CONTINENTAL BRITONS

JEWISH REFUGEES FROM NAZI EUROPE

ANTHONY GRENVILLE

JEWISH MUSEUM LONDON

AJR The Association of Jewish Refugees

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Continental Britons: Jewish Refugees from Nazi Europe

'Finchleystrasse', the bus conductors used to call out, back in the 1950s, as the buses swept down the Finchley Road towards the tube station, and 'Johann Barnes', as they came to John Barnes department store, where Waitrose now stands. The German-speaking refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia who fled to Britain to escape the Nazis after 1933, predominantly Jews, brought a dash of colour and exoticism to the monochrome conformity, the cultural insularity and ethnic homogeneity of British society in the period either side of the Second World War. For at that time the refugees from Central Europe were still the first outriders of a swelling tide of migrants to make their own distinct contribution to the social landscape of the day.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in their principal areas of settlement, especially North-West London, where their culture, their way of life and – not least – their accents made a significant and vivid impact. Few will be surprised to learn that the organisation that has represented the Jews from Central Europe since mid-1941, the Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain, now in its sixtieth anniversary year, has been located in four offices, all of them on or adjacent to the Finchley Road along the short stretch between Swiss Cottage and Frognal.

No less striking was the impact of the refugees on British art and culture, on British intellectual and academic life generally, and on a whole range of areas of British society, from photo-journalism to psychoanalysis, from art history to publishing, all of which would have been incalculably the poorer without the refugees' contribution. Who but the refugee art historian Nikolaus Pevsner could have written the classic *Buildings of England*? Who but the refugee bridge champions Rixi Marcus and Fritzi Gordon would for years have represented Britain at women's international bridge tournaments? Who but the refugee ornithologist Ludwig Koch would have created a sound archive of British birdsong?

The focus of this exhibition is not only on the relatively small number who achieved prominent public success, as Nobel Prize winners, peers of the realm, world-famous artists or founders of great enterprises. It seeks to chronicle the experiences and achievements of the mass of ordinary refugees, most of whom had to struggle to overcome the obstacles they faced in securing a new and settled existence in Britain. Their success is not to be measured in conventional terms of 'high achievement', but in the very fact of their having made a new life here: in creating the conditions for a stable existence for themselves and their families, and in particular for their children, who have in the main been able to build on that inheritance, as British-born descendants of Central European stock. It goes without saying that not all refugees attained even this degree of successful adaptation to life in Britain; traumatized by the circumstances of their brutal ejection from the land of their birth and unable

as émigrés to gain a firm footing in unfamiliar and sometimes uncaring surroundings, some of them eked out miserable and impoverished lives, ending in despair, even in suicide.

But by and large the story that the exhibition has to tell is one of achievement against the odds, of a series of mostly unsung but nonetheless very real triumphs over adversity. The images shown, taken both from family and private life and from the commercial, professional and public spheres, reflect the everyday experiences of the ordinary refugees, what Wolfgang Benz has called 'das Exil der kleinen Leute' – in both its positive and its negative aspects. It is also important to remember that the refugee experience extended well beyond North-West London. Already from an early stage, refugee entrepreneurs, for example, were setting up businesses and founding industrial projects far from the metropolis; notable among them were those who took advantage of government incentives to create employment in areas hard hit by the economic depression of the 1930s, like the North-East, Cumberland and South Wales. The Society of Jewish Refugees was founded in Glasgow well before the AJR in London, and Morris Feinmann House was set up by the Manchester Refugees Committee some years before the equivalent old age homes for refugees in London.

Though small in number compared to subsequent waves of immigration – the Jews from Central Europe who settled permanently in Britain numbered some 50,000 – the refugees from Hitler were to prove disproportionately rich in their potential for achievement. This is partly to be explained by the fact that they were not economic migrants escaping from grinding and primitive poverty, but refugees from political persecution who had, as a group, already held established occupational and professional positions in developed economies and whose families had acquired educational, intellectual and cultural resources that marked them out as socially and economically upwardly mobile.

Already in July 1948, the monthly magazine of the Association of Jewish Refugees, the *AJR Information* (now *AJR Journal*), was puzzling over the settlement patterns of the refugees from Hitler. Their determination to reside in middle-class areas betokened a self-image and sense of identity far removed from that of the Jews from Eastern Europe who, fleeing the pogroms of Tsarist Russia from the 1880s, settled first in areas like the East End:

> In Germany, the Jew was assimilated and belonged to the middle class; even when losing his fortune, he did not become a proletarian but a petty bourgeois. In the London East End … he belonged to a Yiddish-speaking proletarian stratum, though at a later stage either he or his children managed to improve their position … The dispossessed refugee did not start at the lowest rung of the ladder in Whitechapel, but,

penniless as he was, took his furnished room in Hampstead or other North-Western parts of the town.

The different road to integration into British society taken by the later of these two waves of Jewish immigrants does not indicate any innate superiority of one group over another. Rather, it raises the issue of the social, cultural and economic situation from which the refugees from Central Europe had come, for it was that situation in their countries of origin which largely determined the way in which they lived, worked and set about building new lives in the adopted homeland where they had found refuge.

German-Jewish Life before Hitler

Jews have lived in Germany since Roman terms, when they came to frontier settlements like Colonia (Cologne) in the wake of the legions that established outposts on the *limes*, the Empire's line of defence against the barbarian Teutons without. Thus it was that when the Nazis came to power in 1933, what they set about destroying was a centuries-old culture, justifiably proud of its traditions and closely intertwined with the German culture in which it was, in part, rooted.

For many hundreds of years, though, Jews and Germans remained distinct communities, divided both by the physical walls of the ghettoes behind which the Jews were confined and by the separate legal status accorded to each group. Neither wished for close relations. For the Christian Germans, the Jews were the killers of Christ who clung obstinately to pagan beliefs and mysterious practices. Their interactions with the Jews tended all too often to be brutal and violent, as in the massacres of Rhineland Jews perpetrated in 1096 by the god-fearing promoters of the First Crusade, or acts of thinly disguised robbery, as in the countless cases of summary expropriation of Jewish wealth. The Jews, concerned strenuously to preserve their separate identity against the threat of assimilation, held to the religiously based customs and style of life that sealed them off from their gentile surroundings almost as effectively as the discrimination that they suffered and the closure of the areas where they dwelt.

In the late eighteenth century, the Age of Enlightenment, with its doctrine of humanism, secularism and equal rights, brought an end to Jewish spiritual and cultural isolation. The Jews of Germany, too, experienced their 'Aufklärung', the Haskalah, associated with famous names like Moses Mendelssohn, the friend and intellectual confidant of Immanuel Kant, the great philosopher of enlightenment. It seemed as if the barriers that had divided the Jews from their gentile neighbours could be swept away by the doctrines of universal civil rights, political democracy and constitutional liberalism emanating from the French Revolution and the American Declaration of Independence.

Images from Jewish family life in Germany and Austria.

Courtesy of Ronald Gerver.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum.

Courtesy of the Anthony Grenville.

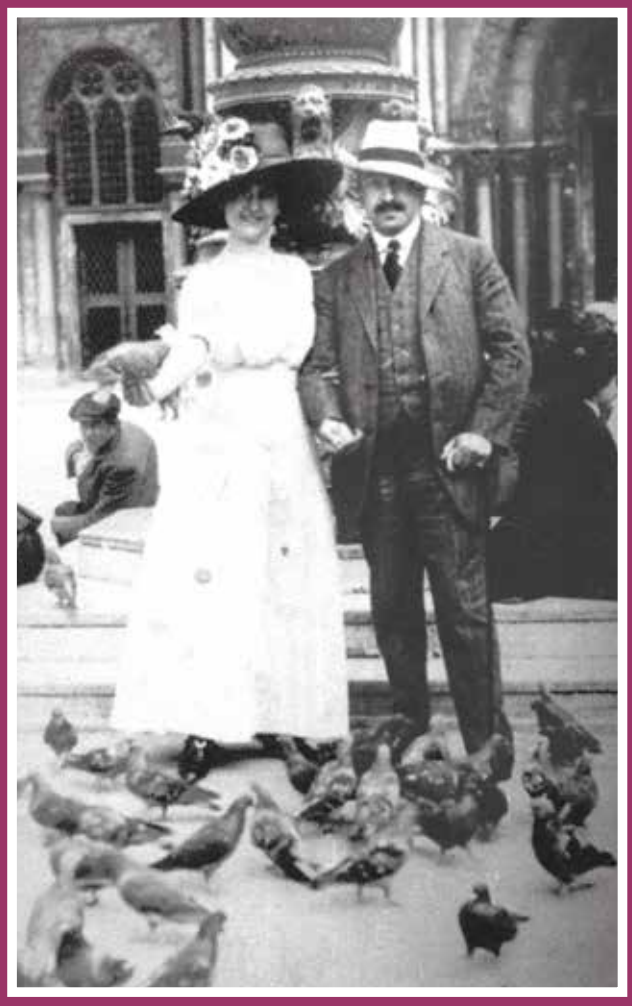
Courtesy of the Jewish Museum.

Jews were all at once free to participate in the vision of the universal brotherhood of humanity, as depicted on stage in Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, where prejudice, violence and discrimination against Jews give way before the gentler powers of reason, tolerance and the forgiveness of past wrongs. Jews too experienced the sense of spiritual emancipation inspired by the new liberalism, which aimed to overthrow in the name of reason and justice the antiquated superstitions and the arbitrary abuse of power under which they had suffered over the centuries. In the name of freedom, all things became possible. Eagerly drinking in the words of Schiller's Marquis Posa to the royal autocrat, Philip of Spain, in his eloquent plea for freedom of thought in *Don Carlos*, 'Sire, geben Sie Gedankenfreiheit', Jews too came to believe that by freeing their minds they could be free to be themselves. To the sublime accompaniment of Beethoven's music, the sentiments of Schiller's 'Ode to Joy' were to usher in an era of equality, humanity and brotherhood; it might have been wiser to pay more heed to the tragic outcome of Marquis Posa's endeavours.

During the nineteenth century, the process of the emancipation of the Jews in the German-speaking lands progressed, slowly and with setbacks, but apparently irrevocably. The Jews, once granted equal rights and status, began to participate energetically in the society around them and to assimilate. Liberalism, and the emancipation it brought, set the Jews of Germany firmly on the path of assimilation, and that key strategy of assimilation was what the great majority of Jews held to, at least as long as they lived under conditions of political liberalism that enabled them so to do. Whatever assimilation meant, though, it did not mean the complete abandonment of Jewish identity and the total absorption of Jews into German society. Jews continued to worship and practise as Jews, to see themselves as Jews in certain key spheres of life, however much they claimed the right to be treated no differently from their fellow Germans in other spheres, and to participate on terms of parity in professional or political life.

That political liberalism faced an uphill struggle in Germany has long been a commonplace among historians. The failure of the revolution of 1848, which aimed to bring full parliamentary government to the German states, was followed in 1871 by the foundation of the German Empire, created by Bismarck on the battlefield and in the spirit of 'blood and iron', not by the will of the German people, constitutionally expressed. Bismarck built a pseudo-constitutional system behind which real power remained vested in the organs of the Prussian state, a military autocracy with parliamentary trappings.

The Wilhelmine Empire was to prove a breeding ground for an underground of illiberal, reactionary and discriminatory ideologies, not the least of which was the new form of racial anti-Semitism, according to which a Jew remained a Jew 'by blood', however assimilated and even when baptized. The slump of 1873, which ushered in a long period of economic depression, provided the trigger for a wave of anti-Jewish feeling to break surface. Jews



Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Lore Sulzbacher's parents on honeymoon in Venice, 1910.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Gertrude Landshoff on her first day at school, c. 1902, holding her 'Schulüte', the cone-shaped box of sweets customary on that occasion.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum with batmitzvah girls, Bingen am Rhein, 1927.

were blamed for the financial scandals and the collapses of companies of the 1870s. Anti-Semitism – the word itself was coined by a German, Wilhelm Marr – became respectable. The court chaplain Adolf Stöcker tried to use it for political purposes, the composer Richard Wagner proclaimed it obsessively, and the historian Heinrich von Treitschke took to declaring 'Die Juden sind unser Unglück' ('The Jews are our misfortune').

The German Jews reacted to this by founding in 1893 their self-defence organization, the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (Central Union of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith). The almost pedantic emphasis on the bourgeois assimilationists' ideal of full German citizenship expressed in the Centralverein's very name has caused it to be the butt of humour, and worse, from later commentators: the Jewish humorist Kurt Tucholsky memorably renamed it 'Centralverein deutscher Staatsjuden bürgerlichen Glaubens' ('Central Union of German State Jews of the Bourgeois Faith'). But the CV fought a stubbornly impressive battle against anti-Semitism. One of its offshoots, the Jewish Central Information Office, which its founder Alfred Wiener brought to London in 1939, has blossomed into the Wiener Library, one of the jewels in the refugee community's crown.

Despite the spread of anti-Semitism, Germany remained a constitutional state, a state under the rule of law ('Rechtsstaat'), where anti-Jewish outrages like the pogroms in Tsarist Russia or the Dreyfus Affair in France were not possible. While the German Jews did not enjoy the range of freedoms and opportunities open to their co-religionists in Britain and America – one can hardly imagine a Disraeli climbing to the 'top of the greasy pole' in Wilhelmine Germany – they were vastly better placed than the Jews in the East, under Tsarist rule or in Hungary and Galicia. The Jews of Germany made enormous advances during the nineteenth century, and these continued after the First World War under the Weimar Republic. The achievements of German-speaking Jewry, intellectually and culturally, were so magnificent that some scholars place the 'German-Jewish symbiosis' on an equal plane with the great highpoints of Jewish cross-fertilisation with gentile cultures, the Graeco-Jewish interaction of the Hellenistic period and the interaction between Jewish and Moslem cultures in Moorish Spain.

This is not the place for a detailed enumeration of the achievements of the German-speaking Jews in the 150 years before Hitler. The names of Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein and Karl Marx alone indicate the enormous impact that Jews from the German-speaking lands have had on the whole course of Western ideas and science, on the very structures in which we think. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, German-Jewish names abound amongst the most important in music, literature, the visual and performing arts and all branches of culture; in science, technology and medicine; in the financial, commercial and industrial worlds; in academic life; in the learned professions, especially law and medicine; and in journalism, publishing and a wide range of free professions involving culture, the written

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Isidor Kaufmann with his army unit, Christmas 1915.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Friday night at the Birken family home, Berlin 1938.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
The tobacconist's shop belonging to Johnny Blunt's father, Kappeln.

word and intellectual skills generally. The Jewish refugees in Britain could thus see themselves as heirs to a grand tradition of culture and achievement; one only needs to glance through the *AJR Journal* to appreciate the standards that they set.

Of specifically Jewish interest is the remarkable liberalization and modernization of the Jewish religion in Germany during the nineteenth century. This found its clearest expression in Reform and Liberal Judaism, whose evolution mirrored in the religious sphere the abandonment of the medieval ghetto and its modes of thought. Orthodox Jewry too underwent far-reaching changes, associated especially with Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfurt am Main. By 1914, the majority of German Jews espoused Liberal Judaism, which enabled them to assimilate into German society while remaining conscious of their Jewish roots and loyalties. One of the crowning achievements of German Jewry was the foundation of the academic discipline known as *Wissenschaft des Judentums* - Jewish Studies, in the rather inadequate English translation - the application of the principles of scientific study to the Jewish religion and sacred texts. Again, the religious heritage that the refugees brought with them was a proud one.

It is plain even from this cursory survey that the German Jews were heavily concentrated in certain professional and occupational areas. One need not waste time refuting the anti-Semitic theories of the day that contended that Jews were somehow constitutionally suited to money-grubbing or to aridly intellectual and 'unproductive' pursuits, influential though these theories were. Far more convincing is the argument that Jews concentrated in those areas where they were allowed to work and flourish. 'If you prick us', cries Shylock to his Christian tormentors, 'Do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?' And, one might continue, if you give us the choice between money-lending and destitution, do we not develop banking skills?

Apart from the world of finance, most of the traditional avenues for social and economic advancement were closed to the Jews into and in some cases beyond the nineteenth century: the army, the government service, ownership of estates, not to mention the Church. It is therefore not surprising that able and ambitious Jews flocked into the professions to which they were allowed access, such as law and medicine. Jews, the people of the Book, also placed a greater value on education than did other Germans, as evidenced by the disproportionately high numbers of Jewish students enrolling at universities. The resulting high rate of qualifications and skills further reinforced the veneration for 'Bildung', for culture and education, which had been instilled in the German-speaking Jews by their abiding attachment to the values of German classical humanism and liberalism.

The German Jews were also concentrated in terms of their areas of residence. By 1914 they had become highly urbanized, with very large numbers living in a few big cities, Berlin, Breslau, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Cologne and Leipzig. The German-Jewish community had thus become to a

considerable extent middle-class, urbanized and secularized, almost a model of an assimilated community. This is not to ignore the considerable number of German Jews who did not fit what has almost become a stereotype of the bourgeois German Jew, whose highest aspiration was to be titled 'Herr Doktor'. Many Jews still lived in small towns and villages, especially in the South and West of Germany. Many more were poor and deprived of the economic, educational and social advantages enjoyed by middle-class Jews. These were often more recent arrivals from the East, from Germany's Polish provinces, Posen and Silesia.

Relations between the assimilated Western Jews and these 'Ostjuden', whose adherence to the traditional dress, appearance and customs of the East and to the Yiddish language emphasized their exotic origins, were uneasy, sometimes strained. The assimilated Jews tended to look down on the newcomers as uncouth and primitive, as uncomfortable reminders of the ghetto past who threatened to fuel the fires of anti-Semitism; in return, the Eastern Jews considered the secularized Jews of the West as turncoats who had traded their Jewish heritage and religious orthodoxy for the baubles of German-speaking civilization. It is important to note that the Jewish refugees who succeeded in escaping from Nazi Germany to Britain were drawn disproportionately from the middle-class, educated, prosperous sections of the community; these were very much better placed to navigate their way through the obstacle course to emigration. In this respect the refugees were unrepresentative of the Jews of Germany as a whole.

