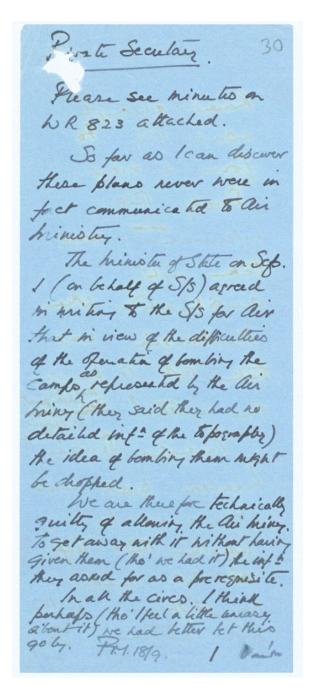
Exchange of notes between Paul Mason, Head of Refugee Section at Foreign Office and Winston Churchill's Private Secretary about the decision not to bomb the camps 18th & 20th September 1944

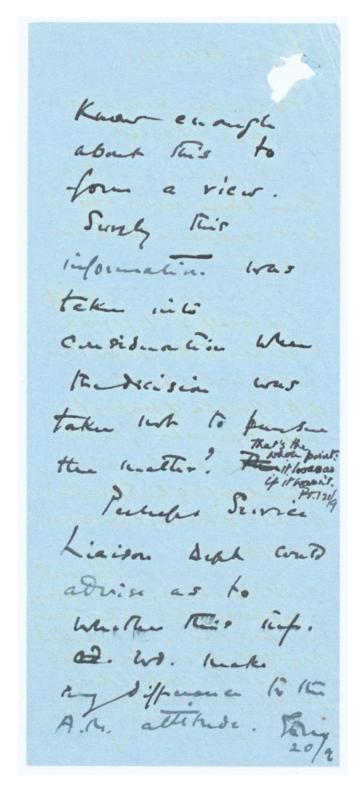
Catalogue ref: FO 371/42806

Extract a



EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: CAMPS

Extract b



EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: CAMPS

What is this source?

This source is a private exchange of notes between Paul Mason, Head of Refugees at the Foreign Office and Winston Churchill's Private Secretary. Paul Mason wrote the first part of this note. Churchill's Private Secretary (possibly here Jack Colville) wrote the second part.

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 large number of European Jews as prisoners. At first they were forced into ghettoes, used in slave labour or simply shot.

There were many demands for the government to take action on the Jewish issue. Some called for an evacuation programme. Others wanted the RAF to bomb the camps (see the opener source to this investigation).

It's worth knowing that...

The decision not to bomb the camps proved highly controversial then and now. There were major difficulties. The location of the camps meant that bombers would have to fly long distances across well-defended German territory. Losses among bomber crews were very high and this mission would probably have resulted in high casualty rates. Another problem was the difficulty of locating the camps and actually hitting them. Wartime bombing was extremely difficult and bombs were often many miles off target.

How will you use this source?

- 1. What information did the Air Ministry ask for in this source?
- 2. Why did they not get it?
- 3. Would it be an unfair judgement to say that this source shows that the British government did not care about what was happening to the Jews?
- 4. Can you use this source to support any part of your presentation?