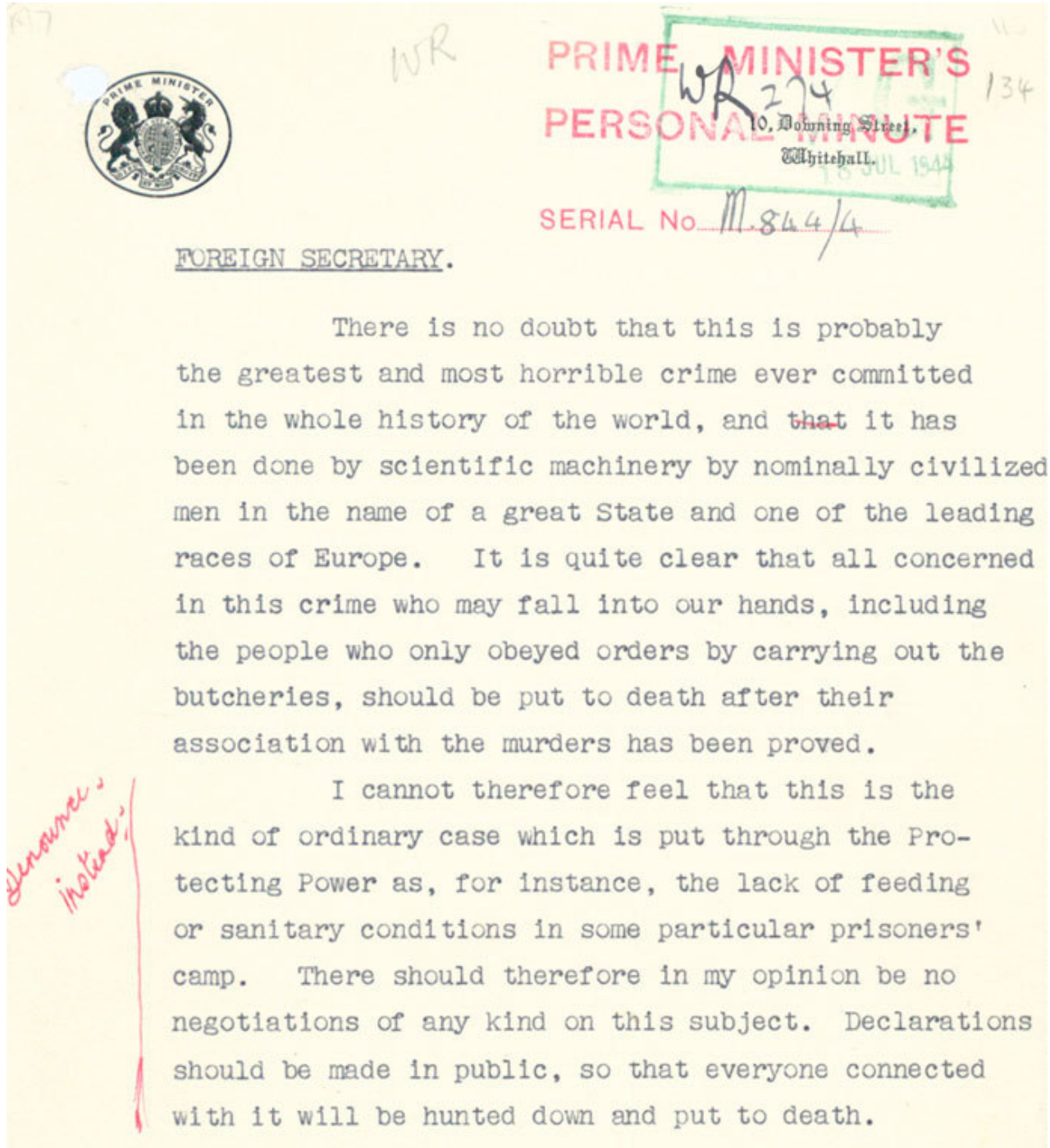


EASTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: CAMPS

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's comments to the Foreign Secretary on the actions of Nazi war criminals, July 1944

Catalogue ref: FO 371/42809



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What is this source?

This is a personal note written by the Prime Minister to the Foreign Secretary dated 11th July 1944.

The note concerned German treatment of Jews in Hungary. Churchill believed that there should be no negotiations of any kind with Germany. Further documents from this time show that the Germans were attempting to bargain over treatment of the Jews in Hungary in order to approach Britain or the USA on the question of a separate peace, not seriously intended, except to threaten relations with the Soviet Government.

What's the background to this source?

It was becoming clear that Germany would lose the war. It was also apparent that horrendous crimes had been committed by the Nazi regime. Churchill was determined that those responsible would be punished.

Churchill had already had discussions with the other Allied leaders (President Roosevelt of the USA and Marshal Stalin of the USSR) in 1943. They were to meet again early in 1945 and agreed that war criminals would be hunted down.

It's worth knowing that...

Churchill was absolutely sincere about hunting down war criminals. It is clear from these comments that he wanted to discourage Germany from carrying out further atrocities.

Behind the scenes, Churchill urged Stalin, the leader of the USSR, to make similar statements. The thinking was that Nazi troops might refuse to murder Jews if they knew they would be caught after the war. There is little evidence to show that this idea had much impact.

How will you use this source?

1. How would you summarise the general tone of this source?
2. According to Churchill, were there any circumstances that could excuse anyone involved in the death camps?
3. Why do you think he wanted such statements to be made public?
4. Can you use this source to support any part of your presentation?