The situation of the Jews in Germany on the eve of the First World War gave little cause for pressing concern; there was no immediate reason to doubt that they would continue gradually to overcome the barriers they faced in society, while containing the marginal forces of racial anti-Semitism. The cataclysm of 1914-18 and its aftermath changed all that. As the war eroded the secure framework of values of nineteenth-century liberal society, ominous pointers to the future appeared: in November 1916 the Prussian Ministry of War conducted a census of Jews in the army, a blatant concession to the anti-Semitic agitation that alleged that Jews were evading war service. Such smears influenced opinion under the post-war Weimar Republic far more than the sad truth, which was that Jewish casualties were higher than those of other groups. Jews had suffered and died for their fatherland in such numbers as to suggest that they had seized on war service as a means to prove their patriotism and devotion to the land of their birth.

The trauma of defeat in 1918 and the wave of revolution that followed the collapse of the imperial order radicalized German politics and society almost beyond recognition, bringing a new strain of brutal and violent fanaticism to the fore. The Jews were one of the groups accused of responsibility for Germany's defeat, by 'stabbing in the back' the armies at the front. That Jews were prominent in the radical left-wing parties most vocal in their opposition to the war, and most heavily involved in the left-wing uprisings of 1918-19,

helped to promote this calumny and to inspire the Nazi obsession with 'Jewish Bolshevism'. When a short-lived revolutionary regime in Munich was bloodily suppressed in May 1919 by the forces of the far right, right-wing radicalism became a driving political force waiting for its moment to strike. It was in post-revolutionary Munich that Adolf Hitler emerged from the gutter to find his twisted vocation as an agitator for the Jew-hating right.

The weakness of the Weimar Republic, Germany's first attempt at full representative democracy, and its replacement by the Nazi regime are too well known to need detailed recapitulation here. Paradoxically, it was under the Republic that Jews were finally granted full equality of rights, while at the same time their collective position was gravely weakened. The far right assailed the Republic as a 'Judenrepublik', where constitutional democracy, political liberalism, cultural experimentation and a progressive package of social reforms were allegedly imposed on an unwilling Germania. Jews were indeed associated with all the modern aspects of republican society so hated by the right: a Jew, Hugo Preuss, drafted the Weimar constitution; the Democratic Party (DDP), supported by liberal Jews, gained 5½ million votes and 75 seats in the Reichstag elections of 1919; and Jews were hugely prominent both among the new cultural elite that made Weimar culture a byword for artistic modernity and among the pioneers of advanced social reforms. The Jews, to use a metaphor coined by Peter Gay, were 'outsiders' who had suddenly become 'insiders'; but they were insiders in a system that was itself all too soon to fall victim to vengeful outsiders bent on its overthrow.

The Jews were also associated in the public mind with economic developments under the Weimar Republic. Anti-Semites blamed the Jews for the shattering hyper-inflation that seized Germany in 1923, though few groups suffered more because of it: the inflation devastated the Jewish private banks, the mainstay of Jewish wealth and power. The mass unemployment that afflicted Germany after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 could also be blamed on 'Jewish profiteering'. As the Nazi vote rose to over a third of the electorate in the early 1930s, the parties of the liberal centre collapsed, the DDP's share falling to a mere 1%. Political liberalism, on which the emancipated, assimilated Jews depended, was dying. The systemic crisis crippling the Weimar Republic ended only when a right-wing cabal prevailed on President Hindenburg to appoint Hitler Chancellor on 30 January 1933.

The Jews of Austria

In view of the substantial number of Austrian Jews who emigrated to Britain after 1938, the historical background also requires brief consideration in their case. They were overwhelmingly concentrated in Vienna, where over 90% of the approximately 200,000 Austrian Jews lived. Yet Jews had been excluded from the imperial city until very late: even in 1848 few were permitted to reside

there, and it was not until the reforms of 1867 that the last vestiges of control were swept away. The expansion of the Jewish population of Vienna in the last four decades of the nineteenth century was staggering, as Jews flooded in from the eastern provinces of the Hapsburg Empire. The Jews were the 'imperial people' (Dan Diner) whose enterprise, mobility and lack of national or territorial bonds enabled them to settle at the empire's heart.

Arguably, it was the rapid rise of a large Jewish population, over a short period and in a city with no established community, that gave the Jews of Vienna the restless dynamism, the extraordinary cultural and intellectual creativity and the economic and commercial drive that characterized the brief spell of their heyday. 'Fin-de-siècle Vienna' has become a concept in its own right, and there can be no doubt that Jews to a great extent made it what it was, however much one may debate what precisely constitutes 'Jewish culture'. A comparison between the era from 1867 to 1938 and the cultural impoverishment of Vienna since 1945 makes the point.

Vienna, perhaps more than any other German-speaking city, held out to the Jews the prospect of assimilation, of professional and commercial advancement, of educational self-improvement and a cultural blossoming as remarkable as could be conceived. They had left the lifestyle and values of the ghetto and the shtetl far behind; for the Viennese Jews, as Steven Beller has remarked, assimilation represented the continuation of Jewish identity by other than religious means. But this highpoint of assimilation under conditions of liberalism was to prove precarious; the vision of cultural self-fulfillment and the promise of emancipation held out by German classical humanism were alluring but deceptive.

For the deeply Catholic culture of Austria was a seedbed for anti-Semitism, more widespread and virulent than in Germany. Already well before World War I, Karl Lueger had become Mayor of Vienna by exploiting political anti-Semitism to further the cause of his Christian Social Party. The First World War left Austria as the German-speaking rump of the Hapsburg Empire, stripped of much of its former territory, pride and economic viability, and politically gravely destabilised. As in Weimar Germany, the Jews were poorly placed to withstand the anti-Semitic and anti-democratic forces of the right, which thrived on the political and economic crises that shook the first Austrian Republic.

In 1933, the Christian Social Chancellor Dollfuss terminated parliamentary government in Austria, introducing a corporate state under a system sometimes called Austro-Fascism. The government came into conflict not only with the forces of the working-class left, which it violently suppressed in February 1934, but also with the pro-Nazi section of the right, which launched a putsch in July of the same year; this succeeded only in murdering the Chancellor. Under his successor, Schuschnigg, Austria existed under the menacing shadow of its neighbour to the North-West; the Jews could rely on protection only from a government which, while not brutally anti-Semitic,

scarcely had their interests at heart and was in any case too weak to resist German aggression.

National Socialism and the Jews, 1933-1939

When Hitler was appointed Chancellor in January 1933 and the Nazis took hold of the apparatus of state power, it was clear that the Jews would suffer. Hatred of the Jews was fundamental to Nazi ideology and to Hitler's entire world view; it coloured his earliest political utterances in the years after the First World War, and it reverberates through the final political testament that he dictated before his suicide in his Berlin bunker. Yet it was quite unclear in 1933 what forms of persecution that hatred would take. While the Führer plainly believed that Jews had no place within the German racial community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) and that they should be removed from German society, there is no evidence at this stage that he intended to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Germany, let alone of Europe. Nazi policy was certainly to persecute the Jews and make life increasingly difficult for them, but it evolved piecemeal, in response to external events and internal party pressures, not according to a master plan for genocide. What Karl Schleunes has called 'the twisted road to Auschwitz' was anything but the highroad to mass murder that it may, in hindsight, appear to us.

As Nazi policy towards the Jews developed, it determined the varying levels of persecution they suffered, and these in turn dictated their attitude to emigration, which the Nazis sought to encourage, if inconsistently. A significant feature of Jewish emigration from Germany is, in the light of the Holocaust that began in 1941, the relatively modest number emigrating in the first five years of Nazi rule, up to 1938. In response to the Nazi takeover of power and the initial excesses of Nazi rule, 37,000 Jews (of some 570,000) left Germany in 1933; but as the situation stabilized, numbers fell, and over the next four years, 1934-37, 92,000 Jews emigrated, and at a decreasing annual rate.

Partly this was the result of the Nazis' own regulations, which placed considerable obstacles in the path of would-be emigrants; partly it was the result of the Nazis' eagerness to despoil any Jew who left Germany, thereby ensuring that penniless Jews would have the greatest difficulty in gaining entry to host countries. Nazi policy in this sphere, far from being ruthlessly focused, was confused and contradictory. Goebbels justified the policy of reducing emigrating Jews to near-destitution by claiming that this would increase their unpopularity in the countries of reception, which would consequently become more sympathetic to German policies; predictably, the principal effect was to thwart the policy objective of emigration. The delight that the Nazis took in tormenting and humiliating Jews was often at odds with the evolution of clear and consistent objectives and policies.

The early months of Nazi rule were marked by considerable violence and

criminal excesses, frequently aimed at Jews. But these were often random acts, unsanctioned by the authorities, and Hitler was at pains to restore order, if only to avoid offending public opinion abroad and influential circles at home whose support he still needed. His first targets were his political opponents, especially the organizations of the working-class left, the Communist Party in particular. It was to house political opponents that concentration camps were set up; Jews were not yet subject to mass arrest and incarceration, unless they were also political activists. The early years of Nazi rule placed the Jews in a curious position where a veneer of Teutonic respect for legality coexisted with random acts of violence and persecution and a more systematic programme of legalized discrimination. A Jew could be arrested or beaten up for no reason, even killed, but he could also insist successfully that his pension or insurance policy payments be maintained in accordance with legal regulations.

In certain areas, however, the law was used against Jews and their position as second-class citizens and undesirables was emphasized by state action. The first nationwide campaign against the Jews was the officially inspired boycott of Jewish shops and businesses of 1 April 1933. SA men swaggered and postured outside Jewish stores, to intimidate potential customers, and subjected Jews to humiliation and violence; but the boycott was called off after three days and not repeated. For Jews, however, the boycott was the expression of a state-inspired offensive against them, aimed at undermining their legal rights and economic security, a psychological blow of great magnitude.

April 1933 also brought a series of laws and decrees affecting Jews. The 'Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service' aimed to purge the civil service of Jews and political opponents of the regime. It was followed by similar anti-Jewish laws relating to the legal profession, the medical profession and the education system; the number of Jewish children admitted to German schools was severely restricted, and Jewish students were effectively excluded from universities. For the many Jews working in the professions, these were body blows that must have made them question whether their future lay in Germany; as yet, however, the dangers posed by National Socialism were for many counterbalanced by the uncertain prospects they faced in exile and the problems of emigration, not least that of gaining admission to a foreign country.

For over two years there was no official intensification of the persecution of the Jews. But in September 1935 the Nazis promulgated a set of three laws known as the Nuremberg Laws. The Reich Citizenship Law made Aryan blood a requirement for citizenship, thus for the first time formally relegating Jews to the status of second-class citizens outside the full protection of the law. The 'Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour' made marriages between Jews and Germans illegal and forbade extramarital sexual relations between them. Gordon Craig has compared the Nuremberg Laws to the action of a primitive tribe that casts unpopular members into an

outer darkness where they become anyone's prey. They did indeed lay the foundation for the exclusion of Jews from German society on racial grounds, and ultimately for their physical elimination.

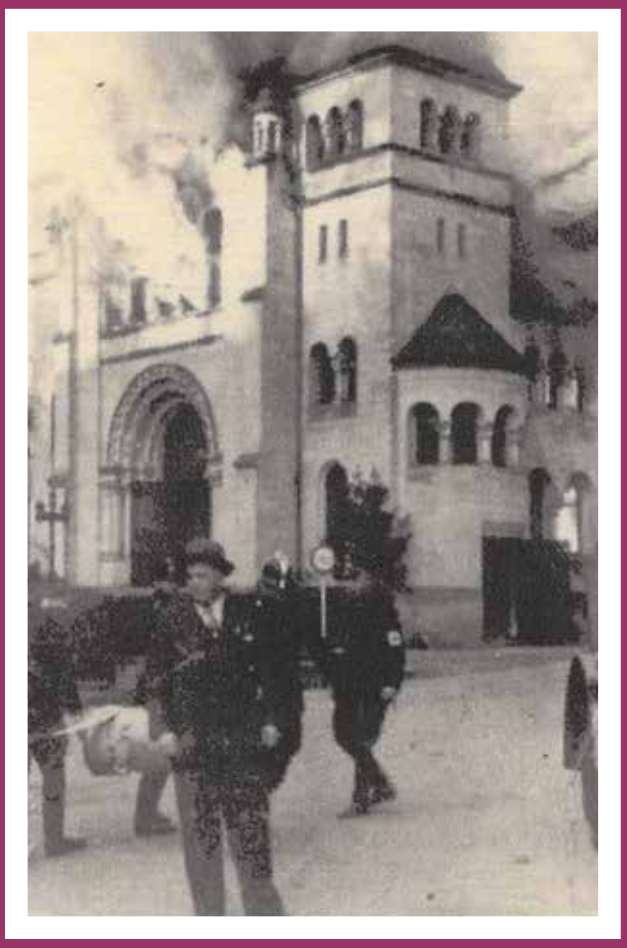
This was not realized at the time. Many Jews felt that, hateful as the new laws were, they at least regularized the situation and gave Jews a status they could live with, if only as second-class citizens. The organization that represented German Jews, the Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland, issued a statement viewing the Nuremberg Laws as the basis for a tolerable arrangement between the Jews and the Nazis and expressed its willingness to work for a modus vivendi with them. But the process of excluding Jews from German society now intensified, especially in the economic field, where Jewish businesses were forced to close or were 'aryanised', through forced sales to German owners at derisory prices.

On 12 March 1938 German forces marched into Austria and effected the 'Anschluss', the incorporation of Austria into the Reich, to the enthusiastic approval of large numbers of Austrians. The Anschluss provoked an orgy of anti-Semitic excesses, especially in Vienna, where mob fury was let loose on the defenceless Jews. Jews were subjected to public violence with no possibility of redress; many were publicly humiliated, by being forced to scrub pavements or clean toilets, others were summarily evicted from their flats, and some were driven to suicide. The looting and violence was on a scale not seen in Germany, and it shocked observers like the American journalist William Shirer and his British colleague G.E.R. Gedye.

The anti-Jewish excesses in Vienna represented a step change in the level of persecution. Jewish property and businesses were 'aryanised' on a large scale and with official approval; Adolf Eichmann, an SS officer in charge of the Jewish Affairs Section, set up a 'Central Office for Jewish Emigration', which stripped emigrant Jews of their wealth and hurried them abroad in unprecedented numbers; frantic Jews queued for hours at the consulates of all countries which might conceivably give them entry visas; Jews were deported on special trains to Dachau, many never to return. A brand of primitive sadism infected the treatment of Jews everywhere, whether it was random molestation in the streets, the ransacking of their homes, or the official chicanery to which they were subjected in their long and often fruitless search for exit documents. It was a green light for all forms of inhumanity and cruelty.

When the young Viennese Jew Georg Klaar (George Clare) arrived in Berlin with his family after the Anschluss, he found the relaxed conditions in Germany, which he described forty years later in his family memoir *Last Waltz in Vienna,* a liberation after Vienna. That was not to last. On 7 November 1938, a young Polish Jew, Herschel Grünspan, shot and fatally wounded a German diplomat in Paris. In revenge, the Nazis unleashed a state-inspired pogrom on the Jewish community. During the night of 9-10 November, hundreds of Jewish shops were plundered and nearly 300 synagogues burned; because of the

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Official Nazi boycott of Jewish shops and businesses, 1 April 1933.



Courtesy of the Wiener Library
Burning synagogue on Crystal Night 9/10 November 1938, Essen.

Reichsfluchtsteuerbescheid

1. Juni 1938

Courtesy of the Freud Museum Jews had to pay a tax before they were allowed to leave the Reich.
This certifies that Sigmund Freud paid the 'Reichsfluchtsteuer' before fleeing Vienna in 1938.

Courtesy of the Wiener Library
Jews being marched through the streets after Crystal Night on their way to detention.

broken glass, Goebbels cynically named the pogrom the 'Reichskristallnacht' (Crystal Night).

For the first time, there was large-scale violence carried out against Jewish communities nationwide by the mass of 'little' Nazis and SA men. The resulting orgy of violence affected hundreds of Jewish communities and spelt the end of any hope that Jews might lead an ordered existence inside Germany. 91 Jews were murdered and some 25,000 Jewish men arrested, many sent to concentration camps for a time. A series of regulations were issued in the wake of the November pogrom, designed to eliminate Jews from the German economy, thus depriving them of their livelihood, to curtail their activities and limit their public interaction with Germans, and generally to subject them to harassment, humiliation and a life stripped of all joy.

Jews now sought desperately to escape from the Reich. But they faced serious obstacles, not least because most foreign countries were gradually closing their doors to Jewish refugees. Visas were objects beyond price. In addition, the Nazi authorities subjected those wishing to emigrate to an endless paperchase; to satisfy the requirements for emigration, a refugee had to have a sheaf of documents, including an exit permit, a certificate of good conduct ('Führungszeugnis'), a document certifying that all tax payments had been made ('Steuerunbedenklichkeitsbescheinigung'), as well as a passport (stamped with the obligatory 'J' for 'Jude') and the documents necessary for admission abroad. Jews were subject to various taxes on leaving Germany, the tax on 'flight from the Reich' ('Reichsfluchtsteuer') and that on Jewish wealth ('Judenvermögensabgabe'), and were only permitted to take personal effects and 10 Reichsmarks with them. The difficulties confronting would-be emigrants were exacerbated when the number of Jews under Hitler's control was increased by the German occupation of the Sudetenland in autumn 1938, followed by his invasion of the rump of Czechoslovakia in March 1939.

