Teaching Pack



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Introduction

Building a New Germany is a collection of documents from the UK Foreign Office records held at The National Archives. It explores the policies adopted by the British authorities towards the end of the Second World War and in the immediate postwar period as they sought to re-educate German soldiers and civilians and create a freer, more democratic, and thoroughly 'denazified' society from the ruins of the Third Reich.

The documents included within this teaching pack represent a tiny sample of the material in the collection at large. They touch upon the early decisions to embark on a denazification and re-education programme, some of the resources utilised as part of this process, and the responses of the German people involved.

The activities contained within this teaching pack could easily take around **30-40 minutes**, though the exact duration will depend on reading time and the breadth and depth of accompanying discussion.

Learning objectives

In using this teaching pack, students will:

- 1. Understand British attitudes towards the Third Reich and their policies on how to handle the future of Germany as the war came to an end.
- 2. Explore the different techniques used in re-education programmes and how these relate to ideas such as indoctrination and 'brainwashing'.
- 3. Investigate how German prisoners-of-war and civilians responded to the denazification process and what its longer-term legacies were.



Historical background and context

Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power in Germany in January 1933. In the years that followed they built a powerful regime, which won over many German people through a mixture of practical successes, political indoctrination, targeted censorship, fear and intimidation, and ideological infiltration throughout the public and private spheres.

In 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland, triggering the outbreak of the Second World War. By 1942, they were opposed by a powerful alliance, led by Britain, the Soviet Union, and the USA. Slowly and inexorably, Allied forces rolled back Nazi domination in Europe and Africa, taking large numbers of prisoners-of-war (POWs) along the way.

As the end of the war drew near, and Allied victory appeared all but certain, the Allies began to consider what to do with defeated Germany. Haunted by the failures of the peace-making process at the end of the First World War, their top priority was to ensure that a resurgent Germany would not, or could not, threaten peace in Europe again.



SOURCE ONE

'The Re-education of Prisoners of War', 26 May 1944

FO 939/445, images 10-14

Source summary

This memorandum was prepared by staff in the Political Warfare Executive (overseen by the Foreign Office) and the Ministry of Information. It was submitted to the War Cabinet, the highest policy-making body in Britain at that time, and used to secure their support for a re-education programme. This was forthcoming on 18 September 1944.

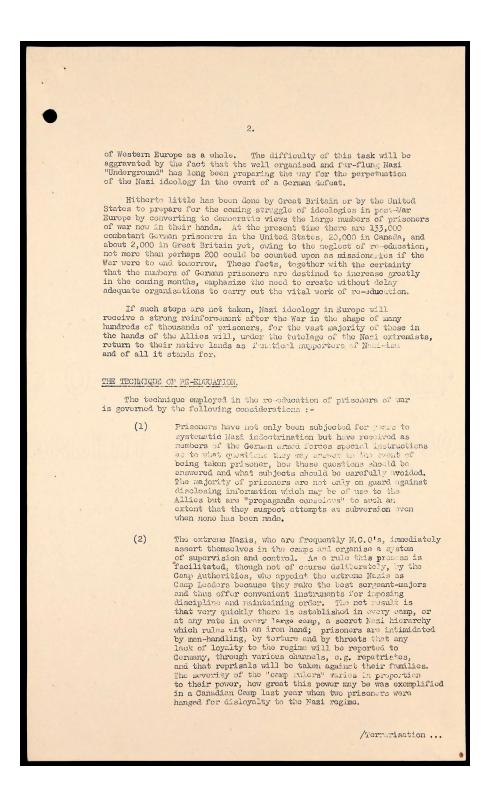
Questions for discussion

- 1. Why did the British authorities seek to launch a re-education programme for German prisoners-of-war?
- 2. How necessary was this objective? How realistic was it?
- 3. What can this document tell us about British concerns and priorities as they looked ahead to the end of the war and the period to follow?



