

GUILT THAT THEY SURVIVED: MEMORIES OF JEWISH WOMEN WHO ARRIVED IN AUSTRALIA IN THE LATE 1930s

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This article is part of a wider study of migrant women's memories and the gender implications of immigration and refugee policies in twentieth century Australia. The aim of this larger project is to examine issues of gender equity, especially in terms of policy outcomes for individual women. In a series of interviews called 'Migrant Women Speak', the nexus between stated official policies and the lived experiences of female migrants and refugees is gradually being documented. As time is running out to record the life histories of those who came to Australia in the early years of this century, in the first instance, women who arrived in Australia prior to the Second World War, either as migrants or refugees, are being interviewed. In this paper the focus is on just one part of the broader study, Jewish refugee women who emigrated to Australia from Europe in 1938 and 1939.

Most of these women are now well into their seventies, with some much older still, and anxious to tell their stories. Their testimonies will complement similar interviews being conducted elsewhere in the world on survival strategies in response to the huge global resurgence of interest in the Holocaust. Although only a small number of interviews in this category have so far been conducted and transcribed, they are already challenging and enriching existing published work in a number of areas. These include growing up Jewish in a Nazi state, the role of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society (AJWS) and other refugee-sponsoring bodies, the available opportunities to escape from Nazi Germany, and the attitudes of authorities to refugees on their arrival in Australian ports just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

The decade of the 1930s is not one that has figured prominently in histories of Australian immigration. As a result of depressed economic conditions, all government assistance schemes ceased in 1930 except in a few exceptional circumstances. In addition, disincentives, such as the requirement for £500 landing money, were imposed upon non-British European immigrants without friends or relatives in Australia to act as guarantors. For a short period at the beginning of the decade, more people actually left Australia than arrived. Together with fears of a declining birth rate, these developments led to a prolonged population debate in academic journals and the contemporary press. It was not until 1936 when economic conditions improved that passage assistance was gradually reintroduced, and 1938 before immigration was actively encouraged. A short-lived revival of assisted British immigration followed. Acknowledging that British immigration was in decline, the Lyons

government reduced the landing money requirement for non-British Europeans to £50 for those with guarantors and £200 for those without.²

At the same time there was international pressure on various governments, including the Australian government, to accept increasing numbers of refugees fleeing Adolf Hitler's repressive policies in Europe. This was to have important repercussions for the Australian immigrant intake and the traditional balance between British and non-British settlers. The Jewish women who are central to this study all arrived in the two years prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. Some were assisted and supported in various ways by governments, non-government bodies and individuals, while others made their own way. Many were sponsored by the recently formed AJWS, which obtained the landing permits, organised their passage to Australia, met the newcomers on arrival, and arranged accommodation and employment.³

While immigration and refugee experiences are in many ways closely related, there are also important differences, one of the most notable being the trauma suffered by the majority of refugees. Rarely is relocation a free choice for refugees; rarely is there an opportunity to consider the comparative advantages of various destinations; rarely is there time for adequate preparation. The future for refugees depends primarily upon which country will accept them. While global movements of people are never a uniform flow, influenced as they are by changing circumstances in the homeland or destination, refugee movements come in pronounced waves in response to particular crises: persecution, war, political upheaval, or environmental disaster.

The Australian federal government in the 1930s had no separate refugee policy. It dealt with the refugee crisis within the context of immigration policy, in general believing that different nationalities, and religious and political groups had to be carefully balanced within the population.⁴ This attitude influenced and constrained their overall response. In addition, Australian immigration officials had traditionally discriminated against Jews, especially Polish Jews, although this was not always stated overtly. In June 1938, a quota of 3600 refugees was introduced on top of the 1500 nominated Jewish immigrants per annum. European Jews had to satisfy all the existing requirements for non-British immigrants with regard to health, character, and either landing money or guarantors in Australia. In July 1938, an international conference was held at Evian-les-Bains in France to discuss possible solutions to the refugee problem. The Australian delegate, Lieutenant Colonel T.W. White, Federal Minister for Trade and Customs, argued that Australia was unable to extend the existing quota, in spite of the fact that the country at the time was actively seeking an increased population. White explained that as Australia was predominantly British, there was no need to import a racial problem by encouraging large-scale 'foreign' migration while there were British settlers available.⁵

