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**BRITAIN AND RESCUE:
GOVERNMENT POLICY AND
THE JEWISH REFUGEES
1942-1943**

DIANA JOAN PACKER

PHD

2017

**BRITAIN AND RESCUE:
GOVERNMENT POLICY AND
THE JEWISH REFUGEES
1942-1943**

DIANA JOAN PACKER

A thesis submitted in partial
fulfilment of the requirements of the
University of Northumbria at Newcastle

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Abstract.

This thesis is an analysis of the initial responses of the British government to the Holocaust focusing on refugee policy. In particular, it seeks to re-examine the role of anti-Semitism as an influencing factor on government decision-making and argues that current historiography underplays that influence. It will argue that the government's fear of anti-Semitism itself betrayed some anti-Jewish assumptions. These fears were used as a means to counter demands for rescue, as the government wanted to ensure that its immigration policies were unchanged and continued to be exclusionary. The thesis also examines how the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community responded to, and engaged with, these policies..

This study is based on extensive archival research and makes a detailed analysis of both government and private papers including correspondence from Eleanor Rathbone, William Temple, The Board of Deputies of British Jews and Rabbi Schonfeld. Other resources have included newspapers – *The Times*, *The Jewish Chronicle* and *the Guardian* – contemporary accounts in books and magazines, parliamentary speeches as well as material from the Parliamentary Committee on Refugees.

The thesis is arranged into a series of case studies that exemplify the complexity of responses to Nazi anti-Jewish policy but also draw attention to significant continuities in exclusionary thinking. The first chapter considers the Evian Conference and argues that the government only ever intended that the conference should end with no change to its immigration policies. Chapters Two and Three consider the government response to schemes for the rescue of children in France in 1942 and Bulgaria in 1943 and argue that such rescue schemes were little more than a charitable façade. The thesis ends by looking critically at the Bermuda Conference and its aftermath in 1943 and ultimately concludes that the government remit at Bermuda was similar to the Evian Conference: public expression of noble sentiments with no intention of easing the immigration laws or providing assistance to Jewish refugees trapped in Nazi Europe, the approach which defined British government attitudes throughout.

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List of Abbreviations

CAB	Cabinet Papers
CO	Colonial Office
CMD	Command Papers
FO	Foreign Office
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
HO	Home Office
HC	House of Commons
HL	House of Lords
INF	Ministry of Information
JML	Jewish Museum London
LMA	London Metropolitan Archive
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
PCR	Parliamentary Committee on Refugees
PREM	Prime Minister Files
ULL	University of Liverpool

Acknowledgements

I grew up in Swiss Cottage or as it was commonly called then, German Cottage in North-West London. It was an area which at that time, was still home to the many German and Austrian Jews who had been fortunate enough to reach the safety of Britain prior to World War Two. As a child I did not realise the significance of the mainly continental population in the area but I still remember the bus conductors calling out 'Finchley Strasse' rather than Finchley Road, the aroma of coffee wafting from the Cosmo and the Dorice Restaurants with their uniquely continental atmosphere and the amazing display of handmade chocolates in the window of Lessiters Chocolate Shop, which in the early post war era, was a child's dream come true. The research for this thesis has invoked the memories of my childhood, but in many ways the catalyst for it came from a seminar conducted by Avram Taylor, which triggered my interest in the immigration laws of this country with a particular focus on the arrival of Jewish refugees over a considerable period of time.

I wish to extend my thanks to all the staff in the Northumbria History Department who have actively provided the encouragement, assistance and, where, necessary the constructive criticism that has provided the support I have needed to return to studying after my retirement. In thanking all the staff, I would like to single out the late Dr. Alex Cowan who offered me the initial opportunity to study on a part-time degree course. Without his encouragement and support I would have probably quit the course at the end of the first year. I have been fortunate to have had two dedicated supervisors throughout this project and although we have had our differences, their advice, assistance, criticism, feedback and patience has been of immeasurable support for me. Thank you to Tom Lawson and Avram Taylor.

Since my research has been concentrated on various archives across the country, my thanks go to the staff in the National Archives, the Wiener Library, the British Library, the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Palace Library and the London Metropolitan Archives for their assistance in providing access to the numerous files and micro-fiches required. These thanks are also extended to the staff at the Hartley Library Southampton, University Library Liverpool and the Modern Records Centre, Warwick University.

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Research Ethics Committee on 22/5/15.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 81342

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Date 2nd May 2018

Introduction

When the news of the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination in occupied Europe was publicly acknowledged by the government in 1942, it was faced with a growing demand for aid and rescue to be provided for the European Jews. The various campaigners presented a series of proposals which included easing the prevailing rigid immigration laws thus granting access to Britain for any Jewish refugees who had reached the comparative safety of the neutral European countries Spain and Portugal; the offer of settlement in the Empire and finally the lifting of the quota system for entry into the Palestine Mandate which had been implemented in 1939. These demands presented the government with a major problem. On the one hand it was adamant in its determination to adhere to the stringent immigration laws and maintain the Palestine White Paper quota, but it also wished to maintain a façade of humanitarian response to the plight of the refugees. The resolution of these conflicting objectives was to exert a strong influence on its response to the campaigners' demands.

The arrival of the German Jewish refugees, after Hitler gained power in 1933 and instigated his policy of Jewish persecution, was greeted with a display of wariness by the government. This thesis will analyse how far the influence of historic anti-Semitism was used as a political tool which influenced the government attitude and policies towards the Jewish refugees, as the news of the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination became known after July 1942. This influence has been overlooked in recent historiography appertaining to the European Jews both prior to and during the Second World War. In current historiography, minimal consideration is given to this concept of anti-Semitism when examining the attitudes and responses of the government, the public and the various campaigners to the plight of European Jewry, as the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination became known.

The government response was not one of welcome. Throughout the Thirties and Forties, the government was determined to maintain its rigid control of the prevailing immigration laws which ensured that all potential immigrants were considered on an individual basis as laid down in the laws of 1914, 1919 and 1920.¹ Whilst there was an alleged fear of increasing anti-Semitism by providing asylum and assistance to Jewish

¹ House of Commons, *Aliens Restrictions, 5th April 1914* (London; H.M.S.O 1914), pp.121-123
Vaughan Bevan, *The Development of British Immigration Law* (Beckenham Kent: Croom Helm, 1986) pp.72,73

refugees, there was also an element of anti-Semitism still prevalent in certain areas of government in particular the Colonial Office, which continued to exert a degree of influence on government policy. In contrast to this attitude within government circles, there was a determination to display a public façade of humanitarianism to the world, which resulted in a series of political manoeuvres as exemplified by government manipulation of the agendas at both the Evian Conference in July 1938 and the Bermuda Conference in April 1943 which were allegedly held in order to resolve the growing refugee problems of the period.

The reaction of the Anglo-Jewish community to the plight of the European Jews was strongly influenced by the fear of any action contributing towards the growth of anti-Semitism which was becoming more prevalent across society. This fear was to have a lasting impact on their subsequent reaction to the extermination of European Jewry. Their response towards the arrival of the Jewish refugees during the Thirties was governed by two main factors. The community wished to maintain its tradition of offering assistance to their co-religionists but they also wanted to ensure that only Jews who were deemed as being acceptable – educated, professional and prepared to assimilate rapidly were welcomed. This initial response may be attributed to the determination to ensure that the problems of a housing shortage, severe unemployment and limited assimilation, which had occurred upon the arrival of the Russian Jews at the turn of the century, did not re-occur.² In their support of the government determination to adhere to the immigration laws, the Jewish leaders, fearing the growth of anti-Semitism which had become more visible during the Thirties, wished to demonstrate their loyalty to the country.³

This acceptance of the refugee policy pursued by the government placed a considerable strain on their efforts to provide assistance to the refugees and much of their efforts during the early years of the war were focused on the creation of various strategies to dismiss the accusations of profiteering and domination of the black market by the Jews.⁴ This approach gradually splintered the initial unity of the various Jewish organisations as the community broke down into factions with differing objectives in

Cmd.172 1919, *Aliens Draft of an Order in Council to Regulate the Admission of Aliens.*, pp.299-308
House of Commons, *Expiring Laws Continuance 20th October 1920* (London: H.M.S.O.,1920) pp.643-649
Vaughan Bevan, *The Development of British Immigration Law.*, pp.72-75

House of Commons, *Aliens restriction 5th April 1914* (London: H.M.S.O. 1914), Pp.,121-123

² Bernard Gainer, *The Alien Invasion. The Origins Of The Aliens Act 1905* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1972)

³ Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp.274,278

⁴ Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656 to 2000* (Berkeley and Los Angeles California: University of California Press, 2002), pp.211-213,225

respect of the resolution of the refugees crisis, thus weakening the overall influence of the Jewish community on government policy.⁵

In contrast to this disunity, the campaigners maintained a strong united front in their demands that the government should provide assistance to the Jews trapped in both occupied Europe and the neutral countries of Spain, Portugal, Switzerland and Sweden. The unity of the church leaders, which in many ways was far more influential than the Anglo-Jewish leadership, was demonstrated publicly in a variety of ways. They lobbied the government on behalf of the Jews in letters to the press and to members of the government, in meetings with various government ministers and in statements, questions and active participation in debates in the House of Lords on behalf of the various organisations working to provide aid to the European Jews.

The general population was, to an extent, influenced by the perception of the Jews as a separate group who did not conform to the mores of society.⁶ They were accused by a number of right-wing groups and organisations, of controlling the press, the financial markets and exerting a considerable influence on government policy.⁷ Lesser charges included the accusations that they were loud, demanding, overbearing⁸ and after war was declared, cowardly, profiteers and controlling the black market.⁹ The government, well aware of these attitudes towards the Jewish refugees, through the weekly reports produced by the Ministry of Information, was determined to avoid any action which might lead to an increase in the underlying anti-Semitism, which they were convinced, existed throughout the country.¹⁰

This fear was reflected in various government decisions relating to the European Jews under Nazi domination. Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, publicly acknowledged the policy of Jewish extermination being implemented in occupied Europe by the Nazi regime, although this was not mirrored in various War Cabinet meetings during 1943. The Eden speech to the Commons on December 17th 1942,

⁵ Meier Sompolsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust. The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), pp. 56; 65-70

⁶ Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1994), p. 34

⁷ Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., 1979), pp. 141-149

⁸ Gisela C. Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1978), p. 147

⁹ Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 94-104; Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain.*, pp., 224, 225

¹⁰ INFI/292 Ministry of Home Information reports.

FO371/32681, A.W.G. Randall *Foreign Office Minutes of Meetings* 8/9/42, 221/9/42, p. 1

PCR/HC/LB1/122, Mary Sibthorp, *Secretary of the friends Alien Protection Committee memorandum (from memory)* 28/10/42, pp 3-4

which became known as the UN Declaration, not only condemned the Nazi policies, but also stated that the perpetrators would be punished as war criminals.¹¹ In contrast to this public declaration in January 1943, it was agreed that the Committee for the Reception and Accommodation of Jewish Refugees, created in December 1942 to consider the possibilities of providing facilities and aid which could be offered to Jewish refugees who were able to escape from the Nazis through either Portugal or Bulgaria, should broaden its remit to encompass all refugees. The reference to Jews was omitted from its title and it was agreed:

“That no differentiation should be made between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees, and that the refugee problem should be dealt with as a whole.”¹²

This decision to create an inclusive approach to the refugee problem was to have a major influence on all future policy decisions involving the Jewish refugees. It was now official government policy to classify Jews as nationals of their country of birth rather than as a separate nationality, thus eliminating any reason for preferential treatment or assistance, thereby discrediting any suggestion that the war was being fought on behalf of the Jews.

In order to analyse these observations, there are a number of questions, which need to be considered. Why was there an element of anti-Semitic views in the government and civil service? Was anti-Semitism used as a political expedient to support the official government policy of rigidly controlling immigration legislation? Were the government policies towards the refugees influenced in any way by the various campaigners during this period? Why was the government adamant that there should be no differentiation between the plight of the European Jews and the rest of Europe under Nazi domination? Why was the response of the Anglo-Jewish community influenced by the need to provide support for the refugees? What were the aims of the various campaigners? Was their primary aim focused on rescuing the Jews or was it based on providing assistance for Jewish refugees resident in neutral countries? How far were their overall aims united and how practical were they? The purpose of the introduction is to provide the historical context in order to consider the answers to these questions.

¹¹ HC Deb, *United Nations Declaration*, 17 December 1942, vol 385 cc2082-7, pp.1-3

¹² CAB/65/28/42, *War Cabinet Meeting Conclusions*, December 23rd, 1942., p.246

CAB/66/13/13 Committee On The Reception And Accommodation Of Refugees, *Memorandum by the Secretary OF State for Foreign Affairs*. January 9th.1943., p.73

Differing historical perspectives

The government reaction to the Jewish refugees from 1933-1945

The historiography of the period has examined various aspects of the Jewish refugee problem, from the initial arrival of the German Jewish refugees in 1933 through to the creation of Israel in 1948. The first comprehensive survey of the period from 1933-1939 was produced by A.J. Sherman in 1973 in a detailed analysis of the newly released government documents appertaining to the period. In his examination of these records, Sherman traced the reaction of different government departments and the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community to the growing problem created by the arrival of the German-Jewish refugees. He concluded that the overall policy of the government was predominantly compassionate in its acceptance of the refugees.¹³ This survey by Sherman was followed by a series of detailed studies into various aspects of the period, notably by Amy Zahl Gottlieb, Louise London, Bernard Wasserstein, Tony Kushner, Pamela Shatzkes, Geoffrey Alderman, Richard Bolchover, Meier Sompolinsky and Harry Defries.¹⁴ These historians have produced valuable studies which offer a range of insights into the formulation of government policy, the response of the Anglo-Jewish leadership and the significance of Palestine in respect of the British reaction to the refugees. The predominant themes in their studies have centred on the extent of anti-Semitism in British society and related issues, as to whether British policy towards the refugees should be seen as overly restrictive or essentially generous in its response to the growing refugee problem.

In his detailed study of the Jewish refugees between 1933-1939, Sherman traces the reactions of both the Anglo-Jewish leadership and the response of the government towards the arrival of the refugees with a strong focus on the Evian Conference and the proposed settlement schemes in Kenya, Northern Rhodesia and

¹³ A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939* (London: Frank Cass & 1194)Co.Ltd.)

¹⁴ Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford: Clarendon Pree,1198);Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision Anglo-Jewry's Aid to Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (London; Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998)

Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948. British Immigration policy, Jewish refugees and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000);Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.2;Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice. Anti-Semitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989);Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*;Pamela Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue. Impotent or Indifferent? Anglo-Jewry 1938-1945* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2004);Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2003);Meier Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust*;Harry Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews 1900-1950* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001)

British Guiana.¹⁵In her detailed analysis of government documentation between 1933-1948, Louise London examines all facets of government policy and attitudes towards the arrival of the Jewish refugees. She emphasises that, without the financial assistance from the Anglo-Jewish community, very few refugees would have been granted permission to enter the country.¹⁶ She notes the underlying anti-Semitism which exerted varying degrees of influence in some areas of the government and the civil service, particularly in the Colonial and the Dominions Offices.¹⁷ She maintains that, since the officials advising the government, did not view the rescue of the European Jews from Nazi-occupied Europe as a British problem, a policy of inaction was advocated.¹⁸ In her overall assessment of the period, she argues that government policy, whilst attempting to maintain a façade of humanitarianism towards the refugees, was dominated by opportunism, self-interest and a total determination to maintain control of immigration.¹⁹

In a totally different approach, Bernard Wasserstein examines the attitude of the government towards the Jews from the perspective of settlement in Palestine. He suggests that the initial reason for promoting the possibility of large-scale settlement in Palestine during the First World War, was based on the belief it this would influence Jewish opinion in Russia and America, thus ensuring support from both countries at a crucial point during the war.²⁰ He notes that this perception changed dramatically during the Thirties and by 1939, the attitudes and policies towards the Jews were dominated by the politics of the Palestine Mandate and the appeasement of the Arabs. He considers the refusal of the government to regard the Jews as a separate entity.²¹He analyses the government response to the various proposals that entry into the Mandate should be eased during the war years and he argues that the immigration policy relating to Palestine was a vital pillar towards maintaining British power in the Middle East.²²In his conclusion, Wasserstein suggests that it was a lack of imagination which influenced the response of government officials, who were unable to comprehend the enormity of the Nazi scheme for the destruction of European Jewry.²³

In his analysis Tony Kushner argues that the government did not fully appreciate the reasons that drove the German Jews to flee Nazi Germany, since, although Nazi anti-Semitism in Germany was blatant, in a liberal democracy '...cultural and ideological

¹⁵ Sherman, *Island Refuge* .,pp.259-264

¹⁶ London, *Whitehall And The Jews* p.25

¹⁷ Ibid.pp.38,43,44,45,59,102

¹⁸ Ibid., pp.206,207

¹⁹Ibid., pp.,14,15, 273,274,281

²⁰ Wasserstein. *Britain and the Jews.*, p.2

²¹ Ibid., pp.352,352

²² Ibid., p.352

²³ Ibid.pp.356,357

factors acted as a barrier to the full assimilation of the available evidence.²⁴

Furthermore, the political agenda was dominated by national and international problems which were compounded by the domestic difficulties of the period. He expands this theory by highlighting the attitude of government towards the Jews after *Kristallnacht*, when the entry of Jewish refugees into the country was eased, but, as he states, those granted entry were expected to assimilate into society, rather than maintain their individuality as a minority group.²⁵ He examines the reaction of government officials to the mounting evidence of the anti-Jewish policies being pursued by the Nazis and their reluctance to accept the concept of planned Jewish mass extermination and he agrees with Wasserstein it was a lack of imagination that influenced their response to the events in Europe.²⁶ He considers the need, in the eyes of the government, to promote a face of compassion and liberalism and suggests that this stance was necessary in order to impress America with the morality of its fight against Nazism.²⁷ He concludes by suggesting that the insular policies pursued by the government came under pressure due to the prevailing influence of the liberal ethos in society, but, in reality, the assistance offered was directed at a very narrow proportion of the European Jews who were viewed as being acceptable in British society.²⁸

In his analysis of the period, Harry Defries focuses on the Conservative Party attitude towards the Jews from 1900 -1950. He argues that, although some Conservatives viewed the Jews as foreigners, due to their belief in Englishness, this did not signify that Jews were subject to deliberate anti-Semitism. He suggests there were a variety of responses to the Jews and for many Conservatives, their ideas of Empire created a bond with the Jewish desire to have a national home.²⁹ He implies that the view of the Jews as being a separate people in British society became more pronounced between 1900-1930, although he stresses that there were contradictory attitudes towards the Jews across the entire Party spectrum during this period.³⁰ He notes that there was an inherent streak of anti-Semitism in some sections of the Party but very few members held extreme views of fascism.³¹ In his final remarks, he cites part of a letter sent by Austen Chamberlain to his sister, in which he describes Benjamin Disraeli as follows 'though an English patriot he was not an Englishman' and it may be

²⁴ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination.*, p.59

²⁵ Ibid., p.59

²⁶ Ibid., pp.136-137

²⁷ Ibid., p.146

²⁸ Ibid., p.60

²⁹ Defries, *Conservative Party Attitude.*,s p.7

³⁰ Ibid., pp10-11

³¹ Ibid., p.204

argued that this one remark encapsulated the ambivalent attitude of the Conservative Party towards the Jews throughout the first half of the Twentieth century.³²

Perhaps the dominant themes in these accounts of the period is the determination of the government to maintain a rigid control of immigration, thus limiting the entry of the Jews, but at the same time displaying an aura of benevolence to both the British public and the world. However, little consideration is given to the reasons for the creation of the immigration laws at the turn of the century. The major influx of Jews between 1880-1905 resulted in the creation of the first immigration act, the 1905 Aliens Act,³³ which was passed in a determined attempt to control the entry of 'Aliens' Russian Jews into the country. The various immigration laws created between 1905 and 1924 were directed primarily at one particular group of people - the Jews. The law of 1914 was further restated in 1919 and amended in 1920.³⁴ The later acts were aimed at restricting entry to the country as a refugee and the right to either political or religious asylum was not acknowledged. The new acts gave complete control to the Home Office in granting entry permits. In the case of the Jewish refugees, they were not granted permission to enter the country unless they could prove they had either guaranteed employment or visible means of support.³⁵ The adherence to the immigration laws was employed by the government as a barrier against granting entry to a substantial number of Jewish refugees, unless they could demonstrate their usefulness to the war effort.

The divisions within the Jewish Community

In their detailed studies of the period, Geoffrey Alderman, Meier Sompolinsky and Richard Bolchover argue that from the Jewish perspective, the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community achieved very little. Alderman examines the attitudes of the British Jews towards the refugees and demonstrates the level of antipathy towards them as foreigners. He cites the actions of the Jewish Aid organisations in their determination to ensure that many of the refugees would not remain in London, since the German and Austrian Jews were viewed as aloof in their attitude towards immediate assimilation.³⁶ Bolchover concludes, that because of the growing divisions in the community caused by Zionism and various groups insisting that they represented the community, the

³² Ibid.,p.209

³³ The Secretary of State for the Home Department, *The Administration of the Aliens Act, 1905* (London: H.M.S.O.,1906)

³⁴ Aliens Draft of an Order to Regulate the Admission of Aliens., pp.299-308³⁴CMD.172 1919. House of Commons, *Expiring Laws Continuance*, 20th October 1920 (London: H.M.S.O.,1920,pp.643-649

³⁵ Bevan, *The Development of British Immigration Law.*, pp.,72-75

³⁶ Alderman, *Modern British Jewry.* pp., 298-299

leadership lacked unity. He suggests, as a result of their emancipation, the Jewish community subscribed to the prevailing liberalism in the country, thus maintaining that the only major difference between Jews and non-Jews was religion. The leaders feared an increase in anti-Semitism, which they ascribed to the behaviour of the Jews themselves. As a result of these ideas, they believed that non-Jews were better advocates on behalf of Jews than the Jews themselves.³⁷

These arguments, are supported by Tony Kushner who subscribes to the same theory that the Anglo-Jewish leaders were determined adherents of the prevailing liberalism that dominated British society during this period. He maintains that the liberal ethos which underpinned society, was instrumental in ensuring that the government demonstrated a semblance of humanity towards the growing Jewish refugee crisis, all be it in a restricted manner, prior to the declaration of war in September 1939.³⁸ He extends this view by suggesting that the liberal ideology of Britain was intertwined with an exclusionary policy formulated on the theory of Englishness, which created a fear that certain alien groups would be incapable of assimilating.³⁹ He suggests that the emphasis placed on assimilation by the community was a result of the fear that they would be subject to further anti-Semitism.⁴⁰ Meier Sompolinsky argues that the leadership of the Anglo-Jewish community failed to utilise the support of the Gentile protesters in Britain in order to alleviate the plight of the European Jews. He attributes this to the internal division within the community and the lack of leadership. He suggests that the leaders did not possess the necessary requirements to provide a powerful stimulus during a time of abnormal circumstances.⁴¹

In contrast to this, Pamela Shatzkes states that, prior to the war, the community achieved a considerable amount of success in difficult circumstances. This clearly demonstrated a large degree of self-confidence in the face of adversity.⁴² She suggests that the main problem facing the community during the war was a lack of skill on the part of the leaders in negotiating with the government. In her assessment of Selig Brodetsky, the President of the Board of Deputies, she argues that, as an academic and a committed Zionist rather than as a businessman such as Neville Laski or Otto Schiff, he veered towards a more idealistic view of the problem and the solution. She argues that this approach ensured the government officials who came into contact with him, were

³⁷ Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust*, pp.144-146

³⁸ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p60

³⁹ Ibid., p273

⁴⁰ Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp.10;-12-13;-165-166;,195-198

⁴¹ Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust*, t pp.1-5

⁴² Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue*, p.5

able to accept the different proposals of the leaders, secure in the knowledge that they could ignore them.⁴³ Contrary to these perspectives, Amy Zahl Gottlieb traces the history of the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF) from its inception in March 1933. She charts its liaison, through Otto Schiff, with various members of the government and his contacts with the Home Office. She emphasises that, at all times, it directed its efforts in providing both financial and practical assistance for the incoming refugees.⁴⁴ She examines how its financial assistance influenced government policy towards accepting the entry of refugees prior to the war.⁴⁵ It was instrumental in organising the successful *Kindertransport* after *Kristallnacht*, which rescued 10,000 children.⁴⁶ On the other hand, its offer to fund the rescue of children from Vichy France was doomed to failure.⁴⁷ She concludes that the contribution of the organisation was invaluable in aiding many refugees to settle in Britain and as she stresses, there was a section of the Jewish leadership able to build a working relationship with the government which would prove to be beneficial to both parties.

It may be argued that the division of opinion in these accounts clearly illustrates the dichotomy within the Jewish community which would hamper their response to the growing refugee problem. However, much of the focus is on the divisions created by the Zionist movement, rather than the gradual weakening of the traditional leadership of the community, which may be considered to be a further contributory factor to the lack of communal unity. In essence, though the primary cause for the lack of an effective response to the plight of European Jewry, was their continued acceptance of the government insistence that an increase in the number of Jewish refugees in the country could encourage the growth of anti-Semitism.

The Campaigners

The people who campaigned on behalf of the European Jews comprised a diverse group of individuals and organisations. The most prominent members of the former included Victor Gollancz, the left-wing book publisher, Eleanor Rathbone, Independent M.P. Combined English Universities and Victor Cazalet, Tory M.P. for Chippenham who was designated as the liaison officer between the British Government and General Sikorski. They were both founder members of the Parliamentary Committee for Refugees. The work of Eleanor Rathbone, on behalf of the Czech refugees after the

⁴³ Ibid., p.216-222

⁴⁴ Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, pp.9-19

⁴⁵ Ibid., 81-83

⁴⁶ Ibid.,112,126

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp.,174-175

Munich Settlement in September 1938,⁴⁸ may be seen as a fore-runner to the creation of the Parliamentary Committee in January 1939. It had been established with the initial aims of lobbying the government to provide financial assistance for the refugees coming from Europe; the setting up of temporary reception areas while schemes were organised to settle them, both in and outside the Empire and the acceleration of the process appertaining to the issue of visas particularly for seriously endangered refugees.⁴⁹ Rathbone continued to campaign on behalf of the Czech refugees after the declaration of war,⁵⁰ but as a result of the government policy of interning all foreign refugees, her attention turned to the conditions which prevailed in the internment camps. Consequently, she campaigned strongly against the policy of these camps, which had been implemented in 1940 and she produced a series of reports for the committee outlining alternative measures for the treatment of the foreign refugees.⁵¹ As the news of the Nazi atrocities reached Britain, Eleanor Rathbone focused her campaigning on rescuing Jews in Europe.

Another influential group composed of the religious leaders in Britain was the Council of Christians and Jews, which had slowly evolved through the work of various secular and non-secular bodies including a Youth Council on Christian-Jewish relations formed in 1934, an International Aid Committee founded in 1936 and affiliated to the Save the Children Fund,⁵² the Refugees Children's Movement created after *Kristallnacht* in 1938 and the Christian Council for Refugees.⁵³ The Council was founded in March 1942 under the leadership of William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, together with the main religious leaders including Cardinal Hinsley, Dr.Hertz, the Chief Rabbi and the Moderators of the Church of Scotland and Free Church Federal Council.

The campaigners' response to the government argument that the arrival of Jewish refugees could act as a stimulus to the latent anti-Semitism in certain areas of society, was, to a degree, somewhat ambivalent. Whilst they were prepared to acknowledge there was a degree of it, they argued that, if the focus of rescue were directed towards Jewish children, the public would provide support for their efforts. They further maintained that anti-Semitism could be combated through propaganda and

⁴⁸ Ibid.,pp.108-112

⁴⁹ PCR/WHI/10/1/GW10/1/4, *Inauguration letter and objectives*, January 1939, pp.1-5

⁵⁰ SJL/XIV2 17 (7), *Rathbone letter to Sir John Anderson, Home Secretary*, 3rd February 1940

⁵¹ Ibid., HC/LB/1/122 report '*British policy towards refugees helps Hitler*', 6th July,1940, pp.1-5

Ibid., *Report on Activities up to March 1941*. pp.1-3; Susan Cohen, *Rescue the Perishing. Eleanor Rathbone and the Refugees* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2010), ,pp.112-118;-137-140;-147-154

⁵² Marcus Braybrooke, *Children Of One God. A History of the Council of Christians and Jews* (London: Vallentine Mitchell,1991)

⁵³ Ibid.,pp.6-7,10

education, thus dispelling the government fears that an increase in the arrival of Jewish refugees would encourage anti-Semitism.

The public perception of Jewish refugees

The public perception of both the indigenous Jews and the refugees is examined by Sonya O. Rose in her analysis of the numerous accusations levelled against the Jews during the war and she concludes that they were viewed as a threat to the morale of the community. She argues that the belief they were totally selfish and self-aggrandizing, supported the idea that the Jews would always be Jews and would never be acceptable to the heroic nation fighting a major war.⁵⁴ In his examination of anti-Semitism, Geoffrey Field argues that anti-Semitism in Britain was mainly a social phenomenon rather than a political movement, with an emphasis on the foreign appearance of the Jews and their seeming alien way of life.⁵⁵ This argument is supported by Brian Cheyette who argues that the popular perception of Jews was and can be influenced by the individual bias of authors which he suggests emanated from the depiction of Jews by Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* and was still apparent in literature of the post-First World War period.⁵⁶ George Orwell suggests that many ordinary people viewed the war as “a Jewish War,” since they were convinced that the Jews would benefit from an Allied victory. He states that little mention was made of the Jewish war effort, thus reinforcing the common view the Jews were evading military service; the accusations of black-marketing, overcharging and favouritism were inevitable, since Jewish traders tended to trade in food, tobacco, clothing and furniture, all of which were strictly rationed; the final common accusation was that Jews were cowards during the air raids.⁵⁷

In examining the causes of anti-Semitism during this period, the primary reasons are based on the common perceptions of Jews deriving a benefit from the circumstances prevailing; however, little mention is made of the similar response which occurred during World War One when the newly-arrived Russian Jews faced identical accusations.⁵⁸ It may, therefore, be argued that the accusations levelled against the

⁵⁴ Rose, *Which People's War.*, pp.98-106

⁵⁵ Geoffrey G. Field, 'Anti-Semitism with the Boots Off; Recent Research On England', *Wiener Library Bulletin*:1983, pp.40-43

⁵⁶ Bryan Cheyette, *Construction of 'the Jew' in English literature and society. Racial representations, 1875-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.268-269

⁵⁷ George Orwell, *Antisemitism in Britain*, available at www.orwell.ru/library/articles/antisemitism/English/e_antib, accessed 10/01/17

⁵⁸ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939.*, pp.,126-129

Jews during the Forties bear a striking resemblance to the accusations levelled against them during World War One.

The major considerations arising from the analysis of the period is how far the responses of the government, the public and the Anglo-Jewish leadership were influenced by the anti-Semitism which had been apparent in both 1905 and 1917. May their response to the influx of Jewish refugees from 1933 onwards be viewed as a pattern of reaction emanating from the public outcry of 1905? Did the perception that the Jews were outsiders and who did not fully assimilate, influence their decisions? In order to answer these questions which form the basis of this study, a primary requisite is to define what anti-Semitism is.

The rise of Anti-Semitism in Western Europe during the Nineteenth Century

The official definition of anti-Semitism is given as 'a hatred of Semites especially Jews.'⁵⁹ It may be argued that the pamphlet published by Wilhelm Marr in 1879, *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism*, created the modern template of anti-Semitism with its virulent hatred of the Jews. In his definition of anti-Semitism, Marr focused on the alleged differences in the racial characteristics of the Jews rather than the traditional religious differences. He emphasised this difference with his creation of the new term *antisemite* in place of *Judenhass*, which implied religious connotations. The main points of his pamphlet stated that the Jews were dominating Germany. He argued that they were a displaced people who refused to assimilate into society and he insisted that they were determined to become a world power by any means available to them. The use of the word 'antisemitism' in the widespread and predominantly secular anti-Jewish political campaign across Europe towards the end of the Nineteenth century, resulted in the Jews being termed as Semites, thus stressing the alleged racial differences rather than the religious ones.⁶⁰

Various historians have considered the reasons for the exacerbation of anti-Semitism from the Nineteenth century to the present day. James Parkes argues that the growth and employment of political antisemitism towards the end of the Nineteenth century provided a useful tool for the reactionary groups in Europe who opposed 'Liberalism', 'Secularism,' 'Industrialism' and any other aspects of modern society which

⁵⁹ *The Chambers Dictionary 10th Edition* (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, 2006) p.,61

⁶⁰ Wilhelm Marr, *The Victory of Judaism over Germanism* Translated by Gerhard Rohringer (Bern; Rudolph Costenoble, 1879), available at www.kevinmacdonald.net/Marr-TeXEnglishpdf, accessed 17/11/2015

they objected to, since the electorate could be easily influenced by citing the Jews as the cause of all the problems resulting from the rapid modernisation of Europe.⁶¹ In his analysis of Germany and Austria during this period, he cites the use of political antisemitism by Bismarck in Germany and the President of the Council in Austria-Hungary, to discredit the progressive movement in order to maintain the support of the conservatives and the Roman Catholic Centre Party, thus ensuring that the power of the Monarchy did not pass to the Parliament.⁶²

In his examination of the period, Zygmunt Bauman defines anti-Semitism as standing for the resentment of Jews. 'It refers to the conception of the Jews as an hostile and undesirable group, and to the practices that derive from and support, such a conception';⁶³ he considers the various factors which may be viewed as major contributions towards the transformation of anti-Semitism from religious to secular. He suggests that because the Jews were viewed as supporters of capitalism, industry and modernity, they were considered to be actively destroying the individual craftsman and undermining the influence of the nobility.⁶⁴ He argues that the liberal theory of assimilation collapsed due to 'the essential incompatibility between nationalism and free choice.'⁶⁵ He maintains that, with the disappearance of segregation, the Jews were no longer a separate visible group and it was feared that they would assimilate and become both socially and culturally indistinguishable from mainstream society. Thus, new boundaries were required which still provided a clear definition of Jew and non-Jew, ultimately creating a new form of anti-Semitism based on racism.⁶⁶ These arguments are supported by Hannah Arendt who observed that 'Jews had been able to escape from Judaism into conversion: from Jewishness there is no escape.'⁶⁷

In his analysis of the causes and ideas which ultimately produced *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Norman Cohn supports the arguments of Baumann. He suggests that the roots of modern political anti-Semitism may be traced to the emancipation of the Jews by Napoleon Bonaparte. This resulted in the Jews embracing all aspects of modernity during the Nineteenth century, which was a period of rapid and exceptional change; this created the basis for a bourgeoisie focused on creating wealth and

⁶¹ James Parkes, *Antisemitism* (London: Vallentine Mitchell & Co.Ltd., 1963), pp22,23,24

⁶² Ibid., pp.26,29,30,33

⁶³ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 2000),p.34

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.47

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.55

⁶⁶ Ibid.,pp.58,59,60

⁶⁷ Hannah Arendt, *Antisemitism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968,), p.87

increasing its rights.⁶⁸ A main beneficiary of these changes was the Jews. In a changing society, as they obtained their freedom from the ghettos, they came to represent every facet of modernity – journalism, industry, commerce and politics, all of which were detested by the conservative elements in society. As a consequence, the ultra-conservative groups portrayed the Jews as a threat to the stability and long-held traditions of life, thus creating a new political form of anti-Semitism.⁶⁹

Walter Laqueur considers the effects of emancipation and assimilation by the Jews as they moved away from the ghetto into the mainstream of modern society. He argues that this movement away from their traditional occupation of finance into the professions, which had originally been barred to them, gave rise to the accusation that they aspired to world domination through money and politics. He points out that Jewish support was given to the predominantly liberal and left-wing parties for two reasons: the right or the confessional-religious parties did not want them as members and many Jews were strong supporters of human freedom, progress and internationalism. He examines the accusation that the alleged Jewish participation in finance was based on the exploitation of non-Jewish labour and financial speculation, although, as he argues, Jews were successful due to their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. He suggests that this was a legacy of their precarious situation when they had been confined to the ghetto with minimal security. He maintains that the general belief that the Jews would achieve power through their possession of great riches, was influenced by the perceived power and visible wealth of the Rothschild family which dominated European banking and finance.⁷⁰ The citing of the Rothschilds to demonstrate the desire of the Jews to achieve world domination is supported by Hannah Arendt as she considers the growth of the Nation-State in Europe and the financial power that this one family wielded in co-operation with England, France and Austria.⁷¹

Albert S. Lindemann argues that the conspicuousness of Jewish activity in the stock market, the financing of railways, journalism and the retail trade, together with their strong participation in the public professions, were further contributory factors towards the rise of modern anti-Semitism. He extends this argument by suggesting that the liberalism of the period was seriously undermined by the European economic

⁶⁸ Norman Cohn, *Warrant For Genocide The Myth of Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Serif, 1996), p.27

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.27-29.

⁷⁰ Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp155-157

⁷¹ Arendt, *Antisemitism.*, pp.,2-,27

depression which occurred between the mid 1870's and the early 1890's and was a further stimulus towards the rise of the nascent growth of anti-Semitism.⁷²

Barnett Litvinoff supports this argument in his analysis of the same period in France citing as an example, the reaction to the collapse of the Catholic bank *Union Generale* which was blamed on the Rothschilds. The demise of the bank brought financial ruin to 40,000 small investors and it created a receptive audience to *La France Juive* which was published by Edouard Drumont in 1886.⁷³ He maintains that this publication may be viewed as a major force behind the growing anti-Semitism of the period in France, which culminated in the Dreyfus case in 1894.⁷⁴ Litvinoff maintains that race could be employed as a political tool in times of difficulty and he suggests that, since a proportion of the population still viewed the Jew as being an 'outsider' in Christian society, they presented the ideal image to be designated as a scapegoat.⁷⁵ In accepting this viewpoint, it may be argued that throughout history, the Jew had always been used as a scapegoat, although prior to the emancipation of Jewry and the growth of industrialisation, the role of scapegoat had been driven by religion.⁷⁶

The historiography of British Anti-Semitism

In contrast to the political anti-Semitism prevalent in Europe during the Nineteenth and the early 20th Centuries, British anti-Semitism tended to manifest itself in the social mores of the country through exclusion, quotas and the class system. The passing of the 1905 Aliens Act which had been driven by demands from the right-wing elements of the Conservative Party, had been supported by mounting social protest, fuelled by a shortage of housing and unemployment rather than as a particular political policy. The only political movement of any real impact associated with anti-Semitism, was the British Union of Fascists, founded in 1932,⁷⁷ which followed in the wake of various extreme right-wing groups established during the Twenties. The original groups had all demonstrated a distinct attitude of anti-Semitism towards the Jews⁷⁸ and, as Mosely lost

⁷² Albert S. Lindemann, *Esau's Tears Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp.99-101

⁷³ Ibid., 205,206.

⁷⁴ Barnett Litvinoff, *The Burning Bush Antisemitism and World History* (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1989), pp.210,211

⁷⁵ Ibid.,pp.206-208

⁷⁶ Ibid.p.35

Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism* pp.49-57

⁷⁷ Robert Benewick, *The Fascist Movement in Britain* (London:Allen Lane The Penguin Press,1972),p.85

⁷⁸ Kenneth Lunn,'The ideology and impact of the British Fascists in the 1920s', in Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn (Eds.) *Traditions of Intolerance. Historical perspectives on Fascism and race discourse in Britain* (Manchester:Manchester University Press,1989),pp.150-151

his initial support, he moved towards an anti-Semitic stance to retain and increase the membership of his movement.⁷⁹

In examining the historiography of British anti-Semitism, it is important to note that since the early 1970s, there have been a variety of publications analysing its numerous aspects from 1876 onwards. In 1979, Colin Holmes broke new ground with his detailed history and analysis of British anti-Semitism from 1876-1939.⁸⁰ Bernard Gainer analyses the causes and effect of the arrival of the Russian Jews at the end of the Nineteenth century on the general population in the East End of London. He traces the roots of the anti-Alien movement, its growth and its goals through to the passing of the 1905 Aliens Act.⁸¹ In similar fashion, John A. Garrard examines the same period with the emphasis on the political aspects of the anti-Alien movement.⁸² On the other hand, Bryan Cheyette discusses the influence of anti-Semitism through the portrayal of 'the Jew' in literature by various authors from 1875 to 1945,⁸³ whilst Alyson Pendlebury examines the alleged influence of anarchy and the Russian Revolution on the public perception of the East London Jews.⁸⁴ In her analysis of anti-Semitism, Gisela C. Lebzelter examines the political anti-Semitism that was prevalent between 1918-1939 with a detailed assessment of the right-wing groups who were active during the Twenties and the Thirties.⁸⁵ I. Rennap considers the rise of anti-Semitism from a Communist perspective.⁸⁶ Gavin Schaffer examines the reactions of the country from the perspective of racial science,⁸⁷ whilst Tony Kushner analyses the anti-Semitic attitudes prevalent in society between 1939-1945.⁸⁸

It may be argued that, before the arrival of the Eastern European Jews from 1880 onwards, the Jewish community, which had mainly originated from Germany and Holland, was comparatively small (approximately 35,000 in total). The predominantly middle class Jews involved in trade, banking and the professions, maintained an unobtrusive presence, thereby avoiding the common accusation of being outsiders in society.⁸⁹ In his detailed analysis of anti-Semitism between 1876 and 1939, Colin

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.72

Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain. A History 1918-1985* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987), p.131

⁸⁰ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939*

⁸¹ Gainer, *The Alien Invasion*.

⁸² John A Garrard, *The English And Immigration 1880-1910* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971)

⁸³ Cheyette, *Construction of 'the Jew'*

⁸⁴ Alyson Pendlebury, *Portraying 'the Jew' in First World War Britain* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2006)

⁸⁵ Gisela C. Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939* (London & Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1978)

⁸⁶ I. Rennap., *Anti-Semitism And The Jewish Question* (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1942)

⁸⁷ Gavin Schaffer, *Racial Science and British Society, 1930-62* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

⁸⁸ Kushner., *The persistence of prejudice*.

⁸⁹ Endelman, *The Jews Of Britain.*, pp.80-81;-92-95

Holmes argue that, whilst the emancipation of Jewry in 1858 clearly displayed the magnanimity of liberal toleration, thus demonstrating it is was not acceptable for a civilised society to practice religious discrimination towards either individuals or groups, it also reflected the idea that Jewish emancipation would encourage them to discard their separateness and start to assimilate into British society. He further argues that the perception of Jewish business interests being focused on finance and material wealth together with the view that the Jew was an outsider, would prove to be a significant cause of the growing anti-Semitism after the arrival of the Eastern European Jews.⁹⁰

The perception that Jews were different and by this very difference outside the parameters of normal society, is examined by Bryan Cheyette in his analysis of the writings of various writers in both the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries. In his analysis of Mathew Arnold and Anthony Trollope, he focuses on the belief of both authors, that whilst the Jews belonged in society as a result of the contemporary liberal attitudes, they were still considered as being different, 'the other,' which effectively excluded them from normal society.⁹¹ He points out that, although Arnold considered the Jews to be an unattractive people 'this petty, unsuccessful, unamiable people without politics, without science, without art, without charm deserve their great place in the world's regard,'⁹² he believed that wealthy assimilated Jews would subscribe to the best of English culture, thus emphasising that they were only acceptable when they did assimilate.⁹³ In his examination of Trollope, Cheyette focuses on the consistent use of racial typology to describe his Jewish characters in order to stress their difference, thereby perpetuating the idea of 'the other.' In this way, he was able to establish that Jews would know their place within a superior England.⁹⁴ Whilst accepting these arguments in relation to the two authors discussed here, in his overall analysis of 'the Jew' in English literature, Cheyette argues that different authors presented 'the Jew' as belonging to and being excluded from society, dependent on the thrust of the writing. He maintains, since Jews were represented in a variety of guises (in English literature) such as: 'Eastern, Oriental, modern medieval, degenerate, assimilated, heretical and vengeful,' there was and still is, a number of interpretations of antisemitism rather than a single antisemitism.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Ibid.pp.8-9

⁹¹ Cheyette, *Construction of 'the Jew'* ., p.13

⁹² Ibid., p.19

⁹³ Ibid., pp.21-22

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.27-28

⁹⁵ Ibid.,pp.268-274.

In contrast to this, Anthony Julius cites the use of the Jew in literature from the Medieval period onwards as an outsider associated with evilness and money-lending, citing Chaucer *The Prioress's Tale*, Shakespeare *The Merchant of Venice* and Dickens *Oliver Twist*. He argues that the use of the Jew as a sinister figure in literature places him firmly outside acceptable society.⁹⁶ This premise is supported by Endelman in his assessment of the depiction of Jews in literature during the Twenties and the Thirties, when it was acceptable to present them as offensive, untrustworthy and, in general, involved in nefarious activities.⁹⁷

In his assessment of the historical context relating to the period 1880-1910, John A. Garrard maintains the Anglo-Jew was generally only recognisable through his religion since, in all other respects, he was able to assimilate by mastering the English language and adopting the dress of the country. He does, however, concur with the latter part of Holmes' argument based on the visible wealth of the Jews, when he discusses the observations made by H.G.F. Modder relating to the Anglo-Jewry elite and suggests that the public awareness of their wealth and power created a focal point for the type of anti-Semitism prevalent in Europe during this period.⁹⁸

The major social problems of the period, high unemployment and lack of housing due to the industrialisation of the East End, were exacerbated by the influx of the Eastern European Jews after 1880, are examined by Bernard Gainer, who analyses the various problems that arose through lack of housing, severe unemployment, a difference of language and customs between the indigenous population and the newly arrived immigrants.⁹⁹ He argues that these factors were the driving force behind the anti-Alien movement which, under the initial leadership of the founder of the British Brothers League, William Stanley Shaw and the later guidance of William Eden Evans-Gordon, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Stepney,¹⁰⁰ evolved into the formation of the Immigration Reform Association in February 1903 in order to increase the pressure on the government to halt the flow of Aliens entering the country.¹⁰¹ It may be argued that the establishment of the early anti-Alien campaign groups laid the foundations for the various extreme right-wing factions, which flourished during the Twenties and the Thirties, culminating in the foundation of the British Union of

⁹⁶ Anthony Julius, *Trials Of The Diaspora. A History of Anti-Semitism in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Ltd., 2010), pp. xxviii

⁹⁷ Endelman, *The Jews Of Britain.*, p. 200

⁹⁸ Garrard, *The English And Immigration.*, pp. 15, 16

⁹⁹ Gainer, *The Alien Invasion.*

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 67, 68

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 73

Fascists in 1932, as discussed by Colin Holmes.¹⁰² In his examination of the growth of the anti-Alien movement, John Garrard points out, in reality, its supporters were campaigning against the arrival of the Russian Jews, but since it was regarded as unacceptable to be seen as a supporter of anti-Semitism, the euphemism of 'Alien' was used as a substitute for Jew.¹⁰³

A further major factor behind the drive for controlled entry of the aliens was based on the fashionable theories of Social Darwinism prevailing in society at the time. These theories supported a growing fear that inter-relationships between the British and the aliens, of whom the latter were viewed as racially degenerate, would weaken the nation considerably. This aspect of the anti-Alien movement is examined by both Bernard Gainer and Colin Holmes.¹⁰⁴ The latter states that great emphasis was placed on the presence of Jewish immigrants who were viewed as presenting a major hazard to the health, morals and physical capabilities of the nation. He analyses the accusations made by known anti-Semites including Joseph Banister, Robert Sherard and John Foster Fraser and points out that every known disease was attributed to the immigrant Jews, as well as physical degeneracy.¹⁰⁵ The irony of these accusations was one of the main complaints against the Jews was that, because they refused to marry non-Jews, they were not willing to assimilate into society. It may be counter-argued that, because of this stance, there was less chance of the Jews weakening the Gentile population. The first immigration act, which was created to control the influx of the Russian Jews, was passed in Parliament in 1905 and implemented in 1906.¹⁰⁶

In his detailed examination of attitudes towards the Jews between 1876 and 1939, Colin Holmes discusses the various aspects and reactions of how society related to the Jews. He considers the response of the Establishment to the success of the Jews in business and focuses on the stereotypes that were portrayed in the press depicting them as totally dominated by the desire to increase their material wealth.¹⁰⁷ He notes that the alleged liberal toleration of the period did not always apply and discrimination occurred, not only in the immigrant areas but also in the academic world, citing the example of Lewis Namier being denied a Fellowship at All Souls in 1911, due

¹⁰² Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939.*, pp.,203-219

¹⁰³ Garrard, *The English And Immigration.*, pp.,62-65

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Pp.18,19; Gainer, *The Alien Invasion.*,pp. 113-114

¹⁰⁵ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939.*, pp.,36-38

¹⁰⁶ The Secretary of State for the Home Department, *The Administration of the Aliens Act,1905* (London: H.M.S.O.,1906)

¹⁰⁷ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939.*, p.114

to his Jewish origin.¹⁰⁸ He focuses on the accusations levelled against the wealthy Anglo-Jews, that they used their power and wealth to manipulate society for their own ends.¹⁰⁹ He maintains two particular images were applied to certain Jews. The first image depicted them as aliens, immigrants from Eastern Europe who were outside the norms of acceptable society and incapable of assimilating. The second image depicted them as latter-day Shylocks, financiers, rich Jews and international Jews intent on increasing their wealth at any price. He concludes with the observation the term 'Jew' was used as a suggestion of infamy to depict a money lender or a person intent on deriving maximum profit from any situation and it was also synonymous with the concept of cheating an individual financially.¹¹⁰ It is worth noting that the use of the term 'to Jew someone' is now viewed as archaic phraseology and totally unacceptable in contemporary society.

Holmes examines the anti-Semitism that arose during World War One and focuses on the accusations levelled against the wealthy Jews of German extraction, that they were disloyal.¹¹¹ He considers the accusations and attacks made against the young Russian Jews, many of whom had retained their Russian citizenship, that they were cowards and by refusing to enlist, were able to increase their prosperity at the expense of the Christians who were fighting.¹¹² He concludes that the outbreak of anti-Semitism during the war was not an isolated occurrence, since the imputations of disloyalty levelled against the wealthy Jews were driven by the perception of their wealth and alleged influence in the higher echelons of society. In direct contrast, the main demonstrations against the Russian Jews took place in the East End of London and Leeds, where there were large Jewish immigrant communities and they were viewed as disloyal by refusing to fight.¹¹³

In his conclusion, Holmes argues that there is no evidence to suggest official government support of anti-Semitism, but he does indicate that there were various strands of anti-Semitism between 1876-1939. He cites the discrimination against the Jews in both the East End and the academic world of Oxford together with a strong racist content prior to 1919. He states an important factor to consider is the pressures in

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp.110-11

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.100

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.113

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp.122-123

¹¹² Ibid., pp.126-129

¹¹³ Ibid., pp.136-138

society, particularly in times of economic crisis and social distress and that these influences are a recurring pattern which cannot be ignored.¹¹⁴

On the other hand, Alyson Pendlebury discusses the influence of Anarchist thinking on the East London Jews and the general belief that all Jews were Anarchists prior to the war. She suggests that this image changed during the war to become the 'pro-German Jew'.¹¹⁵ She discusses the government fear that Bolshevism would be strongly supported by the young radical Jewish immigrants and she argues that such fear was a determining factor behind the government support for Zionism, since it was believed this would deter Jewish support for the Russian Revolution.¹¹⁶ Lindemann observes that various members of the Establishment, including Winston Churchill, Hilaire Belloc and G.K.Chesterton, maintained that the leadership of the Bolshevik revolution included many Jews and they suggested this, combined with the alleged support of the British Jews, was exacerbating anti-Semitism in the country.¹¹⁷

In charting the growth of political anti-Semitism, Gisela C.Lebzelter analyses the period from 1918 – 1939.¹¹⁸ She examines the various myths that implied the Jews were intent on both the destruction of the British Empire and world domination, through a network of conspiracy. She cites the strong belief that International Jewry was intent on world domination as written in *The Protocols of Zion*, even after it was proved to be a forgery. Furthermore, one cannot ignore the lasting influence that it had on the extreme right-wing thinking, prevalent in the country during this period.¹¹⁹ This argument is supported by John Fox who suggests that belief in the publication was boosted by the perception that the Jews were linked to the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution.¹²⁰ In his support of these arguments, Holmes emphasises the major influence that Bolshevism had on the belief that Jews were both alien and a threat to the established order of the day. He further maintains that the appointment of Jews to positions of power in both Government and the Establishment, reinforced the Jewish conspiracy theory of '*The Protocols*'.¹²¹

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp.220-234

¹¹⁵ Alyson Pendlebury, *Portraying 'the Jew'*, pp.118-119

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp.119-120

¹¹⁷ Lindemann, *Esau's Tears*, p.434

¹¹⁸ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939*

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp.21-26

¹²⁰ John P. Fox, 'British Attitudes to Jewish Refugees from Central and Eastern Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century' in Werner Mosse (Co-ordinating editor) Julius Carlebach, Gerhard Hirschfeld, Aubrey M. Newman, Arnold Paucker, Peter Pulzer, (Eds.) *Second Chance. Two Centuries of German speaking Jews in the United Kingdom* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1991), p.476

¹²¹ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939*, p141-149

Lebzelter analyses in depth the theories of the various extreme right-wing groups which flourished during the Twenties and the Thirties, including *The Britons*, the *Imperial Fascist League* and the *British Union of Fascists*. She focuses on the conviction of *The Britons*, that both the government and the press were controlled by International Jewry. She emphasises that a main plank of their propaganda was anti-Semitism and their conviction that the solution to the problem, was to ensure all Jews settled in either Palestine or possibly Madagascar.¹²² In similar fashion, the *Imperial Fascist League* placed all blame on the Jews for any aspect of modern life that they did not approve of and she suggests this stance was effectively applied to anything which they considered to be evil or deceitful.¹²³

In her examination of the BUF, she notes, initially, it was viewed as being detrimental to pursue anti-Semitic content in its agenda, but although Jew-baiting was forbidden, the organisation placed great emphasis on the threat of the 'alien menace'. It argued that, due to the massive unemployment of the time, all foreigners should be compelled to leave the country, with the exception of those who had fought during the war.¹²⁴ She examines the change in their policy towards the end of 1933, when the movement alleged that the Jews were using their influence to benefit themselves through their domination of international finance, the press and the politicians.¹²⁵ She states that, once this policy was established, it became progressively more abusive towards the Jews, eventually culminating in violence. She argues, although, overall, the movement failed in its objectives, it did succeed in stigmatising the Jewish community and strengthening the general dislike of Jews in the East End.¹²⁶

In her concluding remarks, Lebzelter argues that, in order to assess the impact of organised political anti-Semitism between the two World Wars, it must be noted that anti-Jewish prejudice was part of the cultural tradition, which included social discrimination and the use of crude stereotypes of Jews. She maintains these underlying anti-Jewish attitudes were more apparent during times of crisis and she cites the period after the war when a fear of the 'Jewish peril,' as a result of the Russian revolution, combined with the belief there was an international Jewish conspiracy to control the world. She further argues that, although the rise and fall of anti-Semitism appeared to be influenced by the prevailing economic cycles of the day, the actual

¹²² Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939.*, pp.49-62

¹²³ Ibid., pp.74,75

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.91

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.91

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp.108-109

impetus may be traced to a lack of prosperity and stability. She pursues this argument with the observation that anti-Semitism is stimulated by a combination of socio-economic conditions, thus creating a receptive audience to specific propaganda and this effectively diverts their attention from genuine deprivation to a mythical enemy.¹²⁷

In 1942, I. Rennap published the definitive Communist analysis of anti-Semitism. He maintained that, since the Jewish population in Britain was comparatively small, approximately 350,000, anti-Semitism was less widespread pro-rata than in other countries. He did, however, stress the arrival of the Russian Jews at the turn of the century had created a backlash due to the perception that they created unemployment, they never worked in heavy industry and they obtained their wealth at the expense of the Gentile.¹²⁸ He argued that, as unemployment increased in the early Thirties, support for the newly formed BUF started to grow. He conceded that, initially, anti-Semitism did not form any part of the BUF ethos, but notes that this stance was to change rapidly. The BUF adopted an anti-Semitic attitude and labelled the Jews as international financiers who controlled big business and the banks. In the East End of London, the Jews were accused of creating unemployment and driving small businessmen out of existence.¹²⁹

He suggested that, although the movement never achieved the success of its counterparts in Europe, it did serve as a useful cover for the more powerful and influential extreme right-wing movements which supported the ideology of Fascism. These included The Link and the Anglo-German Fellowship, of which the latter counted among its supporters William Astor, Lords Londonderry, Lothian and McGowan, together with directors of banks, insurance companies and major business concerns. He maintained that the various organisations used their influence to spread anti-Semitic ideas throughout the Establishment, thus encouraging the most reactionary elements within the governing class.¹³⁰ In presenting these arguments, Rennap maintained that anti-Semitism was and continued to be, used as a weapon (by the Establishment) to maintain the privilege and domination of their class.

In his detailed analysis of anti-Semitism during the Second World War, Tony Kushner notes that, in 1939, the British public was becoming aware of a potential Jewish problem in the country, with the arrival of 60,000 refugees. This awareness stimulated the growth of anti-Semitism on a daily basis in all walks of life, resulting in a

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp.172-173

¹²⁸ Rennap., *Anti-Semitism.*, pp.101-102

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp.103-104

¹³⁰ Ibid., Pp.106-107

deepening insecurity within the Anglo-Jewish community.¹³¹ Kushner considers different aspects of the attitude towards the Jews during the war years. In his analysis, he suggests that for the right-wing element of the population, the Jews were considered as radicals who were linked with the revolutionary movements – the Bolsheviks and they were viewed as un-British.¹³² He examines the use of the Jew as the scapegoat, as rationing fuelled the growing black market¹³³ and he discusses the perception that the Jews were cowards by nature and as such, refused to fight for the country.¹³⁴ In his analysis of government policy, he maintains, in many ways, the government supported the Anglo-Jewish community but he tends to support the argument presented by Bernard Wasserstein that it was bureaucratic indifference by some government officials rather than deliberate anti-Semitism, which tended to influence the government response to the Jews.¹³⁵ He concludes by suggesting that, although there was anti-Semitism during the war, it was almost a reflexive action, since in the eyes of the general public, a scapegoat was required for the deficiencies created by the existing conditions.

In contrast to these arguments, Gavin Schaffer considers the response of both the government and the public towards the Jewish refugees, from the racial scientific perspective. He analyses the prevailing beliefs held by the scientific establishment from three separate perspectives: that the Jews were cowards, conspirators and disease carriers.¹³⁶ In his examination of Jewish cowardice, he cites the accusations made against them during the First World War when the young Russian Jews were accused of being unpatriotic cowards who refused to enlist,¹³⁷ an accusation that has been refuted by Sharman Kadish in her detailed analysis of the period.¹³⁸ He argues that Jews were viewed as being conspiratorial due to the insecurity of the inter-war years when they were held responsible for the international problems of either German militarism or Bolshevism and were conspiring against Britain:

“These immigrants had always been traitors to the British workers as well as traitors to the British cause...Bolshevism

¹³¹ Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice*, pp.12-13

¹³² Ibid., pp.79-80

¹³³ Ibid., p.102-103

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp.122-124

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.160

¹³⁶ Gavin Schaffer, *Racial Science and British Society, 1930-62* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.53

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp.54-58

¹³⁸ Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews. The Anglo-Jewish Community, Britain and the Russian Revolution* (London: Frank Cass & Co.Ltd., 1992),

was of course...introduced in England almost entirely by aliens."¹³⁹

A further theory was because of their conspiratorial traits, Jews possessed an immunity to various diseases although they were also viewed as being prone to specific diseases such as obesity and diabetes. 'The Jew was presented as an easy prey to certain maladies, slyly immune to others.'¹⁴⁰ He argues that these beliefs had a major influence on the reaction of both the government and the public towards the Jewish refugees fleeing from Germany, since it was felt that they were, in part, to blame for the Nazi persecution they were facing and he maintains, although the public displayed distaste for the anti-Semitic violence in Nazi Germany, it did not change their ideas that Jews were different or 'Alien.'¹⁴¹ He suggests that the government refusal to provide refuge for the majority of Jews who wished to enter the country, was influenced by the belief that there were inherent racial differences between the Jews and the indigenous population.¹⁴²

The historical background to the reception of Jewish refugees in Britain

Between 1880 and 1905, it is estimated that one million Jews fled from Eastern Europe to start a new life in Western Europe and America.¹⁴³ The majority settled in America, South Africa, The Argentine and France, but approximately 100,000 settled in Great Britain and by 1905, the Jewish population had increased by 41.9 percent.¹⁴⁴ The arrival of the Eastern European Jews after 1880, was to have a profound influence on the British attitude towards the Jews. In his detailed history of their arrival, Bernard Gainer analyses the various problems that arose through lack of housing, severe unemployment and the difference in language and customs.¹⁴⁵ John Garrard and Bernard Gainer argue that the formation of the *Immigration Reform Association* in February 1903, increased the pressure on the government to halt the flow of Aliens entering the country.¹⁴⁶ The euphemism of 'Alien' was used as a substitute for Jew since public support for anti-Semitism was not acceptable.¹⁴⁷ It may, therefore, be argued that the establishment of the early anti-Alien campaign groups, which culminated in the

¹³⁹ Schaffer, *Racial Science*.,p.56

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*,p.57

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*,pp.57-60

¹⁴² *Ibid.*,p.62

¹⁴³ David Englander (Ed.), *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigration in Britain 1840-1920* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994), p.10

¹⁴⁴ V.D. Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England 1840-1950* (London: Watts & Co. Ltd., 1954), p.86

¹⁴⁵ Gainer, *The Alien Invasion*.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.73

¹⁴⁷ Garrard, *The English And Immigration*.,pp.62-65

creation of the 1905 Aliens Act to limit the flow of immigrants into the country,¹⁴⁸ laid the foundations for the various extreme right-wing groups which flourished during the Twenties and the Thirties, resulting in the foundation of the *British Union of Fascists* in 1932, as discussed by Colin Holmes.¹⁴⁹

The 1905 Aliens Act was created by the Tory Government in response to continual anti-alien agitation from extreme right-wing Tories. They wanted to curb the arrival of the predominantly Eastern European Jewish refugees, who had been entering Britain since 1880.¹⁵⁰ In his detailed analysis of the causes that led to the creation of the act, Bernard Gainer traces the effect that the arrival of the Jews had on all aspects of life in the East End of London. He focuses on the resentment that gradually developed as the established population of the area viewed the new arrivals as the main causes for rising unemployment and for a growing lack of housing.¹⁵¹ He examines the general view that they were unhygienic with strange habits, which did not conform to the normal way of life in the area¹⁵² and he considers the reaction of the Anglo-Jewish leaders to the newly arrived Russian Jews, which was strongly influenced by the fear that their arrival could create an increase in anti-Semitism.¹⁵³ These views are reiterated by Lloyd P Gartner who also examines the efforts of the Anglo-Jewish leaders to ensure that, through education, the children of the immigrants would start to become English, rather than Jewish, foreigners.¹⁵⁴ In examining this period, it is possible to discern the roots of the anti-Semitism which prevailed during the Thirties and the Forties. The massive unemployment due to the major economic recession of the Thirties and the chronic housing shortage created by the lack of adequate modern housing, fuelled the fear that a large-scale influx of Jewish refugees would exacerbate these problems. Such fears may be viewed as a mirror image of the chronic unemployment caused by the major financial recession of the 1870's and 1880's¹⁵⁵ and the chronic housing shortage created by the redevelopment of the East End during this period,¹⁵⁶ which gave rise to

¹⁴⁸ The Secretary Of State For The Home Department *The Administration of the Aliens Act, 1905* (London: H.M.S.O., 1906), pp.17,19,28,29,30

¹⁴⁹ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939.*, pp.,203-219

¹⁵⁰ The Secretary of State for the Home Department, *The Administration of the Aliens Act, 1905* (London: H.M.S.O., 1906)

¹⁵¹ Gainer, *The Alien Invasion.*, pp.15-44

¹⁵² Ibid., pp.46-52

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp.55-56

¹⁵⁴ Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant In England 1870-1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960), pp.220-231

¹⁵⁵ Joseph White, *Tom Mann* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp.7-8

¹⁵⁶ Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings Life in an East End Tenement Block 1887-1920* (London: Pimlico, 2003), pp.9-14

the accusations that the arrival of the Russian Jews was the main cause for these problems.