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• Ref. P(G)10.	SECRET,
THE RE-EDUCATION OF	PRISONERS OF WAR
	Transmining of the
of German prisoners of war. The fin short-term aim, is to assist the al or partial converts, as instruments	tied war effort by using converts, of political warfare; how they Lly below. The second - the long-term ossible of the prisoners shall
THE SHORT-TERM AIM.	
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for the following reasons, make an j war effort :-	e-education of prisoners of war can, mportant contribution to the Allied
countries that our pris This belief not only er when they are hard pres discount Axis home prop	to spread the belief in enemy oners of war are well treated. courages enemy troops to surronder sed but, because it tends to eganda which maintains that the tory is doom, helps to weaken he enemy peoples.
implication that the Al victory, will also be s (when exchanges take pl repatriated have not on	t our prisoners kindly, with its lies will not be ruthless in proad by repatriated prisoners ace), provided that those whe are ly been well treated but, because longer Nazi or Fascist extremists.
to our broadcasts in on by inviting prisoners t relatives stating that	to increase the numbers of listeners ony countries. This is secured o broadcast messages to their they are in good health and wall uployed such "listeners' bait" as after Dunkirk.
(3) By providing intelligen information which is ro warfare.	ce, particularly the kind of quired for the purposes of political
who are opposed to the connection it should be very effective even if prisoner can, by referr be known to the Allies,	s voluntarily given by prisoners Nazi or Fascist regimes. In this noted that such broadcasts can be they are anonymous, since the ing to details which could not well convince his listemers that the tti-Nazi or anti-Fascist prisoner
	who, because they are anti-Nazi ser for secret service work with
THE LONG-TERM AIM.	
After Germany has been defeated the Allies will be confronted with a most difficult problem namely, how to counteract the results of the long years of intensive Nazi indectrination of the populations not only of Germany and Austria but also, though to a lesser extent, of those	
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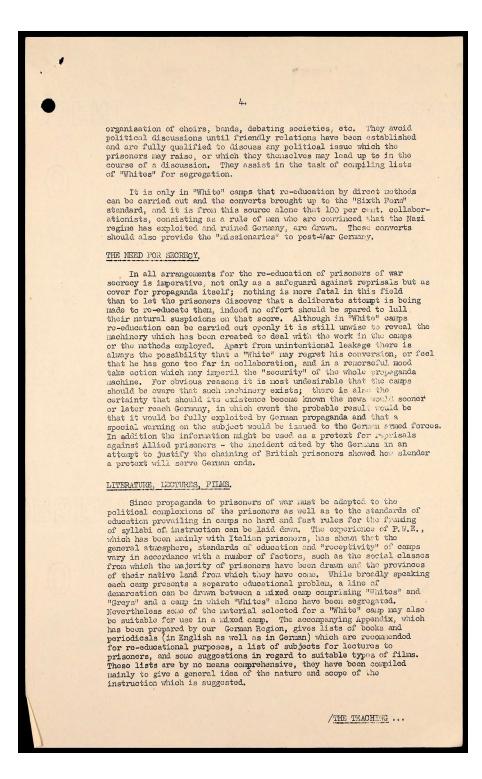