Over the following months, the landing money requirement for Jews was increased to £1000 and later £3000. For all other non-British Europeans without Australian guarantors, it remained at the previous figure of £200. The possession of this landing money and the employment prospects of the applicant

became the primary criteria for selection. Clearly, this policy was discriminatory in relation to Jews. In December 1938, the Minister of the Interior, John McEwen, announced that over the next three years Australia would accept 15,000 refugees, or 5000 per annum, of whom 80 per cent would be Jewish. This was only half the number suggested some months earlier by S.M. Bruce, Australian High Commissioner in London and, it has been argued, would actually reduce slightly the number of Jewish refugees and immigrants (5100 per annum) already being accepted under the June 1938 quota.⁶ McEwen justified the lower figure on the grounds that existing living standards had to be maintained and the interests of refugees had to be reconciled with those of other potential immigrants (namely British) and Australian residents.⁷ As assimilation was then the main goal of immigration policy, the number of Jews to be admitted was strictly limited.⁸ The desire for assimilation and the avoidance of 'alien blocs' were also the main reasons behind the unfavourable response by state and federal governments to various schemes put forward during the interwar period to establish Jewish colonies in Australia.⁹ After the end of 1938, it became much more difficult for Jews to enter Australia. Owing to the outbreak of war less than half of the 15,000 actually arrived: 1556 in 1938 and 5080 in 1939.¹⁰

There has been considerable published material on general government policy regarding Jewish and refugee immigration, both internationally and to Australia, before, during and after the Second World War.¹¹ However, despite this extensive literature, there has been little published about the personal experiences of individual Jewish refugee women who migrated to Australia before the war. A few autobiographies appear as brief sketches in larger works about the period but such accounts rarely focus on the details of immigration. Two videos on this theme, however, have been released. The first, *Bitter Herbs and Honey* (1996), records the reminiscences of European Jews who came to Australia before the war. The second, *Jewish Memories of Wartime: Five Victorian Stories* (1995), filmed by Ruth Goldlust at the Makor Jewish Community Library in South Caulfield, includes interviews of a few who escaped from Europe in the late 1930s and settled in Victoria. In addition, a film called *To the End of the Earth* on related themes was produced by Melissa Rymer for the 'People of the Precious Legacy' exhibition held at the Jewish Museum of Australia in St Kilda in 1999.¹²

Archival material about the specific experiences of Jewish refugee women is also scarce, particularly from the pre-Second World War period. Records generally relate to men's experiences, both as refugees and as members of organisations in Australia responsible for the sponsorship of Jews from Europe. And while there is documentation on the role of the National Council of Jewish Women in providing assistance to female refugees, it is limited and somewhat eclipsed by the information available on male-controlled bodies, such as the AJWS. The Shoah Foundation, based in the United States, has interviewed some 2500 Jewish people in Australia who were affected by the Nuremberg Laws, which from 1935 onwards deprived German Jews of many civil rights. The vast majority of these interviews were carried out with people

who lived through the Holocaust, although there are some recorded with women who escaped it. Most of these, however, concentrate on the lives of these women prior to migration and the trauma leading to their flight rather than on the immigration experience itself.

This specific study focuses particularly on those who emigrated before the war and thus physically escaped the Holocaust. Most arrived during the period described above from mid-1938 to the outbreak of hostilities when quotas for Jews were in place. Several of the women in question have commented that, as their experiences paled in comparison with those who did not make it out before the war, their stories are deemed by others and perhaps seen by themselves, as less important or less interesting. They have been reluctant to talk about what they went through, as any hardships they endured appear trivial when compared with the suffering of those who experienced major trauma. Their spoken words reveal the hurt that they too have felt and the feeling of guilt that they survived while other members of their families and many of their friends and acquaintances did not. Thus, for some, these personal testimonies have a therapeutic value, retrieving for these elderly women an element of their past lives previously denied them. Pseudonyms have been used in the interview excerpts given below.