The Act, which was implemented and amended by the Liberal government in 1906, did, however, grant refugee status to any individual who had been subject to either religious or political persecution. These conditions were changed in a subsequent act passed in 1914 - the Aliens Restrictions Act, which effectively ensured that the Secretary of State exercised strict control of all entrants into the country and removed the right to claim refugee status.¹⁵⁷ The terms of this later act were restated as the Aliens Act, 1919 and the Amended Aliens Order of 1920. These changes strengthened the power of the Home Secretary by removing power from the Immigration Service, thus ensuring that state sovereignty was maintained. In addition, a series of further entry restrictions were imposed and unless an Alien had an official work permit or could demonstrate possession of visible means of support, entry was only granted on a temporary basis. The new restriction also ensured that refugee status was not recognised in the country.¹⁵⁸ These amended Acts remained in place as the immigration laws and they were re-stated each year. With the persistent use of the term Alien rather than refugee, it may be argued that the view of refugees as foreigners, unwittingly reinforced the perception in the public mind of Jews as outsiders. Such a perception may be attributed to a pattern of thought that was created by the arrival of the Russian Jews at the turn of the century. The various immigration laws created between 1905 and 1920 were directed primarily at one particular group of people – the Jews. Initially they had been accused of causing unemployment, creating a housing shortage, living in insanitary conditions and maintaining their own language and customs. The declaration of war in 1914 witnessed a further tightening of the immigration law which concentrated the regulation of Aliens in the office of the Secretary of State, thus enabling strict control of all entrants to Britain and removing the right to claim refugee status.¹⁵⁹ The original perceptions of the Jews as being alien to the British way of life, were further influenced by the general belief that, during the Great War, young Jewish males refused to enlist and that, generally, the Jews were cowards. The most detailed analysis of this period is by Colin Holmes, who not only examines the attitudes of the general public and the Press towards the Russian Jews' alleged refusal to enlist, but also discusses the

¹⁵⁷ House of Commons, *Aliens Restrictions*, 5th April 1914 (London; H.M.S.O 1914), pp.121-123
Bevan, *The Development of British Immigration Law*., pp.72,73

¹⁵⁸ Cmd.172 1919, *Aliens Draft of an Order in Council to Regulate the Admission of Aliens*., pp.299-308
House of Commons, *Expiring Laws Continuance 20th October 1920* (London: H.M.S.O.,1920) pp.643-649
Bevan, *The Development of British Immigration Law*., pp.72-75

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., House of Commons, *Aliens restriction 5th April 1914* (London: H.M.S.O. 1914), pp.,121-123

persecution of certain prominent Jews, who were hounded for being of German extraction.¹⁶⁰

In his investigation of this period, Harry Defries highlights the continual writing of anti-Jewish articles in the national press and, as he states, many of the young Jewish males did not wish to fight on behalf of the repressive Tsarist regime from which both they and their families had fled.¹⁶¹ In his analysis of the general view that the Jews fully supported the Bolshevik government, he emphasises the crucial role of the British press in reinforcing this belief, as it was reported that the Jews were in control of the new Russian government.¹⁶² These extreme ideas gave rise to a growing conviction that, since many of the immigrants had come from Russia, they strongly supported the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. Alyson Pendlebury examines this perception of Jewish support for the Bolsheviks and suggests that such a belief was strongly influenced by the general view Jewish immigrants were linked to the various Anarchist movements of the pre-war era and Jewish radicalism dominated the immigrant community.¹⁶³

The belief that, during the war, the Russian Jews had supported the Bolshevik Revolution, was to exert a strong influence on the early post-war governments. David Cesarani examines these views in his article on Sir William Joynson-Hicks, who, as the newly appointed Home Secretary in 1924, not only re-affirmed the immigration laws, but also ensured the entry of aliens was severely restricted and non-naturalised Jews were deported for various petty offences. He argues that, since the right-wing of the Tory party held considerable influence at the time, the views held by Joynson-Hicks were not extreme and in many ways, he was seen as a representative figure of popular opinion.¹⁶⁴

The law of 1914, which had been further restated in 1919 and amended in 1920, effectively handed complete control for granting entry to immigrants, to the Home Office. The stringent conditions which ensured that, without proof of guaranteed employment or visible financial means, entry into the country was severely restricted.¹⁶⁵ In a speech to the House of Commons in March 1933, shortly after the arrival of the first German Jewish refugees, Sir John Gilmour gave an assurance that the immigration acts were sufficient to control the increased arrival of immigrants and that the national interests of

¹⁶⁰ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939.*, pp.121-138

¹⁶¹ Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to the Jews 1900-1950.*, pp.68-69

¹⁶² Ibid., pp.70-72

¹⁶³ Pendlebury, *Portraying 'the Jew'*, pp.18-21

¹⁶⁴ David Cesarani, 'The Anti-Jewish Career of Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Cabinet minister', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 24 (1989), pp.470-474,476-477

¹⁶⁵ Ibid

the country would govern any decisions of the immigration authorities.¹⁶⁶ This response suggests that there was a fear in government circles that the public outcry, raised after the arrival of the Russian Jews could be repeated. Then, they had been blamed for the high unemployment and lack of housing; the arrival of the German Jewish refugees occurred at a time of economic recession and high unemployment.

It may further be argued that the domination of right- wing political groups, who held a predominantly anti-Semitic attitude towards the Jews, during and after the Great War, would continue to influence future governments and the general public as they were confronted by the growing problem of German and Austrian Jews in the Thirties. There was strong support from the right- wing element of the aristocracy for the government policy of appeasement.¹⁶⁷ Hitler was viewed by them as a bulwark against the threat of Communism and many of them were convinced that the Jews were linked to the Bolsheviks.¹⁶⁸ In his examination of the British upper classes, Richard Griffiths cites the support provided by *Truth*, a deeply anti-Semitic weekly magazine published by Sir Joseph Ball who supported Neville Chamberlain in his policy of appeasement, while R.B.Cockett considers that *Truth* reflected the real political beliefs of Chamberlain.¹⁶⁹

The establishment of Nazi rule in Germany in 1933 and Austria in March 1938, created a major refugee problem for Great Britain and America, as the Jews were forced into exile by the implementation of the harsh anti-Semitic laws promulgated by the Nazi regime. These included the professional Civil Service Law on April 7th which effectively removed the Jews from various professions including education and the Civil service and the de-naturalisation law in July 1933, which removed German nationality from all immigrants who had been naturalised after 1918.¹⁷⁰ In March 1933, the leaders of the Jewish Community agreed to organise a Jewish Refugee Committee under the chairmanship of Otto Schiff, the president of the Jew's Temporary Shelter.¹⁷¹ Schiff, who had a strong working relationship with the Home Office, was quickly informed by the immigration authorities of an increase in the number of German Jews arriving in

¹⁶⁶ HC Deb. *Aliens*, 9th March 1933, vol 275 cc1351-2

¹⁶⁷ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939*, p.34

¹⁶⁸ Ian Kershaw, *Making Friends with Hitler. Lord Londonderry and Britains Road to War* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), p.5

¹⁶⁹ Richard Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted. Captain Ramsey, The Right Club and British Anti-semitism 1939-1940* (London: Constable & Co., 1998), Pp.31,32,33; R.B. Cockett, 'Ball, Chamberlain and *Truth*', *The Historical Journal*, Vol.33, Issue 1, March 1990., pp.133;135-136;138

¹⁷⁰ Norman Bentwich, *The Refugees from Germany April 1933-December 1935* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1936), pp26-30; Kenneth Bourne & D.Cameron Watt (General Eds.), Jeremy Noake (Ed.) *British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Reports and papers From The Foreign Office Confidential Print Part 11 From the First to the Second World War. Series F Europe Vol.44* (America University Publications of America 1994), p.110

¹⁷¹ Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*., pp.7-12

Britain.¹⁷² At the same time, there was a growth of anti-refugee and anti-Semitic statements in both the Press and Parliament.¹⁷³ As a result of this, a meeting was held between the newly-formed committee and Neville Laski, the President of the Board of Jewish Deputies to consider the growing problem facing the community. An agreement was reached to discuss the situation with Sir Ernest Holderness at the Home Office. During the course of the meeting with him, the leaders of the community gave a financial pledge to the British Government that they would provide financial support for all Jewish refugees of German nationality entering the country.¹⁷⁴ The offer of a financial guarantee was based on the assumption made by Schiff that Hitler would not retain power and, therefore, approximately only 3,000-4,000 refugees would request entry into Britain, most of whom would ultimately re-emigrate to either Palestine or other countries¹⁷⁵

The aim of the pledge was to bypass the current immigration laws and allow all German Jews who were in Britain or wished for entry, to be granted permission to do so. Geoffrey Alderman argues that, by providing funding, the community would be able to monitor and control the suitability of the entrants, thus ensuring that they would meet the criteria to assimilate and so lessening the possibility of stimulating anti-Semitism.¹⁷⁶ The inherent communal fear that the arrival of a substantial number of foreign Jews could lead to a growth of anti-Semitism may be viewed as an echo of their reaction to the mass influx of Jews at the turn of the century, who appeared to be totally foreign in their behaviour and habits. This argument is supported by Louise London who notes that the immigration authorities were aware that the Anglo-Jewish leaders did not wish to encourage unrestricted Jewish immigration as had occurred at the turn of the century.¹⁷⁷ had The pledge was discussed by the Cabinet in early April and it was agreed that, although there should be no easing of the immigration laws, the financial pledge was to be accepted.¹⁷⁸ This agreement to accept Jewish financial aid, whilst maintaining the status quo of the prevailing legislation, demonstrated clearly the ambiguous approach that would become the hallmark of the government response to

¹⁷² Ibid.,pp.11-12

¹⁷³ Andrew Scharf, *The British Press and Jews under Nazi Rule* (London: Oxford University Press,1964),. Pp158-159;HC Deb, *Aliens*, Edward Doran, 9th March 1933, vol 276 cc1351-2

¹⁷⁴PRO/H0213/1627 *Anglo-Jewish Guarantee*, 6th April 1933;Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*.,pp,277

¹⁷⁵ Louise London, 'Refugee Agencies and Their Work,1933-39', *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, Vol.4 No., Summer 1995,p.10;Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*.,pp.10-14

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., pp.16-17;Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*.,pp.277-278

¹⁷⁷ London, *Whitehall And The Jews*.,pp.18-19

¹⁷⁸ PRO/CAB/24/239, Committee On Aliens Restrictions, 5th April 1933, pp.294-295;298;303

the growing refugee problem and as Louise London notes, the acceptance of the guarantee did not create any government obligation towards the refugees.¹⁷⁹

In further Cabinet discussions in April 1933, consideration was given to the expulsion, by the Nazis, of prominent German Jewish academics and it was agreed that Britain would benefit from their knowledge and expertise, 'whilst it would also create a very favourable impression in the world.'¹⁸⁰ It was, however, noted that it was important not to allow British workers to be rendered unemployed by the arrival of the refugees since the Cabinet 'were anxious to avoid the danger of creating an atmosphere in Europe critical to this country.'¹⁸¹ The decision to proffer an invitation to prominent Jewish academics, scientists and medical professionals, in order to enhance the reputation of Britain, was implemented on an unofficial level, with varying degrees of success. Within the academic world, the Academic Assistance Council, which was succeeded by the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning in 1936,¹⁸² was established by Sir William Beveridge with a remit to provide assistance in obtaining employment for foreign academics either in Britain or in America.¹⁸³ The funding was provided by Jewish charities and contributions, in the form of deductions from the salaries of British academics and universities.¹⁸⁴ Many of the universities responded favourably, although there was a degree of caution and in some instances refusal to provide assistance for Jewish academics, as in the response from Sheffield, which stated that their limited funds should provide assistance to students whose parents were unemployed rather than to Jewish refugees, since:

"There are many rich men of the Jewish religion whose individual incomes are larger than the whole income of the University, it would be appropriate that they are to be asked to support the teachers in the first instance."¹⁸⁵

In contrast to the attitude of Beveridge and the Academic Council there was a strong element of fear among various professional bodies that the arrival of the refugees presented a tangible threat to their job security and as Herbert Strauss states:

¹⁷⁹ London. *Whitehall And The Jews*, p.30

¹⁸⁰ PRO.CAB/23/75, Cabinet 27 (33) *Conclusions of Cabinet meeting*. April 12th 1933, p.16

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² David Zimmerman, 'The Society For The Protection Of Science And Learning And For The Politicization Of British Science in the 1930s', *Minerva* March 2006, Vol.44 Iss.1, pp.29-30;39

¹⁸³ Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, p.18; 'Academic Assistance', *The Times*, May 24th 1933, p.17 issue 47008

¹⁸⁴ David Zimmerman, 'The Society For The Protection Of Science And Learning And For The Politicization Of British Science in the 1930s', *Minerva* March 2006, Vol.44 Iss.1, pp.29-30;39; 'The Scholar in Exile', *The Times*, March 9th 1935, p.13 issue 47008

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.33-34

“In the 1930s, economic factors and fears of émigré competition on labour markets, as well as xenophobic and anti-Semitic currents re-enforced such perceptions.”¹⁸⁶

These bodies included the Association of University Teachers, The Association of Scientific Workers,¹⁸⁷ The General Medical Council (for the registration of dentists),¹⁸⁸ The Royal College of Physicians and The British Medical Council in their opposition to the entry of Austrian doctors in 1938.¹⁸⁹ They were all supported by the Press who stated:

“There is a big influx of foreign Jews into Britain. They are over-running the country. They are trying to enter the medical profession in great numbers.”
Sunday Express 19 June 1938.

“Most of the alien doctors and dentists are Jews who are fleeing from Germany and Austria. And the methods these Aliens are bringing into England are not always in accordance with the professional etiquette of this country.”
Everybody's 17 September 1938.¹⁹⁰

In March 1938 after the *Anschluss*, the Jewish Refugee Committee informed the Home Office that it could not include the Austrian Jews in this financial agreement.¹⁹¹ This decision resulted in the government, with the full agreement of Otto Schiff and the Jewish community, implementing a visa system in April 1938, in order to control the entry of potential refugees into the country. Schiff maintained that the majority of the Austrian Jews were shopkeepers and small traders, which presented problems of possible re-emigration, in contrast to the German Jews who were mainly of the professional or academic classes.¹⁹² The new visa system limited entry to distinguished professionals of international repute, industrialists in possession of transferable business assets and students, providing they met the stringent entry requirements.¹⁹³

The reaction of the public towards the massive inflow of Jewish refugees at the turn of the century may also be seen in the response of both the Anglo-Jewish leaders and the government, as the Jewish refugees fled from Nazi Germany and Austria after

¹⁸⁶ Paul K Hoch, 'No Utopia Refugee Scholars in Britain,' *History Today*, November 1985 Vol.35, p.55

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.,p.55

¹⁸⁸ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*,pp.51-52

¹⁸⁹ Sherman, *Island Refuge*,pp.48;123-124

¹⁹⁰ Austin Stevens, *The Dispossessed German refugees in Britain* (Great Britain: Barrie & Jenkins,1975),pp.127-129

¹⁹¹ Sherman, *Island Refuge*,pp.86-87; London, *Whitehall And The Jews*, p.60

¹⁹² Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*,pp.278-279

¹⁹³ HC. Deb *Austrian Refugees*, 22nd March,1938 vol 333 cc990-6, p.12

the *Anschluss* in March 1938. The imposition of the limited criteria for entry ensured that there would not be a massive influx of refugees as there had been at the start of the century, which allegedly, had been a major cause of the high unemployment experienced by certain sections of the population at that time.

Methodology and sources

In order to answer the questions raised in the introduction, a wide range of primary resources will be examined and analysed. They will provide the individual case studies relating to the government strategy discussed and refined prior to the Evian Conference and how it was implemented; the political implications of the two government schemes proposed for the rescue of the Jewish children in Vichy France and Bulgaria; the government diplomacy relating to the organisation of the Bermuda Conference and its agenda; the actions and the aims of the campaigners prior to the conference; the discussions and agreement reached at the conference and its success or failure in the eyes of the government and the campaigners. Most of the relevant documentation is in special collections held by various universities and museums or in national archives of the relevant country, some of which may be accessed online i.e: (Acts of Parliament, the Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic papers, British Parliamentary debates in Hansard). Many other archives are only accessible through personal contact, since much of the material has not been digitised.

The main repositories for the relevant documentation used in this thesis may be found in the National Archives at Kew for the Foreign, Colonial and Home Office Archives, the Parkes Institute at Southampton University which holds the papers of both Rabbi Schonfeld and the Chief Rabbi Dr.Hertz, Liverpool University for the Eleanor Rathbone Archive, Warwick University for the Victor Gollancz Archive, Lambeth Palace Library for the papers of William Temple, The Wiener Library for its extensive collection of Holocaust related documents, London Metropolitan Archives for The Jewish Board of Deputies, The British Library for the documentation appertaining to the Evian Conference together with access to the relevant newspapers which are not all available online. Other sources include the Council for German Jewry, the World Jewish Congress, the Council of Christians and Jews, the Imperial War Museum, Yad Vashem for specific speeches, national and international newspapers including the Jewish Telegraph Agency Archives, various magazines, electronic resources, autobiographies, individual political publications and pamphlets, as well as a variety of secondary sources including books and articles.

The challenge of basing the main body of research on primary resources is twofold: firstly, some of the sources may have been destroyed or censored and secondly, due to their age, they may, in some instances, be almost illegible due to the condition of the paper (as a result, in part, of war-time rationing) and in some cases the methods of duplicating employed. A further aspect to be considered is that the documents will mainly present a biased viewpoint. When examining the government archives of the period, it is possible to trace a certain lack of sympathy and non-comprehension of the problems experienced by the Jewish refugees as reflected in the variety of comments added to the original proposals by individual civil servants. In some instances, the level of anti-Semitism displayed is somewhat virulent. In the modern context, these comments would be classified as both racist and politically incorrect, but they have to be considered within the bounds of acceptability in the context of the time. A further problem with the government archives is the culling of documentation from the records with no indication as to the reason for their removal and this may present a barrier to following through comments made by the officials concerned.

The problem of removal or destruction of documents and letters is also apparent in private archives such as the Eleanor Rathbone Archive, which was heavily censored by her executors before depositing them with Liverpool University. A further problem may be the haphazard filing system used by the individual concerned and this is clearly apparent in the Archives of Rabbi Schonfeld which do not appear to have followed any one system of filing. One may also face the other problem of an overwhelming amount of documentation which, in some cases, is sheer duplication of the same information in a variety of archives. In employing a wide range of primary documents, the ultimate aim is to obtain a broad access to the differing views of the relevant groups involved with the European Jews between June 1942 and May 1943.

The thesis will be divided into four chronological chapters: March 1938 – June 1942, July 1942 – December 1942, January 1943 - March 1943, April 1943 - June 1943 in order to consider the responses of the government and the various bodies involved towards the European Jews facing destruction in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Chapter structure

The aim of Chapter One is to provide the contextual background of the period in order to survey the period from the Evian Conference in July 1938 upto the first public acknowledgement of the Nazi policies of Jewish extermination. The main consideration is to understand why the government sought, through various means, to either underplay,, or evade any discussion of Jewish suffering. In order to reach any

conclusions, the chapter will analyse the government strategy employed at Evian and its aftermath. It will analyse the causes of the anti-Semitic attitudes displayed by the Colonial Office and the Colonial Governors regarding the possibility of Jewish settlement in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia. It will consider how government policy towards the refugees changed with the declaration of war and it will examine how far anti-Semitism increased during this period. After the internment and release of the refugees there was little movement or reaction in respect of the Jews of Europe, until the first reports of Nazi policies became public in the latter half of 1942. A detailed analysis of these points will illustrate how the government policy towards the refugees evolved, as the European situation changed from a peacetime to a wartime scenario.

Chapter Two examines the period between June and December 1942 by focusing on the reaction of both individuals and organisations as news of the genocidal policies being implemented by the Nazis towards the European Jews under their control, started to be published in the national press. The aim of this chapter is to examine how the government was able to maintain its censorship and control of the news, thus, initially, limiting publication of the Nazi policies towards the Jews under their control. It will consider the widely held view that there was a major difference of behaviour between the German nation and the Nazi regime, thereby giving rise to the Good German versus the Bad German. It will analyse the initial reactions of the government, the consolidation of various campaigners and organisations, the initial rescue schemes proposed, with a detailed examination of the government proposition to offer refuge to a limited number of French Jewish children in Vichy France and finally the official confrontation and acceptance of the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination in early December 1942, which resulted in the announcement by the government of the UN Declaration on December 17th 1942.

Between January and March 1943, the government was confronted by a growing demand from the public, the Churches and the various campaigning organisations to provide assistance to the beleaguered European Jews. This resulted in a series of diplomatic approaches to America to agree to informal talks, in order to provide a façade of working towards a programme offering assistance to the European Jews. The aim of Chapter Three is to illustrate how the government responded to the various campaigners. It will examine and consider the reasons for the creation of a government-supported rescue scheme to remove 4,500 Bulgarian Jewish children to safety in the Palestine Mandate. It will examine how diplomacy was employed to reach an agreement with America in order to hold a conference which would demonstrate to the public that

serious consideration was being given to the plight of the refugees and finally it will consider the continuing demands of the campaigners during this period.

The Bermuda Conference bears a striking resemblance to the Evian Conference held in July 1938. The brief of the latter was to consider the possibility of assisting the German and Austrian Jews to leave The Third Reich; at Bermuda, it was to consider the entire refugee problem evolving in Europe. May Bermuda be viewed in the same context as Evian, as a substantial volume of discussion but little solid achievement? The final chapter will consider the government objectives and how far they were successfully achieved. It will examine the proceedings of conference and consider if its outcome mirrored the results of Evian. Finally, it will focus on the Parliamentary debate held after the conference and subsequent reactions.

The conclusion will bring together the different aspects of the arguments that have been discussed in the thesis: the persistent belief in government that a further influx of Jewish refugees would stimulate the growth of anti-Semitism; the refusal to acknowledge the plight of the European Jews under Nazi occupation; the similarity between the ethos of both the Evian Conference in 1938 and the Bermuda Conference in 1943; the efforts of the campaigners to place sufficient pressure on the government to offer assistance to the refugees. These points will be analysed in order to substantiate the theory that the modern historians – Sherman, London, Wasserstein, Kushner and Cesarani have tended to focus on the events of the government policies towards the refugees during the Thirties and the Forties. This approach has given little consideration to the government use of anti-Semitism as a political tool in its response to the acknowledgement of the Holocaust between 1942 and 1943.

Chapter One. The British Government and the plight of European Jews from the Austrian Anschluss. March 1938 to June 1942

In order to consider how the decisions reached by the various government departments involved in the planning of the British response after the Anschluss were influenced by the possibility of granting admission to a substantial number of Jewish refugees into Britain, the Colonies and the Dominions, this chapter will analyse the documentation relating to both the Evian Conference and the correspondence from the Colonial Governors of Kenya and Northern Rhodesia when the Colonial Office proposed settling Jewish refugees in their areas. Louise London argues that regardless of the subsequent rhetoric at the conference, there was to be no deviation from the admissions policy applied to all refugees.¹ In contrast to this, Sherman points out that the Foreign Office was well aware of the potential problem arising from the possibility of mass migration from Eastern Europe and this awareness created a strong influence on government thinking.² The chapter will examine the reasons for the failure to organise any substantial settlement in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, taking into account the opposition from the settlers and the limited financial resources available to the Anglo-Jewish leadership. It will discuss the reasons for the limited easing of the immigration laws after *Kristallnacht* and analyse the attitude towards the European Jews after war was declared in September 1939. In their accounts of the period, both Sherman and London tend to focus their analysis on the events, with no reference to the possibility that the majority of the government responses may be viewed as displaying an anti-Semitic influence which was visible at both the turn of the **century** with the general reaction to the influx of Eastern European Jews and during World War One. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the feasibility of this argument.

Government strategy and the Evian Conference July 1938

In his opening speech to the Evian Conference, in July 1938, Lord Winterton, the British spokesman, made a series of statements which clearly demonstrated the attitude of the British Government towards the growing refugee problem and it may be argued this stance never wavered even when it was confronted with the confirmation of the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination in 1942. The contents of the speech had been discussed and refined during a series of interdepartmental meetings in June; they effectively

¹ London, *Whitehall And The Jews, 1933-1948*

² Sherman., p.102

ensured that the British delegation was able to present a façade of humanitarianism to the world whilst adhering to the traditional stance of the government which imposed limited entry to Jewish immigrants. This approach was consolidated in a series of meetings between the British and American delegates, prior to the conference, when its basic aims were agreed and resolved by both sides. In their detailed histories of the conference, both A.J. Sherman and Louise London concentrate on different aspects.³ Sherman, whilst briefly discussing the pre- conference discussions, concentrates on the actual conference.⁴ London analyses in great detail the government inter-departmental discussions held prior to it.⁵ Neither of them discuss in depth the machinations of the British delegation, during their pre-conference meetings with the leader of the American delegation, as they worked to limit the possible remit of the American proposals in order to maintain the status quo for potential refugees in Europe.

Lord Winterton advised the conference delegates that it had always been the traditional policy of successive governments to offer asylum to people fleeing from political, religious or racial persecution but he emphasised that Britain did not view itself as a country of immigration. He supported this statement with the following remarks:

“It is highly industrialised, fully populated and is still faced with the problem of unemployment. For economic and social reasons the traditional policy of granting asylum can only be applied within narrow limits.”⁶

He reviewed the actions taken to date by the government since 1933. These had included granting entry to refugees who had been funded by the Anglo-Jewish community,⁷ together with a number of academics. The latter group had been assisted by the Academic Assistance Council which had been founded by Sir William Beveridge in 1933 and renamed the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning in 1936.⁸ He indicated that, in the aftermath of the *Anschluss*, refugees following an educational or training course who would eventually re-emigrate, potential immigrants who were judged to possess useful skills and refugees able to establish a viable business, would be considered as potentially suitable immigrants.⁹ He informed the delegates that the

³ London, *Whitehall And The Jews 1933-1948*; A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge*

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.113-121

⁵ London, *Whitehall And The Jews 1933-1948.*, pp.,70-71;-87-88;-90;-91;-94

⁶ Wiener Library, ‘Speech by Lord Winterton’ *Evian Conference records 1938*, 503MF DOC54/Reel 3., Pp.1,2

⁷ PRO/H0213/1627, *Anglo-Jewish Guarantee*, 6th April 1933

⁸ ‘Academic Assistance’, *The Times*, May 24th, 1933 P.17 Issue 46542; *Ibid.*, ‘The Scholar in Exile’, March 9th, 1935 P.13 Issue 47008; Daniel Snowman, *The Hitler Emigres. The Cultural Impact on Britain of refugees from Nazism* (London: Pimlico, 2003) pp.101-104

⁹ Wiener Library, ‘Speech by Lord Winterton’ *Evian Conference records 1938*, 503MF DOC54/Reel 3., P.3

possibility of small-scale settlement in certain East African Colonies and overseas territories was currently being examined, but he stressed that many of the areas under consideration were either unsuitable for European settlement due to climatic conditions and possible overcrowding, or in some Colonial areas, local political conditions hindered immigration. He emphasised that any proposed settlement schemes would be based on strict selection.¹⁰

The remainder of his speech was devoted to different aspects of the current European crisis. He insisted that if certain countries, thus obliquely alluding to Poland, Romania and Hungary, wished to encourage large-scale emigration, they should be prepared to allow the emigrants to retain a proportion of their assets in order to assist them in settling elsewhere. He emphasised that, although the purpose of the conference was to specifically examine the problems facing the German and Austrian refugees, it was important for other countries with large minority groups – ‘the Jews’- to realise that due to the prevailing economic situation throughout the world, they should not contemplate resolving their problems by instigating forced migration.¹¹ These oblique remarks were directed specifically towards conference observers sent by Poland and Romania in order to encourage them to reconsider any plans they might have for resolving their ‘Jewish problems.’ He concluded by restating the achievements of the League of Nations, whilst accepting that the proposed creation of a new international organisation could be viewed as providing a further public body to provide further assistance in resolving the refugee crisis, thus demonstrating the humanitarian policy of the government internationally.¹²

The Evian Conference was the outcome of the American response to the Austrian *Anschluss* in March 1938. Immediately after the *Anschluss*, Cordell Hull, the American Secretary of State, contacted Joseph Kennedy, the American Ambassador to London, instructing him to approach the Foreign Secretary in order to discuss the possible participation of Britain in the formation of a new committee (the Intergovernmental Committee) to ease the massive displacement of refugees emanating from Germany and Austria. Cordell Hull’s instructions emphasised certain pre-conditions which included the proviso that all funding for emigration would be provided by private bodies and no country participating in the proposed scheme would be expected to amend its existing immigration legislation. The instruction stated that the proposal was not to be viewed as denigrating the work already being undertaken by other agencies in

¹⁰ Ibid.P.4

¹¹ Ibid.,p.6

¹² Ibid., p6

their endeavours to assist the refugees. It ended by informing Kennedy that similar proposals were being sent to the governments of Western Europe and South America.¹³ The issuing of this invitation was followed next day by President Roosevelt announcing publicly that he had proffered an invitation to 32 countries to participate in a conference to discuss the establishment of a special committee to examine and attempt to resolve the growing refugee problem in Europe.¹⁴

In their response, the Foreign Office raised various points for consideration and clarification. Included in these points was a clear definition of 'political refugee' citing the League of Nations definition, which had been signed by the British in February 1938 at Geneva. This stated that:

- "1) For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "refugee coming from Germany" shall be deemed to apply to:
 - a) Persons possessing or having possessed German nationality and not possessing any other nationality. Who are proved not to enjoy, in law or in fact, the protection of the German Government;
 - b) Stateless persons not covered by previous Conventions or Agreements who have left German territory after being established therein and who are proved not to enjoy, in law or in fact the protection of the German Government.
- 2) Persons who leave Germany for reasons of purely personal convenience are not included in this definition."¹⁵

The observation was made that it would be extremely difficult to differentiate between German and Austrian nationals wishing to emigrate and it was suggested that the proposed committee would have to accept responsibility for both countries. The Foreign Office strongly emphasised the work of the High Commissioner for Refugees from Germany under the aegis of the League of Nations and stated that, as a member of the League of Nations, Great Britain would not wish to weaken his position. It was suggested that in order to overcome this problem, it would be necessary to ensure that there was a strong link of co-operation created between the new committee and the High Commissioner, thus ensuring that there was no duplication of roles. The response concluded that, subject to the points raised being acceptable, the government would be

¹³ FRUS., *Hull to Kennedy*, March 23, 1938 Vol.1, pp.740-741; Daily Mail, 'Plea For Refugees', March 25th 1938, p.4 Issue13078

¹⁴ Public papers of the President 1938; Book 1: *Franklin D. Roosevelt* available at <http://www.presidency.uscb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=15614&st.accessed> 30 September 2015 p.1 Daily Mail, 'Offer To Refugees' MARCH 26 1938, p.9 Issue13079; 'United States Willing to Admit Refugees,' *The Manchester Guardian*, March 26, 1938, p.13

¹⁵ League of Nations, *Convention concerning the Status of Refugees coming from Germany, with Annex. Signed at Geneva*, February 10th, 1938., pp.63,77

pleased to accept the invitation.¹⁶ In the phrasing of this guarded diplomatic response, the government, whilst reiterating its intention to maintain its stringent immigration laws, indicated its acquiescence to co-operate with America. In their assessments, London, Sherman and Joshua Stein argue that this stance was taken in order to capitalise on the belief that America was starting to move away from its isolationist policy.¹⁷

At the beginning of June 1938, the Foreign Office submitted a series of questions via the American Ambassador, requesting details of the pending conference. These included information relating to the proposed organization and procedures to be followed at the conference; the extent of the work and the eventual solution of the refugee problem envisaged; clarification as to whether the United States considered that the outcome of the conference would be viewed as a resolution, a declaration or a series of recommendations to the participating governments and finally, the names of the delegates attending from other countries.¹⁸ In his response, Cordell Hull stated that the proposed agenda would be issued in the near future; he listed the participants and requested a reply from the Dominions.¹⁹

In early June, an inter-departmental meeting was convened to discuss the structure and content of the British delegation's response at the forthcoming Evian Conference on July 6.th The responses from the various departments clearly indicated their determination to limit the entry of Jewish refugees. The Home Office maintained that, within the constraints of the immigration laws, Britain had been extremely generous but it was not possible to grant unlimited entry. It cited the problems of limited employment and the attitude of the Trade Unions towards the employment of the refugees in the artisan trades. It admitted that due to these reasons, the number granted entry was small but it was prepared to broaden the entry requirements to encompass refugees prepared to start businesses, young people for education or training purposes, artisans to be limited to 2,000-3,000 on an annual basis, professional people and academics. The committee agreed that these suggestions represented a reasonable contribution to the growing refugee problem, but as Louise London points out, effectively there was no change in the stance of the Home Office in the implementation of its

¹⁶ Kenneth Bourne & D. Cameron Watt (General Eds.) Jeremy Noakes (Ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs. Reports and Papers from The Foreign Office Confidential Print. Part II from the First to the Second World War. Series F Europe Vol.49* (America; University Publications of America, 1994), pp.104-105

¹⁷ PRO T160/842/F13577/01/01 *Interdepartmental meeting*, 28th March 1938

London, *Whitehall And The Jews 1933-1948.*, p.86; Sherman, *Island Refuge*. p.96; Joshua Stein. 'Great Britain and the Evian Conference of 1938', *Wiener Library Bulletin*, No.29,1976, P.41

¹⁸ FRUS, *Kennedy to the Secretary of State*, June 1,1938 Vol.1 pp.745-746

¹⁹ FRUS, *Hull to Kennedy*, June 2,1938, Vol.1 p.746

admissions policy.²⁰ The emphasis on limited employment and the attitude of the Trade Unions may be attributed to a determination to avoid the accusations raised at the beginning of the century by anti-immigrant organisations, that Eastern European Jews were stealing employment from the indigenous population. This accusation had been proved to be untrue in a major report on the sweating system in 1890,²¹ but it was actively employed by the anti-Alien movement in their campaign which resulted in the establishment of the 1905 Aliens Act.²²

The Colonial Office informed the meeting that they had been in contact with all the Colonial Governors to ascertain their reaction to granting entry to individual Jewish refugees. They stated that in almost all the replies, they had received a negative response, although there were some limited opportunities for a small number of doctors and dentists provided their qualifications were registered in the United Kingdom. They informed the meeting that they were exploring the possibility of settlement in Northern Rhodesia and the Tanganyika Territory but they did not view the Colonies as being in any position to sustain large-scale immigration.²³ Mr. Wiseman, from The Dominions Office, stated that, since Britain did not make any financial contribution towards emigration to the Dominions, it would not be possible to offer this facility to German Jews who would require financial assistance, this could be construed as breaking the conditions governing emigration to the Dominions. He did, however, state that the invitation to participate at Evian had been forwarded to the Dominions, but he informed the meeting that he did not believe the German Jews would be accepted in these countries.²⁴

The Treasury spokesman, Mr. Playfair, stated categorically that no consideration could be given to offering any financial assistance to the refugees since this could create a new precedent with unknown consequences. It was also felt that any offer of financial assistance would encourage other governments to exert pressure on their minorities to emigrate, thus creating further problems of settlement to be resolved. In response to other suggestions such as the provision of subsidy to shipping lines to help with transport costs, he indicated that this would have to be considered by Parliament.

²⁰ London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948*, pp.70,71

²¹ N.N. Feltes, 'Misery or the production of misery: defined sweated labour in 1890', *Social History*, Vol.3, No.3, October 1992, pp.445,446,450; House of Lords, *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Sweating System: Together with an Appendix and Proceedings of the Committee, 12th May 1890*, (London: Henry Hansard & Son, 1890), p.31

²² CO 323/1601/1 /W2127/104, *Sir E. Holderness Interdepartmental Meeting held at the Foreign Office*, 8th June, 1938 Gainer, *The Alien Invasion*, pp.15-44

²³ CO 323/1601/1 /W2127/104, *Mr. Bigg Interdepartmental Meeting held at the Foreign Office*, 8th June, 1938

²⁴ *Ibid*, Mr. Wiseman

He maintained currently, the Treasury did not consider that the circumstances relating to the refugees, warranted any alteration in their policy. He concluded by stating the Treasury had no objection to the possibility of requesting the German Government to permit the refugees to withdraw a larger proportion of their assets in order to facilitate their resettlement.²⁵ The chairman of the meeting raised the possibility of a majority decision being reached by the delegates at the conference to consider providing financial assistance to refugees. Mr Playfair indicated that this would not be viewed favourably by the Treasury since it would be in complete contradiction of current government policy. Mr. Makins, from the Foreign Office, pointed out that an agreed pre-condition of the conference was that all finance for the refugees must be provided by private organisations.²⁶

The meeting considered the implications for the government if a new committee were created. The Home Office considered that its proposed remit could be viewed as a duplication of the League of Nations. It was agreed that, if such a committee were established, the British delegation should endeavour to ensure that it was as innocuous as possible with a limited constitution and it should be viewed as an organisation to assist the High Commissioner for Refugees.

Finally, on June 14,th the American Administration issued an agenda for the conference which basically reiterated the contents of the original invitation issued by Roosevelt in March, but it stated that at the opening session, an invitation would be given to Sir Neill Malcolm, the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany, to attend all the sessions.²⁷

As a result of this response, a further meeting was held to finalise the instructions which would be given to the British delegation. Various points were raised by the representatives from the government offices involved which included emphasis being placed on the deterrence of offering any encouragement to other countries wishing to dispose of their Jewish communities; the limited number of professional people who could be considered for admittance into the country by the Home Office; the insistence of the Dominions Office that any financial assistance to the refugees would be resented; the determination of both the Treasury and Lord Winterton to maintain the current government policy of insisting that all financial aid for the refugees must be

²⁵ Ibid. Mr. Playfair

²⁶ Ibid. Mr. Makins

²⁷ FRUS, *Hull to Kennedy*, June 14th 1938, Vol.1 pp.748,749

provided by the private organisations; the agreement that any representation to the German Government should be made by the American Government.

Finally, Lord Winterton advised the meeting that Lord Samuel of the Council for German Jewry had requested his advice as to who should represent the Anglo-Jewish community at Evian. A major fear of the community was that their attendance would be viewed by the Germans as further proof that it was being organised by “International Jewry” and this would have given credence to the accusations made by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* and Henry Ford in *The International Jew*,²⁸ that International Jewry controlled the world both politically and financially. In his analysis of the period, John Fox argues that one of the causes of anti-Semitism could be attributed to the publication of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* which had stated that the Jews were intent on dominating the world through finance and politics.²⁹ It may be argued that the questions raised with Lord Winterton, as to how attendance by representatives of the Jewish community could be misconstrued, reflected the determination of the Anglo-Jewish leaders to ensure that no accusations of Jewish influence or control could be levelled against them at the forthcoming conference. The Council also requested advice as to whom they should forward any memoranda appertaining to the possible alleviation of the Jewish Refugee problems and whether it was practical for the Council to make any statement to the Press. The meeting agreed that Lord Winterton should advise the Council to send comparatively subordinate representatives to the conference and forward any written communication to the relevant delegates at Evian.³⁰

In the final instructions issued to the British delegation, great emphasis was placed on certain key points which included the admission that, although the conference was to discuss the problems of the German and Austrian Jews, it was known that anti-Semitic measures were being implemented in Poland, Romania and Hungary with a strong possibility that this was also the case in Czechoslovakia. It was common

²⁸ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* Translated by Ralph Manheim (London: Pimlico, 2004), pp.294; James and Suzanne Pool, *Who Financed Hitler The Secret Funding of Hitler's Rise to Power 1919-1939* (London: Macdonald & James, 1979), pp.87,91-109; Henry Ford, *The International Jew* available at [www.https://archive.org/details/TheInternationalJewTheWorldsForemostProblemhenryFord1920s](https://archive.org/details/TheInternationalJewTheWorldsForemostProblemhenryFord1920s) accessed

19 January 2017

²⁹ John P Fox, 'British Attitudes to Jewish Refugees from Central and Eastern Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century' in Werner Mosse (Co-ordinating editor) Julius Carlebach, Gerhard Hirschfeld, Aubrey M. Newman, Arnold Paucker, Peter Pulzer, (Eds.) *Second Chance. Two Centuries of German speaking Jews in the United Kingdom* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1991), p.476

²⁹ CO323/1601/1.Draft Record of Interdepartmental Meeting Circulated For Approval or Amendment, June 30th, 1938 pp.1-8

³⁰ Ibid.

dispersal of their Jewish communities to other countries. The British delegation was to ensure that no hint of encouragement should be given to the observers from these countries at the conference in their pursuit of aid to resolve their problems. In his assessment of this reaction, Michael Marrus analyses the problems facing Eastern European Jews who were subject to the threat of expulsion in Poland, Hungary and Romania and the fear this created in government circles as they contemplated a massive influx of impoverished refugees.³¹ It was to be restated by the delegation, that due to the high level of unemployment in Britain, entry to persons seeking work would be severely restricted. The delegation was to maintain close contact with the private organisations who would be attending the conference.³² There was an underlying fear that the governments of the Eastern European countries were considering following the example of the Nazi attitude towards their Jewish minorities, by implementing forced migration. The government did not welcome the prospect of large numbers of Eastern European Jews entering the country since the previous influx had created major problems in employment, housing and assimilation into British society..

In a separate section of the instructions, the position of the Colonies was reviewed in detail with great stress placed on the requirement to avoid discussing the possibility of immigration into Palestine, since, in the eyes of the Colonial Office, this was not an acceptable solution to the refugee problem. A series of reasons were cited which hinged on the fact that Palestine was a Mandate with a limited right of entry dependant on the prevailing circumstances of the time. It was stated that there were special problems and conditions which were under continual review and due to these considerations, it precluded any discussion of possible settlement at the forthcoming conference. In his analysis of the period, Wasserstein argues the refusal of the Arabs to consider any form of partition together with their continued revolt against the British authorities, presented a major problem, since maintaining the equilibrium of Palestine was viewed to be a prominent element of British strategy as the situation in Europe deteriorated. ³³ The report stated that there were no restrictions to refugees entering the Colonial Dependencies from Europe whether they were Jewish or not, provided they complied with all the immigration regulations. It was, however, pointed out that any

³¹ Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.141-145

³² CO323/1605/3, *Memorandum of instructions for the United Kingdom Delegation to the meeting of an inter-governmental conference at Evian on July 6th to discuss the question of emigration from Germany and Austria.*, pp.1-4

³³Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews.*, pp.15-16

potential immigrant must demonstrate definite means of support or employment before being granted entry and provide a deposit or security to ensure against possible destitution.³⁴ It was noted that the majority of the German and Austrian Jews were engaged in business and industry and there were few opportunities in the Colonies for these people. There was the possibility of some limited agricultural settlement in East Africa which was being considered by the Governors of Kenya and Northern Rhodesia but that would have to be funded by the private Jewish organisations. In his analysis of the attitude taken by the Colonial Office, A.J.Sherman argues that the main concern was to ensure that no false hopes would be raised as to the possibility of allowing large-scale Jewish emigration into the Colonies, particularly Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, which might cause embarrassment to the Colonial Governors.³⁵ In the memorandum produced by the Colonial Office, it was made clear that there was little possibility of offering any positive aid to the Jewish refugees since, in the eyes of many Colonials, they were viewed as outsiders who did not conform to the accepted mores of the time.

In a resume of a meeting on 2nd July, prior to the conference, attended by James MacDonald, the Vice Chairman of the United States refugee committee and various other dignitaries, R. Makins of the Foreign Office made the following comments. The ideas of Roosevelt were intuitive and had not been given detailed consideration. He had suggested broadening the scope of the conference to include all Central European refugees and some of his advisors suggested an immense settlement scheme organised on a semi-commercial basis. The meeting attendees showed little enthusiasm for these ideas and stressed the immense financial costs that would be incurred. The position in the British Colonies was clarified by Sir.C. Parkinson, whilst the Jewish representatives involved stated that the French Colonies were unsuitable. McDonald ruled out exerting pressure on South America but suggested that American influence supported by the British Government could be a possible method of approach. He confirmed that the American Administration would not propose governments be liable to provide financial assistance for the refugees. It was agreed that a collective approach should be made to Germany to allow the refugees to retain a portion of their wealth, to facilitate their settlement in other countries. It was further suggested that since relations between Britain and Germany were better than those between Germany and America, it should be the British Government who would approach the German Government. In a brief discussion as to the viability of any future organization, little was made clear. The

³⁴ CO323/1605/3, *Memorandum of instructions for the United Kingdom Delegation to the meeting of an inter-governmental conference at Evian on July 6th to discuss the question of emigration from Germany and Austria.*, Section B

³⁵Sherman, *Island Refuge.*,pp.109-110

Americans thought that all the private organizations should address the conference but the Jewish representatives at the meeting did not agree since they wished to avoid too much publicity. McDonald admitted that he did not know what concrete results were envisaged as a result of the conference, but he indicated that if 27,000 refugees were allowed to enter the British Empire, he thought that the rigid administration of the American quota system would be eased. In his conclusion, Makins made the following remarks:

“I derive the strong impression that the United States were much embarrassed by the difficulty in which their initiative has placed them and were looking to the British Empire as the likeliest scapegoat. Mr. McDonald was essential negative, and the outcome of the discussion was that on the basis proposed for the meeting little progress could be expected,”³⁶

thus clearly demonstrating that the general government view of the American proposals was that they were ill-conceived and in British eyes, a waste of time.

In contrast to this report from Makins, Myron Taylor, the Chairman of the Evian Conference, sent the following account to Cordell Hull after the conference, detailing the discussions held prior to it with delegates from the British Government. The British had proposed that Sir Michael Palairet should make a private visit to Paris to discuss the forthcoming conference, thus avoiding any publicity in the press. He continued by informing Washington that the British had already discussed the general situation with the French. As a consequence of this action, they had been provided with a copy of the original English text of the opening speech to be forwarded to Lord Winterton for his consideration. In a discussion with Palairet on 31st June, it was made quite clear that firstly, the British intended to devalue the importance of the proposed committee, whilst emphasising the importance of the League of Nations' work with the refugees and secondly, they were adamant that the scope of the new committee should be severely limited. As a result of this, a copy of the draft conference resolution was passed over for consideration in London.³⁷

In a further meeting with Lord Winterton and Palairet on 5th July, it was noted that the British strongly supported the work of the League and felt a new organisation would detract from the respect given to Sir Neill Malcolm and his organisation. They

³⁶ CO323/1605/3, *Evian*, R.M. Makins, 2nd July, 1938, pp.1-3

³⁷ John Mendelsohn (ed.), Donald S. Detwiler (Advisory Ed.) Myron Taylor to The Secretary of State Washington, July 20 1938 *The Holocaust Selected Documents in Eighteen Volumes. Vol.5 Jewish Emigration from 1933 to the Evian Conference of 1938*, (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1982), p3

suggested the obvious resolution to this situation was to ensure that the new Intergovernmental Committee should act in an advisory capacity to the League. However, they were informed this was not acceptable and it was decided that the appointment of an informal committee to consider the final resolution for the conference was advisable.³⁸ In a further move by the British to promote their conception of the new organisation as an advisory committee to the League, a dinner was hosted by Lord Winterton to discuss this concept and stress the importance of the work done by Sir Neill Malcolm. This approach changed immediately upon being informed that the new committee was envisaged as having a British chairman. This resulted in Lord Winterton communicating with the Prime Minister, thus bringing about a modification of the British approach and Lord Winterton accepting the position of Chairman on the new committee.³⁹ It may be argued that although the British representatives gave the impression of accepting the wishes of the American administration, they did, in effect, achieve their goal of being in a position to exercise their influence over the newly constituted committee, thus ensuring that all future decisions made would benefit British policy towards the refugees.

In both his opening and closing speeches, Lord Winterton, as instructed by London, adhered to the guidelines agreed at the various government meetings prior to the conference. In retrospect, his closing speech, which welcomed the inauguration of the Intergovernmental Committee to be based in London, reflected the influence of the pre-conference meetings.⁴⁰ His reference to the situation in Palestine and the insistence that unlimited Jewish migration was not feasible due to the current political situation, was justified by the emphasis on the responsibility of the British Government to resolve the current problems with the indigenous population in the Mandate.⁴¹ He was, however, able to deflect any criticism of this stance by reaffirming the possibility of small-scale settlement in Kenya by Jewish refugees, subject to private funding, together with the announcement that further options in East Africa were under active consideration.⁴²

In his report to the Cabinet, Lord Winterton made the following observations: the desire of the American Government to broaden the conference agenda to encompass potential refugees coming from other countries apart from Germany and Austria, had

³⁸ Ibid. pp., 6-7

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 8-9

⁴⁰ Wiener Library, *Lord Winterton (United Kingdom) Closing Speech, 'Evian Conference records 1938'* 503MF DOC54/Reel 3., p.1

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 1-3

⁴² Ibid., pp., 3-4

been successfully deterred; the Americans who had initially viewed the League as a dying concern, had, after some persuasion, accepted the principle of close collaboration between the newly-formed Intergovernmental Committee and the High Commissioner for Refugees. The inclusion of any denunciatory clause aimed at the German Government, had been avoided, thus ensuring that the British approach to Germany remained unimpeded. He thanked the Colonial Office for assisting him in announcing the possibility of small-scale settlement in Kenya and he advised the Cabinet that America was proposing to combine their quotas for refugees from Germany and Austria. He continued by stating that he believed the German Government might prove to be amenable in allowing Jewish emigrants to leave with a larger proportion of their assets and this would be promoted by the new Intergovernmental Committee. He concluded by informing the Cabinet of the proposed structure of the new organisation and announced that, with the approval of the Prime Minister, he would be both the Chairman and the British Representative.

The response of the Cabinet members confirmed their traditional stance towards the refugees. The Home Secretary stated that he believed there was a growing attitude in the country against the admission of Jewish refugees and as a result, it was felt that permission could only be granted to individuals, dependent on their merits. The Colonial Secretary restated the case for limiting the entry of refugees into Palestine and informed the Cabinet that, although entry into Kenya was agreed, it would be limited in numbers. The possibility of migration to Northern Rhodesia was being opposed by the Non-Official Members of the Legislative Council. Finally, Lord Winterton informed the Cabinet that the annual British proportion of the Evian scheme would be £400.00 out of a total annual cost of £6000.00.⁴³ In her analysis of the Colonial Office attitude, Louise London maintains that it never envisaged any form of mass settlement in the Empire by the Jewish refugees. She further states, that as a result of strong Arab opposition, the government was determined to limit Jewish entry into The Palestine Mandate. She argues an important reason for discouraging settlement was the fear that, by providing the possibility of immigration, it would encourage Poland and Romania to force their large Jewish populations to migrate.⁴⁴ In examining this argument, a further consideration is that the fear of encouraging mass migration from Eastern Europe as stated at the Evian Conference, could act as a catalyst in creating a xenophobic response towards the arrival of a substantial number of Jewish refugees.

⁴³ PRO.CAB/23/94 Cabinet 33(38) *Conclusions of a meeting held 20th July, 1938*, pp.167-170

⁴⁴ London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948*, p.95

In retrospect, the conference may be considered to be a total failure in terms of resolving the refugee crisis, since all the participating governments, whilst expressing deep sympathy for their plight, maintained that, due to both the economic conditions and the major employment problems being experienced worldwide, it was beyond their capabilities to offer any constructive assistance to resolve the growing problems. In contrast to this, as Louise London argues from the British perspective, the original aims of the government had been achieved, since, in the coming months, Britain would be able to refer to the Intergovernmental Committee for any assistance to be given to the refugees rather than accept any responsibility on an individual level.⁴⁵ The delegation had, therefore, been able to ensure that the façade of humanity displayed by the government towards the refugees remained intact without deviating from the traditional stance, initially adopted in 1905, of limited admittance to refugees into the country. The influence of the High Commissioner for Refugees, who was a British appointee, was maintained, whilst the influence of a British chairman on the newly-constituted committee ensured that the government would be admirably positioned to limit any potentially awkward situations in the future. In his analysis of the conference, A.J.Sherman argues that the mention of settlement in Kenya by Lord Winterton in his closing speech together with a brief mention of Palestine, had been an astute diplomatic move, since it was well received by all the delegates.⁴⁶ As a result of this, Lord Winterton had been in a position to report to the Cabinet that the possibility of being put under pressure to grant large scale admittance to Jewish refugees into the Colonies and the Palestine Mandate, had been effectively circumscribed with the suggestion that there was a strong possibility of settlement opportunities being offered to German Jews in the East African colonies.⁴⁷ Whilst supporting Sherman in his assessment of government policy towards settlement in the Colonies, Louise London states that mass settlement in the Empire was never a consideration due to the underlying fear of encouraging the forced eviction of the Jewish populations in Poland and Romania.

Refugees and Colonial attitudes

This section will analyse the correspondence between the Colonial Office and the Governors of Kenya and Northern Rhodesia to support the contention of this thesis that a primary obstacle to the settlement of the Jews in the Colonies was the ingrained anti-Semitism of both the Colonial Office and the Colonial Governors, which effectively acted as a major barrier to any potential settlement scheme involving Jewish refugees. The

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.95

⁴⁶ Sherman, *Island Refuge*, p.120

⁴⁷ PRO.CAB/23/94 Cabinet 33(38) *Conclusions of Meeting* held on Wednesday 20th July 1938, pp.6-9

assumption by the Colonial Office that it would be comparatively easy to organise small-scale settlements of German Jewish refugees in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, was swiftly shattered by the response of the respective Colonial Governors. In his detailed study, A.J. Sherman suggests that the Colonial Office refused to countenance the possibility of settling Jewish refugees in the Colonies apart from Kenya.⁴⁸ On the other hand, Frank Shapiro maintains that Malcolm MacDonald, the Colonial Secretary, was keen to implement the immigration of German Jews into various Colonies in Southern and Central Africa and he maintains that MacDonald showed great compassion towards the refugees.⁴⁹ Hugh MacMillan refutes both these arguments and states that the British reaction towards settlement of Jewish refugees in the Colonies was dominated by the official government policy of appeasement.⁵⁰

The original proposal to settle a small number of German Jews in Kenya had originated from the Council for German Jewry in 1937 with the suggestion that a survey should be made in the Kenya Highlands on their behalf, by an officer of the Palestine Agricultural Department.⁵¹ This request was forwarded to the Governor of Kenya for consideration who raised a series of objections as to the possibility of large-scale settlement. The global economic recession during the Thirties had a severe effect on the overall situation in Kenya. As world prices for crops slumped, the land under cultivation contracted dramatically, resulting in heavy indebtedness by the majority of landowners in 1939. Taking this situation into account, immigration was viewed as a potential benefit and *the Kenya Association* was formed to encourage new immigrants. One of its primary objectives was to scrutinise the potential settlers to ascertain their suitability to settle in a highly selective white community. Preference was given to potential immigrants who possessed the right background - that is British and Protestant. Other faiths and nationalities were not welcomed.⁵² Bernard Wasserstein suggests that it was the influential section of the white settler community who did not welcome the thought of a large-scale influx of Jews and he cites their success in thwarting a Jewish settlement scheme in Kenya, referred to as the Uganda project, which had been proposed by Joseph Chamberlain in 1903-4.⁵³ In his reply, the Governor, whilst agreeing to the

⁴⁸ A.J. Sherman, 'The British Government, the Jewish Community and Refugee Agencies', *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, Vol.4, No.1, Summer 1995, p.25

⁴⁹ Frank Shapiro, *Haven in Africa* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House Ltd., 2002), pp.,13,66-69,84,88-89

⁵⁰ Hugh MacMillan & Frank Shapiro, *Zion in Africa. The Jews of Zambia* (London: Taurus Publishers Ltd., 1999), p.119

⁵¹ CO533/497/8, 7031/37 *Correspondence between Norman Bentwich/J.Flood.*, December 1937.

⁵² C.S. Nicholls, *Red Strangers. The White Tribe of Kenya* (London: Timewell Press, 2005), p.181

⁵³ Bernard Wasserstein, *On the Eve The Jews Of Europe Before The Second World War* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 2012), p.359

proposed settlement of a limited number of German Jewish refugees, raised a series of objections to the possibility of a large scale settlement. He cited various reasons including the possibility of Jewish artisans or professionals jeopardising the economic prospects of the Indian and native populations and he demonstrated his own prejudice and the general feelings of the white community, in the following remarks to the Colonial Minister that:

“I consider that a Jewish enclave of this kind would be an undesirable feature in the Colony.... I should have no objection to the carefully regulated influx of Jews of the right type”.⁵⁴

He reiterated these sentiments in a further letter sent in July when he discussed the reactions of the Indian community and the possible antagonism of the sizeable Arab community in the Colony against the proposed influx of German Jews.⁵⁵ The Kenyan Indian community believed that the entry of German Jews would drastically change the racial balance of the indigenous population and could lead to the creation of serious employment problems.⁵⁶ Their various objections were passed to the India Office in London and finally refuted by the Colonial Office.⁵⁷ These responses from the Governor and the Indian community suggest that there was a degree of anti-Semitism which prevailed in the Colony based on the view of the Jews as the outsiders who did not conform to the accepted social mores of the white community. At the same time, the Indian community considered that the arrival of the Jews could pose a serious threat to their commercial activities. In assessing these responses, it is possible to discern a similarity to the accusations raised in 1905 that the Jewish immigrants were taking employment and business from the indigenous population in Britain.

These objections together with the anti-Semitic attitude of the Governor, were to be repeated in March 1939 when it was proposed to increase the number of Jewish settlers from twenty-five to one hundred and fifty. The Governor raised serious doubts as to the financial stability of the organising body - *The Plough Association* - and its capability to finance further immigration.⁵⁸ In April, a further demonstration of the hostility towards potential immigrants was the imposition of a financial bond (£500.00) if the immigrant were deemed unable to return to his country of origin, together with the

⁵⁴ CO525/176/19 R. Brooke-Popham to Malcolm MacDonald, 18/6/38 pp.1-4

⁵⁵ Ibid., 18th July, 1938

⁵⁶ CO533/498 ‘Government Prefer Aliens’, *The Leader, Allahabad*, October 31st, 1938; Ibid., ‘Immigration of Jewish Refugees into Kenya’, *East India National Congress memorandum*, 7th September, 1938, p.2

⁵⁷ India Office, Documents P&J 4463/38, 5379, September – November 1938

⁵⁸ CO533/511/7 R. Brooke-Popham letter to Colonial Secretary, 14th March 1939, pp.1-5

stipulation that the guarantor of the bond must be a resident of the Colony.⁵⁹ The Governor continued with his campaign to limit the number of immigrants into the Colony and in May he informed the Colonial Secretary that he feared some of the immigrants would deprive the indigenous population of employment, thus repeating the objections raised by the Indian community:

“There is no shortage in those trades and occupations in which German Jews are most likely to engage themselves.”⁶⁰

These later responses from the Governor and the Indian community clearly reiterated the earlier complaints raised by both parties and it may be argued the prevailing antipathy shown towards the Jews was strongly influenced by the belief that the Jews were different. They did not conform to the accepted patterns of behaviour in colonial society and they were primarily concerned with organising commercial enterprises in order to obtain high profits to the detriment of business competitors.

The initial response from the Governor of Northern Rhodesia was very similar to that of the Kenyan Governor. In July 1938, Government House informed London that the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council were strongly biased against any proposed scheme to settle Jewish refugees in the country because of their religion.⁶¹ This anti-Semitism was reflected by Sir Leopold Moore when he objected (on 1st August) to the possibility of a Jewish settlement in Northern Rhodesia, in a speech reported in the Bulawayo Chronicle:

“...less than a month ago I got to know that the Imperial Government has designed a plan to settle in Northern Rhodesia 500 families of Jewish refugees from Austria Germany.... If the Imperial Government tries to foist upon us....thousands of Jewish refugees I will oppose it.”⁶²

The intransigent attitude of the newly-appointed governor, Sir John Maybin, was, in many ways, supported by Malcolm MacDonald, the Colonial Secretary, who continued to procrastinate when the Foreign Office insisted that the opposition of the white community should be disregarded. MacDonald employed a series of delaying tactics and stated that he was loathe to prejudice any action that might result from

⁵⁹ *Jewish telegraph Agency, 'Kenya increases Entry Bond', 21st April, 1939* available at <http://archive.ita.org/1939/04/21/2846238/kenya-increases-entry-bond> accessed 14 January 2016
Bernard Wasserstein, *On the Eve*, p.359

⁶⁰ CO533/511/7 R. Brooke-Popham letter to Colonial Secretary, 9th May, 1939, pp.1-7

⁶¹ FO371/ 24073/ 7031/1/38 W.M. Logan letter to Parkinson, 21st, July, 1938

⁶² CO795/04/12 Telegram from the Officer Administering the Government of Northern Rhodesia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 5th August, 1938

continuing consultations in the country.⁶³ The deliberate delaying tactics employed by the Governor clearly illustrated the feeling of antagonism demonstrated towards the idea of offering a place of settlement to the German Jews. There were strong protests made by the leaders of both the Railway Workers' Union and the Northern Rhodesia Mineworkers' Union against the proposed Jewish immigration into the Colony. In a mirror image of the Kenyan response, it was feared that they would pose a threat to both the economic and employment situation which would have an adverse effect on the white population.⁶⁴

A further consideration is, although the Jewish refugees were of Germanic extraction, they were viewed as being Semitic, originating from the Middle East. In his analysis of the Jew in literature, Brian Cheyette examines the differing depictions of Jews in the Empire at the turn of the century and in this context, rather than classifying them as part of the white population, they were viewed as Eastern or Oriental, which implied that they were not considered as being acceptable to white society.⁶⁵ In the long-term, the white settlers had little to fear since it subsequently transpired that the financial cost of settling approximately 150 Jewish families in Northern Rhodesia was prohibitive – approximately £1,500.00 per family (£82,907.00 in current terms). It was realised that to settle a maximum of 400-500 families would have cost £500,000.00, which, as Sherman points out, was beyond the capability of the community to fund.⁶⁶

The Colonial Governors and the white hierarchy in the Colonies viewed Jews as outsiders who refused to assimilate into the English way of life although they were Caucasian Europeans. The perception that their different life style, religion and apparent refusal to assimilate into society, created an insurmountable barrier which effectively blocked the opportunity for large-scale settlement in the Colonies. They were considered to pose a major threat to business and employment, whilst the potential skills and opportunities they could bring to the Colonies, were disregarded. These attitudes reflected the current thinking prevalent in the Colonial Office and the elite of white Colonial society. It may be argued that these attitudes were the result of the growing affluence of the Jewish business class in the last twenty years of the Nineteenth century together with the arrival of the Eastern European Jews from 1880 onwards. Their arrival had been considered to present a major threat to both employment and business. This viewpoint combined with the concept of their reluctance to assimilate into

⁶³ FO371/24073/W135/45262/38 *Malcolm MacDonald letter to Foreign Office*, 2nd January, 1939 pp.60-64

⁶⁴ MacMillan & Shapiro, *Zion in Africa*., p.108

⁶⁵ Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew'* ., pp.92-93, 268

⁶⁶ Sherman, *Island*, pp., 184, 185

the British way of life had been bitterly resented by the indigenous population of the areas in Britain, where they had initially settled.

