

# LORD BALDWIN'S APPEAL, GREAT BRITAIN, 1938



In March 1938, Nazi Germany annexed or seized control of Austria. The annexation of the Sudetenland, a region in Czechoslovakia, followed in September of the same year. That November, the *Kristallnacht Pogrom* led to mass death and destruction in Jewish communities. As this march toward war progressed, it became increasingly difficult for Jews in Germany and German-occupied territories to leave. During this time, Jewish groups and aid organizations attempted to persuade governments to admit child refugees. In Great Britain, former Prime Minister Lord Baldwin appealed to the British people to support Jewish refugees. His sentiments, expressed in the following article, reflect the feelings of many British people during this time. Such attitudes helped to build support for the Kindertransport program.

## **"A WORLD'S GOOD CAUSE"**

Lord Baldwin said that it was obviously his duty to accept an invitation which was given to him to speak on behalf of all religious communities in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. "I must confess," he said, "that it never entered my head that one day I should broadcast such an appeal as that which I am to make to you to-night. Week after week good causes are laid before you for this boys' club and for that hospital, for the maimed, the halt, the blind, and the deaf.

"To-night I have to speak for a 'world's good cause.' I have to ask you to come to the aid of the victims, not of any catastrophe in the natural world, not of an earthquake, nor of a flood, nor of a famine, but of an explosion of man's inhumanity to man. Thousands of men, women, and children, despoiled of their goods, driven from their homes, are seeking an asylum and a sanctuary on our doorsteps, a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest.

"I am no longer a Minister of the Crown. I do not speak to you to-night as a politician or a member of a party. I am an ordinary Englishman who is shocked and distressed by the plight of these despised and rejected people and their innocent children. They may not be our fellow-subjects, but they are our fellow-men. To-night I plead for the victims who turn to England for help.

"For the first time in their long and troubled history they have asked us in this way for financial aid. Heroic as their own efforts are, the disaster which has fallen upon them is too great for their unaided contributions. Thousands of every degree of education, industry, wealth, position have been made equal in misery. I have no time to depict to you what it means to be scorned and branded and isolated like a leper.

## **A CHALLENGE WE MUST MEET**

"The honour of our country is challenged; our Christian charity is challenged; and it is up to us to meet that challenge. I have just said, 'For the first time in their long and troubled history.' Nothing has been more remarkable among the Jews than the way in which the well-to-do and the wealthy looked after their poorer neighbours. They have always been self-contained, and often without complaint have met great disasters, and I think I ought to say what I do not think any Jew would say to you, that the response that has been made already by the Jewish communities outside Germany to the needs of their own people in the Reich has been magnificent.

## **THINK IT THROUGH...**

- How did Lord Baldwin appeal to the British people? What arguments did he use to gain their support?
- What is the tone of Baldwin's comments? How would you describe his feelings about the Jewish people and the difficulties they faced?
- What specific words or language most reflect the writer's viewpoints?
- How did Baldwin persuade the British people to look beyond purely national interests?