Miriam was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1923.¹³ Her father was Polish and her mother Russian, both Jewish. Her father was a broker on the cotton exchange and, as a foreign national, was able to continue in his profession until 1938 and enjoy certain privileges not available to other Jews living in Germany at the time. The family was middle class, well educated and comfortably situated. Miriam was popular at school until her early teens when a new girl discovered that she was Jewish and encouraged other girls at the school, one by one, to ostracise Miriam, arguing that it was their patriotic duty to do so. As anti-Jewish measures intensified from the mid-1930s, the teachers also excluded her from certain activities and made anti-Semitic remarks. Miriam was a keen piano player and each Friday the best musicians amongst the pupils would perform at the school assembly. When it was her turn to play one week, the music teacher announced loudly before the whole gathering, 'No, we don't need you any more, Miriam. We don't want Jewish children to play for us any more.' Miriam distinctly remembers thousands of children staring at her, although she knows that in reality it could only have been a couple of hundred. This precipitated a series of panic attacks that developed into agoraphobia, a morbid dread of public or open places. Within a short time, she could not walk beyond a certain point on the way to school and eventually withdrew, continuing her education at home with a private tutor.

Miriam testifies that on 31 October 1938 the government decreed that any Polish residents in Germany who did not return to Poland would lose their nationality. She remembers her family being arrested on 28 October, along with many others, and told to pack overnight bags. They stayed one night in prison and the following morning were put on a train to the Polish border and deported. Five months later, an uncle in Hamburg gained permission to go to Bremen and pack up their belongings. He revealed that, although the family

apartment had been sealed, their half-eaten dinner from the night of their detention was still on the table. In July 1939, after eight and a half months of living in reduced circumstances in Lodz, they were able to arrange a passage to Australia on a freighter leaving from Hamburg.

When questioned about the migration experience itself, Miriam recalls that, as a result of the growing anti-Semitism, her father had begun preparations to leave through contacts who had agreed to act as guarantors both in England and Australia. He had also applied to the United States, but the Polish national quota was already full and they could not be granted entry until 1946. Their fate may have been very different had they waited until then. The family had the landing money for Australia and their sponsor's nephew later became Miriam's husband. At the time she had no part in the decision regarding their destination; in fact, she had hated the idea of going to Australia. Her preference was for Palestine. While this option may have been open to her as a young girl of sixteen and a member of a Zionist youth group, her parents were obviously unwilling to break up the family. They themselves had not considered Palestine, since by the time they first thought about emigrating, there were currency regulations in force and it was impossible to leave the country.

Deborah, born in Leipzig in 1925, was the daughter of a middle-class company manager.¹⁴ She recalls a happy, almost idyllic, early childhood. She remembers the change of atmosphere in Germany in the early 1930s with the coming to power of Hitler and the beginnings of the Hitler Youth Movement. At the time school uniforms were not generally worn and she remembers the popularity amongst the girls of the white blouses, black tie with brown leather knot, black skirt, and beautiful brown suede jackets with their armband and swastika insignia. At first the movement seemed apolitical — just singing, marching and camping — and she expected to join along with her friends. However, because of some Jewish background on one side of her family she was prohibited from doing so, despite the fact that her parents were Lutheran and she had been both christened and confirmed. The issue, she explains, was a racial rather than a religious one. She describes her position as of mixed race or *mischling*, her mother Jewish, her father Christian, though neither practising. While she had never before seen herself as a Jew, nor did the family consider themselves Jewish, they were aware that they would now be targeted.