***Kristallnacht* and its aftermath**

The equanimity of the Cabinet after the Evian Conference was shattered by the Nazi pogroms in Germany on November 9th-10th 1938, which became known as *Kristallnacht*. The mass destruction of Jewish property and businesses together with the wholesale imprisonment of Jewish men was to reverberate across Britain. The press, which had viewed the continued arrival of Jewish refugees as a major threat to both unemployment and the reason for an increase in anti-Semitism between July and September,⁶⁷ in a complete volte-face now communicated the horrors perpetrated during the pogroms throughout Germany and Austria.⁶⁸ The main focus of the reporting focused on the possibility of rescuing and admitting Jewish children into the country and this swiftly gained public support. In their analysis of the period, both London and Sherman suggest that, whilst the Jewish refugee organisations were prepared to accept the limited response of the government to the events of *Kristallnacht*, they took the opportunity to press for the admission of young refugees into the country.⁶⁹ This section will examine both the reasons and the reactions of the government towards the proposals of the Anglo-Jewish leaders in their attempt to increase the number of young refugees entering the country. Louise London argues there were two different viewpoints on government action. Chamberlain was determined to maintain his diplomatic relationship with Germany; he did, however support the idea of immediate action, which would provide temporary relief for the refugees whilst insisting that consideration should be given to long-term projects such as settlement overseas, although he admitted that this possibility had a limited scope in the Colonies.⁷⁰ In contrast to this, Sir Samuel Hoare, the Home Secretary, favoured a general acceptance of the younger refugee who would be of benefit to the country, thus demonstrating the humanity of the government to the rest of the world.⁷¹ A.J.Sherman suggests that the government was aware of major public concern both in Britain and America of the situation facing German Jewry and it

⁶⁷ 'German Jews Pouring into this Country', *The Daily Mail*, August 20th 1938, p.11 Issue 13205; 'Collapse of stout party St. John Coper', *Daily Express*, 2nd September, 1938 p.10

⁶⁸ 'German Jews Rounded Up' *The Times*, November 12th 1938 p.2 Issue 48151; 'More Arrests. Jews To Pay For Nazi Damage', *The Times*, November, 14th 1938 p.12 Issue 48151; 'Germany's Day Of Wrecking And Looting', *The Manchester Guardian*, November 11, 1938, p.11

⁶⁹ Sherman, *Island Refuge.*, pp.171-172; London, *Whitehall And The Jews 1933-1948.*, p.100-101

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.105-107

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.104-105

was feared in government circles that, unless there was a visible demonstration of assistance, there could be a deterioration of Anglo-American relations.⁷²

The government now came under considerable pressure from various church leaders, organisations and the public to allow the entry of more refugees into the country⁷³ but as R. Makins, from the Foreign Office, pointed out, the Nazi actions had effectively exacerbated the financial condition of the German Jews, thus creating further problems for any possible settlement in other countries. He did not think that the Home Office would be amenable in agreeing to an increase in the number of Jewish immigrants entering the country. On November 15th, a deputation from the Council for German Jewry had a meeting with the Prime Minister. They agreed, generally, with the government policy of limiting the entry of Jewish refugees into the country, but they now requested that children under the age of 17 should be allowed entry and, as in 1933, they gave a financial guarantee that all expenses would be privately funded, thus ensuring that there would be no cost to public funds; the deputation also stated the children would be educated and trained with a long-term view of ensuring their re-emigration in the future. At the same meeting Dr. Weizmann, requested that 6,000 young men being held in concentration camps and 1,500 children should be given immediate entry into Palestine. The final request at the meeting came from Viscount Bearstead and Lionel De Rothschild, who raised the possibility of financial assistance from the government to assist in aiding the departure of the Jews from the Reich.⁷⁴

In a wide-ranging discussion on the 16th November, the Cabinet confronted the implications of *Kristallnacht* and their response to it. It was noted that there had been a world-wide reaction to the events in Nazi Germany and great emphasis was placed on the alleged anti-British feeling now emanating from America. The Foreign Secretary indicated it was based on the American assumption that, since Britain was near to Germany, it was felt that the former was in a position to implement steps to halt the persecution of the Jews. It was also noted that the general public was not impressed by the apparent lack of government response to the devastation in Germany. The Colonial Secretary, whilst conceding that it was imperative to demonstrate a large degree of humanity to the refugees, insisted it was important to emphasise that possibilities of settlement in the Colonies should not be viewed as the ultimate panacea to the Jewish

⁷² Sherman, *Island*, P.173

⁷³ 'Britain And The Nazi Outrages,' *The Manchester Guardian*, November 15 1938, p.14; *Ibid.*, 'Letters To The Editor The Organised Pogrome In Germany,' November 15 1938, p.20; *Ibid.*, 'German Jews Women Liberals' Appeal,' November 16 1938, p.12; 'Treatment OF German Jews Protest Meeting To Be held At Albert Hall,' *The Times*, November 22, 1938, p.11 Issue 48158

⁷⁴ PREM1/326 147635 *German Jewish Refugees (Deputation from Council of German Jewry)*, 15th November, 1938

problem. Furthermore, he did not think it feasible to increase the number of settlers in Kenya, which was currently limited to 25 families and he indicated that there was unequivocal opposition in Northern Rhodesia, from the unofficial members of the Legislative Council, to the possibility of Jewish refugees settling there. He concluded that the strongest possibility for potential settlement was British Guiana. The other ministers agreed that it would be a politically astute manoeuvre to indicate such a contingency.⁷⁵

The Prime Minister then informed the Cabinet of his meeting with the deputation from the Council for German Jews. In the ensuing discussion, a number of points were made. Lord Winterton reiterated that all problems appertaining to the ongoing refugee problems had been discussed at Evian and resulted in the creation of a new organisation which, in similar fashion to the League of Nations, reflected many opinions and interests. He noted that America believed Britain was doing little to resolve the problems, which he insisted, was totally untrue and he cited the examples of Australia and New Zealand bowing to British pressure and accepting more Jewish refugees. This was supported by the Secretary of State for the Dominions who informed the meeting that he had already spoken to the Australian High Commissioner who had indicated that the annual quota for refugees of 5,000 might be raised to 6,000 or 7,000, which compared very favourably to the current American quota. Lord Winterton pointed out that the American quota had not been increased, although they had combined the German and Austrian quotas on an annual basis. He then informed the Cabinet that the real crux of the problem was the financial restrictions imposed on German Jews who wished to emigrate and that, until this was resolved, the emigration problem would remain insoluble.⁷⁶

The Home Secretary confirmed the belief that in order to exert pressure on America to expand assistance to the refugees, it was imperative that Britain was seen to visibly demonstrate a willingness to offer the possibility of settlement in Kenya, Northern Rhodesia and British Guiana. This suggestion was strongly supported by the Foreign Secretary who added that, if land were made available in British Guiana, there was a definite possibility that, apart from private financial assistance, the American Government might contribute towards potential settlement costs.⁷⁷ The discussion then moved on to the current situation regarding the entry of refugees into the country. The Home Secretary informed the Cabinet that the country was receiving 1,000 letters daily, applying for entry into the country and these were being forwarded to the co-ordinating

⁷⁵ CAB23/986/1 55 (38) *The Jewish Problem*, 16th November 1938, pp.221-224

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp.226-229

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.226-227

committee dealing with potential immigrants. He stated that the Jewish organisations were averse to granting entry to a substantial number of refugees for fear of encouraging anti-Semitism. They did not wish to announce the number of Jews admitted, since they feared that they would be criticised for supporting either too many or too few refugees. He considered the government policy towards the refugees ably reflected public opinion and insisted that it was crucial to check individual immigrants to ensure that undesirable elements were excluded from the country. Taking these factors into account, he was agreeable to admitting a number of young Jews for agricultural training in order to facilitate their settlement elsewhere and he was in favour of accepting a number of Jewish maidservants to replace the German domestics who had returned home. He concluded his recommendations by informing the Cabinet that the Jewish Council was providing £5,000 per week to support the immigrants.⁷⁸ Tony Kushner notes that this appearance of flexibility by the government towards the refugees was influenced by the knowledge that, since, in both these areas, any union activity was weak and the demand for domestics was high, there was little likelihood of any anti-refugee protest.⁷⁹

Further points raised during the meeting centred on the need to demonstrate positive action towards the Jews to assuage public opinion; the problem of informing the public how many Jews had been given permission to enter the country whilst wishing to demonstrate the humanitarian policy of the government and the fate of the older German Jews, who presented an impossible problem to resolve, since the Jewish Council did not classify them as being within their remit.⁸⁰ The meeting concluded with the decision that a statement of policy for dealing with the Jewish problem, should be prepared by the Foreign, Home, Colonial and Dominions' ministers in conjunction with Lord Winterton, as speedily as possible, for public announcement.

In considering the points discussed by the Cabinet during this meeting, it should be noted that an important government objective was to consider how pressure could be brought to bear on America to amend its immigrant quota system and accept a greater responsibility for the refugees. The ministers involved in the discussion, whilst acknowledging the major difficulties the German Jews faced, still adhered to the time-honoured policies that had been pursued assiduously in the treatment of all refugees since the passing of the 1905 Aliens Act: this had focused at that time on the exclusion of Jewish immigrants wherever possible. However, whilst pursuing these goals, the

⁷⁸ Ibid.P227

⁷⁹ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination.*, pp.81-82,85

⁸⁰ CAB23/986/1 55 (38) *The Jewish Problem*, 16th November 1938, p.228

government was determined to maintain a façade of humanitarianism in the eyes of both the general public and the world.

On the 21st November, the Prime Minister reiterated in the House of Commons the government stance on granting entry to the refugees. He announced that entry into the country was constrained by the capacity of the voluntary organisations in their ability to select, receive and maintain the refugees. Since 1933, 11,000 refugees had been granted entry together with a further 4,000 to 5,000 who had subsequently re-emigrated. He reminded the Commons that, as had been stated at the Evian Conference, the Empire did not automatically provide a solution to the re-settlement of the refugees, but options within the Colonies were being actively explored, particularly in British Guiana, subject to private financial assistance being available. He continued by announcing that a small experimental settlement scheme for young men in Kenya had been approved by the Colonial Governor and if this proved to be successful, permission would be given for their families to join them. In conclusion he briefly mentioned Palestine which he deemed to be too small to provide a solution to the Jewish refugee problem but he stated that approximately 40% of the Jewish emigrants into the country in the previous year had come from Germany. He expressed the hope that the newly formed Intergovernmental Committee would achieve a measure of success in solving the growing refugee problem.⁸¹

In the ensuing debate, an impassioned account of the sufferings experienced by the Jews in Nazi Germany was given by Mr. Phillip Noel-Baker. This was duly supported by various other members of the House who all suggested that the settlement of the refugees throughout the Empire would provide an adequate solution to their plight. It could, to a large degree, be financed by the Jewry of the country with any additional finance assistance being provided by Britain. In his response, Sir Samuel Hoare, the Home Secretary, having briefly alluded to Evian and the possibility of settlement in the Empire, moved on to explain to the House the problems facing Britain in its ability to provide practical assistance to the growing refugee problem. He emphasised the issue of both foreign competition and unemployment in a densely populated industrial country, which could lead to growing resentment against alien immigration. He insisted that as a precaution against undesirable individuals masquerading as refugees, it was vital to maintain a check on all prospective immigrants. This would be achieved by working in close liaison with the Co-ordinating Committee which dealt with the prospective refugees, to ascertain the financial situation of the individual and with the Minister of Labour to ensure that there was no threat to indigenous employment or industry. He

⁸¹ HC Deb. *Refugees (Government Proposals)*, 21 November 1938, vol 341 cc1313-7 pp,1-3

noted that as a result of this policy, 11,000 Germans had settled in the country and they had created 15,000 jobs in industry.

He briefly reviewed the visa procedures in Germany and Austria and announced that the government was prepared to provide a temporary abode for trans-migrants who intended to settle elsewhere in the world. He informed the House of the training scheme which had been organised by the Co-ordinating Committee to train Jewish boys in agriculture and Jewish girls for domestic work in preparation for settlement in the Empire. Having expounded the virtues of the government policies towards young refugees, he finally announced the measures he was prepared to adopt in order to rescue 'non-Aryan' children. He stated that, subject to financial guarantees being provided by private organisations and individual sponsors, the Home Office was prepared to grant an unlimited number of entry visas for unaccompanied young people up to the age of 17 coming from the Reich, thus providing the official approval for the *Kindertransport* settlement scheme.⁸² This announcement ensured that the illusion of humanity which the government assiduously fostered internationally, as had been displayed at Evian with the announcement of potential settlement in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, was maintained with minimal financial outlay. However, London argues that the policy to admit the children was a short-term solution since any possibility of permanent settlement was still subject to the existing immigration laws.⁸³

Whilst considering this countenance of government generosity as a change of policy towards the refugees, it may be argued that the entry of Jewish children being totally dependent on funding from private organisations and charities, in effect, enabled the government to present a façade of generosity and humanity to both Europe and America but at no cost to itself. Likewise, as has been mentioned, the employment of young Jews in agriculture and domestic service would prove beneficial to the country with no financial outlay from the public purse. A further consideration is that the main reasons proffered by Hoare to maintain the restrictions on immigration, had not changed since 1905. The Jews, or as he initially termed them, the aliens, were still viewed as different, or, in some cases, undesirable, their arrival was considered as constituting a major threat to employment, which could create anti-Semitism which, with its long roots, was present in 1905 and 1917. However, neither London nor Sherman make any allusion to this similarity.

At a further Cabinet meeting in early December, as a result of a request from the Jewish Agency, consideration was given to granting entry to 21,000 Jews – 11,000

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ London, *Whitehall And the Jews 1933-1948.*, pp.52-53

adults and 10,000 children in addition to the annual quota into Palestine. The original request from Chaim Weizmann in November had been ignored. The Colonial Secretary informed his colleagues that the children were guaranteed homes and he could not envisage their entry creating any problems in the Mandate. He then proceeded to argue against this idea by citing the reaction of the British representatives in the neighbouring Arab countries who had informed him that, in their view, if the scheme were to proceed, the representatives of the Palestinian Arabs would refuse to attend the proposed London Conference on Palestine; however, to counterbalance this, Weizmann had informed him that if the Jewish Agency request were refused, their representatives would withdraw from the Conference. He suggested that the immediate solution was to refuse entry for the children at the present time but it might be a possibility in the future. In the meantime, providing finance was available from the refugee organisations, the children could be brought into Britain. The Home Secretary concurred with this suggestion.⁸⁴ The Secretary of State for India informed the Cabinet that he believed granting entry to the children would have an adverse effect on Muslim opinion and he had been informed by the Indian High Commissioner that the common view held in India was Britain was preparing to halt Jewish migration into the Mandate prior to the forthcoming conference.⁸⁵

Whilst supporting the arguments of the Colonial Secretary, the Foreign Secretary stressed the importance of achieving an agreement with the Arabs over the future of Palestine, but he conceded that it was imperative to consider the problem of large scale Jewish resettlement in its entirety. He further suggested that this might result in a change of policy currently being implemented by the Home Office which he strongly supported. Both the Prime Minister and the Colonial Secretary informed the meeting that they did not believe the Jews were in any position to substantiate their threat of withdrawal from the proposed London Conference.⁸⁶ The Cabinet agreed that it was not possible to permit the children to enter Palestine at present, but it should be discussed at the forthcoming Conference.⁸⁷

Whilst admitting that allowing the children into Palestine did not create any problems, this decision illustrated the continuing fear of upsetting Arab opinion, which now dominated government thinking. It may be argued that the reactions of the Secretary for India and the British representatives in the various Arab countries, were coloured by the traditional view of Jews as outsiders who created problems wherever

⁸⁴ CAB/23/96 59(38) *Cabinet meeting* 4th December, 1938, pp.12-14

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.,14-15

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.14-15

they settled. The suggestion that they should enter Britain was perfectly acceptable, subject to the provision of private funding being available and it was agreed that there must be a concerted action to resolve the Jewish refugee crisis. Whilst wishing to display profound sympathy towards the Jews under Nazi rule, a prime requisite of the government was to maintain its adherence to its traditional immigration policy regardless of the consequences for the Jewish refugees. The other dominant factor in its response was the determination to maintain its dominance in the Middle East, as the prospect of a potential war loomed in early 1939.

Britain declares war September 1939

On September 3rd, 1939, Britain declared war on Germany. This section will analyse the initial government response to the entry of refugees from Europe and the reasons for its change of policy towards the refugees resident in Britain after the invasion of France in 1940. It will consider the reasons for the persistence of anti-Semitism through an examination of the weekly Intelligence reports prepared for the Home Office and the response of the Anglo-Jewish leaders in their attempts to combat it.

In the final days before the declaration of war, various measures had been invoked in preparation for such an event. As a precursor to the possibility of war, the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill was passed in August 1939 by both the Commons and the Lords.⁸⁸ The Bill replicated the conditions contained in the 1914 Bill⁸⁹ which effectively handed unlimited power to the government during a time of war. This transfer of power was clearly demonstrated in a circular issued by the Colonial Secretary to the High Commissioner of Kenya in October 1939. The circular stated that no further permits were to be issued to potential refugees still resident in Germany and admittance was only granted to refugees now resident in neutral or allied countries; entry would be subject to a detailed investigation of the individual visa application, due to wartime conditions.⁹⁰ It informed the Governor that special tribunals had been created in order to review all German, Austrian and Czechoslovakian nationals, to ensure that they were genuine refugees.⁹¹ The refugees were thus placed in three categories: Class A were viewed as presenting a threat to the country and were interned; Class B were subject to certain restrictions of liberty and Class C were cleared completely.⁹² This section will

⁸⁸ *Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill 227*, 24th August, 1939 (H.M.S.O.; London)

⁸⁹ MUN 5/19/221/8 (Nov 1914) *Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act*, 27th November 1914

⁹⁰ CO533/511 /6 *Malcolm MacDonald Circular to High Commissioner Kenya*, 23rd October, 1939

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.2

FO 371/24101 W14595/3231/48 *Ronald to Kennedy*, October 16th 1939

⁹² F. Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens*, (London: Penguin Special, 1940), p.67

examine these policies and consider why the comparatively lenient measures initially applied to the refugees were amended to implement internment of all refugees in 1940.

A.J.Sherman suggests that the main reasons for the policy to halt the entry of refugees still resident in Germany and to subject refugees in neutral countries to further investigation, was partly driven by the lack of funds available to the various refugee organisations, the high level of unemployment amongst the refugees and the government view that they posed a major security risk to the country.⁹³ Tony Kushner maintains that the cancellation of pre-war visas was based on two reasons - security grounds since it was believed that any refugees arriving after the declaration of war might be enemy agents since they would require German authorisation to leave Germany, together with the fear of an increase in domestic anti-Semitism. The latter fear was supported in government circles where it was agreed that an increasing number of people supported the anti-Semitic ideas of National Socialism.⁹⁴ Louise London argues that, although the Home Office displayed some sympathy towards the refugees in Britain, they did not consider the plight of the continental Jews to be part of their remit, since the British Government stated it was fulfilling its contribution towards solving the refugee crisis by destroying the Nazi regime. She suggests that the Home Office was able to implement a further tightening of its entry regulations as a result of the power emanating from the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill. The main consideration now became the possible usefulness of the potential immigrant to the war effort; the concept of humanitarian grounds ceased to exist.⁹⁵ With the declaration of war, entry into Britain for refugees was effectively halted. It was extremely concerned that some of the refugees granted entry might now prove to be passing information to the enemy but until the invasion of France in June 1940, government treatment of the refugees remained unchanged. In the aftermath of the fall of France, the government response towards refugees would ensure that entry into Britain was non-existent for Jewish refugees.

A further consideration is that, by insisting only the careful vetting of foreign aliens would ensure the long-term security of the country, the government was now in a position to justify the continuity of ensuring its ability to maintain a rigid control over immigration. In 1940, in his reply to Eleanor Rathbone, to grant admission to Czech refugees, Sir John Anderson, the Home Secretary, expressed the fear that nationals from Occupied Countries could be used by the German authorities to obtain sensitive information which would be of assistance to them.⁹⁶ This situation was to change

⁹³ Sherman, *Island*, p.255

⁹⁴ Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice*, pp.152-153

⁹⁵ London, *Whitehall And the Jews, 1933-148*, pp.172-173

⁹⁶ ULL, *Sir John Anderson letter to Eleanor Rathbone 6/3/40 XIV 2 17 (7) (8)*

dramatically as the *Phoney War* ceased in April 1940, with the collapse of Norway. The national press, looking for a scapegoat, announced that there was evidence of a Fifth Column and the finger was pointed at the enemy aliens - refugees.⁹⁷ The targeting of the predominantly Jewish refugees as enemy aliens bore a striking resemblance to the accusations of Jewish refugees supporting the Bolsheviks in 1917.

With the fall of Holland and Belgium, the first tightening of restrictions on aliens was implemented with the internment of all enemy aliens residing in the South-East and the Eastern Counties.⁹⁸ This was swiftly followed by further internment of all category B German and Austrian males on 16th May⁹⁹ and females in the same category at the end of the month.¹⁰⁰ This process continued and by mid-July, the majority of Austrian and German Jewish refugees were interned.¹⁰¹ Many books have been written about this period including *Collar the Lot* and *Anderson's Prisoners*.¹⁰² In his detailed account published in 1940, F.Lafitte chronicled the first record of the activities of the refugees, the influence of the press and the Government response, which resulted in the wholesale internment of all the Jewish refugees in Britain.¹⁰³ This action was reversed in 1941, when it was agreed that a substantial number of internees were to be deemed eligible for release in order to contribute to the war effort.¹⁰⁴ The continuing fear of German spies was used as an excuse by the government in their refusal to provide assistance for, or entry to, the Jewish refugees as they attempted to escape from Occupied Europe into Great Britain or the Palestine Mandate.¹⁰⁵ The growing influence of the Zionist movement in both Britain and Palestine presented further problems for the government, as they continued to enforce the allocation quota set out in the Palestine White Paper of 1939. The quota had been created in order to restore a semblance of peace to the region and maintain good relations with the Arabs since Palestine was viewed as a vital strategic part of British diplomacy in the region.¹⁰⁶ In his analysis of the

⁹⁷ 'Round Up Our Fifth Column', *Daily Mirror*, April 19th 1940, p.1; 'Fifth columns menace in Britain,' *Daily Express*, April 19th 1940, p.5

⁹⁸ CAB69/1/1, 10th May 1940

⁹⁹ 'More Aliens Interned', *The Times*, 17th May, 1940, p.3 Issue 48618

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 'German Women To Be Interned', May 28th 1940, p.3 Issue 48627

¹⁰¹ Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens*, p.p.7-74

¹⁰² Peter and Leni Gillman, *'Collar The Lot' How Britain Interned And Expelled Its Wartime Refugees* (London: Quartet Books Ltd., 1980)

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.; "JUDEX", *Anderson's Prisoners* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1940); Lafitte, *The Internment Of Aliens*

¹⁰⁵ Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust. Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel 1939-1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.130

¹⁰⁶ Stephan E.C. Wendehorst, *British Jewry, Zionism, And The Jewish State, 1936-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.39, 213-216; Cmd.6019 1939, *Palestine Statement of Policy* (London: HMSO 1939)

influence of the 1939 White Paper on Palestine on the Colonial Office,¹⁰⁷ Wasserstein argues that the agreed policy of instigating an annual quota for the admittance of Jews into the Mandate ensured that Arab support was maintained since this was required in order to guarantee oil supplies and control of the Suez Canal. He further suggests that the determination of the Colonial Office officials to adhere to this policy resulted in a perception of the Jews as being overbearing in their attempts to obtain some relaxation of the entry requirements to the Mandate.¹⁰⁸ The results of this are examined by A.J.Sherman in his analysis of the Colonial officials in the Mandate during the war, who viewed the Jews as difficult to deal with,¹⁰⁹ whilst Tom Segev states that, overall, the British reaction towards the European Jews was governed by the inability to come to a definite decision on the future of the Mandate without losing the support of the Arab population.¹¹⁰ This combination of ideas and policies would dominate government thinking throughout the period as news began to filter through, of the Nazi policies being implemented against the Jews under their control and their reaction to the news from Europe appertaining to the plight of the Jews under Nazi control during 1942.

The accusations in both the Press and the Government, which suggested that the refugees presented a substantial threat towards the security of the country, were reminiscent of the accusations made against the German Jews during the last war. Then, prominent members of the Anglo-Jewish community with affiliations in Germany, had been forced publicly to declare their loyalty to Britain.¹¹¹ There is a further similarity with the accusations of a Fifth Column and the depiction of Russian Jews actively supporting the Bolshevik Revolution.¹¹² While accepting the arguments of Sherman that the lack of funds available to the various refugee organisations and the possibility of a threat to the security of the country and Louise London, that the plight of the continental Jews was not regarded as a responsibility of the government during this period, it is possible to trace a pattern of reaction reflected in the response of the country towards the refugees when they were viewed as presenting a threat to national security during war time.

¹⁰⁷ Cmd 6019 1939, *Palestine Statement of Policy May 1939* (London: H.M.S.O.,1939)

¹⁰⁸ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews* .,pp.28-29

¹⁰⁹ A.J.Sherman, *Mandate Days. British Lives in Palestine 1918-1945* (London; Thames and Hudson, 1997), Pp.152;155-157

¹¹⁰ Tom Segev, *One Palestine Complete Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (New York: Owl Books, 2001), pp.460-463

¹¹¹ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939.*, pp.121-124

¹¹² 'Fifth Column Dangers', *The Manchester Guardian*, June 12th 1940, p.9;Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews.*,pp.227-231;Pendlebury, *Portraying 'the Jew'.*, pp.121-122

When considering the overall attitude of the government towards the predicament of the German Jewish refugees after the *Anschluss* in March 1938 and during the early years of the war, a clear policy towards the refugees emerges. The government, as London points out, was determined to maintain a rigid policy of immigration control, thus limiting the entry of Jews into the country. In order to achieve this, it employed all means at its disposal, including the acceptance of private finance for the *Kindertransport*, whilst portraying itself as humanitarian in its public attitude towards the refugees. Taking into account the arguments of Sherman and London as to the reactions of the government during this period, a further consideration is that the accusations levelled against the refugees that they represented a security threat to the country, bear a striking similarity to the discourse against the Jewish immigrants during the First World War, which may also be considered as a major contributory factor towards the growing xenophobia and anti-Semitism during this period.

Anti-Semitism

In considering the reasons for the government preoccupation with the threat of increased anti-Semitism, a major factor to take into account was that its resurgence throughout the world did not leave Britain unscathed during the Thirties. The British Union of Fascists under the leadership of Sir Oswald Mosley, whilst presenting an extreme view of the pernicious influence of Jews in Britain, did, to a limited degree, reflect the general perceptions of the Jews particularly in the East End of London with its tradition of 'anti-alien hostility which had emphasized anti-semitism from the turn of the century.'¹¹³ In everyday life, different levels of discrimination were applied to them. They were discouraged from applying for certain jobs, banned from some restaurants and hotels, not accepted for membership of certain golf clubs and discouraged from entering certain professions such as teaching in better-known schools and in medicine.¹¹⁴ The dominant fear caused by the lack, or loss of, employment during the Thirties, created a climate of active discrimination against the employment of Jews.¹¹⁵ These attitudes are discussed by various historians including Louise London and J.M.Ritchie, in their

¹¹³ Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London: McMillan Ltd., 1975); Richard Thurlow, *Fascism In Britain A History, 1918-1985* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1987), pp., 104-105, 108, 116-117; Geoffrey G. Field, *Anti-Semitism with the Boots Off*, *Wiener Library Bulletin Special Issue*, 1983, p.31

¹¹⁴ David Dee, 'There is no discrimination here, but the Committee never elects Jews': antisemitism in British golf, 1894-1970, *Patterns of Prejudice*, May 2016, Vol.47 Iss.2., p.119, 126; Geoffrey G. Field, *Anti-Semitism with the Boots Off*, *Wiener Library Bulletin Special Issue*, 1983, pp., 41-42; Juliet Gardiner, *The Thirties. An Intimate Portrait* (London: Harper Press, 2010) pp.439-44; Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939.*, p.32

¹¹⁵ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939.*, pp.32, 55, 145; Gardiner, *The Thirties.*, pp.439-440

examination of the reaction of the medical organisations towards the arrival of German and Austrian doctors and dentists. The representative bodies camouflaged their antagonism towards the refugees by inferring that their medical expertise was not of the standard required by the British organisations and to allow them to practise would be unprofessional.¹¹⁶

A further consideration is that the fear caused by the lack, or loss of, employment during this period may be viewed as a reflection of the reaction towards the Eastern European Jews at the turn of the century when they were accused of depriving the indigenous population of employment. This underlying influence of anti-Semitism was aggravated by the arrival of the German and Austrian Jews who were viewed as outsiders who did not conform to the British way of life and who presented a threat to the status quo. In a determined attempt to encourage German Jews to behave in a manner acceptable to the English, the Board of Deputies of British Jews issued a booklet *While you are in England* (in English and German).¹¹⁷ The booklet, which has been used as the basis of a novel depicting the struggles of a German couple who struggle to assimilate into Britain,¹¹⁸ included basic information such as the various organisations involved in providing assistance to the newly-arrived refugee, how to register with the local police, types of work allowed and training offered to young people.¹¹⁹ The main thrust of the booklet, whilst specifically produced for the German Jews, concentrated on what constituted acceptable behaviour from the refugees and its advice could be applied to all incoming refugees regardless of race or religion. The booklet included the following points:

- “1. Spend your time immediately in learning the English language and its correct pronunciation.
2. Refrain from speaking German in the streets and in public conveyances and in public places such as restaurants
...do not talk in a loud voice. Do not read German newspapers in public.
3. Do not criticise any Government regulations, nor the way things are done over here. Do not speak of “how much better this or that is in Germany.
4. Do not join any Political organisations.

¹¹⁶ London, *Whitehall And the Jews 1933-1948.*, pp.51-52; J.M. Ritchie, *German Exiles British Perspectives* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1997), p.14

¹¹⁷ JML/1988.48 The German Jewish Aid Committee in conjunction with the Board of Deputies, ‘*Whilst you are in England*’, pp.1-25;

¹¹⁸ Natasha Solomons, *Mr. Rosenblums Dreams in English* (New York: Reagan Arthur Books, 2010)

¹¹⁹ JML/1988.48 The German Jewish Aid Committee in conjunction with the Board of Deputies, ‘*Whilst you are in England*’, pp.1-7

5. Do not make yourself conspicuous by speaking loudly, nor by your manner or dress."¹²⁰

In contrast to this, evidence suggests that the problems experienced by the newly- arrived refugees contributed to the difficulties resulting from their struggle to adapt to a different way of life in a strange country. These problems are analysed by Stefan Howald and Irene Wells in their detailed investigation of everyday life for the refugees during the war¹²¹ and discussed in detail by Marian Berghan. In her conclusion, Berghan argues that, whilst the refugees were struggling to adapt to an unfamiliar way of life, they were faced with a substantially hostile reception created by the growing level of xenophobia in the country.¹²²

The perception of the Jews as outsiders, was to be restated throughout the war and little sympathy was extended towards their situation in Europe. In his assessment of the government response to the plight of the Jewish refugees, Kushner suggests that the ethos behind their actions was strongly influenced by an instinctive dislike of Jews since there was a general perception that they were different and refused to assimilate into British society, which was not compatible with the prevailing liberal attitudes of the time.¹²³ On the other hand, Russell Wallis argues that the government, whilst using the excuse of anti-Semitism to defer difficult decisions, genuinely believed that any display of sympathy for the plight of the Jews would generally exacerbate anti-Semitism.¹²⁴

In his rigid adherence to the maintenance of the immigration laws, Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security, epitomised the attitude of the government towards the admittance of Jewish refugees. In her detailed analysis of the government attitude towards the European Jews from the outbreak of war in 1939 until their acknowledgement of the extermination of the Jews in December 1942 Louise London argues that overall government policy was based on 'a context of self-interest, opportunism and an over-riding concern with control.'¹²⁵ She points out that after May 1940, the Home Office was even more rigid in its control of granting entry to war refugees and that, in effect, this relegated humanitarian aid for the refugees to the side-

¹²⁰ Ibid.,pp.12-15

¹²¹ Stefan Howard and Irene Wells, 'Everyday Life in Pre-war and Wartime Britain' in Marian Malet and Anthony Grenville (Eds), *Changing Countries. The Experience And Achievement Of German-Speaking Exiles From Hitler In Britain, From 1933 To Today* (London: Libris, 2002), pp.90-126

¹²² Marion Berghan, *Continental Britons German Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Ltd., 1988), p.149

¹²³ Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice.*, p.161

¹²⁴ Russell Wallis, *Britain, Germany and the Road to the Holocaust. British Attitudes towards Nazi Atrocities* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co.Ltd., 2014), pp.224-225

¹²⁵ London, *Whitehall And the Jews 1933-1948.*, pp.14-15

lines.¹²⁶ She maintains that a further factor was the official government policy that the demands of the war effort superseded the plight of the refugees, thus providing official justification for granting admission to a strictly limited number of refugees who were considered to be of benefit to the war effort. She argues that this official justification of rigidly controlled entry, dominated all levels of government thinking and, ultimately, it became increasingly difficult for individual government officials to provide humanitarian aid where necessary, although the official stance was one of humanitarianism.¹²⁷

In his assessment of the government attitude towards the Jews between 1939 - 1945, Bernard Wasserstein argues that their plight was not considered to be of major importance within the context of the whole war, since it was accepted as the norm, that full support would be given by the Jews for the Allied cause, thereby negating any display of preferential treatment towards them as a separate group. Consequently, they were never viewed as a special case.¹²⁸ He concedes that there was an element of anti-Semitism in government circles, but he suggests that this did not exert a major influence on government attitudes. He concludes that a primary reason for the indifference shown towards the Jews was a lack of comprehension as to the aims of the Nazi-Jewish policy. He argues that the conventional moral code of the majority of the civil servants involved in the decisions and attitudes to be applied to the Jews, could not come to terms with the lack of ethics and morals applied to the Jews under Nazi rule.¹²⁹

In August 1942, the British Consul in Switzerland forwarded a copy of a telegram from Gerhart Reigner, the Secretary of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, to Sidney Silverman M.P., Chairman of the British Section of World Jewish Congress. The organisation, based in London, provided the only link between Switzerland and the headquarters in America, thus becoming a vital centre since London effectively became the diplomatic centre of the world.¹³⁰ This was illustrated when it played a major part in exposing the Nazi atrocities in Europe by the forwarding of the report, which had been received by Sydney Silverman M.P. in London, from the Geneva Section, detailing the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination, to Rabbi Stephen Wise, the leader of the World Jewish Congress, in America.¹³¹ Alex Easterman, the London Congress Secretary,

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.189

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp.18-,190

¹²⁸ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*., pp.352-355

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp.356-357

¹³⁰ HL/MS/238 World Jewish Congress (British section), *Report of the Executive Officers and Proceedings, National Conference October 23rd & 24th, 1943.*, pp.5-6

¹³¹ F0371/30917/C7853/61/18, Berne to Foreign Office telegram from G. Reigner World Jewish Congress to Sydney Silverman MP, 10th August 1942; Shoah resource centre, *World Jewish Congress (WJC) available at www.yadvashem.org/odot-pdf/Microsoft%20word%20-%20653pdf* accessed 8 May 2017

worked in close liaison with Sydney Silverman M.P. and consistently lobbied the Foreign Office on behalf of the European Jews.

The telegram contained details of the proposed extermination of European Jewry by the Nazis.¹³² It was noted by D. Allen, on September 10th, that no confirmation had been received to substantiate the claims, although the Foreign Office had received numerous reports of Jews being massacred on a large scale. Various other sections within the department were consulted, but no other information was available. Finally, Frank Roberts decided that the telegram should be passed on to Silverman with the comment:

“I do not see how we can hold up this message much longer, although I fear it may provoke embarrassing repercussions. Naturally we have no information bearing on this story.”¹³³

When Silverman requested permission to forward a copy to Rabbi Stephen Wise in New York and asked for Foreign Office comments on the possibility of publishing the report, yet again D. Allen commented, that although various reports detailing the bad treatment of Jews deported to Poland appeared to partially support the report received from Switzerland:

“We have also received plenty of evidence that Jews ... have perished as a consequence of mass deportations and executions. Such stories do provide a basis for Mr. Reigner’s report but they do not amount to ‘extermination at one blow’ I do not think we should be wise to make use of this story in propaganda..... We should not help matters by taking any further action on the basis of this rather wild story.”¹³⁴

This refusal to publicly acknowledge the destruction of the European Jews may, as Wasserstein argues, be seen as total incomprehension of a deliberate policy of extermination, but there was also a perception in both the Foreign and the Colonial Offices that generally, the Jews were prone to exaggeration in order to gain their objectives as well as sympathy for their alleged ill-treatment, as expressed by various civil servants:

¹³² FO371/30917, from Berne to Foreign Office – *telegram to Sidney Silverman*, August 10th 1942

¹³³ FO371/30917/C7853/61/18, *Reported German plan for extermination of all Jews*, 11th August 1942,

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, D. Allen, *Comments*, 10th September 1942

“...As a general rule Jews are inclined to magnify their persecution.”¹³⁵

“Jewish Agency sob stuff.”¹³⁶

“The Jewish technique of atrocity propaganda.”¹³⁷

These somewhat derogatory remarks clearly displayed a degree of anti-Semitism, which it may be argued reflected an attitude that was considered to be acceptable by an element of the Colonial Office administration. This opinion of Jewry in general may be considered to display a pattern of response based on the original reactions and perceptions towards the arrival of the Jews in 1905. They had been viewed then, as alien in their dress, language and manners and this image of difference still lingered in certain echelons of the government.

In his analysis, Russell Wallis argues that the government genuinely believed any display of sympathy for the plight of the Jews would generally exacerbate anti-Semitism,¹³⁸ whilst Kushner argues it was the fear of domestic anti-Semitism that resulted in their refusal to relax the immigration laws during this period. He does, however, state that Morrison's insistence on the maintenance of the immigration laws was fully supported by the Cabinet at all times and this, combined with their refusal to initially acknowledge the continuing destruction of European Jewry, suggests a definite anti-Jewish bias within the higher echelons of government. Morrison insisted on more than one occasion, that any relaxation of the immigration laws could stimulate the growth of anti-Semitism and in support of this argument, he cited the weekly reports of black-marketeering from the Home Information Section, which monitored the causes of anti-Semitism on a national basis.¹³⁹ As a result of this attitude, he was viewed by a group of the campaigners, led by Eleanor Rathbone, as holding anti-Semitic views for his refusal to grant a substantial number of visas for Jewish children to enter Britain in late 1942.¹⁴⁰ In contrast to this alleged attitude of anti-Semitism, he publicly condemned the Nazi atrocities in Czechoslovakia and Poland at a rally organised by the Labour Party in September 1942.¹⁴¹ This seemingly ambiguous approach to the Jewish refugees was to become a hallmark of his attitude towards them throughout the war, as

¹³⁵ FO371/24472/C5471, R. Leeper *minute*, 21st April 1940

¹³⁶ FO921/10, J. Bennett, *Immigration minute*, 7th December 1942

¹³⁷ CO733/445/23, H. Downie, *Illegal immigration minute*, 25th January 1941

¹³⁸ Wallis, *Britain, Germany and the Road to the Holocaust.*, pp.224-225

¹³⁹ Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice.*, pp.152-156

¹⁴⁰ LPL54/136, *Eleanor Rathbone letter to Archbishop of Canterbury*, 29th October 1942

Ibid. 54/145, *Mary Sibthorpe letter to Archbishop of Canterbury*, November 3rd, 1942

¹⁴¹ ‘Pledge of retribution. Mr. Morrison On Nazi Atrocities’, *The Times*, September 3rd, 1942, p.8 issue 49331

in his capacity as Home Secretary, he continued to adhere to and administer the immigration laws.

The weekly reports produced for the Home Intelligence Section contained a separate section which monitored the various reasons which contributed to the rise and fall of anti-Semitism across the country. Tony Kushner examines the causes of anti-Semitism in British society from various angles throughout World War II and he suggests that the stresses in society at this time, such as rationing and the threat of invasion, required a convenient scapegoat to act as a safety valve. He argues that the Jews were an eminently suitable group to fulfill this role, since it was a traditional role that they had fulfilled in the past.¹⁴²

The Public and Anti-Semitism

Throughout the duration of the war, the regular weekly reports on the morale of the nation produced by the Home Intelligence Section, included a section devoted to anti-Semitism which was used by the government to monitor both any increase in its growth and the possible causes for it. These reports attempted to answer the following questions: what was the general attitude of the public towards the Anglo-Jewish community and why did it perceive them as a separate group who were consistently accused of dominating the black market, profiteering and evading military service? What was the response of the Anglo-Jewish leaders towards these accusations and what measures did they implement in a determined effort to counteract the various imputations levelled against the Jews in general?

One of the main accusations levelled at the Jews was their participation in the black market with allegations ranging from trafficking in cigarettes¹⁴³ to the increase in the number of Jews being prosecuted for alleged criminal black market trading.¹⁴⁴ In his analysis of these accusations, Kushner argues that a parallel may be drawn with the depiction of Medieval Jews and usury and he expands this theme by comparing the concept of profiteering with the portrayal of Shylock.¹⁴⁵ This argument is supported by Todd M. Endelman who states that during the 1920s and 1930s many writers including H.G.Wells, John Buchan, T.S.Eliot and Rudyard Kipling depicted Jews as objectional individuals who gave offense with their appearance and alleged participation in criminal activities.¹⁴⁶ These varying depictions of Jews in literature are analysed by Brian

¹⁴² Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice.*, pp, 194-195

¹⁴³ INF1/292 Ministry of Information Home Intelligence Weekly reports no.96,6/8/42 p.12

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., no.73, 25/2/42, P.7 no.744/3/42, p.7;ibid., no.93 16/7/42 p.8

¹⁴⁵ Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice.*, p.119

¹⁴⁶ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain.*,p200

Cheyette who states that there is no one stereotype of the Jew in English literature during this period and he argues that authors 'actively construct them in relation to their own literary and political concerns' and as he suggests, this influence on writing resulted in Jews being depicted as both acceptable and despicable in behaviour and attitude.¹⁴⁷

A further allegation levelled at the community was the apparent avoidance of military service by Jewish men with the comment 'one thing Hitler has done is to put these damned Jews in their place.'¹⁴⁸ Other causes of anti-Semitism were fuelled by the perception that the Jews were profiting from the war, their dominance in variety broadcasts from the BBC and their preponderance in certain industries.¹⁴⁹

The most serious allegation levelled at them was that they had been the cause of the Bethnal Green shelter tragedy because they had panicked when entering the shelter. On March 3rd, 1943, a major catastrophe occurred, when due to inadequate lighting, many people perished as they attempted to enter the bomb shelter at Bethnal Green tube station. An immediate reaction was that the Jews were to blame and this was reported in the Home Intelligence weekly reports:

"These East End Jews; they were so terrified, that they stampeded."

"The trouble was occasioned by the Jews."¹⁵⁰

In his report produced on the 23rd March, 1943, L.R.Dunne acknowledged the public belief that the tragedy had been caused by Jews panicking:

"That this was a Jewish panic. This canard had a much wider circulation and was, I understand endorsed by the broadcast utterances of a renegade traitor from Germany."

He then categorically demonstrated the falseness of this belief with the following comments:

"Not only is it without foundation, it is demonstrably false. The Jewish attendance at this shelter was, and is, so small as to constitute a hardly calculable percentage."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Cheyette, *Construction of 'the Jew'*, p.268

¹⁴⁸ INF1/292 Ministry of Information Home Intelligence Weekly reports no.86 26/5/42, pp.7,8
Ibid., no.116 24/12/42 p.4

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., no.127,128, 11/3/43, p.2, no.128, 18/3/43, p.2,

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 129, 25/3/43, P.10

¹⁵¹ L.R.Dunne., *Tragedy At Bethnal Green. Report on an Inquiry into the Accident at Bethnal Green Tube Station Shelter*. (London: The Stationary Office, 1999), pp.30;61

The actual cause of the disaster, in which 173 people, including 60 children, were crushed to death, was shown to be due to the inadequate entry facilities into the shelter. There was only one entrance for a shelter that could house 10,000 people:

“From the street there was only one entrance, the doors of which opened inwards and led to a flight of nineteen steps. These steps were defective very faintly illuminated, and though 10 feet wide, without a hand-rail in the centre. There was no physical means of controlling the crowd and no warden posted there.”¹⁵²

The accusations that the Jews were prone to panicking as displayed at Bethnal Green, was a commonly held belief and in a determined attempt to refute any accusation of cowardice, Victor Rothschild, the Labour Peer, refused to evacuate his three children to America, with the comment to Chaim Weizmann:

“If I sent those three little things over, the world would say that seven million Jews are cowards.”¹⁵³

Furthermore, detailed regional reports were produced which highlighted the prevalence of anti-Semitism in different parts of the country. Both Leeds and Brighton were considered to be riddled with ill-feeling towards the Jews and various accusations levelled against them included cornering the supply of commodities and charging higher prices, manipulating the use of coupons, displays of ostentation and dominating the entertainment industry.¹⁵⁴ Other common accusations maintained that the Jews, generally, avoided work, they were dirty and they should go to Palestine, as illustrated in a letter sent to the Board of Deputies in June 1942. The writer, who was horrified at the anti-Semitic remarks she had heard during a visit to her hairdressing salon, cited the following comments:

“If the Jews had any decency they’d go to Palestine. What are we doing, keeping a lot of Jews here? They never work... they were so dirty that the authorities didn’t wish to have them.”¹⁵⁵

“Hitler’s’ original plans were quite right.....many of Hitler’s ideas, especially in connection with the Jews, are good”.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Ibid., pp.33-39;INF1/292 Ministry of Information Home Intelligence Weekly reports no no.129, 25/3/43, P.10, no.132,15/4/43 p.4;Sean Longden, *Blitz Kids The Children’s War against Hitler* (London: Constable, 2012), pp.408-419

¹⁵³ Mathew Sweet, *The West End Front* (London; Faber and Faber Ltd., 2011), p.98

¹⁵⁴ HO262/9, *Anti-Semitism Leeds Region*, 12/1/42
Ibid., *South East region*,12/1/42

¹⁵⁵ LMA.ACC 3121/E1/51, *Letter from Mrs.T.C. Owtram to Board of Deputies*, 8th June 1942

¹⁵⁶ LMA.ACC 3121/E1/51, *Letter from Mrs.T.C. Owtram to Board of Deputies*, 8th June 1942

In her analysis of the general perception of the Jews, Sonya O. Rose suggests that the 'myth of the blitz' as described by Angus Calder, the endurance of the British to cope with the bombing, food shortages and general deprivation, required the counterpoint of the Jews, as aliens who did not conform to reinforce the ideal created. The creation of this outsider was then employed to depict the stoicism of the native Briton to boost the self-esteem of the nation. She suggests that it was this requirement which fuelled the anti-Semitism in the public domain.¹⁵⁷

Perhaps in considering the allegations reported to the Home Intelligence Section, it should be noted that the various charges levelled against the Jews, demonstrate an uncanny resemblance to the imputations levelled against them during World War One when they had been accused of profiting from the war, refusing to enlist for military service and cowardice.¹⁵⁸ As a consequence of this similarity, it may be argued that the original perception of the Jewish immigrants as being intent on pursuing all financial opportunities, even to the detriment of the indigenous population, still exerted a strong influence on the public credence in similar circumstances twenty-five years later.

The Response of the Anglo-Jewish Leaders

In 1938, the Board of Deputies created a Co-ordinating Committee (for defence measures), in order to combat the increase of anti-Semitism. This section will trace the growth of its importance as it evolved into the Defence Committee to monitor and advise on any anti-Semitism affecting political, economic and social matters.

Information and assistance were provided to the committee through the Trades Advisory Council, which, initially, met infrequently. In 1940 it was reconstituted and in 1941, it became a democratic organisation, the Trades Advisory Council of British Jewry, commonly known as the Trades Advisory Council. The membership base included Jewish traders, industrialists and professionals.¹⁵⁹ The main aims of this body were to strengthen and maintain standards of integrity, deal with all aspects of Jewish participation in both trade and industry, examine complaints and irregularities which involved both Jews and non-Jews in trade and business and monitor any forms of

¹⁵⁷ Rose, *Which People's War?*, p.98

¹⁵⁸ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939*, pp., 131-132,;-134-135;David Englander (ed), 'The Russian Jewish alien shirker,1918', *A Documentary History*, pp.299-303

¹⁵⁹ UCL Special Collections, *Trades Advisory Council 1936-1938* available at <http://archives.ucl.ac.uk/DServe/dserve.exe?dsqini=Dserv.ini&dsqApp=Archiuves&dsqCmd=Show..tcl&dsqSearch=RefNo==%27&dsqDb=Catalog> accessed 15 February 2015

discrimination, such as defamatory statements in the newspapers.¹⁶⁰ The integral part this body was to play in the Anglo-Jewish response to combat the various anti-Semitic accusations levelled at the community, was illustrated in an address given by The Chairman of the Board of Deputies in March 1942. He was adamant that the role of the Council was to ensure that all Jews, whether traders or members of the public, acted in a manner befitting their position as representatives of the Jews worldwide, with a view to working towards the elimination of black market participation in the community.¹⁶¹ It may be argued that this statement implied an acknowledgement that the Jews were, as Todd Endelman suggests, engaged in sharp practices which tended to exacerbate accusations of involvement in the black market,¹⁶² but consideration must be given to the overall stance of the Board of Deputies which had evolved during the Thirties and was based on a determination to maintain an unobtrusive profile at all times.¹⁶³ In an address from the chairman of the Trades Advisory Council in April 1942, the following points were made:

“At a recent meeting of the Teignmouth (Devon) Chamber of Commerce a tradesman said that he had been told that a Jewish financial syndicate had been formed to purchase all available goods in the country, and to market these goods through Jewish houses only.”¹⁶⁴

He disclosed that illegal practices by Jewish businesses had been investigated recently. These had included eight firms controlled by Rabbis who had been exposed as employing Jewish refugees and exploiting their labour.¹⁶⁵ In 1942, a report was carried in the national press describing the work of the Council as ‘Black Market Tribunals’ which had been established in the main Jewish communities to deter black market practices.¹⁶⁶

In the continued attempts to dispel the idea that the black market was dominated by Jews, the secretary of the Jewish Manchester Information Committee produced a report which focused on the level of reporting in the national press which indicated Jewish participation, as opposed to non-Jewish participation. The report included a short

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ ACC3121/E1/51, Professor S. Brodetsky, *The Vital Work of The Trades Advisory Council*, March 22nd 1942, pp.1-2; CCJ/MS60/15/22/1, *Extracts from an address by Alec Nathan, Chairman of the TAC*, April 27th, 1942, p.3

¹⁶² Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656 to 2000.*, pp210-211

¹⁶³ David Cesarani (Ed.), ‘The Transformation of Communal Authority in Anglo-Jewry, 1914-1940’, *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1990), pp.128,132

¹⁶⁴ MA.ACC3121/E1/57, *Mr. Alec Nathan, Chairman of the Trades Advisory Council at Leicester*, April 27th 1942, p.1

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.2

¹⁶⁶ ‘Jews Aid Purge of Rackets’, *Daily Mail*, February 28th 1942, p.3 Issue 14302

list of cases published in both the national and local press where the emphasis was placed on the religion of the individual.¹⁶⁷ Other actions taken by the community included the preaching of a sermon by the Chief Rabbi condemning Jewish participation in the black market which was reported in the national press,¹⁶⁸ together with various public speeches denouncing the involvement of Jews in illicit dealings.¹⁶⁹

In his examination of Anglo-Jewish leadership during this period, Bolchover argues a major concern of the community leadership was to dispel the perception of Jewish dominance in the black market as they feared that this would stimulate the growth of anti-Semitism. He suggests that the creation of the Trades Advisory Council was the result of the Communities' acceptance of emancipation in Britain as a contract which supported the concept that the Jews should not display any individuality or separate nationality traits which would demonstrate their differences in acceptable society.¹⁷⁰ Such fear was a major factor behind the creation of the Trades Advisory Council through which they endeavoured to refute the numerous allegations levelled against the community by the public, as a result of rationing and general shortages in all spheres of life. In examining the actions of the community, it may be argued that, apart from the influence of rising anti-Semitism during the Thirties, it was the memory of the accusations levelled against the Russian Jews during World War One, when they were accused of refusing to enlist, of avoiding work and of profiteering, which still exerted a strong influence on their actions.

In his analysis of this period, Tony Kushner discusses the attitude and ideas of the Establishment and the general population towards the Jews, suggesting that they were seen as outsiders who did not attempt to assimilate into general society.¹⁷¹ Many people believed that it was their behaviour and attitude towards non-Jews which created the prejudice against them. They were perceived as business people who grasped at any opportunity to make money, they dominated certain areas such as shops and finance and were strongly involved in the black market.¹⁷² These perceptions which

¹⁶⁷ HO262/9 *The Press And The Jews*, 17th July 1942, pp.1-2

¹⁶⁸ 'The Chief Rabbi Jews and Trading Morality', *The Manchester Guardian*, May 23rd 1942, p.7

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 'Black Markets. The Jewish Offenders' March 16th 1942, p.,2; 'Jews And The Black Markets', January 14th 1942, p.6

¹⁷⁰ Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust.*, pp.46-48

¹⁷¹ Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice.*, p.114; Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination.*, pp.127,151

¹⁷² Kushner, *We Europeans? Mass Observation. Race and British Identity in the Twentieth Century* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2008), pp.208-210; Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice.*, pp.114-115; 'Jews Aid Purge Of Rackets,' *Daily Mail*, February 28, 1942, p.3 Issue 14302; Ibid; 'Rabbi Denounces Food Offenders' May 23rd, 1942, p.3 Issue 14373

continued throughout and after the war, are clearly illustrated in letters received by Eleanor Rathbone and Victor Gollancz:

“Do you realise the feelings of the Hampstead residents towards these German Jews? They are rude, insolent, greedy inconsiderate and arrogant.”

“Jews are a sticky lotand in all the outstanding Black Market convictions the prime mover has been a Jew.”¹⁷³

“Jews protest too much.... And the Jews in spite of conflicting figures from all quarters, have not the monopoly of suffering.”

“The non-refugee Jews do in fact obtain goods in short supply by greasing the palms of shopkeepers.”¹⁷⁴

A further factor to be considered is the influence of traditional Christian teachings which depicted the behaviour and attitude of the Jew as being the cause of his own nemesis. Kushner examines the influence of his thinking which implied that the persecution of the Jews was related to their own behaviour namely the crucifying of Jesus Christ, although he argues that the Council of Christians and Jews battled to overcome the belief that anti-Semitism was the fault of the Jews.¹⁷⁵ Tom Lawson supports this and suggests that the Holocaust was a partial Christian crime.¹⁷⁶ In his expose of the Nazi degradation of Jews during the Thirties, the Archbishop of Durham implied that the traditional Christian attitudes towards the Jews provided the basis of anti-Semitism which supported their ideas.¹⁷⁷ Kushner concludes his analysis of the causes of anti-Semitism during this period by suggesting that, because Britain was liberal in thinking and supported national individualism, it expected the Jews to assimilate rather than persist in their adherence to belonging to a specific collective body.¹⁷⁸

This argument is supported by David Cesarani who suggests that the creation of ‘The Other’ is an integral part of British political culture.¹⁷⁹ Perhaps, in considering the

¹⁷³ ULL XIV2 17 (63) *Mrs. M. Crabtree letter to Eleanor Rathbone* 25/1/44; (62) (63) *A.H. Gray letters to Eleanor Rathbone* 5/12/43, 15/12/43

¹⁷⁴ Warwick University M55/157/3/4/NT/1/20 *C. Henderson letter to Victor Gollancz*, 28/6/45; *Gollancz*, 28/6/45; M55/157/3/4/NT/1/20 *Leonard Soper letter to Victor Gollancz* 28/6/45

¹⁷⁵ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p.166,

¹⁷⁶ Tom Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust. Christianity, Memory and Nazism* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), pp.101-102

¹⁷⁷ The Bishop of Durham, *The Yellow Spot* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936), pp.5-8

¹⁷⁸ Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice*, p.161

¹⁷⁹ David Cesarani, ‘An Alien Concept? The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society before 1940’, in David Cesarani & Tony Kushner (Eds.) *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), pp.25-52

allegations reported to the Home Intelligence Section, it should be noted that the various accusations levelled against the Jews, demonstrate an uncanny resemblance to those levelled against them during World War One when they had been accused of profiting from the war, refusing to enlist for military service and cowardice.¹⁸⁰ As a consequence of this similarity, it may be argued that the original perception of the Jewish immigrants between the years 1880-1905 had created an ingrained pattern of response which still exerted an influence on the public reaction in similar circumstances, twenty-five years later.

Whilst accepting the various arguments of London, Wasserstein, Kushner etc. in examining the variety of reasons behind the reported increase in anti-Semitism, the response of the Anglo-Jewish community and the attitude of various government officials towards the Jewish refugees, there is a further concept to be considered, based on the fact that the main link among the responses of the different groups was the continuing influence exerted by the memories of the reactions towards the arrival of the Eastern European Jews at the turn of the century. The accusations of profiteering, avoiding military service and cowardice had all been levelled against the Jews during World War One. The response from the Anglo-Jewish leadership mirrored their earlier attempts, at the turn of the century, to educate the newly arrived Eastern European Jews to assimilate into society in order to avoid being viewed as different. The reaction of the government towards the plight of the European Jews suggests a determination to avoid a repetition of the protest that had arisen with the arrival of the Russian Jews at the turn of the century and during World War One.

Throughout the Thirties and the early years of the war, government policy may be considered to epitomise the mask of Janus. On the one hand, they did not wish to encourage the arrival of the German and Austrian Jewish refugees and cited the possibility of stimulating anti-Semitism in the country, but on the other they were determined to display an appearance of sympathy and toleration to the world. The declaration of war in September 1939 and the fall of France in 1940 were to dictate the future policy of the government towards the refugees, which included internment and weekly reports monitoring anti-Semitism. Taking into account the various factors which contributed to the government response towards the refugees during this period and in particular the perceived growth of anti-Semitism, it may be argued that whilst the

¹⁸⁰ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939*, pp., 131-135; David Englander (ed), 'The Russian Jewish alien shirker, 1918', *A Documentary History* pp.299-303

historians of the period have examined the main reactions of the government in detail, the roots of the growth in anti-Semitism have to a large degree ignored. various

Chapter Two. The acknowledgement of the Holocaust.

July 1942 – December 1942

As the news of the Nazi policies towards the European Jews under their control reached Britain, the Press, with the agreement of the Ministry of Information, started to publish the known facts during June 1942.¹ The initial details were based on a report compiled (in Poland) by the Bund, the underground Jewish Socialist Party. It had been smuggled out to Shmuel Zygielbojm, a member of the Polish Government-In-Exile. As a result of this, he passed the facts to the British Press and persuaded Wladyslaw Sikorsky, the Polish Prime Minister, to broadcast the report of the Nazi atrocities against the Jews, to the Polish population.² These reports were followed by numerous press reports of the ill-treatment of Jews in Vichy France including the deportation of foreign Jews to Eastern Europe and the separation of parents from children.³

This chapter, which is organised chronologically, will analyse how the government maintained its censorship of all communications and why the government was reluctant to release the first news of the Nazi programme of mass murder prior to July 1942. It will consider how far the detailed press reports influenced the reaction of various individuals, many of whom had subscribed to the theory that there was a broad divide between the Nazi regime and the ordinary German. It will examine the reaction of the campaigners in their endeavours to exert pressure on the government to offer assistance to the European Jews in both Nazi-Occupied Europe and the Axis countries, with a specific focus on the proposed Government offer to provide asylum for a limited number of French Jewish children in Vichy France and it will compare it to their response after the initial reports of *Kristallnacht* were published in November 1938.⁴ Finally, it will consider the response of the government in December, when the news of Jewish extermination in Poland was confirmed by the Polish Government-In-Exile. In considering the government response throughout this period, it will consider how far anti-Semitism influenced their reasons for minimising the plight of the Jews.

¹ 'Mass Butchery in Poland', *The Times*, June 10th, 1942, p.3 issue 49258; 'One Million Jews Die', June 30th, 1942, *Daily Mail*, p.3 issue 14405; 'Jews in Poland. Travelling Gas Chambers', *The Daily Telegraph*, June 25th 1942

Ibid., 'Cardinal Hinsley On Nazi Atrocities', July 9th, 1942, p.2 issue 49283

² JTA Jewish News Archive, 'Sikorski Assails Nazi Atrocities Against Jews in Broadcast to Poland', available at <http://www.jta.org/1942/06/10/archive/sikorski-assails-nazi-atrocities-against-jews-in-..> accessed 10 February 2015, P.1; Michael Fleming, *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship of the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2014), pp.97-98

³ 'Round-Up Of Jews In France', *The Times*, September 1st, 1942, p.3 Issue 49329

⁴ *Ibid.*, 'German Jews Rounded Up', November 12th 1938, p..2

Censorship and Propaganda

The period between the beginning of the war in 1939 and the official government acknowledgement of the extermination of the Jews in December 1942, was one of considerable indecision. Strict censorship was imposed on all news as the government moved towards the implementation of various propaganda programmes with, initially, limited success.⁵ The issue of what was known about the Nazi brutalities in Britain cannot be separated from the question of censorship and propaganda. This section will analyse how the policies surrounding censorship, evolved; it will examine the historiography relating to the government censorship and its reactions to the reports of Nazi policies towards the Jews in Europe and it will consider how far the concept, that in Germany, there were two separate groups, the Nazis and the Germans, exerted an influence on both government and the general public viewpoint.

