

Holocaust and Rescue - Impotent or Indifferent? Anglo-Jewry 1938-1945.
By Pamela Shatzkes.
Palgrave 2002.

Holocaust and Rescue is a meticulous account of the workings of the leadership of British Jewry during the worst years of the 20th century for Jews. First they had to wrestle with all the practical details of facilitating the escape of thousands of Jewish refugees from Nazi discrimination, and then they had to come to terms with the news of the Final Solution and the ever deeper abyss into which their Jewish brethren in Occupied Europe were being thrust.

Pamela Shatzkes describes critically but not unsympathetically the travails of the leadership of the Board of Deputies in these terrible times, the efforts of its Presidents Laski and Brodetsky, of Otto Schiff and Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld, to save Jews from the Nazis and of the almost impossible challenge they had to meet when juxtaposing the needs of the Jews of Europe with the demands of the Allied war effort. All those who know the workings of the British Jewish establishment, and those aware of intra-communal politics will understand and empathise with the way people behaved in these extraordinary times, and will find it easy to give credit where merited to those who achieved something positive against overwhelming odds.

Shatzkes is to be congratulated for the cool scholarship that she brings to this emotive subject, as well as for opening up to a general readership an important part of twentieth century British Jewish history in such an exemplary way.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh