CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The forty years in which the undergraduates had dominated the community came to a fairly abrupt end. Even before the war, Jewish refugees from Germany had been coming to Oxford, either more or less directly to the University, where they played a key role in transforming the University's performance in subjects from Greek literature to low-temperature physics, or because they had nowhere particular in England to go and knew about Oxford. On the whole, despite their experiences, the Jewish involvement of this first wave was not all that high. The next wave, those who were evacuated or who removed themselves from the German bombing of London, was a very different matter. Over and above this mainstream, as the war went on, other elements were added, a hostel for about 15 German Jewish children in North Oxford at 1 Linton Road and, particularly at festival times, the need for providing for Jewish servicemen, of various nationalities, stationed in the neighbourhood.

The first impact can hardly be better described than in the report of Walter Ettinghausen, Senior Treasurer of the Congregation, to an Annual General Meeting on 2 June 1940,[1] though the influx was probably gathering pace even as he wrote.

> *Report for the Nine Months ending May 31st 1940*
> *General:* The past nine months cover the period from the beginning of the war down to May 31st. In this period the structure of Oxford Jewry has radically altered. What barely two years ago was a tiny community consisting of perhaps half a dozen resident families and a number of undergraduate and graduate members of the University has developed into one of some thousand souls. We have to-day something like four or five hundred refugees from Germany and other

Central European countries, some two hundred children evacuated from London at the outbreak of war, and not less than two hundred permanent or temporary residents in the city. It is certainly the largest settlement of Jews in Oxford since the thirteenth century, although with the return of many individuals to London and the re-emigration of others to countries overseas it is not to be expected that our present numbers will be kept up after the end of the war.

Although many, perhaps most, of these Jews stand outside the organized Jewish community as represented by the Synagogue and the various Jewish societies existing in the city, yet a heavy burden has been thrown by this influx on the Oxford Jewish Congregation. At the outbreak of war a very large number of individuals were assisted with advisory and in some cases financial help, and many enquiries were answered. The joint Evacuation Committee in London appointed the Rev. J. Weinberg to take charge of the work that arose as a result of the transference to Oxford of schoolchildren, prisoners, blind persons, hospital patients and private individuals, and the Senior Treasurer would like to take this opportunity of recording the great help he has received from Mr. Weinberg and to suggest that the Congregation accord him his special thanks. Without his help it would have been impossible to deal efficiently with the many tasks and problems that have arisen.

It is estimated that on the New Year and the Day of Atonement between 200 and 250 persons were present in the Synagogue and the Vestry Room during the Services. The normal seating accommodation of the Synagogue is 50. There have been many other memorable occasions in the life of the community. Special children's services were held on Chanukah and on Purim; on Friday evening, November 10th, and Sabbath morning, November 11th, special services were held to commemorate the pogroms of the previous year in Germany, and sermons were delivered by Dr. K. Rosenthal and Rabbi Dr. M. Eschelbacher to crowded congregations of German Jews; on Lag B'Omer, May 26th, which had been appointed a Day of National Prayer, a special service was held and the Synagogue filled to capacity. On Pesach, apart from a Children's Seder in the Vestry Room, a communal Seder was held in St. Giles's Hall and attended by some 70 persons; it has been calculated that this year at least 200 Jews celebrated Seder in Oxford, again probably the largest number since the dispersal of the mediaeval settlement. During the period under review five Jewish deaths occurred in Oxford, and others in the

villages around. Three burials have taken place in the cemetery at Wolvercote, and two marriages have been celebrated in the Synagogue. It is interesting to record that at a marriage on December 31st the services of the Secretary for Marriages were required for the first time since the year 1905. Many circumcisions have been performed, largely as a result of the transfer of maternity cases from London.

Few changes have been made in the Synagogue building. A few small repairs have been carried out, and an expense of some magnitude was incurred when it became necessary to repair and repaint all the gutters and rain-water pipes. The Synagogue has been presented with an antique key for the Ark by Dr. Cecil Roth, and with a Besamim box by Mr. Justin Schwarz. An interesting development during this period has been the increased use made of the Synagogue buildings for other than ritual purposes. The Oxford Zionist Society has held several meetings in the Synagogue and the Vestry Room; Hebrew and religion classes have been, and are, held regularly in the Vestry Room, which has also been the weekly meeting-place on Sunday nights of a group of some forty young people. It is no exaggeration to say that the Synagogue has, certainly to a greater extent than during the past twenty years, become something of a focal point for communal activities.

