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# British responses to the Holocaust

## Resources

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# **RESOURCES 1: A3 COLOUR CARDS, SINGLE-SIDED**

# SOURCE A: March 1939



© The Wiener Library

## AT FIRST SIGHT...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the photograph. What can you see?

You might want to think about:

1. Where was the photograph taken? Which country?
2. Who are the people in the photograph? What is their relationship to each other?
3. What is happening in the photograph?

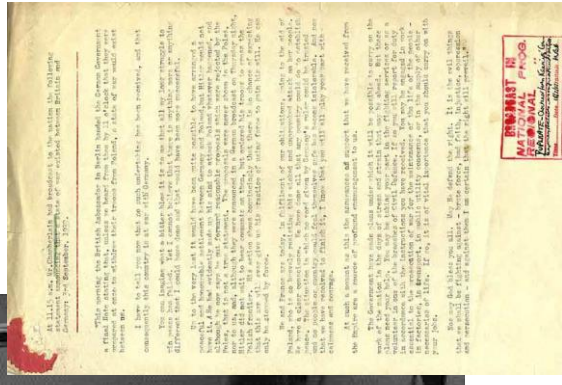
Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the photograph. Think about how you might answer ‘*how can you tell?*’ every time you make a statement from the image.

# SOURCE B: September 1939



© BBC Archives

‘We and France are today, in fulfilment of our obligations, going to the aid of Poland, who is so bravely resisting this wicked and unprovoked attack on her people.’



## AT FIRST SIGHT...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the photograph and the extract from the document. What can you see?

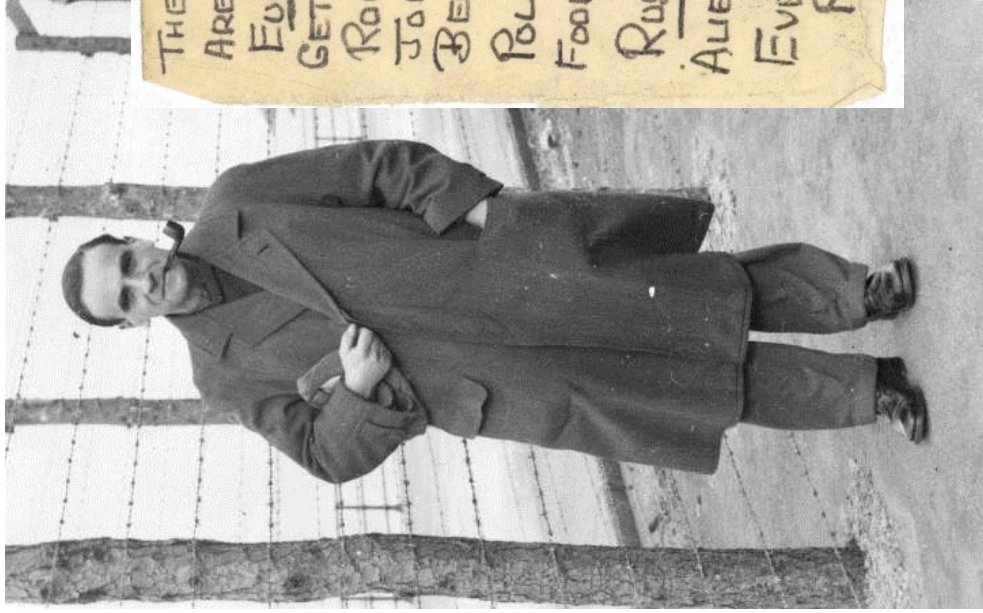
You might want to think about:

1. The person speaking is British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. What is he saying, and why is he saying it at this time?
2. Does this support the belief that Britain declared war on Germany to save Jews from the Holocaust, or does it suggest other war aims?

Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the photograph. Think about how you might answer ‘how can you tell?’ every time you make a statement from the sources.



# SOURCE C: c.1940



© The Wiener Library WL6525

THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN PRENTON  
ARE TAXED TO KEEP SCUM FROM  
EUROPE WHILST ENGLISH CANNOT  
GET A HOUSE. ALIENS THROUGH THEIR  
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH STEAL  
JOBS AND HOUSES. YOU WANT TO  
BECOME BRITISH. SO DO ALL THE  
POLES WHO ARE EATING (GUZZLING)  
FOOD IN ENGLAND. THIEVES, MURDERERS  
RUSSIA DOES NOT HAVE 100,000  
ALIENS LIVING IN THE COUNTRY.  
EVERYONE HATES YOU. GO TO  
PALESTINE.

## AT FIRST SIGHT...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the sources. What can you see?

You might want to think about:

1. Where was the photograph taken? Which country?
2. Who do you think the person in the photograph is?
3. What is the letter describing, and who do you think has written it?
4. What is the connection between the letter and the photograph?

Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the sources. Think about how you might answer 'how can you tell?' every time you make a statement from the sources.

# GERMANS MURDER 700,000 JEWS IN POLAND

## TRAVELLING GAS CHAMBERS

### DAILY TELEGRAPH REPORTER

More than 700,000 Polish Jews have been slaughtered by the Germans in the greatest massacre in the world's history. In addition, a system of starvation is being carried out in which the number of deaths, on the admission of the Germans themselves, bids fair to be almost as large.

The most gruesome details of mass killing, even to the use of poison gas, are revealed in a report sent secretly to Mr. S. Zygielboim, Jewish representative on the Polish National Council in London, by an active group in Poland. It is strongly felt that action should be taken to prevent Hitler from carrying out his threat that five minutes before the war ends, however it may end, he will exterminate all Jews in Europe.

It was the avowed intention of the Germans from the early days of the war to exterminate the Jewish population on Polish territory.

In a 1940 New Year message Gauleiter Greiser said that the only use to be made of the Poles was as slaves for Germany, but for the Jews there was no future.

trace of them has been lost. About 3,000 more were put into barracks in a Lublin suburb. Now there is not a single Jew there.

In Cracow during March 50 men on a proscribed list were shot outside their homes. A similar number of men and women were killed outside their street doors during an arranged night of terror in the Warsaw ghetto. All social groups in the ghetto were affected. More such nights are expected.

The Warsaw ghetto, actually an extensive concentration camp, houses

© Telegraph Media Group Ltd.

## AT FIRST SIGHT ...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the source. What can you see?

You might want to think about:

1. Who was this written by, and who was it written for?
2. What do you think its purpose is? What message is it giving?
3. What new information do you learn from it?
4. Where does this information come from? How reliable do you think this is?

Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the newspaper extract. Think about how you might answer 'how can you tell?' every time you make a statement from the source.



# Source E: August 1942



© USHMM photo no. 17309

44

C 7853

11 AUG 1942 DEPARTMENTAL No. 1.

[CYPHER].

FROM BERNE TO FOREIGN OFFICE.

Mr. Morton.  
No. 2851.  
August 10th, 1942.

D. 4.48 p.m. August 10th, 1942.  
R. 6.25 p.m. August 10th, 1942.

YTTTTT

Following from His Majesty's Consul General at Geneva No. 174 (Begins).

Following for Mr. S.S. Silverman M.P., Chairman of British Section, World Jewish Congress London from Mr. Gerhart Riegner Secretary of World Jewish Congress, Geneva.

[Begins].

Received alarming report stating that, in the Fuehrer's Headquarters, a plan has been discussed, and is under consideration, according to which all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany numbering 5½ to 4 millions should, after deportation and concentration in the East, be at one blow exterminated, in order to resolve, once and for all the Jewish question in Europe. Action is reported to be planned for the autumn. Ways of execution are still being discussed including the use of prussic acid. We transmit this information with all the necessary reservation, as exactitude cannot be confirmed by us. Our informant is reported to have close connexions with the highest German authorities, and his reports are generally reliable. Please inform and consult New York. (Ends).

