

NAZI PERSECUTION - A SONG SHEET

This song sheet has been created for Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2018 and is part of a series which provides lyrics and music for songs created during, or in response to, a genocide. As part of your Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration, you are invited to perform this song and learn more about the genocide below.



Memorial at the site of Börgermoor concentration camp, whose prisoners composed *Moorsoldatenlied*

NAZI PERSECUTION

The Nazi Party ruled Germany from 1933-1945, and persecuted a range of different groups of people whom they believed threatened their ideal of a 'pure Aryan race' of Germans. Nazi theories on race decided that 'Aryan' people were superior to all others, and persecuted 'subhuman' peoples such as Jews, Gypsies (Roma and Sinti people), black people and Slavic people. Anyone seen as a burden or enemy of the state, such as disabled people, gay people, Jehovah's Witnesses and political opponents were targeted by the Nazis. Millions of lives were destroyed or changed beyond recognition because of Nazi persecution.

Nazi propaganda made heavy use of music and censorship to promote their values and encourage ordinary Germans to persecute a wide range of groups. The Nazi Party's anthem, *Horst-Wessel-Lied*, called on the German people to honour and avenge Horst Wessel, a Nazi SA officer who was murdered by members of the German Communist Party. 'Degenerate' music, such as jazz and swing, was banned.

Many victims of Nazi Persecution also used music as a source of hope, a form of resistance, or a way of mourning and commemorating the memory of those murdered. Django Reinhardt was a famous Roma jazz player, who blended African-American jazz with his Roma musical heritage. The Nazis banned his music, along with all jazz. His 1940 composition *Nuages* became an anthem of hope for France's liberation from German occupation.

Žarko Jovanović was a Roma composer who lost much of his family during the genocide, and who later joined the Yugoslav Partisans. After the war he composed *Gelem, Gelem*, the Roma anthem that commemorates the hundreds of thousands of Roma and Sinti people murdered by the Nazis and their allies.

The power of words is the theme for HMD 2018. We invite you to reflect on the words and music of *Moorsoldatenlied*, to perform or feature it as part your HMD activity, and to reflect on the power of words to foster hate and division, and to prevent it.

Find out more:

Nazi Persecution: hmd.org.uk/nazipersecution

You can find the rest of the song sheets and hear recordings of the songs at hmd.org.uk/songs



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SONG OF THE PEAT BOG SOLDIERS

Moorsoldatenlied or *Song of the Peat Bog Soldiers*, was written in 1933 by Johannes Esser, Wolfgang Langhoff, and Rudi Goguel, three political prisoners at Börgermoor concentration camp in north-west Germany. The song was intended to give the inmates something to sing in the camp. Initially the song was approved by the SS, but it was not long before Börgermoor's commandant banned it.

The prisoners continued to sing the song as an act of defiance, and prisoners and even some guards smuggled handwritten copies out of Börgermoor. *Moorsoldatenlied* has been translated into many languages. It is a famous example of a concentration camp resistance song, and became internationally known as a protest song against Nazism and fascism.

Original German lyrics by: Johan Esser and Wolfgang Langhoff
Music: Rudi Goguel

Verse

Far and wide as the eye can wan-der. Heath and bog are eve-ry where. Not a bird si-ngs out to

12

cheer us. Oaks are stand-ing gaunt and bare. We are the peat bog sol -

21

diers, We march with spades on shoul - ders to the Moor. We Moor.

Far and wide as the eye can wander,
Heath and bog are everywhere.
Not a bird sings out to cheer us.
Oaks are standing gaunt and bare.

Chorus

We are the peat bog soldiers
We march with spades on shoulders to the moor x2

Up and down the guards are marching,
No one, no one can get through.
Flight would mean a sure death facing,
Guns and barbed wire block our view.

Chorus

But for us there is no complaining,
Winter will in time be past.
One day we shall rise rejoicing.
Homeland, dear, you are mine at last.

Last Chorus

No more peat bog soldiers
Will march with spades on shoulders to the moor x2

To view the original
German lyrics for
*Song of the Peat Bog
Soldiers*, please visit
hmd.org.uk/songs