Ian MacLaine analyses the strategies and thinking behind the use of anti-German propaganda as he traces the gradual move towards broadcasting the facts concerning the brutal behaviour of the Nazis.⁶ Philip M. Taylor examines how the government used propaganda to promote the idea of democracy in what he terms 'Total War and Total Propaganda, 1939-1945.'⁷ He looks at the initial failure of the system which was based on the experience of the successful methods employed during World War One but were now deemed to be failing due to inter-departmental fighting and the concept of democratic censorship. He suggests that the decision to employ broadcasting as a propaganda tool was only reached after considerable time was wasted on the planning stages but that, within two years, the system was well organised and extremely effective both at home and abroad.⁸ He points out that the use of the mass media through radio and cinema ensured the nation was kept informed of all important developments which were deemed relevant (to the war effort) by the government. He further maintains that, through the medium of the radio, the government possessed the ability to broadcast both news and valuable propaganda, on a worldwide basis, to the allies and to the enemy.⁹ This ability by the government to keep the nation informed, had already been recognised by Joseph Goebbels in a speech made in March 1933 to the Controllers of German Radio, when he stated:

⁵ Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda In The Twentieth Century. Selling Democracy* (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.151

⁶ Ian McLaine, *Ministry Of Morale. Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), pp.166-170

⁷ Taylor, *British Propaganda In The Twentieth Century.*, p.151

⁸ Ibid., pp.156-157

⁹ Ibid., pp.153-160

“I consider radio to be the most modern and crucial instrument that exists for influencing the masses.”¹⁰

In his analysis of wartime cinema, James Chapman examines the different genres of film used for propaganda, in order to influence public opinion and maintain a firm control of the news media and he cites the influence of news-reels which were effectively deployed to produce a seemingly uncensored view for the public. He argues that film could be utilised to present a specific viewpoint; however, that did not guarantee a general public acceptance of it.¹¹ In effect, both MacLaine and Taylor conclude that, after the initial failure to produce relevant propaganda between 1939-1941, by 1942, the content and focus had been successfully re-vamped into a credible operation demonstrating the ability to produce a successful programme of propaganda in support of the war effort together with a morale-boosting campaign at home and for the allies overseas. The main objectives of producing such propaganda had been achieved.¹² These arguments are supported by Chapman, although he suggests that the deployment of film was of the greatest significance in the overall manipulation of propaganda in Britain during this era.

At the start of the war, various departments, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Information, controlled the censorship of the press, the radio and the cinema. The initial use of British propaganda was criticized by various individuals including J.B. Priestley and a number of refugees,¹³ who were willing to offer their expertise in this field to the government. They strongly believed that insufficient emphasis was placed on providing encouragement for various groups of Germans to display opposition to the Hitler regime.¹⁴ In his letters to Edward Davidson, Priestley suggests that it is the attitude of the hierarchy which is out of touch with what is required to produce a modern approach to enthuse the public:

“Condensation has crept into the rather brief remarks addressed to me by the.... senior civil servants.....These are important personages who decide our policy and are not given to welcoming outside assistance, only pay lip service to this notion of a people’s war...This more than the failure of the new organisations, accounts for the over-stubborn censorships, and the stiffness and creakiness

¹⁰ J. Noakes and G. Pridham (Eds.) *Nazism 1919-1945 Volume two State, Economy and Society 1933-1939* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2008), p.191

¹¹ James Chapman, *The British At War Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939-1945* (London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 1998), pp.249-253

¹² Taylor, *British Propaganda In The Twentieth Century.*, pp.155-161

¹³ Heinrich Fraenkel, *Help us Germans to fight the Nazis!* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1941)

¹⁴ ULL, R.V. *Spathaky letter to Eleanor Rathbone 11/9/39*, RP XIV 2 19 (45); *Eleanor Rathbone letters to Sir Robert Vansittart 18/9/39, Harold Nicholson 25/9/39, R.V. Spathaky 20/9/39*, RP XIV 2 19 (45)

of the machinery of information and propaganda. A final word about the ministry of information... its chief fault, I think is that most of the people at the top are organisers, who know how to run a department but do not know much about the public mind, whereas the men in control ought to have been persons who understood what they are trying to serve. What is wanted in that Ministry is a little less Lincoln's Inn Fields and a bit more Gracie Fields."¹⁵

The role of these departments is analysed by Ian MacLaine and Philip Taylor.¹⁶ The latter examines the censorship imposed on the press and the BBC, pointing out that, as the system settled into place, the very organisations being censored were not entirely aware of government control. He concludes that it was this illusion of non-censorship which contributed to the highly effective propaganda produced during this period. MacLaine argues that it was a deliberate government policy, agreed in 1941, to avoid atrocity stories being made public, in an attempt to counter apathy, since it was believed that sheer horror stories were repellent to the normal mind and great emphasis was placed on ensuring that no mention should be made of the situation facing the European Jews under Nazi rule:

"In self-defence people prefer to think that the victims were specially marked men – probably a pretty bad lot anyway. A certain amount of horror is needed but it must be used very sparingly and must deal always with treatment of indisputably innocent people. Not with political opponents. *And not with Jews.*"¹⁷

He states that even when news of the Nazi persecutions was publicised in 1942, more emphasis was placed on the persecution of Christian churches in Europe by the propagandists in the ministry. He argues that the main reason for this was twofold: the government believed that any special mention of the European Jews' plight could lead to an increase in anti-Semitism and they wished to avoid any accusation that the war was being fought on behalf of the Jews. This fear of increasing anti-Semitism was based on information received through regular weekly reports issued by the Home Intelligence Division to various government departments chronicling all daily aspects of life in the country. This information included reports of black market involvement, evasion of the call-up by young Jews and a general dislike of Jews in general.¹⁸ He also suggests after

¹⁵ Neil Hanson (Editor), *Priestley's Wars, Letter to Edward Davidson 11th October 1939* (Ilkley, Great Northern Books, 2008), pp.198-199

¹⁶ Taylor, *British Propaganda In The Twentieth Century.*, pp.160-173

¹⁷ McLaine, *Ministry Of Morale.*, p.,166

¹⁸ Ibid., pp.166-167

INF1/292/73, *Black markets and Anti-semitism* Regions,2,5,9,22 25th February,1942, p.7; Regions 22,3,5,10,11 5th March,1942, p.7;86, 18th-26th May,1942, p.7;95.Regions 8,9,10,12 30th July 1942, p.110

the realisation that the atrocity stories which were circulated during World War One, were proved to be false, there was a distinct possibility of similar propaganda being treated with scepticism by the public.¹⁹

In a detailed examination of the BBC reporting of the Nazi atrocities in Europe, Jeremy D. Hunt argues that the news reported on the Home Service was totally different to that of the European Services. He suggests that this disparity between the two services was a deliberate government policy, as stated by Brendan Bracken, the Minister of Information, in 1941:

“The governors of the BBC have always recognised that in wartime it is necessary and right that the government should control the policy of the BBC in matters affecting the war effort, the publication of news, and the conduct of propaganda.”²⁰

The guidelines produced by the Ministry of Information for the Home Service, ensured that the persecution of the European Jews received minimal reporting in order to limit the perceived growth of anti-Semitism in the country.²¹ In complete contrast, the European service was explicit in its detailed reporting of the Nazi atrocities, since this was considered to be a useful tool in the propaganda war waged on the radio throughout Europe.²²

The first publication of the extermination reports

In July 1942, the first reports of the Nazi extermination policies in Occupied Europe were published in the national press. The initial public response was muted, but as more detailed reports of the Vichy policy towards the French Jews were reported, church leaders, members of the Anglo-Jewish community and individual campaigners began to lobby the government to implement a rescue programme. Finally, in December 1942, the government publicly acknowledged its awareness of the Nazi extermination policy being implemented against the European Jews in occupied Europe. This section will examine how the public reaction to both the initial reports and the later news published in September, changed, as more graphic detail was published.

It has been suggested by Nicholas Terry that British Intelligence became aware the Nazis were pursuing a policy of mass executions in Eastern Europe from 1941 onwards. He states that their awareness was based on the German radio messages

¹⁹ Ibid., 167,168

²⁰ Jeremy D Harris, ‘Broadcasting The Massacres. An analysis of the BBC’S contemporary coverage of the Holocaust’, in David Cesarani (Ed), *Critical Concepts in Holocaust Studies.Vol. V Responses to the Persecution and Mass Murder of the Jews* (London; Routledge, 2004), p.315

²¹ Ibid., pp.299-364

²² Ibid., pp.304-315

decoded at Bletchley Park.²³ In 1997, an article appeared in *The Guardian* which supports this theory, by quoting information passed to British intelligence in 1941, stating that:

“The execution of Jews is so recurrent a feature of these reports that the figures have been omitted from the daily transcripts)... Whether all those executed as Jews are indeed such is of course doubtful, but the figures are no less conclusive as evidence of a policy of savage intimidation if not of ultimate extermination.”²⁴

In their examination of the period, both Richard Breitman and Sinclair McKay cite a speech by Churchill in August 1941, clearly indicating a British awareness of the Nazi extermination policies in the Soviet Union without mentioning the Jews:²⁵

“Whole districts are being exterminated. Scores of thousands literally scores of thousands of executions in cold blood are being perpetrated by the German police-troops upon the Russian patriots who defend their native soil.....here has never been such merciless butchery on such a scale, or approaching such a scale...we are in the presence of a crime without a name.”²⁶

Breitman and Lewis suggest that any mention of the Jews in the USSR was deliberately omitted from the speech, since it was felt that mention of them might alert the Nazis to their codes being broken.²⁷ This argument is supported by David Cesarani in *The Guardian* in an article entitled ‘Code breakers reported slaughter of Jews in 1941’, in which he stated:

“It was a double tragedy The allies could not reveal their knowledge because it would have betrayed the code-breaking, and it was at the nadir of allied power.”²⁸

A further consideration, not mentioned by Breitman or Lewis, is that the refusal to acknowledge the extermination of Russian Jews may have been influenced by the government decision to minimise any public mention of Jewish persecution, thus avoiding the accusation of waging war on behalf of the Jews, and thereby minimise any possibility of stimulating anti-Semitism which, as reported to the Home Office on a

²³ Nicholas Terry, ‘Conflicting Signals: British Intelligence On The “Final Solution” Through Radio Intercepts And Other Sources, 1941-1942’, *Yad Vashem Studies XXXII*, 2004., pp.351-396

²⁴ ‘Code Breakers reported slaughter of Jews in 1941’, *The Guardian*, May 20,1997, p.5

²⁵ Ibid., p.5

²⁶ Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets. What The Nazis Planned, What The British And The Americans Knew* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), p.109; Sinclair McKay, *The Secret Life Of Bletchley Park. The WWII Codebreaking Centre and the Men and Women Who Worked There* (London: Aurum Press Ltd., 2010), pp.117-118; ‘Hope For The Enslaved’, *The Times*, August 26th 1941, p.4 Issue 49014

²⁷ Breitman, *Official Secrets.*, p.109; McKay, *The Secret Life Of Bletchley Park.*, pp.117,118

²⁸ ‘Code Breakers reported slaughter of Jews in 1941’, *The Guardian*, May 20,1997, P.5

weekly basis, was prevalent during this period. The government was aware of the treatment and conditions being experienced by the Eastern European Jews during 1941, through specialised reports that were produced by the Home Office based on information received from various organisations including the Jewish Telegraph Agency based in both London and New York. These reports contained explicit details of Nazi atrocities aimed at the Jews, from a variety of individual sources in occupied Europe:

“The Germans clearly pursue a policy of extermination against the Jews. From an official German document the statement is quoted “The only things Jewish that will remain in Poland will be Jewish cemeteries.”
ANP/2718/41 4.7.41; Aufbau New York to Various Addresses.

“Many reports refer to batches of Jews shot... During the third week of August, 6743 Jews – men women and children – were executed by the Germans in Ukraine.”
LIV/56836/41; 18.6.41; Guttman, Bucharest to Landes Baltimore.²⁹

The press did not publish the known facts until June 1942,³⁰ when, on June 17th, the JTA published reports of the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto and the execution of 60,000 Jews.³¹ The earliest reports of the atrocities in Poland were publicised in a broadcast to the Polish nation by the Polish Prime Minister-In-Exile, Wladyslaw Sikorsky, on June 9th, which gave a detailed account of the mass murders of Jews in Poland within the last year:³²

“The Jewish population in Poland is doomed to annihilation in accordance with the maxim – slaughter all the Jews regardless of how the war will end.”³³

This was followed by a detailed account published on June 25th 1942, by *The Daily Telegraph*.³⁴ The initial details were based on a report compiled (in Poland) by the Bund, the underground Jewish Socialist Party. It had been smuggled out to Shmuel Zygielbojm, a member of the Polish Government-In-Exile. As a result of this, he passed the facts to the British Press and persuaded Wladyslaw Sikorsky, the Polish Prime

²⁹ HO213/953, Postal & Telegraph Censorship report on Jewry No.3 Part II, *Situation in Europe* 22nd January 1942, p.3

³⁰ ‘One Million Jews Die’, *Daily Mail*, June 30th, 1942, p.3 issue 14405; ‘Mass Butchery in Poland’, *The Times*, June 10th, 1942, p.3 issue 49258; Ibid., ‘Cardinal Hinsley On Nazi Atrocities’, July 9th, 1942, p.2 issue 49283 available at

³¹ <http://www.jta.org/1942/06/17/archive/60000-jews-executed-in-vilna-last-month-in-c> accessed 10 February 2015

³² JTA Jewish News Archive, ‘Sikorski Assails Nazi Atrocities Against Jews in Broadcast to Poland’, available at <http://www.jta.org/1942/06/10/archive/sikorski-assails-nazi-atrocities-against-jews-in-..> 10 February 2015, P.1

³³ Harris, ‘Broadcasting The Massacres. An analysis of the BBC’S contemporary coverage of the Holocaust’, p.304

³⁴ ‘Germans Murder 700,000 Jews In Poland’, *The Daily Telegraph*, June 25th 1942

Minister, to broadcast the report of the Nazi atrocities against the Jews, to the Polish population.³⁵

This was swiftly followed by various press reports detailing information of the Nazi atrocities.³⁶ In his analysis of the general acknowledgement that the Polish Jews were being murdered, Michael Fleming stresses that the level of reporting in the press during this period was exceptional, since, prior to June 1942 and after July 1942, very little was mentioned about the situation of the Jews in Occupied Europe. He suggests that there were various reasons for this change in attitude including the government realisation that it would become increasingly difficult to suppress the news due to increasing pressure from the Polish Government-In-Exile to make the report public and the fact that the Ministry of Information viewed the reports as a potential weapon in the war of propaganda.³⁷ In a document issued by the Ministry of Information in 1941, any propaganda that mentioned the Jews, was to be limited, thus reflecting the policy of the Cabinet and the Home Secretary to censor such propaganda that mentioned the Jews.³⁸ When discussing the use of atrocity propaganda in September 1942, the same attitude still prevailed. In an internal BBC memo discussing the news of the Nazi atrocities, Sir Richard Maconachie stated:

“I was also told to see what we could do about the maltreatment of children, although in the case of Jewish children it would be better not to refer to their race.”³⁹

The government was alert to the fact that a proportion of the British public was convinced that the Jews had been instrumental in taking the country into war.⁴⁰ This belief, which had been publicly supported by both Lord Beaverbrook: and Oswald Mosely during the Thirties⁴¹ was similar to the accusations levelled against the Jews

³⁵ JTA Jewish News Archive, 'Sikorski Assails Nazi Atrocities Against Jews in Broadcast to Poland', available at <http://www.jta.org/1942/06/10/archive/sikorski-assails-nazi-atrocities-against-jews-in-..> 10 February 2015, P.1; Fleming, *Auschwitz, the Allies.*, pp.97,98

³⁶ JTA Jewish News Archive 'Nazis Massacre 700,000 Polish Jews: Thousands executed in Mobile Gas Chambers' available at <http://www.jhta.org/1942/06/26/archive/nazis-massacre-700,000-polish-jews> accessed 10 February 2015, Pp.1-3; JTA Jewish News Archive '60,000 Jews Executed in Vilna Last Month in Continuous Two-week Pogrom' available at <http://www.jta.org/1942/06/17/archive/60000-jews-executed-in-vilna-last-month-in-c> accessed 10 February 2015; 'One Million Jews Die', *Daily Mail*, June 30th, 1942, p.3, Issue 14405; 'Cardinal Hinsley On Nazi Atrocities', *The Times*, July 9th 1942, p.2, Issue 49283

³⁷ Fleming, *Auschwitz, the Allies.*, pp.63-64

³⁸ Ibid., pp58-59

³⁹ BBC-Archive-WWII: Witnessing the Holocaust - *Memo on Reporting Atrocities in Occupied Europe*, 26th September 1942 available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/holocaust/5138.shtml>, accessed 17 May 2016

⁴⁰ I.Rennap, *Anti-Semitism*, p.p.103,107

⁴¹ Geoffrey C. Field, 'Anti-Semitism With The Boots Off: Recent Research On England', *Wiener Library Bulletin* 1983, *Special Issue*, p.39: Skidelsky, Oswald Mosley., pp.436-437; Rennap, *Anti-Semitism.*, p.103

during the Boer War by various individuals and groups including, J.A.Hobson who had stated :

“Recent developments of Transvaal gold-mining have thrown the economic resources of the country more and more into the hands of a small group of international financiers, chiefly German in origin and Jewish in race... A consideration of these points throws a clear light upon the nature of the conflict in South Africa. We are fighting in order to place a small international oligarchy of mine-owners and speculators in power at Pretoria..”⁴²

and John Burns, the Trades Union Congress and the Social Democratic Federation who remarked during a parliamentary debate during the Boer War:

“Wherever we examine there is the financial Jew operating, directing inspiring the agencies that have led to war...I thought I had landed in a synagogue when I went to hear the trial of theJohannesburg prisoners...I thought I had dropped into some place in Aldgate or Houndsditch...The trail of the financial serpent is over this war from beginning to end.”⁴³ John Burns.

They had all insisted that Jewish financiers had influenced the government into declaring war.⁴⁴ This awareness of the possibility of apparent support of the accusations levelled against the Jews by Oswald Mosley⁴⁵ gave rise to a policy of ambivalence towards the plight of the European Jews. On the one hand, they did not want to publicly acknowledge that European Jewry was being slaughtered by the Nazis, but on the other, the publication of the atrocities could be used as propaganda to further the war effort. In his analysis of the government censorship relating to reporting news about the Jews, Michael Fleming argues that, since the government maintained that all Jews were nationals of their respective countries, they subscribed to the belief they were either (or should be) assimilated in the countries of which they were nationals. This policy ensured that the public focus was directed towards the general suffering of the countries affected by the Nazi extermination policies, rather than the murder of the Jews.⁴⁶ This argument is supported by MacLaine who suggests that the deliberate avoidance of mentioning the Jews was due to the reported increase in anti-Semitism which appeared in the regular weekly reports received by the Home Intelligence Section of the Ministry of Information.⁴⁷ Kushner, whilst supporting these arguments, maintains that the liberal perspective of the government and the Establishment, which had

⁴² J.A. Hobson, *The War In South Africa*.,pp.189-197

⁴³ HC Deb, 6th February 1900 vol 78 cc731-828, p.26

⁴⁴ David Fleming, ‘Jews and the British Empire c.1900’, *History Workshop Journal* Issue 63,2007

⁴⁵ Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosely*. , pp.436-437

⁴⁶ Fleming, *Auschwitz*., pp.47-48;-85

⁴⁷ MacLaine, *Ministry Of Morale*., pp.166-168

assumed the anti-Semitic policies pursued by the Nazi regime was based on the theory that the Jews were different, ultimately deterred them from admitting that the situation of the Jews under Nazi occupation might be a unique occurrence. He argues that if the government had acknowledged that the Jews were singled out as a separate race, as the Foreign Office had stated, it 'would perpetuate the very Nazi doctrine we are determined to stamp out' and such a government stance could encourage nationalism.⁴⁸

. It may, therefore, be argued that the government pursued a definite policy of publicly disregarding the plight of the Jews, since they did not want to link the war effort with the protection of the Jews. In pursuing this approach, they intended to avoid any link to the accusation that it was being fought on behalf of the Jews. Furthermore they distrusted Jewish sources which they believed were prone to exaggeration.⁴⁹

The decision of the government to minimise the plight of the Jews in Nazi-occupied territory was clearly illustrated by their deliberate policy of limiting any mention of the Jews until it suited their propaganda programme in mid-1942. This was followed by minimal reporting of the persecution being inflicted on European Jewry until the end of the year, when the news of the Nazi actions could no longer be contained and the general population became aware of the massacres taking place in Europe. A major consideration of this decision to minimise the plight of the Jews was the determination of the government to portray the war as a battle of Great Britain versus evil epitomised by Hitler and the Nazis, rather than a war to rescue any one individual group of people. Their ability to implement this with little opposition, was helped by the belief of many people in Britain that the majority of Germans did not support Hitler and his brutal policies of extermination, although, as the war progressed, attitudes towards Germany did begin to change.

In his detailed analysis of the British press, Andrew Sharf argues that, although it was generally contradictory rather than negative in its reporting of the Jewish situation, the influence it exerted on public opinion was a major factor in helping to form both the short and long-term reaction of the public towards the European Jews.⁵⁰ He maintains that from the start of the war in 1939, numerous reports had appeared in the press documenting the atrocities being committed by the Nazis in the occupied areas of Europe.⁵¹ In her examination of the press coverage emanating from the reports of the atrocities, Deborah Lipstadt supports this argument by comparing the different

⁴⁸ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, pp.125-127;

⁴⁹ Ibid.; Tony Kushner, 'Different Worlds. British perceptions of the Final Solution during the Second World war', in David Cesarani (Ed.) *The Final Solution Origins and Implementation* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.249-251

⁵⁰ Sharf, *The British Press*, pp.199-209

⁵¹ Ibid., pp.88-95

presentation of the facts between the British and the American press. She notes that in Britain, the reporting was clear and emphatic with bold headlines and prominent positioning, whereas the reporting in the American press was far more subdued, with many reports being printed on inner pages with little detail.⁵²

In general, most of the papers carried detailed accounts of the plight facing the European Jews. *The Manchester Guardian* which had carried in-depth accounts of the Nazi policies towards the Jews during the Thirties, represented the most liberal approach, whilst the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* which appealed to a broad swathe of newspaper readers, tended towards a more middle-of-the-road view, with some exceptions, such as the demand for internment by the *Daily Express* in 1940.⁵³

In contrast to the general approach taken by the press, Colin Shindler examines the response of *The Times* towards the rise of Hitler and the Nazi regime during the Thirties and suggests that the editors of the paper at this time reflected the broad approach of the government and establishment towards Nazi anti-Semitism (the Jews were to blame for their predicament, they were alien and they refused to assimilate into normal society), thus distancing the paper from the anti-Nazi approach taken by *The Manchester Guardian* and various other newspapers.⁵⁴ The paper actively supported the policy of appeasement and in 1937, the editor, Geoffrey Ward, stated that:

“I have always been convinced that the peace of the world depends more than anything else on our getting into reasonable relations with Germany.”⁵⁵

In June 1942 the initial accounts which appeared in the national press, were concise and factual. *The Times*, whilst reporting the arrests and executions of the Poles, briefly alluded to the Jews: - ‘Massacres of tens of thousands of Jews have been carried out this year. People are being starved to death in the ghettos.’⁵⁶ Shindler argues that by concentrating on the suffering of the Poles rather than focusing on the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination, *The Times* did not grasp the concept of the Nazi-Jewish policy.⁵⁷ In contrast to this concise approach, both the *Daily Telegraph* which headlined its report *Germans Murder 700,000 Jews in Poland* and the *Daily Mail* under the headline *One*

⁵² Deborah H. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief. The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), pp.162-164

⁵³ ‘Fifth columns menace in Britain,’ *Daily Express*, April 19th 1940, p.5

⁵⁴ Colin Shindler, ‘The “Thunderer” and The Coming of The Shoah: *The Times* of London, 1933-1942’ Robert Moses Shapiro (Editor), *Why Didn’t the Press Shout American and International Journalism During the Holocaust* (New Jersey: Yeshiva Press, 2003), pp.154,157-158

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.153

⁵⁶ ‘Mass Butchery in Poland’, *The Times*, June 10th, 1942, p.3 issue 49258

⁵⁷ Shindler, ‘The “Thunderer” and The Coming of The Shoah., pp.162-163

Million Jews Die, contained explicit details of the atrocities being perpetrated by the Nazis:

Daily Telegraph – ‘Jews in Poland Travelling Gas chambers’ June 25th 1942

“Men and boys between 14 and 60 have been driven together into one place.....there killed either by Knifing, Machine guns or grenades... Children in orphanages, pensioners... and the sick have been shot .Women have been killed in the streets... In November the slaughter of Jews by gas in the Polish territories incorporated in the Reich began.”⁵⁸

Daily Mail – ‘One Million Jews Die’ June 30th 1942

“One million Jews, one-sixteenth of the entire world population of Jewry have been exterminated in Axis-controlled countries since the outbreak of war... .Poland – About 700,000 killed. Mass executions of Jews deported from Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Holland Latvia 125,000 Jews murdered...Soviet Russia – Odessa 25,000 men,women and children were crowded into barracks and machine gunned. Barracks were then set on fire and occupants burned to death.”⁵⁹

One of the few papers to consistently report the deportations of the European Jew was *The Jewish Chronicle* which reported on the deportation of the German Jews in November 1941 and continued to publish both factual accounts and rumours of massacres in Eastern Europe throughout the beginning of 1942. On July 3rd 1942, the front page carried the headline ‘MASS MURDER IN POLAND 700,000 Jews Wiped Out’ using this as the lead section of the editorial page.⁶⁰ The paper continued to provide updated reports and on 11th December, 1942, it carried the headline TWO MILLION JEWS SLAUGHTERED on the front page surrounded by a black border.⁶¹ The paper actively lobbied the government for action and continued to do so, but in 1943, domestic matters started to dominate its reporting and less mention was made of the European Jews. In his analysis of the approach taken by the newspaper, David Cesarani suggest that there was a limit to the quantity of devastating reports that could be published and tolerated by the readership at this time. He argues that the reason for this was twofold: the news was appalling and the Jews had accepted that, rather than focus on their own concerns, they subscribed to the ethos the survival of the nation reigned supreme over all other concerns.⁶² A further consideration was the belief that in promoting their

⁵⁸ ‘Jews in Poland. Travelling Gas Chambers’, *The Daily Telegraph*, June 25th 1942

⁵⁹ ‘One Million Jews Die’, *Daily Mail*, June 30th, 1942, p.3 issue 14405

⁶⁰ ‘Mass Murder In Poland’, *The Jewish Chronicle*, July 3, 1942 pp.1,8

⁶¹ Ibid., ‘Two Million Slaughtered’, December 11, 1942, pp.1,8

⁶² David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry 1941-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.178-179

patriotism, they would lessen the possibility of stimulating an increase in anti-Semitism. This viewpoint had been actively promoted by both Neville Laski in his capacity as President and Sidney Salomon as Press Officer of the Board of Deputies in the books they had published in 1939, in their written refutation of the accusations levelled against the Jewish community.⁶³

There was little public reaction to the initial reports, although church leaders responded with letters to the press condemning the atrocities.⁶⁴ In September 1942, numerous press reports were published of the ill-treatment of Jews in Vichy France, including the deportation of foreign Jews to Eastern Europe and the separation of parents from children.⁶⁵ In August and September, *The Times* started to publish details covering the round-ups in the Vichy policy towards the Jews within its territory.⁶⁶ The focus of the French reports in September 1942 swiftly moved to the exposure of the fate of Jewish children, with a succession of articles that included detailed descriptions of their treatment:

The Times – ‘**Anti-Jewish Drive in France**’ August 28th 1942

“Even Jewish children were liable to arrest.... Eyewitnesses confirm reports that women threw their children from windows before jumping out themselves.”⁶⁷

The Times – ‘**Round-Up Of Jews In France**’ September 1st 1942

“French police rounded up for deportation Jews of foreign origin. Many were over 70 years old, many were young children...Mothers were separated from children.”⁶⁸

The Times - ‘**Vichy’s Jewish Victims. Children Deported To Germany**’ September 7th 1942’

“Recently a train containing 4,000 children, unaccompanied, without identification papers or even distinguishing marks, left Lyons for Germany.”⁶⁹
 “Meanwhile the plight of between 5,000 and 8,000 homeless Jewish children in the unoccupied zone.....remains desperate.”⁷⁰

⁶³ Neville Laski KC, *Jewish Rights and Jewish Wrongs* (London: Socino Press, 1939), pp.121-125; Sidney Salomon, *The Jews of Britain New and Revised Introduction* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1939), pp.65-71

⁶⁴ ‘Cardinal Hinsley on Nazi atrocities’, *The Times*, July 9th, 1942, p.2 Issue 49283.

⁶⁵ ‘Round-Up Of Jews In France’, *The Times*, September 1st, 1942, p.3 Issue 49329imes,

⁶⁶ Ibid., ‘7,000 Frenchmen exiled. “Jews And Communists Sent To Poland” July 22nd 1942, p.3 Issue 49294
 Ibid., ‘Jews’ Plight In France’, August 8th 1942, p.3 Issue 49309

⁶⁷ Ibid., ‘Anti-Jewish Drive In France’, August 28th 1942, p.3 Issue 49236

⁶⁸ Ibid., ‘Round-Up Of Jews In France’ September 1st, 1942, p.3 Issue 49329

⁶⁹ Ibid., ‘Vichy’s Jewish Victims. Children Deported To Germany’, September 7th, 1942, p.3 Issue 49334

⁷⁰ Ibid., ‘More deportations Of French Jews. Children’s Plight.’, September 9th 1942, p.3 Issue 49336

This news was confirmed in the House of Commons in a speech by Winston Churchill, condemning the deportations as a bestial tragedy: -

“...the most bestial, the most squalid and the most senseless of all their offences, namely the mass deportation of Jews from France, with the pitiful horrors attendant upon the calculated and final scattering of families.”⁷¹

The Times would continue to report the round-ups, the mass deportations from Europe to Poland and eyewitness testimonies of the various atrocities being committed, but its underlying policy was to support the government and in particular the Foreign Office, in its approach to the growing Jewish problem. This ensured that no mention was made of the reality of mass extermination in Europe which was based on an organised programme.⁷² In his conclusion to the stance taken by *The Times* during the Forties, Shindler suggests it was unsure of its role: did it act as an unofficial organ of the government? Did it represent a broader establishment? Was its role to be a newspaper of independent views and essential reporting? He considers that it was all of these, but, as he emphasises, most of its news-space was devoted to supporting the government in its war effort and the events unfolding in Europe. Taking this approach into account, the destruction of the European Jews was relegated to the bottom of the agenda, since they were not classified as a priority by the government who were determined to minimise their plight.⁷³

As a result of the detailed reporting in the press, various organisations and individuals approached a number of government officials in both the Foreign and the Colonial Offices, with a variety of schemes to rescue European Jews, with a strong focus on the rescue of Jewish children.⁷⁴ This initial response to the news of the Nazi atrocities presented a complete volte-face to the widely held view that there was a clear division between the Nazi regime and the German populace, which had given credence to the theory of German versus Nazi.

Germans versus Nazis

In 1941 Sir Robert Vansittart published *Black Record*, a complete version of his broadcasts from 1940 which had effectively proposed that Germany and German culture

⁷¹ HC Sitting, *Winston Churchill*, 8th September 1942, series 5, vol 383

⁷² Shindler, 'The "Thunderer" and The Coming of The Shoah.', pp.164-165

⁷³ Ibid., pp.168-169

⁷⁴ Cohen, *Rescue the Perishing*, pp.163-177

were dominated by a lust for war and a desire to establish a world empire; he further argued that the brutal actions of the Nazi regime illustrated a reversion to its barbarian roots.⁷⁵ His ideas exemplified the differing views of the Germans in Britain. Support came from various politicians including Harold Nicholson and publications including *The Spectator*,⁷⁶ whilst condemnation came from (the progressive publisher) Victor Gollancz, in his response published in January 1942, in which he argued that inflicting drastic retribution on Germany would not create a long-term peaceful solution for the future.⁷⁷ In a further criticism of the Vansittart publication, Heinrich Fraenkel, in a Fabian Society pamphlet published in June 1941, stated that in his accusations against Germany, Vansittart had handed Goebbels an immense boost for his propaganda against Britain with the threat of drastic punishment to be inflicted on a defeated Germany by a victorious Britain.⁷⁸

Through the analysis of these different views, it becomes apparent that there was a marked tendency, which had prevailed throughout the Thirties, for a large proportion of the public and the government to view the attitude of Germany through the prism of the good German versus the Nazi, resulting in a widespread belief that the majority of Germans did not support the policies pursued by Hitler against the Jews.

In his analysis of the period, Russell Wallis maintains the attitude of the British towards Germany was strongly influenced by a belief that there were great similarities between the two nations, thus giving rise to the theory the majority of Germans would act as a brake on the extremes of Nazi policy towards the Jews.⁷⁹ He strengthens his argument by suggesting that this attitude resulted in any public discussion about the German atrocities as reaching a position of vitriolic stalemate.⁸⁰ The difference in attitude is clearly illustrated by an exchange of words between Anthony Eden and Lord Winterton in the House of Commons during the debate on the German Invasion of Russia in 1941. Eden spoke of 'Hitler's Germany,' thus implying that there were two separate Germanys whilst Lord Winterton stated that 'I do not recognise any difference

⁷⁵Ibid.), pp.49-57

⁷⁶ 'A variety of possible opinions may be held about Black', *The Spectator*, 30th January 1941, P.5 available at <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/31st-january-1941/5/a-variety-of-possible-opinion> accessed 3 April 2015

Harold Nicholson, 'Marginal Comment', *The Spectator*, 8th May 1942, P.9 available at <http://archive.co.uk/article/8th-may-1941/9/marginal-comment> accessed 3 April 2015

⁷⁷ Victor Gollancz, *Shall Our Children Live Or Die? A reply to Vansittart on the German Problem* (London; Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1942) pp.1-12

⁷⁸ Heinrich Fraenkel, *Vansittart's Gift For Goebbels A German Exile's Answer to Black Record* (London: The Fabian Society, 1941)

⁷⁹ Wallis, *Britain, Germany and the Road to the Holocaust..*, pp., 236-237

⁸⁰ Ibid.,pp.236-239

between Hitler and the Germans at the present time.' ⁸¹ Such an exchange of words illustrates the attitude of the Foreign Office who subscribed to the theory that Nazism had been imposed on Germany and was not generally supported by the nation.⁸² Wallis examines how the persistent belief, that the German nation was in a position to influence the extremes of Nazi policy towards the Jews, was used in later propaganda broadcasts to Germany, in an attempt to split the unity of the Germans after the Nazi atrocities became public knowledge.⁸³

Another prominent supporter of this idea that Germany was divided between the Nazis and the Germans, was Eleanor Rathbone who forwarded a copy of a pamphlet to Duff Cooper at the Ministry of Information written by a German refugee Heinrich Fraenkel, who had published a book supporting this theory '*Help us Germans to fight the Nazis!*,' in which he criticised the propaganda produced to bolster the German opposition.⁸⁴

In her analysis of the German reaction towards the atrocities being committed by the Nazis, Brigitte Granzow argues that, since the regime imposed on the population under Hitler, was effectively a totalitarian regime, the majority of Germans believed Hitler was unaware of the Nazi atrocities committed in the concentration camps and if he had known, he would have stopped them.⁸⁵ In effect, it may be argued that this presents a mirror image of the British belief in the 'good' German versus the Nazi. It is interesting to note that a similar attitude prevailed in the U.S.S.R. where most Russians believed that Stalin was unaware of the machinations of the NKVD during the period of the Great Terror.⁸⁶

A further consideration suggested by Bernard Crick is that the language employed by Hitler in his attitude towards the Jews was viewed as rhetoric rather than reality, ⁸⁷ whilst Andrew Sharf argues that the concept of a deliberate policy of Jewish persecution was inferred by the press as being more akin to the Russian pogroms of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, such as Kishinev, rather than the behaviour of a civilised nation.⁸⁸

⁸¹ HC Deb, *German Invasion of Russia*, 24 June 1941, vol 372 cc971-1006, pp1,5

⁸² Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust. Christianity.*, pp.115-117

⁸³ Wallis, Britain, *Germany and the Road to the Holocaust.*, pp.236-239

⁸⁴ ULL, *Eleanor Rathbone letter and pamphlet to Duff Cooper*, 25 June 1941 XI 2 19 (53); Fraenkel, *Help us Germans to fight the Nazis!*

⁸⁵ Dr. Brigitte Granzow, *A Mirror Of Nazism British opinion and the Emergence of Hitler 1929-1933* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1964), p.225

⁸⁶ Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin. The Court of the Red Tsar* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2003), pp203-210,

⁸⁷ Granzow, *A Mirror Of Nazism.*, pp.11-12; Andrew Sharf, *The British Press and Jews Under Nazi Rule* (London; Oxford university Press, 1964), Pp.,6,7

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp.,6-7

In his assessment of the initial response by the Church of England leadership to the threat posed by the Nazi regime, Tom Lawson argues that their initial understanding of Nazism was an attack on Christianity and civilisation.⁸⁹ It may be argued therefore, that utilising these ideas of the Church leaders by focusing on Christian persecution, the government could portray the war as a crusade to save Christian society from the alleged paganism of the Nazis, thus avoiding any mention of the growing Jewish persecution in Europe. It was believed that this approach would resonate with the public, since, during this period, the Nazis were viewed as a separate body within Germany and they did not truly represent the German nation as epitomised by the Vansittart *Black Record*.⁹⁰

The initial response of the campaigners from July – October 1942

As the first reports of the Nazi policies in Europe were published, the campaigners began to lobby the government for assistance to be given to the European Jews. Eleanor Rathbone, who was to consistently demand that assistance and rescue should be provided for the refugees, had her first major clash with the government over the proposed rescue of French Jewish children in Vichy France in September 1942. This scheme, which failed, was a major cause of her antipathy towards Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, whom she considered to be an anti-Semite. Her view was based on his insistence that granting permission for the admission of a substantial number of Jewish refugees into the country in November 1942, which he refused, could stimulate an increase in anti-Semitism.⁹¹

Initially, the Council of Christians and Jews had advocated there should be no specific mention of anti-Semitism. However, when the reports of Jewish persecution by the Nazi regime, were published, the leaders of the churches commenced actively campaigning to rescue the Jews, with meetings and by means of letters to the press, both on an individual and joint basis.

Cardinal Hinsley initially condemned the killing of the Polish Jews in a broadcast on the European Service when the first definite news of the Nazi policies was publicised in July 1942.⁹² This was followed by a large demonstration protesting against the Nazi atrocities at the Royal Albert Hall in October, presided over by William Temple,

⁸⁹ Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust Christianity*, pp.94-95

⁹⁰ Sir Robert Vansittart, *Black Record: Germans Past And Present* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1941)

⁹¹ Ibid., pp.168-.170

⁹² 'Cardinal Hinsley on Nazi Atrocities. Barbarities in Poland', *The Times*, July 9th, 1942. p.2 Issue 49283

the Archbishop of Canterbury. Many expressions of support were received from a variety of individuals including the Archbishop of York, the Ethiopian Emperor, the Prime Ministers of Greece and Belgium and a strong message of sympathy from Winston Churchill, which included the following observations:

“The systematic cruelties to which the Jewish people ...have been exposed ...under the Nazi regime are amongst the most terrible events of history... Free men and women denounce these evil crimes and when this world’s struggle ends.....racial persecution will be ended.”⁹³

It may be argued that in this message of support from Churchill, the allusion that racial persecution would only cease when the war was ended, laid the groundwork for all future statements from the government, which always reiterated that until the war was won, little could be done for the plight of the refugees.

In conjunction with the protests and publicity by the religious leaders condemning the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination, various approaches were made to the government by other individuals and organisations, with suggestions for assisting the European Jews under Nazi rule.

In September 1942, a Labour Party deputation to the Foreign Secretary, stated that, according to its sources, 50,000 Jews in France had been passed to the Germans for deportation to an unknown destination. The delegation also informed the Foreign Secretary it had learnt of a proposal from the Belgian Government suggesting that it might be possible for Washington to persuade the Vichy regime to issue exit visas to Jews who held an entry visa for another country; this would enable them to travel via Spain to Portugal, from where they could be settled in a secure country such as the Belgian Congo, for the interim period of the war.⁹⁴

The initial response of the Jewish leaders

In a similar vein to the Labour Party proposals, Rabbi Schonfeld, the Executive Director of the Chief Rabbi’s Religious Emergency Council founded in July 1938, wrote to Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, on behalf of Dr.Hertz, the Chief Rabbi. The council had originally focused on providing assistance to predominantly orthodox Jews trapped in Europe, but as news of the Nazi extermination of the Jews became known, it enlarged its remit to encompass all European Jews trapped in Nazi-occupied territories,

⁹³ Ibid. ‘Nazi Atrocities Dr. Temple and Fate of the Jews’, October 30th 1942, p.2 Issue 49380

⁹⁴ FO371/32681, *Deputation to Mr. Eden*, September 22,1942, p.85

by emphasising the humanitarian rather than the political aspects of the situation.⁹⁵ In his communication to Anthony Eden, it was proposed that there might be the possibility of a neutral country being asked to intervene with the Hungarian authorities 'to grant at least a right of asylum' to the Jewish refugees now resident in Hungary since 'They ought not to be sent back as mercilessly as is the case at present.'⁹⁶ In his response, Eden maintained:

"The treatment of the Jewish population by Germany and German - controlled countries is a cause of much distress to Mr. Eden and to His Majesty's Government. Intervention.... carries with it no guarantee 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 upon the Hungarian government to mete out even harsher treatment to the Jews."⁹⁷

In a further meeting in September 1942, Dr.Hertz raised the possibility with Lord Cranbourne the Colonial Secretary, that blank visas could be issued to the British Consuls in Turkey, to be used to transport Polish children to Turkey from where they could be sent to safety in various British Colonies, until the war ended.⁹⁸ Lord Cranbourne pointed out that, although he extended his sympathy to the plight of the children, the scheme was not feasible for varying reasons. These included issuing visas for an unknown number of children and the problem of providing accommodation in the Colonies. He explained that the East African Colonies possessed a limited capacity to take immigrants and this had now been reached; there was, therefore, no more capacity for additional refugees.⁹⁹ A further suggestion of using Cyprus as a base for the children, was refuted with the statement that, due to the smallness of the island, it would experience great problems in being able to provide sufficient food for an unknown influx of refugees.¹⁰⁰ The other major obstacle to the proposed scheme was the insecurity of travel in the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰¹ This seemingly sympathetic response, whilst citing a series of feasible reasons for non-acceptance of the various suggestions made by the Chief Rabbi, clearly demonstrates that the Colonial Office had no intention of altering its policy which ensured that the rigid entry requirements of the White Paper into Palestine were adhered to, whilst ensuring that its strict control of Jewish immigration

⁹⁵ Chanan Tomlin, *Protest and Prayer* (Switzerland: Peter Lang AG, 2006),pp.109-112,137-138

⁹⁶ HL/MS183/290 A, *Schonfeld letter to Anthony Eden* 10th September,1942.

⁹⁷ HL/MS183/290 Fi, *A.W.G. Randall letter to Dr. Solomon Schonfeld*, 17th September 1942.

⁹⁸ FO371/32680/W12396 *Lord Cranbourne /Dr. Hertz meeting*, 29/9/42, p.113

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*p.113

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*p.113

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*p.113

throughout the Empire remained unchanged.. The excuses given by Lord Cranbourne were a straightforward reiteration of the Colonial Office response towards the Jewish refugees at the Evian Conference in July 1938, when the government had insisted that large-scale entry into the Empire was not feasible.¹⁰²

The Foreign Office made the following observations in its response to the various suggestions proposed by the Chief Rabbi. They were adamant that no special consideration could be given to Jews, since non-Jews in Allied Countries, for example Belgium and Poland, were also suffering and would expect to receive similar concessions for their children.¹⁰³ It noted that if the plight of the Jews, as an individual group, were acknowledged, this could be viewed as tantamount to accepting that the Jews were a separate nationality.¹⁰⁴ It did concede, that in the event of there being no Allied Government-in-exile, the government was prepared to extend entry to the United Kingdom for a limited number of children under the age of sixteen who had lost their parents through death or deportation. It indicated that although this concession was about to be offered to children in Vichy France, it would not be offered elsewhere. The Foreign Office stated it was of the opinion the Turkish authorities would raise difficulties about allowing transit facilities across the country for an unknown number of children without definite assurances that their stay in Turkey would be very short. In conclusion, since the Governor of Cyprus had already refused to allow Greeks to settle there, it would not be possible to offer this facility to refugees.¹⁰⁵ As with the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office response clearly illustrated its determination to adhere to immigration policy but it also indicates that, although various reports of the Nazi policies towards the Jews had appeared in the press, there was still a reluctance to accept any discrimination in favour of Jews, since this would, in effect, imply that they were a separate nationality.

In a further response to Lord Cranbourne, Rabbi Hertz proposed the possibility of settling rescued Jewish children in Mauritius or in other British administered territories which he suggested could be based on the similar facilities which had been given to Allied Governments.¹⁰⁶ He accepted the premise that entry into Palestine was limited but he raised the possibility of including wives and children of legal male residents in Palestine, in an exchange scheme of Palestinian women resident in Germany for

¹⁰² India Office records, File3071 *Evian Conference*, IOR/L/PJ/7/2014. *Memorandum of instructions. B. The Colonial Empire*; Wiener Library, 'Speech by Lord Winterton' *Evian Conference Records 1938* 503 MF DOC54/Reel3. pp.1-2

¹⁰³ FO371/32680/W13371/45555/48, *Foreign Office response to J.D, Sidebotham Colonial Office*, 9/10/42 p.118

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp.118-120

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, *Chief Rabbi letter to Lord Cranbourne*, 30th October, 1942, p.97

German women resident in Palestine.¹⁰⁷In his response, Lord Cranbourne, whilst reiterating his original stance towards the Jewish children trapped in Europe, provided a detailed explanation of the exchange scheme. He explained that the original negotiations had not envisaged any nationalities, apart from Germans and Palestinians, being included in the scheme. This approach had been revised at the request of the Jewish Agency and with the cooperation of the High Commissioner in Palestine. The scheme was proving to be extremely difficult to implement in its revised form due to the current situation in Occupied Europe and the intransigence of the German Government towards the amended plan.¹⁰⁸

In contrast to the direct approach taken by Hertz and Schonfeld, the Board of Deputies pursued an approach that mirrored their policy employed during the Thirties, when confronted with the rise of the Nazi party. Then, they had followed a deliberate policy of maintaining a low profile in the public domain preferring to solicit the support of prominent Gentiles to speak on their behalf at public meetings, in order to counteract the possibility of stimulating anti-Semitism and they continued to do so during the war.¹⁰⁹ This was clearly demonstrated in their request to the Archbishop of Canterbury in September 1942, as more news of the Nazi extermination of the Jews was received. Selig Brodetsky, in his capacity as chairman of the Board of Deputies, asked the Archbishop if it would be possible for him to raise the issue of Jewish extermination in the House of Lords since, as he stated:

“A specific warning which I feel might be of some use and might appropriately come from that House of Parliament in which the the voice of the Church, as well as the laity, can make itself heard.”¹¹⁰

Many of the schemes were totally impracticable, but even when reasonable solutions were proposed, the government baulked at the idea of implementing them. In his analysis of the government refusal to consider some rescue operations, Meier Sompolinsky argues that the driving force behind this recalcitrant attitude was the policy of strategic war considerations. He maintains that the policy of Arab appeasement in Palestine was viewed as a vital component of overall government strategy to ensure that peace and stability in the Middle East was maintained. In order to achieve this, it was decided that no favour could be shown towards the Jews, thus ensuring that there

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.p.97

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., *Lord Cranbourne letter to Chief Rabbi*, 9th November, 1942, pp.94-95

¹⁰⁹ V.D. Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1853* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1960), p.194; Kushner, *The persistence of Prejudice.*, pp.165-166; Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue.*, p.28

¹¹⁰ LPL/54/111, *Brodetsky letter to Archbishop of Canterbury*, 20th September, 1942

would not be a Jewish exodus from Europe to Palestine.¹¹¹ In her analysis, Louise London argues that it was an agreed government policy that the admission of 'Aliens' was not only severely restricted but any admission was to be based on an evaluation of their potential contribution to the war effort, thus effectively ensuring that no consideration would be given on humanitarian grounds.¹¹² A further point is that the government, in particular the Colonial Office, had no intention of changing its stance towards the possibility of Jewish refugees being granted permission to enter any part of the Empire, since, Jews were not welcomed by the Colonial authorities. In his assessment of the authorities' attitude towards the Jews, Bernard Wasserstein stresses that neither the Dominions nor the Colonial governors were prepared to consider the possibility of Jewish settlement, as the Jews were still viewed as an alien presence:

"The hard fact remains that they are not wanted by any Colonial Government for a number of very good reasons... The introduction of a body of people, however small, which is entirely alien in every sense of the word, would be greatly resented by the working classes in the Colony...I am thinking particularly of the West Indies."¹¹³

Kushner maintains that during the Forties, the traditional view of the Jews as 'Aliens,' who refused to assimilate and conform to the mores of acceptable society, exerted a considerable influence on society generally, since they were considered to present a major threat to the establishment.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the term 'Alien' had originally been used by the campaigners who agitated for the introduction of the original immigration act in 1905 to halt the influx of the Eastern European Jews. They had used the term 'Alien' in order to avoid being accused of anti-Semitism.¹¹⁵

The government proposal to rescue Jewish children in Vichy France

The news and reports of the Nazi policies towards the Jews from the middle of 1942 prompted a multiplicity of schemes being presented to the government by various organisations and individuals in the hope of saving them. In the main, the government refused to countenance any of the proposals, but in late September 1942, detailed consideration was given to a proposal from Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, to mount a limited rescue scheme for Jewish children in Vichy France. This section will examine the apparent change of direction by the government in its policy towards

¹¹¹ Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust.*, p.52

¹¹² London, *Whitehall And The Jews 1933-1948.*, pp.172-173;-188-189

¹¹³ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews.*, pp.46-47

¹¹⁴ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination.*, pp.33-42

¹¹⁵ Garrard, *The English and Immigration.*, pp.56-59; Gainer, *The Alien Invasion.*, p.118

providing assistance to European Jews and why it was agreed to mount the scheme. The historiography relating to the rescue attempts of the French Jewish children is somewhat sparse. Louise London briefly mentions the decision by Herbert Morrison to allow a limited number of children into Britain in September 1942 but stresses that the government clearly stated the proposed rescue was an exceptional concession and would not be repeated.¹¹⁶ Both Pamela Shatzkes and Bernard Wasserstein argue that Morrison supported the rescue scheme because the Refugee Committee offered to provide the necessary financial support for the refugees and that, by allowing a limited number of children into the country, the gesture would appeal to the humanitarian feelings of the public.¹¹⁷

In the wake of the press reports describing the policies of Vichy France towards Jewish children, the initial mention of offering settlement to them originated from a proposal made by Sir Herbert Emerson to Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary at a meeting in early September 1942. It was suggested that Britain should issue 1,000 entry visas to Jewish children in Vichy including many of German or Austrian origin. He indicated that in a report he had received from the Joint Jewish-American Distribution Committee, he understood that the American Government was considering admitting 1,000 children with the added possibility of accepting more who could be settled in San Domingo.¹¹⁸ In his minutes of the meeting, A.W.G.Randall stated that, unless a substantial proportion of the children were of Allied origin, the Foreign Office would oppose the suggestion and as he noted in his response to the issuance of 1,000 entry visas, Mr.Morrison had stated:

“...That he could not accept the suggestion, and referred to the anti-foreign and anti-Semitic feeling which was quite certainly latent in this country (and in some cases not at all latent).”¹¹⁹

It was, however, noted that Morrison had agreed to grant entry to Jewish children who had either one or both parents in this country, even though it would only represent a tiny number. With reference to the report that Sir Herbert Emerson had received from the Joint Jewish-American Committee that the American Government was proposing to grant admittance to 1,000 children, Randall suggested that confirmation of the American decision, as stated by Sir Herbert Emerson, should be obtained from Washington, since a plea by the Polish Government-In-Exile to allow Polish children into

¹¹⁶ London, *Whitehall And The Jews 1933.*, pp.200-201

¹¹⁷ Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue.*, p.167; Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews.*, pp.112-115

¹¹⁸ FO371/32681, A.W. G. Randall *Foreign Office Minutes of meeting 8/9/42, 21/9/42*, p.1

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*,

America, had been declined. He further noted that, if the suggestion proved to be correct, it would be difficult for Herbert Morrison to deny any concessions for the rescue of Jewish Children.¹²⁰

In considering the remarks in which Morrison referred to both latent and active anti-Semitism, his response may be viewed as a clear example of the general feeling towards the Jews which, as Panikos Panayi suggests, still to a degree, permeated the government and the establishment.¹²¹ There was a fear that granting entry to a substantial number of foreign Jews would provide the stimulus to recreate the general anti-Semitic reaction of the public, which had been caused by the arrival of the Eastern European Jews at the turn of the century. They were also aware that this friction had been exacerbated during World War One when, as Colin Holmes states, the Jews were viewed as unpatriotic and driven by a desire to benefit from the prevailing circumstances of the period.¹²²

Following this meeting, Morrison presented a memorandum to the War Cabinet outlining a scheme based on a proposal from Sir Herbert Emerson, in his capacity as the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and supported by Otto Schiff, the Chairman of The Jewish Committee for Refugees, to rescue approximately 300-350 children and elderly people aged over 60 from Vichy France. Furthermore, as on previous occasions, the Jewish Refugee Committee would provide financial guarantees for the refugees, thus ensuring that they would not be a charge on the public purse.¹²³ In his presentation, Morrison gave both sides of the argument, stressing the possibility that the scheme could lead to an increase in anti-Semitism. He emphasised the large number of refugees already in the country. He suggested that the granting of entry to Jewish children would encourage the Vichy Government to deport more Jewish parents.¹²⁴ He countered these arguments by pointing out that, should the scheme be implemented, the government would maintain an appearance of humanity. If on the other hand, it denied the children entry such denial could promote the idea that there was no humanity at all in government thinking. He then suggested a compromise which he felt would be acceptable to all concerned: to give careful consideration to a limited number of cases of individuals exposed to extreme danger, who had relatives in Britain. He concluded by reiterating that, other than this, there would be no further concessions

¹²⁰ FO371/32681, A.W. G. Randall *Foreign Office Minutes of meeting* 8/9/42, 21/9/42, pp.1-3

¹²¹ Panikos Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2010), pp.224-226

¹²² *Idid.*, p.226; Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939.*, pp.134-137

¹²³ PRO/HO123/1627, *Anglo-Jewish Guarantee*, 6/4/33

¹²⁴ Cab/66/29/7, *Home Secretary memo. Admission to the UK of a limited number of Jewish refugees from unoccupied France.* 23/9/42, pp.1-2

made and he cited his refusal to grant transit visas to 28 children living in a Jewish Home in Vichy France. The children were in possession of guaranteed entry into Palestine but they required a temporary place of residence until transport could be provided for their onward journey to Palestine.¹²⁵ In his justification of this refusal, Morrison argued that if an exception were made for this group, there was a strong likelihood that other people in unoccupied France, many of whom were in possession of entry permits to Palestine or elsewhere, would apply to enter Britain on transit visas. Morrison did not view this as being acceptable, but as he stated – ‘it would become impracticable to draw a line of demarcation.’¹²⁶

In a Foreign Office memo dated 28th September, prepared by A.G. Randall, a senior member of the department, as a response to the proposals of Morrison, the attention of the Cabinet was drawn towards the important issues which required consideration. It was felt that, by limiting the entry to French Jews, no thought was being given to the position of non-Jewish Allied Nationals who also faced the danger of deportation from Vichy France; this was substantiated with a note of the various representations that had been made to the British Government by the Belgians, the Poles and the Dutch. It pointed out that Britain had allowed wives and children of Allied soldiers into the country and based on that, it suggested that entry to refugees from enemy-occupied or enemy-controlled territory should only be given to persons who had either rendered, or could render, service to the Allied war effort. Randall argued that other than being of service to the country, there was no practical reason to admit refugees on a purely humanitarian basis. In his final observations, he stressed the potential diplomatic problems that could arise, should the Portuguese Government refuse to issue transit visas or hinder the transport of the refugees from Lisbon to Britain.¹²⁷ The contents of the memorandum clearly made two points: the determination of the Foreign Office not to view the position of the Jews as being an exception in the Nazi-occupied or dominated territories in Europe; the resolve to adhere to the immigration laws with its refusal to offer entry to refugees on purely humanitarian grounds.

The original proposal granting entry to French Jewish orphans was amended by the Home Secretary in a further memo which suggested that, unless proof could be provided that their parents were officially dead, orphans would be refused entry. He argued there was a strong possibility that the granting of entry to children whose parents

¹²⁵ Ibid., p3

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp3

¹²⁷ FO371/32681 A.W. G. Randall memo, 28/9/42, pp.1-2

had been deported, would further encourage the Vichy Government to expand their continuing deportation of foreign Jews to Eastern Europe.¹²⁸ As an alternative humanitarian gesture, he proposed to allow entry to children from Unoccupied France, providing there were a parent or close relative living in Britain who could provide financial support. This concession would include all children of Allied Nationals in order to avoid discrimination in favour of Jews.¹²⁹ This proposal was agreed by the War Cabinet in October.¹³⁰ In her analysis of the Anglo-Jewish reaction to the deportation of Jews by the Vichy regime, Amy Zahl Gottlieb notes that, as the community had done in 1933,¹³¹ they were prepared to accept the financial responsibility for the maintenance of the refugees and it was on this basis that Morrison laid his recommendation for agreeing to grant entry to a limited number of French Jews before the War Cabinet.¹³² It may, therefore, be argued that, in reality, the attitude of the government towards Jewish refugees had not altered in any way since their original arrival in 1933, when, as Louise London argues, the dominant factors of government policy towards the refugees were 'self-interest, opportunism and an overriding concern with control,' which restricted any humanitarian gesture towards them.¹³³

On October 26th Sir Herbert Emerson presented a memorandum to the Foreign Office informing them that a group of influential British people was proposing to contact governments in both Central and South America to request support in obtaining permission from the Vichy Government, to facilitate the departure of children to countries prepared to offer them sanctuary, since this was being withheld by the Vichy authorities. The memo listed both the countries and the number of places being offered to children.¹³⁴ He described the difficulties being experienced by various organisations in obtaining exit permits from the Vichy Government. The regime had agreed to issue 500 visas for children going to America with the proviso that there should be no publicity or propaganda surrounding their departure,¹³⁵ but all other requests were delayed. In his conclusion, he stated that he believed it would be extremely difficult to obtain exit visas for the remainder who had been granted entry to other countries including South Africa

¹²⁸ Michael Marrus and Robert O Paxton, *Vichy France And The Jews* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1981), pp.222-223;-227-233; Paul Webster, *Pétain's Crime The Full Story of French Collaboration in the Holocaust* (London: Papermac, 1992), pp.115-119

¹²⁹ Cab/66/29/24/WP42/44 *Admission to the UK of children from Unoccupied France*, 2/10/42 pp.1-2

¹³⁰ Cab/65/28/1 *War Cabinet*, 5/10/42, p.1

¹³¹ PRO/HO123/1627, *Anglo-Jewish Guarantee*, 6/4/33

¹³² Gottlieb, *Men of Vision.*, pp.174-175

¹³³ London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948.*, pp.14-15

¹³⁴ FO371/32681/F1016/808/91, *Sir Herbert Emerson memo* 26/10/42, p.1

¹³⁵ *Ibid*/W14916/2842/6/42, *British Embassy Washington telegram to French Dept. Foreign Office*, October 30th 1942

and Canada, from whom 500 entry visas had been provided for Jewish children in Vichy France, based on financial guarantees from Jewish organisations.¹³⁶ He also felt that any approach by individuals to neutral governments could exacerbate the overall situation with the Vichy government, thus creating further obstacles to the various attempts to rescue the children.¹³⁷

In a major speech to the Upper House of the Canterbury Convocation in October 1942, George Bell, the Bishop of Chichester, outlined the overall atrocities being perpetrated by the Nazi regime in occupied Europe. He highlighted the famine spreading throughout the continent, the murder of hostages, the use of slave labour and the deportation of Jews from Vichy France, which effectively created between five and eight thousand abandoned children now utterly dependent on Britain, Switzerland and America, to provide them with sanctuary:

“The latest report which has reached this country tells of the deportation of thousands of Jewish refugees from Vichy France ...leaving behind them between five...and eight thousand children of whom many are now orphans....and all are waiting for the charity of Britain or America or Switzerland to give them sanctuary.”¹³⁸

This speech was followed by a meeting at the end of October between Herbert Morrison and a deputation of parliamentarians led by William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury.¹³⁹ Various points were raised which were recorded by Mary Sibthorpe the Secretary of the Friends Alien Protection Committee, which had evolved from the German Emergency Committee of the Society of Friends founded in 1933 by the Quakers to provide assistance to German refugees fleeing from the Nazis.¹⁴⁰ She forwarded her notes to Temple for his information. The deputation raised the allegation that the contribution by the British Government towards helping the refugees in Vichy was minimal in comparison to other countries.¹⁴¹ This allegation was strongly denied by the Home Secretary. He reiterated the number of refugees who had been granted entry

¹³⁶ FO371/32861/W13736 High Commissioner for Canada letter to A.W.G. Randall Foreign Office, 9th October, 1942

¹³⁷ FO371/32681/F1016/808/91, *Sir Herbert Emerson memo* 26/10/42, pp.2-3

¹³⁸ G.K.A. Bell, 'The Threat to Civilisation' in *The Church and Humanity* (1939-1946) (London: Longmans, Green & Co.Ltd., 1946), pp.79-85

¹³⁹ PCR/HC/LB/1/122, Mary Sibthorp, *Secretary of the Friends Aliens Protection Committee memorandum (from memory)* 28/10/42, p.1

¹⁴⁰ Lawrence Barton, *An Account of the Work of the Fiends Committee for Refugees and Aliens, First Known as the German Emergency Committee of the Society of Friends 1933-1950* (London: Friends House, 1954)

¹⁴¹ PCR/HC/LB/1/122, Mary Sibthorp, *Secretary of the Friends Aliens Protection Committee memorandum (from memory)* 28/10/42, p.1

into both Britain and the Empire; he stated that we were a small island and in constant danger of invasion. In his use of this justification, he echoed the sentiments expressed by Lord Cranbourne to Rabbi Schonfeld earlier in the year. Britain, like the Empire, did not possess the means to support an influx of refugees, due to the restrictions imposed by the war – lack of space, the difficulty of absorbing a large number of refugees. In his reiteration of the Colonial Office sentiments, Morrison clearly demonstrated that he intended to adhere to and administer the rigid immigration laws, in order to limit the entry of any potential Jewish refugees.