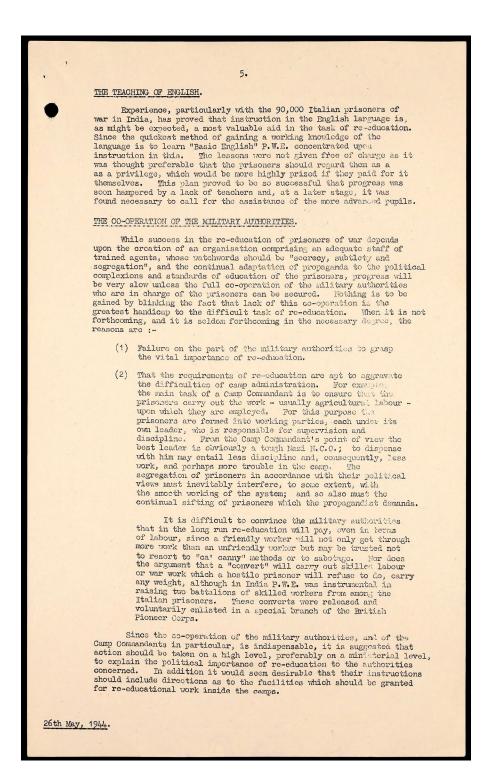


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	Terrorisation, which is corefully hidden from the Camp Authorities, is accompanied by rigorous supervision of the attitude of the prisoners towards their captors and care is taken to ensure that prisoners shall not read literature, or listen to broadcasts or lectures, or see films, of which the Nazi leaders disapprove.
	SEGREGATION OF NAZI EXTREMISTS.
	For the reasons indicated above it is essential, before attempting to begin re-education, to remove from the camps and segregate in a separate camp the Nazi leaders and their "staffs". If the Camp Commandant is willing to co-operate he and his staff can as a rule supply a list of many of the hostile elements. The remainder can be discovered by the following means :-
	(a) Posting to the camp agents who are ostensibly Sorgeant- Interpreters. As in the course of their duties as interpreters these agents constantly mix with the prisoners and overhear their conversations, it is not difficult for them to glean the requisite information.
	(b) The consorship of prisoners' letters, incoming as well as outgoing.
	(c) Hidden microphones in the camps.
	(d) Agents who visit the cause ostensibly as Welfere Officers. They are as a rule civilians, if not they should when visiting the cause drop their titles and dross in civilian clothes.
	When, as a result of this system of investigation, a list of the "Blacks" in a camp has been compiled, the procedure recommanded by P.W.E. is that they should be paraded without warning and be removed to a camp which has been prepared for them. "Dhorafter there should be no communication whatever between them and their fellow prisoners. Among the precautions necessary to ensure this is the selection of a hospital to which "Blacks" alone should be sent in the event of illness. Since the Nazi extremists are as a rule a minority our practice has been to leave them to their own devices and to concentrate upon the task of re-educating the remainder, i.e. the "Greys" and the "Whites".
	In a mixed camp of this description, i.e. containing ".hites" and "Greys", re-education can begin, but, while it is proceeding, the "Whites" should be listed and removed to a separate camp. A voluable aid to this sifting process, which is a gredual one, is the cap newspaper. This should contain nainly straight nows, news about the camps and articles to which the bulk of the prisoners will not take exception. By inserving here and there a paragraph which high the construed as indirect propagands the periodical can be made to serve as a test of political views as well as a whicle for propagands. Prisoners who object to such items are "Greys", who may or may not in due course become "Whites", their subsequent segregation will depend upon their reaction to these and other influences. These other influences are English ewspapers and periodicals, both of which are placed on sule in the camps, carefully selected Geman literature, B.B.C. broadcasts in English, to which the prisoners need not listen, and suitable films. In addition there is the influence of the "Whites", whose views in turn are influenced by the above-mentioned Welfare Officers. These representatives of the Prisoners of War Section of P.W.E. speak Geman fluently and are estensibly interested only in the confort and amenities of the prisoners. They provide games, listen sympathetically to complaints, which if they are well founded are uncentratiously remedied, if the Camp Commandant is willing to help, and advise in regard to the
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BRITISH ONLINE ARCHIVES

SOURCE TWO

'Opening address', Major-General Kenneth Strong, 19 January 1945.

FO 939/214, images 37-44

Source summary

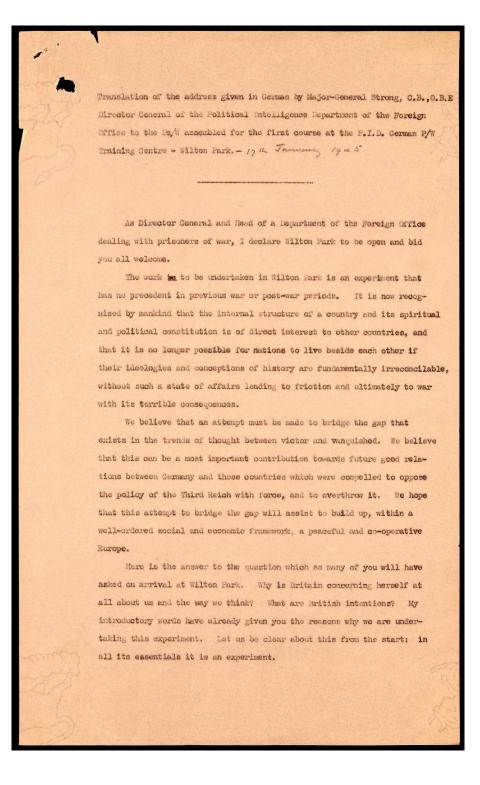
The headquarters of the British re-education programme was at Wilton Park, a country house in Buckinghamshire, which had been an interrogation centre for captured senior Nazis during the war. In January 1945, the first re-education course was launched there, delivered to a handpicked cohort of German prisoners-of-war. The document below contains the opening address, given by Major-General Kenneth Strong, Director-General of the Political Intelligence Department (successor to the Political Warfare Executive), the agency responsible for the programme.

The address was originally written and given in German, which Major-General Strong spoke well. The document below is a translation.