Finance: The financial statement presented to-day balances at a sum approaching £80. The Congregation has had an increase in income, but at the same time a proportionally greater increase in expenditure. The increase under both heads is attributable directly to the expansion of the community, and it is to be regretted that many, indeed the majority, of the Jews now resident in Oxford have not borne their share of the communal charges. The excess of income over expenditure, which in the statement stands at £12, is more apparent than real, as the Communal Fund, which represents sums disbursed before September 1st 1939 as well as cash payments since that date, has a deficit of some £25. This deficit has been borne so far by the private purse of the Senior Treasurer, but this is clearly not a state of affairs that the Congregation should desire to see perpetuated. It will be necessary in the months and years to come to raise larger sums than have been raised up to the present.

June 2nd 1940

W.G. ETTINGHAUSEN,
Senior Treasurer

Another wave of evacuation set in in September as the blitz on London developed. Oxford was packed and its resources were stretched to the utmost. On 6 October, an Extraordinary Meeting, with about fifty persons present, was held in the synagogue at 4 p.m. Ettinghausen was in the chair until 4.45 p.m. when his place was taken by Neville Laski, an eminent K.C., until recently President of the Board of Deputies, who had held office in the Adler Society in 1910 and was a Trustee of the synagogue. He was, curiously enough, a nephew of Joel Zacharias.

After an opening statement by Ettinghausen on the problems which had arisen as a result of the evacuation of Jews from London to Oxford, a general discussion took place. The main subjects were the problem of accommodation, the provision of kosher meat, the institution of cultural activities, *shiurim*, etc. and of a Habonim group for the children. Volunteers were called for in connection with Chevra Kadisha work. It was resolved to open a Jewish Information Office on the lines of a Citizens' Advice Bureau, in order to offer help to Jewish evacuees and others with their problems and difficulties. It was agreed to form a Residents' Advisory Committee to advise the Hon. Officers on current problems: N. Laski, M. Rosette, B.I. Beckman and A. Behr. The Committee was given power to co-opt not more than three additional members.

This Residents' Advisory Committee rapidly turned into a Committee of Management, normally under the Chairmanship of Mr. Beckman. Neville Laski, made President in 1941, had lost his Presidency of the Board of Deputies to Selig Brodetsky the previous year at the hands of what was described as a Zionist caucus, but his legal practice and other communal affairs kept him busy, and he was only intermittently present. Beckman, also an Oxford graduate, had brought his young family to Oxford, but commuted to London throughout the war to maintain his solicitor's practice. Those with experience of wartime travelling can only admire the strength he brought to the affairs of the community. He is remembered in the Beckman Library of the new Centre.

Among the matters which the new Committee took in hand was the creation of a new membership scheme. Undergraduate membership before the war had been ten shillings a term. No formal 'adult' membership was created until late 1940, though seats had been sold for the High Holydays. The initial membership figure was set at £2/2/0 for members, £1/0/0 for married ladies whose husbands were members; this would give the right to a fixed seat.

As will be seen from later figures, actual membership of the Congregation never came remotely near the figures recorded as registered for kosher meat or as attending services. The impression of the present generation that there was an enormous Congregation during the war is, at least formally, false. No doubt, at least some people who were already paying to London synagogues continued to do so; a brief attempt by the United Synagogue to get some co-ordination of membership came to nothing. Membership had stood at 45 in December 1940, but something of a drive took it up the next month to 65 males and 17 ladies. By October 1941 there were 68 gentlemen and 28 ladies; 22 members had left during the year, mainly on account of returns to London. The drift back to London continued, and, in November 1942, the figure, probably not including Cowley, was 57 gentlemen and 32 ladies. The figure at November 1943 was 75 men and 45 ladies, at November 1944, 85 gentlemen and 45 ladies.

