may be expected to go beyond a mere anti-New Deal program into a sphere of action openly encouraging to pro-Axis forces. Their plans will be helped by the fact that this year the war will really begin to be felt on the home front in the form of greater sacrifices for civilians and diminishing profits for industrialists.

Instead of waiting for the coming Congressional attack and then being forced to retreat, the President has already chosen a policy of orderly withdrawal to prepared defensive positions. From Mr. Roosevelt’s point of view, 1944 is more important than 1943. He may figure that it is best to let the opposition march forward and be thrown off balance by the absence of an expected head-on collision with the Administration; to let it reveal its strength and perhaps to overreach itself and evoke a reaction. The President is a resourceful man and will keep his political powder dry until he gets closer to the next election. The possibility of a successful appeal to the people may be enhanced after they have got a full taste of the anti-New Deal coalition in action. It will be interesting to see how far the President goes in the direction of an “American Beveridge plan” in his message to the new Congress. Just as surely as he is now casting about for a new and electrifying idea with which to appeal to the aspirations of common men everywhere, it is certain that he will hold back the complete details of his new program until the psychological moment in 1944. This, the President feels, is the time for a Byrnes. There will be time for a Wallace, too. But later.

What forces can be set in motion to help the President? Measures must be taken to keep the copperheads on the defensive. There are Congressional committees dominated either by New Dealers or by a coalition of New Dealers and conservative Republicans—as the Truman committee—united by a common desire for an all-out effort. It would do a great deal of good, for example, to throw the spotlight of a Senate inquiry on the festering sores in the Detroit area. There is real need for a new mass organization in which patriotic Americans of both left and right could unite for action on the great problems of the war.

The home front will be the dangerous front in 1943.

The Jews of Europe

I. THE REMNANTS OF A PEOPLE

BY PHILIP S. BERNSTEIN

THREE considerations prompt the writing of these articles. First, there is the hope to impress on the conscience of free men the vastness and the ghastliness of the Jewish tragedy in Europe. If they will realize that the Jews are the worst victims of this war, if they will understand that life or death is at stake for this whole people, then perhaps when occasions arise to help, whether through international political action or the giving of relief or the temporary relaxation of immigration restrictions, their decisions may be influenced by compassion, not by self-interest alone.

Second, it is imperative to perceive that what is happening to the Jews is but the foreshadowing of the fate of other peoples under Nazi rule. It has been the strange role of this unhappy people to mirror in its life the destiny of mankind. The oppression of the Jew has been the symptom of decay; it has led inexorably to tyranny, war, and collapse. In their early attacks upon the Jews, the Nazis revealed the pattern of their treacherous and ruthless assault upon the whole Western world. And now in their mass slaughter of Jews they demonstrate what is in store for other peoples as frustration further embitters their mean spirits in the fourth year of war. What we can do to prevent this is still unclear.

Finally, there is the desire that men of vision should at last realize that the solution of the Jewish problem in Europe is not the concern alone of the Jews or of the Christian conscience. Tough-minded statesmen must understand that the future peace of the world is bound up with it. For centuries the Jews have been the scapegoats for Europe’s frustrations. They have been the easy prey of ruling classes under attack, of rulers defeated in war, of impoverished, embittered masses. They have been an ever-present temptation to demagogues in quest of power. Unwittingly, they were an obstacle to the genuine solution of Europe’s problems; it was easier to attack the Jews than the basic causes of those problems.

“Anti-Semitism is the socialism of fools,” said a wise German leader. Attacks upon the Jews and their expulsion from various countries have been an unsettling force in Europe. A peace treaty which does not include provisions for solving the Jewish problem will be incomplete. A normal secure status for the Jews of Europe is a prerequisite for the establishment of the Four Freedoms for mankind.

In this series of articles I propose first to state the facts, then to discuss the possibilities for help in the near future, and finally to consider the long-range solution
of the problem. What are the facts? Here will be presented only such evidence as has been authenticated by our own State Department, by responsible heads of governments-in-exile, by established Jewish agencies functioning in Europe, by trusted eyewitnesses who have escaped from Hitlerite persecution, by letters from known persons in Europe sent to known persons and organizations in this country, and by official statements of the Nazis themselves. The picture is not complete; it will never be. Innumerable Jews have perished without record, as though swallowed up by the earth. Thousands of young Jewish children will never know who their parents were, and tens of thousands of Jewish mothers and fathers will never know what became of their children. The report at this moment takes on a fragmentary character. The gaps cannot be filled until the war is ended. But the main outlines are stark clear. They reveal the most horrible suffering of this war and the most frightful desolation in all Jewish history.

The tragedy of the Jews in this war is unique. Other peoples are suffering keenly under the savage assault of Hitler's forces, but they suffer as enemies of the Nazis in the ravages of war. Hitler promises to make peace with them in his new order, even though their role in that order may be an inferior one. But with the Jews there is to be no peace. They are being slaughtered in cold blood wherever the Nazis can lay hands upon them. Hitler's henchmen are swiftly executing his threat of January 30, 1939, that this war would result in "the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."