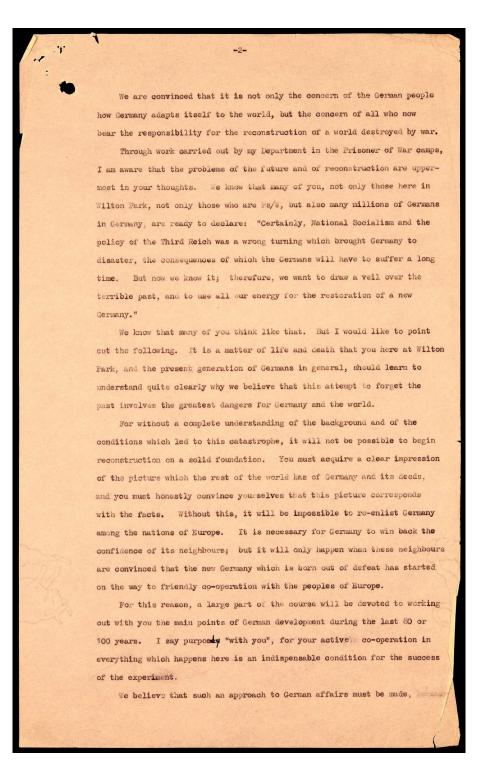
Questions for discussion

- 1. What is the tone of the address? What does it suggest about the spirit and character of the re-education programme?
- 2. How do you think this address would have been received by an audience of German prisoners-of-war?
- 3. What does the source tell us about British attitudes to the Third Reich and Nazi ideology more widely?