The Committee at first only controlled the old synagogue. There had already been High Holiday services in 1940 for Cowley and Headington in Tyndale House, next to the Transport and General Workers Union offices in Cowley Road and also to a British Restaurant (distracting on *Yom Kippur*) and this continued to be a venue for them for the next few years.[2] The Committee first took cognizance of other communities in December 1940, when it was reported that Rev. Blackman and Mr. Hirsch wanted to form a synagogue in Headington, Mr. Julius Cohen of Glanville Road one in Cowley. By March 1941 it had emerged that there were now two synagogues in Headington; the Committee refused to meet them until they were reunited. Cowley was another matter. In May 1941, arrangements were being made with a Cowley delegation, on the lines that members of the Cowley synagogue would become members of the Oxford Jewish Congregation, which would then assume responsibility for the rent of the Cowley synagogue in the East Oxford School, and would help in the conduct of services on special occasions, at which Mr. Weinberg would be prepared to preach; Cowley would get a seat on the Oxford Board of Management. The negotiations dragged on for many months; it is clear that part of the problem was the position of Rabbi Stransky of the Cowley *minyan*. It was not until February 1942 that Mr. J. Cowen, now Chairman of 'the Cowley and Iffley Hebrew Congregation'. reported his committee's agreement to being a *minyan* within the Oxford Jewish Synagogue, continuing, for reasons of distance, to use the hall which they were at present using, and retaining complete autonomy as to the finance and control of services and educational

facilities in that district. They would recognize Mr. Weinberg as the minister of the United Oxford Jewish Synagogue; Rabbi Stransky would be recognized as a duly appointed Teacher of Hebrew, whose salary would be the responsibility of the Cowley and Iffley *minyan*. This would get two representatives on the Board of Management. Two points remained unsettled, whether Rabbi Stransky might also be described as 'the religious guidance of the Cowley-Iffley *minyan*', and which body was to get the subscriptions of existing paying members of the Oxford Jewish Congregation who lived East of the Plain. In April these problems were resolved by the resignation of Rabbi Stransky, doubtless dissatisfied with an even more ambiguous formula which had been devised about his status, and agreement to merge the finances of the two bodies completely. Among the new members brought on to the Board of Management by the merger was a certain Mr. L. Bloom, whose energy is visible in the minutes from the first. No formal arrangements were ever entered into with the Headington communities, though Mr. Weinberg was already preaching there by December 1941. It was simply assumed, for the High Holidays of 1942, that additional services for Cowley and Headington were a central responsibility. We hear of no later service at Headington.

Various other additional services were held as the need arose, for example, one in 1942 for the 'German element of the Community' at St. Philip's and St. James' Hall, Leckford Road, and most notably at the High Holidays of 1944, when there were about 170 people in the synagogue, 160 in Cowley at the Magdalen Road Mission Hall, and an overflow in the Oxford Union Debating Hall with 350 members of the forces and 150 civilians.

What the size of normal congregations was is not clear, but those who came raised the standard unrecognizably. Rabbi Dr. Samuel Daiches, who lived in Oxford throughout the war, claimed in January 1943 in his sermon to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the synagogue that its most brilliant period had been from the end of the summer of 1940 to the autumn of 1942, two years of 'high spirituality. Never had the Synagogue had so many devout worshippers'.

It was also more Orthodox in its religious orientation than ever before. In October 1940, it was agreed, on the proposal of Dr. Roth, that 'the Oxford Jewish Congregation, being under the jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbi, follows in its statutory services the usages of the Synagogues under his guidance'. It would use for all purposes the ritual of Singer's Prayer-Book, supplemented on the Festivals by the Routledge Festival

Prayer-Book, and in cases of dispute or uncertainty would adopt the usages of the Great Synagogue, Duke's Place, London. At the same meeting, however, the possibility was raised of holding services according to the Liberal Jewish rite at special times. Nevertheless, in January 1942, the Management Committee, with Neville Laski in the chair, turned down a request from Lily Montagu for the use of the synagogue for Liberal services, though she had preached there at least in 1923 and possibly on other occasions. So much for the attempt made in 1926 to assert Liberal interests by making Michael Franklin a Trustee; if any Liberal or Reform services were held in Oxford during the war, I do not know about them, although Donald Silk does remember being sent to a Liberal Hebrew Class. On the other hand, when Laski's son was Barmitzvah in November 1944, the Committee found no difficulty in allowing a Sephardi service in the synagogue, conducted by the Rev. David Bueno de Mesquita.