He further stated that he firmly believed there was a growing resentment among a proportion of the population towards the refugees. The implication of the remarks was that, under the prevailing situation, he was not prepared to sanction any action that, in his eyes, could create a rise in the anti-Semitism prevalent in certain sections of the population. He suggested that it was unclear as to whether the Vichy regime was influenced by anti-Semitism or was acting under orders from Germany, insisting there was a degree of uncertainty as to the intentions of the Germans, since it was not known whether they were intent on a policy of extermination of the Jews or whether they were deporting them for use as forced labour.¹⁴² Morrison insisted that, regardless of the number of refugees he gave entry to, the problems would not be alleviated. He was adamant that there was a definite attitude of anti-Semitism that needed to be contained, particularly as the Jews were being accused of major involvement in the black market, even if that was not factually correct. He concluded by telling the deputation that, taking all the reasons he had cited into account, he did not feel able to expand on the concessions he had already granted.¹⁴³

In contrast to this record of the meeting, the Foreign Office report noted that the deputation had requested the issue of 2,000 visas for refugee children, regardless of whether or not the Vichy Government would issue exit permits; they had suggested that visas issued prior to the war for transit to Palestine, should still be valid and that the decision to allow children into the country should not be dependent on financial support from the Refugee Organisations.¹⁴⁴ In his response, the Home Secretary assured the deputation the government was fully aware of the situation in Vichy France, but in contrast to the campaigners' report, no mention is made of his observation that there was a degree of uncertainty regarding German intentions towards the Jews. The most obvious reason for this omission is that the Foreign Office was aware of the Nazi

¹⁴² Ibid., pp.1-2

¹⁴³ Ibid., pp.3-4

¹⁴⁴ FO371/32681/W14410/4558/48 *Notes on deputation to Home Secretary, 28/10/42*, pp.1-2
A.W.G. Randall Refugees in Unoccupied Europe memo, 28/10/42 pp.1-2

extermination policies. Gerhart Reigner the Secretary of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva had informed Sydney Silverman M.P., Chairman of the British section of the World Jewish Congress, in a telegram sent to the Foreign Office in August, of the proposed Nazi policies.¹⁴⁵ Morrison emphasised what the country had already done for Jewish refugees since 1933¹⁴⁶ and he asked the deputation to take a realistic approach and accept that the country could not focus solely on these refugees. He mentioned that, although the general response of the population was sympathetic towards the refugees, there was a section of opinion which could be potentially anti-Semitic in its reaction to their arrival.¹⁴⁷ He reiterated that he would not change his stance on controlling the entry of refugees into the country, concluding that the problem could not be dealt with on an individual basis but had to be controlled by a policy which clearly defined the limits of aid available to the refugees.¹⁴⁸

Throughout his meetings and discussions, it becomes very apparent that Herbert Morrison was convinced that the entry of Jewish refugees into Britain would increase the perceived threat of anti-Semitism in the country, a view that was not supported by the campaigners. In the subsequent exchange of correspondence among William Temple, Eleanor Rathbone and Mary Sibthorpe, a key issue was the refusal of Morrison to consider granting entry to Jewish children and the elderly, since, according to Rathbone, he was adamant that ‘there was danger of an outburst of anti-Semitism if further Jews were brought in.’¹⁴⁹ In her support of Rathbone, Mary Sibthorpe also cited the use of the press allegations by Morrison that Jews were heavily involved in the black market, thus exacerbating the general level of anti-Semitism in the country, which, as she stated:

“I find it completely deplorable that an acting Home Secretary, with the emergency powers now held..., should say that the entry of 2,000 starving children might lead to an “uncontrollable outburst of anti-Semitism” In fact I do not believe it for a moment.”¹⁵⁰

In his replies to both campaigners, Temple agreed ‘It seems quite clear that you could not stimulate anti-Semitism by bringing in these unhappy children,’¹⁵¹ but to Mary Sibthorpe he did intimate:

¹⁴⁵ FO 371/30917/C7853 *Berne to Foreign Office Reigner to Silverman telegram*, 10th August, 1942

¹⁴⁶ FO371/32681/W14410/4558/48 *Notes on deputation to Home Secretary*, 28/10/42, p.3

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.5; A.W..G. Randall *Refugees in Unoccupied Europe memo*, 28/10/42pp.1-2

¹⁴⁹ LPL/54/136, *Eleanor Rathbone letter to Archbishop of Canterbury*, 29th October, 1942; 54/145, *Mary Sibthorpe letter to Archbishop of Canterbury*, November 3rd, 1942

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid* 54/146

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* 54/137 *William Cantaur letter to Eleanor Rathbone*, 29th October 1942

“I think there is a quite real danger of an outbreak of anti-Semitic feeling in this country and that the introduction of a large number of Jewish refugees of working or fighting age would make the prospect seriously worse. But I cannot believe that this has any application to the proposal to admit say some two thousand children.”¹⁵²

In his resistance to allowing the entry of large numbers of Jewish refugees into the country, Bernard Wasserstein suggests that Herbert Morrison was accurately reflecting the general beliefs and attitudes of the period.¹⁵³ A further consideration is that the growth of anti-Semitism at this time may be viewed as a mirror image of the general reaction towards the arrival of the Jewish immigrants at the turn of the century. The Jews were perceived as presenting an invidious threat to the mores of society and as such, they needed to be constrained.

These two reports of the same meeting clearly highlight the different approach and attitude towards the Jewish refugees. The Home Secretary, as advised by his civil servants, was determined to maintain the traditional government stance of strict adherence to the immigration laws; as the ultimate control lay within his remit at the Home Office, he was able to ensure this attitude remained unchanged. It also demonstrated the unwillingness, of the government to confront the truth of the reports relating to the extermination policy of the Nazis. In contrast to this attitude, the members of the deputation, which included the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Hinsley and Mr. Whale the Moderator of the Free Churches, Eleanor Rathbone, Victor Cazalet and Mary Sibthorpe,¹⁵⁴ displayed a high level of compassion towards the Jewish refugees, that was sadly lacking within the Establishment. The campaigners demonstrated their ability to overcome religious and political differences as they attempted to gain the involvement of any organisation or government who would assist with their schemes to rescue the beleaguered Jews in Europe.

In a further attempt to rescue children in Vichy France in October 1942, the Jewish Agency in Lisbon contacted Professor Lewis Namier, a member of the Jewish Agency Political Committee in London. He was asked to obtain 1,000 entry permits to Palestine for Jewish orphans up to the age of seventeen, whose parents had been deported to Eastern Europe, together with permits for 200 unnamed adults to accompany them.¹⁵⁵ The request was passed to the Colonial Office who contacted the

¹⁵² Ibid.54/147 William Cantaur letter to Mary Sibthorpe, 4th November 1942

¹⁵³ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews.*, p.116

¹⁵⁴ FO371/32681/W14410/4558/48 *Notes on deputation to Home Secretary*, 28/10/42, P.1

¹⁵⁵ FO371/32681/W14038/75113/56/42, *Colonial Office telegram to High Commissioner of Palestine*, 20/10/42

Home Office to obtain their approval for a telegram to be sent to the Palestine High Commissioner. His agreement was required in order to grant admission to this group as immigrants, in accordance with the 1939 Palestine White Paper. The Colonial Office also forwarded copies of the correspondence to the Foreign Office for their records.¹⁵⁶ The Palestine High Commissioner, Sir Harold MacMichael, confirmed his acceptance to grant admission to 1,000 orphaned children from Unoccupied France in early November, on the understanding that the visas were to be allocated through the American officials in Vichy. When relations between America and the Vichy regime broke down after the Germans entered unoccupied France in November 1942,¹⁵⁷ this assumption was no longer relevant. In a further telegram from MacMichael, it was assumed that the visa allocation would be arranged by the Swiss authorities.¹⁵⁸

On November 11th 1942, in his response to the King's speech, Viscount Cranbourne, the Colonial Secretary, informed the House of Lords that Germany now occupied the whole of France. He then announced that the government had agreed to admit Jewish children into Britain from Occupied France, who had lost their parents, providing they had a near relative in Britain who could be responsible for them. He informed the House that the High Commissioner of Palestine had agreed to accept 1,000 children into the Mandate if they could be transported there.¹⁵⁹ The Vichy Government had refused to issue visas for the children and the total occupation of France by Germany ensured that no children reached the safety of Britain. The final comments on the entire issue were made during several debates in the House of Commons in early 1943, on the possibility of rescue for Jewish refugees, when Manny Shinwell questioned why the government had refused entry visas to 2,000 French Jewish children.¹⁶⁰ The Foreign Office noted the inaccuracy of this statement by stating that the scheme had failed due to the refusal of both Vichy and the Axis powers to grant exit visas. It stated further that there were visas available for children but there were major difficulties in arranging transport from Spain and Portugal.¹⁶¹

In February, Mrs. Cazalet Keir requested a statement from the Foreign Secretary to clarify why 2,000 French children had been refused visas to enter Britain, thus leading

¹⁵⁶ FO371/32681/75113/56/42 *Letter from J.B. Osborne to Miss J.J. Nunn Home Office*, 12/10/42
FO371/32681/W14038/75113/56/42, *Colonial Office telegram to High Commissioner of Palestine*, 20/10/42

¹⁵⁷ Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France And The Jews.*, p.267

¹⁵⁸ FO371/32681W15195/W15382/45555/48,12 and 16/11/42

¹⁵⁹ HL Deb *Address in reply to His Majesty's most gracious speech*, 11 November 1942, vol 125 cc4-37, pp.,11,14

¹⁶⁰ HC Deb *Refugees (Relief)*, 20 January 1943, vol 386 cc184-6 p.1

¹⁶¹ FO371/26657, *Note on Mr. Shinwell's statement on January 20th*, C. Clutton 22/1/43

to their subsequent deportation to Germany. In his rebuttal of this accusation, Anthony Eden stated that the Vichy authorities had refused to sanction the departure of the children from France. He pointed out that the Vichy authorities had modified this decision by granting exit permits for 500 children to depart for America,¹⁶² but they had been adamant that the many other visas available for the United Kingdom, Palestine, the British Dominions, or other countries, could not be used. He stated that, with the occupation of Vichy France by the Germans, no children including the original 500 mentioned, were allowed to leave the country. He emphasised that, at the time of agreeing to grant entry to a limited number of refugee children into Britain, there were visas available to various countries which vastly exceeded the number of children able to leave.¹⁶³ In this nuanced response, Eden demonstrated quite clearly the government refusal to accept responsibility for the failure to rescue the French children; the blame lay with the refusal of the Vichy regime to allow the departure of the children. No mention was made of the procrastination of Herbert Morrison in respect of making and implementing a speedy decision which might have saved the children from the Nazis. In maintaining this position, Eden was able to promote the humanitarianism of the government towards the children.

It may be argued that the initial reaction of the general public to the plight of European Jewry was comparable to the public response when the destruction, during the events of *Kristallnacht*, was reported in November 1938. In both cases, the emphasis on the uncertain future facing Jewish children was to exert a strong influence on the immediate attitudes towards them. In 1938, this had led to the creation of the *Kindertransport* scheme which rescued 10, 0000 children from Nazi-occupied Europe prior to the outbreak of World War Two. It had been privately funded, thus making it acceptable to the government.¹⁶⁴ In September 1942, Otto Schiff, the Chairman of the Jewish Refugee Committee, offered to fund the rescue of French-Jewish children with close relatives in Britain, thus guaranteeing that their arrival would not be a charge on public funds. In contrast to the protest after *Kristallnacht*, there was no initial major public response to the first reports of the Nazi atrocities and in the regular Ministry of Information reports, no comments from the public were recorded. The main response came from various organisations and religious leaders rather than the general public.

Throughout 1942, although further reports and news of the Nazi policies in Europe become known to the government, it refused to ease the entry requirements,

¹⁶² Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews.*, pp.265,266

¹⁶³ HC Deb *Children (France)*, 3 February 1943, vol 386 cc863-4, p.1

¹⁶⁴ Gottlieb, *Men of Vision.*, pp112-126

even for children to enter the country. The declaration of war in September 1939 had effectively closed the country to the Jewish refugees since they were now viewed as enemy aliens. This attitude stands in stark contrast to the response after *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, when entry requirements for children had been eased,¹⁶⁵ thus ensuring that nearly 10,000 reached safety. A driving force behind the refusal to give refuge to Jewish children was the insistence that the Jews could not be treated as a special case since any differentiation would indicate that they were actually a people rather than a religion.¹⁶⁶ An official acceptance of Jews as a nationality would expose the anti-Semitic attitudes held by various ministers and officials who preferred to label them as enemy aliens rather than as genuine refugees. The policy pursued by the government at this time may be viewed as a complete contradiction of the contents in the Balfour Declaration issued in 1917, which favoured the establishment of a national home for Jews in Palestine, thus recognising the Jews as a nationality. The political expediency of the Declaration in 1917 was not favoured by government after 1939.¹⁶⁷

Confronting proof of the Nazi extermination policy

Throughout the latter part of 1942, the government was forced to confront an increasing level of evidence substantiating the earlier accusations that the Nazi regime was instituting a definite policy of Jewish extermination in the countries under its control. In October 1942, the *Daily Mail* reported that Himmler had promised Hitler 'There would not be a Jew left in Germany by the end of the year.'¹⁶⁸ Finally, in December, the government publicly acknowledged the European Jews in Nazi-Occupied Europe faced extermination and as a result of this, a growing campaign was launched to demand that the European Jews should be rescued. What were the reasons that compelled the government to officially acknowledge the Nazi policy of extermination? What was the primary aim that the government hoped to achieve with Anthony Eden's speech in the House of Commons on December 17th 1942?

In a declaration issued on November 30th 1942, the Elected Assembly of Palestine Jews presented a petition to Sir Harold MacMichael, the High Commissioner for Palestine, requesting that the Allies 'Do what you can to stop that evil force. Put an

¹⁶⁵ HC Deb *Racial, Religious and Political Minorities*, 21 November 1938 vol 341 cc1428-83., pp.20,21

¹⁶⁶ Cab/66/33/13 *Reception & Accommodation of Refugees Committee Memo by the Foreign Secretary*, 9/1/43, P.51; *Draft telegram to H.M. Ambassador, Washington*, p.2

¹⁶⁷ *Balfour Declaration: November 2, 1917*, available at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Hisotry/balfour.html> accessed 6/28/2016

¹⁶⁸ LMA. ACC3121/C11/7/2/7 'Himmler: 'Not A Jew In Germany'', *Daily Mail* October 12th 1942

end to these ghastly mass slaughter. HELP US TO RESCUE THE SURVIVORS.¹⁶⁹ On December 1st 1942, the Polish Ministry of Information published an eight-page article in the *Polish Fortnightly Review* detailing the extermination of Polish Jewry.¹⁷⁰ These actions were followed by reports in the press headlined 'Nazi War On Jews. Deliberate Plan For Extermination'¹⁷¹ and letters from the Archbishop of Canterbury and Eva Marchioness of Reading, in her capacity as President of the World Jewish Congress, British Section, emphasising the Nazi policy of Jewish destruction.¹⁷² Finally, on December 9th, Edward Raczynski, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Polish-Government-In-Exile, handed an official note to Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, detailing the extermination of Polish Jewry by the Nazi regime in the Warsaw Ghetto.¹⁷³ As a result of this, the government scepticism as to the accuracy of the various reports that had resulted in a refusal to accept the veracity of them, was finally dissipated and it was acknowledged the Nazi regime was implementing a policy of extermination against the Jews.¹⁷⁴ This was made official by Frank Roberts, on behalf of Anthony Eden, when, in his acknowledgement of the report, he informed the ambassador that Britain, together with the other allies, intended to issue a declaration condemning the atrocities.¹⁷⁵ In their analysis of the initial government refusal to accept the truth of the reports, Kushner and Wasserstein argue that there was a certain level of distrust towards the Jews among the officials both in the Foreign and the Colonial Offices, since they were of the conviction that the Jews were prone to exaggeration at all times.¹⁷⁶ Whilst accepting these arguments, it should be noted that officials in both the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office had received numerous reports from the Home Office detailing the Nazi policies towards the Jews which demonstrated their intent to eradicate the European Jews, thus undermining the belief that the Jews were prone to exaggeration.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁹ FO371/32682/sf/292/42 *Sir Harold MacMichael to Oliver Stanley Letter and petition*, 1st December, 1942 pp.149-152

¹⁷⁰ HL/.MS238/2/14, 'Extermination Of The Polish Jewry. 'Polish Fortnightly Review No.57, December 1st 1942, pp.1-8

¹⁷¹ 'Nazi War On Jews Deliberate Plan For Extermination', *The Times*, December 4th, 1942, P.3, Issue 49410,

¹⁷² Ibid, 'Response of Civilised World' Letter to the Editor from William Cantur, December 5th, 1942, p.5 issue 49411; 'Nazi War on Jews', Letter to the Editor from Eva Reading, December 8th 1942, p.5 Issue 49413

¹⁷³ FO371/34361 C12313/61/18, *Polish Ambassador to Mr. Eden*, December 9th 1942, Pp.1-4

¹⁷⁴ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, p.172

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., *Frank Roberts to Count Edward Raczynski*, 16/12/42

¹⁷⁶ Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice*, p.158

¹⁷⁶ Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jew*, pp.171-172

¹⁷⁷ HO213/953 *Racial Questions Jews*, various 1942/1943

The United Nations Declaration – December 17th 1942

As the news of the Nazi policy became public, the leading religious leaders issued strong statements of condemnation in the press: Cardinal Hinsley condemned the brutal persecution of the Jews at a Roman Catholic day of prayer;¹⁷⁸ the Archbishop of York denounced in Parliament the Nazi annihilation of the Poles and Jews;¹⁷⁹ the Chief Rabbi, Dr.Hertz, called for a Day of Fast and Prayer on Sunday 13th December.¹⁸⁰ In his address at the service, Dr.Hertz observed that:

“The decay of conscience in the years before the war... helped to build a moral climate favourable to the Nazi atrocities. What atonement, we ask are the United Nations prepared to make for their share in building up that climate? Will they open the gates of their countries to the refugees from the Nazi inferno and help the few neutral states to receive them?”¹⁸¹

On December 16th 1942, a deputation from the Council of Christians and Jews met with Richard Laws of the Foreign Office, to discuss the rapidly deteriorating situation of European Jewry. They had prepared an agenda for discussion which included a request for a joint declaration from the United Nations condemning the Nazi atrocities and a public assurance that any refugee escaping from Nazi persecution would be granted asylum in any part of the British Empire.¹⁸² In his response, Law informed the deputation that there was no doubt that the mass extermination of Jews in Eastern Europe was a fact, but he went on to say that there was a possibility, as suggested by some members of the deputation, that without irrefutable facts to support this information, a proportion of the nation would view the reports as atrocity propaganda, thus providing a further stimulus to increasing anti-Semitism in the country. He informed the committee that the Foreign Secretary would be making a statement to the House of Commons on the following day in the name of the United Nations. He circumvented the suggestion that the offer of granting asylum to refugees by members of the United Nations would be of greater assistance, by inferring, confidentially, that there had been problems in obtaining any help which might be offered to the refugees. He concluded the meeting with an assurance that the Government would welcome the

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., ‘Cardinal Hinsley On Poland’s Ordeal’ December 9th, 1942, p.2 Issue 49414

¹⁷⁹ ‘Archbishop Wants Retribution’, *Daily Mail*, December 10th, 1942, p.3 Issue 14545; HL Deb., ‘*relief Measures For Europe*’, 9th December, 1942 vol 125 cc475-509, pp.5,6

¹⁸⁰ ‘Day Of Fast And Prayer, Sunday, December 13’, *The Jewish Chronicle*, December 11th, 1942 p1

¹⁸¹ ‘Open Gates to Jews. Chief Rabbi Appeals’, *Daily Mail*, December 14th, 1942, p.3 Issue 14548

¹⁸² FO371/32682/C12042/61/18 *Council of Christians and Jews. Memorandum for members of Deputation to Foreign Office* December 16th 1942, pp.1-3

co-operation of the Council in continuing to inform the public through statements and sermons.¹⁸³

On December 17th 1942, in response to a question from Sidney Silverman referring to the Nazi policy of Jewish deportation and extermination in Eastern Europe, Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, condemned the Nazi policies and promised retribution after the war. The speech, which would become known as the *United Nations Declaration*,¹⁸⁴ was viewed by the government as a satisfactory response to the growing demand by the public and the various campaigning organisations to implement some assistance to the beleaguered Jews. The ensuing protests were to prove that their assumptions were incorrect.

As a result of the speech, many individuals sent letters and petitions to the government demanding that constructive action be taken immediately to alleviate the plight of the European Jews facing extermination under Hitler's policy of genocide. The Ministry of Information reported that:

“Widespread indignation, anger and disgust are reported as a result of the recent revelations of Nazi atrocities, particularly the disclosure of the policy for exterminating the Jews in Poland...The joint declaration of the Allied nations that the perpetrators will be punished has “caused great satisfaction.”¹⁸⁵

In contrast to this, the same report carried the following remarks under the anti-Semitism section ‘I don’t care for the Jews, but this is terrible’ and it was noted there was little increase in sympathy for Jews resident in Britain.¹⁸⁶ In the following weeks, similar sentiments were expressed, but there was a growing view, that although assistance should be given, they would not be welcomed in Britain ‘although we wish to help the unfortunate Jews in occupied zones, we don’t want any more over here.’¹⁸⁷ These remarks were followed in subsequent Home Intelligence reports containing widespread reiteration of the traditional views that Jews were different, ostentatious in their dress and behaviour, black-marketeteers and military service evaders:

“Reports from five regions refer to ‘an increase in feeling against the Jews.’ This is again variously ascribed to ‘the number of black-market offences committed by

¹⁸³ FO371/36282 W17401, *Note of conversation between R. Law and Representatives of the Council of Christians and Jews*. 16th December, 1942 pp.1-5

¹⁸⁴ HC Deb, *United Nations Declaration*, 17 December 1942, vol 385 cc2082-7, pp.1-3

¹⁸⁵ INF1/292/116, 8, *German anti-Jewish atrocities in Poland*, December 24th 1942, p.4

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid 117, 17, December 31st 1942; 118 January 7th 1943

people with Jewish names, their indifference and meagre contribution to the war effort.', and their success in getting houses in some areas where the demand is greatest.... it is also suggested.... Any preponderance of Jews in any particular industry or department does get an Englishman's goat."¹⁸⁸

"German and Austrian refugee business men are criticised for 'throwing their weight about', and for running 'flourishing businesses' while their English competitors get called up."¹⁸⁹

In an uncanny echo of accusations levelled against the Russian Jewish immigrants in the First World War, 'The Russian shirkers were pinching food, jobs and businesses of the loyal Brits who had gone into the army.'¹⁹⁰ A commonplace accusation being made in 1942 and 1943 was the dominance of Jewish refugees in business 'running flourishing businesses whilst their English competitors get called up.'¹⁹¹

A further development later in the month was the creation of a committee to focus solely on the problems of Jewish refugees. This new committee was formed as a result of a meeting in late December, between the Foreign Secretary and a deputation from the Board of Deputies of British Jews, to discuss the general situation of Jews.¹⁹² The leaders of the deputation proposed that a possible rescue of Bulgarian Jewish children could be considered.¹⁹³ The Foreign Secretary informed them that 4,000 Bulgarian children had been given permission to travel to Palestine and the government was awaiting a reply from the Bulgarian Government via the Swiss Government to reach an agreement.¹⁹⁴ In a meeting of the War Cabinet on the same day, this matter was raised by the Foreign Secretary, who stated, although no government commitment had been made, he believed that careful consideration should be given as to whether the government was able to offer any assistance. As a result of this, it was agreed to appoint a Cabinet Committee consisting of the Foreign, the Home and the Colonial Secretaries to consider what arrangements could be implemented for the reception and accommodation of any Jewish refugees who were able to leave enemy-occupied territory via either Bulgaria or Portugal.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁸ INF1/292/127, Ministry of Information Home Intelligence *Weekly reports on Anti-semitism*, 11/3/43, p.2

¹⁸⁹ Ibid 128, Ministry of Information Home Intelligence *Weekly reports Anti-Semitism*, 18/3/43, p5

¹⁹⁰ Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks And British Jews*, p.52

¹⁹¹ INF1/292/122 Ministry of Information Home Intelligence *Weekly reports Anti-Semitism*, 4/2/43, p.13

¹⁹² FO341/32682/W17601, *Deputation Of British Jews to Foreign Secretary 23/12/42. Arising from the Declaration made by His Majesty's Government on 17th December, 1942.*, p.1

¹⁹³ FO341/32682/W17601, *Deputation Of British Jews to Foreign Secretary 23/12/42. Arising from the Declaration made by His Majesty's Government on 17th December, 1942.*, p.1

¹⁹⁴ FO371/32682/W17601 A.G. Randall memo 22/12/42

¹⁹⁵ CAB/65/28/42 War Cabinet meeting held at 5.30pm 23/12/42, pp.245-246

It may be argued that the the national press had a substantial influence on the public as they were confronted with the graphic news of the Nazi atrocities in Europe, but an analysis of the reporting clearly demonstrates how the reaction of the public could be manipulated. The first reports in July 1942 had evinced comparatively little reaction to the plight of the European Jews. This began to change in September 1942, when the focus of the reporting was directed at the brutal treatment of French Jewish children, which had resulted in various organisations approaching the government with possible recue schemes. Such a reaction is strongly reminiscent of the initial response to the reporting of *Kristallnacht* in November 1938. A further similarity to 1938 was the initial horror and disgust as the reports of the Nazi extermination of the Jews in December 1942 were reported in all the major newspapers. However, this initial response was short-lived and as Andrew Scharf states, in many ways the influence of the press was, and still is, transitory in its influence on the public.¹⁹⁶ This argument is supported by A.J.Sherman who states that sympathy for the Jewish refugees dissipated rapidly, since they were viewed as presenting a major threat to employment, they were conspicuous in their appearance, and they threatened relations with Germany.¹⁹⁷ In his support of this view, Tony Kushner examines the opportunities for employment offered to the Jews after *Kristallnacht* and as he states, the chance to bring 500 Austrian doctors into Britain was rejected by the BMA who granted permission for 50, since they feared both loss of employment and prestige.¹⁹⁸

A further argument, which neither Sherman nor Kushner allude to, is the similarity between the accusations levelled against the Jews during World War One when the young Jewish Russian males were accused of shirking their military duty and Jewish businesses were accused of profiteering at the expense of the nation. The perception that they had used the circumstances prevailing during that period were echoed again in the weekly reports produced by the Ministry of Information, even as the news of the Nazi extermination policy was publicly acknowledged by the government. The repetition of all previous accusations levelled against the Jewish immigrants may be viewed as an unconscious reaction originating from that period, which contributed to the continuing antipathy of the public in its response to the possibility of more Jews entering the country from Europe.

In the latter half of 1942, the government had been inexorably faced with a series of reports detailing the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination in Occupied Europe,

¹⁹⁶ Sharf, *The British Press and Jews.*, p.100

¹⁹⁷ A.J. Sherman, *Island.*, pp.216-219

¹⁹⁸ Tony Kushner & Katherine Knox, *Refugees In An Age Of Genocide* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp.160-164

which could no longer be withheld from the public domain, although strict censorship had been instituted by the government at the start of the war. These reports triggered the slow collapse in the belief that Germany was a nation divided between the German and the Nazis, a view supported by some of the leading campaigners. As the horror of the reports became public, various individuals and groups approached the government with a series of rescue schemes mainly focused on Jewish children, which included the possibility of settling them in various parts of the Empire. The insistence by the Home Secretary, that granting entry to Jewish refugees could lead to a growth of anti-Semitism, ensured that there was to be no easing of the immigration laws and all the proposed rescue schemes were either refused or discredited with the exception of the government proposal to offer refuge to a limited number of French Jewish children. This scheme, which failed due to the prevarication of the British and the intransigence of Vichy France, would have been funded privately, thus offering a limited comparison to the *Kindertransport* scheme of 1938. In early December 1942, the Polish-Government-in-Exile published an official report detailing the extermination of Polish Jewry. This was passed to Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary. The publication of the report placed the government under extreme pressure from the religious leaders, Jewish organisations, various campaigners and public protest to alleviate the plight facing Polish Jewry. In order to deflect any criticism of its policy towards the refugees, the government, with the consent of the Allies, decided that an official announcement was to be made in Parliament by Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, on December 17th. This announcement would be used to reassure the nation that the perpetrators of the policy to slaughter Polish Jews would face punishment when victory was achieved.

Chapter Three. The Government response to the campaigners.

January – March 1943

In the aftermath of the United Nations Declaration, the public, the Churches and the various campaigners continued to demand visible proof that the government intended to implement some form of assistance or rescue for the European Jews under Nazi rule. This pressure was intensified with the publication of a short pamphlet issued by Victor Gollancz, at the end of January 1943, entitled *Let My People Go*.¹ In a series of Cabinet meetings, it was realised that some form of further action was required to demonstrate that there were actually moves under consideration to provide some sort of assistance to the European Jews. This resulted in the Foreign Office decision to modify its current policy towards the refugees by considering their situation as an international problem, which required the co-operation of America and the Dominions in order to resolve it.² The consequence of this decision was to have a direct bearing on the next major attempt to rescue Jewish children in Europe. Finally, it was agreed in early February, to approach the United States Administration with a proposal to hold informal talks. As the diplomatic machinations on both sides slowly progressed, agreement was finally reached at the end of March to hold these talks in Bermuda.

This chapter will consider the initial response of the government to the public and to the campaigners. It will examine the reasons for both the implementation and the failure of the Bulgarian rescue scheme instituted by Oliver Stanley, the Colonial Secretary. The purpose of the scheme was twofold: it would alleviate the pressure exerted by the different campaigners by offering settlement in the Palestine Mandate to a substantial number of children, without exceeding the fixed quota for Jewish immigrants and it would lend credence to the façade of humanitarianism promoted by the government. It will analyse the unity of the religious groups with a focus on the growing division between Rabbi Schonfeld and the Board of Deputies, which hampered the unity of the Jewish community and focused on the lingering fears, that unless the Jews assimilated and displayed total loyalty to the government, anti-Semitism would continue to increase. It will examine the reasons for the decisions made by the War Cabinet to include the Jews as part of the overall refugee problem, rather than as an exceptional case, thus circumventing the possibility of large scale settlement in either Palestine or Britain in the post-war era; it will assess the reactions of the government departments involved in the policy decision taken by the Cabinet to decide that an

¹ Victor Gollancz, *Let My People Go* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1943)

² FO371/36648/W121/49/48 A.W.G. *Randall minute*, 29/12/42, p.1

international conference with America could provide an acceptable solution to the Jewish situation in occupied Europe. It will analyse the political manoeuvring on both sides before an agreement was reached to hold the Bermuda talks. It will consider the individual aims of the campaigners, to ascertain any common links. Finally, it will scrutinise the feasibility of the proposals presented to the government by the various groups in order to ascertain their practicability.

The influence of Victor Gollancz

At the end of 1942, the prominent campaigners, who included Eleanor Rathbone and the members of the Parliamentary Committee for Refugees, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Hinsley and the other church leaders and the leaders of the Jewish community, were joined by the left-wing book publisher Victor Gollancz. He was renowned for founding the Left Book Club in 1936, a movement which had provided access to political literature for the man-in-the-street at an affordable price.³ The horrific news of the Nazi slaughter had a profound effect on him, since, although of Jewish descent, he had shown little inclination to participate in activities associated with Judaism during the Thirties, apart from providing help to individual Jewish refugees.⁴ His attitude started to change, as the news of the Nazi policies towards the Jews became known during 1942. In December, as a result of Eden's speech in Parliament, he wrote *Let My People Go*⁵ over the Christmas period and published it early in January 1943. The popularity of the pamphlet resulted in the sale of 100,000 copies almost immediately with a further 50,000 sold by the end of January and in total, 250,000 copies were sold in three months.⁶ The options offered in the pamphlet would be quoted in a debate on the European Jews in the Canadian House of Commons in July 1943⁷ and they would be used in a May 1943 appeal on behalf of the Jews in *The Advertiser* (Adelaide S.A.).⁸

The contents of the publication summarised the events in Europe and set out a series of proposals for resolving the continuing policy of Jewish slaughter. Included in his suggestions was the use of the United Nations to organise a concerted plan of rescue. This envisaged the use of appropriate intermediaries to approach Germany,

³ Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Victor Gollancz. A Biography* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1987), pp.228-236

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Gollancz, *Let My People Go*

⁶ Ibid., pp.371-375 Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p.177

⁷ Canada House of Commons Debates, 'Supply External Affairs' Mr S.H. Knowles (Winnipeg North Central) 19th Parliament, 4th Session: Vol 5, July 9, 1943 p.4605-4608

⁸ *The Advertiser* (Adelaide S.A.), 'Appeal On Behalf Of The Jews', 15th May 1943 available at <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/48912740>? accessed 8 February 2017

with the aim of negotiating permission for the Jews under their control, to either emigrate, or be given exit visas and transportation to frontier posts, from where they could be moved to areas of refuge.⁹ He proposed examining the possibility of exchanging Jews for enemy nationals; he suggested encouraging neutral countries to grant entry to refugees who were able to escape the Nazis, by guaranteeing food and cash for their maintenance and evacuation to countries prepared to accept them as soon as practicable. He further proposed the establishing of temporary camps in the Empire prior to settlement in a permanent home and he stated that all these suggestions were to be conducted under the auspices of the International Red Cross. He stressed the importance of granting immediate entry to escaping refugees into Palestine and pointed out that there were still 35,000 unused immigration certificates available.¹⁰ Finally, he argued that the easing of the immigration laws into Great Britain would ensure that any refugee, who managed to escape, was given the right to enter the country.¹¹ In the ensuing months, Gollancz never wavered in his original demands as he campaigned around the country.

The Gollancz publication galvanised a substantial proportion of the population to protest at the inhumane treatment being inflicted on the European Jews. This gave rise to numerous letters sent to the government and the national press, demanding that the European Jews should be aided by any means. In January 1943, various members of the government including Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, Oliver Stanley, the Colonial Secretary and the Prime Minister, received numerous letters all suggesting that the government should provide assistance to rescue the beleaguered European Jews. The variety of correspondence, which included letters from The Theosophical Society in Wales, The Amalgamated Engineering Union, The Association of University Teachers, The Huddersfield & District Free Church and The Women's International League,¹² demonstrated a unity in their demands that the government should provide assistance to the refugees. Under this duress, officials in the Foreign Office discussed a standard reply which would intimate that plans were being discussed but could not be publicised, since this could prove to be disadvantageous to the plight of the refugees.¹³ Lady

⁹ Gollancz, *Let My People Go.*, pp.3-4

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 5,24-25

¹¹ Ibid., p.6

¹² FO371/36648 *The Theosophical Society*, 5th January 1943, *Womens International League* 8th January 1943

FO371/34361, *Amalgamated Engineering Union* 1st January 1943; *Association of University Teachers* 6th January 1943; FO371/36649, *Huddersfield & District Free Church* January 14th 1943

¹³ FO371/366498/9 'Help for refugees in occupied territory' A. Walker remarks, 18th January, 1943 various letters including *The Theosophical Society in Wales*, *Womens Int..League*, *Amalgamated Engineering Union*, *League of Nations Union*, *Huddersfield & District Free Church* etc.

Reading, President of the British Section of the World Jewish Congress, wrote an impassioned letter to Winston Churchill, pleading for the right of unlimited entry into Palestine for any Jews who were able to escape from Europe.¹⁴ The representatives of Polish Jewry in Israel sent a cable to Oliver Stanley, requesting the granting of temporary asylum within the Empire.¹⁵

In a further letter to the Prime Minister, the Archbishop of Canterbury raised the possibility of financial assistance being offered to neutral countries who provided safety for refugees who had escaped from the Nazi regime, together with a pledge that the right of asylum would be given to the countries who accepted the refugees, by both Britain and other members of the United Nations. The response from Anthony Eden was non-committal.¹⁶ In a subsequent letter to him, the Archbishop advised that a statement would be issued to the press, supported by all the Christian leaders, suggesting that refugees in neutral countries should be granted entry into territories of the Empire, thus creating room for other refugees to reach safety.¹⁷

This suggestion was based on a series of proposals, which had been discussed by the Council for Christians and Jews early in January 1943.¹⁸ The Council, which had been formally announced on October 1st 1942, had issued a clear declaration of its main aims:¹⁹

- “That since the Nazi attack on Jewry has revealed that anti-Semitism is part of a general and comprehensive attack on Christianity and Judaism...the Council adopts the following aims:
- a) To check and combat religious and racial tolerance.
 - b) To promote mutual understanding and goodwill between Christians and Jews.
 - c) To foster co-operation of Christians and Jews in study and service directed to post-war reconstruction.”²⁰

¹⁴ FO371/36650 *Lady Reading letter to Winston Churchill*, 16th January 1943

¹⁵ FO371/34361, *Polish Jewry Israel telegram to Oliver Stanley*, January 1943

¹⁶ FO371/366498/W1069 *William Cantaur letter to The Prime Minister* January 8th, 1943; *Reply Anthony Eden to Archbishop of Canterbury*, 16th January, 1942.

¹⁷ ‘Refuge For Jews In The Empire’ Bishops’ Appeal To The Government, *The Times*, 26th January, 1943, Iss.49542, p.2; FO371/36657, *The Observer*, ‘The Massacre Of The Jews’ Sir William Beveridge, 7th February, 1943; ‘Aid For Victims Of Persecution’, The Churches Appeal, 26th January, 1943, Iss.4953, p.5,

¹⁸ HL/ MS 60/15/22/1, *Council of Christians and Jews Suggested steps for saving Jews in Nazi occupied territories*, 11th January 1943, p.7

¹⁹ ‘Council Of Christians and Jews Formed’, *The Times*, October 1st, 1942, p.2 Issue 49355

²⁰ Braybrooke, *Children Of One God.*, pp.13,14

The statements, emanating from the religious leaders, were published in *The Times* on the 25th, 26th and 27th January 1943.²¹

In his assessment of this period, Tony Kushner suggests that it was only after the news of the Nazi massacres in December 1942 became public, that the Council finally took action. He points out that there was still considerable doubt as to the veracity of the reports, hence the request to the Foreign Office to provide tangible proof. He argues that, because of these doubts, the Foreign Office was able to manipulate the deputation at its meeting with them in December 1942, into believing that there was sympathy for the Jews within government departments. He further argues that, in reality, none of the religious organisations wanted to create an embarrassing situation for the government, hence their acquiescent attitude.²²

In his analysis of the foundation of the Council of Christians and Jews, Marcus Braybrooke argues that William Temple, as the major force behind its creation, viewed the ethos of Nazism as a symptom of a deep evil which presented a problem to civilisation, rather than for the relationship between Jew and Christian. Based on this approach, he stated that there should be no specific mention of anti-Semitism in its general aims. It was to be emphasised that it did not support any form of discrimination and its main aim was to promote policies common to both Christianity and Judaism, in order to combat racial and religious intolerance.²³ In his analysis of the Council, Tom Lawson, whilst supporting this argument, points out, that although, initially, attention was focused on the plight of European Jewry after the summer of 1943, little mention was made of the Jews as a specific group suffering under the Nazi regime. The focus of the church emphasised the suffering of the Christian churches under Nazi domination. Lawson argues that the church hierarchy considered Nazism to be primarily an attack on both Christianity and Civilization rather than a deliberate policy of persecution and ultimately, annihilation of the Jews. As a consequence of this viewpoint, they considered that German Christians were the first victims of the Nazis. He further suggests that in promoting this view, the church was subscribing to the theory of the two Germanys – Christian Germany and Nazi Germany.²⁴ Whilst the Council was advocating there should be no specific mention of anti-Semitism, the reports of Jewish persecution by the

²¹ FO371/36655/W1578, *William Cantaur letter to Anthony Eden*, 22nd January 1943; 'Refuge For Jews In The Empire,' *The Times*, 25th January 1943 Issue 9542, p.2; 'Europe and the Jews', 26^h March 1943 Issue 49543, p.5

Ibid., 27th March 1943 Issue 49454, p.5

²² Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination.*, p.167

²³ Braybrooke, *Children of One God.*, p.10-11;14

²⁴ Lawson, *The Church of England and the Holocaust.*, pp.92-95

Nazi regime continued to be published and these resulted in various approaches being made to the government with suggestions for assisting the European Jews under Nazi rule.

Whilst accepting the analysis of Braybrooke as to the ethos behind the formation of the Council of Christians and Jews and supporting the arguments of Lawson, there is a further aspect to be considered. Without the active vocal support of the Council and various other religious leaders in publicising the Nazi atrocities as well as leading protest campaigns, the government would have been able to ignore the issue of the European Jews. Kushner may be correct in stressing the doubts voiced by some church leaders, but as Walter Laqueur suggests, it was beyond comprehension to accept that a deliberate policy of mass extermination was actively being pursued in Europe.²⁵ In considering these various views, it is important to emphasise the new unity between the different denominations and their active campaigning, which ensured that the plight of the Jews remained in the public eye for some considerable time, rather than becoming a transient report in the national press.

The unity of the religious leaders

Whilst the church leaders retained a spirit of unity in their approach to the government, the same cannot be said for the Jewish leadership. The diversity of the Jewish campaigners was reflected in the different organisations representative of the Anglo-Jewish community. This section will analyse the responses of the different Jewish groups to the news of the Nazi extermination policy of Jews in occupied Europe, in order to ascertain why there was such a disparity of reaction at a time when a united approach to the European problem was required. It will consider whether the knowledge, that its influence was beginning to weaken in the community, affected the relationship of the Board of Deputies with the other organisations, in particular The Chief Rabbi's Emergency Council and how far the fear of possibly stimulating the growth of anti-Semitism was a major consideration in its dealings with the government.

There were deep divisions in the community, which had been created for a number of reasons, including support for the Zionist movement and a growing non-acceptance, by the children of the Eastern European immigrants, of the traditional communal authority. In his analysis of this major shift in the community, David Cesarani charts the growing division created by the burgeoning middle-class together with the

²⁵ Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1982), p.237

influence of Socialism and Zionism, on their attitude towards the Jewish leadership. He suggests that the growth and the consolidation of the middle and the lower-middle class together with elements of the bourgeoisie, developed a common link, resulting in a growing disregard for the upper-middle class which had tended to dominate the community prior to the First World War.²⁶ In recent years, these differences have been analysed by various historians including Bolchover, Shatzkes and Sompolinsky.²⁷ This has resulted in a substantial level of criticism of the attitudes taken by the Anglo-Jewish leadership in respect of the extermination of European Jewry. This section will analyse the differences in the responses of the different Jewish groups to the news of the Nazi extermination policy of Jews in their domain.

The reaction and policies of the Board of Deputies has been subjected to a growing level of criticism by several historians. Richard Bolchover argues that the leadership of the community was sadly lacking in talent. He attributes this to the divisions in the community, which were exacerbated by the split between the Zionists and the non-Zionists. He suggests that the continuing fear of anti-Semitism ensured that the leaders maintained a low profile at all times, whilst reiterating the loyalty of the community to the country and this acted as a brake on their endeavours to persuade the government to provide concrete assistance to the European Jews.²⁸ In his analysis of the Board reactions to the crisis facing European Jewry, Meier Sompolinsky argues that the ascendancy of the Zionists on the Board, had a profound influence on their reactions towards any proposed rescue schemes for the European Jews. He further suggests that this division between the Zionists and the non-Zionists exacerbated the differences of opinion in the community and that this dichotomy resulted in a variety of Jewish organisations approaching and negotiating, on an individual basis, with the government and the various embassies and legations in London.²⁹ In contrast to these arguments, Pamela Shatzkes suggests that, at this crucial time, the main problems in the community were a lack of real political skills and a marked level of inadequacy in the leadership of Selig Brodetsky as the President of the Board of Deputies.³⁰ In contrast to these criticisms of the community leadership, Amy Zahl Gottlieb examines and assesses the work of the Jewish Refugees Committee and the Central Council for Jewish Refugees from 1933 onwards. She considers their relationship with the government

²⁶ David Cesarani, 'Communal Authority in Anglo-Jewry, 1914-1940' in David Cesarani, (Ed.) *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1990), p.139

²⁷ Bolchover, *British Jewry And The Holocaust*; Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue*; Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust*.

²⁸ Bolchover, *British Jewry And The Holocaust*, pp.144-146

²⁹ Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust*, pp.119-120

³⁰ Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue*, pp.220-222

and their concentration of effort to provide practical assistance to the refugees throughout the period from 1933-1950 and she concludes that their work provided substantial assistance to the European Jews during this period.³¹

The World Jewish Congress office, based in London, provided the only link between Switzerland and the headquarters of the organisation based in America. It became a vital centre in the overall structure of the organisation, since London, effectively, became the diplomatic centre of the world.³² This was illustrated when it played a major part in exposing the Nazi atrocities in Europe, by forwarding the report, which had been received by Sydney Silverman M.P. in London from the Geneva Section, detailing the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination, to Rabbi Stephen Wise in America.³³ Alex Easterman, the London Congress Secretary, worked in close liaison with Sydney Silverman M.P. and consistently lobbied the Foreign Office on behalf of the European Jews. In a memorandum sent by him to Richard Law, at the Foreign Office, he proposed the establishment of an International Authority by the Allies to deal with all aspects of the refugee problem and having the power to provide the necessary resources to rescue and provide asylum for the European Jews. He further suggested that this body should be adequately funded to provide the maintenance and transit arrangements required for the refugees and he stated that the World Jewish Congress would provide total co-operation in the implementation of any rescue operations mounted.³⁴ This memorandum was followed by a copy of a letter from him to the International Red Cross, requesting their assistance to establish refugee camps in neutral countries.³⁵ He persisted in his lobbying and in February, in a letter to Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, he suggested that the principles of the Lend-Lease Act might be used in the implementation of any rescue plans.³⁶ His letters to the Foreign Office continued and in March he requested help to ensure that Yugoslavian Jews resident in Italy, were not passed over to the Nazis for deportation; this was followed by a letter of thanks when he was informed that measures had been taken to prevent this.³⁷

³¹ Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, pp.195-197

³² HL/MS/238 World Jewish Congress (British section), *Report of the Executive Officers and Proceedings, National Conference October 23rd & 24th, 1943*, pp.5-6

³³ FO371/30917/C7853/61/18, Berne to Foreign Office telegram from G. Reigner World Jewish Congress to Sydney Silverman M.P., 10th August 1942

³⁴ FO371/36648/W415, World Jewish Congress letter and memorandum from Alex Easterman to Richard Law 6th January, 1943, pp.1-4

³⁵ FO371/34361/W1089, World Jewish Congress letter to The President of the International Red Cross, 6th January, 1943, pp.1,2

³⁶ FO371/35662/W3039, World Jewish Congress letter and memorandum to Anthony Eden p.2

³⁷ FO371/36655/W4396/49/48 Alex Easterman letters to Richard Law, 15th and 31st March 1943.

It may be argued that the consistent lobbying by Easterman, which was in total contrast to the attitude of acquiescence adopted by the Board of Deputies, illustrates the move away from the traditional stance of the Jewish leaders, by the second-generation Eastern European immigrants. In his overall approach to the various government officials, Easterman displayed a clear determination to pursue a commitment on behalf of the World Jewish Congress to rescue the European Jews by any means available.

In direct contrast to this positive approach, the Board of Deputies persisted in preparing and presenting long and detailed memoranda to the Foreign Office, both before and after every meeting, which achieved very little since the main content of these communications merely reiterated the demands of the other campaigners.³⁸ Their diffident approach mirrored the strategy employed by the Board during the Thirties, when confronted by the rise of the Nazi party. At that time, they had pursued a deliberate policy of maintaining a low profile in the public domain, preferring to solicit the support of prominent Gentiles to speak on their behalf at public meetings, in order to counteract the possibility of stimulating anti-Semitism and they continued to employ this approach during the war.³⁹ This was clearly demonstrated in their request to the Archbishop of Canterbury in September 1942, as more news of the Nazi extermination of the Jews was received. Brodetsky, in his capacity as chairman, asked the Archbishop if it would be possible for him to raise the issue of Jewish extermination in the House of Lords.⁴⁰

This policy of requesting positive assistance from non-Jewish organisations is further illustrated by their request to the Council of Christians and Jews, at a meeting held in December 1942, which discussed the extermination policy of the Nazi regime towards European Jewry. Brodestky, in his capacity as Chairman of the Board of Deputies, requested that a deputation from the Council approach the Foreign Office to ascertain the veracity of the reports emanating from Eastern Europe. He further suggested that the church leaders should raise the possibility of a United Nations declaration setting out both the present and the future position of the Jewish community and he asked them to consider the possibility of the Church announcing to their congregations, the actual facts appertaining to the European Jews, on an acceptable

³⁸ FO371/32682/W17601, *S. Brodetsky letter and summary to A. Eden*, 28th December 1942, pp1-5
FO371/36654/W3468, *S. Brodetsky letter and summary to Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs*, 28th
February, 1943, pp.1-4

³⁹ Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1853*, p.194; Kushner, *The persistence of Prejudice*, pp.165-166;
Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue*, p.28

⁴⁰ LPL/54/111, *Brodetsky letter to Archbishop of Canterbury*, 20th September, 1942

day to be specified.⁴¹ Tony Kushner argues that the Board of Deputies favoured the stratagem of requesting representatives of the Christian Establishment to act on their behalf, since they felt that any approach on behalf of the Jewish refugees was better received by government officials, if representations were made by non-Jews.⁴² This argument is supported by Pamela Shatzkes, who suggests that the Jewish leaders believed support from prominent non-Jews, offered a greater level of impartiality with the authorities.⁴³

The only exception to this was the emphasis placed on the possibilities of settlement in Palestine, by a deputation from the Board to the Foreign Office in December 1942. They proposed that Palestine should be the obvious place of safety for the European Jews and it was recommended that the entire policy of entry into the Mandate should be reviewed.⁴⁴ This suggestion that entry into Palestine should not be limited by the restrictions imposed by the May 1939 Palestine White Paper, was again reiterated in a further memo sent to Richard Law in March 1943.⁴⁵ In a Foreign Office memo, issued after the December 1942 meeting, it was noted that the deputation had accepted the explanation, that due to security issues, it was not practicable to grant unlimited entry into Palestine for the refugees.⁴⁶ This display of acquiescence by the Board was to be the traditional response of its members at subsequent meetings with various government officials.

In considering the attitude of the Board of Deputies, during this period, it should be noted that, although, to a great degree, the arguments put forward by Bolchover, Sompelinsky and Shatzkes are an accurate depiction, they have overlooked the overall approach employed and supported by all the members of the Board to the Foreign Office. This approach displayed the mentality of the bureaucrat rather than the innovator. The acquiescent attitude displayed both before and after each meeting, would appear to reflect a determination to conform to the expected responses of petitioners rather than to the demands of active campaigners. This is best summed up by the

⁴¹HL/ CCJ/MS60/5/22/2, *Council of Christians and Jews Executive Meeting* 3rd December, 1942, p.1

⁴² Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p.167

⁴³ Pamela Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue*, p.28

⁴⁴ FO371/366655/W1857, *The Board of Deputies of British Jews, A.G. Brotman letter and notes to Richard Law Foreign Office*, 23rd December, 1942., pp.1-5

⁴⁵ FO371/366655/W4518, *Ibid.*, 11th March, 1943. pp.1-4

⁴⁶ FO371/366655/W1857, *Ibid.*, 23rd December, 1942, pp.1-2
FO371/366654/W3468, *The Board of Deputies of British Jews, The Joint Foreign Committee, letter to The Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs*, 15th February, 1943., pp.1-4

following comment made by F.H. Roberts of the Foreign Office, after a meeting with Brotman, the secretary of the Board in April 1943:

“Mr. Brotman is very patient and helpful and it is, I am sure, in our interest to keep him and his moderate organisation as contented as possible.”⁴⁷

The growth of anti-Semitism after the arrival of the Eastern European Jews at the turn of the century, had had an indelible effect on the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community. In a determined attempt to combat its growth, they had employed a variety of schemes to encourage the new immigrants to assimilate as quickly as possible: education, evening classes for adults to encourage older immigrants to learn English, the publication of a Yiddish-English Lexicon in 1894 and Jewish Clubs for both sexes.⁴⁸ It was believed that these measures would help to deflect the general view that the Jews were different and as such did not conform to the prevailing mores of society. The advent of the First World War fuelled the public perceptions of Jewish support for Germany because of their links through banking and commerce.⁴⁹ This view of the Jews as supporting the enemy, was further reinforced by the refusal of many of the Russian immigrants to serve in the armed forces. In the eyes of these immigrants, Russia was their enemy who had forced them to migrate.⁵⁰ In a determined effort, the leaders of the community actively supported the proposed government conscription scheme for the Russian Jews and stressed the need to demonstrate patriotism in order to combat the growing hostility towards them.⁵¹ A further accusation levelled against the Russian Jews in the East End of London and Leeds, was profiteering.⁵² The determination of the leadership to encourage rapid assimilation into society was clearly demonstrated in the response of the community to the arrival of German Jews in the early Thirties, when their entry was monitored by the Central Council for Jewish Refugees, in their endeavours to ensure that there would be rapid assimilation by the newly arrived refugees.⁵³ A further illustration of their attitude towards potential entrants was their support of the government decision to introduce a visa scheme for Austrian Jews after the *Anschluss*, in order to limit the number of Jews granted admission.⁵⁴ Taking all

⁴⁷ FO371/36658/W550/49/48, F.K. Roberts Foreign Office memo 24th April, 1943., p.1

⁴⁸ Englander, Ed. *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants.*, pp.215-218;-250-252; Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870-1914.*, pp.174-17;- 221-226

⁴⁹ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939.*, pp.122-123;-138

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.126-129

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp.126-128; Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jew.*, pp.46-47

⁵² Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939.*, p.135

⁵³ Alderman, *Modern British Jewry.*, p.276; Louise London, 'Jewish Refugees, Anglo-Jewry and British Government Policy, 1930-1940', in David Cesarani (Ed.) *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp.174-176

⁵⁴ Sherman, *Island refuge.*, pp.86-91

these factors into account, it is possible to sense the continuing influence of the problems created by the arrival of the Eastern European Jews at the turn of the century on the response of the Anglo-Jewish leaders as they confronted what appeared to be a seemingly insoluble problem: the growing number of Jewish refugees entering the country.

In contrast to the work of the World Jewish Congress and the Board of Deputies, the approach of the Central Council for Jewish Refugees focused its efforts on providing practical assistance to Jews in occupied territories. After the failure of its proposed scheme to rescue children from Vichy France in September 1942, which the Council would have funded,⁵⁵ they concentrated their efforts on practical measures to provide assistance to the refugees. They approached the government to discuss the possibility of sending food parcels to Jews in concentration camps and this resulted in talks with Sir Herbert Emerson of the Inter-Governmental Committee to further explore this idea. It was suggested that they would provide finance for the committee to purchase food in Switzerland, which would be sent to Theresienstadt and Birkenau; agreement was reached and the Council allocated £5,000.00.⁵⁶ The practical approach of the Council to provide aid for the endangered European Jews where feasible and restricting its efforts to small-scale projects, ensured that it was able to achieve a modicum of success, which was aided by the close working relationship that Otto Schiff had developed with the Home Office. This had developed when, in his capacity as President of the Jews Temporary Shelter, he had discussed with Home Office officials, the status of immigrants wishing to settle in the country. This contact had expanded with the arrival of the first German Jewish refugees in 1933, when Schiff had been instrumental in founding the Central British Fund for German Jewry.⁵⁷

Dr. Joseph Hertz who had worked unceasingly to promote Zionism since his appointment as Chief Rabbi in 1913,⁵⁸ refused to support the idea of Zionism as a solution to the Jewish tragedy unfolding in Europe.⁵⁹ He accepted, that from a diplomatic viewpoint, any proposals to rescue European Jews which mentioned Palestine, would not be welcomed by the Foreign and the Colonial Offices.⁶⁰ This

⁵⁵ CAB/66/27/7, War Cabinet, *Admission to the United Kingdom of a limited number of Jewish refugees from unoccupied France*, 23rd September 1942., pp1-3

⁵⁶ Gottlieb, *Men of Vision.*, pp.175-176

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp.,7-9;--11-13

Louise London, 'Jewish Refugees, Anglo-Jewry and British Government Policy, 1930-1940.,' pp., 166;-171-173

⁵⁸ I. Epstein (Ed.) *Joseph Herman Hertz, In Memoriam* (London: Soncino Press, 1947), pp.27-28;:38

⁵⁹ Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust.*, p.3

⁶⁰ Chanan Tomlin, *Protest and Prayer* (Switzerland: Peter Lang AG, 2006),p.158

stance on Palestine was a further cause of the disunity within the Jewish community.⁶¹ In July 1938, Hertz founded the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council to provide assistance to European Jewry. The driving force behind it was Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld, his son-in-law. The main concerns of the Council were to provide assistance to predominantly orthodox Jews trapped in Europe but as the news from Europe, relating to the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination, reached Britain, this agenda was amended to encompass all European Jews trapped in Nazi-occupied territories, by emphasising the humanitarian rather than the political aspects of the situation.⁶²

In January 1943, Austin Hudson M.P. for North Hackney, wrote to Anthony Eden informing him of Schonfeld's intention to lobby members of Parliament, requesting them to present a resolution in the House which would focus on the apparent lack of political activity since the government declaration of December 17th 1942.⁶³ The proposed resolution stated:

"That in the view of the massacre of the Jews and of other nationalities by the Nazis, and of the admirable statements made thereon in both Houses... H.M. Government should declare its readiness, in consultation with the Dominion Governments, to co-operate with the Governments of the United Nations in finding a place of refuge in territories within the British Empire, as well as elsewhere, for all persons threatened with massacre who can escape from Axis lands. It should appeal to the Governments of neighbouring neutral countries to offer temporary sanctuary in transit to all such persons."⁶⁴

This change of tactic upset the Board of Deputies, who insisted that they, alone, were the main representative of Anglo-Jewry. They insisted that Schonfeld had no authority to lobby members of the Parliamentary Committee for Refugees, in order to introduce a resolution in Parliament which might exert pressure on the government to institute some form of rescue for the European Jews.⁶⁵ Schonfeld argued that, as the religious head of his own community, he had the right to pursue any positive action that he felt was relevant, without having to consult with other organisations in the community.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust*, p.3

⁶² Tomlin, *Protest and Prayer*, pp.109-112

⁶³ FO371/35662/W1067/48/49 Sir Austen Hudson letter and proposed resolution to Anthony Eden, 15th January, 1943, p. 1

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.2

⁶⁵ Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust*, pp.94-95

⁶⁶ HL/MS183/2/4, S. Brodetsky letter to the Chief Rabbi, 11th January, 1943, pp.1-2

This response paved the way for a succession of letters between the Board of Deputies and Schonfeld, exposing the depth of the divisions within the community.⁶⁷ In a strongly worded letter to Brodetsky, which supported the efforts of Schonfeld, the Chief Rabbi emphasised that, since the December declaration by Anthony Eden, nothing had been done to alleviate the situation facing the Polish Jews.⁶⁸ This was followed by a letter from Schonfeld to *The Jewish Chronicle* describing his efforts to rally support for a petition to be discussed in Parliament, which was strongly opposed by the Board of Deputies.⁶⁹ In a significant move, Schonfeld canvassed various M.P.'s and a draft motion was drawn up stating:

“That in the 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.”⁷⁰

This petition was never presented to Parliament. It may, however, be argued that Schonfeld did achieve a measure of success through the tabling of a motion in the House of Lords by the Archbishop of Canterbury in March 1943. The motion requested that government assistance be given to the Jews trapped in Europe.⁷¹

In examining the opposition of the Board towards the possibility of a petition as suggested by Schonfeld, Geoffrey Alderman has argued that it was the refusal of the former to include the possibility of offering refuge to the European Jews in Palestine, which created the problem. He maintains that this omission incurred the unconditional fury of the Zionist lobby among the Boards' members.⁷² Whilst Sompolinsky supports this argument, he also suggests that Schonfeld believed that, by stressing the humanitarian aspect of rescue, more would be achieved than by advocating the scrapping of the quota system emanating from the Palestine White Paper.⁷³ In contrast to these arguments, Chanan Tomlin suggests that the opposition towards the actions of Schonfeld may be viewed as a result of misunderstandings combined with a lack of

⁶⁷ HL/MSMS183/3/4, *Rabbi Schonfeld letter to S. Brodetsky*, 12th January 1943; Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust*, pp.95-97; Tomlin, *Protest and Prayer*, pp.170-172

⁶⁸ HL/MS183/3/4 *Office of the Chief Rabbi letter to S. Brodetsky*, 15th January, 1943

⁶⁹ Letter from Dr. Solomon Schonfeld to the Editor 'The Parliamentary Committee. Jewish Officials' Attitude', *The Jewish Chronicle*, January 29th, 1943, p.5 No.3851

⁷⁰ HL/MS183/3/4, *Rescue From Nazi Massacres*, February 4th, 1943.

⁷¹ HL Debate *German Atrocities; Aid for Refugees*, 23rd March 1943, vol126 cc811-60,

⁷² Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, p.305

⁷³ Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust*, pp.94,95

concerted co-operation, rather than a series of sectarian manoeuvres to assert control.⁷⁴ When considering the various Jewish organisations involved in the different attempts to rescue the European Jews, it may be argued that the pragmatic approach taken by Schonfeld, was far more practical and acceptable to the government. He did not stress the political connotations involved (settlement opportunities in Palestine) in any rescue operation, but by focusing on the humanitarian aspects, he was able to create a substantial body of support among the various campaigners. This, in turn, served to expose the deep divisions in the Anglo-Jewish community leadership, which effectively hindered many rescue proposals.

In assessing the attitude of the Board of Deputies, during this period, a major influence on their reaction towards any display of independent action was beyond their control, was their determination to assert their dwindling authority in the community. This gradual loss of dominance may be traced back to the arrival of the Eastern European Jews arrival at the turn of the century, since it was their children who refused to accept the traditional attitudes of the Anglo-Jewish leaders. A further consideration is the underlying fear of stimulating anti-Semitism, which had pervaded the attitude of the nation towards the Jews since the turn of the century. This continual fear influenced the overall approach of the older leaders in their attitudes, with their insistence on total assimilation by the community and a refusal to take part in any political activities, since they believed that this approach demonstrated their loyalty to the Government of Britain.

It may, therefore, be argued that their response to the events unfolding in Europe did not galvanise them into radical action, since they believed that their primary aim during the war was to demonstrate their loyalty to the country. In viewing this as their main objective, their policy of requesting support from influential Gentiles, whilst pursuing a subdued approach to the lobbying of the government, ensured that, apart from a growing awareness of the Nazi atrocities, they could maintain an aura of normality free from outside disruption. In contrast to this, both Alex Easterman on behalf of the World Jewish Congress and the Chief Rabbi, with the assistance of Rabbi Schonfeld, adopted a determined approach in their meetings with different government officials, as they proposed various schemes to either rescue or alleviate the beleaguered European Jews. They displayed a pragmatism in their approach to government, which was not influenced by the fear of anti-Semitism or the need to maintain a low profile.