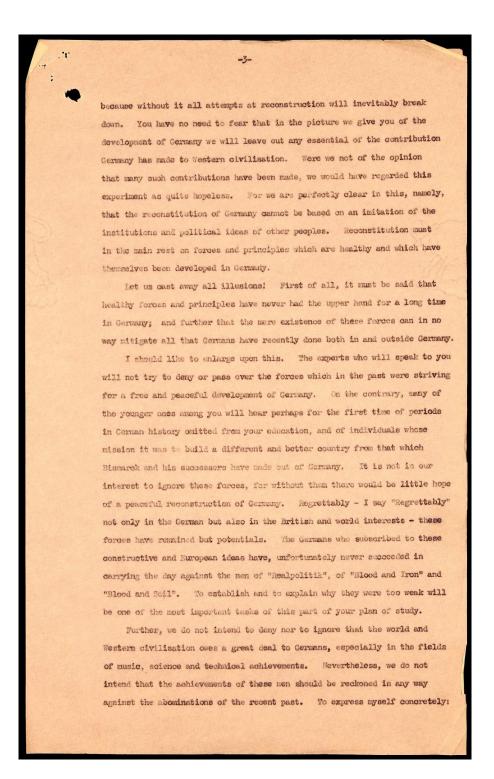




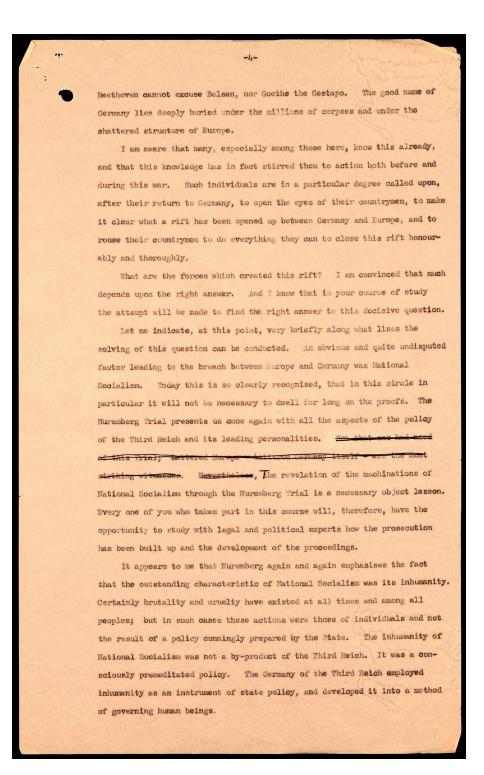




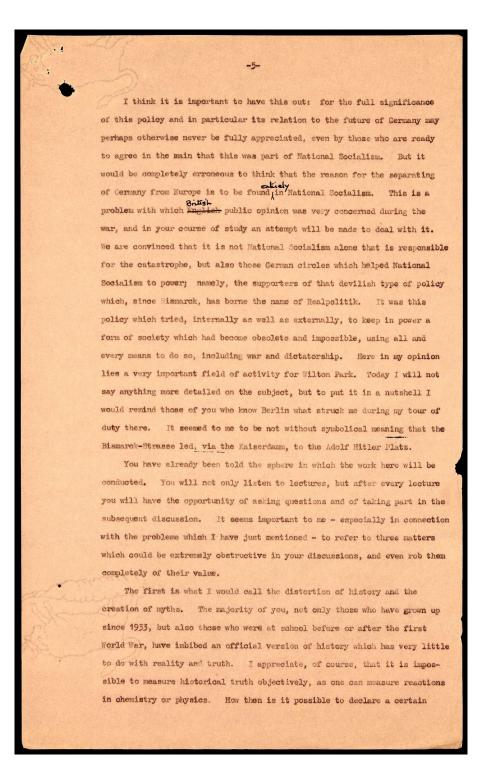




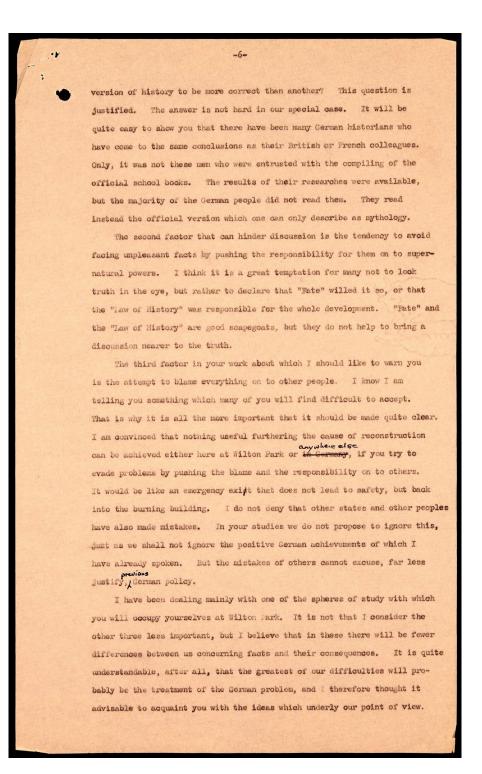




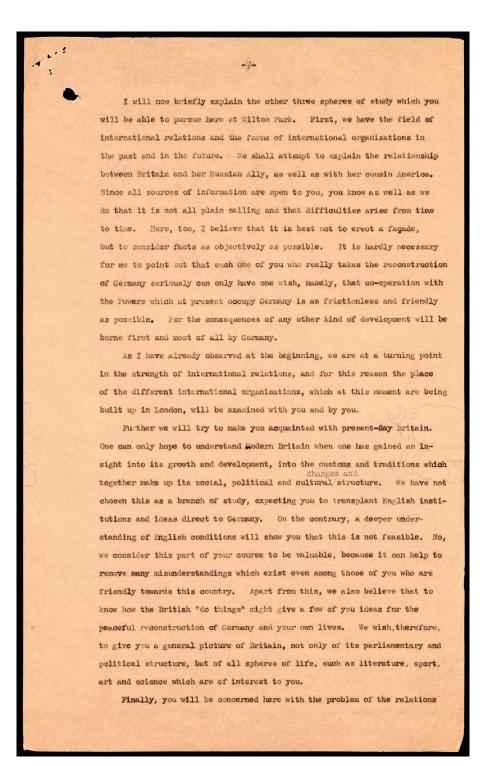




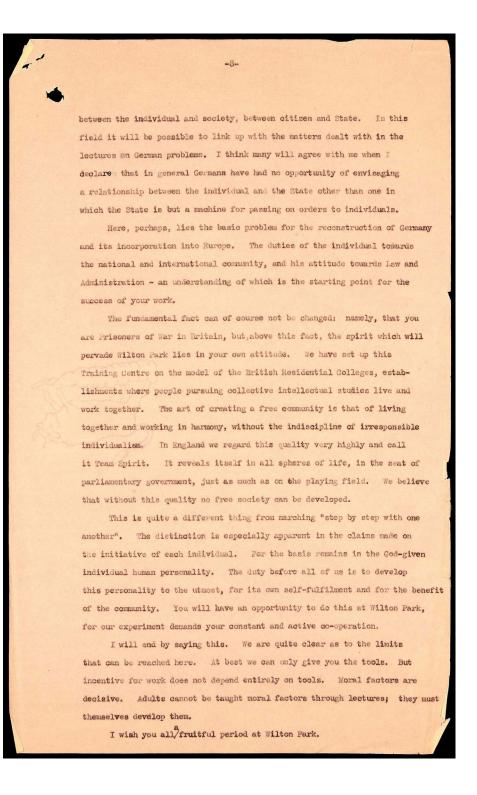














SOURCE THREE

'Excerpts from [POWs'] letters showing the reaction to the German Concentration Camp Atrocities Film during the 1st week of showing', 13 August 1945.

FO 939/72, images 26-31

Source summary

As Allied troops moved through Germany in 1945, they discovered evidence of Nazi atrocities, most notably the concentration and extermination camps. A British film crew was dispatched to make a documentary about these camps which did not shy away from showing the horrors, including piles of corpses and footage of emaciated and tortured survivors. This film was used in a number of re-education contexts: it was shown in German cinemas (with local people marched in at gunpoint to watch) and it was also screened in prisoner-of-war camps. The document below details the responses from prisoners-of-war in a camp in Egypt, after seeing the film, in July 1945.

