

Where is Sanctuary?

Dorothy Day

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Summary: She is appalled that some don't believe the killing of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. Cites documented incidents of mass killings. Lists twelve recommendations for rescue, among them a change in immigration laws in the United States. Keywords: anti-semitism (DDLW #391).

At a meeting at which I spoke last month, a member of the audience arose to protest defense of the Jews and to state emphatically that she did not believe the stories of atrocities told. She made a long speech, and at its close she was applauded by the several hundred present. Against such astounding unbelief the mind is stunned. And yet we of America and England who read and believe, do nothing to oppose the restrictions against immigration of Jews, their seeking sanctuary in this country.

Who does not remember and shudder at the thought of that ship that sailed the seas, looking for a haven for its load of sufferers, and turned away from these shores, refused by England, and finally rescued by such little and more Christian countries as Belgium and Holland?

Blind and Deaf

We read and we believe. But do we really believe? Four or five million are all that are left of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. And here are some of the statistics, well documented, presented by Jacques Maritain in the June 4th issue of the *Commonweal*:

Of the 250,000 Jews driven from Bessarabia toward the part of Southern Ukraine occupied by Rumania, about 190,000 were shot, burned alive or tortured to death during the trip.

In Odessa 25,000 Jews were massacred by the Rumanian troops in October, 1941. On the day when a bomb exploded in the staff building, 10,000 Jews were gathered in wooden barracks and burned alive. In Vitebsk several thousand Jews were similarly burned alive.

In Kiev, according to the information received by the Soviet government, 52,000 men, women and children were massacred, of whom a large proportion (40,000)

were Jews. Other sources later confirmed the fact and indicated the figures as a minimum.

In Pinsk, 8,000 Jews were killed by machine-gun fire, in Brest-Litovsk 6,000, in Mariupol the entire Jewish population—massacred in groups of five hundred in front of trenches into which the corpses were pushed. In a city near Smolensk 7,000 Jews were marched to the fields, compelled to dig their own graves and then shot down. Many were buried alive.

In Riga, Latvia, more than 20,000 Jews were massacred by the Germans.

In Jassy, in Moldavia, 10,000 Jews were put to death in a three-day pogrom (July 28, 29, 30, 1941), pitilessly machine-gunned or, for the most part, put into sealed freight trains where they could receive neither water nor food. Here the Rumanian authorities left them for eleven days, until no sign of life was discernible. When the cars were opened, on August 10, all these unfortunates were dead of suffocation or hunger.

These are just a few facts chosen at random from Maritain's six page document.

Do we believe these facts and figures and then do nothing? Where then is sanctuary for these suffering ones?

Chosen People

"The Jews were God's chosen people, and God does not change," a friend of *The Catholic Worker* said once. Pius XI in 1937 stated: "*Spiritually we are Semites.*"

Unless we choose to echo the words of Cain, and say that we are not our brother's keeper, we must, each of us, take a stand in behalf of the suffering, the starving, the dying victims not only of Hitler but of England and America's unbelief.

Here are the recommendations of the Bermuda Refugee Conference, held last April, about which nothing has yet been done:

The program for the rescue of Jews from Nazi-occupied Europe, which was submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference by the Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs (complete copies of this program may be obtained by writing to the American Jewish Congress, 330 West 42nd Street, New York, New York; this being one of the eight constituent organizations in the Joint Emergency Committee), includes the latest estimates as to the destruction of the Jews in Europe as well as the specific recommendations reprinted below. Following these recommendations are various appendices, elaborating on "the record of extermination," "sanctuaries," "status for the stateless," "feeding," "Jews as prisoners of war," "machinery for program of rescue," and "financing rescue program."

1. The United Nations should approach the German Government, and the governments of the states it now partly dominates or controls, through the

Vatican or neutral governments like Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Argentine, with a view to securing their agreement to the release of their Jewish victims, and to the emigration of Jews to such havens of refuge as may be provided.

2. The United Nations should, without delay, take steps to designate and establish a number of Sanctuaries in Allied and neutral countries to accommodate substantial numbers of Hitler's victims and to serve as havens of refuge for those Jews whose release from captivity may be arranged for, or who may find their way to freedom through efforts of their own.
3. The procedure that now prevails in the administration of the existing immigration law in the United States, which acts as a deterrent and retardation of legal immigration under the established quotas, should be revised and adjusted to war conditions, in order that refugees from Nazi-occupied territories within such quotas, may find sanctuary here.
4. Subject to provisions for its national security, England should be asked to provide for receiving a reasonable number of victims escaping from Nazi-occupied territories and to provide for their accommodation for the duration.
5. The possibilities in several British territories, both in Africa and in the Caribbean, should be explored without delay. Sanctuary has already been afforded to thousands of refugees in these territories and there is room for many more, if not for permanent settlement, at least for the duration.
6. The United Nations should urge the Republics of Latin America to modify such administrative regulations that now make immigration under the law extremely difficult, and to endeavor to find temporary havens of refuge for a substantial number of refugees.
7. Overriding pre-war political considerations, England should be persuaded to open the doors of Palestine for Jewish immigration and the offer of hospitality made by the Jewish Community of Palestine should be accepted.
8. The United Nations should provide financial guarantees to all such neutral states as have given temporary refuge to Jews coming from Nazi-occupied territories and to provide for their feeding and maintenance and eventual evacuation. The neutral states should be guaranteed that the refugees will not become a public charge and that they will be transferred to permanent Sanctuaries as soon as possible.
9. In order to do away with the lack of identity which many stateless refugees present, and to give them sponsorship and protection, an arrangement similar to that which existed under the League of Nations should be established and the stateless refugees should be given identification passports analogous to the "Nansen" passports.

10. In view of the fact that mass starvation is the design of the Nazi regime, the United Nations should take appropriate steps without delay to organize a system for the feeding of the victims of Nazi oppression who are unable to leave the jurisdiction and control of the Axis.
11. It is submitted that the United Nations undertake to provide the financial guarantees that may be required for the execution of the program of rescue here outlined.
12. The United Nations are urged to establish an appropriate inter-governmental agency to which full authority and power should be given to implement the program of rescue here outlined.

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