



Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

A resource pack for secondary school teachers

The Sir Martin Gilbert Learning Centre is a charity dedicated to promoting awareness of and engagement with twentieth century history, focusing on the topics of Sir Martin's scholarship: modern Jewish history, the world wars, the Holocaust, and Winston Churchill. Using Sir Martin's skills and principles as a guide, the Centre emphasizes the voices of individuals and brings academic historical research to wide audiences in accessible ways.

The Centre is delighted to present this first in a series of resource packs for secondary school teachers. It is rooted in the belief that the best way to increase tolerance and understanding of minorities is through education – the kind that facilitates the exploration of nuance and complexity, and helps us to understand minorities in their broader social and historical context.

This pack is intended for use by teachers rather than directly by students. We have drawn on academic expertise to identify useful excerpts from historiography and primary sources. The question of how best to employ these materials is left to you – the classroom experts – to determine, based on your students' level and the subject being taught.

We encourage both you and your students to approach the sources we offer with the requisite caution and critical thinking skills.

If you would like further input from us on this subject or have suggestions for future resources packs, we are always happy to hear from you. Please get in touch at info@sirmartingilbertlearningcentre.org or contact us via our website: www.sirmartingilbertlearningcentre.org

Every effort has been made to secure permissions for all sources, however in some cases this has not been possible. Please get in touch if you have any concerns.

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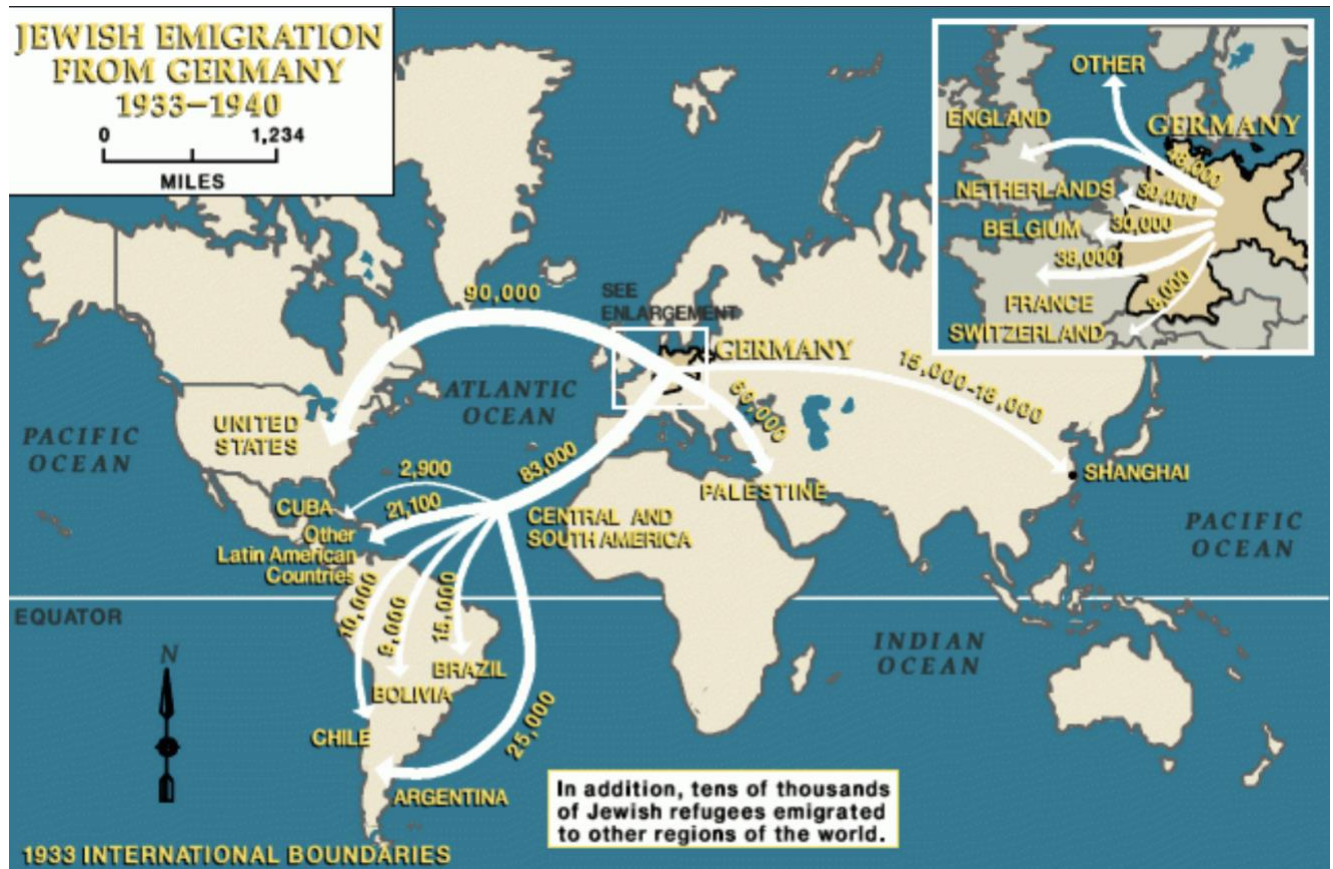
1. Overview

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period came in two main waves. The first, from 1933 to 1937, was a smaller flow of refugees (around 10,000) largely from Germany. The second wave, between 1938–1939, was a larger and more acute influx (around 60,000) of those fleeing intensified Nazi persecution in the expanded German Reich, including Austria and Czechoslovakia. Refugees often settled in North-West London, at least initially, although many sought livelihoods in areas still reeling from the economic depression such as the North East, Cumberland and South Wales. Manchester and Glasgow were also important centres for refugees.

The Jews fleeing Germany belonged largely to the cosmopolitan, assimilated middle classes of major cities such as Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Cologne, who had the finances and personal connections to seek a new life in Britain. The same applied to Austrian Jews, 90% of whom lived in Vienna in the early 1930s. The *Anschluss* (annexation of Austria) in 1938 led to an outbreak of antisemitic violence that was unprecedented even in Nazi Germany. 30,000 Austrian Jews fled to Britain, representing a quarter of all Austrian Jews to survive the Holocaust.

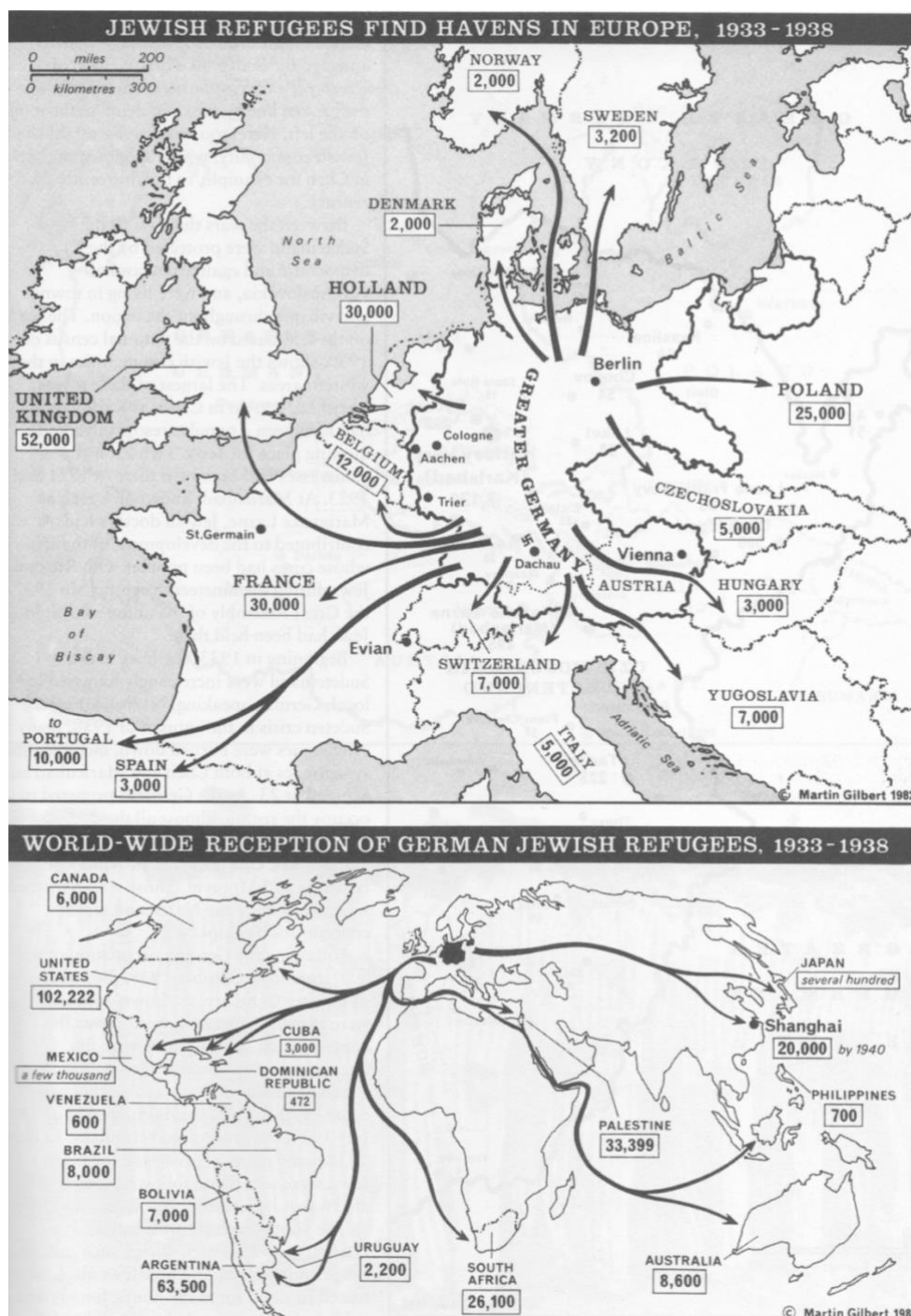
It was largely the poorer Jews in Nazi territory, including many recent arrivals from Eastern Europe, who lacked the economic and practical means to escape. They were unable to shoulder the heavy financial cost of leaving or to circumvent the immigration laws intended to keep those who might be a burden on the state out of Britain.