Questions for discussion

- 1. What are the different sentiments expressed by German prisoners-of-war in response to this film?
- 2. How can we explain the range and diversity of responses? Should we take them all at face value?
- 3. What can this tell us more generally about German attitudes towards the crimes of the Nazi regime in the period immediately following the end of the war?



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		SECRET
- the	I A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A A	EXCERPTS FROM PS/W LETTERS SHOWING THE REACTION TO THE GERMAN CONCENTRATION CAMP ATROCITIES FILM DURING THE 1SP WEEK OF SHOWING
	This fillelicited	Im was shown to 379 P/W Camp from July 9th. to July 16th. and it 190 letters in reaction to it. Henwith excerpts from about
		nem, which are typical of the rest.
	Cage 5.	
	(SGD) KLAAPA	As good soldiers we do not wish to have anything to do with men who ordered or committed such cruelties.
	Cage 13	
	KRAUSE Hugo (184395)	I know KZs existed but after having seen the film I feel deeply ashamed to have fought for such a regime.
	MINNER W. (184396)	I have but one wish: the guilty must be duly punished.
	WIRZ P. (184660)	I could never think such things were possible but I believe the film to be true.
	KRAUSE H.(184395), (185729), MEYER (1	PAUSE F. (188556), SCHNARRE Julius (185521), HEALT (184986), FARREN 181398), HAAK 85728) - they all expressed: "we deeply regret to have fought for such ideas.
	DREYER (182958)	I am very young - 19 years old - I cannot understand things shown on the film.
-	NEDLETZ	I know it is true, I have seen men who have lived inside KZ
	MUELT IN	I know it is true because men I know were there - never returned.
	STRAHL (181921)	We never thought such things could happen in Germany.
	DORRER	It is good for every German to see the film
	(185731) GABRIEL J. (186275)	It is only now since Germany is brought down to a deep miscry that her people begin to see the truth.
	Cage 16.	
	TENT 32	We, Fs/W out in the desert hope that a new Germany will arise from the ruins in which fate has justly thrown her to-day.
	TENT 33.	We are filled with shame to see what we have fought for and to which end our commades have saorified their lives.
	TENT 34	"down with Nazism - long live democracies".
	"E. SCH."	I am glad the KZ no longer exist. When I go back I shall work for a new Germany in which there will never be another KZ.
	ZACHEND Heinz	Now that I have seen the film I denounce the Nazi Regime for over.
	(Unsigned)	The film has torn to shreds the veil of Goebbels propaganda.
	REMYCH (?)	We, Germans, hope that the mighty allies will restore our Fatherland and help her to recover from the present desolation.
	SUESSMUTE F. (182136)	We feel we cannot agree that there existed such a large number of KZs. We also feel that the film is showing rather exceptional cases. Thus, I am afraid this film will give the world a wrong picture of what was really going on inside Germany. This point of view is shared by practically all of us.
	TENT 36. (SGD) WILHELM Lois	We are deeply moved by what we have just seen. We dare not say more because of the "youth" in our tent.
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	CAGE 28.	
	WAGNER 0. (226929)	The film is a faithful picture of the natural consequences of whether the natural consequences of the second s
	VIEHBOECK J. (28622)	The leaders of the political parties and not the German people should be made responsible for the crimes shown in the film.
	MILLER A. (227154)	The world will never forget the immeasurable guilt of the Gorman people.
	NEWMANN P. (187120)	The part of the film that impressed me most was the map showing a large number of spots - centres of cruelties and murders - and these in a country considered highly cultured and civilized.
	NELLESSER H. (156657)	I cannot accept that every one of us Germans should feel guilty for what was going on in KZs. Many of us thought and believed that immates of these camps deserved punishment because they were politically dangerous Those who came out alive did not speak for fear of the death penalty. We must reamber there were similar camps in Cayenno, Siberia, and during the Boer War At any rate I maintain that the German nation as a whole should not be made responsible.
	CACE 29.	
	BURNHARD Valentin (227159)	The film shows the true face of the Nazi regime. Such a disgrace should not be attributed to the entire German nation. Let us hope that these pictures will serve to convert the very last believer in Nazism.
	EGGERT R. (109533)	Men who underwent such unspeakable tortures because they have believed in personal freedom, these men we should consider our true forefathers.
	GRIMM (190533)	We must all strive to provent such happenings taking place in our country again.
	HUBUSCH P.	as a soldier I am profoundly shocked by the knowledge of such atrocities We must all curse men responsible for such acts.
	MAISER G. (189070)	We all remember how shocked we were at the crucities committed in the forests of Hatyn, but a few years later we have to look at pictures which by far surpass everything heretofore seem or heard, anywhere in the world. To atome, in a certrin measure at least, we must pledge ourselves that the martyrdom of so many shall not be in wein.
	KAPIE F. (222612)	We thank the Allies for incarcerating and punishing the oriminals responsible for the existence of the Kzs.
	KOECHE G. (185786)	Fictures of utter horror and bestiality - and to think that it took place in a country of the highest culture! Such is the consequence of Nationalsozialismus Each one who took an active part in that regime must be duly punished. The majority of Ps/W in fact the majority of Germans who see this film must be convinced now that the last dictatorship was a great curse At last the German people are free from Goebbel's propaganda, free to think for themselves.
	KOTIAS (183674)	Not one man in our tent (Zelt 33) could have thought it possible for such horrors ever to take place.
	NOGHA P. (189759)	Not a provigind film but the bare truth Everyone of us who gave his vote to these murderers bears full responsibility for such bestialities.
An and a second	MONNERES H. (189279)	I am only 25 years old and during this war I have seen many ugly things but no horrors to compare with those that prevailed in those unfortunate camps and which were performed by German men and women: Words fail me to express fully my feelings of utter disgust. I was once proud to be a German, but since I have seen the film I feel I must lower my eyes in deepest shame before God and Mankind.
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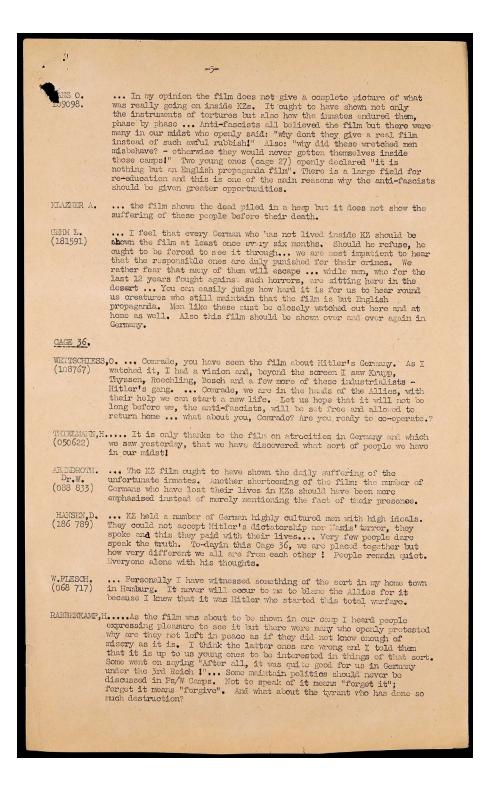