Deborah's father lost his position as managing director in 1935. All workers at the time were required to belong to a national trade union but because of his 'impure' blood he was not permitted to become a member. Owing to his long-standing and diligent work history, his company arranged for his transfer to Potsdam and he was able to 'retire' at only forty-nine years of age. The company continued to pay him a salary, which allowed the family to live, at least temporarily, much as they had done. It was evident to her father, however, that urgent measures had to be taken if they were to avoid persecution. He made desperate attempts to emigrate both to South Africa and Argentina but the response was negative; it seemed that no one wanted a man of nearly fifty years of age with school-aged children. Finally, the Australian government granted him an entry permit. He left Germany on 19 August 1938 on the *ms*

Wuppertal, a small German cargo ship, leaving from Bremen. The family was to follow later on the same ship as soon as he obtained satisfactory employment. His former company paid all expenses, including passage costs and landing money.

Deborah recalls the gradual restrictions placed on Jews in Germany, for example, their prohibition from public places such as swimming pools and theatres. A particularly distressing occasion for her occurred in mid-November 1938, three months after her father had left Germany and during the time the family was packing to join him. Shortly after *Kristallnacht* on 9 November, she was called in by her headmistress and informed gently that the government had forbidden non-Aryan students to remain at non-Jewish schools. Although she had only another week to go, her departure was abrupt and bitter. That afternoon a succession of girls, parents and teachers came to their apartment to bid the family farewell. They left the country later that month. On her passport Deborah's name was changed to Sarah, so that she could be identified as Jewish. This was a particular requirement of the German authorities, although Deborah had some choice as to what name she was given. Their passports also had a 'J' on them for the same reason. Their emigration, however, did not involve any organisational sponsorship, nor at the time of their departure were there any restrictions placed on what they could take with them.

Ula worked in an office within a department store ('like David Jones') in Berlin until December 1938, at which time all Jews, including her English boss Wilfred Israel, had to leave the shop.¹⁵ Ula simply states that after *Kristallnacht* you knew that, as a Jew, you had to get out. Her entire family was keen to leave but her locksmith father was deaf from birth and therefore not accepted by the United States. Ula applied to go to South America but no countries there would take her as she was too young and on her own. She then received an offer from Richard (Dick) Latham, son of Sir John Latham, Victoria's Chief Justice, to go to Australia, which she first refused because it was too far away. Dick Latham, then teaching at Oxford and practising law, was a friend of Wilfred Israel who wanted Ula in a safe place. At the time, Sir John and Lady Latham were looking for a housekeeper and companion for Dick's sister, born in 1911 and only a few years older than Ula. Consequently, in February 1939 at the age of twenty-three, Ula left for Australia.

Miriam's family gained permission to travel from Lodz in Poland to Hamburg by train on condition that they remained there for a limited period only, at most a few weeks. After leaving Hamburg their freighter, the *ss Stassfurt*, called at Bremen where their belongings were loaded on board although they had no access to them during the voyage. On the ship were twelve other passengers — eleven Jewish refugees including a young girl travelling on her brother's papers, and an Englishman who had embarked at Antwerp — and thirty or forty German crew members. The ship, Miriam remembers, was quite luxurious, and had large and beautiful cabins with wood panelling. They arrived in Australia via the Cape of Good Hope on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War.

Deborah also has fond memories of the actual journey to Australia. Travelling on the same German cargo ship as her father had done some months earlier, the family was warmly welcomed by his friend the captain. They had a spacious and comfortable cabin, sat at the captain's table, and were taken sightseeing in the captain's car at all ports of call. From Bremen, the ship called at Antwerp and Amsterdam, then Morocco, the Canary Islands and finally Port Pirie, Adelaide and Melbourne. There were again only about a dozen passengers on board and Deborah recalls celebrating Christmas and New Year's Eve on the ship in the traditional German manner. Altogether the journey took seven weeks.

