The National Archives

Education Service

Britain and the Holocaust

Preparation materials for videoconference/virtual classroom (KS 3)

AIR 40/29
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This pack of documents and transcripts will allow you to prepare your students for the videoconference / virtual classroom session. The session examines photographs, telegrams and radio intercepts received by British officials during the Second World War. Students analyse and interpret these documents and debate how far the British government was aware of the events of The Holocaust.

Students should have some prior knowledge of Jewish persecution in the lead up to the Second World War, such as the anti-Jewish laws and Kristallnacht. They should also be aware of key events of The Holocaust. A timeline has been included for teacher reference in this pack.

**Teacher preparation (videoconference only)**

During the videoconference, the Education Officer will ask students to analyse documents included within this pack. Please have photocopies of Documents 1-4 with transcripts ready for students to examine individually or in pairs during the session. Document descriptions have intentionally been omitted within the pack to build students’ inference skills, but can be found in the contents page for teacher reference.

**Teacher preparation (virtual classroom)**

No preparation is required in advance of the session; however you may wish to photocopy documents in this pack for follow-up work with your class.

**Background information**

Information from Nazi Germany reached the British Foreign Office through telegrams, reports and eye witness accounts. This session focuses primarily on a telegram sent in August 1942 by a German Industrialist to Gerhart Riegner, a member of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva. Riegner forwarded this telegram to the British Legation in Berne so that it could be transmitted in the fastest possible way to officials in London. The telegram reported of a plan being discussed in the Fuehrer’s Headquarters for extermination after deportation of all the Jews in Europe. The reliability both of Riegner and the contents of telegram was questioned by the British authorities.

**Useful links**

Try out our online lesson, 'Belsen Concentration Camp 1945':

Students can explore our topics page 'World War II – Eastern Europe 1939-1945':

Listen to a Podcast, 'Kindertransport – Britain’s rescue plan':
[GYPERH].

FROM BERNE TO FOREIGN OFFICE.

Mr. Norton.  D. 4.48 p.m.  August 10th, 1942.
No. 2851.  R. 6.25 p.m.  August 10th, 1942.

August 10th, 1942.

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

Following for Mr. S.S. Silberman 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 3½ 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 connections with the highest German authorities, and his reports are generally reliable. Please inform and consult New York. [Ends].

[INDIV].
FROM BERNE TO FOREIGN OFFICE.

Mr. Norton. D. 4.48 p.m. August 10th, 1942.

No. 2831. R. 6.25 p.m. August 10th, 1942

August 10th, 1942.

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 3½ 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 connections with the highest German authorities and his reports are generally reliable. Please inform and consult New York. (Ends).

[INDIV].
Reported German plan for extermination of all Jews.

Geneva telegram No. 374. Message for Mr. S. S.
Silverman, Chairman of World Jewish Congress, London,
from Mr. Gerhart Riegner, Secretary of World Jewish
Congress, Geneva. Mr. Riegner has received a report
stating that in the Fuehrer's Headquarters, a plan has
been discussed and is under consideration for
extermination after deportation to East of all Jews in
countries occupied or controlled by Germany; action
is planned for the autumn; ways and means are still
being discussed including use of prussic acid.

Mr. Silverman is requested to inform and consult
New York.

We have no confirmation of this report from other sources, although we
have of course received numerous
reports of large scale massacres of
Jews, particularly in Poland: see
the Polish report in C 7843/457/63,
which, however, does not
include any mass extermination.

We have also, what we know of
Riegner. Main tolerably can produce only
C 3208/3208/62 of 1940 which does not
have much. Can Refugee Dept, or
Easterman Dept, provide any information?

[Signature]

Next Paper.
(Reference)
C 8780 (94/49)
Sir, Mr. Solomon is away,
the Jewish Agency have no information.
Asa
15/7/8

Rabbi, what have I heard of the Rieper.

Wishing I do not see how we
can deal of this message and
Rieper, although I fear it may
involve embarrassing repercussions.
Naturally, we have no information
bearing on this story.

W. Goldie
15/7/8
Reported German plan for extermination of all Jews

Geneva telegram No. 174. Message for Mr. S.S.