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	CACE 29 (cont).	
	"F.R."(OFZ)	during the last six years the German soldier has seen every possible kind of death but what this film unrolled before our eyes was too much for the hardest among us.
	RODLE. (190246)	for the sake of our future we must endeavour to prevent a repetition of such deeds through a better political education.
	SIEG H.E. IFZ (28541)	I have seen men who had marks of this inhuman treatment on their bodies. They are dumb witnesses of these unforgettable crimes and should be known to all those who still maintain the atrocities' film is but propagandaWe should consider the Allied Nations not as oppressors but as true liberators we must abaudon all hatrod and all war thoughts and give our full co-operation towards the world's peace.
	WIRF H.(?)	In spite of prevailing difficulties at the present moment we ought to consider ourselves as most fortunate to be free at last from this clique which stood lower than the wild beast.
	METTE S.(UFZ)	there should never be another Hitler in the history of Gormany.
	SCHWANDA K. (aus Wien)	the film held nothing for me as I lived inside KZ and my body is covered with marks of the crueltics. I could write a book about it.
	CACE 32.	
	GUENTHER von . Amin,	In our group there are men who have never heard of KZg before. The showing of the film is sure to be of a very great educational value for such specific cases in particular. Now they ask questions and learn.
	KALUSA K. (107135)	We shall never forget what Mazis looked like. There is a great deal of suffering awaiting us but let us face it and accept it as an incentive in our fight against faceism.
	HELMUT P. (180300)	to us anti-fascists this film will give strongth to fight Nazism until our last breath.
	W.PAUSENWAG.	men, women and children have suffered because they believed in a different, a better idea.
	TINT 13.	the film left us speechless for a long while. Later in the night we all had the same thought: to do all in our power in order to repair the evil committed by these murderers in charge of KZs.
	WENZEL K. (186935)	I have lived in the horror camps, therefore the film brought nothing new to me. One thing should be borne in mind however: it was just a handful of oriminals and not the German people as a whole who should be held responsible.
	LORENZv.der ring.	it would be wrong to contern the whole of the German nation as among us there are many who fought against Nazism and have experienced themselves the horrors shown on the film.
	FUHRMANN K. (125194)	It is not true that we Germans did not know of KZs existence, only the Gestapo was far too dangerous in those days. It is up to every German to help the Allies in their search of the really responsible ones who must not escape the due punishment.
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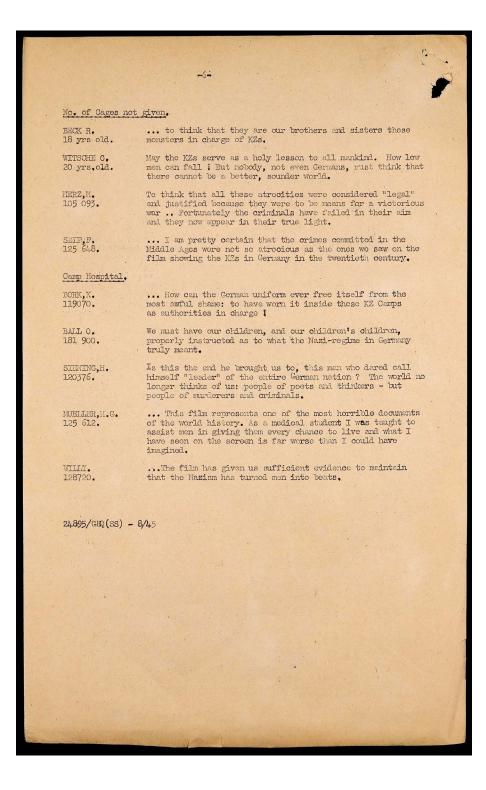


