



To those of my people who  
fight for the right to die  
with their boots on —  
my pride, my love, my  
devotion . . .

*Arthur Szyk*  
New York, Dec. 1942

“We shall no longer witness with pity alone...”



## To The Conscience of America

**“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.”**

In that hallowed hour on Thanksgiving Day when President Roosevelt recited those words from the 23rd Psalm to the nation, seven thousand children of the people who first sang that Psalm were led out of the ghetto of Warsaw to be slaughtered.

The day before and the day before that, the day thereafter and the day after that the same harrowing thing occurred: more thousands of Jews were massacred. For Hitler is not merely boasting that the Europe he has conquered will be made *Judenrein*, he is feverishly at work translating into reality his threats to exterminate the Jewish people root and branch and wherever they may be found.

To the Jew of Europe the green pastures have become a big ditch which he is forced to dig with his own hands before falling into it riddled by volleys of shot from the Gestapo's execution squads. The still waters are pools, nay, a rising river of blood . . .

Day in, day out, the torment goes on. The details of the massacres are almost too hideous to be put into words. They are appalling. Nothing so bestially cruel has been recorded in the annals of history.

Air bubbles are injected into the veins of tens of thousands of Jews, resulting in agonizing death in a short time . . . Men, women and children are pressed into airtight chambers where they are choked to death en masse with poison gas . . . Elsewhere, as in Vilna, Jews are herded into disused slaughterhouses and done to death by electric currents that pass through the specially installed metal flooring on which they stand. Jewish mothers have been compelled to look on as German soldiers played football with babes and newly born infants . . .

Did Dante in his awful vision see anything as gruesome in hell?

Every day, our State Department's figures reveal, a larger number of Jews is slain than the British people lost in the entire year 1940, the worst year of the air blitz. The Jews have nearly two million victims to mourn, and each hour the mountain of their martyred dead rises to still ghastlier heights . . .

When, a quarter century ago, the Armenian people were subjected to systematic spoliation and murder, the Christian world cried out its indignation and protest. When the streamlined barbarians of our day leveled Rotterdam with the ground and buried 30,000 Netherlanders under the ruins, humanity's heart stood still and sickened. When they burned Lidice, a cry of horror went up from the civilized world.

*The Jew has seen a hundred Rotterdams. He has witnessed and experienced the horrors of a thousand Lidices.* Every step he takes in Europe is stained with his own blood. Yet, no action was undertaken to stop this ruthless process of annihilation. There has not been an official word of protest or indignation in America following the State Department's recent harrowing revelations—not a word of rebuke or disgust, of shame or warning.

Hardly a word from the Christian churches! Not a word from governmental authorities! Not an adequate word from the moulders of public opinion in the press and on the radio! Not a word from the intellectuals, the guardians of civilization!



That silence, sinister in its implications, has now lengthened into weeks. And Jews are still being slaughtered.

That is why the "*Proclamation on the Moral Rights of the Stateless and Palestinian Jews*" assumes greater significance than ever. Its program should become the policy of the American people and government toward the oppressed Jews of the Old World.

Or are we so callous or so inured to calamity and horror that we cannot take notice of an old people's anguish or hear the death-rattle in the throats of millions of human beings?

Are the United Nations so weak, or so cowed and intimidated by Hitler's bloody face, that they do not even dare to talk back?

Dr. Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Popular Enlightenment, wrote not long ago in his weekly newspaper *Das Reich*: "If the day should ever come when we (Nazis) must go, if some day we are compelled to leave the scene of history, we will slam the door so hard that the universe will shake and mankind will stand back in stupefaction!"

Now, having seen the writing on the wall in the unbroken fighting spirit of the Red Army and in America's ability to wage offensive war on both sides of the world simultaneously, the butchers of Berlin have begun to slam the door. They have started to do to the Jewish people that fiendish thing which is to cause the human race to reel back aghast, just as every act of barbarism and every piece of inhumanity they ever perpetrated was first tried out on the Jews.

What the Nazis are doing to the Jewish people today is a foreshadowing, a foretaste of what is in store for all the peoples in the occupied countries. It is the beginning of a program of terror and horror that is ultimately to be applied to Poles and Czechs, to Dutchmen and Yugoslavs, Greeks and Frenchmen.