Mr Silverman, Chairman of World Jewish Congress, London,

From Mr. Gerhart Riegner, Secretary of World Jewish Congress, Geneva. Mr. Riegner has received a report stating that in the Fuehrer’s Headquarters, a plan has been discussed and is under consideration for extermination after deportation to East of all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany; action is planned for the autumn; ways and means are still being discussed including use of prussic acid.

Mr. Silverman is requested to inform and consult New York.

(Minutes.)

Pt. Submitted.  

A. David 11/8

We have no confirmation of this report from other sources, although we have of course received numerous reports of large scale massacres of Jews, particularly in Poland: see The Polish report in C 7843/957/55, marked passage on pages 7 and 8.

Mr Law asks what we know of Riegner. Main Index can produce only C 3208/3208/62 of 1940 which does not help much. Can Refugee Dept. or Eastern Dept. provide any information?

D. Allen 14/8

Refugee Dept
Eastern Dept
And b.u. (?) 16 Aug

I have no information.
Sir H Emerson might be consulted.
A. Walker 14/8

We have never heard of Dr Riegner, but will consult Sir H Emerson and the Zionists (Mr Namiar) informally.  

AWR 14/8
Sir H Emerson is away, +the Jewish Agency have no information.

A. Walker
15/8

Eastern Dept. have no knowledge of Mr. Riegner.

(?) 15/8

N. Grey
I do not see how we can hold up this message much longer, although I fear it may provoke embarrassing repercussions. Naturally we have no information bearing on this story.

F Roberts
15/8
Document 4: HW 16/23

12. OMZ de OMQ

1000

89 ? ?

Geheime Reichssache! An das Reichssicherheitshauptamt, zu Händen SS Obersturmbannführer HICKMANN, BERLIN... rest missed.

13/15. OLQ de OMQ

1005

83 234 250

Geheime Reichssache! An den Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspol., zu Händen SS Obersturmbannführer HEIM, KRAKAU.

Betr: 14-tägige Meldung Einsatz REINHART. Bezugs: dort.

Beizug: 11.31.34, L 12761 B 0, S 515, T 10335 zusammen 2361, Stand... 31.12.42, L 24733 B 43508, S 10370, T 71355, zusammen 1274166.

SS und Pol.führer LUBLIN, NOBLE, Sturmbannführer.

16. ? de ?

1040

140

SS Obersturmführer LOHERHESSEL, Willi, befindet sich seit 20.12.42 bei der Abt. als Zugführer.

Gef. KORFF, SS Hauptsturmführer und Abt.

17/18. ? de ?

1030

159 111


Verladung der Bekleidung erfolgt per Wagon. Es ist ein Begleitld. nach hier zu senden, Stärke 2 Mann. Eintreffen am 16.1.43 vormittags TT der Waffen SS, WARSCHAU... 2 groups corrupt... gez. VERLAICH, SS Obersturmführer.

19. Dad.

20/21. OMZ de OLQ

1100

197 139


Der Leiter der Wartung des SS O.A. Warthe, gez. DITTMANN, SS Oberführer.

22/22. ? de ?

1105

250 95


WEZ KRAKAU.

24/25. OMZ de OMZ

1115

250 228


Der Chef des Zentralamtes, gez. LIEBHESCHEL, SS Obersturmbannführer.

26/41. OMZ de OMX

1300

2 16 Ttl.


(Continued)
Transcript 4: HW 16/23

Translated extract:

13/15 OLQ de OMQ 1005 83 234 250
State secret! To the commander of the Security Police, for the attention of SS Obersturmbannfuhrer HEIM, CRACOW.
Re: 14-day report operation REINHARD. Reference: radio telegram from there.
Recorded arrivals until December 42, L 12761, B 0, S 515, T 10335, totaling 23611. Situation 31 December 42, L 24733, B 434508, S 101370, T 71355, totaling 1274166.
SS and police leader of Lublin, HOFLE, Sturmbannfuhrer.
# Timeline of events

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>January</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Hitler becomes Chancellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Nuremberg Laws passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>The Anschluss – Germany annexes Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Kristallnacht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Britain declares war on Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>The largest Jewish ghetto established in Warsaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>The Wannsee Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Operation Reinhard begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Hoefle dictates the Jewish resettlement order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>