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This map from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum shows Jewish routes of emigration from Germany between 1933 and 1940. The numbers given for immigration to Britain differ from those given above, because this map relates only to German Jews. (Credit: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum)

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These maps, created by Sir Martin Gilbert, show the flows of Jewish refugees in Europe and (below) around the rest of the world. These maps cover the period until 1938, which is why the figures given are lower than the totals for the period discussed in this resource pack. As discussed below, there was a mass surge of immigration to Britain after April 1938.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Margarete Hinrichson was born on 21 October 1919 in Bad Polzin, in what was at that time part of Germany (present day Poland). Her family was affluent and she had a privileged upbringing, living in a stately home with lots of staff. Life changed for Margarete and her family in 1935, when the Nuremberg race laws were introduced, imposing restrictions on the Jewish population.

Here Margarete recounts the shifting attitudes of her peers:

'once Hitler came to power when I was thirteen...Well then everything changed in any case, you know. Friends from school, whom you walked in the break with, arm in arm, wouldn't do that anymore. And you just didn't know what hit you in a way, you know?'

Margarete was not allowed to continue onto higher education in Germany and so her parents sent her to Regent's Park School in London. She married Klaus, a fellow Jewish refugee in London, in 1942.

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Margarete Hinrichson pictured in 1940.

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Margarete lived in the grand home pictured above. After moving to London for schooling, she visited her parents in Germany in 1937 to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. She did not know this would be the last time she would see them. Her father was murdered in 1938 and her mother died in Israel in 1945.

(Photos belong to the family estate of Margarete Hinrichson and are copyright of the AJR. These sources can be found on the AJR website, along with further information about Margarete.

<https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/Margarete-Hinrichson>)

Thinking points:

- Ask students to consider the socio-economic context in which Margarete grew up (affluent; her educational background; business interests; political leanings).
- Open a discussion on the kinds of challenges Margarete encountered when she came to the UK – both the ones we know she faced, and the ones we might infer.
- Ask the students to think about her post-war relationship with Germany (there is more information on this on the AJR website above).

2. British immigration rules

The Aliens Act of 1905, designed to limit Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, was the first time that immigration to Britain had been controlled and capped. The outbreak of World War One brought further restrictions, and the subsequent Aliens Order of 1920 informed the government's approach to the renewed immigration that began in 1933.

Due to fears of unemployment, refugees were admitted on the condition that they could not seek employment without permission from the Ministry of Labour. Exclusions included those in a position to transfer their business to Britain and thereby benefit the local economy, and those willing to become domestic servants. Put simply, British interests came first, and sympathy for the plight of Jews was a secondary concern. In a country still suffering from the economic depression, it was imperative that refugees could bring some material benefit for Britain.

Britain did not have a quota system like the US, meaning individual immigration officers at the ports of arrival had more discretion to accept or reject refugees. In April 1938 a visa system was introduced, guaranteeing entry for anyone with a valid visa. In the following 18 months there was a steep increase in immigration, with 60,000 new arrivals, compared to a total of 10,000 in the previous five years.

However, all outstanding visas were cancelled following the outbreak of the Second World War, effectively shutting Britain's ports to enemy nationals.

PRIMARY SOURCES

In British politics there is a 'Cabinet', which is a group of senior politicians who are responsible for making Government decisions. The Cabinet is chaired by the Prime Minister and includes the PM's most senior ministers and secretaries of state. Cabinet papers are the records of Cabinet meetings. They are confidential documents, which are generally sealed to the public for a set period of time. (Previously this was 30 years, but from 2013 this period was reduced to 20 years. There are exceptions, however, when the contents are deemed particularly sensitive.)

Below you will find Cabinet papers from April 1933. They discuss 'the problem of the influx of Jews from Germany'. While the British Jewish Community was calling for a relaxation of the immigration protocols in light of the plight of their coreligionists in Germany, the Committee in fact recommends to the Cabinet that there should be no relaxation of the rules, but that a new condition should be introduced, requiring refugees to register themselves with the Police immediately upon their arrival.

The Cabinet papers also demonstrate how discussions about Jewish refugees were repeatedly drawn back to what was in the UK's best interests. There is also discussion of balancing the 'burden' of refugees with wanting to appear to be doing the right thing to the rest of Europe:

'it would be in the public interest to try and secure for this country prominent Jews who were being expelled from Germany and who had achieved distinction whether in pure science, applied science, such as medicine or technical industry, music or art. This would not only obtain for this country the advantage of their knowledge and experience, but would also create a very favourable impression in the world. [...]

While fully realising the importance of not allowing this country to be flooded with foreign refugees who would before long either become a burden to the country or replace other workers who would become a burden, the Cabinet were anxious to avoid the other danger of creating an atmosphere in Europe critical to this country.'

The quotations above are highlighted in the original Cabinet papers below.

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- (4) That the Committee should continue to watch the situation and, if necessary, should report further to the Cabinet after the Easter Recess.

The Home Secretary informed the Cabinet that he would have to answer the following Question the same afternoon:-

"Mr Mander.- To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government will be prepared to consider the granting of asylum to German Jews in this country on a self-supporting financial basis".

He suggested the draft of a reply.

Proposals were made to the Cabinet that it would be in the public interest to try and secure for this country prominent Jews who were being expelled from Germany^{and} who had achieved distinction whether in pure science, applied science, such as medicine or technical industry, music or art. This would not only obtain for this country the advantage of their knowledge and experience, but would also create a very favourable impression in the world, particularly if our hospitality were offered with some warmth. It was suggested that perhaps the Lord President of the Council might be willing to consult Officials and Members of such bodies as the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Medical Research Council and the Royal Society on these matters and advise the Home Secretary and the Cabinet Committee as to whether anything could be done.

While fully realising the importance of not allowing this country to be flooded with foreign refugees who would before long either become a burden to the community or replace other workers who would become a burden, the Cabinet were anxious to avoid the other danger of creating an atmosphere in Europe critical to this country.

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National Archives, CAB 23/75/27, 12 April 1933. For a full list of attendees and the agenda, see <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7653835>.

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Thinking points:

- What does this source show about the Cabinet's attitude towards German Jewish refugees, and their motivations for accepting 'prominent Jews'?
 - Are students aware of any 'prominent' Jews who came to Britain to escape Nazi persecution? (E.g., Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud).
-



(Daily Mail, 1938)

Thinking points:

- Ask students to focus on the language used in this article ('aliens', 'pouring') and consider the subtle interpretive biases ('back door'), connecting aliens with increased crime.
- It might be interesting to compare this Daily Mail article with the language used by the Cabinet in the source above ('flooded').

3. British responses to refugees

The economic crisis of the 1930s meant that many British people feared the impact that an influx of refugees would have on the labour market. On the one hand, a number of organisations were established to raise money to bring over and support refugees, and groups such as the Quakers were instrumental in saving many lives. Thousands of families accepted refugees into their homes, some becoming surrogate families, with friendships lasting decades. On the other hand, there was also political antisemitism stoked up especially by the right-wing press. Following the Nazi invasion of Poland and the outbreak of the Second World War, German refugees in Britain became nationals of an enemy power, plunging them into a precarious position and fuelling suspicion against them.

The historian William D. Rubinstein questions what he calls the ‘myth of rescue’, arguing that ‘no Jew who perished during the Nazi Holocaust could have been saved by any action which the Allies could have taken at the time, given what was actually known about the Holocaust, what was *actually proposed* at the time and what was realistically possible. If there are any exceptions at all to this statement, their numbers may be measured in the dozens or hundreds rather than in some higher figure.’¹

By contrast, several other historians have criticized Britain's responses to Jewish refugees, prominent among them Tony Kushner, Martin Gilbert, David Cesarani, and Louise London.

London argues that ‘countries around the globe resisted the pressure to take special measures to relieve Jewish suffering. The United Kingdom was no exception. It opted for caution and pragmatism, subordinating humanitarianism to Britain's national interest. Nor, when the crisis of the Jews became yet more grave, did the British approach change fundamentally. During the Holocaust, Britain's policy - much of it made in conjunction with the United States government - continued to put self-interest first, leaving minimal scope for humanitarian action.’²

Kushner points to a ‘subtle form of hostility’ that can help us to understand British government policy and public attitudes towards Jewish refugees. He writes about ‘a liberal discourse demanding that the Jew should assimilate totally into British society. The theory was that of an unwritten emancipation contract which could be summarized as follows: Britain was a tolerant society and was thus opposed to the *intolerance* of antisemitism. The Jew, in return for his total

¹ Rubinstein, William D. *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997, x.

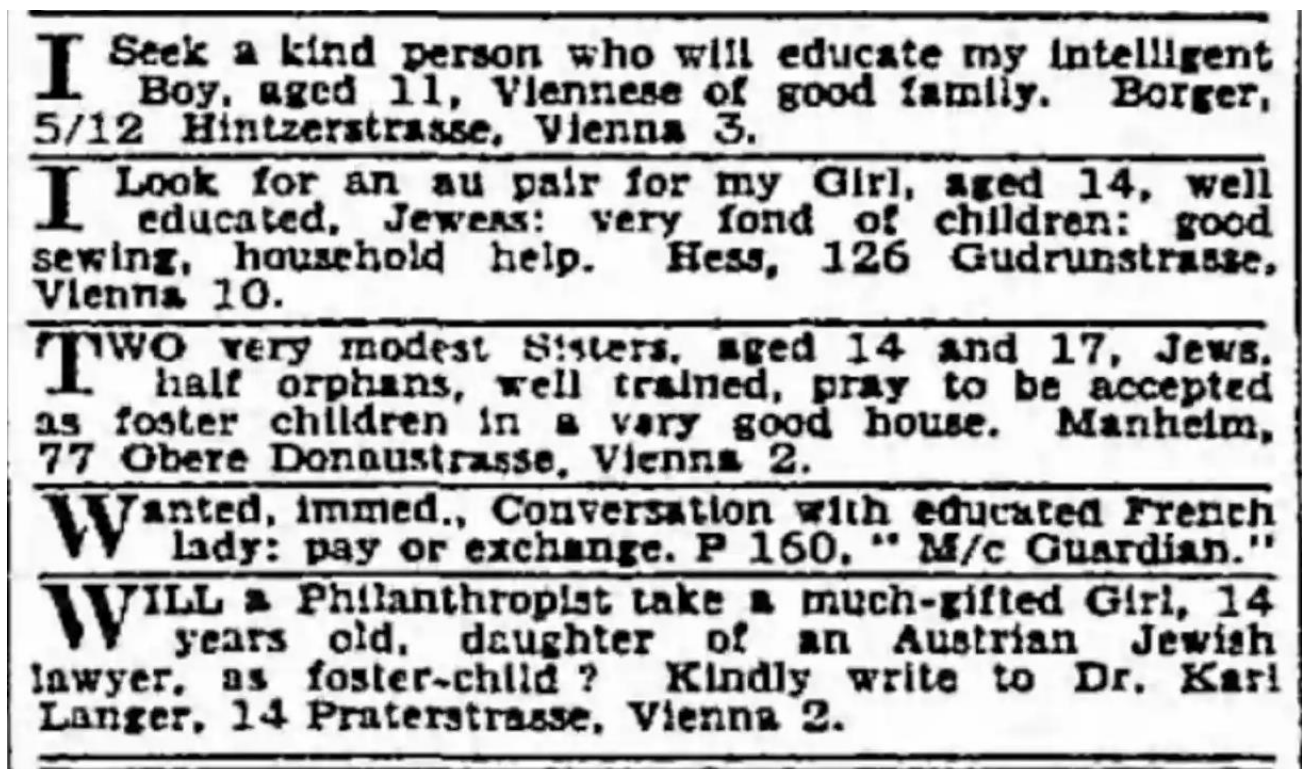
² London, Louise. *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: University Press, 2000.

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acceptance in Britain, would remove any distinctiveness. The corollary of this, however, was that if antisemitism persisted after emancipation then it was the Jew's own responsibility.'³

³ Kushner, Tony. 'Beyond the Pale? British Reactions to Nazi Anti-Semitism, 1933-39'. In *The Politics of Marginality: Race, the Radical Right and Minorities in Twentieth Century Britain*, edited by Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn, 143–60. London: Cass, 1990, 145.

PRIMARY SOURCES



This clipping from the *Manchester Guardian* in 1938 show how pleas from families desperate to send their children to Britain dominated the advertisement sections. (Photo: *The Guardian*)

Thinking points:

- Ask students to look at how the children are described in by their parents and consider why the adverts might have been written in this way.

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Below are some Cabinet papers from 16 November 1938 – less than a week after the November pogroms. In this Cabinet meeting, the Secretary of State for Home Affairs outlines the way in which the Jewish representatives *‘were adverse from allowing very large numbers of Jews to enter this country or from allowing the entry of Jews whom they had not themselves approved, since they were afraid of an anti-Jew agitation in this country.’* This concern is notable in other sources in this pack, especially the pamphlet with advice for new Jewish arrivals in [section 4](#). In the highlighted section of this paper below, we see the Secretary of State for Home Affairs suggest that Great Britain should consider admitting Jews for agricultural roles and Jewish refugee women as maidservants, reflecting the expectation that refugees should meet a practical, existing need for the host country.

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS
1,000 letters
said that ~~10,000 applications~~ a day were being
received in the United Kingdom. *The* All these applications
were sent to a co-ordinating Committee which included
representatives of various Societies and of ~~all~~ the
important Jewish interests. Broadly speaking, only
cases which were recommended by the Jewish representatives
were admitted. The Jewish representatives were averse
from allowing very large numbers of Jews to enter this
country or from allowing the entry of Jews whom they had
not themselves approved, since they were afraid of an
anti-Jew agitation in this country. For the same
reason they were unwilling to give definite figures
as to the number of Jews admitted, since they were
afraid that any number published would be attacked
from both sides as being too big or too little. He
thought that we were going as far at present as
public opinion would allow, and it was important to
retain a check on individual immigrants. He thought,
however, that we might agree to admit a number of young
Jews for the purpose of agricultural training, with a
view to their ultimate settlement elsewhere. He was
also in favour of admitting a number of Jewish
maidservants. These girls might replace the German
domestics who had left at the time of the crisis. He
mentioned that the Jewish Committee was subscribing
£5,000 a week to help immigrants.

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On the following page, the Minister of Health argues forcefully in favour of decisive action to help the persecuted Jews. The Minister refers to the need to avoid 'another Midlothian campaign': this is a reference to a series of speeches given by William Gladstone, leader of the Liberal Party, in 1878-1880. Gladstone criticized the government's support of the Ottoman Empire, despite news reaching Britain about atrocities being committed by the Ottomans during their suppression of the Bulgarian April Uprising. These speeches tallied with public

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feeling and contributed to the Liberals' electoral success in 1880 and the ousting of Disraeli's Conservative government.

The Minister of Health concludes by stating that many of the Jewish refugees were likely to become 'valuable citizens' as other refugees throughout the previous centuries had proved to be.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH thought that it was of the utmost importance that something should be done at once, as there was a danger of another Midlothian campaign. He thought that any constructive action taken to alleviate the difficulties would appeal to Liberal opinion in this country. He also thought that we should proceed on the basis of alleviating the terrible suffering and humiliation which had been inflicted on many Jews and that we should take positive action to this end forthwith. Such action would be expected by public opinion in this country. He was certain that it would be necessary to establish centres in which immigrants could find temporary shelter before they were moved on elsewhere. Many of the Jews now being driven out of Germany would prove valuable citizens, as had been the case with many other refugees who had settled in this country in previous centuries.

The Minister of Health was supported during the Cabinet meeting by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who expresses deep concern for the welfare of elderly Jews. The Secretary of State voices his hope that the British public might be willing to support them in their time of need. His language echoes that of the Minister of Health, 'hopeless position', 'appalling fate'.

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
said that he had been much impressed by the almost
hopeless position of the older Jews in Germany.
He asked if it was possible that some appeal might
be made to the people in this country to make
themselves responsible for the support of
individual elderly Jews who would otherwise be
left to an appalling fate in Germany.
THE PRIME MINISTER thought that this
suggestion might be considered later.

(National Archives, CAB 23/96/7, 16 November 1938. For a full list of attendees and the agenda, see
<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7738389>)

Thinking points:

This meeting took place a week after the November pogroms, when countries around the world were acutely aware of the dangerous acceleration of Nazi violence towards Jews and their livelihoods.

- Ask students to discuss the Prime Minister's response to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs's suggestion. What is likely to have happened to the 'older Jews in Germany'?
- While there was clearly sympathy amongst the Cabinet for the plight of the German Jews, to what extent does this source suggest that the refugees were viewed as 'useful', both in terms of the labour they represented and as a means of portraying a benevolent and generous image of Britain to Europe, rather than as victims in need of humanitarian assistance?

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(© British Online Archives)

Thinking points:

Action was a weekly newspaper by the British Union of Fascists. This front page, from 14 January 1939, sets up a dichotomy between 'aliens' and 'Britons', claiming that 'Jews' are receiving 'British money', leading Britons to 'starve'.