This extermination was initiated in Germany itself. There were 600,000 Jews in that country when Hitler came to power. By 1939 oppression and forced migration had reduced the number to 200,000. Today there are only 40,000 elderly, weakened Jews in Germany, who cannot long survive. Their death rate is five times that of the rest of the German civilian population. Since the beginning of the war more than 100,000 Jews have perished in Germany through pogroms, suicides, exposure, privation, and expulsion. An authenticated letter dated April 8, 1942, from a responsible person in Germany vividly describes what has happened:

Since the outbreak of the war between Germany and the United States, the vilest crimes against Jews have been perpetrated. They are being deported to unknown destinations. Many have already committed suicide—about 1,200 to date. You can readily understand the attitude of these hopeless creatures who prefer immediate death to being killed by slow torture. The first transports of Jews sent to Lodz (formerly Lodz), each one consisting of 1,500 souls, have not been heard from in five months, doubtless because the area is infested with epidemics. The people are dying like flies. . . . The transport which left on January 25 surpassed all previous transports for the bestial treatment accorded the Jews. One thousand human beings, among them children, were crowded into cattle trains in freezing weather. . . . These human beings were locked in the cattle trains for eight weeks, and not a single one remained alive. . . . These people died miserably from hunger and cold.

This program of mass expulsion has completely wiped out the Jewish population of many German cities. Even the tombstones have been torn from the earth. The Nazis have systematically set out to destroy every physical evidence of the organic connections of the Jew with German history.

The defeats in Russia and the bombings of Germany have intensified Nazi anti-Semitism. Howard Smith in "Last Train from Berlin" reports how the Nazis have diverted the sense of frustration and the rising wrath of the German masses to the traditional scapegoat—the Jews. On June 12 of this year Propaganda Minister Goebbels wrote in Das Reich that the Jews would "atone" for the R.A.F. bombings of Cologne and other German cities "with the extermination of their race in all Europe, and perhaps even beyond Europe." Immediately after the first R.A.F. attacks on Cologne, 258 Jews were arrested in Berlin. They were marched to the Gross Lichterfelde barracks and shot in the presence of photographers and reporters. This "reprisal" was widely publicized.

The most important Nazi leaders openly advocate the annihilation of the Jews. In the speech delivered in Munich on November 8 Hitler reminded the Jews that once they had laughed at his threat of extermination. But now, he boasted, "countless numbers of those who laughed then are no longer laughing." It was a certain Hermann Backe who last summer presented to Hitler a diabolical plan for the mass destruction of the Jews which has since been adopted. Until now the Jews have received approximately half as much food as the Poles, who have received only half as much as the Germans. Herr Backe, the New York Times reported on December 8, has now been appointed Food Minister of Germany, and as such he will possess absolute authority to starve those Jews who escape violent death. The Nazis have found a typical rationalization for these murders. Writes Karl Rudolf Werner Best, chief jurist of the Gestapo, "History teaches that the annihilation of an alien people is not contrary to the laws of life, providing the annihilation is complete."

It is in Poland that the Nazis have given the fullest implementation to their policy. Perhaps this is because of Hitler's special venom for Polish Jews as revealed in "Mein Kampf," or because Poland is near the eastern front, where the impact of war has obliterated such civilian restraints as still obtain inside Germany. Conditions seemed frightful in Poland even last summer. Driven from their homes, denied normal means of subsistence, Jews huddled in ghettos, half-starved, perishing from epidemics, living in hourly terror of reprisals for Nazi
setbacks. Their able-bodied men were forced into slave labor. Their synagogues were burned. They were, they felt, at the bottom of the pit.

But something was happening which even they, injured to suffering, could not believe. It was heralded by the suicide of Adam Czerniakow, the full import of which was not immediately understood. This distinguished Jewish leader had been burgomaster of the Warsaw ghetto since its establishment. In the most trying circumstances—he was severely beaten by the Nazis on several occasions—he conducted himself with dignity and courage. Although he carried a vial of poison with him at all times, he never lost hope. Moved by an inescapable sense of duty, he went about his business of rebuilding Jewish community life and relieving distress wherever possible. Then one day in August it was announced that Adam Czerniakow had taken his life. This was not like the man whose sense of responsibility alone would have sustained him. But it was his sense of responsibility which undid him. For the Nazis had demanded, it was revealed, a list of 100,000 Jews to be deported to "an undetermined place." He refused—to the point of death. His motive subsequently became clear. The Nazis had begun their systematic slaughter. Czerniakow was being requested, in effect, to provide the victims. He chose, rather, death for himself.