Much as the Nazis wished to rid themselves of 'non-Aryans', the brutality and sheer malice with which they conducted the process of emigration impeded the departure of many Jews. And time was now of the essence. Within ten months of the Crystal Night, Hitler invaded Poland and provoked World War II. Under wartime conditions, emigration became vastly more difficult. With the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the Nazis turned to other means to realize their 'Final Solution'. Nevertheless, by September 1939, a considerable portion of Germany's 570,000 Jews had emigrated; of the Austrian Jews, who had only the eighteen months between the Anschluss and the outbreak of war in which to leave, some two thirds, over 120,000, succeeded in emigrating. The number of these Jews who found refuge in Britain, often with great difficulty, was surprisingly large.

The Arrival of the Jewish Refugees in Britain, 1933-1940

By far the most important factor determining the reception of Jewish refugees from Hitler's Reich who sought entry to Britain was the attitude of the British government and people towards them. Whether they could gain entry at all depended on the government; for governments could refuse them entry on principle, as the USSR did, or apply rigid quota limits on the American model. With the Aliens Act of 1905, designed to limit Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, Britain had abandoned its policy of allowing free entry to immigrants. This act, together with legislation passed on the outbreak of World War I and at its end and with the detailed regulations set out in the Aliens Order of 1920, provided the legislative framework within which the government approached the problems created by the sudden demand for entry from German Jews after 1933.

The British government found itself in the unenviable position of having to react to developments over which it had no control. The Nazi takeover of power in Germany created the problem of Jewish refugees in the first place; the intensification of Nazi persecution of the Jews, especially in 1938/39, caused fresh waves of refugees; and Hitler's decision to invade Poland and trigger war with Britain made refugees from Germany nationals of an enemy power. The government had thus to wait on the initiatives of an unpredictable and potentially hostile power, which would not hesitate to use the Jewish issue to embarrass it politically.

For the first five years of Nazi rule, British government policy was, broadly, to restrict the admission of refugees to a small number, while trying to give the appearance of humanity in its treatment of them: a manageable compromise between humanity and expediency. Ministers were not insensitive to the plight of the refugees, especially when Nazi brutality outraged public opinion and provoked waves of sympathy for the refugees. But ultimately British interests came first: refugees were to be admitted only if they could bring some benefit to Britain, if they were wealthy, for example, or eminent in an artistic, scientific or technological field. Otherwise, they risked being turned back at their port of entry by immigration officers; it was these officials who, up to 1938, decided who could and could not enter Britain.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the relatively few refugees who settled in Britain between 1933 and 1938 included a number of persons with capital, industrialists who might set up firms and provide employment, established figures in the arts like the writer Stefan Zweig or the violinist Carl Flesch, and a significant element of scientific and academic talent brought over under the auspices of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning. Since the first targets of the Nazis were their political opponents, there were also a number of mostly left-wing, non-Jewish political figures among the early refugees. Accurate figures are not available, but best estimates suggest that by 1938 there were something under 10,000 refugees from Germany in Britain.


DEUTSCHES REICH

J

REISEPASS

Nr. 244/39

NAME DES PASSINHABERS

BEGLEITET VON SEINER EHEFRAU

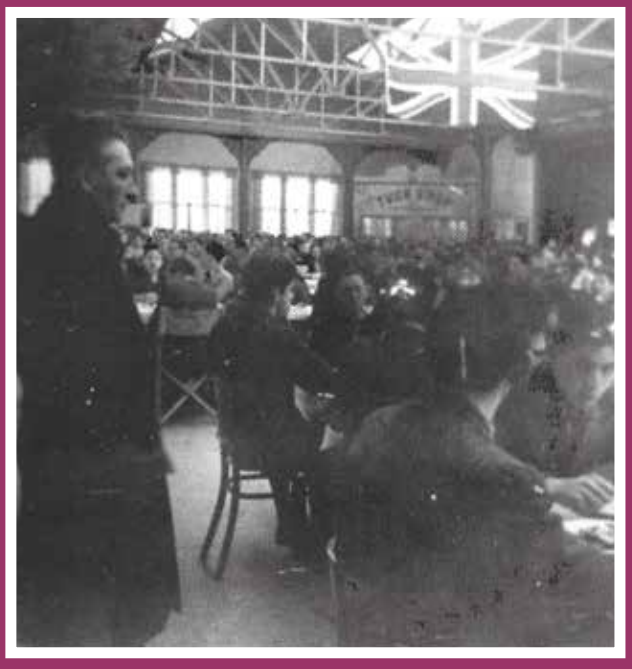
UND VON KINDERN

STAATSANGEHÖRIGKEIT:

DEUTSCHES REICH

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
A German passport stamped with the obligatory 'J' for 'Jude' (Jew).

Courtesy of World Jewish Relief
Jewish children arriving on a Kinderstransport from Germany at a station in Britain, 1939.



Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Kinderstransport children housed at Dovercourt, formerly a Butlin's holiday camp near Harwich, 1939.

Courtesy of Kenneth Ambrose
Kenneth Ambrose and sister with a trunk that was to bring his possessions from Stettin to England, 1936.

One reason for this low figure is that many refugees did not yet consider emigrating to Britain. At this stage, they preferred countries nearer home, France, Czechoslovakia, Holland or Austria, which were both culturally and geographically more accessible. Those who wanted to get as far from Hitler as possible went to America. Britain, across the Channel and aloof in its mentality from the Continent, at first attracted comparatively few.

Public opinion in Britain was divided on the question of how many refugees to admit. The number of outright political supporters of Nazism was very small. Mosley's British Union of Fascists was vocal, but electorally insignificant; the government remained nervous, however, about its potential for stirring up trouble over the refugee issue. More widespread was an ugly layer of anti-Semitism that pervaded right-wing sections of the social and political establishment and the right-wing press, then as now concerned to keep out 'aliens' bent on 'scrounging' off Britain. This mindset, often known as 'golf club anti-Semitism', drew the line at outright violence: men like G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc could not stomach Nazi measures. But there is no doubt that much of the traditional right was constitutionally opposed to the settlement of 'alien Jews' in Britain, and the National and Conservative governments paid heed to its views. The belief that war could be avoided by appeasing Hitler also militated against the admission of known enemies of Germany.

Right-wing hardliners, like Mr E. Doran, Unionist M.P. for Tottenham North and a ready critic of any Home Secretary prepared to admit refugees, relied heavily on the argument that Britain could not support more than a very few of them and that large-scale immigration would lead to an increase in anti-Semitism and to public disorder. In 1933 Britain was in the throes of the Great Depression, with mass unemployment stalking the land. In these conditions, the trade unions also opposed immigration that threatened 'British jobs'. In the first years after 1933, most refugees were either forbidden to work or permitted to take only jobs that could not be performed by British citizens.

Aware that many Jewish refugees were highly qualified, the professional bodies representing the legal and medical professions set about defending their territory. The Law Society was able to hide behind the difference between the German and English legal systems, which meant that refugee lawyers could not practise unless they retrained. The British Medical Association fought to keep the refugees from practising, even though the anatomy of the average Englishman does not differ noticeably from that of his German counterpart. German medical practitioners, it was explained, could not perform to British standards. The excellence of German medical institutions was conveniently ignored; when Viennese psychoanalysts joined the refugees, the same argument was applied, incredibly enough, to those from the very home of the discipline.

It is difficult to gauge where the balance of public opinion lay. Probably, the bulk of the population without set views inclined towards admitting the

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Lorraine Allard with her foster family, Lincoln.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Many young Jewish refugees were housed in hostels.

refugees in principle out of a generalized sense of sympathy, but in practice opposed mass immigration. A widespread strain of hostility to foreigners resident in Britain – 'aliens' in the current jargon – also militated against the admission of refugees. Essentially, the debate about immigration with which we are familiar today is largely replaying the arguments deployed after 1933 in the case of the Jewish refugees from Hitler.

The refugees also had their supporters, though these were a minority and, with the possible exception of periods like the aftermath of the Crystal Night, had to fight an uphill battle against public attitudes of indifference or hostility. Those who spoke up for the refugees in the Commons included Eleanor Rathbone, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood and Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, and Lord Marley in the Lords; Bishop Bell of Chichester was among the churchmen who championed their cause, as did a steadfast band of liberal and left-wing notables who could be relied on for their support. The Society of Friends (Quakers) was particularly active in bringing Jews to Britain and supporting them.

In the forefront of the refugee cause was the Jewish community. In 1933 it set up the Jewish Refugees Committee, under Otto M. Schiff, a banker of Anglo-German origin, which was funded by the Central British Fund for German Jewry. This was the body to which must go much of the credit for securing the admission of many thousands of Jews. Leading figures in the Jewish community, like Simon Marks, Viscount Samuel and Lord Bearsted, raised money for the same cause. The Board of Deputies provided an organizational base for the project of rescue at Woburn House; by early 1939 the organizations involved had multiplied so greatly that new premises had to be found for them, and they moved to Bloomsbury House, which became a landmark of hope for many a desperate refugee. Most importantly, the Jewish community undertook in April 1933 to bear all the expenses of maintaining and accommodating the Jewish refugees, thus ensuring that they would not become a burden on the state. This guarantee to the Treasury and the taxpayer greatly eased the position, though the number of those admitted ultimately involved expenditure beyond the capacity of the community, and in September 1939 the government took over.

But Anglo-Jewish attitudes towards the refugees were ambiguous. British Jews, descendants of the immigrants from Tsarist Russia at the turn of the previous century, shared the misgivings of Eastern Jewry about the assimilated Jews of Central Europe, with their middle-class aspirations and pretentions to high culture. British Jews were also very concerned that the arrival of a fresh wave of immigrants would provoke an anti-Semitic backlash that would undo the progress they had made in the past decades.

This pervasive anxiety found clear expression in the pamphlet *Helpful Information and Guidance for Every Refugee,* published in January 1939 by the German Jewish Aid Committee (the renamed Jewish Refugees Committee)

and the Board of Deputies. This urged the refugees, in terms that would now appear comic if they were not so demeaning, to avoid at all costs giving offence to the British, not to make themselves conspicuous in public by their speech or appearance and, in conclusion, to 'be loyal to England, your host'. This should not detract from the admirable efforts made by many British Jews, often of modest means, to provide accommodation, hospitality and support for refugees, and especially for Jewish children from the Reich. Although there are many examples of close relations between British and Continental Jews, it is probably fair to say that overall the two communities have never entirely overcome the differences between them.

Government policy underwent a marked change in 1938, in response to the waves of refugees caused by the Anschluss and the Crystal Night. The Jews of Austria were the first to flee in large numbers, overwhelming the resources of the British Consul General on the spot, who reported that his building was 'literally besieged every day by hundreds of Jews', conditions which were to be repeated in Germany after November 1938. At the insistence of the Home Office, the government reacted in April 1938 by instituting a visa system, which required refugees to obtain a visa from the British authorities before they left the Reich. It is often argued that this was intended to restrict the number of refugees entering Britain. If so, it failed spectacularly. Whereas at most 10,000 refugees had been admitted in the five years since 1933, some 60,000 were admitted in the eighteen months between March 1938 and the outbreak of war. To move from admitting some 2,000 refugees a year to admitting over 3,000 a month is, even by Home Office standards, a curious way of effecting a reduction in numbers.

It is worth recalling that possession of a visa guaranteed entry, whereas previously a refugee arriving at a British port could expect to be refused entry by the immigration officer. Take the case of the Austrian actress Hanne Norbert, later to marry the distinguished refugee actor Martin Miller. She was acting in Innsbruck at the time of the 'Anschluss', jumped onto the first train to the Channel ports and travelled on by boat to Britain, where she was promptly deported back to France. Later, her parents came to Britain, secured a visa for her, and she entered Britain without a hitch.

It is also plain that the government turned a blind eye to the generous way in which consular officials like Frank Foley in Berlin (subject of Michael Smith's bestseller *Foley: The Spy Who Saved Ten Thousand Jews)* and R.T. Smallbones in Frankfurt were dispensing visas. While the attitude of the British government to the refugees remained grudging and ungenerous, in the sense that too few were admitted and those too reluctantly, analyses of government policies that conclude that they were inhumane, anti-Semitic in inspiration and aimed only at leaving the Jews to their fate are one-sided. Take the Austrian Jews, who sought to emigrate precisely during the period when Britain admitted the great majority of its Jewish refugees, between the Anschluss and the outbreak of war. Of the 180,000 Jews of Vienna, 30,000 came to Britain as their first country of

SITUATIONS WANTED

WILL any kindhearted people help bring husband out of Vienna? Wife already here; first-class cook and dressmaker; desire post together anywhere.—Write, Mrs. Grunbaum, 19, Christchurch-ave., Brondesbury, N.W.2.

WOULD kindhearted person help Viennese orphan to come over. Possesses visa; experienced in all domestic work.—Apply, 55, Marylands-road, Paddington, W.9.

YOUNG lady, permit, highest references, speaks Engl., French, German, driving licence, trained housekeeper, surgery assistant, seeks post; doctor's household preferred.—Address, 4,903, Jewish Chronicle.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Jews sought desperately for jobs that would secure them entry to Britain.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Home from home? Refugees skiing on Primrose Hill, London, 1940.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Several thousand Jewish women were permitted to enter Britain as domestic servants working in British households.

refuge; that is to say, one sixth of the entire Jewish community and fully one quarter of those who escaped the Holocaust. If a handful of countries had taken as many refugees, there would have been few Jews left to emigrate in September 1939. No country admitted more refugees in relation to its population and absorptive capacity than Britain, except Palestine.

One must beware of allowing the Holocaust that commenced in 1941 to colour one's judgment of British policies before 1939, powerfully though it affects one's emotional reaction to the story of the Jews of Central Europe. Books that claim to study pre-war British policies in the context of the Holocaust should be treated with caution. This is for the simple reason that before Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, there was no Holocaust; nor is it reasonable to expect British ministers and civil servants to have foreseen it, inconceivable as it was to virtually everyone else. The historian must judge the participants in these events according to the conditions in which they actually functioned, not in the hindsight afforded by knowledge of later developments that they could not have foreseen.

The Initial Settlement of the Jewish Refugees, 1933-39

The great majority of the Jewish refugees who came to Britain arrived in 1938/39, and had little time to settle before the outbreak of war disrupted their lives afresh. For them, this short period was a temporary stage, allowing for little more than acclimatization.

There were several clearly defined groups among the Jews who were admitted to Britain in significant numbers in 1938/39, some of whom were also represented among the earlier arrivals. An example of the latter is the fortunate group of people who had the means to maintain themselves or who had a British citizen to act as guarantor for them; in either case, they would not become a charge on the exchequer or enter the employment market, and were granted entry visas more or less automatically, as those with capital had been admitted earlier. These were often people with personal or family contacts in Britain or who had business connections here. They came largely from the more prosperous and cosmopolitan sections of the Jewish community, familiar with foreign travel and less daunted than most by the prospect of making a new start in Britain. Their professional and business skills often gave them a head start in the challenging process of making their way in Britain, once the period of initial settlement was past. Even these, the more affluent of the refugees, had to leave most of their wealth and possessions behind; only a tiny minority of the refugees could enjoy a life of comfortable prosperity in the early days.

At the opposite end of the scale were several thousand women admitted on domestic service visas, who were employed as servants in British households. The use of refugees as menial domestics has rightly been

criticized as a demeaning exploitation of women fleeing from persecution, and often quite unsuited by their middle-class backgrounds to the work they had to do. All too often underpaid, underfed and overworked, they were exposed to callous and inhuman treatment, by employers who ignored the emotional trauma of their expulsion from the country of their birth and their agonizing separation from their endangered families at home. Some employers behaved well to their refugee domestics, but many more treated them as servants from abroad were – and are – treated: 'an alien occupation', as Tony Kushner has tellingly styled it. Sadly, it appears that Anglo-Jewish families behaved no better than their gentile counterparts. Once war broke out, very few women remained long in domestic service.

A high-profile group was the children who came on special transports, now known as Kindertransportees. Public outrage at the Crystal Night gave rise to the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, under whose auspices nearly 10,000 Jewish children were allowed to enter Britain without visas. Two whole schools were brought over, the ORT school from Berlin and the Jawne school from Cologne, the last of whose transports was prevented from leaving Germany by the outbreak of war.

About half the children were never to see one or both of their parents again, which invests those last hurried moments of farewell on a railway platform in Berlin or Vienna with an almost unbearable poignancy. The rescue of some 10,000 Jewish children from the Holocaust to come has rightly been celebrated as a triumph for Jewish life over the forces of darkness and death. Even their parents, who parted from them in anguish, would surely not have preferred them to fall into the hands of the Gestapo. The children saved probably represented not far short of 10% of Jewish children remaining in Germany by 1939.

The children were placed with foster parents or in Jewish hostels, a cluster of which sprang up in London NW2, either side of Shoot Up Hill; a number were housed temporarily at Dovercourt holiday camp, not far from Harwich, the main port of arrival en route to Liverpool Street Station. Jewish organizations did their best to look after the children, but this proved impossible in some cases, once the children were spread over the country. Their experiences varied from the best to the worst: some suffered emotional neglect, even physical abuse, from unsuitable foster parents; others encountered warmth and love. For example, Martha Blend, née Immerdauer, who came from Vienna aged nine, records in the story of her life, *A Child Alone,* the kindness with which she was enveloped by the Jewish foster family of modest means who took her in and the neighbourliness that characterized the whole area of the East End where they lived.

Although many of the children have gone on to lead happy, productive and successful lives, it is probably fair to say that the trauma of separation from the family, growing up in a strange environment and in some cases adopting a new, 'British' identity has inevitably left its mark. About 20% were

reunited with their parents when the latter succeeded in emigrating. The 'Kinder' created their own organization, the Reunion of Kindertransport, founded on the initiative of Bertha Leverton and recently affiliated to the AJR; their experiences have been recorded in a number of documentary films, notably Deborah Oppenheimer's *Into the Arms of Strangers*.