- Ask students to consider *Action's* tagline, "BRITAIN FIRST", and the title and subtitle of this front page.
- What was the BUF trying to communicate to their readers about Jewish refugees?

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Peter Kurer was one of many refugees brought to Britain and assisted by the Quakers. In the accounts below he describes his experience and the gratitude he feels towards the Society of Friends.

Peter Kurer: "The Quakers not only saved us, but they got other Quakers to give guarantees, at £2,500 a time, and they saved another five members of our family [...]. My education gave me a feeling that I owe something to the Quakers. Six million exterminated and nine of us got out, thanks to the Quakers. The Quakers guaranteed for thousands of Jews when the rest of the world sat back and slowly did nothing. There were individuals who helped Jews, but as an organisation, the Quakers were the only organisation who helped organise anything."

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/holocaust-memorial-day-incredible-stories-17624877>

How did you escape from Nazi Europe?
Peter F. Kurer

The Society of Friends rescued thousands of Jews from Nazi Europe. The Society does not seek publicity, but this is no reason why people like myself - whose family and life it saved - should be content with the minimum recognition it has received from us Jews.

The Quakers gave guarantees - the life line essential for Jews to obtain visas to move to England - not knowing in most cases the people for whom they were providing guarantees but aware that help was needed.

My brother and I were provided with two free years in a Quaker boarding school in Cumberland to ensure our safety and to enable our parents to look after their other relations. Of the school's less than 150 pupils, five were refugees.

More than 10,000 Jewish children

were rescued from Germany and Austria by the Society and enabled to come to England. They played an important role in the Kindertransport movement.

That Quakers were among the most active groups of rescuers of Jews from the Holocaust was recognised by the award in 1949 of a Nobel Peace Prize for humanitarian efforts to both the British Friends Service Committee and its American counterpart.

In 2001 a sculpture of a leader of the Quaker movement was installed and dedicated in the courtyard of Friends' House, London. The sculpture was made by Naomi Blake, herself a Kindertransport member. Its plaque reads: 'To honour Bertha Bracey (1893-1989) who gave practical leadership to Quakers in quietly rescuing and resettling thousands of Nazi victims and

lone children between 1922-1938.'

Today, the question is: what have the beneficiaries of the Society's work and dedication done to ensure that we, and future generations, are aware of its actions to save us in our hour of need and to ensure that its unique, inspired help will never be forgotten?

With the support and assistance of the Association of Jewish Refugees, I would ask all those who were helped in any way by the Society of Friends - or who have a friend, acquaintance or relative who might have received help - to forward to me their names and addresses so that I can send them a form for completion and initiate the project We Must Never Forget. Please contact me at: 7 Bruntwood Lane, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 1HS, tel 0161 428 5080, email peter@kurer.co.uk.

(https://web.archive.org/web/20130407001719/http://www.ajr.org.uk/journalpdf/2006_june.pdf AJR Journal, June 2006).

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Bertha Bracey was a British Quaker and from 1933 she was in charge of the German Emergency Committee (later renamed the Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens). You can listen to her oral history accounts on the Imperial War Museum website:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80004606>

Thinking points:

- Ask students to consider why there is relatively little known about the Quakers' assistance of Jewish refugees and why the Quakers might have felt driven to help the refugees.

Regional links:

Birmingham: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/st-mary-s-vicarage-selly-oak>

Belfast: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/lisburn-friends-school>

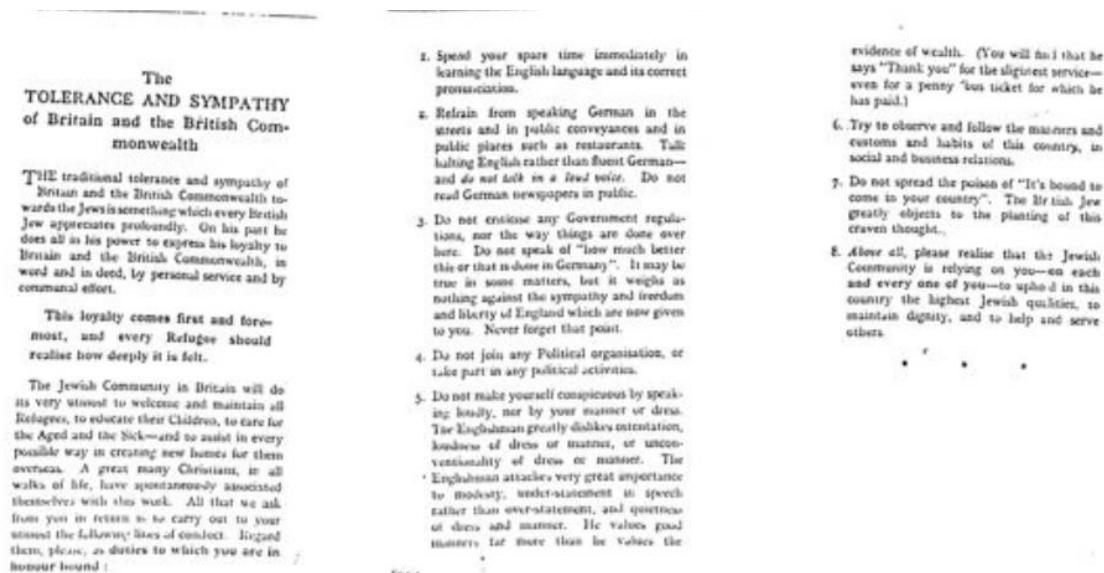
4. Experiences of Jewish refugees in Britain

In order to escape Nazi territory, Jewish refugees faced a harsh levy, which presented a financial barrier to many. The *Reichsfluchtsteuer* (tax to leave the Reich) had to be paid along with a tax on Jewish wealth, the *Judenvermögensabgabe*. Refugees were only allowed to take 10 Reichsmarks when leaving the country. They thus arrived in Britain having lost most of their savings, status and standard of living. Disorientated, confronted with new customs and strange manners, and in many cases forced to undertake menial work for which they were vastly overqualified, the new arrivals faced a difficult period of adjustment. To ease this transition, in 1939 a pamphlet entitled *While you are in England: Helpful Information and Guidance for Every Refugee* (see below) was published by the German Jewish Aid Committee. The pamphlet offered detailed guidelines and exhorted new arrivals to avoid speaking German in public and to assimilate into the local society as quickly and completely as possible.

Despite the fact that refugees were granted entry on a temporary basis, with the expectation that they would move on in due course, some 40,000 stayed and made their homes in Britain after the War.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Extract from *While you are in England: Helpful Information and Guidance for Every Refugee.*



(Scottish Jewish Archives Centre: <https://sjac-collection.is.ed.ac.uk/jlss/record/111324>)

The pamphlet begins by stressing the existing Jewish population's gratitude and loyalty to Britain and the British Commonwealth:

"The traditional tolerance and sympathy of Britain and the British Commonwealth towards the Jews is something which every British Jew appreciates profoundly. On his part he does all in his power to express his loyalty to Britain and the British Commonwealth, in word and in deed, by personal service and by communal effort.

This loyalty comes first and foremost, and every Refugee should realise how deeply it is felt.

The text continues by encouraging readers to do the following:

1. Spend your spare time immediately in learning the English language and its correct pronunciation.

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- 2. Refrain from speaking German in the streets and in public conveyances and in public places such as restaurants. Talk halting English rather than fluent German – and do not talk in a loud voice. Do not read German newspapers in public.*
- 3. Do not criticize any Government regulations, nor the way things are done over here. Do not speak of “how much better this or that is done in Germany”. It may be true in some matters, but it weighs as nothing against the sympathy and freedom and liberty of England which are now given to you. Never forget that point.*
- 4. Do not join any Political organisation, or take part in any political activities.*
- 5. Do not make yourself conspicuous by speaking loudly, nor by your manner or dress. The Englishman greatly dislikes ostentation, loudness of dress or manner. The Englishman attaches very great importance to modesty, under-statement in speech rather than over-statement, and quietness of dress and manner. He values good manners far more than he values the evidence of wealth. (You will find that he said “Thank you” for the slightest service – even for a penny bus ticket for which he has paid.)*
- 6. Try to observe and follow the manner and customs and habits of this country, in social and business relations.*
- 7. Do not spread the poison of “It’s bound to come in your country”. The British Jew greatly objects to the planting of this craven thought.*
- 8. Above all, please realise that the Jewish Community is relying on you – on each and every one of you – to uphold in this country the highest Jewish qualities, to maintain dignity, and to help and serve others.*

Thinking points:

- Ask students to consider what this booklet suggests about the existing Jewish community's position in Britain.
- Students might discuss whether the depiction of the ‘Englishman’ and typically British behaviour still rings true today.
- The booklet emphasizes the 'traditional tolerance and sympathy' towards Jews and thus the obligation that Jews have towards Britain. This is as much about helping the refugees as about safeguarding their own security in Britain (British Jews were worried that the presence of refugees would inflame antisemitism and jeopardize their own hard-won position). They want refugees to assimilate.