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CACE 34.	
FUSS B. (054804)	Should one in the course of rebuilding of Cermany come across Nazi-minded people, these should be handed over immediately to the Control Commissioners.
KIRSCHNER K.	Before condemning the entire German nation one should reachber German anti-fascists who fought in Spain and who were later delivered to the Nazis by Hitler's France. These were great men and martyrs and one must remember them and their exploits before condemning the whole of the German nation.
DREWS K(UFZ)	Very few Germans knew what was going on in KZs therefore it is difficult to accept the statement that every one of them should be made responsible.
RETZ F. (068829)	one question: How is it that these KZ criminals are still alive and living under better conditions, while we, their bitterest enemdes, are still kept as Ps/W? Have we not given sufficient proof of our anti-fassist ideas? Why cant we be free and help-clean up Germany to the last Nazi?
ARMBRUSTER A. (188986)	I believe the film should be shown over and over again in the eages where the opinion is divided.
HERMANN B. a soldier.	If I am to say anything I would like to express the wish that the guilty ones should be punished by being sent to the desert to build and mend roads - with very little water, very little bread.
KLAUSMER B. (12302 5)	whother we know about KZ or not must we, and only we Germans be made responsible? What about the rest of the world. Just because Napoleon behaved very much in the same way as Hitler did has anybody ever considered condemning the entire French nation?
BORDIKE E. (175313)	We all knew the two letters: KZ but could never imagine what they truly stood for ! not until we had seen the film.
BUTIMER W.	things we have seen on the film may fill us with shame; we behind the barbed wire can judge the difference of our guards and these in charge of KZs.
FLACH W. (126736)	The film explained the real meaning of the National-Socialism better than any words ever could.
HAIMELRATH H. (104259)	I must repudiate the statement: every German is responsible for the existenc of the Kzs. I belonged to the Boys Scouts' organisation until 1933. After it ceased to exist I became an active anti-nazi. I knew of the KZ but its whole truth I saw only on the film.
HUTTERER X. (186299).	I belong to a catholic family and as such I have experimond great hardships Hitler's youth laughed at and mocked everything Christian.
CACE 35.	
SCHIPDER W. (185033)	About 90% of people in cage 35 are just as ignorant about politics as an ordinary schoolchild. They have no notions whatsoever about the rights or duties of a citizen. Should England earnestly desire peace and safety, we, the Anti-Tazis should be allowed to deal with the Mazis until the last of them disappears from this world. Also I propose to send Mazi girls to wait on the black soldiers or work on farms in Egypt, all over Africa and India. No less than 10,000 of these proud made should be put to work for
N.B.	ten whole years and without pay. (the rest of the letter is a petition for the release from the camp).
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General discussion

- 1. What were the top priorities for the British (and the other Allies) as the war came to an end and they became responsible for the occupation of Germany?
- 2. Alongside re-education programmes such as those detailed above, what other strategies would you consider essential in order to 'denazify' Germany?
- 3. How successful do you think initiatives such as these would have been? What potential challenges would they have likely faced?
- 4. Do you think it is possible to politically re-educate the population of an entire country?





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