Ultimately, the disunity of the Jewish community leadership was in stark contrast to the continuing cooperation displayed by the church leaders who worked both together

⁷⁴ Tomlin, *Protest and Prayer*, p.171

and in conjunction with the campaigners. They did not hesitate to confront and criticise the government stance towards the plight of the refugees, whereas the Jewish leadership never achieved any real degree of unity in their approach to the growing refugee problem. The causes of this disparity were fuelled by a combination of factors which were dominated by the fear of stimulating anti-Semitism and a determination to display, at all times, the loyalty of the community to Britain which they equated with strong support for the government policies. It may be argued, that since the government wished to maintain its façade of humanitarianism towards the refugees, the non-Jewish religious leadership was in a position to exert a considerable level of influence on the public policy of the government, whereas the determination of the Jewish leaders to maintain a seemingly innocuous stance severely hindered their influence in the public domain.

The proposed rescue of the Bulgarian Jewish children

In the aftermath of the debacle of the proposed rescue of Jewish children in Vichy France government officials were aware that they were expected to display a visible response to the situation of Jews in Europe. This section will examine the proposed government scheme to rescue 4,000 Bulgarian Jewish children and settle them in Palestine. It will consider the political implications for this scheme which still adhered to the rigid quota set in the Palestine White Paper of 1939, thus ensuring continued support from the Arabs in the overall war effort, whilst demonstrating to the Allies, in particular America, its compassionate attitude towards Jewish children trapped in Nazi-occupied Europe. The reactions of the Bulgarian and Turkish governments will be considered to ascertain how far the initial problems envisaged by Oliver Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, contributed to the continuing difficulties in implementing the rescue.

Early in December 1942, Oliver Stanley, the newly appointed Colonial Secretary, informed Churchill that the Jewish Agency had been in contact regarding a request to rescue children in Axis and Axis-dominated countries. He cited Bulgaria as an example and he suggested that, since the High Commissioner had agreed to allow a limited number of children to enter Palestine, this should be given serious consideration. He stated that, in reality, it was thought little could be done to effect a mass rescue, but by opting to rescue a limited number of children, the government whilst retaining control, would benefit from the opportunity to display a façade of humanity towards the plight of

the refugees.⁷⁵ The matter was discussed by the War Cabinet and it was noted that the High Commissioner had agreed, in principle, to allow the entry of a number of Bulgarian children into Palestine as part of the first immigration quota for 1943. Stanley was authorised to implement the necessary steps to set the scheme in motion.⁷⁶ In retrospect, this decision was in complete contradiction to the previous stance of the Colonial Office who had been unwavering in their decision to refuse entry into Palestine to the passengers on board *The Struma* in February 1942.⁷⁷ They had insisted that the passengers, whom they classified as illegal immigrants attempting to reach Palestine, must be forced to return to their port of departure, Constantia, Romania.⁷⁸ In their efforts to put a halt to desperate Jews attempting to enter the Palestine Mandate, the Colonial Office, until the Stanley proposal of rescue, insisted on adhering to the conditions laid down in the 1939 Palestine White Paper, when any suggestion of allowing the European Jews trapped in Europe to enter the country was mentioned. This attitude had been strongly supported by Sir Harold MacMichael, the High Commissioner, who had consistently argued against accepting Jewish adults and had stated that with regard to admitting adults from Bulgaria:

“The door would then be thrown open to any number and condition of Jews whom any Axis country felt disposed to get rid of.”⁷⁹

In the light of this statement, it should be noted that Jewish children were not considered to pose the threat that adults would. The belief that the Axis countries would implement such a policy was a reiteration of the ideas expressed both prior to and during the Evian Conference, when the concern was that Hungary, Poland and Romania would attempt to force their substantial Jewish populations to emigrate.⁸⁰ Taking this attitude into account, it would appear that the apparent volte-face of the government in the overall policy towards the Jews at this juncture, may be considered as one of promoting a

⁷⁵ PRO PREM 4/51/2/121 *Stanley memo to Churchill*, 9/12/42; FO371/32698/W15197/48 *High Commissioner Jerusalem to Colonial Office*, 9/11/42

⁷⁶ CAB65/28 *War Cabinet, Immigration of Jewish Children from Bulgaria*, 14/12/42 p.224

⁷⁷ FO371/29163/W12180/11/48 *Jerusalem to Colonial Office*, 9th October 1941; Foreign Office to Angora, 11th October 1941; Douglas Frantz & Catherine Collins, *Death On The Black Sea. The Untold Story Of The Struma And World War II's Holocaust At Sea* (New York: Ecco, 2004), pp.128-129;155

⁷⁸ CO733/449/P3/4/30 *S.E.V. Luke minute*, 23rd December, 1942; E.B. Boyd minute, 23rd December 1941; Lord Moyne Colonial Secretary letter of protest to Richard Law Foreign Office, 24th December, 1941

⁷⁹ FO371/32698/W15197/15197/48 *High Commissioner Jerusalem to Colonial Office*, 9th November 1942

⁸⁰ CO323/1601/1. *Draft Record of Interdepartmental Meeting Circulated For Approval or Amendment*, June 30th, 1938, pp.1-8; Wiener Library, 'Speech by Lord Winterton' *Evian Conference records 1938*, 503MF DOC54/Reel 3., p.6

compassionate façade to the world rather than implementing a successful rescue operation.

In late December, in a meeting with the Foreign Secretary, a similar proposal was made by a deputation from the Board of Deputies of British Jews during a meeting to discuss the general situation of Jews in Europe.⁸¹ The Foreign Secretary informed them that 4,000 Bulgarian children had been given permission to travel to Palestine and the government was awaiting a reply from the Bulgarian Government, via the Swiss government to reach an agreement.⁸² In a meeting of the War Cabinet on the same day, this matter was raised by the Foreign Secretary who stated that, although no government commitment had been made, he believed that careful consideration should be given as to whether the government was able to offer any assistance. As a result of this, it was agreed to appoint a Cabinet Committee consisting of the Foreign, the Home and the Colonial Secretaries to consider what arrangements could be implemented for the reception and accommodation of any Jewish refugees who were able to leave enemy-occupied territory, via either Bulgaria or Portugal.⁸³ This offer of help for Bulgarian children was acknowledged by the deputation in their letter of thanks, together with a draft of the points raised at the meeting of December 23rd with the Foreign Secretary.⁸⁴

The creation of a committee solely to deal with the refugees, was not made public. In a further meeting held early in January 1943, the reference to Jewish refugees was removed and replaced with 'Refugees' in the title of the Cabinet Committee when the following conclusions were agreed: -

"A) That no differentiation should be made as between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees, and that the refugee problem should be dealt with as a whole.

B) That the problem should be regarded as a United Nations responsibility in respect of which each nation should agree to make a definite contribution."⁸⁵

⁸¹ FO341/32682/W17601, *Deputation Of British Jews to Foreign Secretary 23/12/42. Arising from the Declaration made by His Majesty's Government on 17th December, 1942.*, p.1

⁸² FO371/32682/W17601 A.W..G. Randall memo 22/12/42

⁸³ CAB/65/28/42 War Cabinet meeting held at 5.30pm 23/12/42, pp.245-246

⁸⁴ FO371/32682/W17601 Letter to H.A. Nutting Foreign Office from A.J. Brotman 28/12/42 -Pp.1-3

⁸⁵ Cab/66/33/13, *Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 9/1/43, p.51

This decision was to act as the template for all future government discussions which reviewed both the general and individual situation of European Jews in Nazi-occupied or Nazi-dominated countries.

The rescue scheme was announced in Parliament by Oliver Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, on February 3rd 1943. He stated that the Governor of Palestine had agreed to admit 4,000 Bulgarian Jewish children with 500 adults to accompany them on the journey. He assured the Commons that the negotiations had been successful and arrangements were now being made to arrange transport. He qualified this by stating that the practical problems of arranging the transport could be considerable and time-consuming. He informed the Commons, that since some of the 270 Rumanian and Hungarian Jewish children, who had been given visas for Palestine, were now in transit, it had been decided to admit a further 500 children from these countries. He then announced that, subject to transport being available, Jewish children accompanied by a proportion of adults, would be given entry into Palestine. He qualified this statement by indicating that approximately 29,000 visas were available for entry into the Mandate. This equated to the agreed number of immigrants permissible as at 31st March 1944, stipulated in the Palestine White Paper of 1939.⁸⁶ He reiterated the major problems of arranging transport together with the strain of providing food and accommodation for large numbers in Palestine.⁸⁷ In examining this proposal, various points need to be considered. Did the government believe that the rescue of the Bulgarian children would succeed? Was the main reason for their endorsement of the scheme a political strategem to display an element of humanitarianism? Was the aim to alleviate the growing pressure from the campaigners after the failure of the Vichy rescue?

The problems Stanley mentioned in his speech to the Commons, had already been encountered by the British Ambassador in Turkey. In early January, he had informed the Foreign Office of the difficulties encountered by Jews wishing to travel through Turkey. The Turkish authorities refused to grant any transit visa unless the applicant were in possession of an entry visa into territory beyond Turkey. It was also noted that there was a strong degree of anti-Jewish feeling in the country.⁸⁸ Corry Guttstadt examines the ramifications of an amendment, in January 1941, to a decree relating to transit visas for Jewish refugees coming from the Balkans. In effect, this

⁸⁶ Cmd.6019 1939, *Palestine Statement of Policy*, (London: HMSO1939)

⁸⁷ HC Deb *Palestine (Immigration)* 3rd February 1943, vol 386 cc864-7, p.1; JTA Jewish Telegraph Agency, 'Bulgarian Government permits 4,000 Jewish Children to Leave for Palestine', available at <http://www.jta.org/1943/02/04/archive/bulgarian-government-permits-4000-jewish-ch> accessed 9 March 2015, Pp.1-2

⁸⁸ HO213/1827Gen 470/12/64 *Telegram from Knatchbull-Hugessen Angora to Foreign Office*, 22/1/43

limited the number of transit visas available to Jews from Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania with a quota of transit visas set by Ankara for the respective consulates. The main condition of the visa was that the refugee had to possess a ticket for travel across Turkey, leaving within two weeks of entry and a stay in Istanbul was restricted to twenty-four hours.⁸⁹ In contrast to this, Stanford J. Shaw, whilst listing the entire contents of the decree, maintains that any European Jews subject to persecution would be allowed to travel through Turkey, providing they possessed an entry visa to another country.⁹⁰

In March 1943, the British Embassy informed the Foreign Office that Bulgaria was prepared to allow two coaches per train to depart three times a week, to transport Jewish children to Istanbul, under the proposed scheme to allow entry to Palestine for 5,000 children. This agreement would result in approximately 450 children arriving in Istanbul on a weekly basis. As the Turkish railway system was not adequate to deal with this number, it was proposed that the children should be transported from Turkey by ship.⁹¹ A further problem was initially identified by The Jewish Agency For Palestine in February, when they suggested that, in order to advance the scheme, the visa procedure should be simplified.⁹² This request was followed by a letter in March, restating the request⁹³ and subsequently reiterated by Lord Melchett in a letter to Lord Cranbourn later in the month. He pointed out the current system of issuing visas in Bulgaria through the Swiss Consulate was having an adverse effect on the proposed rescue plan. He stated that the entire system needed to be simplified in order to facilitate the process of granting the visas, since the current system could prove to be an impossible barrier, ultimately condemning the children to the mercy of the Nazis. In her analysis of the prevailing problems, Dalia Ofer argues that the procedures applied by the Foreign and the Colonial Offices in arranging permits for the children, were still based on those applied during the pre-war era. The process, which involved various officials in Palestine, Bulgaria and Turkey, had normally taken at least nine weeks for completion, but this was lengthened due war-time conditions. She maintains that the relevant sections of the departments involved did not take this into account, hence the apparent lack of urgency displayed by the Foreign and the Colonial Offices. She concludes that the rigid adherence to the routine procedures for compiling the relevant

⁸⁹ Corry Guttschadt, *Turkey, The Jews, and the Holocaust*. Translated from German Kathleen M. Dell'Orto, Sabine Bartel & Michelle Miles (New York; Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.110-111

⁹⁰ Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust. Turkey's Role in Rescuing Turkish European Jews from Nazi Persecution 1933-1945* (Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press, 1993), p.263, 264

⁹¹ FO371/36679/A4546, *Telegram from Angora to Foreign Office*, 18/3/42

⁹² FO371/36678, A.W.G. Randall letter to W.W. Clark Colonial Office, 26th February 1943 p.92; Proposed *Transit of Bulgarian Jewish Children Across Turkey to Palestine Index notes*, March 1st 1943

⁹³ CO733/438/2, L.B. Namier *The Jewish Agency For Palestine letter to E.E. Boyd*, 25th March 1943

detailed lists, in conjunction with the various other organisations involved, in Palestine, Sofia and Istanbul, created immense problems, which ultimately hampered the whole process, as pointed out by The Jewish Agency and Lord Melchett.⁹⁴

On the other hand, the officials involved in the entire process, justified their actions in a lengthy memorandum prepared by Randall of the Foreign Office. He pointed out, in order to simplify the general procedure, it was necessary to consult with the Home and the Foreign Office, the Swiss government, the Bulgarian government (passing through Switzerland), the Embassy and Passport Control Officer in Angora and Istanbul and finally, the High Commissioner in Jerusalem.⁹⁵ Randall stated that, in tandem with this five-way consultation, various questions were raised which focused on transport, the identification of the Bulgarian Jews to be granted permits and transit permits to be granted by the Turkish authorities. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that there was no public criticism of the Turkish Government although the refusal of the Turkish Consul in Sofia to issue any transit visas on an individual basis, without authorisation from his government, had to be overcome. In conjunction with this, the Bulgarian Government insisted that the organisation of transport must be resolved prior to any discussions appertaining to lists of Jews selected for emigration. Further difficulties included the refusal of the Turkish authorities to permit the first group of Bulgarians to pass through Turkey until a group of Romanians had completed their transit through the country by the middle of April.⁹⁶

He suggested Lord Melchett should be advised that the Angora Embassy was endeavouring to resolve the transport problems with the use of both the railway and shipping and finally, the government was raising the possibility of Turkey granting entry to children in possession of visas for whom immediate transport was not available. He concluded his brief by pointing out that, since Turkish agreement was vital in achieving the rescue of Jews in the Balkans, it would not be politic to have any public discussion of the current situation, nor would it be fair to level any public criticism of the British or Palestinian procedures, since any response would inculcate the Turkish authorities and this would not be in the best interests of the Jewish refugees.⁹⁷

In examining these arguments, it may be argued that the Foreign Office was hidebound by red tape, but consideration must also be given to the involvement of the

⁹⁴ Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust.*, pp.220-223

⁹⁵ FO371/36678/W5521/80/48 A. W, G. Randall Brief re: - response to Lord Melchett letter for Nigel Law, 1st April 1943

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Bulgarian and the Turkish governments in the overall arrangements, appertaining to the various types of documentation required for the children, since both countries maintained an official status of neutrality throughout the war. It may be argued that, initially, the attitude of the Turkish authorities towards the scheme displaying a determination to ensure that the Jewish children would be given no opportunity to remain in Turkey, was driven by the possibility that they would not be allowed to enter Palestine. However, as Corrie Guttstadt points out, even after entry permits were granted by the Mandate authorities, the Turks still displayed an attitude of indifference to the plight of the refugees and continued to refuse any assistance from the Allies in alleviating the problems.⁹⁸

The Turkish authorities continued to raise problems which only exacerbated the situation even before the refugees could leave Bulgaria. In two telegrams sent from the Turkish Embassy to the Foreign Office, they were summed up as follows; the Foreign Minister refused to consider allowing the establishment of transit camps, citing lack of health facilities, inadequate water supplies and difficulty in providing sufficient food; he declined to accept any offer of external administrative assistance and he stated that, due to a lack of transport, the offer of extra food supplies from Great Britain and America was not a practicable solution. He did, however, point out, given their limited resources, they were prepared to provide maximum help in transporting the refugees from the Bulgarian frontiers to either Istanbul or to another port on the Marmaris coast, for onward travel in shipping provided by either Britain or America. He explained that transport through Anatolia to Syria and Palestine, could only be offered to approximately 150 persons per month and this facility was already being used to capacity by other Jewish children. The embassy informed London that the International Red Cross was prepared to sponsor safe conducts on reliable shipping, but it was qualified by the observation that the current shipping available was limited and it might be more practicable to obtain shipping from other sources.⁹⁹ In response to this information, the Foreign Office decided to approach the Admiralty and the Ministry of War, to discuss the feasibility of chartering two Romanian liners to transport the refugees.¹⁰⁰

As the situation deteriorated, Oliver Stanley wrote to Anthony Eden, pointing out that no progress had been made in implementing the practical arrangements of rescuing

⁹⁸ Guttstadt, *Turkey, the Jew.,* pp124,1-25; Frederick B. Chary, *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution, 1940-1944* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), pp.136-137

⁹⁹ FO371/36678/W5503. *Telegram from Knatchbull-Hugesson Angora to Foreign Office, 6/4/43*, pp.1-2
FO371/36678/. W5505, *Sterndale Bennet Angora to Foreign Office, 6/4/43*, pp.1-2

¹⁰⁰ FO371/366678, *A. Walker Foreign Office memo, 12/4/43* pp.1,2

the children. He suggested the problems might be resolved by appointing one person, with ministerial responsibility, to oversee the situation, thus resolving all the issues as quickly as possible. In his response, whilst giving the impression of agreeing with Stanley's suggestion, Eden raised various objections, but he did agree to contact the Ambassador for his views on the proposal.¹⁰¹ In a summary of all the events produced by the Colonial Office in May, it became apparent, that, apart from the intransigence of the Turkish authorities and the problems of transport through Turkey, there were also major differences between the Bulgarian government and the High Commissioner for Palestine. These centred on who should be responsible for selecting the eligible children and adults to use the visas granted by the British Government. Finally, in early May, the Bulgarians insisted that they would designate which Jews could travel to Palestine. It was further noted that, although it appeared that the Bulgarians would still allow individual Jews to leave, the likelihood of being able to implement the scheme for mass immigration was fading, due to increasing pressure from the German authorities to halt the departure of Jews. It was also noted that the embassy in Angora did not feel the appointment of one person to oversee the scheme, as suggested by the Colonial Secretary, was of practical use until the refugees started to move.¹⁰² In a telegram from Berne to the Foreign Office, it was confirmed that Germany had exerted considerable influence on the Bulgarian government to deport the Jews and an agreement had been reached between the government and members of the Nazi hierarchy, detailing how the deportations would be implemented.¹⁰³ The original scheme was only implemented for Jews from the annexed territories of Thrace, Macedonia and Eastern Serbia but it appeared that there was now little hope of a large exodus of refugees from the country.¹⁰⁴ The scheme totally collapsed in the middle of May. The Swiss *Charge d'Affaires* informed the British representative in Berne that they had been told by the Bulgarian Minister of the Interior on the 18th May, that it had been decided to close the Bulgarian-Turkish frontier to all Jews. In the light of this, they stated that they were unable to provide any more assistance to rescue the children.¹⁰⁵

In a final twist to the whole sorry saga, the Foreign Office sent a detailed telegram to America with copies to Berne, Angora and Jerusalem. It reported the

¹⁰¹ FO371/36678/W6426/80/48, *Oliver Stanley letter to Anthony Eden*, 14/4/43, Pp1,2
Anthony Eden Reply to Oliver Stanley, 25/4/43, pp.1-2

¹⁰² CO733/449/9, *Immigration From Bulgaria Notes W.W. Clark*, 11/5/43, pp.1-3

¹⁰³ Frederick B. Chary, *The Bulgarian*, pp.208-213

¹⁰⁴ FO371/36677/W7339 *From Norton in Berne telegram to Foreign Office*, 14/5/43; Klaus Gensicke, *The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Nazis. The Berlin Years*. Translated by Alexander Fraser Gunn (London; Valentine Mitchell, 2011), pp.117-123

¹⁰⁵ FO371/36677/W7705, *Norton in Berne telegram to Foreign Office*, 21/5/43

decision of the Bulgarian Government to close the Turkish-Bulgarian frontier to all Jews, but it instructed the British ambassador in Switzerland to ascertain whether the Bulgarian Government was denying passage to all Jews or was there still a possibility of some individual exceptions being granted permission to leave the country? It also contained a response to a suggestion made to the Swiss authorities by the German Government. The Germans had indicated that they might consider approving the departure of a number of Jews to enter Palestine from certain countries controlled by them, but they wanted German internees in exchange for this concession.¹⁰⁶ The proposal was viewed as blackmail and it was not considered feasible, since it would mean negotiating with Hitler and this could be viewed as giving preference to the enemy over Allied nationals. It was accepted that by refusing this offer, there would be much dismay and dissatisfaction from Jewish "pressure" groups and, no doubt, both the British and the American Governments would be blamed for the impasse of the scheme to rescue Jews from German-controlled countries. The telegram concluded by requesting the American State Department to ascertain whether they had any suggestions or contacts which could facilitate the departure of the Jews from Bulgaria.¹⁰⁷ *The Times* carried a brief report which stated that 20,000 Jews had been expelled from Sofia to other parts of the country, as a potential first step towards deportation to Poland. The report stated further that 14,000 Greek and Yugoslavian Jews in Bulgarian territory, had already been deported and that in the rest of Bulgaria, there remained approximately 45,000 Jews. These facts were confirmed by the Foreign Office in a letter early in June 1943, which substantiated the news report carried in *The Times*. It stated that the government still hoped that there might be a slight chance of rescuing the children, since it was understood that there was a fair degree of opposition to the expulsion of the Jews.¹⁰⁸

Ultimately, the problems facing the different organisations in their attempts to rescue Jewish children in Bulgaria, were virtually insurmountable. The intransigence of the Bulgarian authorities in their refusal to allow any neutral body to select the adults who would accompany the children on their journey was compounded by their decision in early May to close their frontier with Turkey, thereby halting any possibility of a mass departure of Bulgarian Jews. The limited co-operation of the Turkish authorities in permitting the Bulgarian children to have transit visas together with their refusal to accept any assistance from the Allies, created a further hindrance to the proposed

¹⁰⁶ FO371/36677/W7065/80/48 *Foreign Office telegram to Washington, Berne, Angora and Jerusalem*, 28/5/43, p.1

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp1-2

¹⁰⁸ FO371/366662/W8192/49/48 *A.W.G. Randall letter to C.A.C.J. Hendricks*, 7/6/43

scheme. The aim of the British to display a humanitarian approach, after the debacle of *The Struma*, was severely hindered by the delay in granting Palestine entry visas to the children. The rigid adherence to the rules governing the issue of the permits and the numerous foreign departments involved in the process, was to ultimately delay any movement of the children until all the numerous procedures had been resolved. The requirements for any of the proposed schemes was determined by the attitude and adherence to clearly-defined policies in both the Foreign and Colonial Offices towards the Jews. There was a belief in different, government departments that the Jews themselves had a tendency to exaggerate the persecution of their fellow compatriots in Nazi Europe - 'As a general rule Jews are inclined to magnify their persecutions.'¹⁰⁹ This resulted in an initial refusal to acknowledge that it was predominantly the Jews who were being exterminated, even as factual reports were received during the latter part of 1942.¹¹⁰ The government was adamant that the European Jews should be treated as nationals of their respective countries rather than being viewed as a separate race, since, apart from a fear of increasing anti-Semitism, they were determined to adhere to the restrictions of the Palestine White Paper in order to placate the Arab population. These attitudes, together with an insistence that to ease the entry requirements to enter Britain, could lead to an increase of anti-Semitism, dominated the behaviour and thinking of the Civil Service. This resulted in a strict adherence to the prevailing immigration laws in both Britain and Palestine, culminating in their refusal to ease the entry regulations for refugees into either country.

In his analysis of the Bulgarian rescue scheme, Wasserstein suggests that the main reason for the determination of Oliver Stanley to implement it, was because it was the only practical rescue scheme that the government had proposed, but he does state that the efforts of Stanley and the government did show a level of good faith and determination in the rescue attempt, which sadly failed. He examines the suggestion by the German Government of the possibility of an exchange of German internees for Bulgarian Jews, which was based on the refugees being granted entry to Great Britain rather than Palestine. This proviso was stipulated in order to satisfy the Mufti of Jerusalem (who, as an exile in Berlin, was a strong supporter of Hitler).¹¹¹ This argument is supported by both Richard Breitman and Frederick B.Chary. Breitman states that in May, the Swiss Government approached Germany for permission to be given for 5,000 Jewish children from Eastern Europe and the General Government of

¹⁰⁹ FO371/30917, *T. Scunfield Minutes of meeting with S. Silverman 9/9/42*, p.93; D. Allen *Minutes on above*, 10/9/42, pp.94-95

¹¹⁰ FO371/30917/C7855/61/18, *Reported German plan for extermination of all Jews*, 11/8/42

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.181

Poland, to travel to Palestine and quotes the clearly defined basic requirements for any agreement laid down by Himmler together with the conditions demanded by the German Foreign Office:

“We cannot agree to the emigration of Jewish children from the German sphere of power and from friendly states. He (Himmler) considers that he might change his view with respect to emigrating from the German sphere only if, in return for the release of Jewish children....young interned Germans be permitted to return to Germany, on a scale not yet determined. As a scale one Jew for four Germans.”¹¹²

Whilst Chary states that the British rejected the plan on the basis that they would not exchange German-prisoners-of war for non- British citizens,¹¹³ Klaus Gensicke maintains that the Germans were referring to ‘the exchange of Jews for Germans who had been unable to return to the Reich due to the war situation’ and their proposal was subject to the refugees being settled in Britain with British nationality, in place of being able to immigrate to Palestine.¹¹⁴ Anthony Bevins disputes the claim made by Gensicke that the Germans specified the proposed exchange should be dependent on the Bulgarian children being settled in Britain.¹¹⁵ He tends to endorse the conclusions reached by Wasserstein that Stanley had made a determined attempt to rescue the children.

It may be argued that the responses of both the Foreign and the Colonial Offices towards the rescue schemes would appear to be at variance with the attitude towards the actions instigated by the Cabinet. However, a detailed examination of the government proposals suggests that the real purpose was to present a façade of humanitarian action to the free world, whilst deliberately refusing to acknowledge publicly that the European Jews were being exterminated by the Nazi regime. In similar fashion, Oliver Stanley had also considered the humanitarian factor when raising the prospect of rescuing Jewish children from Bulgaria. A further point is that the proposed rescue scheme would enable the government to display a degree of compassion towards the plight of the children whilst it would, in part, stem the criticism of the Palestine policy based on a rigid quota system, without changing it. This seemingly benevolent attitude could be employed to deflect any criticism raised by the

¹¹² Richard Breitman, Himmler and Bergen Belsen in Jo Reilly, David Cesarani, Tony Kushner, Colin Richmand (Editirs) *Belsen In History And Memory* (London: Frank Cass & Co.Ltd., 2001).,p.75

¹¹³ Chary, *The Bulgarian.*, pp., 156-157

¹¹⁴ Gensicke, *The Mufti of Jerusalem.*, p.121

¹¹⁵ Anthony Bevins, *British Wartime Policy Towards European Jewry* (University of Reading Department of Politics: Occasional Paper No.5, March 1991), pp.37

campaigners and the American Administration, whilst adhering to the agreed quota system. The deployment of the scheme would be used by Anthony Eden in his meeting in Washington in March, when the fear of facing a large influx of Jews from both the Axis countries and Nazi-occupied Europe, was discussed.¹¹⁶ In effect, it would seem that the scheme was doomed to failure through the intransigence of the Bulgarian Government but consideration should actually be given to the underlying purpose of the government policies. As at the Evian Conference, which had considered the refugee crisis in July 1938 and the initial response to *Kristallnacht* in November of the same year, the government of the day paid lip service to the plight of the Jews whilst enforcing a policy of rigidly controlled entry for Jewish refugees into Great Britain and the Colonies. In effect, they ensured that their attitude towards the Jews remained as it had been since their original entry into the country at the turn of the century. The xenophobia displayed during that period could be viewed as still exerting a lasting reaction on the policies of the government which ensured that whilst tangible aid for the European Jews was minimal a public façade of humanitarianism was displayed.

The aims and goals of the Bermuda Conference in April 1943

Throughout the first months of 1943, demands to provide tangible assistance to the refugees were raised by members of the public through letters to the government and the press¹¹⁷ and through deputations to meet government officials,¹¹⁸ as well as the campaigners raising a succession of questions in Parliament.¹¹⁹ Eleanor Rathbone became a major driving force behind the campaign to rescue the beleaguered Jews, by

¹¹⁶ FRUS.Vol 111 1943., *Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Harry L. Hopkins, Special Assistant to President Roosevelt*, March 27th, 1943, p.38

¹¹⁷ 'Refuge For Jews In The Empire' Bishops' Appeal To The Government,' *The Times*, 26th January, 1943, Iss.49542, p.2

Fo371/36657, *The Observer*, 'Aid For Victims Of Persecution', *The Churches Appeal*, 26th January, 1943, Iss.4953, p.5.; Fo371/36657, *The Observer*, 'The Massacre Of The Jews' Sir William Beveridge, 7th February, 1943; 'How Can We rescue the Doomed Jews' Sir William Beveridge, 8th February, 1943; Fo371/366498/9 'Help for refugees in occupied territory' A. Walker remarks, 18th January, 1943

various letters including *The Theosophical Society in Wales*, *Womens Int..League*, *Amalgamated Engineering Union*, *League of Nations Union*, *Huddersfield & District Free Church* etc.

Fo371/36655/W1578, *William Cantaur letter to Anthony Eden*, 22nd January 1943

Fo371/36658/W533, *League of Nations Union letter*, 23rd March 1943, p.1

¹¹⁸ Fo371/35662/W3054, *National Council for Social Service deputation to Richard Law Foreign Office*, February 15th, 1943 pp.1-2; Fo371/36657, *National Union of Teachers and the Save the Children Fund deputation to Richard Law Foreign Office*, 2nd April, 1943, pp.10-2

¹¹⁹ Hansard, 'Jewish and Other Refugees', 21st January, 1943, vol.386 cols.863-7; 'Palestine Immigration', 3rd, February, 1943, vol.386 col., 1446-7; 'Jewish Refugees Visas', 18th February, 1943, vol.387, col.284-5; 'Nazi Massacres and persecutions' 10th March, 1943, vol.387, col.846-849; 'Alien Refugees', 18th March, 1943, vol.388, col.189-90

her consistent lobbying of various members of the government with suggestions to provide assistance and possible rescue. These included letters to Herbert Morrison, Richard Law, Clement Atlee and Anthony Eden, drawing their attention to the continued plight of the Jews and the refusal to grant visas to alien refugees.¹²⁰ The differing aims of the campaigners were, to a degree, encapsulated in a resolution from the Council of Christians and Jews, which included the proposal that temporary asylum should be granted in both the Empire and Palestine, to any refugees escaping from Nazi persecution.¹²¹ Other similar letters, resolutions and suggestions came from various sources including Lord Lytton, Chairman of the League of Nations Union¹²² and the Inter-University Jewish Federation,¹²³ all of whom reiterated the ideas proposed by Gollancz and the church leaders. The common denominator in the letters was the suggestion that the government should grant temporary asylum, either in the Empire or the Palestine Mandate, to any refugees who were able to escape from the Nazis. This demand, which formed a major part of the campaigners' consistent requests to the government on behalf of the Jews, to provide tangible assistance to the refugees, was a complete contradiction of government policy which maintained that Jewish refugees were not acceptable in either the Empire where they were viewed as 'Outsiders' or Palestine, where the driving force was to appease the Arab population by restricting entry of Jews. In March 1943, as a result of continual pressure from a group of determined campaigners including Eleanor Rathbone M.P., Victor Cazalet M.P., Victor Gollancz, the left-wing publisher, William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the British Section of the World Jewish Congress, an agreement was reached between Great Britain and the United States to hold a conference in Bermuda in order to discuss the growing problem of refugees in Europe.¹²⁴

In order to assess why the government decided to approach America with the suggestion to hold informal discussions about the growing refugee problem, a number of factors need to be considered. What were the reactions of the various government

¹²⁰ FO371/36655, Letter to Herbert Morrison Re: - *Visas for French children*, 5th December, 1942 pp.1-2
 Ibid., Letter to Richard Law, *Internees and Other Refugees in North Africa*, 12th December, 1942 pp.1-3
 Ibid., Letter to C. Atlee Re: - *Nazi massacre of Jews and others*, 26th February, 1943, pp1-2
 Ibid., Letter to A. Eden Re: - *Regulations for issue of U.K. visas* 11th March, 1943, p.1

¹²¹ FO371/36657/W250 *The Council of Christians And Jews letter and resolution to Anthony Eden*, 8th February 1943

¹²² FO371/36665/W1689, *League of Nations Union, Lord Lytton letter to Anthony Eden*, 29th January 1943

¹²³ FO371/36649/W15771, *The Inter-University Jewish Federation resolution to Anthony Eden*, 9th January 1943

¹²⁴ FRUS 1943 Vol III *Memorandum of Conversation by Mr. Harry Hopkins*, Special Assistant to President Roosevelt, 27th March 1943, p.38

HC Deb 7th April 1943, *Refugees (Bermuda Conference)* vol 388 c 588, p.1

departments involved in the policy decision taken by the Cabinet that an international conference with America could provide an acceptable solution to the Jewish situation in occupied Europe? Did the departments take into account the reactions of the American Government to this proposal? What were the long-term government policies towards the persecuted Jews? How strong was the influence exerted on the government, by both the campaigners and the public, in their response to the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination being implemented in Europe? Were there any common links between the aims of the campaigners and how practical were the proposals that they presented to the government? This section will examine and discuss these issues to ascertain the underlying factors that gave the impetus to the proposed government policy.

The negotiations between the British and the American Administrations commenced in January 1943 and were to prove extremely frustrating for the Cabinet even before they were able to reach an agreed response to the growing refugee problem in occupied Europe. The historiography relating to the aims of the British Government is somewhat limited in its scope and is dominated by Bernard Wasserstein, who focuses on the issues relating to the entry of Jews into the Palestine Mandate during the war period of 1939-1945. In his analysis of the aims and the achievements of the government, he states that the agreement reached with the American Administration, prior to the Bermuda Conference to limit any discussion appertaining to Palestine, was successfully maintained throughout the conference.¹²⁵ Monty Penkower, while supporting this analysis, points out that the State Department Near- East Division stressed that Palestine should not be considered as a place of refuge for fear of upsetting the Arab and Moslem worlds.¹²⁶ In her analysis of the conference, Louise London maintains that the government decided to limit the 29,000 remaining visas under the Palestine quota for Jewish children, thus ensuring that the entry limit to the Mandate as laid down in the Palestine White Paper, was adhered to. This effectively ensured, an overall ban was placed on the entry of adults. In their creation of this apparent humanitarian response, London argues that the government calculated few children would be able to take advantage of the offer.¹²⁷

Pamela Shatzkes argues that Eden never anticipated the UN Declaration would have, as he stated 'a far greater dramatic effect than I expected' and that, ultimately, the expectations aroused by it would force the government into discussing the refugee

¹²⁵ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jew*.,,p.348

¹²⁶ Monty Noam Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable. Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p.108

¹²⁷ London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948*., p.221

problems with America.¹²⁸ She further argues that the demand by the Jewish Agency and the Zionist faction of Anglo-Jewry, that Palestine should become a Jewish sanctuary, was viewed by the government as obstructiveness. The complex situation in the Middle East had created a situation which made it impossible to ignore the legalities and constraints of the Palestine White Paper.¹²⁹ Kushner propounds a similar argument as he states it had been hoped the promise of post-war retribution in the Declaration would remove the demands for a rescue operation to be mounted for two specific reasons. The general government assumption was that, in reality, a wide-scale rescue scheme was not feasible and would result in disappointment, but more importantly, the fear that, if such a scheme were successful, the end result could result in an influx of Jews into Britain, Palestine or the Empire, which it was feared, would generate an increase in anti-Semitism.¹³⁰ A further argument made by W.D. Rubinstein is that the majority of Jews trapped in Europe were unable to leave, thereby negating any possibility of rescuing them from the Nazis, whilst Jews who had reached the safety of neutral countries were not at risk. Rubinstein maintains the only feasible option was the possibility of exchanging refugees for 'Axis nationals,' but, as he admits, these would be extremely limited due to the intransigence of the Nazi negotiators and the limited number of 'Axis nationals' who wished to be repatriated.¹³¹

In his history of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, Tommie Sjoberg not only traces its creation, but also examines how it was employed by the British and the American Governments at the conference, to demonstrate their compassion and concern for the refugees, as a result of the pressure exerted by various campaigners to rescue the European Jews in Nazi –occupied territory. He concludes that narrow political concerns overrode humanitarian issues and he argues there was a major difference between the rhetoric used and the practical proposals implemented towards the refugees from 1938 onwards.¹³² The major considerations for the Cabinet were focused on maintaining the status quo in Palestine by adhering rigidly to the agreed quota system implemented in the 1939 Palestine White Paper and the underlying fear that granting admittance to a large influx of foreign Jews might create a similar scenario

¹²⁸ Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue*.,p.117

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp.118-119

¹³⁰ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*., pp.177-178

¹³¹ W.D. Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue Why the democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis* (London: Routledge,1997), pp.,127-128

¹³² Tommie Sjoberg, *The Powers and the Persecuted The Refugee Problem and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR),1938-1947* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1991), pp.226-237

to the social and economic problems experienced by the indigenous population at the turn of the century, which had been attributed to the arrival of the Russian Jews.

Government response to the growing Jewish refugee problem

In the course of a discussion by the Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Jewish Refugees at the end of December 1942, certain observations made by both the Home Secretary and the Colonial Office reiterated the continuation of current government policy being applied to the Jewish refugees in Europe. Morrison, the Home Secretary, regretted that Britain was viewed as the only refuge for the refugees. In his response to the proposal that the overall refugee problem should be viewed as a United Nations problem with a shared responsibility and that Britain would be prepared to accept a specific number of refugees, on the basis that America and the Dominions shoulder a proportionate number, he stated that he would accept a very limited number of refugees (approximately 1,000-2, 0000) on condition they were settled on the Isle of Man for an indefinite period. He refused to allow entry for uncategorised Jews, citing accommodation problems and the fear that a substantial increase in the number of Jewish refugees would increase what he termed 'The considerable anti -Semitism under the surface in this country'. Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, reiterated that entry into Palestine would be reserved for children from Eastern Europe, accompanied by a limited number of women, but adult males would be excluded, as a security risk.¹³³ In his reference to these arguments, Stanley was adhering to the maintenance of the 1939 Palestine White Paper with its rigid entry quotas, thus effectively precluding any mass migration by Jews to the Mandate and he suggested that 'there should be no differentiation between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees.'¹³⁴ At a subsequent meeting, two major decisions affecting the growing problem of Jewish refugees in Europe were reached: it was agreed that the committee title should be changed, with any mention of Jews omitted and the plight of the European Jews in Nazi -occupied Europe would no longer be viewed as an exclusively British concern.¹³⁵

At the end of January, Alec Randall, Head of the Refugee Section in the Foreign Office, prepared a memo to the Cabinet summarising the British position, both at Home and in the Colonies, towards the problem of the refugees and the exceptional pressure emanating from the campaigners after the United Nations Declaration of December 17th

¹³³ CAB95/15 Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Jewish Refugees, *Minutes of meeting*, 31st December, 1942, pp.3-4

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.5

¹³⁵ CAB95/15 Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of *Refugees Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 9th January 1943 p.1

1942.¹³⁶ The demands of the campaigners, that the government should provide assistance to the refugees, was emphasised in a series of letters to the press from influential people including the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Cardinal Hinsley and John S. Whale, Moderator of the Free Church Federal Councils .¹³⁷ Further pressure was applied to the government in February when Sir William Beveridge published two articles in *The Observer* that offered various proposals for government consideration in order to assist the Jews who had reached the neutral countries.¹³⁸ Randall informed the Cabinet that, unless new policies were introduced or the current policies relating to the refugee problems were modified, it would seem that there was no easy solution to the growing issues. In his brief, he noted that admittance into the country was only granted by the Home Office on practical grounds. No adults of enemy nationality were admitted and the only grounds for the entry of Allied adults were either compassionate or usefulness to the war effort. He advised that the Colonial resources were stretched to full capacity by the arrival of Polish refugees, British evacuees and prisoners-of-war. As a result of this, even if shipping were available, there was a minimal possibility of re-settling the 10,000 to 12,000 refugees currently resident in Spain and Portugal, in the Colonies.¹³⁹

He emphasised that Palestine was a unique situation, since it possessed a substantial number of visas to be allocated to refugees of friendly nationalities and the government had just agreed to grant entry to 5,000 (Bulgarian) Jewish children. He suggested, providing this scheme worked, it would be feasible to consider a further movement to the Mandate.¹⁴⁰ He made various suggestions for consideration by the Committee, including the proposal to treat the refugee problem as an international one and he suggested that an obvious solution would be to involve America in solving the growing refugee crisis. This would, in effect, create an Anglo-American venture which would demonstrate that Britain was working towards achieving a lasting resolution to the continuing refugee problems.¹⁴¹

The Foreign Office was requested to prepare a draft telegram to communicate these ideas to Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador in Washington. The Joint Secretaries of the committee were requested to draft a policy statement in order to

¹³⁶ HC Deb, *United Nations Declaration*, 17 December 1942, vol 385 cc2082-7, pp.1-3

¹³⁷ 'Refuge For Jews In The Empire' Bishops' Appeal To The Government, *The Times*, 26th January, 1943, Iss.49542, p.2; FO371/36657, *The Observer*, 'The Massacre Of The Jews' Sir William Beveridge, 7th February, 1943; 'Aid For Victims Of Persecution', *The Churches Appeal*, 26th January, 1943, Iss.4953, p..5,

¹³⁸ FO371/36657, *The Observer*, 'The Massacre Of The Jews' Sir William Beveridge, 7th February, 1943; 'How Can We Rescue the Doomed Jews' Sir William Beveridge, 8th February, 1943

¹³⁹ FO37136651/W2020 A.W.G. Randall brief for cabinet meeting, 29th December, 1942. p.1

¹⁴⁰ FO37136651/W2020 A.W.G. Randall brief for cabinet meeting, 29th December, 1942. p.1

¹⁴¹ FO371/36648, A.W.G..Randall memo 29th December 1942., Pp.1,2

provide guidance on a suitable approach to be made to the American Administration. The main objective was to suggest that a viable response to the growing urgency to provide relief for the European refugees, should be under the auspices of the United Nations.

It was further agreed that Britain would be prepared to accept a specific number of refugees based on the proviso that the United States and the Dominions were prepared to accept a similar proportion. In a separate comment, the Home Secretary reiterated that he was not prepared to grant entry to an unlimited number of Jewish refugees, since there were almost 100,000 Jews already in the country. He further stated, that due to the already acute housing shortage, he believed the acceptance of more would exacerbate this situation in the event of air attacks being renewed in the future.¹⁴² In his determination to justify his continuing refusal to amend the immigration laws, Morrison concluded with the observation that:

“There was considerable anti-Semitism under the surface in this country. If there were any substantial increase in the number of Jewish refugees or if these refugees did not leave this country after the war, we should be in for serious trouble.”¹⁴³

These comments may be considered to reflect a pattern of response which was created by the housing problems which had been attributed to the arrival of the Russian Jews at the turn of the century, when the East End of London was being redeveloped for industry rather than for the benefit of the indigenous population. The government was again faced with an acute housing shortage, due to the Blitz, but the fear was, that any substantial entry of Jewish refugees might lead to an increase in anti-Semitism if they were seen to be obtaining housing comparatively easily.

As a result of this meeting, Alec Randall prepared a draft telegram to be sent to Lord Halifax, the American Ambassador in Washington. In his review of the problems arising from the current situation in Occupied Europe, he made three main points: the refugee problem was not totally Jewish; there were as many non-Jews who were suffering great hardship in the Allied countries; any preferential treatment shown towards the Jews by attempting to rescue them from the Nazis could result in an increase in anti-Semitism from the Allies.¹⁴⁴ It may be argued that this refusal to accept

¹⁴² CAB/95/15 War Cabinet Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of *Refugees Minutes of Meeting*, 31st December, 1942, pp.12-13

¹⁴³ PCR/HC/LB/1/122, Mary Sibthorp, Secretary of the Friends Aliens Protection Committee *memorandum from memory* 28/10/42, pp.3-4

¹⁴⁴ FO371/36668 (43)2 *Foreign Office draft telegram from AW.G. Randall to Lord Halifax Washington*, January 12th 1943.p.1

that the European Jews were in a far worse position than the non-Jews, was a deliberate diplomatic ploy to encourage the American Administration to demonstrate a willingness to participate in a joint effort to resolve the growing refugee problem. In his analysis of the telegram, Wasserstein suggests that such an approach on a joint basis, could provide the means to approach the various allied governments, the British Dominions and the Latin American countries, to obtain their agreement to take a proportion of the refugees.¹⁴⁵ He maintained that any announcement of possible destinations which were beyond the capacity of rescue by shipping, would only raise false hopes which could not be fulfilled and he suggested that there was a possibility that the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination might be changed in favour of a policy of extrusion.¹⁴⁶ In this final point, he was referring back to the pre-war policies adopted by the Nazi hierarchy of attempting to flood other countries with alien immigrants in the hope of embarrassing them into the acceptance of unlimited numbers of Jews.¹⁴⁷ It may be argued that this supposition of a possible reversion to a pre-war policy was highly unlikely, since, in various speeches made in 1939, 1941 and 1942, Hitler had clearly announced his intention to exterminate all the Jews under his control and the Foreign Office was aware of his speeches in 1939, and 1942:

“Today I will once more be a prophet: If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be Bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.”
Reichstag Speech January 30th 1939.

“In my speech before the Reichstag on the first of September 1939, I spoke to two matters... if world Jewry launches another war in order to destroy the Aryan nations of Europe, it will not be the Aryan nations that will be destroyed but the Jews.”
Winter relief Fund Speech 2nd September 1942.¹⁴⁸

Further points reiterated the continuing contributions made by both Britain and the Colonies towards the resolution of the refugee problem, at the same time stressing the problems of providing both food and accommodation under the prevailing wartime conditions. In a diplomatic move, the efforts of the United States in helping to resolve

¹⁴⁵ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews.*, p.185

¹⁴⁶ FO371/36668 (43)2 *Foreign Office draft telegram* from A Randall to Lord Halifax Washington, January 12th 1943.p.1

¹⁴⁷ FO371/36668 (43)2 *Foreign Office draft telegram* from A W.G.Randall to Lord Halifax Washington, January 12th 1943.p.1

¹⁴⁸ Extract from Speech by Hitler January 30th 1939, *Yad Vashem Shoah Resource Center*, The International School for Holocaust Studies, P.3; Adolf Hitler: *Threats Against The Jews* (1941-194), available at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Hitlerthreats.html>, P.1 accessed 18 January 2015

the refugee problems, were acknowledged with a specific mention made of the 1938 Evian Conference, which had been convened by President Roosevelt, in a final attempt to provide a solution to the growing problem of Jewish refugees after the *Anschluss* in Austria in March 1938. It was noted that this initiative had resulted in San Domingo and other areas offering to accept the refugees. These comments were followed by an acknowledgement of the generous offer from America to admit large numbers of refugee children from Vichy France in 1942.¹⁴⁹ The draft concluded with the suggestion that Britain and America should have an informal meeting in the near future, in an attempt to resolve the growing refugee situation.¹⁵⁰

In subsequent discussions held by the committee to review the draft presented by Alec Randall, it was agreed on the 7th January, to omit any reference to the Jews in the committee title. It was thus referred to as the Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees. In a further comment, Morrison stated that he believed the only solution to the problem was to find one area in which the refugees could be settled.¹⁵¹ The omission of Jewish from the title of the committee and the remarks by Morrison provided a clear indication that there would be no preferential treatment for the European Jews. They were to be treated as a part of the overall refugee problem because it was felt that an excessive number of foreign Jews settled in one area could lead to an increase in anti-Semitism. Kushner argues that this fear was based on a distrust of both the British population and the Jewish refugees and he cites comments made by Morrison during the Thirties. These included the accusation that the Jews still operated a sweated labour system, they were bad landlords and they employed dubious economic practices.¹⁵² He points out that Morrison was highly critical of Jewish black marketeers, whom he viewed as alien and commented, 'these (foreign Jewish black market offenders) people (were) creating the anti-alien feeling.'¹⁵³ A further consideration is that Morrison as the Home Secretary was determined to maintain the rigidity of the immigration laws and his employment of a threatened increase in anti-

¹⁴⁹ Public papers of the President 1938 Book 1: *Franklin Roosevelt* available at <http://www.residency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?i=15614&st=accessed> 30 March 2011.,p1 Kenneth Bourne & D. Cameron Watt (General Eds.) Jeremy Noake (Ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs. Reports and Papers From The Foreign Office Confidential Print*. Part II from the First to the Second World War. Series F Europe Vol.49 Doc.114 (C5609/1667/62) (America: University Publications of America, 1994), p.89

¹⁵⁰ FO371/36668 (43)2 *Foreign Office draft telegram from AW.G. Randall to Lord Halifax Washington*, January 1943. pp.2-3

¹⁵¹ CAB/95/15, Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, *Minutes of meeting* 7th January, 1943., pp.,13,14

¹⁵² Kushner, *The persistence of prejudice.*, pp.155,156

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*,P.156

Semitism could be used to maintain the law. In considering these remarks, it may be argued that the description of foreign Jews as aliens reflected the general perception of the Jews as outsiders, intent on dominating trade and finance at the expense of the indigenous population.

The final draft for the telegram was agreed on the 9th January in a meeting chaired by Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, who again stressed that no differentiation should be made between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees:

“The refugee problem is not wholly Jewish and there are as many non-Jewish refugees and so much acute suffering among non-Jews in Allied countries that Allied criticism would probably result if any marked preference was shown in removing Jews from territories in or threatened by enemy occupation; there is also the distinct danger of stimulating anti-Semitism in areas where an excessive number of foreign Jews are introduced.”¹⁵⁴

The lingering fear that the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination might change to one of extrusion, thus creating a major problem for the Allies, was alluded to:

“There is the 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.”¹⁵⁵

It was proposed that the entire refugee problem should be considered as a United Nations responsibility with each nation making a definite contribution to its solution. It may be argued that the origin of this proposal may be traced back to a memorandum sent by Philip Noel Baker, an influential Parliamentary campaigner, to Richard Law in the Foreign Office in early January, which had included a series of suggestions, all of which were now being reiterated by the Foreign Office.¹⁵⁶ Great emphasis was placed on the efforts of both Britain and the Colonies to provide assistance to the refugees, whilst struggling to cope with a limited supply of food and housing. The government acknowledged the generous reception given to the refugees by America, together with their efforts to provide other areas of settlement such as San Domingo.¹⁵⁷ The telegram was sent to Lord Halifax in Washington and to the

¹⁵⁴ Cab 95/15, Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees *Draft telegram to H.M. Ambassador, Washington, Annex*, 9th January, 143, p.2

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2

¹⁵⁶ FO371/36655/W792/49/48 P. Noel Baker *United Nations help to European Jews*, 8th January, 1943 Pp.1-4

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 9th January, 1943, p.1

Dominions, in the middle of January.¹⁵⁸ The contents reiterated the draft prepared by Randall with the emphasis placed on certain observations, including the determination not to view the refugee problem as wholly Jewish.

In a deliberate move to forestall the awkward questions being raised by the various campaigners as to what measures were being taken to provide for the European Jews, Clement Atlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, informed the Commons that the government was in confidential consultation with other governments to create a series of practical proposals to be implemented by the United Nations, although he did stress the only real solution to the problem was to achieve an Allied victory over the Nazis.¹⁵⁹

In a further move to elicit a reply from Washington, a copy of Atlee's statement was sent together with an emphatic reminder to Lord Halifax to obtain a response to the original suggestion of considering the plight of the refugees as an issue to be dealt with by the United Nations.¹⁶⁰ The committee held a separate meeting to consider what the response should be to an All-Party deputation to be received on the 28th January. Its main conclusions centred on stressing that mass immigration to either Britain or the Colonies was not feasible; emphasis should be placed on the contributions Britain and the Colonies had already made and this should be substantiated by providing a detailed list of our efforts; no reference should be made to the Palestine quota since the Colonial Secretary stated that he was waiting for agreement from the High Commissioner of Palestine to allocate the remaining places to Jewish children and accompanying adults from enemy occupied territories.¹⁶¹

In their overall consideration of the Jewish refugees, little sympathy was shown. The Home Secretary stated that:

“We should be thinking now of what could be done after the war to solve the Jewish problem in Europe by large scale transference to some suitable home.”

whilst the Foreign Secretary thought:

¹⁵⁸ FO371/36668 W607/49/48 *Foreign Office telegram to Washington*, 12th January 1943; FO371/36668 WF213/2 *Dominions Office telegram to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia* 15th January 1943

¹⁵⁹ HC Deb *Jewish Refugees (Relief)* 19th January 1943, vol3, Pp.1-286 cc32-3

¹⁶⁰ CAB95/15 Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, *Note by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, 27th January 1943, p.1

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Discussion re; *All Party Deputation*, 27th January, 1943, P.1

“The solution of the Jewish problem in Europe after the war lay in making Europe fit for Jews to live in and not by large scale transference.”¹⁶²

It was also agreed by the committee that any mention of an exchange of German Jews for other nationals in Britain was not acceptable, on the grounds of security; there was no reason to consider granting entry to Jews from Spain since they were not thought to be in immediate danger and it was agreed that any settlement should be part of the United Nations remit. Finally, it was decided that the Deputy Prime Minister should be the main representative of the government at the proposed meeting of the All Party Deputation on the following day.¹⁶³ The deputation led by A.Greenwood and comprising Lord Melchett, Eleanor Rathbone, Professor A.V.Hill, Quintin Hogg, S.Silverman, Graham White and H.Holdsworth, was subsequently assured by Eden, Morrison and Stanley that the government was doing its utmost to help the refugees.¹⁶⁴

In examining the individual responses of the ministers towards the plight of the Jews, various considerations need to be taken into account. As noted by Kushner, Morrison viewed the foreign refugees as untrustworthy aliens; Wasserstein argues that for many of the government officials, the Jewish situation in Europe was almost beyond their comprehension;¹⁶⁵ London maintains that the rescue of the Jews was not viewed as a British problem.¹⁶⁶ A further consideration is that the government believed that a large Jewish influx could result in problematic consequences resulting in the growth of anti-Semitism across the country.

In February, it transpired that, whilst Lord Halifax was consistently attempting to elicit a response to the government suggestion of early January, there was little appreciation in America of the urgency of the problems, as well as administrative difficulties in ascertaining under whose remit the refugees came. A major difference was noted between the approach of the vociferous campaigners in Britain and the negligible campaigning in America.¹⁶⁷

In another meeting in February, the Home Secretary reiterated that, although it might be possible to admit between 1,000 and 2,000 refugees, he did not favour this, unless it were part of a joint effort by the United Nations. In the ensuing discussion, as various options were considered, it was agreed that, whilst maintaining the refugee

¹⁶² Ibid., p.2

¹⁶³ Ibid., p.3

¹⁶⁴ FO371/36657 A.W.G. *Randall Minutes of meeting* 28th January, 1943

¹⁶⁵ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, p.356

¹⁶⁶ London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948*, p.206

¹⁶⁷ CAB95/15 Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, *General American Attitude*, 18th February 1943, Ppp.2-3

problem should be dealt with by the United Nations, the Foreign Secretary should continue to press for a response from the American Administration and a statement should be made in Parliament to publicise the number of refugees already admitted to British territory since the beginning of the war.¹⁶⁸ Throughout these meetings and discussions, the committee was united in insisting that the refugee problem was not the sole responsibility of Britain; there was to be no differentiation between the Jews and the non-Jews in occupied Europe; there was to be no relaxation of the Palestine Mandate quota and no easing of the rigid immigration laws administered by the Home Secretary, since there was the underlying fear that granting entry to Jews, would stimulate anti-Semitism. Ultimately, the government was in agreement that the European Jews were not to be granted any special assistance, which might be viewed as prejudicial to the other groups under Nazi occupation.

These meetings and discussions culminated in an Aide Memoire being handed to the US Charge d'Affaires, in a further attempt to elicit a response to the original telegram sent in January. This summarised the current situation in Britain as regards the European Jews and stressed the demands for tangible assistance from various influential people, individual campaigners and organisations to rescue the Jews from extermination. It reviewed the level of aid already extended to the refugees both in Britain and the Colonies and mention was made of the proposal to settle thousands of South-Eastern Europeans in Palestine, regardless of the limitations of the quota system. Whilst it acknowledged the co-operation of the American authorities in dealing with localised refugee problems in Spain and North Africa, it stressed that the level of public interest in the situation of the European Jews was growing, with the expectation that every effort should be made to alleviate their plight. Whilst conceding that large-scale measures of relief and rescue were impracticable at the present time, the communication contained three major points: that a meeting should be arranged by the Americans and the British with the Allied governments, currently based in London to consider the refugee problem and possible solutions at a mutually agreed centre; an agreed number of special visas should be used to encourage other countries to provide similar assistance and the American and the British Governments should provide assurance to neutral Governments that the responsibility for refugees at the end of the war would not devolve on them alone.¹⁶⁹ The primary aims of this communication were to emphasise to the American Administration the generous offer of settlement in

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., *Annex note*, 23rd February 1943, pp.1,2

¹⁶⁹ CAB/95/15 Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, *Discussions with the United States Government, Aide-memoire handed to the American Charge d'Affaires*, 19th February, 1943, Pp.1,2

Palestine for Balkan Jews, subject to transport being available and the continual efforts of the British Government to provide humanitarian assistance to the refugees under extreme war-time conditions. The emphasis on these displays of assistance was to demonstrate that Britain was responding to a major catastrophe in Europe, whilst lacking access to major resources to provide the level of assistance demanded by the campaigners. It may be argued that the main aims of the communication were primarily to exert pressure on the American Government to reciprocate with some visible form of assistance, hence the stress placed on the British response to the overall refugee crisis, rather than the potential crisis created by the Jewish refugees. Government advisors believed that, the adoption of this approach and the creating of an international body to deal with the growing refugee problem, would assuage any American fear of preferential treatment being extended to the Jewish refugees. The creation of such an organisation would clearly demonstrate an international commitment to confront the growing refugee problem, thus satisfying the campaigners' demands.

The American response

The American response of 26th February, encapsulated the aid and assistance given by the American Government to the refugees. It cited the convening of the Evian Conference in 1938 which had been called in order to find a solution to the growing refugee problem at that time. It maintained that, as a result of the conference, the American Government had exerted considerable efforts to find areas of settlement for the refugees; it emphasised the liberal spirit of its immigration laws and its official condemnation of Axis policy towards racial and religious minorities. It stated that, from 1933 until June 1942, it had issued 547,775 visas to nationals of countries dominated by the Axis powers and it stressed 5,000 visas had been granted to refugee children from France, Spain and Portugal, together with funds available for their maintenance. The Administration suggested, in order to resolve the growing refugee problem, serious consideration should be given to the revival of the dormant Executive Committee of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, rather than create a new organisation. It was suggested that in order to consider their remit, a meeting in Ottawa between Britain and America should be held to consider its future. In outlining this, it was stressed that:

“The refugee problem should not be considered as being confined to persons of any particular race or faith. Nazi measures against minorities have caused the flight of persons of various races and faiths as well as of other persons because of their political beliefs.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. *Aide-memoire received from American Charge d’Affaires*, February 26th, 1943, Pp.1-3;-6

This emphasis on refusing to accept that the European Jews were the most persecuted people under the Nazi regime, clearly echoed the attitude of the British Government, who refused to acknowledge that the Jews were a separate nationality, they were to be treated as being on a par with the Allies. Wasserstein argues that by adhering to this policy, the government did not have to provide effective assistance to the European Jews.¹⁷¹ Whilst supporting this argument, London suggests further that other reasons included the determination that no discrimination should be shown to the Jews and the conviction that the rescue of the Jews was not a British problem.¹⁷² Whilst accepting these arguments a further consideration is the government fear, as voiced by Morrison, that the admittance of a substantial number of European Jews would stimulate the growth of anti-Semitism. In his analysis of the American response to the European Jews under the Nazi regime, David Wyman argues that the Roosevelt administration feared that special assistance to the Jews would encourage anti-Semitism, which was widespread during this era, together with the accusation that Roosevelt favoured the Jews in his administration.¹⁷³ He further argues the examples of assistance given by the American Government to the Jews, were a gross exaggeration and he cites the inflated figures quoted for the number of visas granting entry to the refugees from the Nazi regime since 1933.¹⁷⁴

In early March, the *New York Times* printed a detailed report of a huge rally held on the previous day in Madison Square Gardens, demanding that the European Jews facing extermination under Hitler, should be rescued. The rally was addressed by various public figures including F. La Guardia, the Mayor of New York, Dr. Chaim Weitzman, President of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, Senator Robert Wagner and Governor Dewey. Many messages of support were received from foreign ambassadors including Britain, Belgium, Yugoslavia and Luxembourg and the main British religious leaders, Chief Rabbi Hertz, William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Hinsley.¹⁷⁵ In a detailed telegram from Washington, Viscount Halifax informed the War Cabinet that the crux of the resolution adopted at the rally had called for the German Government to allow Jews to emigrate and for admission to be granted for entry to the United States, Britain, Palestine and Latin America. He stated that he had been informed the State Department had received 1,600 telegrams in support of these aims

¹⁷¹ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, pp.132-133

¹⁷² London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933 -1948*, P.206

¹⁷³ David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment OF The Jews America and the Holocaust 1941-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books1984), P.107

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, P.106

¹⁷⁵ FO371/36656/W4715/49/46 'Help for Jews in Europe *New York Times* March 2nd 1943', 24th March,1943

and, indeed, many more were expected, but the Department did not intend to be influenced by this level of protest. He advised the committee the State Department was firmly opposed to the British suggestion of convening a meeting of the Allied Governments to discuss the problems of the European refugees and the possibility of agreeing to a limited number of visas for refugees would not be considered under any circumstances.¹⁷⁶

On the following day at a press conference, Sumner Welles, the Under Secretary of State, announced that the refugee situation was under discussion with Britain and he would be publishing the American Communication to London forthwith. He made no reference to the British Aide Memoire which had been submitted prior to the American announcement. It caused acute embarrassment to the British, since the proposal to hold a meeting in Ottawa had not been discussed with the Canadian Government, nor had they been invited to participate in it.¹⁷⁷ When Welles was confronted by Sir Ronald Ian Campbell with a request to halt publication of the American note, he was informed that this was impossible, since the American Government reserved its right to publish any communication to a foreign government.¹⁷⁸ Welles told Campbell that the American response had been sent to the British Government through the American Ambassador in London and although the State Department maintained this was incorrect, Alec Randall (Foreign Office) confirmed on 4th March, that the response had been received through the American Charge d'Affaires. He further noted the action taken by Welles could be viewed as an attempt to placate the Jewish vote.¹⁷⁹ It may be argued that a major influence on the American response was their determination to demonstrate that they were initiating the possibility of a conference rather than the British. This was reflected in various American and British press reports of the announcement, which presented the initiative for a discussion as originating in Washington.¹⁸⁰ This theory is supported by Wyman, who states that not only was Welles conveying the false idea that plans for a conference had originated from America, but also that his overall behaviour was a total breach of the diplomatic code of practice, since confidential negotiations were still taking place.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ FO371/36654/W3660, *Viscount Halifax telegram 1028* to War Cabinet, March 2nd, 1943

¹⁷⁷ FO371/36654 *Halifax telegram 1097* to War Cabinet, 5th March 1943

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁹ FO371/36654/W3661/W3661, *Halifax telegram 1048* to War Cabinet, March 3rd, 1943 ; *United States co-operation in the refugee problem*, Randall comments March 4th, 1943, 1943

¹⁸⁰ FO36654/W3661, *Press cuttings The Manchester Guardian, News Chronicle, The Times*, 4th March, 1943

¹⁸¹ Wyman, *The Abandonment of The Jews.*, pp.106-107

The action taken by Welles resulted in an unsatisfactory meeting between Campbell and Welles, at which the former made it clear the publication of the American response had created an embarrassing situation for the government, particularly with regard to Canada, who had not been consulted. Welles was informed that his announcement had created an impression that Britain had been inactive in dealing with the growing refugee problem, whereas the British Government reaction had been the reverse. In his response, Welles accused Britain of creating an impression that they were the only country attempting to resolve the refugee problem. He further stated that there had been a series of statements and propaganda from various British Government officials, which were viewed as being detrimental to America.¹⁸² Campbell considered that Welles did not regret the embarrassment caused to the British and he emphasised the publication of the announcement was designed to reinforce the impression that the overall initiative emanated from America:

“It will be seen that Mr. Welles, who adopted the tactics of counter-attack (which are not unusual with the State Department) ...in effect admitted that the publication of the United States note was a calculated action designed to cast the United States in the lead role and to give the appearance of American initiative.”¹⁸³

In his analysis of the American proposals, Randall argued that their suggestions to hold a meeting in Ottawa and to employ the Intergovernmental Committee to resolve the growing refugee situation, could be viewed as a tactical move to embarrass the British. He considered the action of the State Department to be an attempt to placate the Jewish vote and he believed that:

“The American action in publishing their memorandum and their proposal about Ottawa, together with their quite impracticable proposals about the Evian Committee, while at the same time stalling on our chief practical proposal, namely the establishment of a camp will mean that if there is no spectacular result the blame will be passed to His Majesty's Government.”¹⁸⁴

In considering the American response, it may be argued, as David Wyman states, the main intention was to assert the supremacy of the American Administration in its reaction to the refugee problem. In pursuing this policy, it intended to gain the initiative in any manoeuvres to provide assistance for European refugees. The suggestion to

¹⁸² FO371/36654 Halifax telegram 1097 to War Cabinet, 5th March 1943

¹⁸³ FO371/36654/W3661/49/48, *United States co-operation in the refugee*, Halifax telegrams nos.1097 & 67 Saving to War Cabinet, 6th March,1943, pp1-4

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, A.W.G. Randall *comments*,4th March1943

reactivate the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees would ensure that, as at Evian, little would be achieved, but its façade of humanity would be maintained. The publication of its response to the British request for a meeting, was designed to convey the impression that rather than the British Government, it had initiated the idea of a conference to discuss the growing refugee problem, thus placating the Jewish protest which had taken place in early March in Madison Square Gardens.