Renate Beigel was born in Vienna in 1933. Her family left Austria for Zagreb in 1938, but Renate's parents were unable to obtain a visa and so made the difficult decision to send Renate and her sister to Britain via Trieste. She recounts life with her foster parents and the shock of arrival in a new country, with a new language as a six-year-old:

'It was a horror. I mean, you can imagine. All of a sudden I'm with an elderly couple who don't know a single word of German. I don't know a single word of English. I'm six years old and I don't know what's happening to me. [...] I think they thought they would have to return me somewhere, because I just could not stop crying. And eventually they put me to bed and [...] I eventually went to sleep. I distinctly remember the next morning... By then I'd obviously stopped crying. And I don't know whether there was some sort of innate... response in me to all this that was happening, and I realised that there was nothing I could do about anything. And crying wasn't going to get me anywhere. [...] I think this is a philosophy I've now had for the rest of my life, that bad things happen and getting oneself into an absolute tizz... doesn't make it any better. It just makes it worse.'

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Here Renate is pictured with her parents and elder sister in May 1939, shortly before she left for England.

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Here Renate is pictured with Mr and Mrs Wheeler in Wiltshire in summer 1939.

Thinking points:

- Why might these two photos might have been taken?
- Does the second photo offer any clues about what Renate's life with Mr and Mrs Wheeler might have been like?

Photos belong to the family estate of Renate Beigel and are copyright of the AJR. You can see more photos and read more about Renate here: <https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/Renate-Beigel>

5. Domestic Workers

One way of gaining entry to Britain was to find employment as a domestic worker. Many women were compelled to seek these positions irrespective of their previous working experience. This self-serving policy of using refugees for menial work has been much criticized as exploitative and demeaning, and there is evidence that domestic workers were often treated poorly by their host families. At the same time, this scheme did allow some Jewish women to escape Nazi persecution. With the outbreak of war, many families employing domestic workers left London, leaving behind refugees with no home and no means to support themselves.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Read these four accounts of female refugees who gained employment as domestic workers in Britain:

Susi Linton (Susi was born in Berlin in 1920, she was an only child and her father organised for her to travel to England as a domestic worker. She left Germany on 17 April 1939):

'I found out that two or three girls were in the same area, refugee girls, working. And we were all in the same boat. They all complained the same as I did, how badly treated they were. We got together on our day off. We used to go to Lyon's Corner House and sat all afternoon with a cup of coffee, crying. [...] I was not frightened of work, I was healthy, I was young, I didn't mind the work, but I [...] objected to the way I was treated.'

<https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/Susi-Linton>

Natalie Huss-Smickler (Natalie was born in Vienna in 1912. Her brother was able to obtain a domestic visa for her parents):

'It was a doctor's house with 23 rooms, including the surgeries. [...] That's what I had to do. And, after seven weeks, my hands were shaking, [...] I couldn't do that. It was such hard work. It was from 8 o'clock in the morning to 11 o'clock at night, with one hour lunch-time and nothing else, so it was very, very hard going. And, I'm sorry to say, I don't know if I should say it, I'm sorry to say, my brother phoned my employer to say that it's such hard, long hours and so on, and she

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said: "Well, if it's too much for her, I send her back to Hitler." True. And I left. I had to leave. My next job was as a nanny with a little child. And there we were friends, they were so kind, they were really friends to me and to my brother, he came to visit, and they helped me to bring my parents over.'



This photo shows Natalie Huss-Smickler with her two brothers in England in 1938.

Photos belong to the family estate of Natalie Huss-Smickler and are copyright of the AJR, you can find our further information about Natalie on the AJR website:

<https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/Natalie-Huss-Smickler>

Gertrude Black (Gertrude was born in East Prussia in 1912, her family moved to Düsseldorf around 1929 following an antisemitic incident. She married in 1937 and fled to England with her husband and their baby daughter):

'The Moncrieffs were unbelievably good. With a tact that really needs remembering. The first day we came and you feel like the last dirt on earth. You have no money; your language is very bad; and you have nobody. You have no doctor; you have no uncle; you have no aunt; you have nobody, in a strange city, in Edinburgh had no relatives [...] and what did they do? She lays the

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

breakfast table for me, my husband and Hannah, who was nine months old, in the lounge, and she lays a table for herself, her husband and the boy in the kitchen. Wonderful! You know, makes you feel like a Mensch again. Wonderful! So they were very, very good to us. And I mean I did the housework for them.'



This photo shows Gertrude Black on her wedding day in 1937 with her husband Julius Schwarz.

Photos belong to the family estate of Gertrude Black and are copyright of the AJR, you can find our further information about Gertrude on the AJR website:

<https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/Gertrude-Black>

Käthe Kupferberg (Käthe arrived in Britain from Leipzig, Germany, in her early twenties):

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

'To add to my woes, [were] the increasingly strenuous tasks I had to perform in the household... I spent my days doing a great deal of hard work and feeling inconsolable. I cursed these rich people who didn't seem to have a shred of feeling or understanding for a single and unhappy woman... My friends and acquaintances from home should have seen me, how I was dressed up and "polished" when guests came to the house... A brown dress with cuffs and a little white apron and a dreadful little cap which I hated – I would have loved to just run away the first time I was made to work in this apparel.' [Translated by Margy Walter, Hochdorf, Germany; qualified translator, member of BDÜ (German Translators' Association).]



This photo shows Käthe Kupferberg and her parents in Germany in 1939.

- (<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/untold-stories-jewish-women-domestic-servants-britain-escape-nazis/>, now part of the Käthe Kupferberg Collection at the Wiener Holocaust Library).

Thinking points:

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

- Students might wish to discuss why some of the refugee women were unhappy despite having found refuge in Britain.
- How might having close family in England have impacted Natalie's experience as a domestic worker?
- Gertrude's phrase 'makes you feel like a Mensch again' might be worth reflecting on.
- How might life have been different for domestic workers like Gertrude who came over with a husband and children?
- Why might a young woman have found it so upsetting to wear the uniform described? Consider this in light of the photo of Käthe with her parents in 1939.
- Consider the following thoughts from Dr Jennifer Craig-Norton on Käthe Kupferberg's account:

'Käthe arrived from Leipzig, Germany, with only a small suitcase. In her diary, written as an extended letter to her family, she recalled all that she had "saved and purchased there on my own, and was sad about losing the fruits of all my labour there, the nice clothes and belongings I had earned myself". Even worse was having "to go to a strange land and start all over again... all seemed lost and forlorn to me". [...]

Käthe Kupferberg's diary, along with hundreds of testimonies, memoirs, letters and other documentation from refugee domestics, shows how much these women wanted to record their experiences as refugees and their feelings about having to become servants in British homes. Yet despite wide interest in the Holocaust, these sources have remained largely unexplored. Very little research has been done on these Jewish refugees and they are nearly absent from the national narratives that have formed around Britain's response to fascism, though they were the largest single group of refugees admitted into the UK in the interwar period.

It is hardly surprising that the refugee domestics failed to garner the same kinds of laudatory accounts that have attached themselves to the Kindertransport and to the refugee academics and scientists who were brought to the UK in the same period. It would have been difficult to claim similar uncomplicated humanitarian motives for a quid pro quo arrangement in which thousands of women were offered rescue, but only on the condition that they labour away in private homes.'⁴

⁴ <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/untold-stories-jewish-women-domestic-servants-britain-escape-nazis/>

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

1786/1/3/4/1

1 Holmbury View
CLAPTON E. 5.

LONDON ENGLAND

24. 2. 39

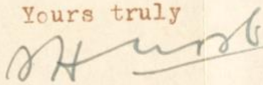
Dear Miss Mandl,

The Refugee committee herein London have given me your name and adress and also various particulars of your qualifications and I understand that you are prepared to come here into domestic service. I am quite willing to engage you provided that you are prepared to carry out the duties required. We are a family of 6 persons, (5 adults and a boy of 12 years.) The work will include a little washing of clothes, cleaning of dishes and general housework. You will have no cooking to do, but there will be light housework on Saturday. You will be assured of a good comfortable home, good outings and will be treated like a member of the family.

I am quite sure that you will be happy here provided that you are perfectly clear in your mind what you will have to do. I am quite willing to assist you if you are prepared to do the rough work.

I have signed the various documents but please write me by return telling what experience you have had in general housework and whether you thaink you will care to work for me.

We all understand Jewish here.

Yours truly

Mrs. S. Hurst.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

This letter is from Mrs S Hurst to Miss Frieda Newton on 24 February 1939 (Wiener Holocaust Library Collections).

Thinking points:

- Ask students to think about the overall tone of the letter. Is it friendly? Welcoming? Demanding?
- Focus on the following phrases with students: 'there will be light housework on Saturday', 'We all understand Jewish here.' (Jews are not allowed to work on Saturdays, so the employer is asking Frieda to violate the Sabbath.) The Wiener Library Archive states that the recipient did not enjoy her time with the family.

6. Kindertransport

Kristallnacht, or the pogroms of 9-10 November 1938, catapulted the plight of the Jews in Nazi territory into international public view. There was an outpouring of popular sympathy, leading to the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany and, from the following month, the Kindertransports. Nearly 10,000 children arrived in Britain on a Kindertransport from Germany and German-occupied territories, roughly half of whom would lose one or both parents. Most children arrived at the port of Harwich, and some were temporarily lodged in the ill-equipped holiday camps nearby during one of the coldest winters on record.