An early question for the Management Committee of October 1940 was that of a minister. They had one on the spot and considered no alternative. Jacob Weinberg had been born in Vilna in 1910, and was the son of Rabbi Hirsch Weinberg, who ministered in the East End for thirty years; he had been educated at King's College, London as well as at Jews' College.[3] His career would show that he was capable of steady self-improvement, but at this stage of it some might think that he had intellectual limitations. They did not stop him getting down to jobs which had to be done, and it is not obvious that any of the disagreements which arose were of his making. Although he had already been performing many ministerial duties, he had originally been appointed from London by the Joint Emergency Committee for Jewish Education for educational purposes, and was paid for this from London (£234 per annum in 1942). He was now formally appointed minister of the Oxford Congregation, to be paid at £104 per annum from October 1940 for performing ministerial functions. He also got bonuses from time to time. This dual arrangement later caused trouble, when it was found that the London Committee had a principle against paying ministers for doing its teaching.

Education was his prior responsibility, and it took up a great deal of the Committee's time as well. The arrangement in theory was that paying for it and organizing was the responsibility of the London Committee, though Oxford was expected to make a contribution on behalf of its 'own' students. In fact, although London commanded most of the money and superior expertise, the Oxford Committee was

inevitably drawn in. It was on the spot and could, with some effort, find out what was going on; there was a sufficient pool in Oxford to find teachers if needed. In 1944, after long experience and some touchy episodes, like the sacking by London of someone thought well of in Oxford and the problem about Weinberg's dual salary, Oxford eventually took over total responsibility for Jewish education in the area, with a grant of £350 p.a. from the Joint Emergency Committee. It had been doing most of the work for a long time.

The problems were manifold. They were probably at their largest in 1940, but to take the position as revealed by investigation in May 1942, there were then in public education 260 Jewish children in Oxford City: 55 in Headington, 71 in Cowley and Iffley, 44 in New Marston, 31 in Hinksey, 59 in North Oxford. There was also thought to be enough work for a full-time teacher in Wallingford. We have no material for dividing these numbers between those with their families and those evacuated by themselves. The children attended a wide variety of schools, one or two of which taught on Saturdays. Children of primary age were mostly with their parents and could be made amenable; secondary school children, evacuated on their own, were a good deal less so. Though the Directors of Education were happy to produce lists of Jewish children, they were reluctant actually to get them to Jewish instruction. Not all those engaged in teaching were suited to the job, and Weinberg and Committee members sometimes uncovered some cases of clear inadequacy. The general trend was to centralizing the teaching, but there were transport problems.

The very first meeting of the Advisory Committee in October 1940 had seen the desirability of establishing a social and communal centre; it was said that people should be given something with which to occupy themselves and so kept off the streets. After a fortnight's investigation of possible premises, it was agreed to take the Methodist Church Hall at 94 Walton Street for a weekly donation of £1 to the funds of the Church Hall. The Communal Centre, under a Sub-committee of Mrs. Ettinghausen, Senior, Mrs. Laski, Mrs. J. Weinberg and Mr. W.G. Ettinghausen, was opened on 21 November. There were some initial problems with the staff. The first manager was not satisfactory and given one month's notice, and an employee was injured in the course of her work, which involved arranging a settlement of about £60. But things rapidly settled down, principally thanks to Mrs. Ettinghausen, Welfare Worker for the Central Jewish Committee for Evacuation, and, although there were some internal complaints about the tendency of the

attendants to split into cliques and there was sometimes a shortage of volunteer workers, the main aims were successfully fulfilled throughout the war, to the admiration of the Town Clerk, who remarked that it had eased many problems. The aim was that the Centre would be financially self-supporting, and, after its first year, when its net cost was £102/4/6, it became so.

The provision of kosher meat was mostly dealt with outside the Committee. There were several *shochetim* among the evacuees, and arrangements were entered into with a local butcher on the nineteenth century system, but on a far vaster scale. It should be explained that only ordinary meat was rationed and that on a price basis. Since kosher meat was dearer because of the costs of *shechita*, Jews got less of it, and this made chickens and offal, which were unrationed but only sporadically available, more important. In March 1941, the individuals registered for kosher meat had reached about 800 (a figure more or less maintained throughout the war), and about 150 fowls were sold every week, but by May the difficulty of obtaining live fowls had reduced the figure by more than half, with consequences for the Congregation's income. There were public relations problems, gradually solved, in the large Jewish queues in the narrow alleys of the Covered Market, and the customers themselves complained that the shop was not kept in a clean state and that fowls were killed in the shop in the presence of women and children.