Ula, travelling as a young single woman, found the journey more difficult. As Dick Latham had suggested that she come to London a week before the ship sailed and enjoy a few days of freedom, she was to travel to Australia via England. The passport office in Berlin, however, withheld her passport (deliberately, she maintains) until just two days before the ship's date of departure. Ula had planned to go via Holland to see some old friends, knowing that it would be for the last time, but her mother feared that at the border crossing she would be strip-searched. Thus, with the assistance of an uncle, she took an alternative route from Essen. The train was very late; it was February, bitterly cold, with snow and ice on the line. She had to wait on the station platform as Jews were not allowed in the waiting rooms. When the train finally arrived, Ula tried to get a cup of coffee and was told, 'No, not for Jews.'

At the border the authorities were calculatingly slow going through the belongings of the passengers, who would have had nowhere to go had the train left without them as it was the middle of the night. Ula had twenty-five marks with her but as she was only allowed to take ten out of Germany, she furiously flung the rest over a small bridge onto the train line rather than give it to the Nazis. Others in the queue behind her followed her lead. Fortunately at the last moment in London, her mother was able to send her, directly through the shipping line, some *boatgeld* (money to have on board ship) which she had not been permitted to have earlier. As for her visa, passage costs and landing money, these had all been arranged for and paid by the Lathams.

Ula travelled on a passenger ship, one of the P&O Orford Line, together with a few hundred refugees. She kept her passport, visa, medical certificate and landing money inside her girdle, which she took to bed with her while on board. The journey took five and a half weeks via Naples, Marseilles, then through the Suez Canal to Colombo, Fremantle, Adelaide and Melbourne.

Deborah's memories of her arrival in Australia at the age of fourteen are poignant; it was shortly after Black Friday, 13 January 1939. As the ship docked in Adelaide, a pungent though oddly pleasant scent of burning gum trees drifted towards her across the water. She remembers a continent on fire, a strange and unforgettable sight, and the joyful reunion with her father, the only person on the wharf as they berthed at Station Pier on 21 January 1939.

When Ula's ship docked in Fremantle, she remembers looking down on all the corrugated iron roofs and being horrified at how forlorn everything

seemed. She recalls that when she was feeling at her most homesick, a huge basket of food was delivered to her cabin, a welcoming gift from the Lathams. On her arrival in Adelaide the following Saturday morning, members of the Jewish community met the ship and took some of the passengers to synagogue and to a special luncheon. Before disembarking, she remembers being asked by immigration officials to spread out her fingers so that they could check whether or not she had skin trouble. Later, when they sailed into Port Phillip Bay, an Englishman on the deck pointed out the various Melbourne suburbs to her: 'That is Brighton and that is St Kilda where you will live'. Conscious that she was already being stereotyped, she was most happy to be able to reply, 'I live in Armadale, not St Kilda'. When they docked at Station Pier, Sir John Latham's private secretary arrived to say hello and let her know that Lady Latham would come the following morning to collect her. On the drive to Armadale the next day, Ula particularly remembers the beauty of St Kilda Road, then bordered with palm trees, and the luxury of the Lathams' big Buick.

Miriam's arrival in Australia was perhaps the most eventful of the three described here. After coming through the Heads in Port Phillip Bay, the local pilot came on board and had a discussion with the captain. When he departed, the ship immediately changed course. It was not announced until the following morning that England and Australia had just declared war on Germany, and as a result they had been told they could not land. The German authorities did not want their ships caught in enemy territory and the captain had been instructed to make for Montevideo in Uruguay, a neutral port, or to scuttle the ship. The crew painted everything grey so that the whole ship was camouflaged but as they had insufficient coal on board to get to their proposed destination, they decided to scuttle the ship off the West Australian coast and go down with her. In the meantime, however, they were caught in a violent storm while in traditionally unnavigable waters. Miraculously, they survived although most of what was on the ship was destroyed. Having come through that grave experience, the crew accepted that it was their destiny to continue. Making what repairs they could, they proceeded to the coast of Java, where they anchored three nautical miles out to sea in extra-territorial waters.