The initial policy of selecting orphans or children whose parents were in concentration camps was quickly abandoned in favour of choosing children whose wealthier backgrounds meant they could be more readily assimilated into British families. There was also a financial element, since a 'guarantee' of £50 was required per child, roughly £2,000 in today's money. Some of the arrivals found loving foster families while others were viewed as domestic servants and treated poorly.

The historian Jennifer Craig-Norton argues that while popular memory views the Kindertransport as a straightforward act of rescue, closer analysis of the historical record shows that children were often treated inconsistently by refugee agencies and some experienced difficulties with settlement.

While it is laudable that Britain saved thousands of children from a bleak future under the Nazis, the enforced separation of children from their parents, thousands of whom would subsequently be murdered, also raises questions about why adults were not allowed to accompany their children and who is considered a 'safe' refugee.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

PRIMARY SOURCES



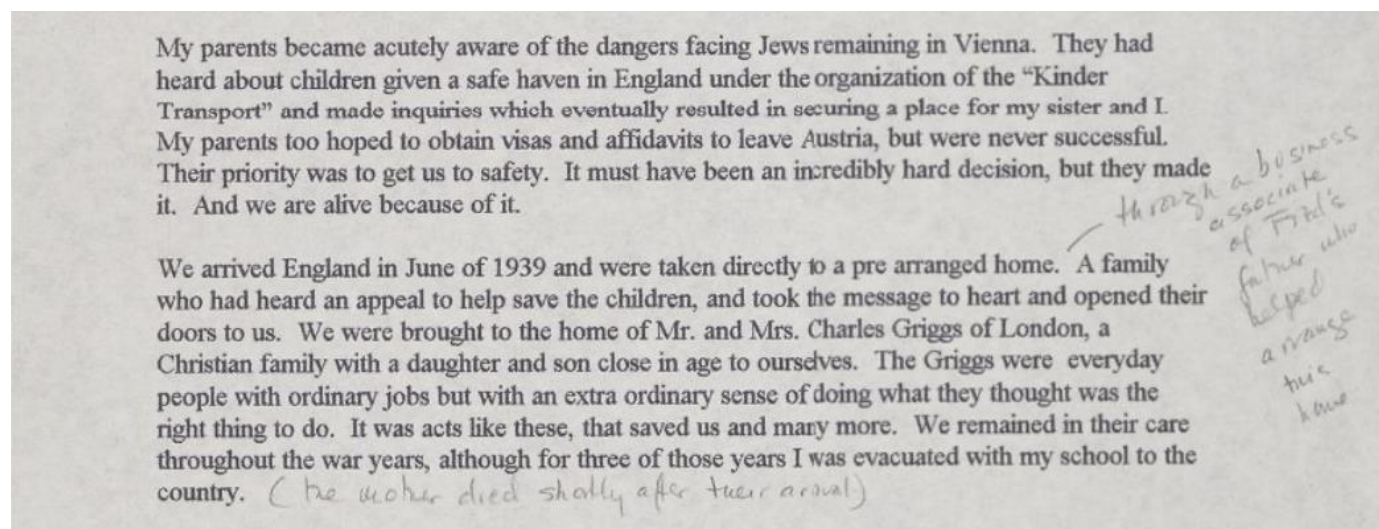
Ruth Traum in May 1939 (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Gift of Alfred Traum.)

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

Thinking points:

Ruth and her brother Alfred left Austria on a Kindertransport in June 1939.

- Ask students to consider why this photograph might have been taken in the previous month?
- To whom might this photograph have belonged?



This extract is taken from the personal account of Alfred Traum (written in c. 1997).

(United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Gift of Alfred Traum. You can find more information about Alfred and see more photos from his life [here](#).)

Thinking points:

Ask students to think about the choices made by Alfred and Ruth's parents. None of the extended Traum family, including Alfred and Ruth's parents, survived the Holocaust.

Some categories of refugees faced multiple relocations (see [section 8](#) below). Alfred and Ruth both experienced this, moving first to England on a Kindertransport before being evacuated to the countryside. We learn from the USHMM website that Alfred found this second relocation positive in some ways because he was no longer a refugee, but one of many evacuees. However, he was not treated well by his second foster family. Ask students to consider the choices made by the families who chose to take in the refugee children. You might like to include more information about Alfred's experience from the [USHMM site](#).

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

One Kindertransportee, Elizabeth Orsten, kept a diary. In an entry from 3 July 1941 she discusses her move from England to Buffalo State, New York. The entry offers an insight into the impression her time in England had left:

'I had learned a great deal in England, first and foremost I had learned English but I had also learned some Latin and had developed my French. I had been taught more graceful movements, better manners and several other subjects. But I had also been ridiculed and hated and that has left a strong impression on my mind. To this day, six months later and I believe it will be for always, I have been afraid of humans I don't want to admit it, but it is true. In my mind I always feel "they don't like me, there's something wrong with me". At the most difficult stage of our growth I was being constantly criticised and I still feel constantly that everyone "weighs" me, and I am afraid. At school, in the street, in church, at home, even when I play with children of only five or six I have that feeling and I cannot conquer it. That was one of the defects of my education, others I will mention later.'

(United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Gift of Elisabeth M. Orsten.)

Thinking points:

- Ask students to think about what this source tells us about life in England for some refugee children and about contemporary attitudes to refugees.

[This short clip](#) from February 1939 shows Jewish refugee children playing in a park in London, playing with dolls, writing letters to relatives and eating soup together. The voiceover says the children are 'part of the Jewish refugee influx which is causing the world with such a ticklish problem', before concluding that 'all people of understanding and sympathy must surely deplore [their circumstances].'

Thinking points:

Ask students to consider the following:

- what is this film trying to achieve?
- Why was it made?
- How are the children presented?

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

[This video](#) offers further background to the Kindertransport, including the personal accounts of two kindertransportees.

Regional links:

Sunderland: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/sunderland-central-railway-station>

Harwich: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/dovercourt-bay-holiday-camp>

Manchester: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/bury-new-road-manchester>

Edinburgh: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/5ae447be-66be-435b-82d8-8dcbbae630f>

Coed-y-bryn: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/bronwydd-castle>

Bradford: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/parkfield-road-jewish-refugees-hostel-bradford>

Belfast: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/jewish-refugee-hostel-belfast>

7. The Kitchener Camp

Following the November 1938 pogroms, thousands of Jewish men were incarcerated in concentration camps. They were released only on the condition that they would leave Nazi occupied territory immediately. The Kitchener Camp rescue operation helped 4,000 Jewish men (and some accompanying women and children) to escape from Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1939 and transmigrate through Britain. The men stayed in a former Army camp near Sandwich, Kent and were supported by the Central British Fund for Germany Jewry to secure visas to migrate elsewhere. This onward migration was fundamental to the scheme, which the British Office approved only on the condition that the refugees did not make Britain their permanent home.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

PRIMARY SOURCES



The image above shows Herbert Finkelstein's passport. Note the Kent County Constabulary's stamp and the wording above the Immigration Officer's stamp: 'Leave to land granted at Dover this day on condition that the holder will emigrate from the United Kingdom on completion of his training.'

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

Home Office No. F 12197

Certificate No. **AZ 22411**

BRITISH NATIONALITY AND STATUS OF ALIENS ACT, 1914

CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION

Whereas **Herbert Finkelstein**

has applied to one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State for a Certificate of Naturalization, alleging with respect to him self 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

Herbert Finkelstein

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 **5th** day of **February, 1947.**

G. H. Oliver.
Under Secretary of State.

HOME OFFICE,
LONDON.

PARTICULARS RELATING TO APPLICANT

Full Name	Herbert FINKELSTEIN.	
Address	"Brynfield", The Walk, Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorganshire.	
Trade or Occupation	Chargehand.	
Place and date of birth	Vienna, Austria.	4th September, 1913.
Nationality	Austrian.	
Single, Married, etc.	Married.	
Name of wife or husband	Erna.	
Names and nationality of parents	Adolf and Helene FINKELSTEIN. (Austrian).	

(For Oath
see overleaf)

"B". THIS is the naturalisation certificate of Herbert Fraser referred to in the Statutory Declaration of Evan Morgan made this 23rd day of February 1948

Before me
[Signature]
A Commissioner for Oaths.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

PELTOURS LTD.
WALTER HOUSE,
52 BEDFORD STREET,
STRAND,
LONDON, W.C.2
TELE. TEM 6141/2

Oath of Allegiance.

I, HERBERT FINKELSTEIN
swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty,
King George the Sixth, His Heirs and Successors, according to law.

(Signature) Herbert Finkelstein

Sworn and subscribed this 14 day of February 1947, before me,

(Signature) [Signature]

Justice of the Peace for—

A Commissioner for Oaths.

Name and Address
(in Block Capitals) 175 High Street
Dowdall's Lane

Unless otherwise indicated hereon, if the Oath of Allegiance is not taken
within one calendar month after the date of this Certificate, the Certificate shall
not take effect.

18 MAR 1947
REGISTERED

Wt 9911 25 bks/5/46 Wt & Sons Ltd 69j/6982—24

This document is Herbert Finkelstein's certificate of British naturalization.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

489
S/c Dated 23rd February 1948.
25/2/48

MR. HERBERT FRASER.