But this did not modify Nazi relentlessness. They unleashed a program of mass murder of civilians which has no parallel in recorded history. Deputy Prime Minister Mikolajczuk, head of the Polish National Council, now in London, reported concerning this phase:

In the Warsaw ghetto, behind walls cutting them off from the world, hundreds of thousands of doomed are awaiting death. No hope of rescue exists for them. . . . On the pavements lie unburied bodies. Daily a prescribed number of victims amounts from eight to ten thousand. . . . Children who cannot walk by themselves are put into trucks. This is carried out in such a brutal manner that very few reach the ramparts alive. Mothers go mad watching this. At the ramparts railway cars wait. People are packed so tightly that those who die cannot fall but remain standing side by side with those still living or dying slowly from fumes of lime and chlorine, from being deprived of air, water, and food. . . . Wherever and whenever death trains arrive they contain only corpses. . . . What has been going on in the Warsaw ghetto has been going on in hundreds of the larger and smaller Polish places. . . . All are perishing.
Cold statistics testify to the effectiveness of this pogrom. In March, 1942, 433,000 ration cards were issued to the Jews of Warsaw. Seven months later only 40,000 were printed!

Recent official confirmation of this slaughter appears in the joint declaration of the United Nations issued on December 19:

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

The same official declaration reported the fate of the Jews in other European countries: "In Yugoslavia 99 per cent of the country's Jews and those who had taken refuge there from other countries are now dead." In Slovakia "65,000 Jewish men, women, and children were deported to Polish ghettos, and the deportation of the remaining 20,000 is imminent."

Equally authentic reports indicate that not more than 270,000 Jews are left of the 900,000 who lived in Romania proper in 1939. Of the 185,000 deported to the prison camps at Transnistria, some 75,000 have perished. Fewer than 10,000 Jews remain in Belgium of the 85,000 who lived there in 1940.

The assault upon the Jews goes beyond the destruction of human lives. Nearly every synagogue on the European continent has been bombed, burned, or converted to some vulgar purpose, such as a latrine or a stable. The sacred scrolls of the law have been desecrated, and public worship forbidden. Except for those who escaped early, the leading rabbis have been imprisoned or murdered. The great centers of Jewish culture have been completely obliterated. Vilna, the "Jerusalem of Lithuania," was for centuries a fountainhead of spirituality and learning. In October, 1942, the Nazis announced gleefully that Vilna was Judenrein. Gura Kalwaria near Warsaw was a center of Jewish mysticism, Hasidism. The Nazis bombèd it out of existence. Since the pogrom of 1903, Kishinev in Bessarabia had been a hallowed Jewish community. Now, the Nazis boast, no Jew is left in the city. No one can yet measure the meaning of such losses, for these communities sustained Israel with faith and hope and enriched the totality of man's spiritual life.

Nor can we yet measure the damage done by the Nazis to the position of the Jews in the world. By the most unscrupulous and efficient propaganda in history they have made the word "Jew" a stigma, not a name. In a decade they have wiped out the gains of 150 years of emancipation. To this melancholy fact France gives eloquent testimony. The Jews of revolutionary France were the first in Europe to win full civil rights. And now a French government under Nazi control has withdrawn those rights and reduced them to their medieval status. Even if defeated the Nazis will have made it very difficult for the Jews to achieve security in Europe. For they have accustomed the nations to a lowered status for the Jews; at best they have made the rights of Jews again a debatable question in the world.

This account would be incomplete without some reference to the reactions of Jews and Christians in Europe to these frightful events. Among Jews, there are terror, numb despair, and a bitter struggle for survival. But there are also courage, dignity, and determination. Reports emerge of a vigorous communal life organized in the ghettos. A letter comes from a man about to die at the hands of the Nazis: "The greatest trial has now arrived. When you receive these lines I shall be no more. I ask only one thing, that you be stronger than ever." Dr. Leo Beck, Germany's leading rabbi, who might have fled but chose to remain at his post so long as there were any Jews left in Germany, offered this prayer at Rosh Hashanah: "We bow our heads before God, and remain upright and erect before man. We know our way and we see the road to our goal. . . . Therefore, let us throw back the insult, evil, and malice aimed against us." For this, of course, he was again arrested.

European Christendom, at first confused and silent before the Nazi assault, has more recently reassessed its righteous indignation and its humanity. In the Catholic denunciations of the expulsion of French Jews and the shielding of Jewish children by the Paris police, in the Dutch Protestants' voluntary wearing of the yellow badge of David and the conduct of German men and women who quietly take their places in shopping lines with Jews—in these countless acts, great and small, are found the reaffirmation of Christian principles and the promise of better days to come. It is precisely because Hitler knows that the Christians of Europe would rebel against his monumental inhumanity that he finds it necessary to move the Jews to eastern wastelands for execution.

What a pity that this reaction comes so late! A clearer perception ten years ago of the meaning and intent of Hitlerism might have spared the world this holocaust. As Cauchon asks in Shaw's "St. Joan," "Must then a Christ perish in torment in every age to save those that have no imagination?"

[This is the first of three articles on the position of European Jewry. Dr. Bernstein's second article, to appear next week, will discuss what may be done to help Hitler's Jewish victims now and immediately after the end of the war.]