There was of course a vastly increased number of burials. At a fairly early stage in the war, the City Engineer started worrying about the need for large numbers of graves in the event of air attack, and the plot at Wolvercote allotted for Jewish burials was eventually extended in late 1944. Initially, Ettinghausen turned his own hands to *taharah*, but experts were again found.

The Committee also spent a good deal of time on personal rows. One long-lasting one which developed in Cowley mostly stayed there without impinging on the main Congregation until after the war. But a great deal of time was spent on Cecil Roth. The impression conveyed by the minutes is that the Committee had enormous respect for his position and learning, but were gradually worn out by what seemed to them his unreasonable touchiness, his refusal to take Weinberg seriously as a minister, and a persistent undocumented insistence that there were massive conversionist activities attacking refugees and undergraduates alike, which the Congregation was doing too little to counter. What the scale of this problem really was I have no idea, though I do happen to know of one officer of the University Jewish Society who became a

Roman Catholic. At Roth's insistence, various series of lectures on Jewish Ethical Teaching were instituted, first at the synagogue and then at the Jewish Centre in Walton Street. It was not obvious that these had any marked effect, and they could create problems of their own, as when Isaac Berenblum gave a particularly individualistic one which caused complaint. Though Roth was on the Management Committee for most of the war, he seldom attended; he did come to half-yearly General Meetings to raise his main points and to dispute the minutes of his interventions at the previous meeting. When he was elected the Congregation's Representative on the Board of Deputies, even these attendances ceased, to create new complaints that the Congregation was getting no reports from its Representative.

Brief excursions into the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle* give another side.[4] Although his wife wrote his biography as of a 'Historian without Tears', he was by 1943 occupied on a plane which made the problems of Oxford communal organization relatively unimportant. Even before the details of the physical destruction of European Jewry became clear, he was appalled by the destruction of centre after centre of Jewish learning, the life-blood of Jewish survival. The future of Jewry rested with Britain and America, and in Britain there was rapid disintegration. The old families were declining in their commitment to public service and even financial support, and were rapidly leaving the community altogether. That trend was being enhanced by the conversionist drive; he was constantly having cases brought to his notice of undergraduates at both universities converted to Christianity. The essential organizations of Anglo-Jewry had ceased to mean anything, since they had no sincerity behind them. In the next generation there would only be a few committed Jews and they would not allow him to speak without a skull-cap. In this mood, he treated as cataclysmic a conversation with a small boy who claimed to know the story of Joseph and, when challenged, produced a fairly accurate account of the Nativity and the Massacre of the Innocents. The teacher and the Committee thought it outrageous that he had omitted to mention that the child was only four and a half and attending his second synagogue class; they were missing a good deal of his point, though they could rightly think that they were maintaining Jewish life in their own practical way.

There was another cause of conflict, the status of the undergraduates in the synagogue. He did not hold the extreme view of Herbert Loewe[5] that the position was the same as in Cambridge and that the undergraduates were entitled to full control, which would have been

hardly realistic in the circumstances, but he did think, with some reason, that they were historically entitled to joint control. However, few of the rapidly changing undergraduates were inclined to press the point; they were happy to attend the general services. He tried to initiate the occasional University service, but the Committee did not care for some of the things he said. Beckman did feel that there ought to be one service a term conducted by undergraduates, but they showed no immediate interest and it was not until autumn 1944 that it was agreed to have regular undergraduate services at 6 on Fridays.

There was a final blow-up when the undergraduates asked for a Saturday morning service in February 1945, and it simultaneously turned out that one of them had written directly to the Chief Rabbi about the affairs of the Congregation. He apologized, and the Committee agreed to the service, suggesting that they invited an outside speaker. When it turned out that they wanted Roth to address it, Beckman's original reaction was that he and Laski would resign if this happened; it is not quite clear if it did. By the time I arrived in autumn 1945, there was a sharp distinction between Friday evening University services, run by undergraduates and attended by Roth in cap and gown, and Saturday morning services which, I was given to understand, would not appeal to anyone who had any regard for dignity and decorum. Meanwhile, Laski had consulted the title-deeds of the synagogue and convinced himself that it had been established by the Jewish townspeople of Oxford and that undergraduates had no special rights in it, though they would always be welcome. Provided this was clearly understood, there would be no objection to their organizing a service and dinner in November 1945 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the University Jewish Society and the 75th of the passing of the University Tests Act.[6]

