

## Reading 16A

### SUICIDE NOTE OF SHMUEL ZYGELBOIM {zee-gull-boym}

Shmuel Zygelboim had been an elected member of the Polish parliament before World War II. He represented the Jewish political party called the *Bund*. When Poland was conquered by Germany, the Polish government went into exile, that is, fled to London. Zygelboim lived in London as part of the Polish government in exile. By 1943, he had learned of the massacres in Poland—in particular, in his city of Warsaw. After pleading for months with British government officials to make some public protest, he had achieved no success. Alone, desperate and depressed, he committed suicide on the steps on the British Parliament and left the following letter for the President of the Polish government in exile in London.

It has become clear from the information that has reached me from Poland that the Germans are now annihilating the remaining Jews of Poland with terrible cruelty. The last act of a tragedy without precedent in history is now being played out behind the walls of the ghetto. Responsibility for the crime of murdering the entire Jewish population of Poland lies first and foremost with the murderers themselves, but indirectly this responsibility lies with all mankind—the allied nations and governments who have not yet made any effort toward concrete action to halt the crime . . .

I also wish to declare that even though the Polish government contributed much to awakening world public opinion, it did not do so in an adequate manner. It did nothing befitting the magnitude of the drama now taking place in Poland. . . I can no longer remain silent. I cannot live when the remnant of the Jewish people in Poland, whom I represent, is being steadily annihilated. My comrades in the Warsaw ghetto fell with weapons in their hands, in the last heroic struggle. I was not fortunate enough to die as they did and together with them. But I belong to them and to their mass graves. By my death I wish to express my vigorous protest against the apathy with which the world regards and resigns itself to the slaughter of the Jewish people.