DEED POLL
101
to effectuate change of surname.

6056

"A"

This is the Deed Poll referred to in the Statutory Declaration of Even
Morgen made this 23rd day of February 1948

Before me
[Signature]
A Commissioner for Oaths.

F054

This document shows Herbert Finkelstein's deed poll to effectuate a change of surname. His new name, from February 1948, was Herbert Fraser.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

MEMO	
TO:-	FROM:-
M. H. Finkelstein Esq., Kitchener Camp, hut 8/1, Richborough, NR. SANDWICH. KENT.	FINETEX MANUFACTURING CO. LTD. TREForest ESTATE, PONTYPRIDD, GLAM. 28th December, 1939. Telephone:- Taffs Well 137.

FAF/LN.

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your letter of the 25th inst., and beg to enclose your certificate of Registration together with a Postal Order for £1. You must consider this £1 as a loan and if you work satisfactory we will wash it out, otherwise it will have to be deducted from your wages so come whenever you can.

You had better take a train to Cardiff then go to Park Place where you can catch the Pontypridd bus to the Treforest Estate, getting out at the beginning by the Simmonds Accessories.

As to your wife, after careful consideration I think that it is best to see how you work, if you are satisfactory then we will be pleased to engage your wife, but the matter is not urgent and perhaps it is better to leave this over for say 2 or 3 weeks.

Yours faithfully,
FINETEX MANUFACTURING CO. LTD.
F. A. Finkelstein
Director.

A letter to Herbert Finkelstein from his future employer, Finetex.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period



This photograph shows Herbert and his wife Erna outside Hut 8, Kitchener Camp. Herbert was one of the few refugees at Kitchener Camp who was able to bring his wife along.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

(Photos and documents kindly shared by Robert W. Fraser. Further information about Herbert Finkelstein can be found at: <https://kitchenercamp.co.uk/list-of-names/herbert-finkelstein/>)

Thinking points:

- Encourage students to look closely at the passport, especially the 'Leave to land' stamp. What does this tell us about the conditions attached to this visa? Why did the Kent County Constabulary stamp Herbert's passport the month after his arrival?
- Why might Herbert have changed his name by deed poll? What can we infer from this about his own attitudes and those of his co-workers in Wales? Why might he have done this in 1948?
- Based on the letter, what do you think Finetex's attitudes towards refugees such as Herbert were? Does the company seem helpful or unhelpful, generous or mean, sympathetic or unsympathetic? It is worth mentioning here that Robert W. Fraser, son of the Finkelsteins, informed the Sir Martin Gilbert Learning Centre that "my father only worked there for a year. When the (Jewish) owner sold his share of the business and moved to the USA, the new owners sacked all the migrant workers."
- How might having emigrated together as a married couple have made life easier or harder for the Finkelsteins in Britain?

8. 'Enemy aliens' (detention, internment, deportation)

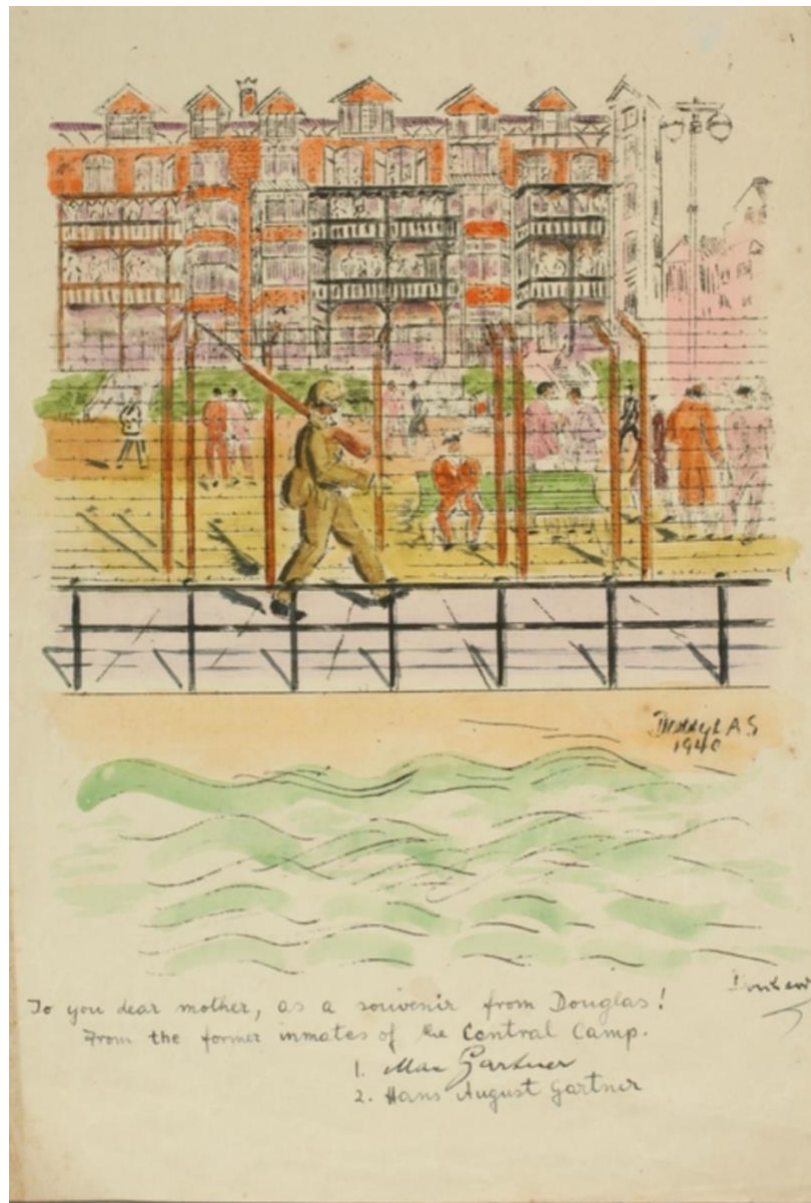
Following the outbreak of the Second World War, refugees from Nazi territories were classed as 'Enemy Aliens,' subject to restricted movements and prohibited from owning items such as radios, cameras, maps and even vehicles. Enemy Aliens were classified according to three categories: A, B and C. Those falling into category A were considered a threat and were interned; those deemed category B were not interned but were subject to restrictions; category C were exempt from both internment and restrictions. Most Jewish refugees were considered category C and acknowledged as genuine refugees from Nazi persecution.

By January 1940, 75,500 enemy aliens had gone before a tribunal, of which 55,600 were refugees. Around 600 people designated category A were interned at this point. The situation changed, however, following the collapse of France and the Low Countries, which caused mass paranoia in Britain. Antisemitism and xenophobia grew, fuelled by the press. The new Churchill government began to move against enemy aliens in May 1940, initially clearing the southern and eastern coasts of refugees, before imposing increasing restrictions on categories B and C. By June 1940, all adult male and female category B and all male category C aliens were interned in various locations, most famously on the Isle of Man. Nearly 28,000 people were interned in total, of which 5,000 refugees were subsequently deported to Canada and Australia, and many were robbed and mistreated during the long journeys. Following a vociferous public backlash, most internees were released in mid 1941.

Internees were forcibly removed from family and friends and lived behind barbed wire for months and years. The historian Rachel Pistol shows in her work how internment initially denied these people the right to fight in the war and caused unnecessary hardships to individuals and families already suffering displacement because of Nazism or inherent societal racism.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

PRIMARY SOURCES



(<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn564326>, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection.
The acquisition of this collection was made possible by the Philip and Janet Levin Foundation)

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

This drawing shows the camp at Douglas, Isle of Man, in 1940. The writing says:

To you dear mother, as a souvenir from Douglas! From the former inmates of the Central Camp.

1. *Max Gartner*
2. *Hans August Gartner*

Thinking points:

- Guide students to consider the contrast between the elegant buildings and the barbed wire, with the armed soldier patrolling the perimeter.
- Why might the brothers have wished to send this to their mother as a 'souvenir'?
- Herbert Finkelstein (see previous section) was not interned as an enemy alien, since he was a worker engaged in what was regarded as a Reserved Occupation. His younger brother was, however, and according to his nephew Robert Fraser, he 'never forgave the British Government for the humiliation'.

Read these three accounts from refugees interned as enemy aliens and think about their experiences.

Ellen Shiffman

'they took us in a place in Derby, where we stayed overnight, and then they took us to Liverpool, Liverpool Lime Street. When we emerged, angry crowds lined the street, because there were the terrible Germans coming out of the Station. And we were marched to the Docks, where they'd opened an old sailor's home, that hadn't been used for five years, and they kept us there overnight. And it was terrible because there was some flooding, and we had filthy dirty mattresses, and there was no food, but oh I forget, as we marched, as we were marched to this place, the local Liverpudlians were throwing stones at us, because they were ignorant, they didn't know, they thought we were Nazis. Anyhow we got to this place, and I must say, there was a policeman there, a very kind policeman, and he went home, I'll never forget that, and brought me a piece of apple pie that his wife had baked, he felt so sorry for me. And the next day we were put on a boat to the Isle of Man.'