A considerable number of refugees entered Britain in transit, with permission to stay for a limited time until they re-emigrated, usually to the USA. To house some of them, the government set up Kitchener Camp at Richborough, near Sandwich. Their status as 'transmigrants' was a polite fiction, for no attempt was made to enforce their departure; once war broke out, they were allowed to stay and were treated no differently from other refugees. The residents of Kitchener Camp, many of whom joined the Pioneer Corps when war broke out, found its atmosphere both companionable and purposeful; today a plaque commemorates their stay on the quiet Kent coast.

There were agricultural camps, set up under Zionist auspices, where young people could train for work in Palestine. Schools run by refugee teachers with a large proportion of refugee pupils included Bunce Court in Kent, where Anna Essinger relocated her school from Herrlingen, Stoatley Rough under Hilde Lion in Surrey, Minna Specht's Butcombe Court near Bristol, and Alma Schindler's Regents Park School, which led an almost nomadic existence in the decade and a half of its existence. Few refugee children could attend Gordonstoun, the school founded by Kurt Hahn that numbers the Duke of Edinburgh and the Prince of Wales among its alumni.

Outside these groups were the many refugees who made their way to Britain alone or with family members and who faced a daily battle for subsistence. They tended to congregate in certain areas, principally North-West London along the axis of the Finchley Road. Even today, the greatest concentration of the AJR's members is in the postal districts of NW3 (Hampstead, Belsize Park and Swiss Cottage), NW6 (West Hampstead), NW8 (St. John's Wood) and NW11 (Golders Green), with a perceptible presence in the adjacent areas of NW2 (Willesden Green) and W9 (Maida Vale). Those with more orthodox Jewish beliefs settled as a distinct group in Stamford Hill and Stoke Newington.

The areas of settlement point to the middle-class status and aspirations of many refugees. But at the start they mostly had to lower their expectations sharply. Many of them, being young, accepted this as a temporary loss of status, confident that they would in time be able to work their way up. The age profile of those who left the Reich was skewed towards the younger age groups; the more elderly were inclined to stay behind, fearful of emigration and believing that the Nazis had no incentive seriously to mistreat harmless old folk. The young refugees lived in bedsits, boarding houses and cheap rented flats; the women worked as cleaners or charwomen, while the men tried to gain some professional foothold on which to build a secure existence. Lyons Corner Houses in the West End were favoured, both as meeting places and as

employers, since they paid their staff well. The refugees deployed a remarkable degree of resourcefulness: one young woman from Czechoslovakia set up a cheese-making business at home, selling to stores that were household names, until war put a stop to her efforts.

There were, however, many cases of refugees who suffered grievously from a loss of professional dignity: scientists forced to take employment as laboratory technicians; men who had been in senior and responsible jobs working as bookkeepers and office drudges; scholars and intellectuals like Ernst Sommer, a highly respected writer from the Sudetenland, working as menials and waiters in the struggle to keep their families and continue their creative work. Some, like the doyen of Berlin's theatre critics, Alfred Kerr, never succeeded in gaining settled employment. There were cases of suicide, for instance among doctors who despaired of ever being permitted to practise in England. The Jewish refugees were markedly reluctant to engage in manual or unskilled labour, except as a temporary expedient; this contrasts sharply with the Irish, at that time by far the largest group of foreign workers in Britain, who often came specifically as labourers.

Most of the refugees could not easily sell their labour on the employment market, coming as many of them did from professional and commercial occupations. The circular of visa instructions sent in April 1938 by the Foreign Office to officials issuing passports in the Reich sought to restrict the entry of such people. This is another area where official documents are a bad guide to historical reality. The categories of applicants not to be admitted included retail traders, agents and middlemen, precisely the type of businessmen who set up the host of small businesses and enterprises that were to be such a feature of the refugee community. The instructions also deemed undesirable 'the rank and file' of doctors, lawyers and dentists, professions that are again heavily over-represented among the Jewish refugees. The extraordinary wealth of musical talent that the refugees brought with them, which revolutionized British musical life from Glyndebourne to the Wigmore Hall and from Covent Garden to the Edinburgh Festival, amply disproves the notion that the British authorities achieved the stated aim of excluding 'minor musicians', which is exactly what many of the great names of the future then were.

It was not only in the professional and occupational field that the refugees had difficulty fitting in. Britain in the late 1930s was a vastly different country from today, far more insular, less aware of European culture and customs and, as befitted an imperial power, almost unquestioningly confident of the superiority of its institutions, intellectual traditions and way of life over those of mere Continentals. Far from being an offshore island of Europe, Britain saw itself as a world centre whose standards Europeans struggled to emulate. 'Fog in Channel, Continent cut off', as the (probably apocryphal) newspaper headline had it. Any number of refugee memoirs and autobiographies have recorded the new arrivals' struggle to adapt to the unfamiliar clothes, climate and customs: the inadequacy of the heating and the inedibility of the food are

standard themes. Books like Judith Kerr's *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* vividly recreate the first encounter with English life, as the young narrator arrives in rain-sodden London via Newhaven with her family.

The young Marianne Elsley, née Josephy, arrived from Rostock on a Kindertransport and stayed with a widow, Elizabeth Carter, and her daughter Irene in North-West London. She was lovingly looked after, but her autobiography *A Chance in Six Million* records that she was 'totally unprepared for the rigours of the English indoor climate':

> The Carters' house was comfortable enough by pre-war London standards. There was an open fire in the sitting-room, an Ideal Boiler which gave out a blissful heat in the kitchen, and a gas-fire, rarely in use, in a small dining room. The bedrooms were completely unheated, and how I shivered during those first months. I should have brought a hot water bottle, unheard of in Germany except in the case of illness. Irene kindly shared hers with me; that is, I borrowed it to get my bed warm and then put it out for her to use. It was not an entirely satisfactory arrangement.

This did not count heavily when set against the kindness she experienced from the Carters and from the lady who acted as guarantor for her, Miss Courtauld.

The sheer size of London, with its imperious buildings and architecture, could be intimidating, bearing in mind that even former inhabitants of Vienna or Hamburg would never have seen an underground system. The drab slums and the apparently endless monotony of the suburbs added to their sense of estrangement. Outside London, on the other hand, refugees could easily feel even more cut off from all that was familiar and reassuring. English manners, with their peculiar aloofness and reserve, did not help in this respect. Many refugees would have suffered more from the invisible barriers created by indifference and politely impenetrable distance than from outright hostility and insult, which seem on the whole to have been rare.

Language was perhaps the greatest barrier. Even those refugees who had learnt English at school were at first baffled by the everyday jargon and the Cockney or local dialects they encountered. Others were barely able to communicate at all. The refugees themselves proclaimed their foreignness as soon as they opened their mouths, and their accents have in not a few cases accompanied them through their lives. For many, it is a matter of regret, surprise or even anger that they are instantly recognizable as 'foreigners' even after sixty years of residence in Britain. One recent book of reminiscences of refugee life has the apt title *'Where Do You Come from?',* the question that casts a shadow over the refugees' acquired British identity. Interviewed after half a century of life in South-West London, another former refugee

pronounced herself so tired of being asked where she came from that she regularly replied – in an accent one could cut with a knife – 'I come from Kew Gardens'.

Language problems could have their lighter side. One elderly refugee lady, employed as a cook, had learnt enough of British kitchen equipment to appreciate the power of the then popular cleaning agent, Liquid Gumption; having arrived at a new household, she discomfited her 'madam' by asking her why she had no gumption. On another occasion, when the husband of the house asked her where the Lux (soap powder) was, she mistook this for the German word 'Lachs', meaning salmon, and replied that they were having it for dinner. Similar jokes have passed into refugee lore, veiling the hardships of the early years behind a bilingual humour that assumes a mastery of both cultures.

Lotte Kramer's poem 'Bilingual' captures the sense of division between native and adopted tongues:

> When you speak German
> The Rhineland opens its watery gates
> Lets in strong currents of thought
> Sentences sit on shores teeming
> With certainties. You cross bridges
> To travel many lifetimes
> Of a captive's continent.
>
> When you speak English
> The hesitant earth softens your vowels.
> The sea – never far away – explores
> Your words with liquid memory.
> You are an apprentice again and skill
> Is belief you can't quite master
> In your adoptive island.
>
> Myself, I'm unsure
> In both languages. One, with mothering
> Genes, at once close and foreign
> After much unuse. Near in poetry.
> The other, a constant love affair
> Still unfulfilled, a warm
> Shoulder to touch'.

Perhaps surprisingly, many refugees remember the early days in Britain as a happy time. Through the alchemy of memory, acts of kindness tend to predominate in interviews recorded with former refugees: railway porters, taxi drivers and policemen who helped them on arrival; strangers who extended

hospitality to them; colleagues at work who took them under their wing. There were also examples of gross insensitivity, cold indifference, hostility, and downright callousness, displayed especially towards domestics and sometimes children.

But in the main, admiration, even affection, for certain aspects of pre-war British life pervades the life stories of refugees: the orderliness of the queues, with their aura of fair play; the public insistence on courtesy, especially the habit of saying 'sorry' in the street even when not at fault; the approachability of the 'bobbies', so different from their authoritarian German counterparts; the tolerance of dissenting views and the right of free speech, manifested at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park, and the ability to contain such differences within a democratic framework. One young Jewish refugee came on a Kindertransport and was joined later by her mother in Oldham, where they settled in modest circumstances; the family had been Communists, and thus lost members both to Nazi persecution and to Stalin's purges. By contrast with the murderous maelstrom of totalitarian politics, her schooldays in a small Lancashire town now evoke memories of 'my dear old Oldham'. Perhaps the very ordinariness of her new existence invested it with a luminosity of its own, modest but enduring.

Fred Pelican arrived at Dover in 1939, aged 21, after a period of detention in Dachau, and his account in his autobiography *From Dachau to Dunkirk* is clearly coloured by the contrast between his reception and his treatment in Germany: 'This very first hour in Dover left in me a lasting impression to this very day, and made an impact never to be forgotten – that a real land of Hope and Glory was to follow'. At Kitchener Camp, he was befriended by Mrs Joyce Piercy, who introduced him to local life:

One of my favourite places was Margate. I was fascinated by the atmosphere of joy and hilarity, completely strange to me. I watched the scene intensely as ordinary members of the public seized the microphone to lead a sing-song, joined by the rest of the public in a spirit of happiness. That was the England I got to know and love in the year of 1939.

This attitude towards Britain and the British people is echoed by other refugees, time without number. It is generously forgiving of the harshness and shortcomings that they also experienced.

'So here was England', writes Lotte Kramer in her poem 'Arrival',

> By the fire-place,
> The tea with scones and soda-bread,
> The Irish voice
> That read from Dickens, made
> Him live for us;
> The passion in each breath,
> Her Schubert songs!
> The shabby, shaking figure

Who was once an/Indian Army Colonel,
Now absorbed in roses, lawns,
And the same curry every week.
A portrait hung/Large, on her study wall:
A grandmother
From Java – beautiful
And like the rest:
A contradiction of this island universe.
And not one door was ever locked.'

The Outbreak of War

The outbreak of war in September 1939 marked a major caesura in the lives of the refugees. At a stroke, they lost contact with their families in the Reich, apart from the exchange of messages through the Red Cross that became possible many months later. The war also spelt the end of large-scale emigration from Nazi-held territories to Britain, though small numbers of German, Austrian and Czech refugees succeeded in fleeing from the Low Countries and France when they were overrun in 1940. The British government cancelled all outstanding visas and, as a matter of course, closed its borders to enemy nationals, though, as already mentioned, Jews who fled on ship from France, Belgium or Holland were not refused entry. The Nazis did not boost emigration; the numbers of Jews leaving Germany fell to a fraction of the pre-war figure, and even those who had affidavits permitting entry to the neutral USA had the greatest difficulty in getting there. In October 1941, all Jewish emigration from the Reich was halted, and the fate of those left behind became shrouded in sinister darkness.

The war also caused major disruption in the spheres of employment and residence. Many families that employed refugee domestics left London and gave them notice, and homeless refugees descended on Bloomsbury House. Refugee businesses often had to close because of wartime conditions. However, wartime demand for labour eventually eased the situation. Those refugees with German nationality, which included the Austrians, were now given the ugly classification of 'enemy aliens', though every indicator showed that they were the bitterest foes of the Hitler regime. Their movements were subject to restrictions and they were forbidden to possess items like arms, cameras, maps, motor vehicles and radios.

Keen to avoid the mass internment of enemy aliens implemented in World War I, the British government set up a system of tribunals to classify all enemy aliens, Germans and refugees alike. They were divided into three

categories: A, which meant internment; B, which meant exemption from internment, while subject to restriction; and C, which meant exemption from both internment and restriction. The small number of Nazi supporters was interned, while the vast majority of the Jewish refugees were classified under category C and given the status of 'victim of Nazi oppression'. Though there were justified protests about the way some tribunals proceeded, the classification worked reasonably well and justly. By January 1939, some 60,000 refugees had been placed in category C and left at liberty, 8,356 had been subjected to the restrictions of category B, while a mere 528 aliens had been interned. This should have satisfied the requirements of British security.

Internment

But the rapid collapse of France and the Low Countries in May/June 1940 and the looming threat of the invasion of Britain itself precipitated a panic reaction verging on mass hysteria. British public opinion found it hard to accept that the German victories had been the result of simple military superiority, and gave credence instead to wild rumours about fifth columnists and saboteurs operating behind the lines. The press demanded the mass internment of aliens, presumably on the dubious grounds that it was better to intern thousands of innocent and harmless Jews than to leave a handful of potential spies at large. In fact, no evidence has ever emerged that any Jewish refugee posed any security risk as an agent of the Nazis.

A heightened mood of anti-Semitism and of animosity towards foreigners and all things 'German' prevailed. The apparatus of military security, by inclination illiberal and suspicious of 'aliens', came into the ascendant. Under its influence, the new Churchill government, which took office on 11 May 1940, declared areas along the eastern and southern coasts to be 'protected areas', from which refugees were to be removed; all male German nationals between sixteen and sixty residing there were to be rounded up and interned. Later that month, all category B enemy aliens, male and female, from 16 to 70, were interned. In June, it was decided to intern the category C males, in accordance with Churchill's instruction to 'collar the lot'. A total of some 27,000 refugees were interned, at first on racecourses around London and in makeshift and insalubrious sites like Prees Heath and Warth Mill, then taken, sometimes via transit camps like Huyton on Merseyside, to the Isle of Man. Here they were interned in hotels and boarding houses vacated for the purpose; many of the camp names, Hutchinson, Onchan, Ramsey, Sefton, Central Promenade, Mooragh, Rushen, Port Erin, Port St. Mary, have passed into refugee lore.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Refugees classed as 'enemy aliens' being marched to internment camp, summer 1940.

Courtesy of Hans Schneider
Four refugees, all previously resident in Edinburgh, interned on the Isle of Man, summer 1940. The composer and musicologist Hans Gál is second from right.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
The plight of the interned refugees was reflected in stage productions like 'Homeless', performed October 1940, Central Promenade Camp, Isle of Man.

The period of internment turned out, for most internees, to be brief, not that that made it any more tolerable while it lasted. Criticism of mass internment as an arbitrary and inhumane measure began to be heard already during summer 1940, and it increased greatly as a result of the policy of deporting internees by ship to Canada and Australia. These deportations, which affected some 8,000 men, were accompanied by scandals involving the mistreatment of deportees which, while minor compared to other crimes against civilians during World War II, were sufficiently unpleasant to bring the whole enterprise into disrepute. The worst of these was the transport of some 2,400 'aliens' to Australia on the *Dunera*, during which they were robbed and maltreated by their military escort; disciplinary action was subsequently taken against the commanding officer and two others. Those who went to Canada on the *Ettrick* were also robbed.

The turning point for public opinion came when the *Arandora Star,* carrying some 1200 German and Italian deportees to Canada, was torpedoed on 2 July 1940 by a German submarine, with heavy loss of life. A barrage of criticism was levelled at the entire policy of internment, on the grounds that it was morally shameful, stupidly misconceived, damaging to the name and reputation of Britain, harmful only to friendly persons of use to the war effort, and contrary to the national interest. A striking reversal occurred in public opinion, and the policy of internment lost much of its public support in July/ August 1940. The matter was debated in parliament, with critics like Eleanor Rathbone mounting a highly effective attack. François Lafitte contributed a brilliant polemic, in his Penguin Special, *The Internment of Aliens.* The government hastened to produce a White Paper that commenced the process of releasing the internees. Most were released by the early part of 1941, and by August 1941 only some 1300 refugees remained in internment.

That the plight of the 'aliens' in internment attracted the attention of government while Britain was facing the greatest threat to its survival since the Norman Conquest, and that it was debated in parliament at the height of the Battle of Britain, has lastingly influenced the attitude of the refugees themselves to internment. In the second volume of her semi-autobiographical trilogy, *The Other Way Round*, Judith Kerr describes the release of her brother, the future Sir Michael Kerr, from internment, after her parents had written to a national newspaper. Within two days they received a reply from the editor stating that he had been greatly moved by their plea and had passed it to the Home Secretary, who had promised to look into the case himself at once. The prospect of the imminent release of Max (Michael) leaves the astounded family almost stunned with delight:

> At last Papa said slowly, 'The English really are extraordinary. Here they are, threatened with invasion at any moment, and yet the Home Secretary can find time to right an injustice to

> an unknown boy who wasn't even born here.' Mama blew her nose. 'But of course,' she said, 'Max is a very remarkable boy!'

This begs the question of the justice of detaining Max, then a Cambridge undergraduate, in the first place. Nevertheless, the image of the House of Commons debating the rightfulness of interning a small group of enemy nationals while the Battle of Britain raged overhead is so powerful that it has endured in refugee memories. Their abiding view of internment is that it was a stupid panic measure that was soon put right, as the British liberal tradition of fair play and freedom under the law reasserted itself. Some former internees, and many non-refugee commentators, take a considerably less charitable view.