From this time onwards the passengers were held as hostages, although Miriam's father was allowed off the ship to go to hospital as he had developed a severe kidney infection. The Englishman who had boarded in Antwerp was also permitted to disembark. The Governor of Batavia, with whom Miriam's family had connections, offered to use his influence to get the remaining refugees off the ship. Eventually they were released and were able to arrange for passages to Australia on a cruise ship returning to Perth, and thence to Melbourne a week later on a coastal liner.

On arrival in Melbourne, they were met both by their original sponsors and AJWS representatives and were able to procure the landing money they were required to have in order to come to Australia. The AJWS helped find factory and office jobs for Miriam and her older sister while her mother ran a boarding house and her father went into the insurance business. They were sufficiently fluent in English not to be disadvantaged. Following the German

invasion of the Netherlands, the ships in the previously neutral Indonesian ports were all taken into custody. This meant that the family's luggage was dumped on the wharf and remained there throughout the next rainy season. Although it was later recovered and sent on to Australia, all the wooden furniture they had brought with them had rotted. Luckily, their other belongings were largely intact.

Unlike Miriam and her family, Deborah spoke minimal English on arrival in Australia. Fortunately, her parents were more fluent but all had distinct and recognisable German accents. On 25 April 1939, three months after their arrival, her father, who had been an officer in World War I and subsequently decorated, was invited by the local mayor to attend the Anzac Day service. The following day the newspapers printed an article headed 'The Man with the Iron Cross', declaring how happy the Australian people were to welcome a former enemy as a loyal citizen of their country. Once war broke out, however, they were subject to the restrictions placed on all foreigners and Deborah's family suffered, as did many others of German descent in Australia. They had to report to the local police station on a weekly basis, hand in cameras and any weapons they possessed (in their case, only an old airgun) for the duration of the war, and obtain permission to go outside the boundaries of their suburb. Deborah had to carry an ID card, which enabled her to travel to school and later to work in the city. Even going to cadet balls required a special letter from the police stationed close by, who would allow her to type it out for them to sign. As 'enemy aliens', her father lost his branch managerial position and she was unable to undertake teacher training or sit for a university scholarship. Despite her excellent school records, Deborah's foreign sounding surname made it difficult for her to get a job; she finally obtained a position in the office of her father's employers. Later she partly fulfilled her career ambitions by securing a part-time night job teaching German at the Berlitz School of Languages. In 1945, at the age of nineteen, she married a Jewish man from a similar background who had come to Australia in 1940 on the *Dunera*. Although her father had not been interned during the war, her husband had been, first in Great Britain and then again in Australia. On his release, he was required to carry out menial duties in the 8th Labour Corps [Employment Company].¹⁶ It was not until after the war that the couple was able to become naturalised citizens.

Ula remained for two years as companion to the Lathams, looking after the house and answering the telephone, and found her job to be pleasant enough. Once the war broke out, her letters to her family were intercepted by the censors and at times she was subject to racist comments on trams and experienced resentment from the established Jewish community. On leaving the Lathams' employ, she worked for five years at the Jewish refugee children's home in Maleela Avenue, Balwyn, funded by the AJWS. At the home there were some twenty children, aged between nine and thirteen, who had come out as a group hoping that their parents might join them after the war; for most this was not to be.

For refugees to be accepted into Australia, they had to be in perfect health, reasonably wealthy and perceived as readily employable. As age was also an important selection criterion, many older people, including Deborah's two grandmothers, her aunts and uncles who were over fifty, and a cousin who was disabled, were unable to leave and ultimately did not survive. Another of Deborah's cousins came to Australia at the age of nine on a children's transport in 1939 sponsored by the AJWS, and an uncle made it to Venezuela via Shanghai.

Most of Ula's family did not see the end of the war. She thought she would have time to get her parents and brother out of Germany and had all the papers for the Immigration Department by August 1939 but 'the war came too early'. She recalls that Dick Latham and Wilfred Israel, working from England and Portugal, got quite a few other people out of Germany but neither of them survived the war: Wilfred Israel was on Flight 777 when it was shot down, a plane on which the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, was thought to be travelling; and Latham's AIF aeroplane failed to return from a flight over the Norwegian coast on 15 April 1943.¹⁷

For many years, Deborah has enjoyed an engrossing and fulfilling career as an English teacher to newly arrived migrants. She now identifies herself as Australian and loves Australia.