<https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/Ellen-Shiffman>

Walter Brunner

'The Isle of Man was really very good, we were 29 people in our house. We were left in peace. There was no shortage of food, Isle of Man kippers were very good. We got sick of them because we had them every day. Smoked kippers, you know what they are? And there was nothing wrong, the sun was shining and really ... if we wouldn't have been parted from our family it was almost like a holiday camp. Well, we cooked ourselves. We got flour and eggs and so on and we had to cook ourselves. I don't mean each person, but one was cooking for the whole household, for everybody, we had 29 people in the house, we sat together, ate together. There were no complaints whatsoever, in actual fact I think, people were taken out to pictures once in four weeks. I learnt here tailoring to make ladies coats and costumes.'

<https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/Walter-Brunner>

Fred Stern

'The police came on the 13th of May- 12th of May rather, 12th of May, 1940... and... they said, "We have to take you in for the duration of the war." I said, "Why?" "Well, because you are a - a foreign immigrant. You are actually a member of, of, of our... opponents, the Germans and the Austrians." I said, "Yes, but I'm a Jew so that therefore that doesn't exist. I'm here because I'm a Jew, and because of the fact that I'm not one of them." That wasn't good enough. That just wasn't good enough. He took me in. I said, "My mother and father are in Bournemouth, and I would like to phone them- what's happening to me." "Well you can't." They did not let me talk to my parents. My parents only found out what happened to me afterwards when I wasn't communicating with them they obviously went to the hostel and found out. That all of us were interned. And that's what they called it, 'an internment'.'

<https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk/RefugeeVoices/Fred-Stern>

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period



This photo shows enemy aliens entering the camp in Douglas, Isle of Man. (© IWM HU 36122)

Thinking points:

- Ask students to consider how these Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution might they have felt about being rounded up and interned in England?
- Why might the Isle of Man have been chosen to intern enemy aliens?
- [This video](#) offers a helpful overview of life on the Isle of Man before, during and after the period of the internment camps.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

Regional links:

Torquay: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/dixon-s-holiday-camp-paignton>

York: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/york-racecourse>

Edinburgh: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk/map/records/donaldson-school>

Glossary

Alien	Official wording for someone from a foreign country, i.e., outside Britain.
Allied governments	The governments (Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, the United States which opposed the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) in the Second World War.
<i>Anschluss</i>	The annexation of Austria into the German Reich on 13 March 1938.
Antisemitism	Prejudice towards or hatred of Jews.
Assimilated	To become part of a different group, or largely accepted by or indistinguishable from the majority population.
Concentration camp	A place in which political prisoners and persecuted minorities are imprisoned with inadequate space and provisions. Often prisoners in Nazi concentration camps were made to do forced labour and many were subsequently sent to death camps.
Cosmopolitan	Worldly, sophisticated, exposed to different cultures.
Deported	Expelled from a country, usually only used to refer to foreigners.
Domestic workers	Jewish women who were granted entry into Britain on the condition that they could only do housework. This was one way in which Jewish refugees escaped persecution.
Economic depression	Also known as 'the Great Depression', 'the Great Slump'. In 1930s Britain, there was a period of mass unemployment, particularly among industrial areas in northern England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Many families struggled financially and relied on government support.
Enemy nationals	Those people who were citizens of a foreign nation with which Great Britain was at war.
Holocaust	The mass murder of approximately 6 million Jews during World War Two by the Nazis and their collaborators.
Immigration	Coming to live in a foreign country.
Interned	Imprisoned.
<i>Judenvermögensabgabe</i>	A tax on Jewish wealth levied by the Nazis on Jews trying to leave Nazi territory.

Jewish migration to Britain during the Nazi period

Kindertransport	The rescue operation to evacuate approximately 10,000 Jewish children from Germany and German-occupied territory to Great Britain between 1938 and 1940.
Kitchener Camp	A disused Army Camp in Kent where 4,000 Jewish men from Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia were able to stay before finding permanent homes elsewhere.
<i>Kristallnacht</i>	Also known as 'Crystal Night', 'Night of Broken Glass', 'Night of Crystal', 'November Pogroms'. The night of 9–10 November 1938, when Jewish people and property were attacked by German Nazis.
Levy	A tax or fine.
Migration	Movement from one region or country to another.
Persecution	Oppression and ill-treatment based on race, political or religious affiliations.
Pogrom	An organised massacre of an ethnic group, usually referring to Jews.
Quaker	A member of the Religious Society of Friends, a Christian movement strongly opposed to violence and war.
Refugee	A person forced to leave their country to escape war, persecution or natural disaster.
<i>Reich</i>	Mainly used to refer to Germany during the period of Nazi control (1933–1945).
<i>Reichsfluchtsteuer</i>	A tax to leave the Reich, another way in which Nazis exploited and profited from those desperate to emigrate. This tax meant poorer people were often unable to escape persecution.
<i>Reichsmarks</i>	The currency in Germany from 1924 to 1948.
Visa	A formal confirmation allowing the holder to enter, leave or stay in a country for a specific amount of time.
Xenophobia	Prejudice towards or hatred of foreigners.

Suggested reading

Cesarani, David, and Tony Kushner, eds. *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain*. London: F. Cass, 1993.

Craig-Norton, Jennifer. “‘We Had the Most Marvellous Time’: Jewish Refugee Domestic’s Narratives of Internment in Britain during the Second World War”. *Jewish Historical Studies* 52, no. 1 (2021): 37–55. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.jhs.2021v52.004>.

Craig-Norton. ‘Refugees at the Margins: Jewish Domestic’s in Britain 1938-1945’. *Shofar (West Lafayette, Ind.)* 37, no. 3 (2019): 295-. <https://doi.org/10.5703/shofar.37.3.0295>.

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Helpful websites

Association of Jewish Refugees, Refugee Voices: <https://www.ajrrefugeevoices.org.uk>

The Jewish Museum: <https://jewishmuseum.org.uk>

Kitchener Camp: <https://kitchenercamp.co.uk>

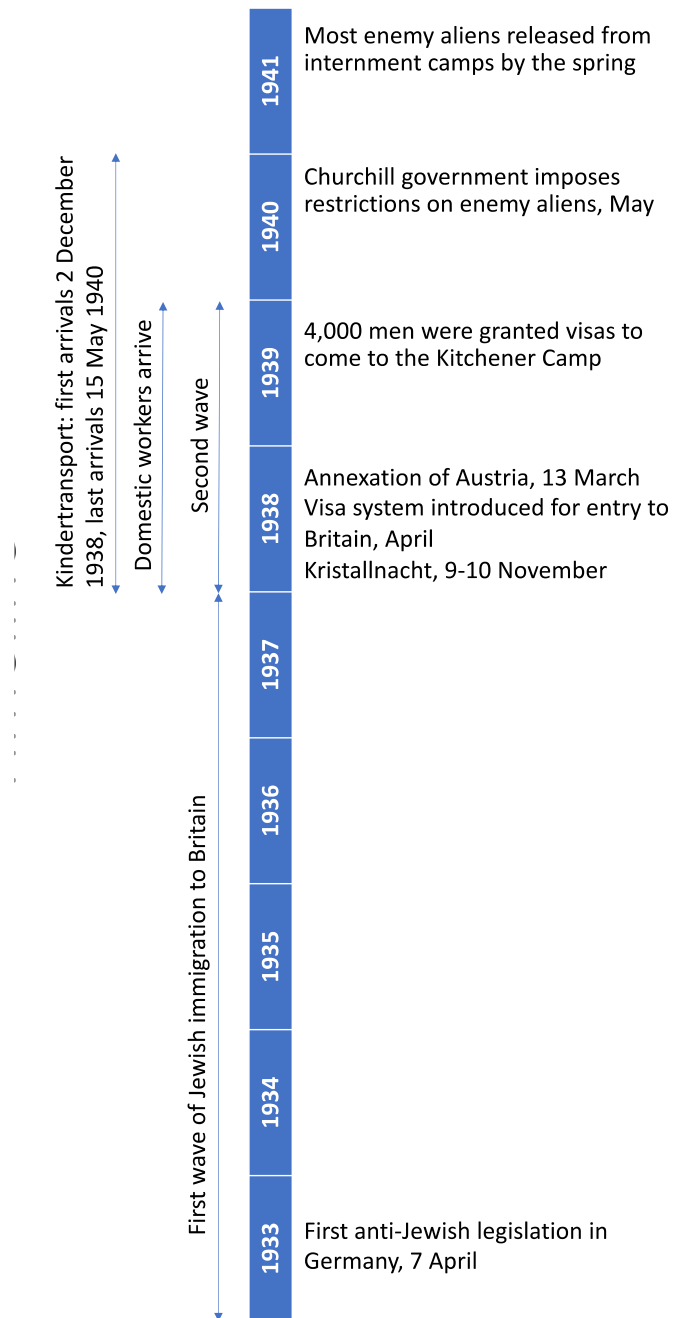
The Wiener Holocaust Library: <https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org>

UK Holocaust map: <https://www.ukholocaustmap.org.uk>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: <https://www.ushmm.org>

Yad Vashem: <https://www.yadvashem.org>

Timeline



[An editable PPT version of this is available]