The majority of the former internees have adopted an upbeat, determinedly cheerful attitude to their detention, as if it were some adventure-like vicissitude, unpleasant at the time, but which they can look back on with detached humour. This is very much the tone of most refugee memoirs when they treat the subject, as in the painter and writer Fred Uhlman's autobiography *The Making of an Englishman* or the articles published in the *AJR Information* in 1960, on the twentieth anniversary of internment; significantly, diary entries and other accounts written closer to the events tend to make the suffering and anguish of the time much plainer. The later accounts dwell more on the muddle and disorganization with which the internment of refugees was handled and which was not without its comic aspects; on the spirit of camaraderie in the camps; and on the extraordinary range of cultural and educational activities that sprang up in the camps.

It is well known that the initial encounter that led to the formation of the Amadeus Quartet took place on the Isle of Man, where the famous pianist Maryan Rawicz was also interned. Artists were particularly well represented: apart from internationally famous figures like Kurt Schwitters, John Heartfield and Ludwig Meidner, the list compiled with loving expertise by Klaus Hinrichsen, who shared their internment as a young art historian, includes major names like Walter Nessler, Hugo (Puck) Dachinger, Erich Kahn and Martin Bloch. Writers interned included Robert Neumann and Richard Friedenthal, who described his experiences in *Die Welt in der Nußschale*. The large number of academics and other experts interned enabled an ambitious programme of lectures to be established, with classes catering for the young. All this was a matter of pride for the refugees, and helped reconcile them to the injustice of internment.

But it is plain that many refugees suffered greatly from internment, as did their families from whom they were separated. They suffered from the injustice of it, since they were anything but sympathetic to the Nazis; indeed, as a famous cartoon by David Low in the *Evening Standard* showed, those who bayed for their imprisonment were closer in spirit to the Nazis than were their victims. Above all, it was a betrayal of Britain's reputation for humanity

and fairness to detain without cause helpless men and women who had just been forced to flee their homes with little more than what they could carry with them. Psychologically, those who had already endured a spell of detention under the Nazis suffered greatly; that men who had experienced Dachau, Buchenwald or Sachsenhausen should have been re-interned in their country of refuge was a disgrace. Many internees also suffered great anxiety at the prospect of a German invasion, in which event they could scarcely have escaped being handed over to the Nazis. This is not a view that prevails among the refugees themselves, many of whom, like the poet Stella Rotenberg, vehemently defend the British against such charges:

> I think it ungrateful and unfair and, worse still, I think it stupid when people complain [about internment]; because I know that I wouldn't be alive if I hadn't landed up in England. I know that England saved my life. And not only mine, that of others too. One can of course criticize, everyone's free to do that, it's a free country, why shouldn't one be allowed to criticize? The English are very generous in that respect. But I don't want to forget that I'm alive because I'm in England. [Translated from the German]

The Refugees and the Second World War

A convincing explanation for the refugees' forgiving attitude to internment, and indeed for their deep-rooted affection for their adopted homeland in general, lies in their experience of the British at war. Whereas internment lasted for a few months and could be considered as an episode apart, the war lasted for years and became so woven into the fabric of British life that it subsequently coloured memories and national perceptions over decades. Its impact on the refugees is evident to anyone who has interviewed them on the subject; it is a weakness of Marion Berghahn's otherwise excellent book on the refugees that being a German, she does not investigate the war as a source of pride and a prime cause of collective solidarity. For Germans who grew up under the shadow of Hitler's war, it requires a considerable effort of mind to adjust to attitudes like Fred Pelican's:

> I also wish to express my personal pride at having served the Crown and worn the uniform of the finest army in the world. I pay tribute to the heroic British people who at the most critical time of my life granted me refuge, and never showed malice or hostility towards us. They welcomed and embraced us on account of our exemplary conduct, because we respected the rule of law, and thus adjusted to freedom and democracy.

Such statements of gratitude are themselves gratifying, but should be understood in their very special context.

Lotte Kramer's poem 'At Dover Harbour', whose title evokes the white cliffs emblematic of bulldog defiance of the Nazis, conveys the perception of Britain as the land which held tyranny at bay:

> Behind this rough sleeve of water
> There lies the heart's island, set in
> A harvest of stone, its work done.
>
> Ahead, the broad hand of Europe
> Opens her lined landscape, the skin
> Hard and calloused with bitter blood'.

It takes a Jewish refugee from Germany to call Britain 'the heart's island', a declaration so open that even romantic British patriots might baulk at it.

From the summer of 1940, the refugees, including those released from internment, found themselves in the front line of a population facing the Blitz, the first large-scale campaign of aerial bombardment aimed at civilian towns and cities over an extended period; London was bombed every night almost without interruption from September 1940 till May 1941. The stolid endurance and companionable good humour of the British and the unflustered coolness of quite ordinary people under fire immensely impressed many refugees. One refugee, in hospital with injuries sustained during an air raid on Belsize Park, remembers how her spirits were raised by an old man who urged her to 'keep smiling, young woman'; an hour later he had died of his own injuries.

Although the refugees saw many examples of behaviour that was less than admirable, the standards of honesty and consideration and above all the strong spirit of mutual support and determination to fight through to victory had a lasting influence on them. The refugees' image of the war is, for all the danger and loss of life, one of common purpose, high morale and even a certain devil-may-care happiness, beside which the post-war decades represent a decline into a meaner-spirited world lacking social cohesion. Anyone who has interviewed former refugees will be familiar with elderly ladies regretfully recalling that they felt less at risk in the total darkness of the blackout, bombing or no bombing, than they now do on the streets at night.

The war seemed to many refugees to bring the best out of the British. One businessman went by underground to the City, only to find that his premises had been damaged by the previous night's air raid; his windows had been blown out, but not one item of the goods on display had been taken, and the windows had been considerately boarded up. On the other side of the balance were incidents like that experienced by Fanny Stang, née Knesbach, from Vienna: alone in London, her husband away on active service, her brother an illegal immigrant in Palestine and her parents having disappeared

in Nazi-occupied Yugoslavia, she was devastated by a callously insensitive remark: 'Some people come here and live in safety, while we get ourselves killed in an effort to defend them!'

The refugees, as 'enemy aliens', faced difficulties beyond those endured by the British; they were subject to a curfew and other restrictions, for example, and were fearful of speaking in German-accented English in public. But they were proud to share the burdens and sufferings of the war, the dangers of the Blitz, the discomfort of the air raid shelters and the general privations and hardships of war. Morale did not crack, the system of rationing was fair, if minimal, and for once the apparently irresistible advance of the Nazis was stopped. This was a factor of major significance for the refugees.

The Jews of Germany had watched the Nazis grow from an insignificant splinter group in 1928 to the largest party in Germany, able by 1933 to dismantle the entire edifice of Weimar democracy within months and virtually unopposed. They saw Hitler regain the Saarland, send German troops into the demilitarized Rhineland, rebuild Germany's armed forces, brush aside the Treaty of Versailles, annex Austria, occupy the Sudetenland and invade the rump of Czechoslovakia, all without a fight. And when war came, his armies swept into Poland, seized Denmark and Norway, and overran Belgium, Holland and France with almost contemptuous ease. The Jews of Austria had seen their country decline into a state of barely suppressed civil war in 1934, so weakening it that in 1938 it fell like a rotten apple into the Führer's hands. In both countries, the Nazi seizure of power had triggered a collapse of moral values in much of society at large, a toleration of lawlessness, violence and the humiliation and despoliation of defenceless minorities; the refugees had witnessed the triumph of open thuggery, where uniformed hooligans could trample on all civilized values with impunity and where dissenters could be incarcerated indefinitely in concentration camps.

All this had occurred with the tacit approval, at the very least, of most of German society. Psychologically, therefore, the stand of the British people against the threat of invasion and their stubborn refusal to contemplate defeat or surrender made a profound impression on the refugees, especially the spirit of common purpose with which the struggle was prosecuted in everyday life by ordinary people. Few groups were more influenced by the spirit of 1940: refugee memories of the war repeatedly invoke the ritual of gathering round the radio to listen to the news, Churchill's speeches and the air battles of summer 1940. Having been outcasts in their lands of birth, they could now feel that they were involved in the struggle against Nazism, that they once again shared the values of the society around them and that they were in harmony with its goals.

The unity of purpose that formed a bond extending from stateless refugees to Battle of Britain pilots is powerfully conveyed in Judith Kerr's *The Other Way Round*, when the refugee residents of a Bloomsbury hotel listen to the evening news, in the unusual presence of a real English visitor. Anna, Judith

Kerr's semi-autobiographical narrator, is at once aware of an unfamiliar note in the stately tones of the announcer, Bruce Belfrage, in this crucial bulletin:

> The voice did not sound quite as usual and Anna thought, what's the matter with him? It had a breathlessness, a barely discernible wish to hurry, which had never been there before. She was listening so hard to the intonation of each word that she hardly took in the sense. Air battles over most of England ... Heavy concentrations of bombers ... An official communiqué from the Air Ministry ... And then it came. The voice developed something like a tiny crack which completely robbed it of its detachment, stopped for a fraction of a second and then said slowly and clearly, 'One hundred and eighty-two enemy aircraft shot down'. There was a gasp from the people in the lounge, followed by murmured questions and answers as those who did not understand much English asked what the news-reader had said, and the others checked with each other that they had heard aright. And then the elderly Pole was leaping up from his chair and shaking Mr Chetwin by the hand. 'It is success!' he cried. 'You English show Hitler he not can win all the time! Your aeroplanes show him!'

As a result, the eagerness with which many refugees supported the war effort is readily understandable, and its motivation was the stronger as it went beyond the mere desire for self-preservation from a German invasion. Refugees were eager to join the armed forces, though at first they were mostly limited to the non-combatant Pioneer Corps, where a number of Aliens Companies were formed. Subsequently, refugees were admitted to almost all branches of H.M. Forces, including the women's units. Even an elite unit of German-speaking commandos was formed, 3 Troop of 10 Commando (known as X Troop), whose members performed their special tasks with high distinction.

Refugees were amongst those who embarked on the Normandy beaches in June 1944, and those who took part in the liberation of Europe from the Nazis occupied a place of special esteem. *Zeitspiegel*, the weekly newspaper published for Austrian refugees by the Austrian Centre, reported the first death of an Austrian serving with the British forces in France, Lieutenant Franz Revertera, almost as if he had given his life on a sacred mission. The AJR reported in one of its wartime circulars the death of Lance-Corporal Peter Moody (formerly Kurt Meyer) of 3 Troop, 10 Commando, killed in action near Caen a week after D-Day, under the caption 'A Young Refugee Hero'; a sense of pride in the distinction with which this young man had served his adopted country suffuses the report, along with approval of his evident identification with its cause. Numerous refugees had the bittersweet experience of

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Refugees as soldiers.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Women refugees contributed to the war effort. Lorraine Allard served in the A.T.S.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Robert Parker saw service with the Seventh Armoured Corps in the advance into Germany, 1944-45.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Johnny Blunt demonstrates how to deal with Nazism.

returning to Germany as victors. Some, like Fred Pelican, were able to put their knowledge of Germany to good use in the War Crimes Investigations Unit, where he served under another refugee, Captain Anton Walter Freud, or at the war crimes trials at Nuremberg and elsewhere.

The refugees also supported the war effort in civilian life, doing war work in the factories and on the land, and serving in civil defence units. Refugee publications like *Zeitspiegel* constantly exhorted their readers to take jobs in the munitions plants and other places where essential war work was carried out. Many refugees were proud that their efforts contributed in some small measure to victory, even if they consisted of metal-bashing in an engineering works or stitching uniforms for the forces. The large number of advertisements in *Zeitspiegel* for female staff to work at sewing, machining and finishing – 'Finisherinnen' in the refugee jargon of the time - shows how greatly refugee labour was in demand in this area.

Many refugees spent their days at work and part of their nights fire-watching and on other civil defence work. It requires an effort for their descendants today to see these former 'enemy aliens' performing such tasks. The author of this catalogue looks with some amazement at the A.R.P. card issued by Finchley Borough Council's air raid precautions organization to his parents, Arthur and Trude Grünfeld, as members of a fire-fighting party empowered by the Fire Precautions (Access to Premises) Order, 1940, to gain entry to premises, to extinguish fires and to rescue persons and property from the ravages of the Blitz. One may also be forgiven for seeing a touch of Walmington-on-Sea about the certificate granted by King George VI to Adolf Koebner, by his daughter's account a thoroughly unmilitary man, in gratitude for his service in the Home Guard, when he was prepared to defend his country 'by force of arms and with his life if need be'. No doubt matters appeared considerably more serious at the time.

The war also saw the development of the refugees' own organizations. The most prominent of these in the early days were those founded by political refugees, which had a strong left-wing commitment. The largest was the Austrian Centre, founded in 1939, which grew out of the Council of Austrians that had come into being the previous year; the Centre came to occupy several houses in Westbourne Terrace, near Paddington Station, and organized a wide range of activities, as well as publishing *Zeitspiegel,* its newspaper. The Centre saw as its principal rival the Jacob Ehrlich Society, a Zionist organization which focused on settlement in Palestine, while the Centre itself sought to persuade its members to return to Austria once the war was won; neither could fully represent the Jewish refugees who wished to stay in Britain.

The German equivalent of the Austrian Centre was the Free German League of Culture (Freier Deutscher Kulturbund), which had its headquarters in Belsize Park. As both organizations were effectively run by Communists eager to return home as soon as possible, they ceased to exist after the war. A non-political organization, the Self Aid of Refugees, had been set up by

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum (above and below) Josephine Bruegel, who had studied medicine in Prague, trained as a nurse during the war.


WAR ORGANISATION OF THE BRITISH RED CROSS AND ORDER OF ST. JOHN

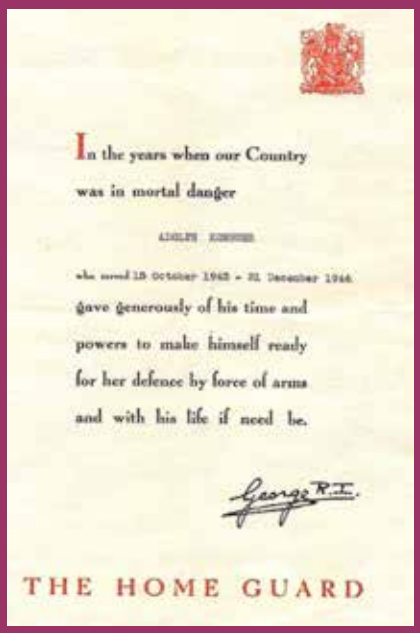
GLAUBEN
GRETE
c/o Rev O.D. RUDKIN
St HILARY
26 CHURCH ST. EDMONTON, LONDON N9
DAUGHTER

LIEBE MUTTER. ICH BIN GESUND. HOFFE DU BIST DASSELBE. ICH HATTE EINEN BRIEF VON ONKEL. ER IST GESUND. VIELE GRÜSSE UND KÜSSE GRETE

APRIL 19th 1940

GLAUBEN
ELSA (FRAU)
16/27 ADGARTEN STRASSE
WIEN I

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum Communication with loved ones in Germany was limited to brief Red Cross, messages which broke off when the family members in Nazi territory were deported to the East.


In the years when our Country
was in mortal danger

ADOLPH KOEBNER

who served 15 October 1942 - 31 December 1944

gave generously of his time and
powers to make himself ready
for her defence by force of arms
and with his life if need be.

George R.I.

THE HOME GUARD

Courtesy of Marion Koebner
King George VI expresses his gratitude to Adolf Koebner for his service in the Home Guard.

Courtesy of Kate Gourvitch
The refugees did not neglect culture in wartime. A production by the Laterndl company of Goethe's *Iphigenie auf Tauris* with Hanne Norbet and Fritz Schrecker, 1952.

German refugees before the war. This was later absorbed by what was to become the principal organization for the majority of Jewish refugees who chose to remain in Britain, the Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain. Founded in June 1941, the AJR has over six decades represented the interests of the refugees in all manner of spheres of life and has become, especially through its journal, the public face and voice of the refugee community. The first of its circulars to its members after its foundation stated its purpose: 'It is the aim of the Association to be responsible for the Jewish Refugee Community in London and in the country. The Association does not serve any particular Jewish group or party'.

Refugee Settlement in Britain after 1945

The Jewish refugees greeted the end of the war and the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 with jubilation. 'The Long, Long Night Is Over', declared the headline of the AJR's circular to its members of June 1945. Yet for them jubilation was mixed with grief. The liberation of Europe had revealed the terrible truth about the concentration and extermination camps. The refugees had to face the fact that most of their families and friends who had remained behind were lost forever, that their entire communities had been wiped out, and that most of what bound them to their former homelands had been swept away. They had to make a new start, and this demanded major decisions of them.

The first decision was a fundamental one: where to live. Given the treatment meted out to Jews by their erstwhile compatriots in Germany and Austria, which had escalated from persecution to deportation and physical liquidation, the overwhelming majority of the Jewish refugees in Britain simply could not envisage returning to live among people from whose deeds, whether as active perpetrators, complicit connivers or passive bystanders, they recoiled in horror. Typical was a letter published in the *AJR Information* in April 1947, which asked bluntly: 'Who can expect that a self-conscious Jew would or should return to a country which has inflicted upon him and his community sufferings unparalleled in history?'

Although some thousands of those who had come to Britain before the war re-emigrated elsewhere, mainly to America and also to Palestine/Israel, the great majority of the Jewish refugees who had spent the war in Britain chose to remain here. The relatively small number emigrating to Palestine says something about the refugees' image of themselves, about the identity and values that they held to. The hardships of life in Palestine and the dangers arising from the inter-communal violence there were important contributory factors; but so were a sense of cultural distance from the Eastern European groups that set the tone in the Yishuv and a not unfounded fear that 'Yekkes' from Central Europe might not always enjoy the warmest of welcomes. While

the refugees have remained strong supporters of the state of Israel, only a minority have settled there or identified themselves with the Jewish state above all others.