[ENDIV].

© The National Archives FO371/30917

## AT FIRST SIGHT...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the source. What can you see?

You might want to think about:

1. When was it sent? What was happening in the Second World War at the time?
2. Who has written this, and who was it sent to?
3. What new information does it give?
4. How reliable do you think it might be?

Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the source. Think about how you might answer 'how can you tell?' every time you make a statement from the source.

# Source F: September 1942

57.

The German is now more hated in every country in Europe than any race has been since human records began.

In a dozen countries Hitler's firing parties are at work every morning, and a dark stream of cold execution blood flows between the Germans and almost all their fellowmen.

The cruelties, the massacres of hostages, the brutal persecutions in which the Germans have indulged in every land into which their armies have broken have recently received an addition in the most bestial and the most senseless of all their offences, namely, the mass deportations of Jews from France, with the pitiful horrors attendant upon the calculated and final scattering of families.

© The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust

58.

This tragedy fills one with astonishment as well as with indignation, and illustrates as nothing else can do, the utter degradation of the Nazi nature and of all who lend themselves to its unnatural and perverted passions.

When the hour of liberation strikes in Europe, as strike it will, it will also be the hour of retribution.

Reference: CHAR 9/156 A  
Image © The Sir Winston Churchill Archive Trust  
& content © the copyright owner, 2001  
8x

## AT FIRST SIGHT ...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the source. What can you see?

You might want to think about:

1. What clues are there in the layout of the words that help identify what this is?
2. What do you notice about the language and words used? What does this tell you?
3. Who has written this source, and to whom are they writing?
4. What is the issue being discussed?
5. What does this tell you about Britain's knowledge and attitude towards the unfolding genocide?

Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the source. Think about how you might answer 'how can you tell?' every time you make a statement from the source.



# Source G: October 1942

179  
29 October, 1942.

My dear Archbishop,

I cannot refrain from sending, through you, to the audience which is assembling under your Chairmanship at the Albert Hall today to protest against Nazi atrocities inflicted on the Jews, the assurance of my warm sympathy with the objects of the meeting. The systematic cruelties to which the Jewish people - men, women, and children - have been exposed under the Nazi regime are amongst the most terrible events of history, and place an indelible stain upon all who perpetrate and instigate them. Free men and women denounce these vile crimes, and when this world struggle ends with the enthronement of human rights, racial persecution will be ended.

Yrs sincerely,  
Winston S Churchill

His Grace  
The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

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## AT FIRST SIGHT...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the source. What can you see?

You might want to think about:

1. What clues are there on the source that help identify what it is?
2. Who has written this source, and to whom are they writing?
3. What is the issue being discussed?
4. What is Churchill's opinion about the issue?

Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the source. Think about how you might answer 'how can you tell?' every time you make a statement from the source.

# Source H: December 1942



© BBC Archives

'the German authorities, not content with denying to persons of Jewish race in all the territories over which their barbarous rule has been extended the most elementary human rights, are now carrying into effect Hitler's oft repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe... (we) condemn in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination... such events can only strengthen the resolve of all freedom loving peoples to overthrow the barbarous Hitlerite tyranny... those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution.'

## AT FIRST SIGHT...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the source. What can you see?

You might want to think about:

1. The person speaking is Anthony Eden, Foreign Secretary and member of the British government. Who is he speaking to?
2. What do you notice about the language and words that are used? What does this tell you?
3. What is the issue being discussed?
4. What new information do you learn about Britain's position towards the Holocaust?

Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the source. Think about how you might answer 'how can you tell?' every time you make a statement from the source.

# Source I: May 1943

'The responsibility for the crime of the murder of the whole Jewish nationality in Poland rests first of all on those who are carrying it out, but indirectly it falls also upon the whole of humanity, on the peoples of the Allied nations and on their governments, who up to this day have not taken any real steps to halt this crime. By looking on passively upon this murder of defenseless millions tortured children, women and men they have become partners to the responsibility ...

...I cannot continue to live and to be silent while the remnants of Polish Jewry, whose representative I am, are being murdered. My comrades in the Warsaw ghetto fell with arms in their hands in the last heroic battle. I was not permitted to fall like them, together with them, but I belong with them, to their mass grave.

By my death, I wish to give expression to my most profound protest against the inaction in which the world watches and permits the destruction of the Jewish people...

I bid farewell to all and everything dear to me and loved by me.

S. ZYGIELBOJM'



## AT FIRST SIGHT ...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the source. What do you think it is about?

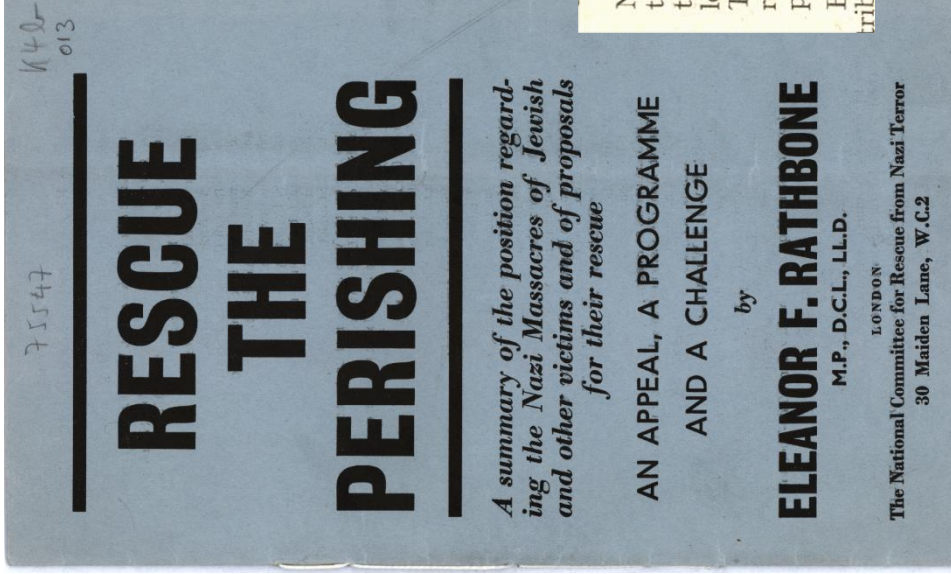
You might want to think about;

1. What is the letter saying?
2. Who do you think the intended audience might be?
3. What does the author intend to do next, and why?

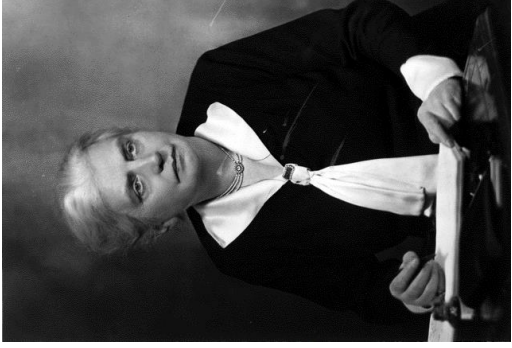
Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the letter. Think about how you might answer '*how can you tell?*' every time you make a statement from the source.



# Source J: June 1943



© The Wiener Library



“The above-mentioned Governments and the French National Committee condemn in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination. They declare that such events can only strengthen the resolve of all freedom-loving peoples to overthrow the barbarous Hitlerite tyranny. They re-affirm their solemn resolution to ensure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution, and to press on with the necessary practical measures to this end.”

But the “practical measures” then promised were for retribution not for rescue. The massacres continued. The later facts

## AT FIRST SIGHT...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the source. What can you see?

You might want to think about:

1. What does the title of this pamphlet mean?
2. Many of the words are the same as another source. Which one, and what does Eleanor Rathbone think of it?
3. Who do you think the intended audience might be?

Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the source. Think about how you might answer ‘how can you tell?’ every time you make a statement from the source.

# Source K : July 1944



## AT FIRST SIGHT...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the photographs. What can you see?

You might want to think about:

1. What viewpoint have these two photographs been taken from? Why?
2. What can you see in the photographs?
3. How are the two photographs connected?
4. Who do you think took these photographs, and why?
5. What new information do these photographs give you?

Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the photograph. Think about how you might answer ‘*how can you tell?*’ every time you make a statement from the source.



# Source L: May 1945

Hampstead

Atrocity Film Indirects

M 40 B

3. 5. 45

C.G.

"I think it has been rather an unfair trick of the Government to have fastened on these horror camps like this. I don't say it wasn't a dreadful thing, but I do think they should tell us the other side of the picture - the fearful disorganisation of Germany during the last few months, due to our bombing largely. Well, I ask you, would the Germans deliberately establish focal points of dysentery and typhus all over Germany if they could avoid it? They know as well as we do that it can't be confined to the camps once it has broken out. It will very quickly spread all over Germany. No, the disorganisation made it impossible to run the camps or supply them at all. I don't say they were run like the Ritz before all this, but I do think it's gross misrepresentation to suggest that the prisoners have been treated like that all along, deliberately. It just isn't sense."

As for the pictures of thin, starving people, dead and alive - well, dysentery and typhus are wasting diseases, and anyone suffering from advanced stages of them will look like that no matter what their diet is or has been."

## AT FIRST SIGHT...

Take a couple of minutes to look at the source. What can you see?

You might want to think about:

1. What is this source talking about?
2. Why do you think it was written?
3. What does the source tell us about who knew what, and when, about the Holocaust?

Try to back-up your ideas with some evidence from the photograph. Think about how you might answer 'how can you tell?' every time you make a statement from the source.



# **RESOURCES 2: A4 COLOUR CARDS, SINGLE-SIDED**

# Word bank for historical sources



word	meaning
<b>atrocities</b>	an extremely cruel act
<b>barbarous</b>	extremely cruel or uncivilised
<b>bestial</b>	behaving so badly that the person is acting 'like a beast'
<b>deportation</b>	transporting someone forcibly from a place or a country
<b>indelible</b>	impossible to remove
<b>liberation</b>	setting free
<b>obligation</b>	a duty or commitment to do something
<b>passive</b>	inactive; allowing something to happen without doing anything about it
<b>remnants</b>	what is left over after the rest has been destroyed or removed
<b>retribution</b>	revenge
<b>typhus</b>	an acute disease spread by lice and fleas
<b>tyranny</b>	a cruel form of rule that doesn't respect people's rights

# **RESOURCES 3: A4 COLOUR CARDS, SINGLE-SIDED**



# SOURCE A: Context

Title: Refugees from German-occupied Czechoslovakia being marched way by police at Croydon airport  
Date: 31<sup>st</sup> March 1939  
Archive: Wiener Library, London

**The Wiener Library**  
for the Study of the Holocaust & Genocide

## Source context

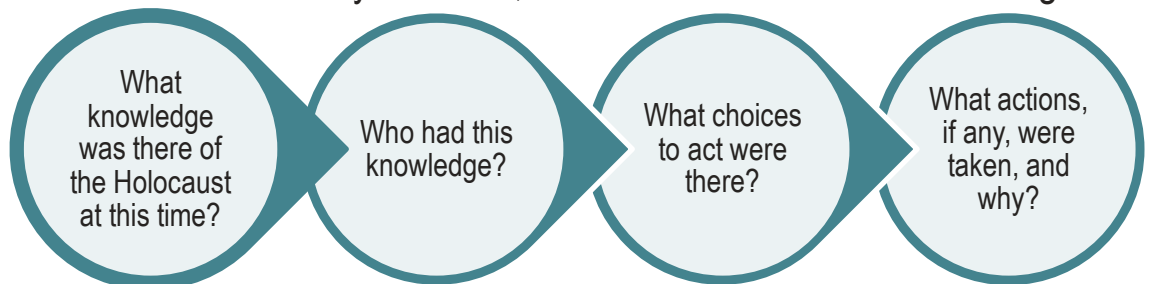
This photograph shows a Polish-Jewish man and a woman being deported. They are shown at Croydon airport being escorted by police officers to be sent on a plane back to Czechoslovakia. They were part of a group of 13 people being deported; the man had previously been living in Czechoslovakia, and had just arrived in Britain.

The Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia just over two weeks before this photo was taken, on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1939, and some Czechs had decided to flee. Refugees at the time had no automatic right of entry to Britain, unless they could show they had enough money to support themselves, or had someone to look after them. There was some opposition to immigration on the grounds that it threatened British jobs, and some feared that 'floodgates' would be opened if Britain offered sanctuary to all who wanted it.

The refugees threatened to jump out of the plane if the pilot took off, so the pilot refused. One story is that the man had actually informed the press beforehand so they could come and record the event, hoping this might help his case to stay in Britain. Eventually, it seems that only one of the group of thirteen, David Herbst, was allowed to stay because his wife, a former Austrian tennis star was already in Britain, and friends testified he had enough money to stay.

## Key questions

What does this source tell you about...



# SOURCE B: Context

Title: Neville Chamberlain's 'Declaration of War'

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939

Archive: The National Archives

 The National Archives

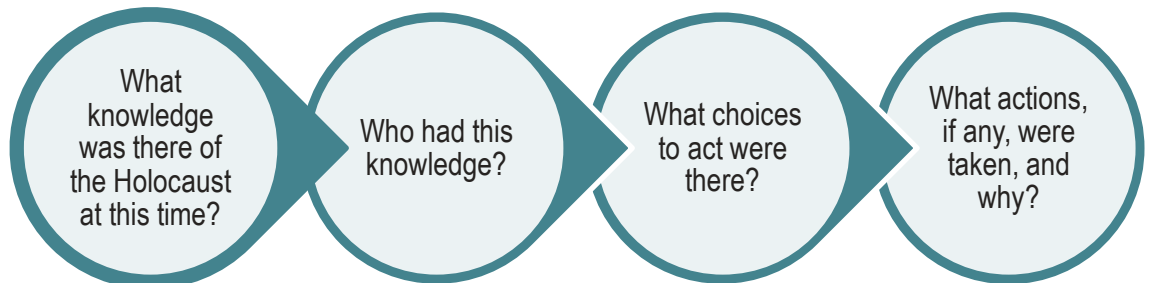
## Source context

Following Hitler's invasion of Poland on the 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1939, Britain and France quickly declared a state of war with Germany.

What is important here is the reasoning Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister at the time, gave for going to war. The 'obligations' he refers to are the promises Britain and France made to Poland that they would declare war if Poland was invaded. There is no mention here, though, of Jews, and certainly no mention of going to war to save Jews, which is a misconception many students (and adults) in England still have.

## Key questions;

What does this source tell you about...



