

Los Angeles Times

Jewish Situation
Less Complex

BY BEN HECHT

The Jewish situation is becoming less and less complex. For one thing, it has no longer much to do with Jews. Their extermination is removing them from any and all situations.

As a matter of fact, the Jewish situation never had much to do with Jews. The hating and killing of Jews has been one of the unlovely sides of history—not Jewish history, but everybody else's history. The Jews have been a lightning rod down which a thousand different psychic storms have struck and vented themselves.

This has given the Jew a bad name. His historical position as a target has inspired countless thinkers to investigate the "curious" qualities that have made him a target. Investigation of the qualities that have inspired mass murder in his enemies has been less active.

I will write about this later. I am writing about something else now.

The Jewish situation has undergone a change unique in history, for the incontrovertible reason that he is being wiped out in Europe—where he was so great a "problem."

THE NEW PROBLEM

Two millions already have been killed. There are some 4,000,000 Jews remaining in Europe, a fact that is outrageous to the German philosophers. To remedy this blot on civilization, the Germans have announced officially that they are going to speed up their anti-Jew procedures. They are going to exterminate 4,000,000 Jews by Christmas.

We live in a world in which many things have come to be taken for granted. It is taken for granted that massacre must be crueler than war. Once you have bashed in a million defenseless skulls, massacre loses its original appeal.

With the killing of the 4,000,000 remaining Jews of Europe, Hans and Fritz will have solved to a great extent the Jewish problem in a great many places. They will, however, have created another problem of much greater proportions. This is the problem of what humanity—as the civilized peoples of the world are still called—is going to do about it.

To date, humanity has done almost nothing. Its indignation has been small. It has raised no sustained official voice. It has shuddered and taken matters for granted.

In fact, the German massacre of 2,000,000 human beings without guns or sticks with which to defend themselves has been possible only because humanity has stuck its skull into a fog. Its nerve endings are apparently dead.

The numbness of our American folks, small and great, is as striking an exhibition of life fallen into humanless ways as the massacre politik of the Germans. We who have stood by silently at the overthrow of basic human reason and sensibilities have been honorary members of the German posse.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

Our writers fill their columns daily with intrepid denunciations and exposures of tweedledum-tweedledee political confusion in the world. But of this overthrow of the basic concept of life, of this plunge into the ways of savagery, of this great backward step into massacre, they speak almost not at all.

It is for this reason that the Committee for a Jewish Army of Palestinian and Stateless Jews conducted a memorial service in Madison Square Garden for the dead Jews of Europe.

This memorial service was an attempt to cope with the Jewish situation as it exists in the befogged and bemused soul of New York. We did not make speeches. Instead we sang Kaddish for the 2,000,000 dead. We brought a Madison Square Garden audience to the large grave of Jewry and let them stand for two hours looking into its remarkable contents.

We did denounce Hitler, if there is a Hitler. It is our thought that Hitler is a back number—a sort of Typhus Mary—who has had his day. He has blown his germs far and wide across seas and continents.

The germs we are combating are those of spiritual corruption that have burrowed deep into the soul of man. There aren't many Nazis in New York today. But there are a myriad of numb people with hearts deadlier than doornails. These are the new Jewish situation.

It is for these—Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, agnostics and atheists—that we conducted our memorial service. It was to sing a song over their befogged and preoccupied heads and wake them for an hour or two to the degeneration of life taking place that we dedicated our efforts.

* THURSDAY MORNING, MARCH 11, 1943