Miriam, now seventy-seven, has lived her whole life in Australia and sees herself as Australian, despite her original opposition to the move and her difficult early years here. When she travels to Europe, however, she still feels at home there. For many years though she had not wanted to have anything to do with German things but is now sorry not to have taught her children German. Yet she resents always being asked where she is from because of her accent, and finds it difficult to make people here understand that, although she was born in Germany, she is actually Polish.

Ula applied for Australian citizenship as soon as she could: she wanted to be Australian. She liked it here 'but there was that other pull about the family – what are they doing, are they making it, have they taken them away? — and that was always there which didn't allow you to enjoy it'. She has never had any desire to go back to Germany although she did return on one occasion only to find that there was nobody left of the family, 'no uncle, no aunt, no nothing'. One friend of her parents was still living there and 'as I saw her, there was a glass wall between us because she wasn't Jewish and so she stayed alive'. When asked if many Jewish people who did get out before the war had a guilt of their own that they survived, she answered, 'Oh yes. And you live with that.'

This is but a small taste of the richness of the material being documented. Owing to the relatively few interviews conducted to date, no over-riding generalisations are yet possible. Rather, they emphasise the diversity of experiences of migrant and refugee women arriving in Australia in the immediate pre-Second World War period, as at any other time. Nonetheless, some common themes are emerging:

- Those so far interviewed seem to be predominantly from middle-class backgrounds.
- Most emigrated because of the growing anti-Semitism and increasing inability to earn their own livelihoods.
- While they had some difficulty in arranging their escape from Nazi-controlled Europe, once accepted by the Australian authorities they seemed to have little trouble in getting passages on ships out of Europe in the late 1930s.
- People over fifty, the aged and the disabled were rarely accepted as they were seen to be unemployable. This reinforces that fact that the Australian government of the time applied general immigration selection criteria to refugees, rather than formulating a separate humanitarian refugee policy.
- All those interviewed tried to emigrate to other countries other than Australia which was not their first choice of destination. This was because of its distance from Europe, their lack of knowledge about it and the expense involved.
- For most, the actual voyage to Australia was enjoyable and several travelled first class. They did this even if it meant borrowing considerable sums of money so that they could maintain their past standards of living.
- Contrary to expectations, a significant number were not aided by international refugee organisations or welfare societies, but by individual family or business contacts.
- Usually they spoke minimal or no English on arrival.
- Many Jews who escaped Nazi rule in the late 1930s were then persecuted in various ways in Australia during the war for being German or German-speaking.

I would be delighted to hear from any Jewish women who arrived in Australia from Europe in 1938 or 1939 and who would be willing to participate in this project.

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NOTES

- 1 I gratefully acknowledge the research assistance of Jane Yule in this project.
- 2 See Michele Langfield, '“To Restore British Migration”: The Population Debates of the 1930s in Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 41, no. 3, December 1995, pp. 408-19.
- 3 See Malcolm J. Turnbull, *Safe Haven. Records of the Jewish Experience in Australia*, Research Guide Number 12, National Archives of Australia (NAA), Commonwealth of Australia, 1999, p. 19.