# SOURCE C: Context

Title: Ludwig Neumann interned on the Isle of Man

Date: 1941

Archive: The Wiener Library

## Source context

**The Wiener Library**  
for the Study of the Holocaust & Genocide

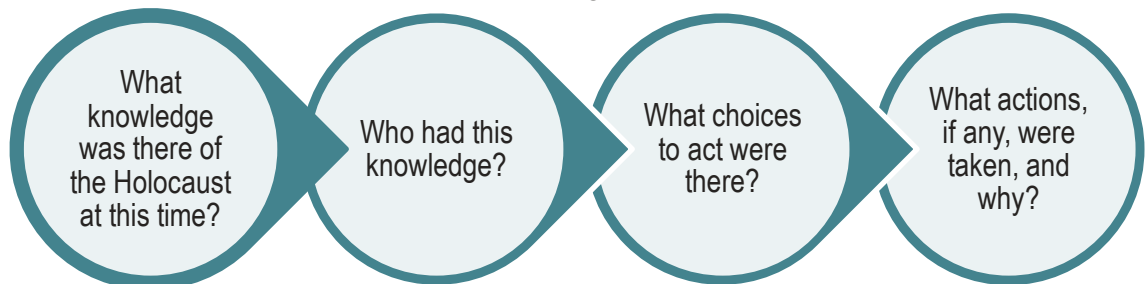
At the start of the war there were more than 70,000 potential 'enemy aliens' estimated to be living in Britain, including Germans, Austrians and, later, Italians. The government divided them into three categories – 'A' were 'high risk' (600); 'B' were 'doubtful cases' (6,500); and 'C' were 'no security risk' (64,000) which included mostly refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. At first, only 'A' category were sent to special 'internment camps' – eventually, almost all were. Many were sent to camps in racecourses, such as Ascot and York, or incomplete housing estates, such as Huyton near Liverpool. Most, though, were sent to the Isle of Man.

Ludwig Neumann was a German-Jewish businessman who owned an industrial clothing factory in Essen. After he was forced by the Nazis to sell it to a so-called 'Aryan' businessman, he was sent to Dachau concentration camp, and from there left Germany for Great Britain where he was briefly interned in the Isle of Man as an 'enemy alien'. He later went on to serve as an anti-aircraft gunner for the British during the war.

The National Archives also contains many notes and letters such as the one shown here, written to the Home Office, describing some British attitudes towards non-British citizens and immigrants.

## Key questions

What does this source tell you about...



# SOURCE D: Context

Title: **The Daily Telegraph**  
Date: **15<sup>th</sup> June 1942**  
Archive: **The Daily Telegraph**

## Source context

**The Daily Telegraph**

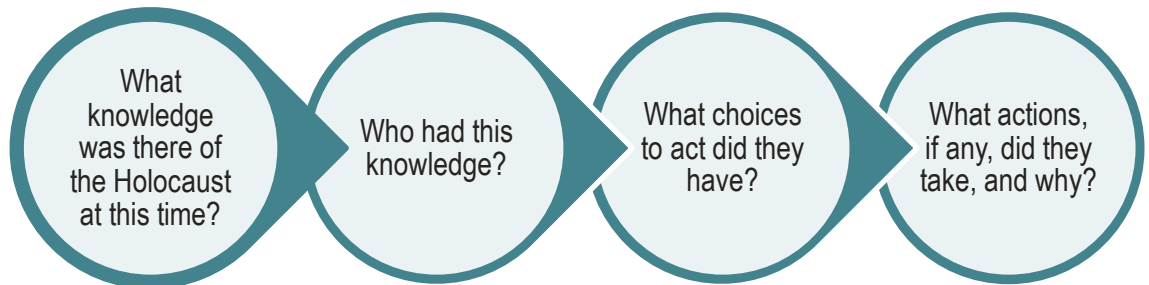
On 25 June 1942, the *Daily Telegraph* published information that 700,000 Polish Jews had been murdered, naming Chelmno as one of the killing sites. Chelmno, in German-occupied Poland, was the first of the Nazi death camps and used mobile gas vans to murder Jews.

The information came from a report sent by the Bund via the Polish underground to Szmul Zygielbojm, a representative on the Polish National Council in London. The Bund was a Jewish socialist party in Poland which promoted the political, cultural and social rights of Jewish workers and fought against antisemitism.

Zygielbojm worked tirelessly to alert the world to the mass murder of his fellow Jews. On 26 June 1942, Zygielbojm broadcast the main facts of the Bund Report on BBC radio.

## Key questions

What does this source tell you about...



# SOURCE E: Context

Title: **The Riegner Telegram**  
Date: **8<sup>th</sup> August 1942**  
Archive: **The National Archives, London**

## Source context

 The National Archives

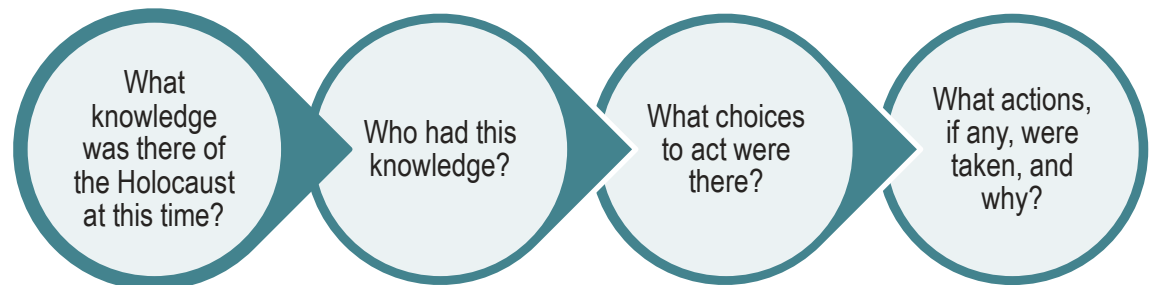
Gerhart Riegner was the World Jewish Congress (WJC) representative in Switzerland. A message about the Nazi extermination plan reached Riegner in Switzerland from a German industrialist who hated Nazism, and who had access to highly placed Nazi officials.

On 8<sup>th</sup> August, convinced that the message was as accurate as it was terrible, Riegner handed an identical telegram to the British Consul to send to Sydney Silverman in London, a Labour MP, and Chairman of the British Section of the WJC. Nothing was said, or even known, about the plan having already been in operation for nearly 4½ months already.

Silverman was finally given Riegner's message on 17<sup>th</sup> August, and promptly asked for an interview at the Foreign Office. At the interview, Colonel Ponsonby said 'he should consider whether any action taken by the Jewish Associations might not annoy the Germans and make any action they were proposing to take even more unpleasant than it might otherwise have been.' It was clear that the impact of Riegner's telegram had been lost.

## Key questions

What does this source tell you about...





# SOURCE F: Context

Title: Churchill's speaking notes  
for the House of Commons  
Date: 8<sup>th</sup> September 1942  
Archive: Churchill Archives  
Centre, Cambridge

## Source context

### What is this source?

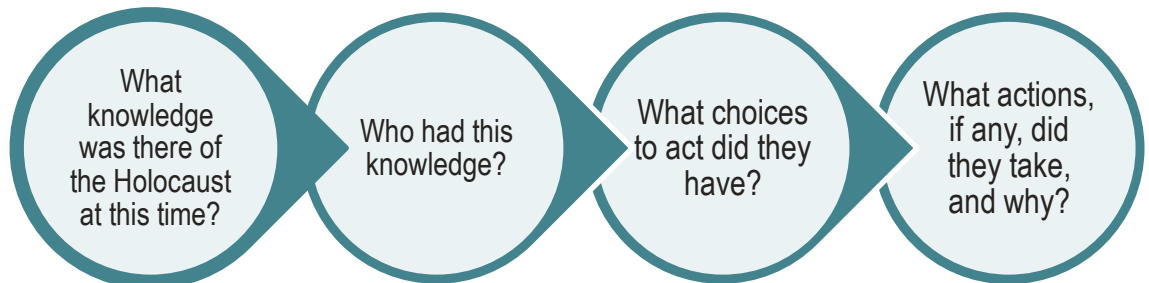
This is an extract from Prime Minister Winston Churchill's notes for a speech he gave in the House of Commons in Parliament. He condemns the 'utter degradation of the Nazi nature' and the atrocities they have committed across Europe with particular reference to the Jews.