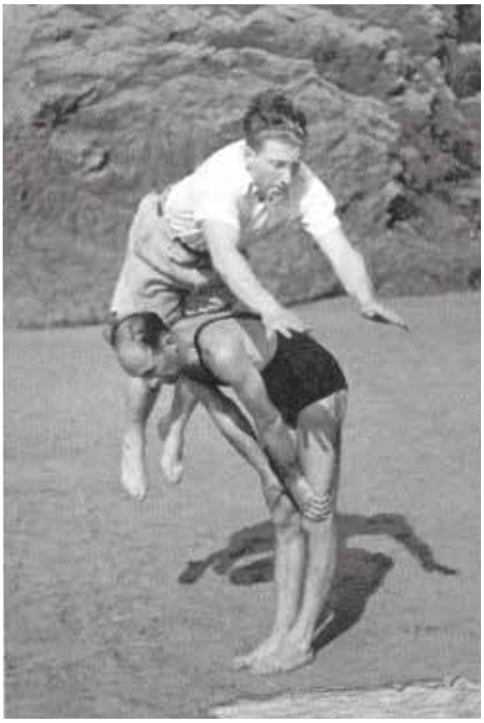
Staying in Britain was not the simple matter that it may seem to us in retrospect, for there was powerful opposition to allowing the refugees the right to settle. Herbert Morrison, Home Secretary in the wartime coalition government, refused obstinately to allow refugees to be naturalized as British citizens during the war, even if they were fighting in His Majesty's Forces. Circles hostile to the Jewish refugees pressed the government to repatriate them after the war, and government documents reveal that this was given official consideration by the Home Office. The AJR realized that citizenship was the key issue. From an early date, it campaigned vigorously against any attempt to re-impose German or Austrian citizenship on refugees from those countries against their will, seeing this as a first step towards repatriation. It quoted with evident approval in its circular of November 1944 from a letter to the *New York Times* by the president of its American sister organization, the Federation of Jews from Central Europe:

> I believe that nobody who considers nationality more than a mere matter of form would advocate that anyone should be forced to resume citizenship of a nation with which he no longer is connected through any formal or emotional ties whatsoever. Even less would they advocate the idea of forced repatriation. It would mean almost a mental cruelty to force citizenship upon people who do not and cannot feel any kind of allegiance towards their former country and a new 'deportation' to compel them to return there.

In a statement issued in May 1945, the executive of the AJR made out a convincing case for the right of the refugees to remain in Britain:

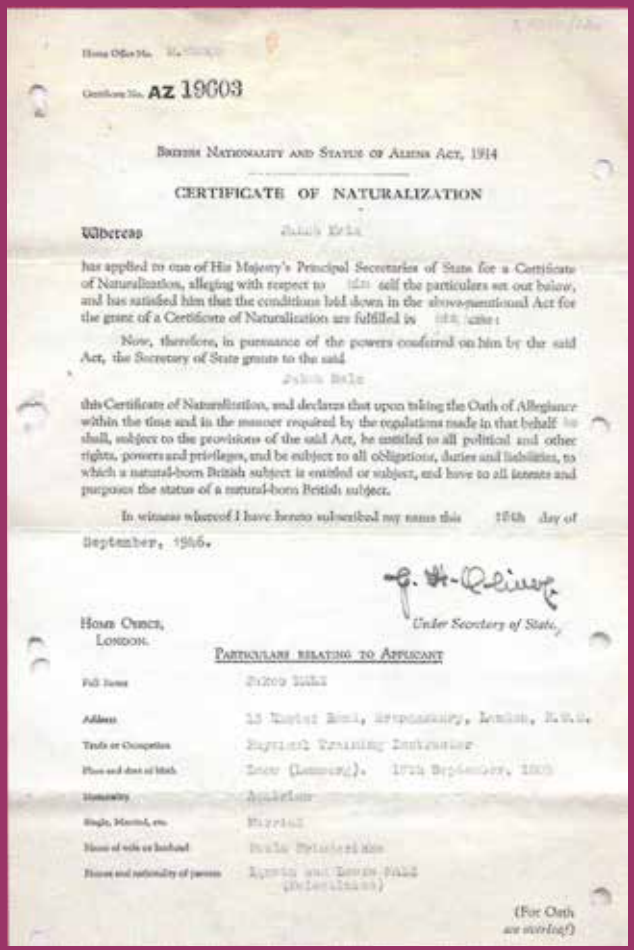
> Many of us have founded a new life for ourselves and our children in this country. We have cut off all ties with a country which is responsible for the wanton destruction of once flourishing Jewish communities. We are certain that Jewish refugees with their skill and experience will contribute to the welfare of this country in the same way as they played their part in the war effort.

The question of repatriation was decisively resolved in the refugees' favour by the authority of Winston Churchill himself. On 15 May 1945, a week after the end of the war, Austen Hopkinson M.P. asked the Prime Minister in the House of Commons whether he would make arrangements for the



Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Refugees enjoying a post-war holiday in Jersey.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Refugee family group, West Hampstead, 1943.



Certificate No. AZ 19003

BRITISH NATIONALITY AND STATUS OF ALIENS ACT, 1914

CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION

Whereas

has applied to one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State for a Certificate of Naturalization, alleging with respect to himself the particulars set out below, and has satisfied him that the conditions laid down in the above-mentioned Act for the grant of a Certificate of Naturalization are fulfilled in his case:

Now, therefore, in pursuance of the powers conferred on him by the said Act, the Secretary of State grants to the said

this Certificate of Naturalization, and declares that upon taking the Oath of Allegiance within the time and in the manner required by the regulations made in that behalf he shall, subject to the provisions of the said Act, be entitled to all political and other rights, powers and privileges, and be subject to all obligations, duties and liabilities, to which a natural-born British subject is entitled or subject, and have to all intents and purposes the status of a natural-born British subject.

In witness whereof I have hereto subscribed my name this 10th day of September, 1946.

Under Secretary of State.

HOME OFFICE, LONDON.

PARTICULARS RELATING TO APPLICANT

Full Name

Address

Trade or Occupation

Place and date of birth

Nationality

Single, Married, etc.

Name of wife or husband

Name and nationality of parents

(For Oath see overleaf)

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Certificate of naturalization granting British citizenship to Jakob Malz, 1946.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Gerda Kaufmann with friends, Fulham, c. 1950.

immediate repatriation of the Jewish refugees, receiving in reply a firm 'No, Sir'. Churchill cited both humanitarian and practical considerations in support of his stance, and when the Jewish Labour M.P. Sydney Silverman protested that it would be hard to imagine a more cruel procedure than forcing people who had lost their homes and families to return to live at the scene of those crimes, the Prime Minister replied succinctly: 'I agree with that'.

With repatriation ruled out, the AJR set its sights on securing the right of the Jewish refugees to naturalization as British citizens. The AJR was later to state that 'to secure the right of permanent residence in Great Britain for all those who wished to stay here after the war' was 'the first central task for whose accomplishment the AJR had been founded'. On 15 November 1945 Home Secretary Chuter Ede set out in the Commons the new Labour government's policy on naturalization. He recognized that the sheer volume of applications from refugees would inevitably mean that the process of naturalization would not be concluded quickly and that 'the work will have to be spread over a comparatively lengthy period'. This was because the Home Office had opted to stick to its usual procedure of vetting each application individually. There was also a backlog of some 6,500 applications that had already been lodged with the Home Office before naturalization was suspended in November 1940.

To regulate the process, the Home Secretary announced that applications from certain categories among the refugees would receive priority attention: those who had served in H.M. Forces, or had made a substantial contribution to the war effort in a civilian capacity, or were making a substantial economic contribution through their businesses or professions. These categories included many of the refugees, bearing in mind that a single application covered a whole family. The definition of those who were contributing substantially to the national interest was widened by a subsequent statement by Chuter Ede on 28 February 1946, which extended it to include directors of businesses, members of professions such as doctors, nurses and teachers, persons in business on their own account and self-employed persons, as well as salaried officials or employees of industrial or commercial concerns.

Particularly important was the government's decision to retain the requirement of five years' residence in Britain (including Crown service) as qualifying an applicant for naturalization: given the near-impossibility, for most refugees, of leaving Britain during the war years other than on active service, this was a requirement that pre-war refugees could not fail to meet. It is well known that the more or less automatic granting of citizenship after five years' residence was later to be withdrawn, as part of the attempt to reduce immigration from the New Commonwealth countries; the Jewish refugees from Hitler did not have to face this restriction.

The process of naturalization at first proceeded at a snail's pace. In March 1946, the *AJR Information* reported that a mere 220 certificates of naturalization had been granted since the previous November; over 1,000

of the pre-1940 applications had been 'reopened', of which about 300 had been updated by the applicants and were now being examined, while plans for dealing 'expeditiously' with the priority applications were 'in an advanced state'. By July 1946 it could report only that 250 certificates had been granted since the beginning of the year to refugees who had lodged their applications before November 1940 and that 22,000 applications were awaiting decision.

Nevertheless, the *AJR Information* warmly welcomed the start of naturalization, stating in May 1946:

> The outstanding event for refugees for refugees in Great Britain during the year [1945-46] was the resumption of naturalization. Even if many will have to wait a considerable time until they will become British subjects, the barriers which have hitherto blocked the way to legal absorption are removed. Anxieties that people might be compelled to leave the country of their refuge have been dispelled.

Events were to justify this optimistic view. The process of naturalization soon accelerated sharply, with more applications granted in the first quarter of 1947 than in the whole of 1946. In 1947 17,742 certificates of naturalization were granted, and 15,108 in 1948; as these figures do not include the wives and minor children of those naturalized, they represent a very substantial proportion of the refugee applicants. Since the pre-war refugees from Central Europe were by far the largest group that had been in Britain for the requisite five years, they naturally formed a large proportion of those whose applications were granted, some two-thirds in 1947 (including Czechoslovakia) and half in 1948. The granting of citizenship had become more or less automatic.

By 1950 naturalization had started to recede into the past and had become the subject of refugee jokes, a sure sign that the anxieties surrounding it had been dispelled. The editor of *AJR Information,* Werner Rosenstock, wrote in his column 'Narrator': 'Once upon a time people vied with each other about the moment of their naturalization. Do you still remember the joke about the two refugees who were exhibited at Madame Tussaud's, because they had not applied for naturalization under one of the priority categories?' By 1950 almost all the refugees who wished to become British citizens had been naturalized; the number of applications rejected was about 1%. The procedure worked smoothly, after a slow start, and hardly any refugees experienced problems with it; the only exceptions were those few who both delayed their applications until the 1950s and also had left-wing political affiliations, since they came under the suspicious eye of the security services in the Cold War era. In March 1950 the *AJR Information* was able to draw a line under the process: 'A person of foreign birth is unavoidably bound to remain in a specific situation also after naturalization, but the granting of British citizenship brought one chapter of our history to a happy conclusion'.

A case by way of example: the issue of the *AJR Information* that followed the general election of 23 February 1950 carried an item on the fiftieth birthday of the actor Peter Ihle, who had anglicized his surname to Illing; he had been known in the BBC as 'the voice of Winston Churchill' during the war. The son of a Turkish father, Illing had never been able to vote, in Berlin or Vienna, and 'now that he is British like most of us', the journal reported, he was greatly looking forward to casting his vote for the first time. Alas, he was offered a part in Basil Dean's New York production of Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter,* and left for Broadway before polling day. 'Bad luck for citizen Illing, good luck for the actor', commented the journal.

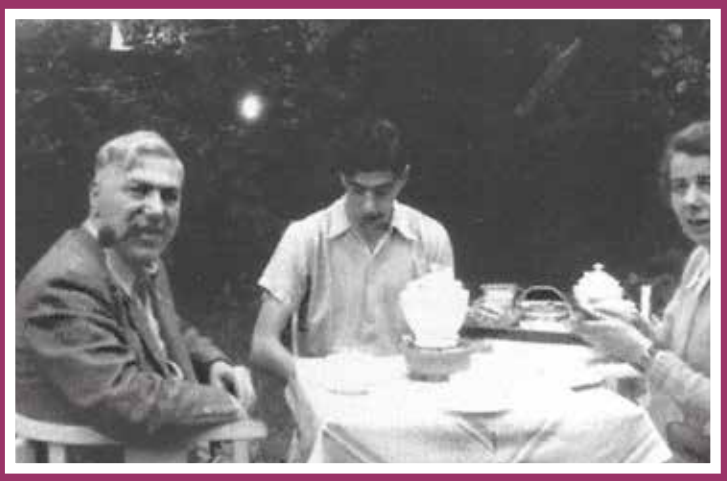
One of the most obvious ways in which refugees could become 'British like most of us' was by changing their names, which had the additional advantage of ending the mangling of Continental surnames by the linguistically challenged British. Abrahamsohn became Ambrose, Deutsch became Dunston, Goldstein became Gordon, Morgenstern became Morgan, Urbach became Aubrey. In the writer's own family, Grünfeld has become Grenville, Ascher Anson and Schnurmann Shelton; the first of these surnames, which has resonated through the feudal landed gentry back as far as the Norman Conquest, has also been adopted by the distinguished historian J.A.S. Grenville (originally Guhrauer), as well as by one John Antony Grenville (Jacob Guter), the subject of a search enquiry in the *AJR Information* in March 1961.

The process of changing one's name, once naturalized, was so common that in 1950 the *AJR Information*'s legal advice column, 'Law and Life', had to explain to eager readers how to do so by deed poll. One reader even had the temerity to address the journal's editor, Werner Rosenstock, as 'Dr Rosecane', in a letter on the subject published in April 1950. In his book *'Where do you come from?',* Carl F. Flesch lists one witty fellow who simply called himself Anders (meaning 'different' in German), two brothers who divided their surname Schwarzschild between them by calling themselves Black (Schwarz) and Shield (Schild) respectively, as well as a serving soldier called Giebel who was mortified to be refused permission by his commanding officer to change his name to the alluring Clark Gable (Giebel).

Even the *AJR Information* had to step in, tongue-in-cheek, to chide those who took their enthusiasm for anglicization too far:

> Without wishing to hurt anybody's sentiments, one feels tempted to ask whether people do not overdo the expression of their gratitude to their new country if they adopt names like Eden and Kipling, and whether names starting with 'Mac' should not rather be left to members of the Scottish clans.

Presumably the editor would have approved of a case of becoming modesty: lurking behind the unassuming adopted name George Mansfield



Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Tea in the garden of the family home of Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum, Kilburn.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Edith Rothschild working as a dressmaker.

Courtesy of Anthony Grenville
Trudi Grenville and Klary Friedl walking on Regent Street, c. 1950.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
Hilda Schindler among a class of graduating teachers, Trent Park College, 1957.

in the register of naturalized aliens for 1947 was no less a personage than Friedrich Georg Wilhelm Christoph Hohenzollern, a grandson of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Again, the humour with which the refugees came to treat the subject indicates a relaxed and relatively secure attitude in this sphere of integration. Here the refugees from Central Europe were fortunate. The British-born children of families like the Grünfelds have found it far easier to present a convincingly English face to the world thanks to a new surname than would those of a Patel or a Sharma, if only because of skin pigmentation.

Taking Root, 1945-1960

The signs that the refugees had settled securely in Britain soon multiplied in the post-war years. This was most obvious in the sphere of family life. In its third issue, that of March 1946, the *AJR Information* carried its first notice of a birth, that of Carol Ann, third child of Mr and Mrs P.Y. Mayer of Goldhurst Terrace, London NW6. Four months later, in July 1946, came the first marriage notice, that of Artur Heichelheim and Ingeborg Markowitz, of Lyndhurst Road, NW3, alongside the announcement of the eightieth birthday of Moritz Weindling, of Howitt Close, NW3, itself an indication that the elderly also felt themselves to be part of a settled community in Britain. The journal's 'Family Events' column rapidly filled with announcements of births, marriages, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and also deaths. The three items in the 'Family Events' column of October 1949 reflect in their symmetry the life rhythms of a settled community: there is the announcement of the marriage of Hans Spear and Charlotte Muskat of Bishop Auckland, the notice of the birthday of Ida Loewenberg of The Vale, London NW11, and that of the death of Flora Pollak, née Parilla, of Oakengates, Shropshire. One can build up something approximating to a map of refugee settlement from the 'Family Events' column, with its predictable concentration of addresses in inner North-West London.

The 'Personal' section of the journal's classified advertisements column displayed numerous notices for potential marriage partners and lonelyhearts ads, as well as a sprinkling of advertisements from rather unappetizing marriage bureaus. It is perhaps a happy sign of the changing fortunes of the refugees from Hitler's persecution that in February 1949 these notices for marriage partners for the first time outnumbered the 'Missing Persons' enquiries, which in those years were often vain attempts to contact relatives and friends who had vanished in the Holocaust. 'Wienerin, intelligent, smart, domesticated, with business experience, some savings, seeks serious minded gentleman, about 45-55 years, in secure position, view marriage', reads one. Another appears to make education as important as appearance or housewifely virtues: 'Youthful, good looking widow (50, of first-class German-Jewish family) efficient housewife, educated, intelligent, wishes to make

the acquaintance of gentleman corresponding age. Object matrimony'. The emphasis on culture, education and intellectual refinement in these personal ads was such as to suggest that the customary initial exchange of photographs might almost have been replaced by that of examination certificates.

The evidence of family building strongly suggests that the refugees participated fully in the baby boom that accompanied the end of the war. Apart from the birth notices, there were in the *AJR Information* all manner of advertisements by firms specializing in areas like toys and child photography, as well as notices from families requiring nannies and babysitters and from those offering such services. Advertisements by firms offering advice on house purchase, building services and household goods also testified to the level of what can be termed rooted settlement in Britain. Housewives were, for example, offered the 'new Fusade (Schabbos) oven', the nearest equivalent to the 'Küchenwunder' and the 'Zauberglocke' of Continental fame. Education for the children of refugees was also an important area, starting with nurseries and kindergartens like the House on the Hill in Hampstead (not far from Anna Freud's better known establishment in Maresfield Gardens) and going on to boarding schools like Regents Park School, then in Horley, Surrey.