There were many other Jewish organizations in Oxford which operated entirely outside the structures of the Congregation. Of these, the best documented is the Oxford Women's Zionist Society, of which the minute-book for 1943–5 survives. The Presidents were Lady Samuel and Lady Fitzgerald (nee Bischoffsheim); Lady Samuel at least was a good deal more than a figure-head. Mrs.I. Goldstein, Mrs M. Berlin and Mrs B. Horovitz were particularly active, but the work was spread around a good deal among a membership of 60 or so. There was a Knitting Circle, operating for the Russian Army and the R.A.F., and a great deal of fund-raising by organizing public lectures and concerts. There was a general atmosphere of grim determination and seriousness (most Committee meetings ended with readings from Zionist literature), and the minutes reflect much more fully than those of the Congregation reactions to the

growing realization of the European Jewish disaster and other events of Jewish concern. They protested against the imprisonment of Polish Jewish soldiers for seeking to join the British Army in order to escape anti-semitism in the Polish Army. They strongly disapproved of the murder of Lord Moyne and called on the Jewish Agency to adopt strong measures against such excesses. But they were always intensely practical, and activities such as providing clothes for the remnants of the concentration camps became more and more important.

We know a great deal less about the other Jewish organizations, except when their meetings got into the local or Jewish press. There was a branch of the League of Jewish Women, often blending with the Women's Zionist Society towards the end of the war, a Zionist Society, a Poale Zion Society, an Oxford Keren Hayesod Committee, quite apart from national Anglo-Jewish organizations, who frequently met in Oxford.

Youth activity calls for special attention. Some 40 young people were already meeting in the synagogue vestry on Sunday evenings before June 1940, but the formal creation of the Oxford Jewish Youth Club dates to December 1940, under the Chairmanship of Alan Silverman. For the next year it met in or next to the Jewish Centre, but it had interruptions, and, apart from the odd reference to a 'Youth Council' organizing a dance in January 1943, we lose sight of it until July 1944, when it was refounded with 25 members at its first meeting. By December it had a membership of 44, meeting for three hours on Sunday evenings. Their elders thought they should be more serious and get lectures on Jewish history and have monthly services conducted by themselves on Saturday afternoons; little came of this. Overlapping in date was the more Zionist Habonim, of which we know little.

There was a regular succession of Jewish undergraduates throughout the war, since there was more system than there had been in the First World War about giving cadets short academic courses along with their preliminary training. The University Jewish Society operated throughout the war, but there is another gap in its minute-books. In 1943, at least, it was active. It organized a public meeting in January 1943 on the plight of European Jewry, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, and also influenced the Union to take the matter up. Both meetings resulted in resolutions urging the Government to take more active measures to halt the destruction. Laski thought that the Honorary Officers of the Congregation should have been consulted about this and an invitation to the Chief Rabbi to come to Oxford.

All this activity, it was eventually realized, needed some form of co-

ordination, and in April 1943 an Oxford Jewish Council was formed under Beckman's chairmanship, to which all organizations had delegates. Little survives about its activities except its fund-raising. By November 1943, it had raised £800 for Keren Hayesod, and over £1000 for the Board of Deputies Essential Services Appeal. Whether greater knowledge of its activities would improve our picture, I do not know.

One substantial and difficult matter remains to be discussed. It is well known that there was a great deal of anti-semitism in England during the war, substantially as a response to wartime strains. The correspondence columns of the *Jewish Chronicle* thought that the press did little to repress it and was more interested in reporting black market cases involving Jews than particulars of Jewish servicemen and deaths in service. My impression so far is that the Oxford press had an honourable record; the *Oxford Times* was retrospectively hostile to many aspects of the mass internments of summer 1940. However, its factual reports of court-cases reveal, probably only as the tip of an iceberg, some of the things which were being said. In August 1940. a lorry driver was charged with creating disaffection by telling soldiers 'You are mugs to fight for two bob a day, while enemy aliens are living in luxury in the Isle of Man', and in October a prominent Zionist official claimed to have been lured into a field by a soldier and told 'You are a Jew and you and your like will be turned out of Oxford. Now hand over all the money you have.'[7]