This speech was given on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1942, shortly before the Allied Declaration given by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden that publicly acknowledged the Nazi atrocities against the Jews.

The final sentence makes clear that British wartime policy was to win the war first, and then punish the perpetrators after. The Allies never made it a war aim to save the Jews of Europe, and were unwilling to divert significant resources away from the war effort, arguing that this would be the most effective way to stop the Nazi crimes.

### Key questions

What does this source tell you about...



# SOURCE G: Context

Title: **Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury by Winston Churchill**  
Date: **29 October 1942**  
Archive: **Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge**

## Source Context

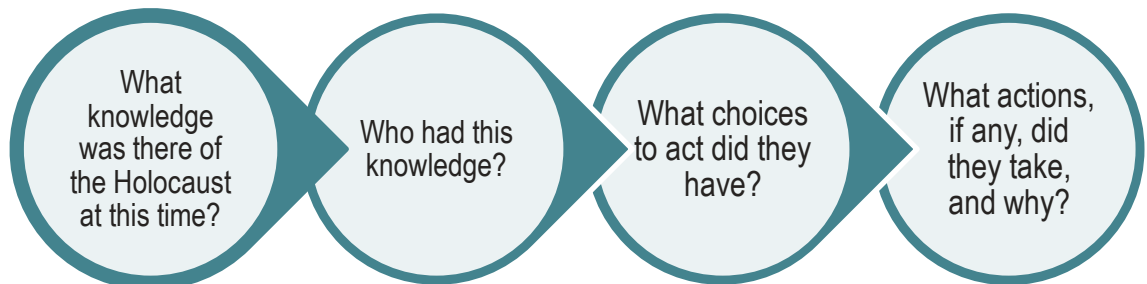
### What is this source?

This is a copy of a letter of support from Winston Churchill, written to the Archbishop of Canterbury, condemning Nazi atrocities against the Jewish people. This letter was written ahead of a public meeting to be held in the Albert Hall to express outrage at the atrocities in German-occupied territories.

It demonstrates that there was widespread knowledge of these atrocities, during the war itself, while the murders were ongoing. And that this was known not only at the highest political level (Churchill was the British Prime Minister), but also among the general public, as shown in the public meeting to be held in a prominent public building.

### Key questions

What does this source tell you about...



# SOURCE H: Context

Title: **Anthony Eden's 'Allied Declaration'**  
Date: **17<sup>th</sup> December, 1942**  
Archive: **The National Archives**

## Source context

 The National Archives

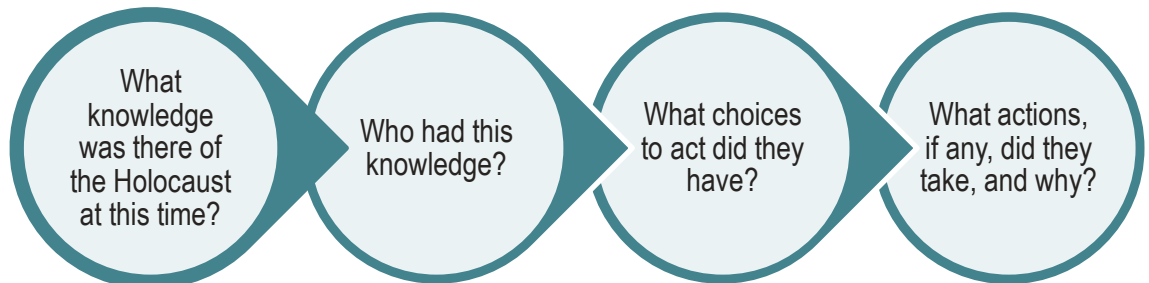
Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, read out a statement in Parliament called the 'Joint Declaration by Members of the United Nations' on behalf of both the British and American governments.

In it, he described the unfolding genocide in Nazi-occupied Europe and concluded by saying that 'those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution,' which directly relates to one of the options on the 2016 UCL student survey.

Pressure had been building on the Government to acknowledge the unfolding genocide in Europe as information about it was increasing, especially that supplied by the Polish Government-in-Exile which was based in London.

## Key questions;

What does this source tell you about...



# SOURCE I: Context

Title: **Suicide letter of Szmul Zygielbojm**  
Date: **11<sup>th</sup> May 1943**  
Archive: **The National Archives**

## Source Context

 The National Archives

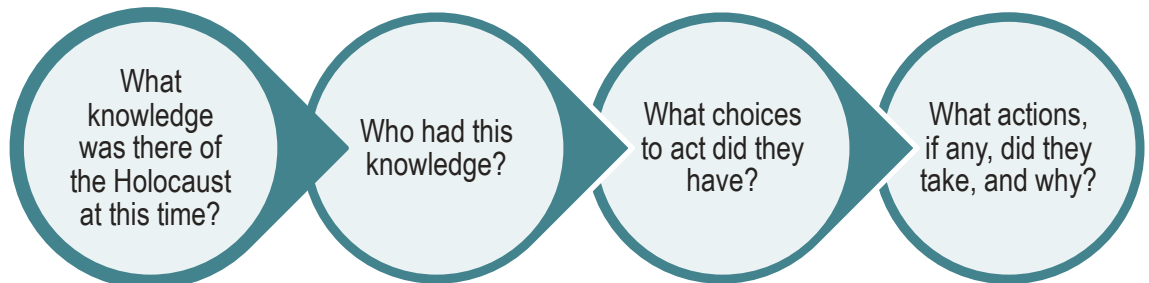
Szmul Zygielbojm, the Bundist deputy to the Polish National Council, made frantic efforts to persuade the Polish Government-in-Exile in London and the Allied powers to do more to help save the Jews of continental Europe, but they came to nothing.

On 11<sup>th</sup> May 1943, he told a Polish Jewish reporter that he was contemplating a hunger strike to draw attention to the slaughter. However, instead on 12<sup>th</sup> May Szmul Zygielbojm committed suicide in London.

His note said 'the responsibility for this crime... falls indirectly on the whole human race'. Although Zygielbojm's death was widely reported in the press, the motive behind it received little notice.

## Key questions;

What does this source tell you about...





# SOURCE J: Context

Title: 'Rescue the Perishing' by  
Eleanor Rathbone  
Date: June, 1943  
Archive: The Wiener Library

## Source Context

The  
**Wiener** Library  
for the Study of the Holocaust & Genocide

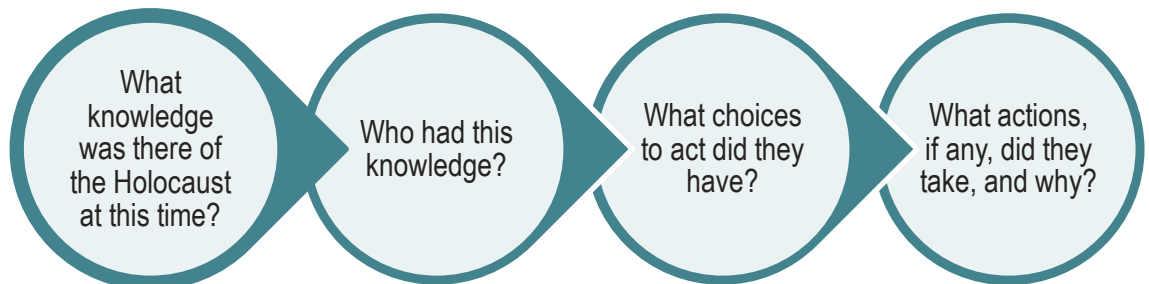
Eleanor Rathbone was a social reformer who became an independent MP in 1929 until her death in 1946. She was particularly involved in campaigns for women's suffrage, human rights and issues around refugees. This pamphlet was first published in May 1943, at the time of a long-awaited debate in Parliament over the refugee crisis.