The AJR attached such importance to the issue that in June 1946 it included in the journal an article entitled 'To Which Schools Shall We Send Our Children?', which explained the mysteries of the English educational system to refugee parents keen to give their children the best start in life. As one might expect, the attractions of grammar schools, for 'children with intellectual ability', figured prominently. Perhaps surprisingly, almost as much space was devoted to public schools, though parents were warned of the shortage of spaces for 'outsiders' and the high level of fees. Such remarks, along with the unexpected frequency of advertisements for luxury goods and services, indicate an undeniable level of prosperity at least among a section of the refugees, even in these early years; clearly, though, the majority of the refugees enjoyed at best a modest standard of living, and many struggled to make ends meet until the economic upswing of the 'Never Had It So Good' years lifted the middle classes into the consumption-led prosperity of the 1960s.

The refugees also started to establish a firm economic base in the post-war years. The commercial acumen displayed by refugees eager to build a new life for themselves and their families enabled a multiplicity of refugee businesses to emerge, as a brief survey of some of the enterprises in the refugee heartland demonstrates. Sadly, little trace remains of the many refugee shops and restaurants on Finchley Road, West End Lane or Haverstock Hill, though Ackermans Chocolates and Louis Patisserie continue to delight their customers in Goldhurst Terrace and Heath Street respectively, and Zenith Tailor Service still existed on the corner of Frognal and Finchley

Courtesy of Doris Balacs
Doris Balacs at the Dorice Restaurant, Swiss Cottage.

Courtesy of Madeline Mannheimer
The Coffee Bar of the Cosmo Restaurant, Swiss Cottage, 1965.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum Wedding of Herbert Goldsmith.

Courtesy of the Weiner Library. The Wiener Library and AJR
Right to left:
Werner Rosenstock, General Secretary of the AJR, 1941-82 and editor of AJR Information, 1946-82, the historian Eva Reichmann, Alfred Wiener, founder of the Library, lise Wolff, Chief Librarian, Hans Reichmann, Chairman of the AJR, 1953-163 and Susan Rosenstock.

Road until fairly recently.

The famous meeting places like the Cosmo and Dorice restaurants on Finchley Road are gone, as is Peter Herz's Blue Danube theatre club and Libris bookshop, that Mecca for specialists in German literature run by Dr Joseph Suschitzky on Boundary Road, and the tailoring and clothes shops, the furriers, chemists and opticians, the cafés and the food shops that offered Continental delicatessen to discerning palates starved by wartime rationing, and the discreet specialists in ladies foundation garments, of which the best known was Mme Lieberg in Golders Green. Even John Barnes department store, where refugees were prominent among both the patrons and the staff, has become a supermarket.

A number of the larger refugee firms also advertised in the *AJR Information*: for example, S.F. & O. Hallgarten, the wine merchants, Colibri cigarette lighters, and the corset manufacturer Silhouette, whose advertisements for the 'little X' and 'Xtra-Hi' lines brought a touch of freedom and streamlined modernity to the displays of the late 1950s. A large number of refugees resumed the legal, medical and other professional practices for which they had trained or planned to train in Germany or Austria; the list of refugee medical practitioners compiled by Paul Weindling runs to many hundreds of names. A strikingly large number of refugees set up their own businesses, notably in the import/export field, but also across a very wide range of business and service activities. A few became major industrialists, like Frank Schon of Marchon Products, later Lord Schon of Whitehaven, or the Djanogly family, suppliers to Marks & Spencer, to give but two examples.

One must emphasise again that the majority of the refugees never reached anything like this level of wealth and success. Most lived far more modestly, though their average standard of living and socio-economic status was still considerably higher than that of the mass of the native population. Whether they would have done better had they been able to remain in their native countries, or whether emigration, with its fresh opportunities and cultural cross-fertilization, worked to their economic and professional advantage, remains an open question; it formed the subject of a lively correspondence in the *AJR Journal* as late as 2002.

The emotional and psychological condition of the refugees is even harder to assess accurately. One very important factor was their relations with the native British, which in most cases developed reasonably amicably in the post-war period. Most refugees were aware of a pervasive strain of latent anti-Semitism in British society, but open hostility and insults were fortunately rare. Despite frequently expressed fears of a revival of neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic sentiments, the *AJR Information* noted the repeated failure of extreme right-wing groups to make any headway, starting with the resounding rejection of Sir Oswald Mosley's party when he sought to relaunch it at the London County Council elections of 1949.

Many refugees felt a permanent distance between themselves and the

British that precluded the development of close relationships of friendship. But others, as noted above, reacted with warmth and gratitude to their new surroundings, which in turn helped to smooth their path to a friendly reception in the British circles with which they had contact. Perhaps the best summary of the situation is that regularly provided by refugees when asked by interviewers about their sense of national identity: the standard reply is that they definitely see themselves as British, but are too aware of their Continental origins and nature to call themselves English, which would imply that they had been indistinguishably absorbed into and accepted by the host community.

A good indicator is intermarriage. The refugees showed a striking preference for other refugees from Central Europe as marriage partners, including on occasion non-Jews; a number of refugee marriages occurred among members of the Hyphen, an organization founded in 1948 to provide a forum where young refugees could meet. Such refugee marriages predominate, for example, among the 27 Jewish refugees interviewed by the members of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies for the study *Changing Countries*. But a significant number also married British partners, while only one married a British Jew and none took non-refugee partners from Germany or Austria.

The Jewish refugees from Central Europe have, it is fair to say, enjoyed a less hostile reception and experienced fewer difficulties during their settlement in Britain than did both their predecessors from Tsarist Russia at the turn of the previous century and the later waves of immigrants from New Commonwealth and Third World countries – wartime internment excepted. This feeling of security, of being in an essentially benign social environment is conveyed by a multitude of anecdotes, remarks and stories by refugees.

To take some brief examples: in 1957, Werner Rosenstock recalled in the *AJR Information* an incident that had occurred ten years earlier, during the harsh, drab days of post-war austerity. On an interminable journey from Earl's Court to Finchley Road on a 31 bus, the prevailing grey monotony was enlivened for the weary passengers by the conductor, who called out: 'Swiss Cottage! Have your passports ready, please!' Rosenstock alighted, he remembered, 'in a paroxysm of mirth'. What is immediately noticeable about this little story is that Rosenstock did not dream of taking offence at a joke about 'alien' foreigners; he saw it for what it was, a harmless piece of humour intended to cheer up a busload of passengers, refugees and British alike. Such a reaction was only possible in a situation where there was little racial tension between the two groups and little sense on the part of the refugees that they were an embattled and unpopular minority group whose ethnicity embittered their relations with the majority community. One need only imagine the likely consequences of a similar remark passed in Brixton or Harlesden today to realize how much less strained relations must have been fifty years ago.

In February 1949, the 'Narrator' column in the journal lamented the passing of Tommy Handley, star of the BBC radio show 'Itma' ('It's That Man Again'). The article highlighted the way in which the refugees had come to feel part of the host community, by virtue of a shared familiarity with the characters and the special brand of humour that the programme had made famous nationwide:

> Refugee ITMA fans were made to feel that they were members of a large family of millions in this country, for whom Itma's catch phrases had become a kind of code. It induced them to get better acquainted with the life and customs of the average Englishman and to sharpen their ears, lest they might miss the meaning of any of the precious cracks. They say with tears farewell to 'that man' who, in his unique way, taught them 'English without tears'.

Humour as a means towards social inclusivity.

In the following year, on a more serious note, C.C. Aronsfeld, one of the journal's finest contributors and a future editor, celebrated the centenary of the death of William Wordsworth by praising the poet's defence of British liberties against the threat of the dictator Napoleon. Aronsfeld, a man of a notably independent cast of mind, felt impelled to draw the parallel between that time and Britain's more recent role as 'a bulwark for the cause of men' against the Nazi dictatorship: 'Jews, especially Jews from Germany, will read these lines rejoicingly, with reverence and perhaps with gratitude. This is the voice of that great, that free England which has been so long the champion of their cause.' The rhetoric may grate on modern ears, and few today would judge Britain's behaviour towards the Jews so uncritically. What comes across unmistakably, however, is Aronsfeld's image of Britain as a haven of liberty and a refuge for the persecuted, as well as the ex-refugee's pride at being able to participate in that idealized collective, at least as an honorary member from Europe.

This is not to gloss over the dark sides of the refugees' situation in post-war Britain, nor to deny that almost all of them had been deeply affected by the experiences they had undergone. They had been reviled and persecuted in their native lands, and ultimately forced to flee for their lives. The communities into which they had been born had been destroyed, they had had to abandon their homes and most of their possessions, and their loved ones left behind had almost all been murdered in conditions of unspeakable inhumanity. The emotional impact of the Nazi years had been to create a permanent gulf between the refugees and their countries of origin, where the people among whom they had lived had turned on the Jews and

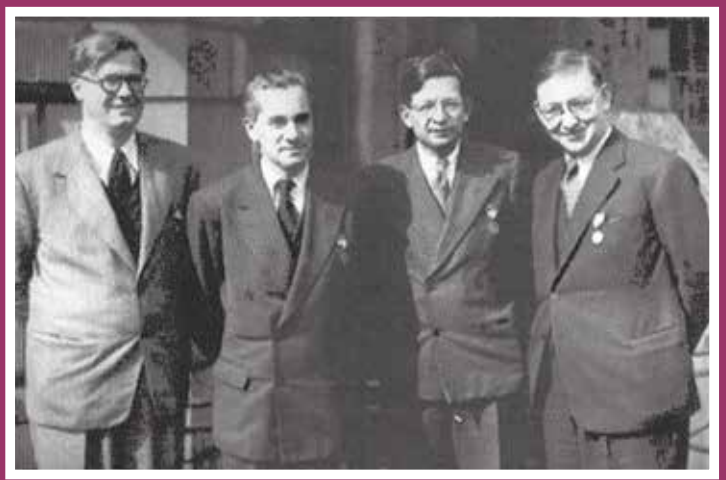
connived at their elimination. Psychologically, the Germany and Austria to which some refugees returned as visitors in the post-war years had become uncannily strange and alien lands; the ties that had bound them to their homelands had mostly been severed, leaving only a sense of grief and loss and bittersweet memories of happier times.

Most refugees remained fundamentally alienated from their former fellow countrymen, even if many returned over the years on holidays, to visit relatives or, later on, as guests of municipalities eager to make some small amends to their former Jewish citizens. Added to this were the inevitable tribulations of forced emigration, the upheavals and uncertainties of a new life in unfamiliar surroundings and the near-impossibility of recovering the rooted security that the refugees had enjoyed previously, not to mention the effects of living through the Second World War. But it was the Holocaust that cast the darkest shadow over their lives and has continued to do so down the decades. A haunting sense of utterly irreparable loss permeates Gerda Mayer's poem about her father, written nearly fifty years after he disappeared in Poland. The poignancy of the title, 'Make Believe', arises from her forlorn and hopeless hope that somewhere, somehow the father who has vanished so completely that even his death remains a matter of conjecture may yet be reading her lines:

> Say I were not sixty,
> say you weren't near-hundred,
> say you were alive.
> Say my verse was read
> in some distant country,
> and say you were idly turning the pages:
> The blood washed from your shirt,
> the tears from your eyes,
> the earth from your bones;
> neither missing since 1940,
> nor dead as reported later/by a friend of a friend of a friend ...
> Quite dapper you stand in that bookshop
> and chance upon my clues.
>
> That is why at sixty
> when some publisher asks me
> for biographical details,
> I still carefully give
> the year of my birth,
> the name of my hometown:
> GERDA MAYER born in '27, in Karlsbad,
> Czechoslovakia ... write to me, father.'

Courtesy of the Freud Museum
The Freud Museum is located in the house in Maresfield Gardens, Hampstead where Sigmund Freud, his wife Martha (pictured) and his daughter Anna settled after emigrating to London from Vienna in 1938.

Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
The Amadeus Quarter: Norbert Brainin, Siegmun Nissel, Peter Schidlof and Martin Lovett.



Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
The distinguished physicist Rudolf (*later Sir Rudolf*) Peierls (*second from right*) with colleagues.

Courtesy of the Warburg Institute
Sir Ernst Gombrich, Director of the Warburg Institute, with the Queen Mother on the occassion of her visit to the Institute, 8 March 1973.

The Refugees in Britain in Subsequent Decades

After the period of settlement, the life of the refugee community developed within the framework of the conditions described above. After a time, the refugees ceased to be affected by historical events specific to them that gave them a high profile in the public arena, and their communal life was played out increasingly in the private sphere. An important factor that made itself felt from the 1950s on was restitution. The two major pieces of restitution legislation enacted by the West German government in that decade, the Bundesentschädigungsgesetz (BEG) and the Bundesrückerstattungsgesetz (BRüG), meant that substantial amounts of money began to flow from Germany to the refugees, though not without considerable delays and bureaucratic obstruction. By the 1960s this had greatly changed the financial position of the refugees from Germany for the better.

The figures for total payments to all Jews were substantial. By 1960 some 2,945,000 claims had been lodged under the BEG, of which some 1,577,000 had been settled; payments made totaled DM 8,731,000,000, rising to an estimated DM 17,200,000,000 when all claims were settled. A further DM 1,500,000,000 was paid under the BRüG. Though most of this money went to Holocaust survivors outside the UK, a proportion of it came to the former refugees in this country. Needless to say, no amount of money could make up for the human loss they had suffered. The process of restitution proceeded much more slowly in the case of Austria, which, although it had been part of the Reich and had participated fully in Hitler's criminal actions, sought to wriggle out of its responsibilities; to avoid making restitution in the early years, Austria employed a series of delaying tactics that reflected little credit on its government or people. But by the 1960s restitution from Austria was also flowing more generously.

As well as these payments to individuals, payments were also made to organizations from the monies realized by the sale of heirless, unclaimed and communal Jewish property in Germany. This money was channeled through organizations set up for the purpose, the Jewish Trust Corporation in the British Zone of Occupation and the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization in the American Zone. It was then divided up between various Jewish organizations, including the Council of Jews from Germany, of which the AJR was an important constituent part, representing the former German Jews in Britain. The Council had to fight ferociously to secure the modest amount that it considered its rightful share of the proceeds from heirless Jewish property in Germany, against other Jewish organizations bent on directing the funds to groups of survivors from countries other than Germany.

The money that came to the AJR enabled it to play a leading role in the administration of the old age homes built for elderly refugees, to fund an excellent social services department that provides a wide range of services

to needy members and to secure the future of its journal. The Council of Jews from Germany, ever conscious of the great heritage of its past, used part of the restitution money to establish the Leo Baeck Institute, named after the famous rabbi, survivor of Theresienstadt camp and spiritual leader of the former German Jews. The Institute's task is to record and research the history and culture of the German Jews, and its Yearbook has been published by its London branch since 1956, when the founding editor was Robert Weltsch.

The rising affluence of the refugees is reflected in the legacies, bequests and donations made by members to the AJR, which it continues to use to their benefit. In 1965 the AJR coordinated the raising of £90,000 – then a very large sum of money – by former refugees for the 'Thank You Britain' Fund, which gave it to the British Academy for the benefit of scholarship and research. The fund was the brainchild of Victor Ross, a successful publisher, and a cheque was presented to the president of the Academy, Lord Robbins, by one of the refugee Nobel Prize winners, Sir Hans Krebs.

In the last two decades, the generation of the refugees' children has come increasingly to the fore. An organization to represent them, the Association of Children of Jewish Refugees, was founded in 1985. This was followed by the Second Generation Trust and the Second Generation Network, which publishes the magazine *Second Generation Voices*. These groups have organized a variety of activities, but their membership is not large; the majority of their generation no longer feels bound by the same strong common ties to the social culture of their parents.

An important aspect of second generation activity has been the investigation of the indirect impact of the Holocaust on children born to refugees, pioneered by Irene Bloomfield. The best-known exposition of the psychological transmission of Holocaust trauma from parents to children in Britain is the book *The War After* by Anne Karpf, the daughter of camp survivors. That the children of refugees can also be affected by the psychological aftermath of their parents' suffering is now widely recognized. This is especially the case in families where the Holocaust was never discussed, despite the loss of close relatives, either because the parents wished to protect their children from it, or because they could not bring themselves to talk about it. It is perhaps for this reason that a number of those who associate themselves with the second generation have a stronger image of themselves as victims than do their parents. The majority of this generation, however, appears to be well integrated into British or Anglo-Jewish society, especially in cosmopolitan London.

The AJR itself remains strong, though the ageing of its membership has inevitably meant that its running is now largely in the hands of the children of the original refugees. Its vigour was emphasized when its magazine adopted a new and brighter format to greet the new millennium in January 2001; sporting a new title, *AJR Journal*, the excellence of its content has remained

consistent under its editor since 1988, Richard Grunberger. The refugees have been reduced in numbers by the passage of the years, and this has resulted in a slow fall in the membership of the AJR. But the affiliation of the former Kindertransportees brought an influx of new and - to judge by the success of the reunions they organized to commemorate both the fiftieth and the sixtieth anniversaries of the transports - vigorous members.

Contribution to British Society

The details of the refugees' remarkable contribution to their adopted country lie beyond the scope of this catalogue; indeed, it would take another catalogue to record them fully. The distinguished achievements of individual refugees and the contribution made by the community as a whole to the society, culture and economy of Britain have been very thoroughly researched. Many volumes have been devoted to specific areas where the refugees' contribution was especially prominent, while overall studies of the subject range from *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews in the United Kingdom*, edited by Werner E. Mosse (Tübingen, 1991), and *Exile in Great Britain: Refugees from Hitler's Germany,* edited by Gerhard Hirschfeld (Leamington Spa, 1984), to Daniel Snowman's book on the Hitler émigrés that is appearing this year.

