WHAT DID BRITAIN KNOW ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST DURING WORLD WAR TWO?



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A new exhibition is examining how much Britain knew about the Holocaust while it was happening. Many people believe that the British public only learned about the Nazi murder of Europe's Jews after the war. However, newspapers, radio broadcasts, government reports and witnesses were already describing mass killings during the early 1940s. The Manchester Guardian reported especially strongly on the persecution of Jewish people and argued that Britain and other countries should do more to help refugees. Information was often smuggled out of occupied Poland by couriers working for the Polish government-in-exile in London. At the same time, Britain had strict immigration rules and some people opposed allowing more Jewish refugees into the country. The exhibition will travel to different parts of the United Kingdom while plans continue for a permanent Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in London.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

This story raises a difficult question about what people do when they receive shocking information. Knowing about a crime does not automatically lead to action. The history also shows that governments and ordinary people can respond in different ways, with some offering help while others fear refugees or refuse to change their policies.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

“Why might governments know about a terrible event but still act slowly?”

Source: The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/sep/27/britain-knew-about-holocaust-as-it-happened-exhibition