At the time when the Nazis came to power and singled out the Jews for their first attacks, the democracies stood aside, invoking the political doctrine that there must be no interference in or notice taken of the purely internal affairs of a foreign state. Moral considerations had to make way for the rules of the imperialist game of blood and guile when great nations like the Czechs and the Austrians were to be handed over to the sadists of the Reich. We distrusted reports about the inhuman treatment meted out to Jews in the murder camps of Dachau and Oranienburg. We shrugged our shoulders as if it was no concern of ours what Streicher and Himmler did to a few thousand German citizens of the Jewish faith.

We were yet to learn, at an immense cost in tears and blood, that humanity is one, even as God is One, and that the martyred Jews were merely the fore-runners on the road of sorrows of Poles and Albanians, of Czechs and Norwegians—and of American mothers and fathers.

We were yet to learn that the anti-Semitic justification of the Hitlerite's attitude to the Jews was but a trick to lull the Christian nations to sleep, to divide the democracies, to obscure the issues at stake, to befuddle people's minds in order that they might fall victim the easier to the Nazi plans of world conquest.

*To be silent in this hour when thousands of unarmed, innocent Jewish human beings are murdered each day is not only a betrayal of elementary human solidarity, it is tantamount to giving the blood-thirsty Gestapo carte blanche to continue and speed its ghastly program of extermination.*

To be silent is to help Hitler carry out his program of killing off one people today—another people, perhaps the Poles, tomorrow, and the Czechs and Yugoslavs the day after tomorrow, when the American Army proceeds to the offensive against the European continent, and Hitler, in desperation and fury, will seek to remove the danger of uprisings in his back.



This must not be! *There is a way to stop and prevent those blood baths.* America is not to have the blood-guilt of these millions on its conscience.

They must be delivered from the two-jawed trap in which they are caught: Hitler's long knife at their throats on the one hand, and our passive commiseration and silence on the other! To succor a man who suffers is a duty, but to succor a man who suffers for humanity is more than a duty . . .

If this is to be, America must speak out. The furor and outcry over Lidice in this country did frighten the Nazis. The Hitlerites are so afraid of the avenging wrath of the common people of America that they seek to cover their gruesome annihilation of the Jewish people in darkness.

Let them at least be dragged out into the light of day! Let an American Commission of military and governmental experts not only prepare an indictment against those guilty of the pogroms in Poland and Eastern Europe! Let it find a way to stop this wholesale murder!

In order to judge with scrupulous impartiality eight miserable saboteurs and traitors, seven high American Army officers sat in deliberation for a week.

When thousands of Jews are killed each day, Jews who are not saboteurs or traitors but our allies in the bitter struggle to preserve the Christian foundations of Western civilization, can we not send one strong word of warning to the German people that we intend to keep them to account for what they are doing now?

*This warning, for instance: that for every ten thousand Jews slain by the Nazis the civilian population of Berlin will be bombed for one whole night.*

Such language the brutal masters of the *Herrenvolk* will understand. In fact, they understand no other language.

Our present silence is growing audible in Berlin. *For us to say that we will do our best to find a solution for the Jewish question after the war is a mockery, and only evokes laughter in hell. At the present rate of killing, there will be no Jewish question left to solve . . .*

Let America speak out.

The disinherited Stateless Jews and the Jews of Palestine are asking once more to be given arms and to be in the vanguard of the Allied Armies that will invade the European continent. No other motive but self-respect, as the brothers of the millions of victims of Hitler, prompts this demand.

*Enough of chicanery and evasion!* Enough of a political warfare that rejoices over bloodless victories in one place but turns its face and is silent when millions of victims fall in another!

Man is one all over the earth. Hurt to one brother is hurt to all!

*Give the Jewish people the opportunity to fight back at its detractors and murderers!*

It is their right!

**NOTE:**

Since this letter was published, it caused definite utterances and statements to be made by officials of the United Nations, various church groups and other organizations, condemning in strong terms the atrocities referred to in the letter. It is our aim to translate such utterances into action.

*Pierre van Paassen*

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