Much of the trouble was created by housing shortage. One correspondent claimed that he had been forced to leave his hotel because it had raised its prices, though rich aliens seemed to have no difficulty in paying either there or at other places.[8] The theme bothered more dispassionate observers. In a letter of late October 1940, Kathleen Haldane, widow of Professor J.S. Haldane and mother of Professor J.B.S. Haldane and Naomi Mitchison, wrote, 'Oxford with a normal population of 90,000 has 150,000 and no new houses. People simply won't stay in the country and drift back here, some of them back into the institutions they were drafted from, but others, with plenty of money, bribing people to take them in. There has been a good deal of that, lodgers turned out (people with work here) to make room for well-to-do East End Jews and it isn't good for anti-Semitic feeling to be allowed to spread. I never heard a murmur of it before down here.'[9] Her daughter, collecting material for Mass Observation, paid a visit to Oxford in January 1941 and noted 'Quite a bit of anti-semite feeling here, mostly against the middle-class refugees, partly from the south coast. None against the working-class ones from Coventry etc.'[10] In an even more worried mood, in an address

given in March 1942 to students of University College London evacuated to Bangor, the historian Norman Baynes, whose liberal credentials were impeccable, spoke about the need to maintain the college's traditions of tolerance. 'We look out upon the Anti-Semitism of other lands and we comfort ourselves with the soothing thought: "That could never happen here." But have we any right to be so sure of that? There are British Fascists who are prepared to inflame hostility against the Jews, and there will be many who will listen. Have you read the reports of the situation in the East End of London published in the papers of the Society of Jews and Christians? One feels there is a lot of gunpowder about. And the conduct of alien Jews in this country – if Oxford provides a fair sample – does not help: there are many in Oxford today who will tell you that Hitler in his Anti-Semitic policy has provided a model for others to follow. I have an uncomfortable feeling that a wave of Anti-Semitism in this country might be called up at short notice, without insuperable difficulty.'[11] Such worries eventually prompted a meeting of the Oxford branch of the National Council of Civil Liberties in July 1943. No Jewish organizations were invited, and the concern of the meeting was to fight against any division in the country into first and second class citizens. There was a small majority in favour of legislation to counteract libels on communities.[12]

Given the context and the nature of their concern, the observations of Baynes and Mrs. Haldane about the conduct of alien Jews in Oxford cannot be simply brushed aside, but they are hard to investigate. Oxford was in a process of rapid transformation, which had begun with a large working-class influx into the motor trade in the 1930s and was now enhanced by the strains of war and evacuation. Although they were only a fraction of the problem, the number of registered aliens in Oxford doubled from December 1939 to December 1940 to over 2000, of whom 275 males and 702 females were enemy aliens,[13] probably mostly Jews. They were an easy target on whom to blame the strains of overcrowding, and the isolated case which caused irritation, if it existed, could have been magnified many times.

Obviously, there was some simple nonsense. Ettinghausen in 1939 was called on to investigate a report that antisemitic agitation was rampant in Nettlebed on the road to Henley. Investigation showed that there were in fact no Jewish evacuees in Nettlebed. 'The explanation was simple: the manners and speech of these working-class London women and children were utterly foreign, and therefore offensive, to the simple farm-workers of Nettlebed, who had never seen a Jew in their lives. They took it for

granted that such uncouth Cockney-speaking people must be Jews, and cursed them accordingly. There was nothing we could do about it: to the good people of Nettlebed these people *were* Jews (by definition, if you like).'[14]

It may be doubted whether there were many wealthy East End Jews and there was little comfortable accommodation to be had. One East End Jew reports casually 'I arrived in August 1940 with my parents when I was a mere slip of a lad. They managed to get one room in Bullingdon Road and I shared a room with a relative in Hurst Street.'[15] There were some relatively prosperous refugees who had seen trouble coming well in advance and had settled their activities in Oxford, but those I knew will have been pretty scrupulous about their behaviour. A much larger number of refugees had been translated from security to penury. Some of them worked their way back from the humblest occupations to some form of stability and normality; some carried on with lives which were literally wrecked and lived out their time in Oxford with obsessive economy. That they were under abnormal strain was recognized in some newspaper reports. There was the wife whose husband and four sons were interned; the sons, of whom the youngest was 16, were whisked off to Canada without notice. Another of 28 died from eclampsia in pregnancy after her husband had been transported to Australia. It would be ridiculous to claim that all Jews in Oxford were saintly, but they, as well as the citizens of Oxford, had much to contend with.