The British response to the American proposals – diplomacy and planning

As a result of the American announcement, it was agreed in a Cabinet meeting held to consider a response to the American proposals, that a telegram should be sent to Washington accepting the suggestion of a preliminary meeting to consider the refugee problems. It was further agreed that the venue should be Ottawa, subject to its acceptance by the Canadian Government. The American agenda was accepted with the proviso that there should be an examination of the problems relating to food and accommodation. It was, however, noted that the Executive Committee of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees was not viewed as being adequate to take responsibility for any decisions relating to the refugees and it was felt that the creation of a suitable body should be included on the agenda.¹⁸⁵

In a further move to smooth out any differences between America and Britain, Eden, the Foreign Secretary, visited Washington in mid- March. When Richard Law, at the Foreign Office, requested an indication as to any progress regarding the current refugee situation, he was initially informed by Lord Halifax that Eden would not raise the refugee question.¹⁸⁶ This stance changed when Eden was informed that there was to be a major debate in the House of Lords on March 23rd, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury on behalf of the campaigners, with Lord Cranbourne representing the government; it was imperative that some response to demonstrate the current government action in dealing with the refugee problem was forthcoming.¹⁸⁷ Subsequently, in various discussions concerning the refugee situation, Eden made the following comments: a major problem was the situation facing Jews in the Axis-occupied countries to which there was no quick solution; he informed the Americans that Britain was planning to move 30,000 Eastern European Jews to Palestine and discussions to achieve this were ongoing through the Swiss Government; he stated that there would be

¹⁸⁵ CAB95/15 Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, *U.S. reply on relief of refugees discussion*, 6th March, 1943, pp.2-3

¹⁸⁶ FO371/36656/W4383/49/48 *Anglo- American discussion minutes* A. Randall, 17th February, 1943
Ibid./W4383, *Halifax telegram no.1729* to Foreign Office, 16th March, 1943

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*/W4383/49/48, *Richard Law telegram no.1751* to Washington, 17th March, 1943

no objections raised by the Arabs, since this number was acceptable under the current quota system applying to the Mandate.¹⁸⁸ As a result of this meeting, Halifax informed the Foreign Office that deep consideration had been given by both governments to the persecution of 'persecuted peoples in Eastern Europe' and reference had been made to the evacuation and relief being offered to them in Palestine. It had been agreed that there should be further discussions between the two governments at a designated place to be announced in the immediate future.¹⁸⁹ In a further conversation, Harry Hopkins, Special Assistant to Roosevelt, recorded that, when confronted with the possibility that between 60,00 and 70,00 Bulgarian Jews were facing extermination, Eden had said:

"The whole problem of Jews in Europe is very difficult and that we should move very cautiously about offering to take all Jews out of a country like Bulgaria. If we do that, then the Jews of the world will be wanting us to make similar offers in Poland and Germany. Hitler might well take us up on such an offer and there are simply not enough ships and means of transportation in the world to handle them."¹⁹⁰

Yet again the fear that there would be a massive movement of European Jewry to Britain if large-scale assistance were offered to Eastern European Jewry, influenced the British response to the refugee crisis. The fear had been demonstrated at the Evian Conference and in various Cabinet meetings throughout the period, thus reflecting the xenophobia at the turn of the century which had culminated in the creation of the Aliens Act in 1905.

Hopkins further recorded that Eden had informed the meeting that Britain was prepared to permit entry to approximately 60,000 Jews to Palestine, although transport was a major problem and it posed a great danger to security, since the Germans would attempt to infiltrate a number of their agents in this migration.¹⁹¹ This report of 60,000 is a total contradiction of the figures recorded in the previous meeting; in retrospect, it seems, it would have been highly unlikely for Eden to have made such a pronouncement since, as Bernard Wasserstein notes, the figure totally breached the quota limits imposed by the White paper for Palestine.¹⁹² A further factor for consideration is that Eden was utterly pro-Arab and did not like Jews. Oliver Harvey, the private secretary to Eden had noted in September 1941 that the latter had informed him

¹⁸⁸ FRUS.Vol.III 1943.*Memorandum of Conversation by the Secretary of State*, March 22nd 1943, pp.28-29

¹⁸⁹ FO371/36656 *Viscount Halifax, telegram* from Washington to Foreign Office No.1351, 22nd March, 1943.

¹⁹⁰ FRUS.Vol 111 1943., *Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Harry L. Hopkins*, Special Assistant to President Roosevelt, March 27th, 1943, p.38

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.38

¹⁹² Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, p.188

'If we must have preferences, let me murmur in your ear that I prefer Arabs to Jews.'¹⁹³
This view of Eden was restated by Harvey in April 1943 with his diary note:

"Unfortunately A.E. is immovable on the subject of
Palestine. He loves Arabs and hates Jews."¹⁹⁴

In noting these comments from Eden, it is highly unlikely that he would have even considered breaching the Palestine quota for Jewish entry, which would have upset the Arab population.

The American announcement that the conference would be held in Ottawa, was not acceptable to the Canadian authorities. The Canadian immigration policy in respect of Jews was not welcoming. In a national poll held in January 1943, eighty per cent of the respondents voted against any large-scale entry of immigrants into the country.¹⁹⁵ With the Canadian Government unwilling to host a conference in Ottawa,¹⁹⁶ it was agreed between America and Britain, that an alternative venue was required and finally Bermuda was agreed upon for various reasons, including its isolated position in the West Indies.¹⁹⁷ As a result of this decision, an inter-departmental meeting was held on the 25th March to discuss and formulate the policy to be presented at the forthcoming conference.

The ultimate objective of the government departments was to create a policy that would be of assistance in responding to the campaigners' demands without easing the immigration laws or granting admission to the Empire. Major emphasis was placed on a solution for the refugees in Spain and Portugal, since it was felt that, if they were transferred to camps in North Africa, this would satisfy the demands of the pro-refugee campaigners. The ramifications of such a proposal were discussed and included the finance required; the possible employment of the refugees in the war effort, which from the Ministry of Labour's viewpoint, appeared to be remote, owing to the age and sex of the refugees, thus precluding admittance into Britain; the problems of food in the African Colonies which limited the possibility of settling the refugees there; the India Office stating that there was no possibility of India accepting any more refugees and the Dominions Office informing the meeting that no response could be given on behalf of

¹⁹³ British Library, *Oliver Harvey Papers*, Mss.56402 Eden to Harvey, 7th September 1941

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., Mss.56399, Diary entry 25th April, 1943

¹⁹⁵ Irving Abella & Harold Troper, *None Is To Many Canada And The Jews Of Europe 1933-1948* (Toronto: Lester Publishing Ltd., 1991), pp.128-136

¹⁹⁶ FO371/36556, *Canadian telegram to Dominions Office*, 18th March, 1943

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., *Halifax telegram to Foreign Office*, 22nd March, 1943

the Dominion governments, since they would wish to be represented at the conference as independent delegates.

The Home Office stated there should be an agreement that in the post-war era, both refugees and stateless people would be returned to their country of origin. Alec Randall, of the Foreign Office, concurred that an Anglo-American guarantee for the return of refugees to their own countries should be a fore-runner to a United Nations guarantee and this would provide solid reassurance for the neutral countries.¹⁹⁸ The Home Office intimated that the International Labour Office would appreciate contact with the post-war refugee organisations. This was agreed. The meeting reached three conclusions:

“A) The Establishment of personal contact between the British and American authorities concerned with the practical problems.

B) The construction of some Anglo-American machinery to be adapted to an international scope to organise concerted action in respect of the refugees.

C) An agreement between His Majesty's Government and the United States Government on the basis of a United Nations refugee conference and organisation.

Any decision affecting immigration or foreign policy would be “ad. referendum.”¹⁹⁹

These departmental comments were considered by the War Cabinet at a meeting to discuss the forthcoming Anglo-American conversations which were viewed as an American alternative to the original British suggestion of convening a United Nations meeting. The main aims of the government were encapsulated in this and included the proviso that: ‘The problem is not confined to persons of any particular race or faith’. The other directives given to the British delegation stated that ‘In view of transport limitations, refugees shall be housed as near as possible to where they are now or to their homes’ and ‘plans should be made to maintain refugees in neutral countries in Europe’. It continued by submitting that the possibility of asylum in allied countries should be examined with the proviso ‘taking account of availability of shipping, food and accommodation’ and it suggested that the possible use of the Inter-

¹⁹⁸ FO371/36657, *Interdepartmental meeting to discuss the Anglo-American conference on refugees*, March 25th, 1943, pp.1-4

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Governmental Committee needed to be taken into account, since it was deemed to be an inadequate organisation in its current form.²⁰⁰

In a further meeting, it was agreed that assurances should be given to neutral countries that repatriation of refugees would be under the auspices of the United Nations when the war ended. It was suggested, that since the United States had not filled their immigration quotas, it might be possible for them to receive refugees up to their maximum limit by using the example of Palestine, where Britain had stated that it was prepared to use the outstanding quota which was available until 1944, for the admission of refugees. It was noted that due to the serious food situation in the East African Colonies, it was not feasible to accept any more refugees. A further consideration was the possibility the Americans might offer to accept a fixed number of refugees, providing a similar fixed proportion were settled in the Empire. This suggestion was discussed and it was agreed a maximum of 2,000 could be accommodated in Britain but the Empire could not receive more than a total of 500 and Canada could be asked to accept 2,000 refugees; overall the total number of refugees would not exceed 5,000. The final decision taken, stated that:

“A most important objective to aim at was to return large numbers of refugees to their country of origin.... It would be worthwhile for the Bermuda Conference to investigate the possibility of allocating some suitable area of large size as a place of settlement for Jewish refugees after the war... since the Jewish element in the population of Poland was proportionately higher than was healthy.”²⁰¹

These aims clearly illustrated the government's adamant refusal to acknowledge the Jews as a separate entity in Europe. Their intention was to ensure that the European Jews remained in Europe rather than settling elsewhere in the world, thus determining that the limitations of the Palestine White Paper were adhered to. This limited response to the continuing problems of the refugees, illustrates the determination of the government to maintain a rigid control in granting admittance to Jews both in Britain and the Empire. The views propounded by the Home Secretary and the Colonial Secretary mirrored the responses of their departments prior to the Evian Conference in 1938. They had insisted then that there were no suitable areas for German Jews to settle in 1938 and in 1943 they maintained the limited resources of the Empire could not provide support for the entry of Jewish refugees. In 1938, identical views had demonstrated the government determination to adhere to the immigration laws, the fear

²⁰⁰ CAB/95/15 Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, *Forthcoming Anglo-American Conversation Foreign Office note Annex*, 31st March 1943, pp.,2,3

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 2nd April, 1943, Pp.1-4

of a substantial influx of Eastern European Jews from Poland and Romania and the refusal of the Colonies to accept a substantial number of Jews since they were viewed as outsiders who did not conform to the mores of society.²⁰² Whilst Kushner argues that this approach was influenced by the liberal ambivalence towards Jewry as a whole,²⁰³ a further consideration is that anti-Semitism had long roots which were apparent with the arrival of Russian Jews at the turn of the century and this was reflected in the government policies towards the refugees during this period.

Working towards a common goal

With the basis of unofficial discussions agreed by both governments, the focus turned to the composition of the delegations. At the end of March, Roosevelt appointed Justice Owen Roberts, Senator Lucas and Congressman Sol Bloom as the American representatives for the Bermuda Conference. In their summary of the three individuals, the Foreign Office noted that:

“Mr. Bloom, although Jewish and representing a largely Jewish district of New York, plays no part in Zionist affairs. He does not even sign their manifestoes...and does not appear to belong to any Jewish organisation.”²⁰⁴

It was agreed by the committee that the British Delegation should consist of the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs accompanied by A. Randall (Foreign Office), Sir Frank Newsam (Home Office) and Sir Bernard Reilly (Colonial Office). It was further agreed that, if required, a Ministry of War Transport representative in New York would be available.²⁰⁵ In a further meeting, Richard Law, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was appointed to lead the delegation and a further two delegates were included, Osbert Peake, Under Secretary in the Home Office and G.H.Hall, Admiralty Financial Secretary.²⁰⁶

As the final planning for the conference proceeded, there remained two separate problems to be resolved – newspaper reporting of the proceedings and private Jewish representation at the conference. The Colonial Office had indicated that there should be limited publicity issued by the resident Information Officer in Bermuda, whilst the Foreign Office was amenable to a press officer being attached to the American delegation. The

²⁰² India Office Records, File 3071 Evian Conference, OR/L/PJ/7/2014., W8885/104/98. *Memorandum of instructions.B. The Colonial Empire*

²⁰³ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination.*, pp.149-152

²⁰⁴ CAB/95/15 Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, *Forthcoming Anglo-American Conversations Annex*, 31st March, 1943 p.2

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, *Composition of British delegation to the Bermuda Conference*, April 2nd, 1943, p.1

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 7th April, 1943 P.1

government was adamant that excessive publicity was to be avoided, since it would raise exaggerated hopes and this could result in either side passing the onus to the other, which would, ultimately be of little benefit to the refugees or to Anglo-American relations.²⁰⁷ In his reply, Halifax informed London that the Administration, whilst wishing to restrict press representation to the conference, was aware that this could create considerable protest. It was believed that they would be accused of preventing the press from reporting the conference. In the search for a face-saving compromise, they informed the American News Agencies that they would need to make their own travel arrangements to attend it. They would, however, provide assistance should any difficulties be experienced and this facility was to be offered to British agencies wishing to attend.²⁰⁸

As a result of this agreement, the American press, who feared that their reporting would be subject to censorship, were reassured that this would not be the case. This was circumvented by the Colonial Office who informed Bermuda that, since agreement to American press representation had been given, they would be asked to limit the number wishing to attend, in order to ensure that there would be no difficulty in their transmittance of reports.²⁰⁹ A further instruction to Washington indicated that it was vital to provide a press officer for Bermuda, who knew the various press representatives, in order to facilitate matters during the course of the conference. Such a tactical move effectively ensured that press reportage would be limited and as Halifax made known, press interest in the conference was diminished once it became apparent that there would be no attempt to ban the press from attending the proceedings in Bermuda.²¹⁰

The question of Jewish representatives attending the conference had been raised by the Board of Deputies, when they had approached the Foreign Office to discuss the possibility of sending a representative to attend. In an explicit telegram to Washington, the Foreign Office quoted its response towards the Jewish request:

“They have been told that the Conference is really an informal exchange of views....and that their basis is that the refugee should not be confined to persons of any particular race or faith; it would therefore be embarrassing to admit Jewish interest which although admittedly important, is paralleled with other interests (Poles Czechs etc.) which might claim to have observers.”²¹¹

²⁰⁷ FO371/36659, *Foreign Office telegram no.2244* to Washington., 6th April, 1943

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, *Halifax telegram no.1649* to Foreign Office, 8th April, 1943

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*/W574 Colonial Office *telegram no.120* to Bermuda, 10th April, 1943

²¹⁰ *Ibid*/W5769, *Halifax telegram no.1711* to Foreign Office, 12th April, 1943

²¹¹ FO371/36659, *Foreign Office telegram no.2276* to Washington, 6th April, 1943.

This stance was reiterated in a letter from Eden to the request of Sir Maurice Bloch to represent the Jewish community at the conference.²¹² It was noted that British Jewry feared their American counter-parts would persuade the State Department to allow them to attend the talks which would be viewed as discrimination. A further comment stated that:

“Our interpretation of Mr. Sol Bloom's proposed appointment was that it was in virtue of his position in Congress and not as a representative of Jewry.”²¹³

They concluded by insisting that the inclusion of representatives for special interests would give rise to various Jewish bodies claiming the right to attend.²¹⁴ In his response, Halifax, whilst confirming that the current intention of the State Department was to exclude any private representation, advised that this stance might change, although the embassy would endeavour to hold them to it. It was also confirmed that the assumption of Bloom's appointment was correct, since:

“He has never been identified with Zionism or with any recognised Jewish pressure groups. But no doubt the President thought his appointment would be a sop to Jewish opinion in this country.”²¹⁵

In a series of comments, A.Walker of the Foreign Office Refugee Section, stated that if American Jewish representatives went to Bermuda to cover the conference, there would be ‘heart-burnings and lobbying amongst Jewish organisations in this country’.²¹⁶ He noted that Dr.Brotman of the Board of Deputies had enquired as to the possibility of a representative attending the conference and had informed Walker that he had contacted Eden requesting an interview to discuss this. Walker then noted that, although the members of the American delegation had changed:

“It looks as if Mr. Bloom will be one of their number and that there will be other Jewish representatives of some importance present on the fringes of the conference if the State Department “weaken.” When the names of the delegates are published Mr. Bloom's presence will undoubtedly cause a renewal of pressure, but in the meantime think that we should maintain our previous standpoint and reiterate it to Dr.Brotman if and when he approaches us again.”²¹⁷

²¹² Ibid.W5692/49/48, *Eden letter to A.S.L. Young*, 15th April,1943

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ FO371/36658. *Halifax telegram no.1650* to Foreign Office, 8th April,1943

²¹⁶ Ibid/W5534/49/48, *A. Walker Bermuda Conference notes*,9th April,1943

²¹⁷ Ibid.

The possibility of American Jewish representation, as voiced by A. Walker, became a reality when two additional assistants to the American delegation were announced. The representatives now included George Backer, a board member of Overseas News Agency (Jewish) and the former proprietor of the New York Post (now run by his wife). ²¹⁸ This was an advanced Liberal paper with an active interest in refugees. In his comments, Halifax noted that:

“While Backer is... a prominent Jewish philanthropist...he has not been nominated by Jewish organisations. His inclusion may represent a compromise by the United States Government between yielding completely and opposing a flat negative to insistent Jewish demand for representation.”²¹⁹

The government refusal to countenance any Jewish representation at the forthcoming conference may be attributed to their refusal to acknowledge the untenable position of Jewry in Nazi-occupied Europe, since the fear of an unlimited number of Jews being released by Hitler could lead to a major outburst of anti-Semitism in both countries. A further consideration is that Britain and America were aware that the proposed conference was not designed to provide any tangible assistance to the European Jews; its primary aim was to promote a combined display of humanitarianism, therefore the possibility of Jewish representation could prove to be embarrassing when this policy became public.

As with the Evian Conference of July 1938, which had been held in a final attempt to resolve the German Jewish refugee crisis at the time, the government reached an unofficial agreement with the American Administration as to the proposed contents of the talks.²²⁰ In a lengthy telegram from the Foreign Office to the ambassadors of the Governments-In- Exile, the agenda for the conference was formulated; it was agreed that the refugee problem should not be confined to persons of any particular faith or race; co-operation among governments should be employed to provide temporary asylum for refugees wherever practicable, with the proviso that they would be returned to their homeland at the end of the war; maintenance should be provided by the United Nations and private sources offered to the neutral countries providing assistance to the refugees together with an assurance from the various

²¹⁸ W6028/49/48 *Halifax telegram no.1773* to Foreign Office, 16th April,1943

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Kenneth Bourne & D.Cameron Watt (General Eds.) Jeremy Noake (Ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs. Reports and Papers From The Foreign Office Confidential Print*. Part II from the First to the Second World War. Series F Europe Vol.49 Doc.61 (C2560/2889/18) (America: University Publications of America,1994), pp.104-105

Governments-In-Exile to ensure that the refugees would eventually return to their native countries; temporary asylum in other countries should be considered dependent on the availability of shipping in Europe and finally, the method to be employed in organising concerted action to achieve this aim. The conclusion of the telegram noted that, although America wished to employ the Inter-Governmental Committee:

“His Majesty’s Government’s doubt whether this body in its present form, is suitable. The refugee problem can only be comprehensively and effectively dealt with by international co-operation, and they anticipate that steps will be agreed upon and to keep the Governments of the United Nations informed regarding the progress of the forthcoming talks.”²²¹

The agenda agreed between the two governments provided the British Government with a political ploy to satisfy the campaigners in the immediate future. The various government departments involved in the planning had ensured that, as at Evian, there would be no change in the long-term policies in place for the reception of Jews whether in Britain, Palestine or the Colonies. The only major difference between Evian and the forthcoming meeting was that, whereas at Evian, thirty-eight different independent organisations, which had been represented by twenty-four delegates, had attended, but at the forthcoming conference, the government had ensured that no private organisations were granted permission to attend.²²²

Campaigning unity

The differing aims of the campaigners were, to a degree, encapsulated in a resolution from The Council of Christians and Jews, which included the proposal that temporary asylum should be granted in both the Empire and Palestine to any refugees escaping from Nazi persecution.²²³ Other similar letters, resolutions and suggestions came from various sources, including Lord Lytton, Chairman of the League of Nations Union ²²⁴and the Inter-University Jewish Federation,²²⁵ all of whom reiterated the ideas proposed by both Gollancz and the church leaders. The common denominator in the letters was the

²²¹FO371/36658/W4236/49/48, *Alan Walker, Foreign Office, Copy telegram no.158 to British Ambassadors of Governments-in-Exile*, 12th April,1943 pp.1-2;FO371/36658/W4236/49/48, *Alan Walker, Foreign Office, Copy telegram no.158 to British Ambassadors of Governments-in-Exile*, 12th April,1943 pp.1-2

²²² LMA ACC3121/E3/269 Board of deputies Report, Inter-Governmental Conference on refugees held at Evian.

²²³ FO371/36657/W250 *The Council of Christians And Jews letter and resolution to Anthony Eden*, 8th February 1943

²²⁴ FO371/36665/W1689, *League of Nations Union, Lord Lytton letter to Anthony Eden*, 29th January 1943

²²⁵ FO371/36649/W15771, *The Inter-University Jewish Federation resolution to Anthony Eden*, 9th January 1943

suggestion that the government should grant temporary asylum, either in the Empire or the Palestine Mandate, to any refugees who were able to escape from the Nazis. This demand formed a major part of the campaigners' consistent requests to the government on behalf of the Jews, to provide tangible assistance to the refugees. They continued to raise their demands in Parliament for assistance to be given to the refugees and in March 1943, a new committee of *The National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror* was formed to maintain public interest. The main aims of the new committee were laid down in a draft statement prepared for a meeting to be held on March 16th and included the following points:

"To act as a medium for co-operation between the various organisations, groups and individuals concerned with the rescue of victim of Nazi persecution...Favour immediate and adequate action by His Majesty's Government and other governments of the United Nations, particularly the U.S.A. to provide rescue for as many lives as possible, subject to...not delaying the victor by impeding the war effort."²²⁶

The other suggestions listed for discussion included the issuing of individual and block visas to representatives of the government in neutral countries, in order to maintain a steady flow of refugees, with the possibility of providing accommodation for them in the Isle of Man; to implement admission into Palestine for adults able to escape, rather than restricting entry to children only and to provide temporary residence for refugees in the Colonies and the Dominions. The final suggestion was that the proposed conference between Britain and America should be held as soon as possible with the opportunity for representatives of both Jewish and other expert bodies to address the conference with suggestions for possible rescue measures.²²⁷ In conjunction with this, William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was a Vice President of the committee, presented a Resolution to the House of Lords entitled 'German Atrocities: Aid for Refugees'²²⁸ on 23rd March, 1943.

The main thrust of William Temple's arguments and proposals made on behalf of the European Jews, centred on the continuing reports being received of the atrocities which the Nazis were committing against the Jews across occupied Europe. It was noted that, since the announcement of the United Nations Declaration on December 17th 1942, very little progress seemed to have been made in respect of the alleviation of their plight. He referred to the announcement by the Colonial Secretary, earlier in February, of the proposal to rescue 4000 Bulgarian children but stressed that, subsequently,

²²⁶ Ibid. *Nazi Atrocities: Draft Statement for Conference* 6th March 1943, p.1

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ HL Debate *German Atrocities: Aid for Refugees*, 23rd March 1943, vol 126 cc811-60, Pp.1-21

nothing appeared to have happened.²²⁹ Having made these points, he then proposed the implementation of the following action by the government: a major revision of the visa requirements needed to enter the country, since it was not feasible to expect neutral countries to provide refuge if Britain refused to demonstrate a willingness to accept the Jews. He suggested that, offering to provide aid to the neutral countries which allowed entry to the Jews, would encourage them to offer on-going assistance to the refugees, but he argued assurances must be given to the neutral countries that the refugees would be re-settled in various countries including the British Empire as soon as it was practicable.²³⁰ He considered further the possibility of negotiating through a neutral power, an agreement with the Germans, to allow an agreed number of Jews to enter territory within the Empire or travel to Eire, but he was adamant that he was not advocating any direct contact with the Nazi regime.²³¹ He touched upon the issue of anti-Semitism (which he had acknowledged existed in a letter to Mary Sibthorpe after the acrimonious meeting with Herbert Morrison in November 1942)²³² and insisted that this could be controlled by the government through the employment of the radio to gain peoples' sympathy, particularly if it were focused on the possibility of rescuing endangered Jewish children. He further suggested the appointment of either a high-standing individual from the government or the civil service, to be solely responsible for the implementation of any rescue proposals deemed acceptable by the government. He proposed that, providing the United Nations were in agreement, they should either appoint a High Commissioner or widen the power of the current League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to aid the Jews. In his closing remarks he strongly decried the apparent procrastination of the government to implement any visible action to rescue the Jews.²³³

The arguments presented by the Archbishop were strongly supported by other members of the Lords; Viscount Samuel raised the possibility of granting entry into Palestine which he maintained would be of great benefit to both the Jews and the Arabs. He further argued Britain could not expect various neutral countries to provide assistance to the Jews, if it were not demonstrated that the same aid was being offered by the government.²³⁴ He confronted the issue of anti-Semitism and advised the House, that in his opinion, it was aggravated by the implication of Jews dominating the Black

²²⁹ Ibid., pp2-3

²³⁰ Ibid., p.3

²³¹ Ibid., p.4

²³² LPL/54/147 *William Cantaur letter to Mary Sibthorpe*, 4th November, 1942

²³³ HL Debate *German Atrocities: Aid for Refugees*, 23rd March 1943, vol 126 cc811-60, p.4

²³⁴ Ibid., p.6

Market as reported in the national press.²³⁵ In examining these arguments, it becomes apparent that the various proposals clearly demonstrated a growing agreement among the campaigners as to what they felt were feasible suggestions for rescuing the beleaguered Jews. The suggestion to use the possible rescue of children in order to obtain public support for allowing Jewish refugees to enter Britain, clearly demonstrated that the influence of *Kristallnacht*, which had resulted in granting entry into Britain for 10,000 children, had not been forgotten by the campaigners.

The response of the government reaffirmed their refusal to accept that the persecution of the Jews was exceptional. Viscount Cranbourne insisted that 'It would be a mistake to throw undue emphasis on the Jewish side of this question.'²³⁶ In effect, he was reiterating the decision made by the War Cabinet committee for the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees in January 1943, which had explicitly stated:

"No differentiation should be made as between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees, and that the refugee problem should be dealt with as a whole."²³⁷

He refuted the suggestion that the government had been somewhat slow in achieving any tangible results after the UN Declaration in December 1942. He stressed that, overall, the government had displayed a high level of humanity towards the refugees from 1933 onwards and cited the numbers who had entered Britain since the outbreak of the war. He emphasised that many were not viewed as a burden, since they were in the armed forces, whereas the ordinary refugees could be viewed as an encumbrance on the resources of the country. He insisted that the refugee problem was not solely a Jewish problem. He repeated the arguments that had been made in his discussion with the Chief Rabbi in September 1942 with regard to the Colonial territories – lack of resources, no room available for extra refugees and shortages of food.²³⁸ He insisted that, since Britain was not self-sufficient, any large increase in the population could create major problems with food supplies and he stressed the drastic shortage of accommodation due to the destruction of housing during the *Blitz*. He advised the House that the country was still admitting over 800 refugees each month, but was forced

²³⁵ Ibid., p.6

²³⁶ Ibid., p.15

²³⁷ CAB/66/33/13 Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, *memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Draft telegraph to H.M. Ambassador, Washington*.9/1/43., pp.,51-52

²³⁸ FO371/32680/W12396 Lord Cranbourne/Dr.Hertz meeting, 29/9/42

to agree most of this number either joined the Armed Forces or were the wives and children of members of the Allied forces.²³⁹

Viscount Cranbourne continued his defence of the government by reminding the House that the situation in Palestine was not solely based on economics, but it was also political and it could not be assumed that allowing more Jewish refugees to enter the Mandate would not affect the Arabs.²⁴⁰ He concluded his speech by detailing the discussions between the government and the American Administration whereby an agreement had been reached to hold a meeting in the near future, to discuss the following:

“Question of the plight of oppressed and persecuted persons in Europe has been taken up between Mr. Hull and Mr. Eden. It has been decided that conversations in connexion with this matter should take place in the immediate future.”²⁴¹

The proposals of the campaigners and the response of the government contained in the debate, defined the opposing views held in respect of the plight of the European Jews. In his analysis, Wasserstein tends to focus on the ramifications of granting entry into Palestine, whilst to a degree, the other suggestions put forward by the campaigners, are ignored. It may be argued that the campaigners' ideas presented by the Archbishop of Canterbury clearly defined their proposals which they believed could be implemented to aid and rescue European Jews. In contrast to the charitable approach of the Lords, the response by Lord Cranbourne epitomised the government attitude towards the European Jews and was encapsulated in his insistence that there should be no emphasis on Jewish suffering. There was to be no acknowledgement that the treatment of the Jews under Nazi rule might be considered to be far harsher than the general policies applied across occupied Europe. The emphasis on the benevolent attitude of the government towards the refugees as a whole ensured that a façade of humanity could be displayed to the world. The citing of substantial numbers of refugees entering the country from 1940 onwards, demonstrated the disingenuous attitude of the government towards refugees stranded in Europe since, until they were challenged by the campaigners, they chose to ignore that the majority granted entry, consisted of potential fighters and their immediate families.

²³⁹ HL Debate *German Atrocities; Aid for Refugees*, 23rd March 1943, vol126 cc811-60, pp16-18

²⁴⁰ Ibid., pp.1-,18

²⁴¹ Ibid., P.20

In the aftermath of the plea by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Lords to rescue the Jews, letters from the public were sent to the government²⁴² and the press with suggestions and requests that action be taken to ease the plight of the refugees.²⁴³ In a further development by the campaigners, it was agreed at a meeting, that the creation of the new committee The National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror should be publicly announced.²⁴⁴ A pamphlet, which crystallised the aims of the campaigners, was published in April 1943, '*Rescue The Perishing*,' written by Eleanor Rathbone on behalf of the newly created committee.²⁴⁵ The guiding ethos of the committee was as follows:

- "1. To act as a medium for co-operation between the various organisations, groups and individuals in the United Kingdom interested in saving victims of Axis persecution of whatever race or religion.
2. To consider what practical measures can be taken to this end.
3. To establish and maintain relations with non-official organisations and groups in other countries working for the same."²⁴⁶

The pamphlet contained a list of measures to be implemented immediately in order to rescue the Jews, in essence, reiterating the majority of the suggestions proposed by Gollancz in January.

The main emphasis of this new pamphlet was based on what became known as 'The Twelve Point Programme for Immediate Rescue Measures' which suggested that neutral countries such as Spain, Portugal, Switzerland and Sweden should be given guarantees by Britain and the United States that all refugees in their respective countries would either be removed after victory was achieved or sooner if it were feasible. They should be assured of being provided with both practical aid such as food, medicines and clothing, together with financial assistance where applicable.²⁴⁷ The different types of assistance would vary according to the individual countries: for example, early evacuation from Spain and Portugal was essential but less so from Sweden and Switzerland. It was stressed that, in order to accelerate the evacuation of

²⁴² FO371/36658/W5033 *League of nations Union letter*, 23rd March 1943; FO371/36657/W5034 *London County Council letter*, 26th March 1943, pp.1-2; FO371/36657, *Berne telegram no.1584 to Foreign Office*, 29th March, 1943, pp.1-2; FO371/36657, *Deputation from National Union of Teachers and Save the Children Fund to R. Law Foreign Office*, 2nd April, 1943, pp.1-2

²⁴³ 'A Policy For Refugees L.B. Namier', *The Times*, April 7th, 1943 p..5 Iss.49514; *Future Of refugees Norman Bentwich*, April 15th, 1943, p.5 Iss.49521; 'Rescuing The Jews, Charles Sturge, '*The Manchester Guardian*, April 1st, 1943, p.4

²⁴⁴ PCR/WHI/10/3/GW10/3/55 *Minutes of Executive meeting* March 24th 1943, pp.1-2

²⁴⁵ Eleanor Rathbone, *Rescue The Perishing*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1943)

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.6

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.7

refugees, both neutral shipping and empty troop and supply ships could be employed to move refugees from ports controlled by the British and the Allies. A further measure to resettle the refugees should be the establishment of temporary camps in areas under British or Allied control – Cyprus, Palestine, North and East Africa thus providing tangible reassurance to the neutral countries that the housing of refugees was a transient measure.²⁴⁸ This would be further supported by the suggestion that blocks of un-named visas should be issued for allocation to the British Consuls in the neutral countries with particular emphasis on Spain and Portugal, for any refugees, regardless of their circumstances. The quota provisions of the Palestine White Paper should be bypassed in order to facilitate the rescue of refugees currently resident in the vicinity of the Mandate.²⁴⁹

Further suggestions included maintaining pressure on the German Axis countries to refrain from participating in the Nazi deportation measures; a possible extension of arrangements made with Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania for the release of refugees; an examination of exchanging civilian internees - German and Italian for Jewish and other possible victims under Nazi control; radio broadcasts and pamphlets to be dropped over enemy and enemy-occupied countries; the formation of a separate government department to focus solely on the refugee situation; the appointment of a High Commissioner acting on behalf of the United Nations to liaise with neutral and Allied countries, to ensure implementation of the suggested rescue measures.²⁵⁰

In his analysis of the campaigners' proposals, W.D. Rubenstein argues that their proposals were based on the conception of rescue as being directed towards providing areas of settlement for the refugees rather than the liberation of Jews trapped in Europe. He maintains that the different proposals put forward were impractical and misguided since he insists that to apply them would have been impossible in wartime conditions.²⁵¹ In contrast to this, Pamela Shatzkes states that the main focus of rescue by the Jewish organisations centred on the possibilities of rescuing children in the Balkans and Hungary or the exchange of Jews in possession of Palestine certificates or similar 'protective papers' for German civilians held in Allied territory. The British fear that German agents might be infiltrated through such means, ensured that this proposal was not accepted.²⁵² In her assessment of the possibility of rescuing the Jews, London

²⁴⁸ Ibid.p.7

²⁴⁹ Ibid.p.8

²⁵⁰ Ibid, p p-,8

²⁵¹ William Rubenstein, *The Myth Of Rescue.*, pp.135-136

²⁵² Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue.*,pp.168-169

suggests that the government maintained the number of refugees granted entry into the country, had reached its limits, thus justifying its embargo on admission for humanitarian reasons being reinstated.²⁵³ A further argument suggested by Kushner is that the delaying tactics employed by the government to side-track the efforts of the campaigners, ensured that their initial momentum was lost in early 1943. The realization that, regardless of public pressure, there had been no alteration in government policy, was the driving force behind the establishment of the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi terror by Eleanor Rathbone and Victor Gollancz.²⁵⁴

Overall, the Jewish organisations supported the aims of the committee, but their main emphasis for the rescue of Jewish refugees was based on the possibilities of settlement in Palestine. This had been initially suggested by a deputation from the Board to the Foreign Office in December 1942. They had proposed that Palestine should be the obvious place of safety for the European Jews and it was recommended that the entire policy of entry into the Mandate be reviewed.²⁵⁵ This suggestion, that entry into Palestine should not be limited by the restrictions imposed by the May 1939 Palestine White Paper, was reiterated in a further memo sent to Richard Law in March 1943²⁵⁶ and after the announcement of the Bermuda Conference in March 1943, when the Joint Foreign Committee, on behalf of both the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association, drew up a list of resolutions for consideration by the Government.²⁵⁷ These endorsed the proposals submitted by The National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror, although, as in previous communications, more emphasis was placed on the possibility of large- scale settlement in Palestine.

The leading campaigners, who were predominantly the religious leaders, members of the Houses of Parliament, the Establishment and the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community, supported a variety of schemes to provide assistance to the Jews which reflected the ideas propounded by Victor Gollancz at the start of 1943. The proposals, which they wanted to be discussed at Bermuda, were published by the newly created *National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror* in their pamphlet '*Rescue The Perishing*,' issued in April 1943. The main solution was the concept of encouraging neutral countries to accept refugees by providing aid in various forms together with firm

²⁵³ London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948*, p.219

²⁵⁴ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* ., p.179

²⁵⁵ FO371/366655/W1857, The Board of Deputies of British Jews, A.G. Brotman letter and notes to Richard Law Foreign Office, 23rd December, 1942., pp.1-5

²⁵⁶ FO371/36655/W4518, Ibid., 11th March, 1943. pp.1-4

²⁵⁷ FO371/36654.W3468/49/48 ibid, 31st March, 1943

guarantees that they would not become a permanent burden, since they would be re-settled by the Allies, as soon as was feasible under the prevailing war-time conditions.

In his analysis of the Allies' attitude towards the beleaguered Jews, Wyman argues that there was no intention of attempting to implement any of the proposals put forward by the campaigners. In support of this, he cites the evaluation produced by Sir Herbert Emerson, the director of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, prior to the conference.²⁵⁸ This emphasised that any rescue operation should not impinge on the war effort, thus ensuring that if any rescue schemes were to be considered, they would be limited in the extreme.²⁵⁹ On the other hand, William D. Rubenstein refutes all the rescue schemes put forward by the campaigners. He maintains that the only possibility of saving the Jews was for the Allies to win the war as rapidly as possible, since all other proposals were totally impractical. In contrast to both these arguments, it may be, that in hindsight, the campaigners would not have achieved all their aims but there is a reasonable possibility that they might have achieved an element of success, if their proposals to work with the neutral countries had been accepted and implemented by the government. This single idea in its various forms was truly supported by all the campaigning groups in their determined attempts to provide assistance and, wherever possible, the opportunity of rescue to the persecuted Jews in Nazi Europe. Tragically, this ran counter to the aims of the government who had no intention of providing any assistance or rescue schemes for the beleaguered Jews and was able to ensure that they were never seriously considered for implementation.

The aims of the government and the campaigners were diametrically opposed. The intention of the government had been to quell the campaigners' demands to provide some tangible assistance for the endangered Jews trapped in Nazi-occupied Europe, with the UN Declaration by Eden on December 17th 1942. The leading campaigners, supported by small groups and individuals,²⁶⁰ continued with their demands in the national press, speeches in parliament and letters to the government. In considering the reaction of the government refugee committee, in early 1943, the evidence demonstrates that there was to be no exception made towards the plight of the Jews for a variety of reasons. These included the belief that the entry of Jewish refugees would actively encourage a rise in anti-Semitism, an insistence on maintaining the rigid immigration laws and the Colonial Office determination to adhere to the Palestine White

²⁵⁸ Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews.*, p.11

²⁵⁹ Ibid. Pp.110-114

²⁶⁰ FO371/36659, *The Presbytery of Liverpool letter –rescue Jews*, April 22nd 1943; FO371/36657 *The Save the Children Fund and the NUT petition to rescue the Jews*, 2nd April 1943

paper. These aims were emphasised by Lord Cranbourne in his response, on behalf of the government, during the major debate on the refugees in March 1943. In a calculated strategy to deflect the pressure of the campaigners' demands, the Cabinet committee approached the American Administration with the proposal to hold an informal meeting, with an agreed agenda, to discuss the overall refugee problems. The agreement to hold a meeting in Bermuda provided the government with a feasible answer to deflect the campaigners' requests for tangible assistance to assist in the rescue of the European Jews.

In the early months of 1943, the government was confronted by a growing insistence from various campaigners, organisations and the public to provide visible assistance and aid to rescue European Jews wherever possible. In a determined effort to deflect criticism of their policies towards the refugees, the Colonial Office set in motion a scheme to rescue 4,000 Bulgarian Jewish children and to re-settle them in Palestine. The scheme failed for a variety of reasons but the proposal to offer settlement in Palestine for children did maintain a façade of humanity. Finally, in March, as pressure from the campaigners grew more vociferous, the government approached America with a proposal to hold an informal meeting to formulate a plan to assist all the European refugees in Europe rather than just the Jews. After a series of protracted discussions, an agenda was agreed that was acceptable to both sides to be discussed at a meeting in Bermuda on April 1943. This proposed meeting was used by the government to alleviate the pressure exerted by the campaigners to provide assistance to European Jewry.

Chapter Four. The Bermuda Conference: Success or failure?

April – June 1943

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the government's agreed objectives for discussion at the Bermuda Conference and to consider whether they were achieved. It will examine the flow of communication between the British representatives and the Foreign Office during the course of the conference and consider how far the British delegation was able to ensure success within their aims. It will analyse the reaction of the British press to the limited news emanating from Bermuda and it will examine the approach agreed by the Cabinet when the proposal to hold a parliamentary debate on the outcome of the conference was considered and how successful this approach proved to be. The response of the various campaigners and the public will be examined in depth and finally it will consider how successful the government was in achieving its agreed goal to deflect the campaigners demands to provide assistance to the beleaguered Jews in Nazi-Europe.

The Government objectives at the Bermuda Conference April 1943

On the 19th April 1943, representatives of the British and American Governments met for talks in Bermuda to discuss the growing problems of the refugee situation in Nazi-occupied Europe. The talks were closed to the public and no representatives of any charitable or campaigning organisation were invited to attend. These talks would become known as the Bermuda Conference and at the time, very little was publicised as to either the remit of the delegates or the agreed results. The reasons for convening the Bermuda Conference may be compared to those for the Evian Conference in 1938. In both cases, the intention was to demonstrate the humanitarian stance of both America and Britain to the suffering and persecution of the refugees.

The primary objective of the British Government was to silence the demands of the campaigners and individuals who demanded that some form of visible assistance should be offered to the Jewish refugees trapped in Nazi occupied Europe. The focus of the talks was to be on all refugees, thus deliberately omitting any mention of the Jews as a separate group, since the government considered that they were nationals of individual countries rather than a separate nationality. In her analysis of the dominant concerns of both governments, Louise London argues that a major consideration was the determination to maintain the legal limits imposed by both countries on immigration, since neither country wished to extend its admission of Jews in order to offer

humanitarian assistance.¹ In contrast to this, Tommie Sjoberg suggests that the main objectives of the conference were to placate public opinion and to disabuse the public of the idea that the refugee problem was solely a Jewish one.²

In his analysis of the government reaction, Monty Penkower suggests that there was a fear in the Foreign Office that Hitler might release the European Jews, thus swamping Britain with them and increasing anti-Semitism.³ In their separate examinations of the American policies presented at the conference, both Arthur D. Morse and David S. Wyman agree that the main aims of the administration were to ensure that no mention was made specifically of Jewish refugees and no commitment was to be given to provide support for any rescue schemes. The American Administration was determined to ensure that no change to the immigration laws was to be envisaged.⁴

The refusal of the government to recognise the Jews as a separate nationality had been clearly stated by the Foreign Office in its response to the discussions that had taken place between Lord Cranbourne and the Chief Rabbi in September 1942, concerning the possible rescue of Jewish children in enemy-occupied territory:

“Again it is our constant practice to hold the Allied Governments in London responsible for their nationals, Jews and non-Jews alike.”⁵

This stance had been adopted in January 1943 when the Committee for the Reception and Accommodation of Refugees had stated:

“No differentiation should be made as between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees, and that the refugee problem should be dealt with as a whole.”⁶

It was emphasised in the Aide-Memoire handed to the State Department in Washington by the British Embassy:

“The refugee problem cannot be treated as though it were a wholly Jewish problem.... 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

¹ London, *Whitehall And the Jews 1933-1948.*, pp.218-220

² Tommie Sjoberg, *The Powers and the persecuted.*, pp.130-131;-165-166

³ Monty Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable.*, p.101

⁴ Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died* (New York: Random House Inc.,1968), Pp.53-54; Wyman, *The Abandonment Of The Jews.*, pp.113-114

⁵ FO371/32680/W13371/45555/48 A.G. Randall, *Foreign Office letter to J.D. Sidebotham, Colonial Office*,9/10/42, p.118

⁶ CAB/66/33/13 Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*,9/1/43., pp.,51-52

territories in enemy occupation. There is also a distinct danger of stimulating anti-Semitism in areas where an excessive number of foreign Jews are introduced.”⁷

It was reiterated by Lord Cranbourne in his response to the Archbishop of Canterbury during the major debate held in March 1943, when he informed the Lords:

“The most reverend Primate himself and those Noble Lords have painted a vivid picture of... the odious persecutions being inflicted upon the Jews, the Czechoslovaks, the Poles, the Yugoslavs and other subject peoples. For I think it would be a mistake to throw undue emphasis on the Jewish side of this question. We all admit it is perhaps the most horrible feature, but it is only a feature of a much bigger problem.”⁸

Tony Kushner maintains that, when the Allies were confronted with the Jewish catastrophe, they were, to a degree, in a cleft stick, since their offer of sympathy for the Jews’ plight was influenced by a feeling of aversion and national exclusivity against Jews generally. He further suggested that the Allies maintained, it would be of benefit to Hitler, if mention of the Jewishness of the refugees were made.⁹ In a major speech to the Reichstag in January 1939, Hitler had blamed International Jewry for World War One and had stated that if there were another war, it would be at the instigation of International Jewry, hence the determination of the Allies to avoid providing either Hitler or Goebbels with an announcement that could be used for propaganda.¹⁰ A further government consideration for deliberately excluding the mention of the European Jews from the agenda was the accusation that the war was being fought on behalf of the Jews. The idea of Jewish influence on war policies had been a longstanding anti-Semitic trope.¹¹

The British insisted, as at the Evian Conference in July 1938. There was to be no mention of Palestine, since the entire Palestine issue was governed by a strict adherence to the 1939 Palestine White Paper. This had established a maximum quota of Jews to be granted entry into the Mandate between 1939 and 1944 of 75,000 at a rate of 10,000 per year.¹² In his examination of the government attitudes in 1939, Tom

⁷ FRUS Vol.1 1943 *The British Embassy to the Department of State, Aide-Memoire Refugees From Nazi-Occupied Europe*, 20th January 1943, p.134

⁸ HL Deb *German Atrocities: Aid For Refugees*, 23 March 1943 vol.126 cc811-60, p.15

⁹ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*., p.181

¹⁰ Yad Vashem Shoah Resource Center, *Extract from Speech by Hitler* January 30th 1939, pp.1-4

¹¹ J.A. Hobson, *The War In South Africa*., pp.189-197

HC Deb, 6th February 1900 vol 78 cc731-828, p.26

Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosely* . , pp.436-437

Geoffrey C. Field, ‘Anti-Semitism With The Boots Off: Recent Research On England’, *Wiener Library Bulletin* 1983, *Special Issue*, p.39

¹² Cmd.6019 *Palestine Statement of policy May 1939* (London: H.M.S.O.,1939) pp.10-11

Segev argues that the comment of Neville Chamberlain “If we must offend one side, let us offend the Jews rather than the Arabs,” illustrated the dilemma facing the government, as the prospect of war grew nearer. The government considered that appeasing the Palestinian Arabs, maintaining the British presence in Egypt with control of the Suez Canal and retaining vital links with Iraq for its oil, was of vital strategic importance. On the other hand, it was assumed that the Jews would have no alternative other than to support Britain, but there was the possibility that the Arabs might opt to support Germany.¹³ This fear was reinforced by the fact that the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, who had organised the riots in Jerusalem in the Thirties, was known to be resident in both Germany and Italy from 1941 onwards, where he continued to inveigh against the British and the Jews.¹⁴

In his assessment, Sjoberg argues a continuing theme of the German broadcasts to the Middle East and North Africa, was the accusation that the Allies were fighting the war on behalf of the Jews in a major attempt to alienate Arab opinion. The Germans believed that this would encourage the Arab leaders to offer their support to Germany.¹⁵ In partial justification of this argument, Monty Penkower cites the objections raised by the Near- East Division of the State Department, who were worried that if Palestine were to be considered as an area offering temporary refuge to the refugees, “it would create serious disaffection, perhaps accompanied by outbreaks of protest in the Arab and Moslem world.”¹⁶ In his analysis, Henry L. Feingold points out that the State Department, who wished to maintain good trading relationships with the Arab nations, was well aware of the potential problems that mention of Palestine could create, as a result of concerns expressed by both Egypt and Saudi Arabia towards the possibility of further refugee settlement there.¹⁷ In essence, it may be argued that neither Britain nor America wished to upset the Arab nations for either political or strategic reasons. The decision to exclude any mention of Palestine from the Bermuda agenda was viewed as a sensible precaution by both governments and as Martin Gilbert notes during the course of the conference, no reference was made to the possibility of Britain absorbing more refugees, nor was the conference informed there were still 33,000 immigration certificates available for Palestine.¹⁸ In his detailed

¹³ Segev, *One Palestine*., pp.436-437

¹⁴ Gensicke, *The Mufti of Jerusalem*., Pp.16-17;-19;-58-63

¹⁵ Sjoberg, *The Powers and the Persecute*., pp., 131-132

¹⁶ Penkower, *The Jews Wer Expendable*., p.108

¹⁷ Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics Of Rescue The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p.215

¹⁸ Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies. How the Allies responded to the news of Hitler's Final Solution* (London: Michael Joseph/Rainbird, 1981), pp.131-133

analysis, Bernard Wasserstein concludes that the conference agenda was based on the unspoken agreement in respect of immigration into Palestine, together with a quid pro quo that there would be no discussion of the limitations posed by the American immigration laws. This argument is supported by Tony Kushner.¹⁹

A further government decision was that it should not be seen to accept responsibility for implementing any specific initiatives to either rescue the Jews or provide them with any area of refuge. The pervading fear of both the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office was that Hitler, or his Axis allies, might opt to release the Jews under their control, thus creating a potentially embarrassing situation for themselves and their allies. These fears were expressed to the American Government in the detailed telegram sent in early January 1943 to Lord Halifax in Washington, in which a meeting with the American Administration to discuss the growing refugee problems had been proposed:

“There is the 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, of embarrassing other countries by flooding them with alien immigrants.”²⁰

This fear that Germany would swamp the Allies with predominantly Eastern European Jews, may be compared to the views expressed by the Foreign Office prior to the Evian Conference. Then, the likelihood to be faced, was the potential threat of forced Jewish emigration from Poland, Romania and Hungary.²¹ The fear expressed by the government of being overwhelmed by Jews may be attributed to the belief that their arrival could give rise to a string of accusations ranging from depriving the indigenous population of employment and housing to colonising complete areas which would become exclusively Jewish in character. The government was determined to avoid such a situation occurring.

In return for American agreement to these requests, the British consented to make no mention of the prevailing immigration laws of America, which ensured that entry into the country was severely limited owing to the immigration legislation which had been passed in 1917, 1921 and 1924. These laws had removed the right of asylum

¹⁹ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, pp.348; Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p.182

²⁰ CAB/66/33/13 Reception and Accommodation of Refugees, *Foreign Office telegram no.274 to H.M. Ambassador, Washington*.12/1/43, p.1

²¹ CO323/1605/3, *Memorandum of instructions for the United Kingdom Delegation to the meeting of an inter-governmental conference at Evian on July 6th to discuss the question of emigration from Germany and Austria*, pp.1-4; Marrus, *The Unwanted European Refugees*, pp.141 - 145

for refugees fleeing from religious or political persecution.²² They forbade an immigrant to obtain employment before entering the country (1917- Contract Labour Clause) and demanded proof of financial independence before entry was permitted (1917- Liable to become a Public Charge Clause).²³ In the immediate post-war period, the 1921 Quota Act and the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act were instituted, stipulating strict entry quotas for potential immigrants based, respectively, on the 1910 and 1890 census. The original quota of 355,000 immigrants per annum in 1921 (based on the 1910 census) was amended to 150,000 per annum in 1924 (based on the 1890 census) and finalised in 1927 with the National Origins plan, implemented in 1929.²⁴ This final calculation ensured that the majority of potential immigrants would come from Great Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia and Germany.²⁵ The control of entry visas to America was assumed by the European Consuls appointed by the State Department, instead of the customs officials at the port of arrival.²⁶

In his analysis of the British demands, Wasserstein argues that they are one of the clearest and most detailed statements of policy emanating from the government in respect of the refugees. He notes that the government was quite prepared to be complicit in ignoring the restrictions of the American immigration quotas as a quid pro quo for no mention of Palestine being made during the ensuing talks.²⁷ In her assessment of the British objectives, Louise London argues that the main aim of the government was to limit the scope of any action to aid the refugees. She maintains that the decision to focus on all potential refugees, rather than the Jewish refugees, was to minimise any pressure to create a special initiative to save them, thus ensuring that the government would be absolved of any responsibility to find a safe refuge for a substantial number of homeless Jews.²⁸ She further argues that it suited the British to ignore the restrictive quota system employed by the American Administration towards potential immigrants, since the British system was as restrictive, although it did not have an official quota system.²⁹ In contrast to these arguments, Kushner maintains that, by

²² Read Lewis & Marian Schisby, 'Status of the Refugee Under American Immigration Laws', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 203, May 1939, pp.78-79; Bat-Ami Zucker, *In Search of Refuge Jews and US Consuls in Nazi Germany 1933-1941* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2001), Pp.,36p38

²³ Ibid., p.88

²⁴ Robert A. Devine, *American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp.5-6;14-17

²⁵ Zucker, *In Search of Refuge.*, pp.,33-35; Saul Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed. United States Policy Towards Jewish Refugees 1938-1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), pp.20-21

²⁶ Zucker, *In Search of Refuge.*, pp.,36-38

²⁷ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, p.185

²⁸ London, *Whitehall And The Jews 1933-1948.*, p.212

²⁹ Ibid., P.218

publicly limiting discussion to refugees rather than emphasising the Jewishness of the victims, the Allies avoided the Nazi policy of focusing on the Jews as the cause of a major problem.³⁰ An alternative consideration is that, as a result of the influx of Jewish refugees at the turn of the century, the government was determined to maintain rigid control over the entry of Jews, thus limiting any mass protest particularly in a time of war.