Rathbone argued in Parliament that the British government showed little sign of urgency in dealing with the refugee problem. She asked how many more 'who might be saved will perish' unless the British government acted. 'We are responsible if a single man, woman or child perishes whom we could and should have saved,' she declared.

Conservative MP Colonel Ward, who spoke after her, responded by saying that 'to admit a large number of refugees of the Jewish religion might easily fan the smouldering flames of antisemitism which exist here into a flame.' He also feared they would gravitate to the East End of London, where, after the Blitz, there was a severe housing shortage. He suggested refugees should be settled in Libya and Tunisia, in North Africa, instead.

## Key questions

What does this source tell you about...



# SOURCE K: Context

Title: Air Ministry & RAF  
Photograph  
Date: July 1944  
Archive: The National Archives

## Source context



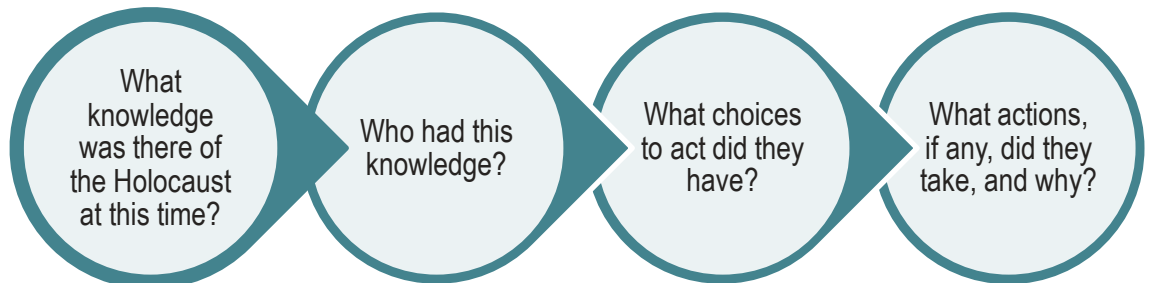
Although they are not dated, these two photographs were probably taken around July – August 1944. Whilst probably taken by an American reconnaissance plane, they were held by the Air Ministry and RAF records.

According to historian Martin Gilbert, Winston Churchill was supportive of bombing raids on Auschwitz, which hadn't been possible earlier in the war as it was beyond the range of Allied aircraft, but the RAF were resistant for logistical reasons. There was also some resistance from the World Jewish Congress, concerned that the first victims of any bombing would be the Jews themselves, but they did call for bombing railway lines.

The area identified as number 2 on the first photograph is that shown in the second: Auschwitz III (Monowitz). This slave labour camp served a synthetic oil and rubber plant. Industries like this were the prime targets of Allied bombing raids from August 1944, with the intention of disabling German industry to disrupt its war effort. In September some cluster bombs were dropped on Birkenau, but this was in error. Several times Auschwitz I and II were accidentally photographed, but photo-analysts knew little about Auschwitz and so didn't comprehend that they were looking at a factory of death.

## Key questions

What does this source tell you about...



# SOURCE L: Context

Title: **Atrocity Film Directive**  
Date: **3<sup>rd</sup> May 1945**  
Archive: **Mass Observation**

## Source context

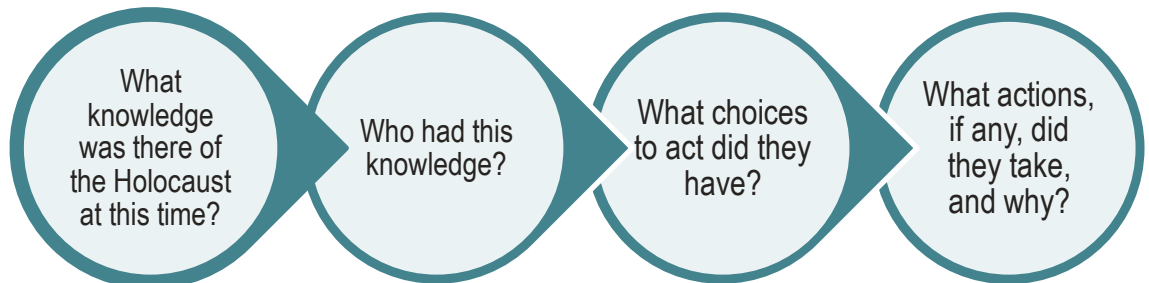
This source is a response to a Mass Observation Directive about a newsreel film of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen that was shown in British cinemas. It is dated May 1945, and shows the response of one member of the public to viewing this film.

Bergen-Belsen, near Hanover in northern Germany, was the most significant of the concentration camps to be liberated by the British, on April 15<sup>th</sup> 1945.

Conditions were horrific when the British arrived. Half the 60,000 inmates had arrived just a week before on death marches from the East. Disease, especially typhus, was rife, as was starvation, with many of the inmates being described in witness accounts as 'living skeletons' and 'walking dead'.

## Key questions

What does this source tell you about...



**RESOURCES 4:  
A6 COLOUR CARDS,  
SINGLE-SIDED**



# *Kindertransport*

November 1938 - August 1939

British citizens like Nicholas Winton worked tirelessly to rescue Jewish children in German-occupied Europe.

He helped raise funds to pay for their transport and guaranteed the British government that they wouldn't remain in the United Kingdom after the war. In all, he found foster homes for 669 children.

The children's parents who weren't allowed entry to the UK have been given far less attention in public memory.



# Deporting Jewish refugees

## March 1939



When the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia on the 15<sup>th</sup> March, some Jews decided to flee. Refugees at the time had no automatic right of entry to Britain, unless they could show they had enough money, or had someone to look after them.

In Britain there was some opposition to immigration on the grounds that they threatened British jobs, and some feared that 'floodgates' would be opened if Britain offered sanctuary to all who wanted it.

# British internment camps

## c.1940



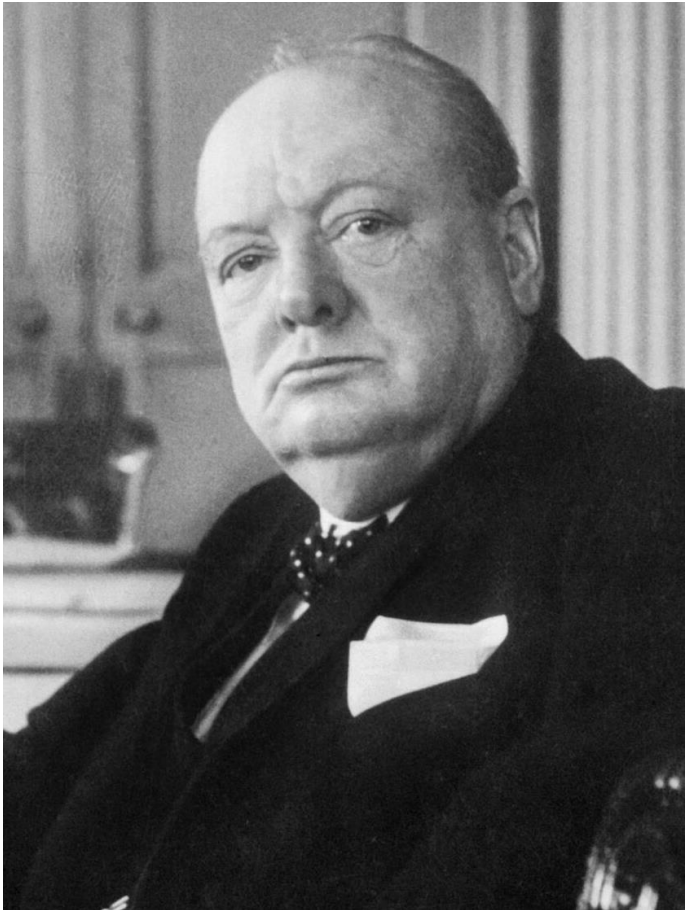
German-Jewish citizens such as Ludwig Neumann were seen as 'enemy aliens' and placed in internment camps in Britain, mostly on the Isle of Man.

