EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: CAMPS

Extract from a letter printed in a British newspaper, The Daily Worker, February 1943

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DAILY WORKER.



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Britain Urged To Act Now And Save Jews

The following letter appeared in The Times yesterday:—

WE have noted with satisfaction the Joint Declaration of the United Nations vigorously protesting against the Nazi outrages upon the Jewish people.

We desire to associate ourselves with it. But we think that present action to mitigate this barbarism now is even more essential than the assurance of penalties after Hitler's defeat for those who have shared in the perpetration of the outrages upon the Jews and other victims of Nazi Germany.

defeat for those who have shared in the perpetration of the outrages upon the Jews and other victims of Nazi Germany.

We suggest that the nation is eager to see the British Government take the lead in attempting to rescue as many as possible of these, the most helpless of Hitler's victims, as they were also the first; the generous temper in which Italian settlers in Abyssinia have been repatriated to Italy should be applied to the right of the Jews to protection.

OBLIGATION

In the circumstances, we suggest that it is incumbent on the British Government to take the initiative in the following measures:

(1) To make representations by the United Nations to the German Government to permit Jews to

leave the occupied countries of Europe.

- (2) To offer the joint protection of the United Nations to Jews liberated or escaping from the occupied territories.
- (3) To facilitate the transfer of Jews to and their asylum in the territories and colonies of the United Nations.
- (4) To urge on neutral countries the desirability of receiving as many Jewish refugees as possible until, with victory, it is possible to consider ways and means of their permanent settlement. Where food and finance raise difficult problems for neutral countries willing to assist, the United Nations should agree to make these available to them.

(5) To make available the fullest possible facilities for the immigration of Jewish refugees into Palestine:

into Palestine:
We suggest that, as a prelude to these large-scale measures, the British Government should offer immediately to admit to Great Britain the largest possible number of Jewish refugees, especially children.

Jewish refugees, especially children. We see little difficulty, given good will, in taking all the necessary precautions which the national security demands.

We do not deny either the magnitude or the complexity of the Jewish problem. But we do not feel that the Government and nation can stand helplessly by while a whole people is ruthlessly butchered.

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What is this source?

This letter appeared in The Times and was reprinted in another British newspaper called The Daily Worker, November 17th 1943.

This newspaper cutting was filed by a British government official in the Foreign Office to help the government judge public opinion on the issue.

What's the background to this source?

In 1942 Hitler's armies had carved out a huge empire in Eastern Europe. During their invasions German forces had taken a large number of European Jews prisoner. At first they were forced into ghettoes, used in slave labour or simply shot.

From 1942 so many Jews were under Nazi control that the Nazi leaders came up with plans for a 'Final Solution'. This involved building camps that were used to execute millions of Jews and other groups the Nazis regarded as inferior.

It's worth knowing that...

The Daily Worker was a left wing paper. Although it supported the war effort, it was a paper which was generally more likely to raise issues which the government might find awkward, such as working conditions or in this case the Jews.

There had been a programme of rescuing Jewish children from Nazi territories in the 1930s. It was known as the kindertransport programme. There were also detailed discussions about a possible evacuation programme at this time. However, the USA and British governments believed that they could not spare the manpower and resources for an operation like this when they needed all their resources to fight the war. One government document suggested that the whole campaign in North Africa would have to be abandoned if the evacuation was to go ahead.

How will you use this source?

- 1. Is there any doubt in this letter about what was happening to the Jews?
- 2. How would you describe the tone of the letter?



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- 3. What does the letter want the government to do?
- 4. Do you think these demands were reasonable in a wartime situation?
- 5. Can you use this source to support any part of your presentation?