The Bermuda Conference April 19th – 29th April 1943

The opening speech by Harold W. Dodds, the American Chairman, set the tone for the conference, which, while filled with platitudes and self-praise for the efforts of America to aid the refugees, stated that – ‘Complete and final victory, will, of course, afford a true and final solution to the refugee problem.’³¹ The delegates then proceeded to discuss the various options which had been agreed prior to the talks. The main points that the British considered to be the most relevant and practical, were the possibility of re-settling refugees in Spain and Portugal on a temporary basis in the newly liberated areas of North Africa and their potential settlement in friendly South American countries. These options had been discussed in the preparatory inter-departmental talks prior to the conference and it had been agreed that a visible display of offering assistance to refugees situated in Spain and Portugal would both solve the problem and give a degree of satisfaction to the pro-refugee campaigners and assuage public opinion.³²

Apart from the agreed government points for discussion, consideration was given to the proposals put forward by various Jewish organisations, including the World Jewish Congress, the Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain,³³ the Jewish Agency For Palestine, the Joint Emergency Committee For European Jewish Affairs, the Australian United Emergency Committee for European Jewry, the Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews³⁴ and various non-Jewish organisations

³⁰ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination.*, pp.181-182

³¹ State Department Bulletin, *Bermuda Meeting on the Refugee Problem opening address by Harold W. Dodds Chairman of the American Delegation* April 19, 1943, pp.351,352 available at <https://babelhathitrust.org/record/000596810> accessed 26 October 2016

³² FO371/36657, *Foreign Office minutes of Interdepartmental meeting re Anglo-American conference on refugees*, 25th March 1943, p2

³³ FO371/36657 *World Jewish Congress memorandum to The Delegates Bermuda Refugee Conference* April 14 1943, pp11-12; *Association of Jewish refugees in Great Britain*, 19 April, 1942

³⁴ Wiener Library/ 88578/430/ *Jewish Agency for Palestine memorandum to Bermuda Conference Refugee Committee*, 14 April 1943 S262, pp.1-4; 87538/446/19 *Joint Emergency Committee For European Jewish Affairs letter Sumner Welles*, April 14 1943, pp.1-2; 91592/319/S209, *Australian United Emergency Committee for European Jewry*, May 1943 p.18

including the National Committee of Rescue from Nazi Terror and the World Council of Churches,³⁵ all of which offered a number of options, including:

- 1) "That an approach should be made to Hitler to release Jews from Germany and German-occupied countries.
- 2) That the Jews in Germany or German-occupied countries should be released in exchange for German internees or prisoners of war held by the United Nations.
- 3) That the United Nations should send food through the blockade to feed the Jews in Europe."³⁶

In the ensuing discussion of these proposals, Congressman Sol Bloom, in what was perceived as an attempt to portray himself as a staunch rescue advocate,³⁷ suggested consideration should be given to the possibility of opening negotiations with Hitler to release an agreed number of refugees on a monthly basis, in an attempt to maintain a channel of communication. This was totally overruled by the other delegates and Bloom withdrew his suggestion. It was also agreed that there would be no exchange of Allied prisoners for refugees and due to the blockade, it was not possible to send food to potential refugees.³⁸

The other areas under discussion included the possibilities of neutral shipping, the various categories of refugees and the possibility of them being settled in North Africa for the duration of the war. In a detailed telegram at the start of the conference from Richard Law, the leader of the British Delegation, to the Foreign Secretary, the following observations were made: he did not think that Palestine or other British Colonies would be mentioned by the American delegation; he viewed the conference proceedings as going well since he believed the American delegation was looking for British support when the unpalatable results of the conference were made public to the American nation, rather than attempting to shift the blame for any failure onto the British. He suggested that, in return, American support would be of considerable assistance when dealing with 'our own Archbishops.'³⁹ He intimated that the possibility of refugee settlement in North Africa would not be viewed favourably by Washington and he concluded that the most practical outcome appeared to be the American proposal to re-

³⁵ Eleanor Rathbone, *Rescue The Perishing*, (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.,1943);FO371/36660/W6733 Victor Cazalet telegram to Secretary, Bermuda Conference on refugees, April 1943;various M.P.s telegram to Richard Law Bermuda, April 21 1943;FO371/36657, Telegram no.1500 Berne to Foreign Office summary of Aide Memoire Secretariat of World Council of Churches, 29th March,1943 p.1

³⁶ CAB/65/34/21/ Bermuda Conference Report, May 4,1943, p.3

³⁷ Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue.*, p198

³⁸ FO371/36660 Telegram no.8 from Richard Law to Foreign Secretary, 21 April 1943;Wyman, *The Abandonment Of The Jews.*, p114

³⁹FO371/36660, Telegram no. 6 to Foreign Office,21st April 1943

establish the Intergovernmental Committee with the proviso that the format was improved in order to ensure that it would be capable of dealing with the various problems associated with offering practical assistance to alleviate the refugee problems.⁴⁰

The possibility of re-settling refugees in Spain and Portugal on a temporary basis in the newly liberated areas of North Africa and the potential settlement of refugees in friendly South American countries, were discussed by Law in a succession of telegrams, sent to inform the Foreign Office of the relevant developments as the conference progressed. The British objective to re-settle refugees in North Africa was not viewed as acceptable in Washington due to military concerns, but Osbert Peake of the Home Office drafted an explicit telegram, on behalf of the British delegation to Washington, stating clearly the problems as follows:

“Spain is the only effective channel of escape remaining in Western Europe for refugees of all nationalities. It is of supreme importance that this channel should not become blocked as the consequence would be: -

- 1) That the admission of further refugees would be prevented by the Spanish Government.
- 2) The Allies would be deprived of useful personnel.
- 3) Public opinion throughout the world would come to the conclusion that the Allies were not making any serious endeavour to deal with the refugee problem.”⁴¹

The telegram discussed the number of refugees in Spain and the issues of transport. It was suggested that a temporary camp should be set up in an area selected by the American authorities under the auspices of a British Administration. The personnel would be provided by Britain who would be able to offer the expertise required to manage camps with a mixed body of men, women and children. It was further suggested that this camp could be used to house refugees prior to their re-settlement, under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Committee.⁴² In their determination to obtain agreement from the Americans to resettle the refugees in Spain, on a temporary basis, little mention was made of the Jewish refugees whilst great emphasis was placed on the French nationals, the Poles and the Czechs, all of whom were considered eligible for military service. The Jews, who were viewed as being of enemy nationality or stateless, presented a problem, but it was thought if they were placed in temporary

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 22nd April 1943

⁴² Ibid., 22 April 1943

holding camps in North Africa, it would ease the pressure of the campaigners' demands for rescue.⁴³

As agreed prior to the conference, little mention was made of Palestine. The British informed the delegates that it had been agreed to arrange the admission of 4,500 children and 500 adults from Bulgaria into the Mandate. They further stated that, overall, entry from the Balkans and Eastern Europe was governed by a quota system as laid down in the 1939 Palestine White Paper. As a result of this, the Palestine authorities were prepared to admit a further 12,500 Jews by the end of 1943 and it was envisaged that approximately 85% of this number would be children from enemy or enemy-occupied territory. This would result in a further 16,500 places being available before the quota was completed in 1944, as laid down in the 1939 White Paper.⁴⁴

It was finally agreed by both sides, to revive the Intergovernmental Committee. It was acknowledged that, in order for it to be effective, major changes were required in its organisation. In his analysis, Tommie Sjöberg argues that the American Administration viewed the employment of the Intergovernmental Committee as the ideal tool to deflect any criticism from campaigners.⁴⁵ This argument was accepted by the British who noted that 'the United States argument it was easier to revive an established body rather than create a new one was impossible to resist.'⁴⁶ This resulted in the delegation sending a detailed telegram to the Foreign Office outlining the major changes required to ensure that it became a viable organisation. These were summarised as follows in its revised mandate:

"The executive Committee of the Inter-Governmental Committee is hereby empowered by the member States to undertake negotiation with Neutral or Allied States or organisations...to preserve, maintain and transport those persons displaced from their homes by their efforts to escape from areas where their lives and liberty are in danger on account of their race, religion or their political beliefs. The operation of the Committee shall extend to all countries from which refugees come as a result of the war in Europe... The executive Committee shall be empowered to receive and disburse...funds both public and private."⁴⁷

On the 28th April, agreement was reached between the delegations as to the wording of the final communique to be released to the public, which was to state that:

"The delegates were able to agree on a number of concrete recommendations which they are jointly submitting to their

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Cab/66/36/43/WP (43) 193, *Bermuda Conference memorandum by the secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, May 4, 1943, pp.6;9

⁴⁵ Sjöberg, *The Powers and the Persecuted*, pp.139-141

⁴⁶ FO371/36660 *Telegram no.20 from Richard Law to Foreign Secretary*, 25th April 1943

⁴⁷ Ibid., *Telegram no.25*, 27th April, 1943

Governments.... Since the recommendations necessarily concerning Governments other than those represented at the Bermuda Conference, and involve military considerations, they must remain confidential.”⁴⁸

The main announcement in the communique focused on the reconstitution of the Intergovernmental Committee in an enlarged capacity, with a broader remit to take responsibility for the refugee problem. ⁴⁹ It was agreed that there should be no statements beyond the official communique but, if the government intended to make any other reference to the conference proposals in the forthcoming debate to be held in May, this would be done in conjunction with American agreement.⁵⁰ The results of the conference were viewed with satisfaction by the government since, to a large degree, the objectives that had been set for the delegations had been achieved in a creditable manner. This is clearly illustrated in a long telegram from the Foreign Office to Washington in early May, which, whilst summarising the results of the conference, emphasised the assistance that had been and was still, being given, to Polish and Greek refugees and the large number of visas which had been available for the French children in Occupied France. It made no mention of the deteriorating situation faced by the European Jews. ⁵¹

This stance is further illustrated in a detailed note from Richard Law to Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, after his return from Bermuda, in which he pointed out the difference between the American and the British positions in respect of the Jewish refugees:

“We are subjected to extreme pressure from an alliance of Jewish organisations and Archbishops. There is no counter-pressure as yet from people who are afraid of alien immigration into the country because it will put their livelihood in jeopardy after the war. I have no doubt in my own mind that that feeling is widespread in England, but it is not organised so we do not feel it. In the United States, on the other hand, there is added to the pressure of the Jewish organisations the pressure of that body of opinion which, without being purely anti-Semitic, is jealous and fearful of an alien immigration per se.” ⁵²

⁴⁸ Ibid *Telegram no.29*, 28th April,1943

⁴⁹ FO371/36660 *Telegram no.29 from U.K. Delegation to Foreign Office Refugee Dept.*, 28th April,1943

⁵⁰ Ibid., telegram co.31,29th April,1943

⁵¹ Ibid, *Foreign Office to Washington Telegram no.2987*, 4th May,1943

⁵² FO371/36731/W.P. (43) 1191, A. Eden *Memorandum Anglo-American discussions at Bermuda on refugee problems*, May 3rd,1943, p.1

Law continued by succinctly summarising the attitude of the American Administration towards the Jews as follows:

“They want to appease Jewish organisations... If, however, it came to a show-down, Jew and Gentile, I am satisfied that... they would have to tell the Jewish organisations to go to hell.”⁵³

He maintained that a similar attitude existed in Britain, although he considered that, at the present time, it was both dormant and unorganised, but he warned that it was not to be ignored. He emphasised this with his insistence that:

“We must not make some magnificent gesture to the Archbishops now only to find that in twelve or eighteen months’ time the average man, *moyen sensuel*, turns and rends us.”⁵⁴

In considering his reference towards the clergy, Law was acknowledging the influence of the church leaders in their continuing demands to provide assistance to the European refugees, whilst demonstrating the prevailing government belief, that to grant admission to Jewish refugees, could create a substantial rise of anti-Semitism in the country. The fear of stimulating anti-Semitism had been an essential government ploy throughout the Thirties and had been successfully deployed at the Evian conference with the allusions to the possibility of large scale emigration by the Eastern European Jews to Britain and Europe.⁵⁵

The church leaders had been actively involved in approaching the government on behalf of the Jewish refugees from the mid Thirties onwards. In July 1938, the Bishop of Chichester had tabled a motion requesting details of the Evian Conference in order to emphasise the predicament facing the German and Austrian Jews.⁵⁶ The Archbishop of Canterbury had been active in working with the other church leaders to maintain pressure on the government to provide some form of visible assistance for the refugees through numerous letters to the press and Anthony Eden, both prior to and after the UN Declaration. He continued to work closely with the major campaigners both inside and outside parliament. His leadership and determination had been crucial in leading the debate in the Lords prior to the Bermuda Conference, when further pressure was applied to the government to implement the recommendations of Victor Gollancz to rescue the trapped Jews.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibid., p.2

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.2

⁵⁵ Wiener Library, ‘Speech by Lord Winterton’ *Evian Conference records 1938*, 503MF DOC54/Reel 3., P.6

⁵⁶ HL Deb. ‘Refugee Problems’, 27th July 1938 vol.110 cc1206-49, pp.1-3

⁵⁷ HL Debate *German Atrocities: Aid for Refugees*, 23rd March 1943, vol 126 cc81

In her analysis of the conference, Louise London argues that the rescue of the Jews was not the main objective of the government. She states that the position of the Home Office remained unchanged towards Jewish refugees: they were not wanted. She maintains that the government intended to use the conference and its conclusions to sustain its stance of public sympathy and compassion for the refugees. The main government objective was not to rescue the Jews but to avoid any accusation of inaction towards them, thus lessening public pressure to aid them and deflect criticism of their tardiness.⁵⁸ Tony Kushner points out that the problem facing the liberal ethos of the government was the dichotomy of reconciling universalism and sympathy for the Jews against nationalism and anti-Semitic sentiments. He argues that, by focusing the discussions on refugees rather than Jewish refugees, the government would achieve two objectives: the avoidance of the Nazi accusation that the war was being fought on behalf of international Jewry and⁵⁹ the possibility of halting any increase in anti-Semitism, which the government believed could occur if emphasis were placed on Jews rather than refugees.⁶⁰ Wasserstein states that the government had achieved its objectives at the conference, particularly in respect of the Jewish refugees, whom it wished to be classified with all other refugees. The revival of the Intergovernmental Committee with a broader mandate, would be responsible for dealing with the refugee problem on an international basis. This would, effectively, provide the government with the means to maintain its concern towards the Jews and the non-Jews trapped in occupied Europe.⁶¹

There is a further argument to be considered which is ignored by the historians of the period. In analysing the discussions at the conference, it is apparent that, although great emphasis was placed on the possibility of Hitler extruding all the Jews of Europe, which in the eyes of the Allies could present a major problem, there was, apart from a brief allusion to the Jewish refugees in Spain, no mention of the European Jews at any point in the discussions. In the various communications between Law and Eden, much emphasis is placed on the government perception of anti-Semitism in the country and the continual fear that either the arrival of Jewish refugees or the belief that a primary aim of the war was to rescue the European Jews, would encourage its growth. It may be argued that, although Kushner, London and Wasserstein examine these points in detail, they do not consider that the roots of these

⁵⁸ London, *Whitehall And The Jews 1933—1948.*, p.221

⁵⁹ Adolf Hitler Address at the opening of the Winter Relief Campaign 30th September 1942 available at www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/source/Holocaust/hitlerwintwer/html accessed 8 November 2016

⁶⁰ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* ., pp.181-182

⁶¹ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews.*, pp.200-201

fears may be traced to the public opposition at the turn of the century emanating from the arrival of the Russian Jews fleeing persecution, which the government wished to avoid, by minimising the possibility of further large scale immigration by European Jewry during this period.

The public reaction to the Conference communique

Since the news of the Nazi policy had become public in December 1942, the government had deployed various tactics to deflect criticism of their lack of action by the church leadership, the various campaigning bodies and the general public. These had included the announcement of the UN Declaration in the House of Commons by Anthony Eden on December 17th 1942. This was followed by the announcement of a scheme to rescue and resettle 4,500 Jewish children from the Balkans in Palestine in 1943 and the statement to Parliament, that there was to be a meeting between government representatives and the American Administration in April, in an attempt to consider various ways to ease the refugee situation in occupied Europe. The pressure exerted by the campaigners continued. While the conference was in session, Victor Cazalet M.P. sent a letter to *The Times* on behalf of the Executive Committee of the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror and he voiced the following opinion:

“These speeches hold out no prospect of immediate decisions, they adumbrate nothing but “exploratory consultations”- ‘laying foundations” “working out tentatively some basis – with a view to” &c. In phrase after phrase the government spokesman instead of showing a vigorous determination seemed mainly concerned to accentuate difficulties which have always been obvious and to emphasise that, after all, very little could be done.”⁶²

Further critical articles appeared in the national press during the conference. *The Observer* noted the remoteness of Bermuda and suggested that the delegates had no intention of resolving the growing problems facing the European Jews under Nazi control. In its castigation of America and Britain, it noted that, during the conference:

“We have been told that this problem is beyond the resource of Britain and America combined.... If Britain and America cannot help who can?... What is so terrible about these speeches is not only their utter insensitiveness to human suffering. It is the implied readiness of the two greatest Powers on earth to humiliate themselves, to declare themselves bankrupt and impotent, in order to evade the slight discomfort of charity

⁶² ‘The Bermuda Speeches. Victor A. Cazalet,’ *The Times*, 22nd April, 1943, p.5 Iss. 49527

The Bermuda speeches evoke the agonising memory of Geneva and Evian.”⁶³

In similar vein, *The News Chronicle* reiterated the sentiments expressed by *The Observer* with the observation:

“The impression here is that a number of cautious gentlemen, well-schooled in the doctrine of not giving much away, have conducted a series of formal meetings in an atmosphere which was defined in advance with the aid of such reliable political clichés as “exploratory conversations” and the “formulation of preliminary proposals.” It was like a song heard in a past delirium: it was the outline for a too familiar nightmare. It was business as usual. With sudden clarity it recalled other conferences... which began and ended with the solemn certainty that nothing was going to be done.”⁶⁴

The publication of the conference communique demonstrated that these forebodings were correct since there was no indication that any major decisions, which would offer relief to the refugees, had been reached between the two powers. In examining these comments, a strong comparison may be drawn with the results of the Evian Conference in July 1938 when the Nazi newspaper *Voelkischer Beobachter* published an article with the headline ‘No One Wants To Have Them,’ which had emphasised the various reasons offered by the delegates as to why their respective countries were unable to provide the possibility of settlement for the Jews.⁶⁵ In the aftermath of the conference, *The Jewish Chronicle* concluded its lengthy editorial with the following observation:

“Already even under the stress of the present emotion, the ghost of Evian walks abroad. The distressing *non possumus* is being uttered with almost indecent haste in country after country. Once more a Jewish Palestine shines ... as a sure haven...Must Jews alone, perhaps the worst sufferers of all from the Nazi nightmare, have no home to call their own.”⁶⁶

Towards the end of April, Eleanor Rathbone published her pamphlet *Rescue the Perishing*, which included a detailed twelve-point plan of rescue measures that could be implemented to provide assistance to the refugees stranded in neutral countries. These included the revision of visa regulations applied in Britain; increased transport for the evacuation of refugees from neutral countries; provision of new camps for the dispersal

⁶³ ‘Honour Our Guide?’ *The Observer*, April 25, 1943

⁶⁴ ‘How Not to Hold A Conference On Refugees,’ *The News Chronicle*, April 26th 1943.

⁶⁵ *Voelkischer Beobachter*, North German Edition, 13th July 1938 ‘No One Wants To Have Them’ pp.1-2 available at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/evian2.html> 21/2/17 accessed 8 November 2016

⁶⁶ ‘Bermuda’, *The Jewish Chronicle*, May 7th, 1943 p.8

of refugees; aid to neutral countries for the provision of refugees and unlimited entry into Palestine.⁶⁷ In early May, Anthony Eden was questioned by a series of Parliamentarians, as to the outcome of the conference and whether there would be a discussion in the near future in the Commons. Eden refused to make any statement, but he did confirm that, at some point, there would be a debate on the conference results.⁶⁸ *The Manchester Guardian* printed a scathing article on the results of the conference in the days preceding the parliamentary debate, questioning the actions of government in their attempts to accelerate the escape of refugees to safe havens and in particular the Colonial Office, in its endeavours to transport refugees from the Balkans to Palestine.⁶⁹ Further letters from campaigners included the observation from the Bishop of Chichester, that five months had elapsed since the UN Declaration in December 1942 and to date, very little appeared to have been organised to rescue the refugees.⁷⁰ With the realisation that some tangible evidence was required by the government to assuage the continuing criticism of its actions, it was agreed that an announcement would have to be made in parliament by the Under Secretary of State for the Home Office in the forthcoming debate on refugees which it was confirmed should take place on the 19th May. At the same meeting, it was further decided that:⁷¹

“In view of the risk that a disproportionate number of speeches might be by members holding extreme views in favour of the free admission of refugees to this country, the Whips were invited to arrange that some members would intervene in the debate who would put a more balanced point of view.”⁷²

In a further meeting, prior to the debate, the Foreign Secretary expressed his fears of the possibility that the main focus would centre on:

“The facilities for refugees to escape from Nazi oppression through Spain. There had been some public discussion of the proposal to facilitate the transfer of Jewish refugees to Palestine through Bulgaria. Apparently as a result... the Germans had now taken steps to prevent refugees from leaving Bulgaria. If there were now similar discussions about Spain, there was a danger that the Germans might take similar action to close the Spanish channels.”⁷³

⁶⁷ Rathbone, *Rescue the Perishing*.

⁶⁸ HC Deb. *Refugees (Bermuda Conference)*, May 5 1943 vol.389 cc148-50, p.1

⁶⁹ ‘Bermuda Conference,’ *The Manchester Guardian*, May 15th 1943, p.4

⁷⁰ ‘Jews in Europe,’ *George Cicestr, The Times*, May 18th 1943, p.5 Issue 49548

⁷¹ CAB/65/34/21, WM 67 (43) *War Cabinet Meeting*, 10th May, 1943, p.25

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid

The suggestion that the debate should be held in a Secret Session was considered since the government wished to avoid the possibility of Germany exerting influence on the response of the Spanish Government towards the possible closure of refugee escape routes. The Cabinet decided on a standard debate, but agreed that in a Secret Session prior to it, the Commons should be warned of this danger, in order to avoid a repetition of such behaviour.⁷⁴ The government concern that the German regime would attempt to influence Spain to close the refugee escape routes, was emboldened by the British argument at the Bermuda Conference, which had maintained that the demands of the campaigners to rescue the refugees would be deflected by the apparent provision of assistance to the small number who reached the comparative safety of Spain; however, if this route were closed, the Allies would face further pressure from the campaigners to provide assistance and ease the entry of the predominantly Jewish refugees into Britain, Palestine or the Empire, where according to government thinking, they would be unwelcome.

The debate on The Refugee Problem 19th May 1943

The debate was opened by Osbert Peake, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Office, who had been a member of the Bermuda delegation. This section will analyse his address to the Commons with a particular focus on his deliberate attack on the suggestions and reports published by Eleanor Rathbone in her pamphlet *Rescue The Perishing*; Peake's insistence that it was not only the Jews who were facing persecution and extermination in Nazi Europe; his defence of the published results of the Bermuda Conference with his emphasis on the purpose of the conference, which was primarily for discussion rather than formulating policy. It will examine the responses of the various participants, who, whilst acknowledging there was an element of anti-Semitism prevalent in the country, refused to accept this as the reason for adhering to the immigration laws which remained unchanged; finally it will consider the alternative proposals for both assisting the refugees and combatting the bias against Jews.

In his opening remarks, he gave the House a brief resume of the history of the refugee problems created by the Nazi treatment of Jews during the Thirties, which had resulted in the formation of the Intergovernmental Committee under the auspices of President Roosevelt. He emphasised that 300,000 Jewish immigrants had been admitted to Palestine since 1919, a substantial number of refugees had been settled in

⁷⁴ Ibid./Wm.69(43) p.35

the East African Colonies and 40,000 Poles, who had reached safety in Persia, were now protected and fed by Britain. He observed that, in the enemy-occupied areas, there were approximately 120,000,000 people who were the victims of Axis aggression. He emphasised that:

“There can be no doubt that the policies of labour conscription, of deportation and extermination are being applied, not only to the Jews, but to other large sections of European peoples.”⁷⁵

thus implying the suffering was not exclusive to the European Jews, but could be applied to all the nations under Nazi domination. In his analysis of the government reaction to the events unfolding in Nazi-occupied Europe, Wasserstein argues that, to a degree, the various government officials involved in formulating government policy in respect of the Jews, were influenced by ‘collective paranoia to which modern nations involved in total war are prone.’ He cites the belief of the Colonial Office, that Nazi agents might be smuggled into Palestine and he argues that, generally, it was beyond the imagination of the government officials to envisage the horrors being perpetrated in Europe.⁷⁶ The alternative argument to this may be that government determination to minimise the suffering of the Jews under Nazi rule, was determined by a combination of factors: the policy of both the Foreign and the Colonial Office to ensure the continued appeasement of the Arabs through the Palestine White Paper ; the determination to avoid any accusation that the war was being fought solely to rescue the Jews and the long-held fear that the country might be forced to grant assistance to a substantial number of Eastern European Jews. This fear had exerted a degree of influence on government thinking throughout the Twentieth century, but it had become more prevalent in the Thirties after Hitler gained power in Germany and initiated his persecution of German Jewry.

He then turned his attention to the various campaigners who were demanding that tangible measures be implemented to assist the European Jews. He suggested, that even if an approach were made to the German Government to effect an exchange scheme, it was doubtful that it would work. He reminded The House of the rescue scheme announced in February to remove 4,500 Jewish children from Bulgaria to Palestine and he stressed that the delays for its implementation were not the fault of the government. He informed the House that between 1940-1942, Britain had admitted

⁷⁵ HC Deb. *Refugee Problem*, 19 May 1943, vol 389 cc1117-204, p.2

⁷⁶ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*.,pp.355-357

63,000 refugees and a further 4,000 had entered the country since January 1943; he defended the refusal of the Home Office to grant block visas for security reasons.⁷⁷

He gave a detailed analysis of the contents contained in the pamphlet - *Rescue the Perishing* written by Eleanor Rathbone and issued by the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror, with a particular focus on one case in the pamphlet, which he quoted extensively:

“An aged Jewish couple in Berlin had a son in Istanbul, a naturalised Turk. On January 4th the son cabled to his sister in London, saying he could get Turkish visas for parents if London told its Consulate in Istanbul that a United Kingdom visa would be given. Asked for immediate reply, as parents in danger. The sister...by advice from Home Office cabled... British visa impossible while parents in enemy territory.... Her parents were deported to Poland about eight weeks after refusal of British visas... She writes. I would feel better if England had tried to help.”⁷⁸

Peake pointed out that he would be surprised if the couple had been deported since, although the description of the Home Secretary suggested that ‘he was devoid of all decent humanitarian feeling’,⁷⁹ what was not shown was the son in Turkey held an important position with an agency for Krupps of Essen, a major German armaments’ manufacturer. Peake continued his attack with the suggestion ‘No doubt, part of his business... is to obtain information about arms supplied by other countries and forward this to Germany.’⁸⁰ In using this example, he successfully traduced the facts that she had quoted and concluded with the inference concerning the situation facing an aged couple in Poland as being totally incorrect.⁸¹ He concluded his line of attack by stating that:

“We at the Home Office cannot bring ourselves to believe that the parents of a man occupying an important position in a firm which acts for Krupps in Constantinople are in serious danger or that we ought to facilitate their escape from German territory by promising them visas to this country.”⁸²

He advised the Commons, that although there were major difficulties in providing transport for refugees, the government had decided to expand the categories for

⁷⁷ Ibid.,pp.P3-4.

⁷⁸ Ibid.p.4

⁷⁹ Ibid.p.4

⁸⁰ Ibid.p.4

⁸¹ Ibid.p.5

⁸² Ibid. p.5

persons eligible for special consideration to be granted entry into Britain. These would now include:

- 1) "Parents of persons serving in His Majesty's or Allied Forces, or in their Mercantile Marines.
- 2) Persons of other Allied nationality willing to join His Majesty's Forces and who are certified to be fit and acceptable for them.
- 3) Parents of children under 16 who are already here and who came here unaccompanied."⁸³

These new categories would only apply to potential immigrants who were deemed to be eligible for entry into Britain; they would be subject to security vetting with the possibility of being placed in internment; it was emphasised that entry did not convey the automatic right to remain in Britain at the end of the war.⁸⁴

Finally, in his dismissal of the campaigners' demands, he informed the House that the purpose of the Bermuda Conference was not to make any decisions:

"The purpose of the Conference was to confer, to analyse the facts, to examine possible methods of relief and to reach agreed conclusions and recommendations between the United States and British Governments as a preliminary to wider international collaboration."⁸⁵

He pointed out that the basis for the discussions had been announced in the press advice issued by the American Administration on 26th February, which, among other things, had stated : 'The refugee problem should not be considered as being confined to persons of any particular race or faith.'⁸⁶ In his emphasis on this point, it may be argued that he was reiterating the Government viewpoint that Jews were not a separate group and therefore, did not qualify for any differentiation of assistance. He emphasised that the government considered that any practical form of help could only be offered to the refugees who were resident in neutral countries. He gave a detailed resume of the conference proceedings and he announced that, after considerable discussion, the government was in full agreement with the proposal that the most suitable body for dealing with the refugee situation was through an enlarged Intergovernmental Committee with ample means at its disposal to provide assistance where required:

"His Majesty's Government are in the fullest agreement that the most effective way of planning the rescue and settlement of persons who have had the opportunity of escaping the horrors of deportation, and, it may be death

⁸³ Ibid.p.5

⁸⁴ Ibid.p.5

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.6

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.6

in Europe would be through the Inter-Governmental Committee constituted on the widest basis and with all possible means of action at its disposal.”⁸⁷

As he concluded his address to the Commons, Peake conceded, that due to the nature of the discussions, he was not in a position to publicly state the entire proceedings of the conference, but he informed the House that the increased contribution of assistance provided by the Government together with the establishment of a permanent and effective organisation to work on behalf of the refugees, clearly illustrated that-

“The Government are, and always have been in earnest on this matter, and that, while the United Nations press on to the day of retribution and victory, the Bermuda Conference was not an expedient for delay, but a real step forward on the road that leads to liberation.”⁸⁸

It may be argued that in the final sentence, the position of the government is clearly stated – victory and retribution. The plight of the refugees, whether Jewish or otherwise, was of secondary importance. In his analysis, Sjoberg maintains that there were many similarities between the Evian Conference and the Bermuda Conference, both of which he argues were a clear illustration of the desire by America and Britain to placate public opinion rather than to organise a move to deliver assistance to the people trapped in Nazi-occupied Europe.⁸⁹

The response of the campaigners in the House was led by Eleanor Rathbone. She immediately stated that in his entire speech, Peake had divulged a minimum of information as to the actual result of the conference or the proposals presented by both the delegations as possible solutions and she likened the paucity of information to -‘The schoolboy who was asked to write an essay on snakes in Ireland, and who could only say that there were no snakes in Ireland.’⁹⁰ She analysed the various points that had been made and questioned the lack of detail regarding the Intergovernmental Committee; she reminded the House that when it was created at the Evian Conference, all funding had come from private bodies. Was the new organisation to be guaranteed to have access to a substantial sum of money to fund its enlarged activities?⁹¹ She pointed out that Palestine was an obvious place to settle Jewish refugees and stressed that it was the Jews who were the target for the most severe persecution. She reminded

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.7

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.7

⁸⁹ Sjoberg, *The Powers and the Persecuted.*, pp.127-130

⁹⁰ HC Deb. *Refugee Problem*, 19 May 1943, vol 389 cc1117-204. p.7

⁹¹ Ibid.p..8

the House that – ‘We have a special responsibility for Jewish refugees because of our responsibility for Palestine.’ She queried the alleged lack of shipping available to remove refugees from Europe to areas of safety. She noted that the new concessions appertaining to entry into the country would be of minimal assistance to the majority of refugees. She reminded the Home Secretary of his attitude towards the Jewish refugees prior to the war, when he had attacked the Government entry quota for Palestine as being grossly unjust, bearing in mind the growing plight of the German Jewish refugees fleeing from the persecution of the Nazi regime.⁹² As she had noted at the beginning of her response to the government statement:

“My right hon. Friend’s whole speech seemed to be a plea for gratitude for what the Government have done in the past and for what they vaguely foreshadow may be done under the decisions of the Bermuda Conference. That is ask for gratitude for very small mercies.”⁹³

In the speeches that followed on from Rathbone’s response, numerous observations were made which repeatedly focused on the lack of government information in respect of the discussions and agreements reached at the conference.⁹⁴ Further remarks included the observation that the government attitude towards the persecuted Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe was uncaring.⁹⁵ Much of the discussion centred on the issues surrounding the non-acceptance of the European Jews as a separate group. It was pointed out that the main victims of Nazi oppression and cruelty were the Jews;⁹⁶ the long-term problem was mainly a Jewish one since it was doubtful that German Jews would wish to return to Germany after the war;⁹⁷ the situation for the Jews in Europe was different since they did not possess any status or have a country of their own;⁹⁸ the entry of between 60,000 and 70,000 German and Austrian Jews prior to the war, was funded totally by private organisations, not the government;⁹⁹ there would be little difficulty in settling the Jewish problem after the war since few in Europe would still be alive.¹⁰⁰ The remarks referring to Palestine, focused to a large degree, on its capacity to accept more immigrants; it was noted that there was a shortage of man-power in the Mandate which, it was felt, could provide the opportunity

⁹² Ibid.p.11

⁹³ Ibid.p..7

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.12;15;17;20;25

⁹⁵ Ibid., *Sir Richard Acland (Barnstaple)*, pp.24,25

⁹⁶ Ibid., *Mr. Ridley (Clay Cross)*, p.12

⁹⁷ Ibid., *Sir.A. Lambert Ward (Kingston-Upon-Hull)*, p.13

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.14

⁹⁹ Ibid., *Colonel Cazalet (Chippenham)*, p.18

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., *Mr. Mander (Wolverhampton East)*, p.21

for the settlement in the region for either 30,000 families or 70,000 people; ¹⁰¹Palestine alone has the capacity to absorb as many refugees as is possible to rescue from Europe.¹⁰² The single dissenting voice was that of Mr Colegate, who stated that:

“...Another 300, 0000 Jews going to Palestine...would be a gross violation of the pledges of this country and would mean grave injury to a very friendly race who have provided considerable support in this war. It does harm... if suggestions of that kind are put forward without regard to the sentiments of the Arabs whose land and houses would be taken.”¹⁰³

A major part of the debate was devoted to the commonly held view, that if a substantial number of Jewish immigrants were granted admission, their arrival could increase and exacerbate anti-Semitism. Various speakers quoted a list of commonly-held ideas and accusations directed towards the refugees. Mr.Ridley maintained that they were considered to be a burden on the country;¹⁰⁴ Sir Lambert Ward pointed out that the Jews were always implicated as dominating the black market, an accusation that was not proven;¹⁰⁵ in his response, Colonel Cazalet pointed out that when tens of thousands of Jews are being massacred in Europe, it is not news, but if a few Jews are implicated in the black market it instantly becomes news;¹⁰⁶ Mr.Mack suggested that legislation was required to eradicate anti-Semitism;¹⁰⁷ Sir Austin Hudson made the observation that the solution lay in greater tolerance between Jew and Gentile, particularly on religious practices and cited the different attitudes and behaviour and non-observance of Sunday as a rest day. ¹⁰⁸ In his comments on anti-Semitism, Professor A.V.Hill stated:

“It has been urged on the Home Secretary that a danger of anti-Semitism will exist, if more Jews are introduced here...Are the Jews so powerful and baneful an influence that one extra Jew among 5, 0000 Englishmen will make the whole mixture unstable?...To suggestthere is a serious danger of anti-Semitism here if an extra 10,000 Jews are introduced from Europe, one in 5,000 of our people, is a gross insult to the intelligence, good nature and common sense of the normal citizen.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰¹ Ibid., Mr. Ridley (*Clay Cross*), p.12

¹⁰² Ibid., Mr. Mack (*Newcastle-under-Lyme*), p.15

¹⁰³ Ibid., Mr. Colegate (*The Wrekin*), p.32

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Mr. Ridley (*Clay Cross*), p.12

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. Sir.A. Lambert Ward (*Kingston-Upon-Hull*), P.13

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., Colonel Cazalet (*Chippenham*), p.19

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., Mr. Mack (*Newcastle-under-Lyme*), p.16

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., Sir Ausin Hudson (*Hackney, North*), p.23

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., Professor A.V. Hill (*Cambridge University*), pp.28-31

In a total contradiction of the views expressed by many of the members, Mr. Butcher expressed his conviction that the refugee problem was not solely a Jewish one and he argued that any differentiation between Jew and non-Jew would lead to an increase in anti-Semitism:

“This is not a Jewish problem. The Under-Secretary said that there are in Europe at present 120,000,000 potential refugees. I can conceive nothing more likely to create anti-Semitism in this country than to let the feeling get abroad that every Jew or Jewess is to have a special measure of relief which is not open to the Norwegian Pastor, the Dutch politician or the French trade unionist...At all costs, we must not allow anti-Semitism to increase, and it is going to increase if Jews receive special treatment.”¹¹⁰

Strong support for this view was expressed by Mr. Colegate in the most outspoken remarks of the debate, which clearly supported the government policy that the increased entry of Jews would encourage the growth of anti-Semitism:

“I must say a word about anti-Semitism, I think that the Jews today in this country are suffering from the over-zealousness of their friends. Some of their propaganda simply repels me and puts me against the Jews.”¹¹¹

He cited the example of Jews employed in agriculture refusing to work after 4pm on a Friday, thereby upsetting the other workers and he suggested that it was the responsibility of friends of the refugees to deal with these types of differences, rather than acknowledging that, for the Jews, it was the start of their Sabbath.¹¹²

In his contribution to the debate, Sydney Silverman questioned why the conference had been limited to America and Britain, since, as he pointed out:

“It is true that there has been the Bermuda Conference between this country and one other country. They discussed what they could do themselves...Ought there still not to be, belatedly, a conference of all the Powers who are interested?”¹¹³

He queried exactly who the Intergovernmental Committee would represent:

“The right hon. Gentleman said something about an Inter-Government committee. We would like to know, inter-what Governments? The two Governments represented at the Bermuda Conference, or others

¹¹⁰ Ibid., *Mr. Butcher (Holland with Boston)*, p.27

¹¹¹ Ibid., *Mr. Colegate (The Wrekin)*, p.32

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., *Mr. Silverman (Nelson & Colne)*, pp.33-34

as well?...If that committee is intended to be representative of a great number of nations perhaps the right hon. Gentleman who is to reply will clear up what ambiguity there may be?"¹¹⁴

Various other points were raised, including the suggestion that serious consideration should be given to arranging the settlement of Jews in North Africa, since there was already a reasonable number of indigenous Jews resident in Tunis, Algeria and Morocco. A further area for consideration was Cyrenaica, which was viewed by Sir A.Lambert Ward as being an eminently suitable area for settlement, now that it no longer belonged to Italy.¹¹⁵ This perception was endorsed by David Grenfell, who pointed out to Earl Winterton, that his suggestion of it not being politic to ignore the French presence in North Africa, was irrelevant, since the French government had no bearing on the territories under discussion. They had never had authority over the whole of North Africa and neither Cyrenaica nor Libya had ever belonged to them.¹¹⁶

In the closing speech, Anthony Eden attempted to cover the main points raised during the course of the discussions. He agreed that, in some respects, if the debate had been in held in secret, there would not have been the limitations posed by holding it in public, but he believed it was preferable to hold the debate in public in order to relate, where possible, the results of the conference. He stressed this and linked it to the British tradition of racial and religious tolerance, which provided him with the opportunity to state:

"One of the things we are fighting this war about is to create conditions in this world where a man is free to speak, free to think, free to practice worship as he would."¹¹⁷

He informed the House that the government had created a separate committee to deal with the problem of the refugees; he neglected to inform them that it had been in existence since the end of 1942.

In his response to the various suggestions centred on Palestine, he pointed out that, at the present time, there were 30,000 vacancies available in the Mandate which could only be filled if a neutral Power were prepared to negotiate for the release of Jews from one of the belligerent powers involved in the war. He pointed out that this approach had been used to no avail, since the country concerned (Bulgaria), after initially agreeing to permit a group of children to leave, changed its stance and had halted their

¹¹⁴ Ibid.p.34

¹¹⁵ Ibid.p14

¹¹⁶ Ibid., *Earl Winterton*, p.26
Mr. David Grenfell (Gower), p.27

¹¹⁷ Ibid., *A. Eden*, p.34

proposed departure. He briefly covered some of the other points raised, including the demands for an unlimited number of visas to be issued. He stated that there was no numerical limitation on the number of visas that a consul could issue, but there were limitations on certain categories. He informed the House that 4,000 people had arrived in the country during the previous five months which, he insisted, demonstrated a continuous flow of immigrants.

Having covered most of the points raised during the debate, he finally informed the House of the discussions and decisions that had been taken at the Bermuda Conference. The information he divulged was minimal, since, as he said, it had been agreed for security reasons, to keep most of the recommendations confidential until agreement had been reached by both governments to implement the proposals. He confirmed that the War Cabinet had agreed to all the proposals and steps were being taken to implement them. He announced that assurances had been given to neutral countries, that after the war, they would receive assistance, both financial and practical, from the government and the United Nations.

He explained why the government was prepared to support the re-establishment of the Intergovernmental Committee. The terms and conditions laid down at the Evian Conference would no longer apply; it had been agreed by both sides to broaden its basis, increase its authority and provide it with a suitable level of staff, funded by government to ensure a high degree of efficiency. It was further envisaged that the work of the Committee, on behalf of the refugees, would continue after the war. In his concluding remarks, he restated the government commitment to provide assistance for the refugees wherever possible, but, as he had pointed out at the beginning of his speech, which he reiterated in his closing comments:

“The only real solution that can be found for this problem is a solution of a final and complete Allied victory.”

“We shall do what we can, but I should be false to my trust if I raised the hopes of the Committee, because I do not believe that great things can be achieved. I do not believe it is possible to rescue more than a few until final victory is won.”¹¹⁸

The closing statement made by Eden demonstrated the futility of the debate to obtain any definite action from the government to provide firm assistance to the refugees. Ultimately, the government had no intention of deviating from its policy of

¹¹⁸ Ibid.pp.34-37

maintaining the immigration laws of the country. The campaigners had argued for admission into Palestine, North Africa and the Colonies but to a degree they accepted the government belief that an increased entry of Jewish refugees into Britain could stimulate the growth of anti-Semitism. It may be argued that in gaining the campaigning parliamentarians' acceptance of this, the government had ensured that its policy towards the refugees would remain unchanged.

Was the debate a success or failure for the Government?

Many of the speakers in the debate held on the 19th May, were either supporters or members of the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror. Whilst they were prepared to concede that there was an element of anti-Semitism in society, which could be attributed to various causes, they refused to accept the government view that granting entry to a substantial number of Jews into the country, would actively increase anti-Semitism. This refusal suggests that they considered the threat of a possible increase in anti-Semitism as a government ploy in its refusal to ease the immigration laws. They emphasised the need to ignore the limitation set down in the Palestine White Paper and they castigated the government for its refusal to accept that the Nazi persecution of the Jews was far harsher than the overall treatment of the other nationalities in occupied Europe. In his response to these criticisms and suggestions, Eden pointed out the difficulties of transporting Jews from Axis Europe to Palestine and cited the proposed government scheme for the rescue of Jewish children in the Balkans, which was being obstructed by Bulgaria. He insisted that the war was being fought for universal freedom of speech, religion and thought. The one area of contention that he by-passed, was the discussion focusing on the possibility of anti-Semitism in Britain. His emphasis on the need to achieve a total victory in Europe effectively summarised the policy of the government towards the refugees, whatever their nationality.

The reactions to the debate in the national press were diverse; *The Times* supported the government in its approach and stressed that little actual information regarding the resolutions agreed at the Bermuda Conference could be made public, due to the constraints of security. The report noted Anthony Eden had assured the House that the government 'fully shared the horrors perpetrated by the enemy but...stated that the only real help for the victims was complete victory for the allies.'¹¹⁹ In contrast to this, *The Manchester Guardian* noted that little information was divulged. It deemed the

¹¹⁹ 'Helping The Refugees,' *The Times*, May 20, 1943, p.4 Issue 49550; 'Victims of Nazi Terror,' May 20, 1943, p.5

criticism by Osbert Peake of a case cited by Eleanor Rathbone (the provision of visas for the parents of a naturalised Turk in the employment of an agency linked to the German armaments company Krupps of Essen) as unnecessary and it described the attitude of Anthony Eden as being slightly sympathetic towards the refugee problem. It further pointed out that, although the government had cited transport as the major obstacle to the rescue of the Bulgarian children, this did not appear to have the same effect on the movement of prisoners-of-war.¹²⁰

One of the longest reports on the debate, which appeared on the front page of *The Jewish Chronicle*, attempted to maintain a balanced approach in its reporting, although the underlying sentiment reflected a certain level of disappointment at the government attitude. It noted that, in his opening speech, Peake immediately attacked the critics of the government policy towards the refugees, whilst defending the government stance towards the refugees since December 1942. The report noted that in his general remarks, Peake insisted that no refugee who had reached Britain, had been refused entry. He had informed the House that the various suggestions reached at Bermuda were now under consideration by both governments, hence the reason for limited information being available and he concluded by restating that:

“The Government was in earnest in this matter,
The Bermuda Conference was not an expedient for
delay, but a real step towards liberty.”¹²¹

The report stated that the reply given by Anthony Eden at the close of the debate appeared to give a certain level of satisfaction. He had summarised the government attitude towards the refugees and announced that there was a specific committee for dealing with the numerous problems and obstacles surrounding the options for providing assistance and aid for them. In his concluding remarks, he had reassured the House that the Government was not insensitive to the plight facing the refugees under Nazi control, but he had reiterated that little could be achieved for them until the final victory was won.¹²²

In his analysis of the debate, Kushner argues that the initial advantage the government gained from the acknowledgement by Eleanor Rathbone that it was only total victory over the Nazi regime that would halt the killing, was lost through the comments of several backbench members, in their enthusiasm to support the government policy of restricted entry (for Jewish refugees) into the country. He notes that a major part of the debate focused on the government allegation that a new influx of

¹²⁰ Bermuda Debate, *The Manchester Guardian*, May 20 1943, P.3

¹²¹ ‘Rescue Of Hitler’s Victims’, *The Jewish Chronicle*, May 21, 1943, p.1

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.5

Jewish refugees would increase the level of anti-Semitism in the country but he makes no mention of the other points raised during the course of the debate.¹²³ London argues that, since the Government divulged very little solid evidence of the conference proceedings, it successfully obstructed a concerted effort by the various individuals and organisations to sustain a campaign against the preferred policy of the government towards the refugees.¹²⁴

In a detailed examination of the debate, Wasserstein argues that it was parliamentary pressure that forced the Government to hold a debate on its refugee policy. He focuses on the determination of the government to ensure that the debate was not dominated by the campaigners who advocated free admission of refugees into the country and he agrees with Kushner that this concern was not best served by the speeches from several supporters of government policy towards the refugees. He points out that in his closing speech, Eden created an impression of enthusiasm for the various suggestions in respect of the provision of aid to the refugees, whilst displaying a scepticism of the viability of any substantial assistance. He concludes with the observation that the debate achieved little to satisfy the pro-refugee lobby.¹²⁵

In considering the success or failure of the debate, it may be argued that, initially, the pro-refugee movement, whilst under attack from Osbert Peake, was able to counter his accusations with some success. In their detailed remarks appertaining to the threat of increased anti-Semitism, if a substantial influx of Jews were granted entry into the country, they successfully focused on a facet of reaction in the country, which, although social, rather than political, was employed by the government. The threat of stimulating anti-Semitism provided the government with the justification to reinforce a rigid determination to control and limit the entry of Jewish immigrants. They also emphasised the anomalies of the Palestine White Paper which had and continued to, limit entry for the Jews into the Mandate. In these two areas, the debate may be viewed as a success for the campaigners. In considering the long-term results, however, it may be considered a failure for the campaigners as support for their efforts to rescue the refugees lost its impetus.

In his closing speech, Eden, whilst appearing to agree with the demands of the campaigners, emphasised that, until total victory were achieved in the war, little could be done to provide assistance for the refugees trapped in Europe. He did, however assure the House that the re-establishment of an enlarged and re-organised Intergovernmental Committee would have both the staffing and the finance required, to work on behalf of

¹²³ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination.*, pp.182-183

¹²⁴ London, *Whitehall And The Jews 1933-1948.*, p.222

¹²⁵ Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews.*, pp.203-204

the refugees wherever it was deemed to be practicable. In the coming months, as Kushner points out, the Committee was to be deployed by the government to stave off any criticism of its apparent inertia towards the refugees.¹²⁶ It may be argued that the deployment of the Intergovernmental Committee as a political tool was a repetition of the government policy after the Evian Conference, when it was used in order to deflect criticism of its attitude towards the refugees between August 1938 and September 1939.¹²⁷

The disagreement between Osbert Peake and Eleanor Rathbone continued after the debate and Peake sent a lengthy letter of detailed criticism to her at the end of May. He refuted the observations and suggestions included in the pamphlet *Rescue the Perishing* and suggested that the title was misleading. He argued that it created the impression there were measures which, if adopted by the government, would lead to the rescue of many refugees. He concluded his lengthy critique of the points raised in the pamphlet with the following comments:

“Nor, I am sure is the cause of the refugees likely to be forwarded by attributing to the Government of this country and to that of the United States a policy of sluggish inaction....without waiting to learn the results of the Bermuda Conference,(some of which for reasons known to you, cannot yet be made known).”¹²⁸

In the initial aftermath of the debate, letters and petitions were sent to both the government and M.P.'s; these included a variety of suggestions, but the main theme which dominated, was the request to provide immediate assistance to rescue the Jews trapped in Europe,¹²⁹ for, as the Aberdare Christian Fellowship Group stated:

“We agree with His Majesty’s Government in deploring the atrocities perpetrated against the Jews in Europe. But we ask, will the Jews now dying thank us for post-war retribution?”¹³⁰

On the other hand, there were also a number of letters expressing dismay at the government reaction to the refugees, as a result of the agreement reached at the Bermuda conference. In a lengthy letter of criticism addressed to Anthony Eden from the Vancouver News-Herald in British Colombia, the following points were made:

¹²⁶ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*.p.184

¹²⁷ FO371/22539 W16641/104/98 *Emigration of Jews from Germany*, 17 December 1938, p.86

¹²⁸ O371/3662 W7963 *Copy to A. Randall from Osbert Peake of his letter to Eleanor Rathbone*, 25th May, 1943 pp.1-4

¹²⁹ FO371/36662, *The Hull Methodist Mission letter to The Foreign Secretary* 26 May 1943

Ibid., *Leicester Co-ordinating Committee for Refugees letter to Major A.M. Lyons, K.G., M.P.*, May 1943

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, *Aberdare Christian Fellowship Group. Petition and letter to G.H. Hall M.P.*, 25 May 1943

“Your government’s admission that...permission for any more of that unfortunate race (Jews) to gain freedom in Palestine, their“homeland” would strain to the utmost the goodwill of the Arabs –has shocked me to the very depth of my heart. Furthermore, reference to the 120,000,000 victims of the Nazis who would also like to escape if they could – seems to me proof of wanton brutal misrepresentation...it is not a matter of life and death for them.... as it is for Europe’s Jews. I have come to the conclusion that Great Britain has in no way lived up to expectations in her handling of this problem. The cruel joke of the Bermuda Conference.... Empty words, stupid arguments were used to prove that nothing could be done, as if...the matter was under consideration at all. Let me assure, Sir, that Great Britain is losing rapidly the friendship of many...which hurts deeply, because the only faith we have left is our faith in the part British Empire should, but unfortunately is not, playing in the building of a better world.”¹³¹

The campaigners continued to press their case and requested Anthony Eden to receive an informal deputation led by Eleanor Rathbone. The meeting organised for the 1st June was, however, postponed as a result of a War Cabinet meeting which agreed that:

“The general feeling of the war Cabinet was that it was unreasonable that a request for a deputation to be received so soon after the matter had been fully debated Parliament.”¹³²

Not to be deterred by this refusal, Eleanor Rathbone visited A.W.G. Randall to stress that it was of the utmost importance to issue a stern warning to Bulgaria, since *The Times* had reported on the 29th May, that all Bulgarian Jews were facing deportation to Poland. In the ensuing discussion, she observed that, what was required, was an official warning to the Bulgarian Government comparable to the UN Declaration of December 1942, rather than an anonymous Bulgarian announcement on the European Radio broadcasts.¹³³ In the departmental discussions which followed this proposal, various points were made, one of which raised the question as to ‘whether a promise of retribution for the general Bulgarian action against the Jews will do good or harm.’¹³⁴ It was decided that, until there was no hope of rescuing the Bulgarian children,

¹³¹ Ibid., Vancouver News-Herald *letter from I. Strunbeck to A. Eden*, May 27th, 1943

¹³² CAB/65/28/42 *War Cabinet Committee on the reception and Accommodation Refugees, Meeting*, 25th May 1943

¹³³ FO371/36662/W8192 *Suggestions for discussion at informal deputation on Tuesday June 1st, A.W.G. Randall minutes*, 2nd June 1943 p.1; Eleanor Rathbone *Suggestions for discussion with Mr. Eden at informal deputation on Tuesday June 1st, 1943 Point.1*, 29th May 1943

¹³⁴ A.W.G. Randall notes, 4th June 1943

a warning should be issued through the wireless service to Bulgaria and South-Eastern Europe.¹³⁵In a further meeting between Randall and Lord Perth, the former reiterated the various measures the government had taken to complete the rescue of the children and he advised that it would not be appreciated if public criticism were levelled against either the Turks or the United States for their involvement in the proposed scheme. In his reply, Lord Perth indicated that a possible solution to this problem was for Eleanor Rathbone to be appointed to the newly convened Intergovernmental Committee. This would, in effect, provide her with a greater insight into the numerous problems surrounding the feasibility of providing assistance to the refugees. It would also provide a valuable link with the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror.¹³⁶This suggestion was finally discarded when Sir Herbert Emerson refused to countenance it, thus destroying any possible collaboration between the two organisations working on behalf of the refugees. The final government comment on the possibility of her involvement was clarified in a Foreign Office memo issued by Richard Law, in September, which stated:

“The reconstitution of the Intergovernmental Committee is very important.... refugee enthusiasts can now be turned to Sir Herbert Emerson and his vice-director, Mr. Patrick Malin....We are being pressed to get Jews and enthusiasts like Miss Rathbone appointed to the committee....I’m convinced that we can’t use Miss Eleanor or any of her kind as ‘assessors’. Assessors are concerned with facts. Miss Eleanor is interested in policies (and) would just sit there trying to force her particular views down the throats of the others.”¹³⁷

The government continued to maintain its stance that little could be done for the refugees until final victory, but in the meantime, as with the outcome of the Evian Conference, all problems appertaining to the refugees could be referred to the newly constituted Intergovernmental Committee.

Following this initial response, the public support for the campaign to rescue the refugees gradually dwindled and this loss of interest was reflected in a number of remarks and letters by Eleanor Rathbone, who noted ‘the position seems extremely unsatisfactory. We seem to have reached a stalemate or a dead-end.’¹³⁸ In a further comment, she observed that:

¹³⁵ Minutes 9th June 1943

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ FO371/36666/W12842/9/48 *Richard Law memo on the refugee situation*, 3rd September, 1943

¹³⁸ Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination*, p.183

“The government has little sense of urgency over the whole matter, very little hope of doing anything for rescue except on a small scale, and a strong desire to avoid pressure.”¹³⁹

The statement by Eden that little could be achieved until final victory was obtained, resonated with the public; it may be argued that if a statement is subsequently reiterated, it will eventually convince the listener of its veracity, or as Joseph Goebbels had said ‘If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.’¹⁴⁰ In the long-term it may, therefore, be argued that the debate ultimately achieved success for the government who refused to deviate from their agreed policy towards the refugees and this is encapsulated in a memo issued by Richard Law in September 1943:

“Fundamentally the refugee problem remains within the same limitations and the persistent propaganda of large-scale ‘rescue’ remains as unreal as ever short of victory.”¹⁴¹

There are, however, other factors to be considered regarding the loss of interest in the plight of the European Jews. The tide of war was turning in favour of the Allies in Europe with the defeat of the Nazi’s at Stalingrad in January 1943, victory at Tunis and Bizerte in May 1943, the surrender of Italy in July 1943 and the recapture of Kharkov in August 1943. There was a degree of scepticism towards the reports of Jewish suffering, since a proportion of the nation could still recall the atrocity propaganda of the First World War which had been exposed as a fabrication.¹⁴² A further consideration is that for many people, it was almost impossible to envisage the wholesale extermination of a single group. In his afterword to *Story of a Secret State*, Andrew Roberts notes that it was the lack of photographic evidence in support of Karski’s report on the German atrocities in Poland during 1943, that influenced the scepticism displayed by Judge Felix Frankfurter when he challenged the accuracy of Karski’s report on the German atrocities in Poland, with the comment ‘... I did not say this young man is lying. I said I am unable to believe him. There is a difference.’¹⁴³ In his analysis of the Press during this period, Andrew Sharf notes that the distinction between the alleged black-marketeers and the victims of the Nazi policies, became blurred when reported and a proportion of the nation believed that the Jews were their

¹³⁹ Cohen, *Rescue the Perishing.*, p.202

¹⁴⁰ Joseph Goebbels: *On the “Big Lie”* available at <http://www.jewisvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/goebbelslie.html> accessed 5 November 2015

¹⁴¹ FO371/36666/W12841, *Richard Law memorandum*, 3 September 1943

¹⁴² McLaine, *Ministry of Morale.*, pp.168-169

¹⁴³ Jan Karski, *Story of a Secret State. My Report to the World* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), pp..453-454; Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret.*, p.3

own worst enemies.¹⁴⁴ It may be further argued that the national press could exert a strong influence on the perceptions and opinions of its readers. This is demonstrated by two separate articles that appeared in the *Daily Mail* in 1938. The first article reported on the number of aliens allegedly entering the country illegally in August 1938:

“The way stateless Jews from Germany are pouring in from every port of this country is becoming an outrage. ... In these words, Mr. Herbert Metcalfe... referred to the number of aliens entering this country... a problem to which The *Daily Mail* has repeatedly pointed.”¹⁴⁵

On the other hand, the report on the arrival of the first children to enter the country on the *Kindertransport* scheme, sympathised with their plight:

“As the bleak dawn of a winter’s day broke over England this morning more than 200 boys and girls between 12 and 17 woke from days and nights of terror and deprivation to a new life that holds for them freedom, happiness and careers.”¹⁴⁶

Finally, public opinion tends to be fickle and as new events were reported, with a growing focus on the Allied victories in Europe which would ultimately bring an end to the war, interest in the refugees diminished rapidly. This loss of interest combined with the government determination to adhere to its long-term policy towards the refugees contributed to the rapidly diminishing support for the pro-refugee campaigners in their continued efforts to provide assistance to the European Jews.

The aims of the government at the Bermuda Conference may be compared to the aims of the Evian Conference in July 1938. The conference was to demonstrate to the Allies that Britain and America were working together to provide assistance to the beleaguered refugees in Europe, whilst stressing the obstacles which halted any real assistance being given. The revival of the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees was the only active decision reached, but its remit would still be limited, although it would provide the façade of humanity that they wished to portray. Neither government was prepared to accept a substantial number of Jews and in order to circumvent any possible accusation of anti-Semitism, the entire conference focused on all refugees with minimal mention of the Jewish situation in Nazi-occupied Europe. In the aftermath of the conference, the government maintained its stance towards the European Jews by stating categorically in Parliament that the only solution to the refugee problem was to

¹⁴⁴ Andrew Sharf, *The British Press*, pp.178,-180

¹⁴⁵ ‘German Jews Pouring Into This Country,’ *Daily Mail*, August 20, 1938

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, ‘200 Children Here In Search Of Homes,’ December 2, 1938

achieve total victory in Europe. In obtaining acceptance of this policy by the campaigners and the public, the government ensured that its rigid enforcement of the immigration laws and its adherence to the conditions laid down in the Palestine White Paper, remained untouched. The outcome of the conference may, therefore, be considered to have been a complete success for the government since it had achieved its stated aims.

Conclusion

The reaction of the British towards the flight of the German Jews had not been one of welcome when they began arriving in 1933. A limited number of mainly professional people, had been granted admittance after the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community gave a written guarantee to the government that they would provide all the financial support for the refugees, thus assuring the government that the new arrivals would not be a financial burden on the public purse. This situation changed radically after the Austrian *Anschluss* of March 1938 when the guarantee was withdrawn and a visa system was instituted, thereby ensuring that entry was rigidly restricted to specified groups of useful immigrants. This attitude was encapsulated in the speech delivered by the British delegate Lord Winterton at the Evian Conference in July 1938. The position was clearly stated, Britain was not a country of immigrants, there was high unemployment, limited opportunities and whilst certain professionals were accepted, the majority of refugees were not. These government views, which reflected the general mood of the country, were supported by the Anglo-Jewish leadership who feared that an increase in the Jewish population would fuel anti-Semitism. It may be argued that this fear of encouraging anti-Semitism, which had arisen as a result of prevailing social and economic problems attributed to the arrival of the Russian Jews at the turn of the century, still exerted a considerable influence on the general response of the Anglo-Jewish leadership towards the Jewish refugees.

The declaration of war in September 1939 brought to an end any possibility of Jewish refugees trapped in Europe, from entering the country, for the duration of the war. After the initial scare that the refugees resident in Britain presented a threat to national security, life resumed its normality. The advent of rationing in January 1941 soon gave rise to numerous accusations that the Jews were hoarding foodstuffs and profiteering at the expense of the housewife. These imputations were to grow throughout 1941 and 1942, when further accusations were made that young Jewish men avoided military service; that Jewish businessmen were totally unscrupulous in their business dealings with non-Jews and generally, the Jews were cowardly. Similar accusations had been made during World War One when Russian Jews were considered to be active supporters of the Bolshevik Revolution; young Russian males had been accused of refusing to enlist whilst Jewish businessmen had profited from the absence of non-Jewish counterparts.

These accusations, together with the emphasis on a shortage of housing (which Herbert Morrison admitted was a result of the Blitz), were used by him in his capacity as

Home Secretary, to deflect any suggestion of easing the immigration laws to facilitate the rescue of Jewish refugees. The reference to an accommodation shortage resonated with the public. One of the main accusations levelled against the Russian Jews at the turn of the century was that their arrival had created a major housing shortage, when in effect, the real cause had been the massive redevelopment in the East End.

The first official reports in June 1942 of the Nazi policy of Jewish extermination, galvanised various campaigners and church leaders to propose a number of rescue schemes which were mainly centred on the rescue of children. The campaigners were aware, that in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, the public had been vocal in their demands for government assistance to be provided to the German Jews and they had actively supported the *Kindertransport* scheme which had been set up in order to rescue Jewish children up to the age of eighteen. Thus the campaigners believed that an emphasis on the rescue of children would resonate with the public without stimulating anti-Semitism, as feared by the government who dismissed all the proposed schemes with one exception, the rescue of children in Vichy France. The government acceptance of the scheme, which was to be funded by the Anglo-Jewish community, was rigidly limited by Morrison and ultimately failed, due to the intransigence of the Vichy government. The campaigners were quickly disabused of any belief that there would be any charitable actions coming from the government and Morrison, influenced by the weekly reports produced by the Ministry of Information, maintained throughout the period, that to grant entry to Jewish refugees, would exacerbate the growing levels of anti-Semitism in the country. The government was finally forced to confront the reality of the Holocaust when the Polish Government-In-Exile presented a detailed report of the Nazi extermination of Polish Jewry to Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, at the beginning of December 1942. With the pressure mounting from the various campaigners, Eden announced the UN Declaration in Parliament on December 17th 1942. The main contents, whilst denouncing the atrocities being committed by the Nazis, stated categorically that when total victory was achieved, the perpetrators of the atrocities would face judgement as war criminals. The government assumed that this declaration of intent would satisfy the campaign groups and individuals who were demanding that assistance should be provided for the refugees.

The pressure for the government to provide assistance to the refugees continued to grow and in February 1943, it was decided to approach the American Administration to organise an informal discussion regarding the refugees. In the negotiations between the two sides, the government stressed that there was a genuine fear that Hitler would change his policy of Jewish extermination to one of extrusion. The

inherent concern that Britain might be forced into dealing with such a problem, may be attributed to the effect of the Russian-Jewish influx at the turn of the century, which created a reactive pattern of response when faced with the possibility of a similar scenario. Neither side was prepared to provide tangible assistance for the European Jews, since there was a degree of anti-Semitism in both governments. They did, however, wish to demonstrate their humanitarianism to their allies. In order to achieve this, the two sides, in a repetition of the diplomatic manoeuvres prior to the Evian Conference, reached an agreed agenda before the talks, which were held in Bermuda. The main emphasis was to deliberately focus on all the Europeans in Nazi occupied Europe, thus excluding any reference to the European Jews as a separate entity. The outcome of the talks was very similar to the Evian Conference in July 1938; a large display of sympathy; minimal action but an opportunity to display the humanitarian beliefs of the government. In a speech to the Commons on 19th May 1943, Eden reiterated the government stance that nothing could be done for the refugees until total victory was achieved. There was to be no assistance for the Jews trapped in Europe.

Throughout the Thirties and the Forties, a major concern of the government was the possibility of being swamped with a further large influx of Jewish refugees, similar to the Russian Jewish exodus that had been experienced by Britain between 1880 and 1905. This is best illustrated in the speech by Lord Winterton at the Evian Conference, with his allusion to the possibility of some Eastern European governments forcing their Jewish populations to emigrate en masse. The fear of Jewish extrusion by Hitler presented a major concern for the government both prior to and during the war. This underlying fear which was referred to in numerous discussions, may be considered to reflect a response based on the long roots of anti-Semitism which were clearly present during the early years of the century.

There is no denying that there was an element of anti-Semitism throughout this period in Britain, but it was never a political movement as exemplified by the Nazis. The nearest comparison was the British Union of Fascists which established a foothold in the Thirties but never attained any political significance and by the beginning of the war, its influence was minimal. The main form of anti-Semitism may be described as a social phenomenon. This was exemplified with the usual references to the Jews as being different, intent on making money, loud, intrusive and not restrained in their attitude to life. It manifested itself in job discrimination, non-entry into golf and tennis clubs, restrictions in hotels and in some cases, a quota system in Public schools. The most notable area within the government which displayed a manifestation of an anti-Semitic bias, was the Colonial Office where various civil servants and the Colonial Governors

indicated a definite antipathy towards the Jews in general. The Colonial Office, which was constrained by the limitations of the Palestine White Paper, considered the Jews to be demanding and difficult to deal with. The Colonial Governors and the dominant white hierarchy in the Colonies viewed the possibility of large-scale entry for Jewish immigrants as unacceptable. They were not Protestant; they were business people who presented a threat to the status quo; they did not assimilate and in some circles, they were viewed as Eastern or Oriental which was not truly acceptable within the confines of the prevailing social mores.

There is, however, a further type of anti-Semitism to be considered. This may be interpreted as an unwitting condemnation of the Jews based on an unconscious association with certain conceptions of Jews in general during this period. This form of anti-Semitism has long roots and may be traced back over centuries. It should not, therefore, be a surprise that it still existed, since it had been present in the response to immigrant Jews in the near past of 1905 and 1917.

In current historiography, minimal consideration is given to this concept, in their different approaches to the period. Sherman traces government policy towards the arrival of the German Jews in 1933 upto the declaration of war in 1939. He makes little mention of anti-Semitism, although both he and London highlight the influence of high unemployment, the intransigence of some professional bodies towards foreign professional qualifications and a widespread reluctance to accept a substantial number of foreigners, regardless of their nationality or creed. He concludes that, in comparison to other countries, government policy was comparatively compassionate. London analyses the political manoeuvres and responses to the arrival of the refugees. She focuses on the fear of an increase in anti-Semitism if the refugees presented a seemingly foreign attitude and did not appear to assimilate. Little allusion is made to the problems emanating from the influx of the Eastern European Jews at the turn of the century. She argues that the Anglo-Jewish response to the German Jews was based on the assumption that the refugees would either emigrate to Palestine or other areas worldwide and that entry into Britain was on a transitional basis. Whilst Wasserstein concentrates his focus on the political implications of the Palestine White Paper in respect of the response of the government to the refugees, he argues that the anti-Semitism prevalent during the war was based on the inherent xenophobia of the British towards all foreigners. In contrast to these approaches, Kushner examines the dichotomy created for the government, of a society based on a liberal ethos as a result of Hitler's Jewish policies. He argues that the Nazi persecution of the Jews presented a major conflict in government policy which, whilst adhering to the prevailing immigration

laws, wished to present a façade of humanitarianism based on liberalism whilst not willing to provide tangible assistance for the European Jews.

In examining this alternative form of anti-Semitism (unwitting condemnation), it may be argued that the responses of the public and the leaders of the Anglo-Jewish community were influenced by the multiplicity of problems originating from the anti-Semitism which was prevalent at the start of the century, whilst the government used it as a political tool to maintain its immigration laws created in 1905 and amended in 1914, 1919 and 1920.

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