Many British citizens resented their presence. They called the inmates 'scum,' 'aliens,' 'thieves' and 'murderers'.

The National Archives has many letters that members of the public wrote to the Home Office at the time that used this sort of language.

# Churchill: 'a crime without a name'

August 1941



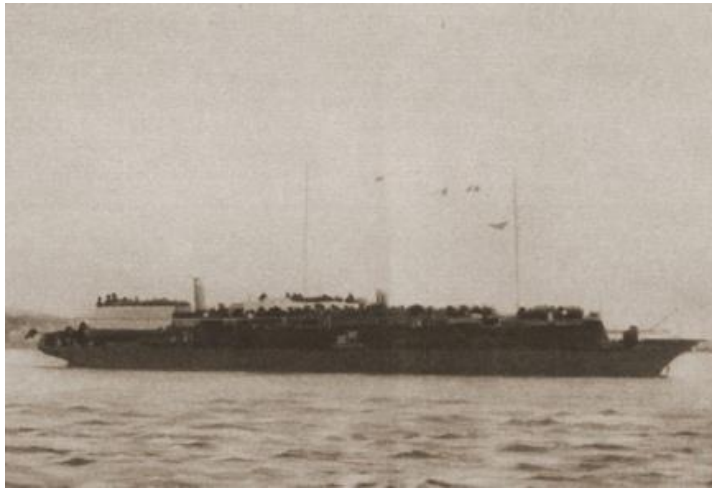
Winston Churchill described the actions of *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squads) as Hitler's forces invaded the Soviet Union in 1941. Churchill said:

'As his armies advance, whole districts are being exterminated. Scores of thousands, literally scores of thousands of executions in cold blood are being perpetrated by the German police troops upon the Russian patriots who defend their native soil... We are in the presence of a crime without a name.'



# Sinking of the MV Struma

February, 1942



The MV Struma was a ship trying to take nearly 800 Jewish refugees from Romania to British-controlled Palestine.

The British refused the ship permission to land in Palestine, so the Turkish authorities towed her out to sea from Istanbul, where she was sunk by a Soviet submarine.

All the passengers died apart from 19 year old David Stoliar, who clung to a piece of floating wreckage and was rescued.

# Newspaper reports Jewish murders

## May 1942

The Daily Telegraph reported the murders of 700,000 Jews in Poland.

It called it 'the greatest massacre in the world's history.' It even mentioned the use of poison gas.

The report is based on information sent to Szmul Zygielbojm of the Polish National Council in London by an underground Polish group that managed to smuggle details out of the country.



# Riegner Telegram

August 1942



Gerhart Riegner (of the World Jewish Congress) sent a telegram to the British government, which was met with disbelief. It said:

‘received alarming report stating that, in the Fuehrer's Headquarters, a plan has been discussed, and is under consideration, according to which all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany numbering 3½ to 4 millions should, after deportation and concentration in the East, be at one blow exterminated...’

# Churchill: 'the hour of retribution'

## September 1942



In the House of Commons Winston Churchill gave a speech declaring:

'When the hour of liberation strikes in Europe, as strike it will, it will also be the hour of retribution.'

It set out the consistent British strategic belief that it was necessary to win the war first, and then punish the perpetrators afterwards.

# Karski report

## November 1942



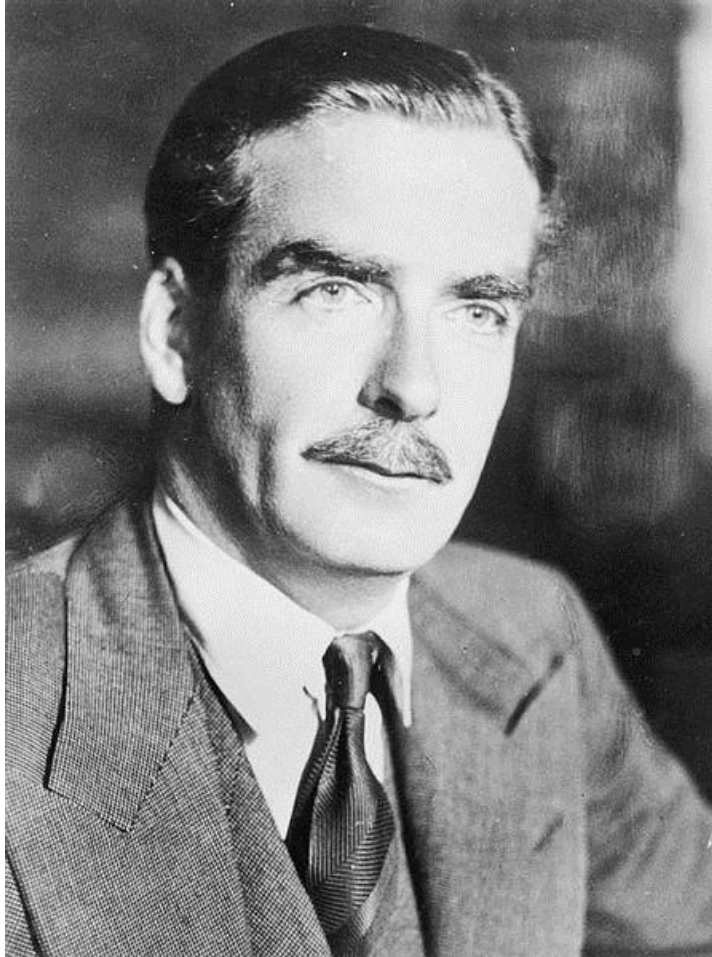
Jan Karski provided non-Jewish, eyewitness testimony to the British Foreign Office about events in Poland. He conveyed secret messages from the Polish resistance to the Polish Government-in-Exile in London.

His report described the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto, deportations, and gassings at Belzec. It led to the Allied Declaration in December 1942.



# The Allied Declaration

December 1942



Anthony Eden declared in the House of Commons that:

‘reliable reports have recently reached His Majesty's Government regarding the barbarous and inhuman treatment to which Jews are being subjected in German-occupied Europe... The German authorities, are now carrying into effect Hitler's oft repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe.’

# Archbishop of Canterbury's plea

## March 1943



In the House of Lords the Archbishop pleaded for the rescue of Jews:

‘The Jews are being slaughtered at the rate of tens of thousands a day on many days...

The priest and the Levite... were not in the least responsible for the traveller's wounds as he lay there by the roadside... but they stand as the picture of those who are condemned for neglecting the opportunity of showing mercy...

We at this moment have upon us a tremendous responsibility. We stand at the bar of history, of humanity and of God.’

# The Bermuda Conference

April 1943



This conference between the UK and USA was to discuss the question of Jewish refugees still trapped in Nazi-occupied Europe. It occurred on the day the Warsaw ghetto uprising transmitted its final message: 'save us'.

The British refused to allow Jewish refugees entrance to Palestine, then under the control of the British mandate. The only thing the conference agreed on was to move 630 Jews who had already found refuge in neutral Spain to North Africa.

# The suicide of Szmul Zygielbojm

May 1943



Frustrated at the indifference and inaction of the Allied governments in the face of the Holocaust, especially by the lack of action at the Bermuda conference and with the murder of his wife Manya and son Tuvia in the Warsaw ghetto uprising, Zygielbojm committed suicide in London in protest.