- 4 Paul R. Bartrop, 'The Australian Government's "Liberalisation" of Refugee Immigration Policy in 1938: Fact or Myth?' *Menorah* (Australian Journal of Jewish Studies), vol. 2, no. 1 June 1988, pp. 69, 73.
- 5 White's speech is reproduced in Department of the Interior II Correspondence Files, Class 3, 'European Migrants, 1939-50', NAA, CRS A434, item 50/3/41837 and in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 & 7 July 1938; Suzanne D. Rutland, 'Australian Government Policies to Refugee Migration 1933-39', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 69, no. 4, March 1984, p. 228; Michael Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees, 1933-1948*, Croom Helm, Sydney, 1985, p. 130; David J. Benjamin, 'Australia and the Evian Conference', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. 5, no. 5, 1961, pp. 216-33 and John Lack & Jacqueline Templeton, *Sources of Australian Immigration History, vol. 1, 1901-1945*, History Department, University of Melbourne, 1988, p. 172.
- 6 Bartrop, op.cit., p. 70.
- 7 Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, Minister for the Interior, J. McEwen, 1 December 1938, vol. 158, p. 2535; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 November 1938, 6 & 7 January 1939, 24 August 1939.
- 8 The official objections to admitting a larger number of Jews were their non-assimilability, their alleged disregard of Australian living and working conditions, and that the number of 'alien' immigrants would be considerably increased in relation to British immigration. Department of the Interior Statement for Cabinet, 25 May 1938, NAA, CRS A433, item 43/2/46.
- 9 See I.N. Steinberg, 'A Jewish Settlement in the Kimberleys', *The Australian Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 1, March 1940, p. 24; Rutland, 'Australian Government Policies to Refugee Migration, 1933-1939', p.233; Suzanne D. Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia*, Collins, Australia, 1988, pp. 183-4; and Turnbull, *Safe Haven*, pp. 29-30.
- 10 Andrew Markus, 'Jewish Migration to Australia 1938-49', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 13, November 1983, p. 23. For the distinct ranking order employed in selection during 1939 and later, see Paul R. Bartrop, "'A Low Class of White People': The Garrett Report of 1939 and Plans for Jewish Immigration to Australia in the 1940s", *Menorah*, vol. 4, nos 1 & 2, December 1990, pp. 28-39.
- 11 These include Benjamin, 'Australia and the Evian Conference'; C.A. Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia', *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. 5, no. 8, May 1964; Markus, 'Jewish Migration to Australia 1938-49'; Suzanne D. Rutland, 'Jewish Immigration to New South Wales, 1919-1930', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 7, no. 5 November 1973, pp. 337-47; Rutland, 'Australian Government Policies to Refugee Migration 1933-39', pp. 224-38; Suzanne D. Rutland, 'Australian Responses to Jewish Refugee Migration before and after World War Two', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1985, pp. 29-42, and Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, Ch. 8; Blakeney, *Australia and the Jewish Refugees*; Paul R. Bartrop, 'The "Jewish race" clause in Australian immigration forms, 1939: reasonable or racist', *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 11, no. 1, November 1990, pp. 69-78; Bartrop, 'A Low Class of White People'; Paul R. Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933-1945*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 1994; and W.D. Rubinstein, 'Australia and the Refugee Jews of Europe 1933-1954: A Dissenting View', *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 10, no. 6, May 1989.
- 12 Monique Schwarz, *Bitter Herbs and Honey*, Amber Films, 1996; R. Goldlust, 'Jewish Memories of Wartime: Five Victorian Stories', contribution of the Makor Jewish Community Library towards 'The Jews of Victoria Remember', participants in 'Australia Remembers 1945-95', 1995.
- 13 Interview by Jane Yule, 16 November 1998.
- 14 Interview by Jane Yule, 4 May 1999. Further material sent on disk by interviewee, 21 September 1999.
- 15 Interview by Jane Yule, 15 April 1999.
- 16 See Turnbull, *Safe Haven*, p.21.

- 17 Stuart Macintyre in Bede Nairn & Geoffrey Serle (gen. eds), *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 10: 1891-1939*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1986, p. 6. There is also a file in the National Archives of Australia consisting of notes by R.T.E. Latham dated January 1938 on the situation in Berlin with regard to refugee emigration to Australia. They are concerned partly with the character of the flow of refugees at the time and partly with questions of organisation. They contain several recommendations, notably a reform of the landing-money requirement. Department of the Interior [II], Correspondence File, Class 2, 'R.T.E. Latham. Notes on Refugee problem', NAA, A433/1, 1939/2/21.