The list of areas where the refugees' contribution has had a major impact on British life and society is a long one. As might be expected, they achieved great prominence in the field of culture: in all branches of literature (including a Nobel Prize winner, Elias Canetti, and one of the century's landmark political novels, Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*); in the visual arts, painting, architecture, sculpture, pottery, photography and photo-journalism, and many areas of design; in the performing arts, cinema, theatre, ballet and dance, as actors and performers, directors, critics and creators of decors and sets; and in music, as composers, conductors, performers and musicologists (British institutions from Covent Garden to Glyndebourne and the Edinburgh Festival owe a huge debt to the refugees.)

The refugees were also prominent in many academic disciplines, history, German literature and culture, Jewish studies, philosophy, sociology, political science, economics and above all art history. The disciplines of law and medicine, which straddle the worlds of academia and practice, proved especially attractive to refugees, surprisingly many of whom proved themselves masters of the arcane mysteries of English law. In the field of the sciences, where the contribution of the refugees was of inestimable advantage to the nation, it is hard to avoid listing names, such is the world renown of scientists like Ernst Chain, Franz Simon, Rudolf Peierls, Hans Krebs and Max Perutz – a veritable galaxy of talents. With Sigmund and Anna

Courtesy of Victoria Sternfield
Fred Kormis, *Salome*, 1934

Courtesy of Harold Marks and Dr Frances Marks
Cup and saucer by Margaret Marks

Courtesy of Milein Cosman
Milein Cosman, *Portrait of Hans Keller*, 1955

Courtesy of the Werthwhile Foundation
Hans Feibusch, *Apollo and Daphne*, 1934

Freud, one might say, the discipline of psychoanalysis moved from Vienna to Britain, where psychology also benefited enormously from the influx of refugee practitioners and academics.

Refugees have risen to positions of great eminence in British public life and in major British institutions. They have also contributed notably to the nation's economy, in industry, commerce, finance and engineering; the world of publishing in particular would be unrecognizably poorer without the great publishing houses and imprints founded by refugees. Refugees ran art galleries, excelled as journalists, and amused the British as humorists; Hans Schleger designed the bus-stop sign for London Transport, Vicky (Victor Weisz) the outstanding political cartoonist, Judith Kerr enchanted British children with her books. Few countries can have owed so much to so relatively small a group of newcomers.

The refugees founded institutions that greatly enriched their adopted country, while retaining the distinct character of Central European Jewry. Apart from the AJR, these include the Wiener Library, the world's oldest established archive of material on the Nazi period and the Holocaust, and the Leo Baeck Institute, both of which have already been mentioned. In 1933 the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg was shipped in its entirety from Hamburg to London, where it has, as the Warburg Institute, become a world-renowned centre for art history under directors like Fritz Saxl, Gertrud Bing and Sir Ernst Gombrich. The Freud Museum, located in the house in Hampstead where Sigmund Freud lived for the last year of his life after emigrating to London in 1938, preserves the memory of the life and work of the founder of psychoanalysis. The venerable Club 43, so called because it was founded in 1943, holds its weekly meetings in Belsize Square Synagogue, where a mainly refugee audience listens to lectures on cultural, historical and topical subjects, chaired since 1993 by Hans Seelig.

The last area to be covered is one of the most important: the contribution made by refugee rabbis to Judaism and the Jewish community in Britain. Apart from Leo Baeck himself, figures of the stature of Ignaz Maybaum, Bruno Italiener, Alexander Altmann and Albert Friedlander carried on their work in Britain, as did the former Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits. Most closely associated with the refugee community is Belsize Square Synagogue. Founded in 1938 as the New Liberal Jewish Congregation, it moved into Belsize Square when its present building was erected in 1958; Rabbi Georg Salzberger, its first rabbi, was a refugee from Germany, as were his successor, Rabbi Jakob Kokotek, and Cantor Magnus Davidsohn, who came from the Fasanenstrasse Synagogue in Berlin to London.

Leo Baeck was associated with the North Western Reform Synagogue in Golders Green, whose rabbi was Werner van der Zyl. Many refugees joined Anglo-Jewish synagogues like the West London Synagogue. Among the bastions of Orthodox Jewry is the Golders Green Beth Hamedrash, which under the tenure of Rabbi Eli Munk from Berlin welcomed those fleeing from

Nazi persecution with open arms. With the courageous assistance of his friends Arthur and Fred Rau, Rabbi Eli Munk engineered the daring escape of his brother Michael from Germany in late 1938; Rabbi Michael Munk went on to establish the Hendon Adath Yisroel Synagogue.

The story of the refugees from Central Europe has not yet passed entirely into history. The exhibition 'Continental Britons: Jewish Refugees from Nazi Europe' seeks to present the community of those who sought refuge from Nazi persecution on British soil as a living entity and to commemorate their achievements and their experiences, happy or otherwise, in the country in which they remade their lives. For while Israel was the land to which conscious Jews were drawn and America the land of immigration par excellence, Britain can to some extent claim to have been the classic land of settlement for the Jews from Central Europe in the post-war period.


Kindertransport
60th Anniversary
In deep gratitude to the people and Parliament of the United Kingdom for saving the lives of 10,000 Jewish and other children who fled to this country from Nazi persecution on the Kindertransport 1938 - 1939
PUBLICATIONS OF THE LEO BAECK INSTITUTE OF JEWS FROM GERMANY
YEAR BOOK I
1956
PUBLISHED FOR THE INSTITUTE BY THE EAST AND WEST LIBRARY LONDON
JOURNAL OF THE WARBURG AND COURTAULD INSTITUTES
LXIII
THE SYNAGOGUE AT SIXTY
ATHENE
Association of Jewish Refugees 1941 - 2001
ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH REFUGEES
60th Anniversary

Conclusion

(Written for the 2021 edition)

Almost two decades have passed since 2002, when the 'Continental Britons' exhibition was successfully shown at the Jewish Museum and when this brochure, with the same title, was first published to accompany it. In the intervening twenty years, two developments above all have affected the situation of the Jewish refugees from Nazism in Britain. The first and most obvious effect of the passage of time has been the decline in the number of the former refugees still alive; that is sadly inevitable in the case of a group whose youngest members were born in the 1930s. For example, of the twenty refugees interviewed by Dr Bea Lewkowicz for the 'Continental Britons' film, shown at the exhibition in the recreated Cosmo Café, none is still alive; the last of them, Elly Miller, died in late 2020.

This trend can be clearly observed within the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), the largest and most significant organisation founded by the Jewish refugees from Nazism in Britain, and, as it celebrates the eightieth anniversary of its founding, surely the longest-lived such organisation still actively functioning anywhere in the world. Over the past two decades, while the AJR's membership has fallen to below 2,000, the proportion of that membership who are the children of refugees, the second generation, has risen sharply. The AJR's Board of Directors, known as its Trustees, has provided a reassuring element of continuity, with the gradual succession of the second generation replacing the first, including the continued service of the chairman, Andrew Kaufman, and fellow trustees Eleanor Angel, Frank Harding, David Rothenberg and Anthony Spiro. The appointment of Michael Newman as Chief Executive in 2012 marked another stage in the process by which the third generation took on the baton of responsibility at the AJR.

But for all that the AJR has changed hugely in terms of personnel. While in the 1990s the senior staff were still largely refugees, in 2021 only one refugee remains at the AJR's offices. This generational change can be observed in the staff responsible for the *AJR Journal*. Richard Grunberger, a Kindertransportee from Vienna who had been Editor of the monthly journal since 1988, died in 2005. He was succeeded by Anthony Grenville, the son of refugees from Vienna, who served as Consultant Editor until 2017 and was in turn replaced as Contributing Editor by David Herman, who is also the son of Jewish refugees. The position of Editor is now held by Jo Briggs, one of an increasing number of British Jews serving on the staff; her assistant, Lilian Levy, however, is a child survivor of the Nazi camps, a member of the generation that experienced the Holocaust.

But otherwise the generation of the refugees has, for reasons of age and frailty, mostly ceased to play an active role in the organisation. This is also reflected in the retirement from the AJR Board of Trustees of Viennese-born Sir

Erich Reich, who came on a Kindertransport from Gdansk, and Joanna Millan, who survived the Holocaust as a child. Increasingly, the surviving refugees have become the recipients of the social welfare support offered by the AJR, which has been greatly expanded by grants from the Claims Conference (Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany) administered by the AJR, as well as from the AJR's own Self-Aid. The efforts of the Association's volunteer and outreach programme have proved particularly valuable during the recent pandemic.

Paradoxically, at the very juncture when the generation of the refugees from Nazism is passing from the scene, they have become the object of greatly heightened public attention. This is in part related to the hugely increased public interest in the Holocaust; the refugees form the largest group of surviving victims of Nazi persecution on British soil and the most significant living testimony to the historical experience of the Jews of Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. It is also part of the process whereby memory of past events passes from the living testimony of those who experienced them, known as communicative memory, and becomes history that is no longer accessible through lived experience, but has become part of collective remembrance, known as cultural memory.

As the generation of the refugees passes into history, greater attempts are being made to preserve their experience for posterity. One of the most significant projects aimed at preserving that experience, the AJR's 'Refugee Voices' collection of filmed interviews, developed directly from the 'Continental Britons' exhibition. The 'Continental Britons' film proved so successful that Anthony Grenville and Bea Lewkowicz developed a project to create a permanent archive of filmed interviews to be used for research and educational purposes. The AJR generously funded the project, which commenced in 2003 and which consisted of 150 interviews when Anthony Grenville stood down in 2008. Since then, under the energetic direction of Bea Lewkowicz, the archive has expanded to more than 250 interviews, which have been widely used for films, television programmes and scholarly research. It is now one of the most important resources of its kind in Britain, and has been made accessible in universities and similar institutions across the world. 'Refugee Voices' is one of many collections of interviews that have been created in Britain over the past twenty or so years. The AJR's 'My Story' project, whose purpose is to tell the life stories of Jewish victims of Nazi persecution through the creation of life story books, is another example of such gatherings of testimonies.

The refugees from Nazism have also been accorded public recognition at the highest national level. On their behalf, the AJR has been involved in the planning and delivery of public events and memorials, including the 80th anniversary commemoration of the anti-Jewish pogrom known as *Kristallnacht* at Westminster Abbey in November 2018. Additionally, the AJR has ensured that its members have been able to contribute to the nationwide consultation on the proposed UK Holocaust Memorial, which, together with

its learning centre, is to be located on Victoria Tower Gardens, close to the Houses of Parliament. Other notable public memorials include the Imperial War Museum's plans for a new set of galleries covering the Holocaust and its importance in World War II. The refugees themselves have been instrumental in the establishment of educational and commemorative institutions, such as the Holocaust Exhibition and Learning Centre, set up in 2018 at the University of Huddersfield; this built on the devoted work of the Yorkshire-based Holocaust Survivors Friendship Association and the endeavours of Lilian Black, who passed away from Covid-19 in October 2020.

Anniversaries of significant dates are now also marked by commemorative events, often with a high nationwide profile, most notably Holocaust Memorial Day, held annually on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz; on that day, former refugees are frequently invited to schools and universities to speak about their experiences. Single anniversary commemorations have also become common. In November 2018, for example, on the eightieth anniversary of the debate in which the House of Commons gave its consent to the Kindertransports, the AJR organised an event at the Palace of Westminster, at the invitation of the Speaker, to mark the initiation of the rescue of the children from the Third Reich. In April 2019, the AJR convened another commemoration of the Kindertransport, the international forum 'Remembering and Rethinking' at Lancaster House, attended by over 200 people including government ministers and representatives of the German and Austrian embassies.

Since the first reunion of former Kindertransport children in 1989, the Kindertransports have assumed a prominent place in public consciousness. Their reunions and other events have been honoured by the presence of royalty, especially by the Prince of Wales. The chairman of the AJR's Kindertransport special interest group, Erich Reich, has been knighted, one of a number of refugees who have been honoured for services to Holocaust education, including Ruth Barnett, who came to Britain aged four on a Kindertransport, and Eva Clarke, a child survivor born in Mauthausen concentration camp a few days before its liberation. Memorials and statues have been erected to record the experience of the saved children, most notably at Liverpool Street Station, where many of them arrived at the end of their journey to Britain.

The prominence of the Kindertransports in public consciousness is partly due to the fact that, as the youngest of the refugees, former child refugees now form the majority of those surviving and are consequently more present in public awareness than other groups, such as those who came to Britain on domestic service permits. It is also the case that the rescue of children from the Nazis has a strong emotional appeal, generating an image of British generosity and compassion in taking in these innocent victims of Nazi persecution. While few would deny that the rescue of the children is in itself something to be celebrated, it is now argued by some historians that the element of self-congratulation in British commemorations of the Kindertransport also acts to

obscure the less generous aspects of the treatment of the Jewish refugees from Nazism by the British government and their reception by the British people.

Academic research on the refugees from Nazism has proliferated in the years since the showing of the 'Continental Britons' exhibition. In 2002, that research was still dominated by histories, based mainly on government documents, which studied the process by which the refugees were admitted to Britain in the 1930s, on government policy towards the Jews of Europe during the war and on the wartime internment of many thousands of refugees. There were volumes containing contributions detailing the experience of the refugees in various areas of British public life and the many and varied contributions that they made to British society; there were also studies devoted to individual refugees, mostly well known.

Over the past two decades, however, the number of studies relating to the Jewish refugees from Nazism in Britain has increased hugely, to such an extent that it cannot be covered in detail here. It is worth noting that German and Austrian academics have also contributed to this large and growing stock of scholarship, producing, for example, works of the quality of Traude Bollauf's study of refugee domestic servants, *Dienstmädchen-Emigration*. In Britain, the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, based at the Institute of Modern Languages Research, University of London, has concentrated on researching the history of the refugees from Nazism and their experience in Britain. The Yearbook of the Research Centre has become a major source of academic scholarship in its field.

Broadly speaking, scholarly writing on the refugees has developed into two streams. On the one hand are the studies that have emerged from the refugee community itself and from those close to it, like the Research Centre mentioned above. These studies often present a broadly positive view of the experience of the refugees as they settled in Britain. Drawing on interviews, memoirs and sources like *AJR Journal* (previously *AJR Information*), which has appeared monthly since 1946, they do not minimise the obstacles and hostility that the refugees faced in the early years nor the suffering and loss that forced emigration to a foreign country inflicted on them; but nor do such studies shrink from celebrating the achievements of the refugees, whether those of outstanding individuals or those of the bulk of the refugee community as it integrated into British society.

Against these should be set studies that place a very different historical interpretation on the arrival, reception and long-term settlement of the Jewish refugees from Nazism in Britain. This type of studies, broadly speaking, sees the experience of the refugees through the prism of longstanding British traditions of antisemitism and of hostility and intolerance towards immigrant groups. For them, the refugees were primarily the victims of British attitudes, ranging from government policy to street-level expressions of anti-Jewish or fascist sentiments; to portray the experience and integration of the refugees as a 'success story' is consequently taboo, as is any 'celebration' of their

contribution to British society or of their treatment at the hands of the British.

Refugees and their descendants will sometimes find such judgments hard to accept, as when Britain is said to have provided 'a homeland but not a home' for the refugees; or when the writer and artist Fred Ullman's description of Britain as 'a heaven and a haven' is said to be true only when it is compared with what would otherwise have been the fate of the refugees in Auschwitz (the more so as Ullman is expressly comparing Britain to France and Germany, not to an extermination camp). The post-war settlement of the refugees in Britain, a period that now extends to three quarters of a century, arguably remains under-researched. The only full-length monograph to appear since 2002 that covers the period much beyond 1945 is Anthony Grenville's *Jewish Refugees from Germany and Austria in Britain, 1933-1970,* which was published in 2010. The *Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust* (2020), on the other hand, contains fifteen chapters devoted to the post-war period, but not a single one pays any attention to the refugees.

The 2002 edition of this publication concluded with the statement that the 'Continental Britons' exhibition sought 'to present the community of those who sought refuge from Nazi persecution on British soil as a living entity and to commemorate their achievements and their experiences, happy or otherwise, in the country in which they remade their lives'. It is in the same spirit that, looking back over the past twenty years, we salute the refugees, both those who are still with us and those who live on in our memories.

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THE JEWISH MUSEUM

The Jewish Museum opens a window onto the history and religious life of the Jewish community in Britain and beyond. It seeks to recover and preserve the diverse roots and heritage of Jewish people in Britain, and to increase knowledge and understanding about Jewish life and history.

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The Museum's attractive premises in an elegant Victorian building in Camden Town include a History Gallery tracing stories of the Jewish community in Britain and a Ceremonial Art Gallery illustrating Jewish religious life with objects of rarity and beauty. The Museum has been awarded Designated status by the Museums and Galleries Commission in recognition of its outstanding collection of Jewish ceremonial art, which are among the finest in the world. A Temporary Exhibitions Gallery offers a varied programme of changing exhibitions, and audio-visual programmes are also available.

The Jewish Museum, Camden Town, Raymond Burton House, 129-131 Albert Street, London NW1 7NB
Tel: (020) 7284 1997 Fax (020) 7267 9008
e-mail: admin@jmus.org.uk Website: www.jewishmuseum.org.uk

Opening hours: Mon – Thurs 10am to 4pm, Sundays 10am to 5pm
Closed Jewish Festivals and Public Holidays

The Jewish Museum, Finchley

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The Jewish Museum, Finchley, The Sternberg Centre, 80 East End Road, London N3 2SY
Tel: (020) 8349 1143 Fax (020) 8343 2162
e-mail: enquiries@jewishmuseum.org.uk

Opening hours: Mon – Thurs 10.30am to 5pm, Sundays 10.30am to 4.30pm
Closed Jewish Festivals, Public Holidays and 24 December to 4 January.
Our Finchley location is also closed on Sundays in August and Bank Holiday weekends.

Education and Outreach

Education programmes and group visits are welcome by arrangement at both Camden and Finchley locations. The Museum also offers travelling displays and guided walks of Jewish London.

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