He declared that responsibility 'directly falls upon the whole of humanity, on the peoples of the Allied nations and their governments, who up to this day have not taken any real steps to halt this crime.'

# Eleanor Rathbone

June 1943



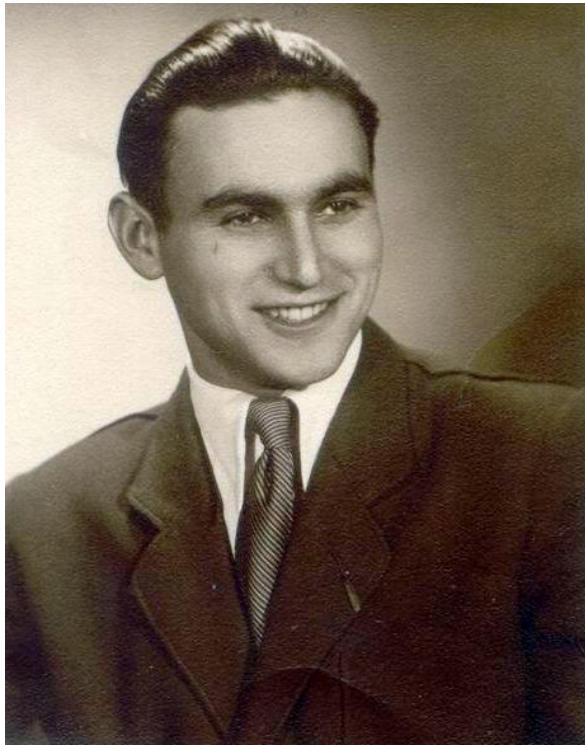
Eleanor Rathbone was a social reformer and independent MP. In May 1943 her pamphlet 'Rescue the Perishing' argued the British Government had done little to help refugees.

Conservative MP Colonel Ward, responding to her in Parliament, said that 'to admit a large number of refugees of the Jewish religion might easily fan the smouldering flames of antisemitism which exist here into a flame.' He also feared they would gravitate to the East End of London, where, after the Blitz, there was a severe housing shortage.



# Vrba-Wetzler report

April 1944



Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler were two Slovak Jews who escaped from Auschwitz in April 1944.

Although since November 1942 the Allies had known Jews were being killed in large numbers at Auschwitz, the Vrba-Wetzler report which was part-published in June, estimated numbers involved and provided the most detailed descriptions of the gas chambers.

The first full English translation of the report was produced in November 1944.

# Mass observation directive

May 1945

Film was shown of the April liberation of Bergen-Belsen by the British, in a cinema in Hampstead the following month.

Hampstead      Atrocity Film Indirects      C.G.  
M 40 B      3. 5. 45      24

"I think it has been rather an unfair trick of the Government to have fastened on these horror camps like this. I don't say it wasn't a dreadful thing, but I do think they should tell us the other side of the picture - the fearful disorganisation of Germany during the last few months, due to our bombing largely. Well, I ask you, would the Germans deliberately establish focal points of dysentery and typhus all over Germany if they could avoid it? They know as well as we do that it can't be confined to the camps once it has broken out. It will very quickly spread all over Germany. No, the disorganisation made it impossible to run the camps or supply them at all. I don't say they were run like the Ritz before all this, but I do think it's gross misrepresentation to suggest that the prisoners have been treated like that all along, deliberately. It just isn't sense."

As for the pictures of thin, starving people, dead and alive - well, dysentery and typhus are wasting diseases, and anyone suffering from advanced stages of them will look like that no matter what their diet is or has been."

One viewer found it difficult to explain what it was showing. They thought the Government had played an 'unfair trick' by showing it because they believed the camp was so bad due to disorganisation at the end of the war, rather than a deliberate policy of starvation which, they said, 'just isn't sense.'

# Guernsey British Intelligence Report

## August 1945



Part of the report about the Nazi-occupied Channel Islands reads:

‘When the Germans proposed to put their anti-Jewish measures into force, no protest whatsoever was raised by any of the Guernsey officials and they hastened to give the Germans every assistance. By contrast, when it was proposed to take steps against the Freemasons, of which there are many in Guernsey, the Bailiff [Alexander Coutanche] made considerable protests and did everything possible to protect the Masons.’

**RESOURCES 5:  
A5 COLOUR CARDS,  
SINGLE-SIDED**

# 1939



## **January**

Central Office for Jewish Emigration established under Reinhard Heydrich to force Jews to leave Germany

## **May**

British Parliament passes law to restrict Jewish immigration to Palestine, despite Churchill's protest

## **1<sup>st</sup> September**

Germany invades Poland

## **3<sup>rd</sup> September**

Britain and France declare war on Germany

## **8<sup>th</sup> October**

The first large ghetto created in German-occupied Poland



# 1940



## **23<sup>rd</sup> January**

First operational break of the German Enigma code

## **May**

Polish political prisoners begin to arrive at Auschwitz I

## **10<sup>th</sup> May**

Churchill becomes British Prime Minister

## **3<sup>rd</sup> July**

The Madagascar Plan discussed by the Nazis to ship all the Jewish people of Europe onto the African island

## **July-October**

Battle of Britain – British victory forces Hitler to postpone invasion plans

# 1941



## 22<sup>nd</sup> June

Operation *Barbarossa*, the German invasion of the Soviet Union, begins.

## 31<sup>st</sup> July

Heydrich plans a 'total solution to the Jewish question,' which leads to the organised murder of Jews by *Einstazgruppen* mobile killing squads. Genocide has begun.

## 18<sup>th</sup> October

Himmler orders 'no emigration by Jews to overseas', trapping Jews in Nazi Europe.

## December

Opening of first death camp at Chelmno.

## 7<sup>th</sup> December

Japanese bomb Pearl Harbour. The following day Hitler declares war on the United States.

# 1942



## **20<sup>th</sup> January**

The Wannsee Conference, a meeting to coordinate details of the mass killing of Jews.

## **26<sup>th</sup> March**

First two trains of Jews arrive at Auschwitz II, which has an operational gas chamber.

## **30<sup>th</sup> May**

The British bomb Cologne, bringing the war to Germany for the first time.

## **28<sup>th</sup> June**

Germany and its Axis allies launch new offensive against the Soviet Union.

## **23<sup>rd</sup> July**

Treblinka death camp starts operating.

# 1943



## **30<sup>th</sup> January & 2<sup>nd</sup> February**

The German army, trapped in Stalingrad and forbidden to retreat by Hitler, surrenders to Soviet troops.

## **8<sup>th</sup> September**

the Germans seize control of Rome and northern Italy, after the Italian government tries to surrender to the Allies.

## **9<sup>th</sup> September**

Allied troops land near Naples in Southern Italy.



# 1944



## **19<sup>th</sup> March**

Mass deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz follows German occupation.

## **6<sup>th</sup> June**

D-Day – the Allied invasion of France.

## **25<sup>th</sup> August**

Paris is liberated by the Allies, with a regiment of the Free French forces.

## **Winter**

Death marches – as the Soviet army advances, Himmler orders all concentration camp prisoners be brought into Nazi Germany, to work and to stop them telling their stories to the Allies.



# 1945



## **27<sup>th</sup> January**

Auschwitz-Birkenau, abandoned by the SS ten days before, is liberated by the Soviet Red Army.

## **15<sup>th</sup> April**

Bergen-Belsen liberated by the British 11<sup>th</sup> Division.

## **30<sup>th</sup> April**

Hitler commits suicide after dictating his last words that, even to the end, raved against the Jewish people as Germany's 'racial enemies'.

## **7<sup>th</sup> May**

Germany surrenders unconditionally.

# British responses to the Holocaust

Created by Tom Haward and Paul Salmons



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