

## **Jewish refugee doctors, dentists and nurses in Wales**

### **Teachers' Notes**

In this lesson, students will learn about Jewish doctors, dentists and nurses who came to the UK in the 1930s, fleeing Nazi persecution.

### **Curriculum links**

Key Stage 4.  
History, Literacy skills

## Lesson Plan

### LEARNING AIMS

- To learn about the persecution of Jews in the medical services in Nazi Germany.
- To learn about the difficulties Jewish doctors, dentist and nurses encountered as refugees in the UK.
- To explore the difficulties of retraining in a new environment and to consider educational attainment in different countries.

### EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

- Copies of student worksheet.
- Transcript of the audio clip.<sup>1</sup>

### STARTER

On the board, display a photograph of Paul Bosse, father of refugee Kate Bosse-Griffiths, meeting Hitler in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1935.

Paul's wife, Käthe, was Jewish, and Paul's refusal to divorce her meant he was sacked from his job as chief surgeon at the local hospital.



*Paul Bosse (standing, left) meeting Hitler in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1935. This photograph was taken after an explosion at a nearby munitions factory. Despite all of his work, Paul was dismissed six months later.*

*Image courtesy of Heini Gruffudd.*

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<sup>1</sup> We added the video clip's transcript, which you may choose to share with your students if you think it would be helpful. The transcript is in English and Welsh whilst the clip is in English only.

The Nazis came to power in January 1933 and soon began placing restrictions on Jews in the medical profession; by April, Jewish doctors were excluded from the public health insurance programme and by the summer they were instructed not to cooperate with their non-Jewish colleagues.

Within a year, over 2,600 Jewish doctors were removed from their posts and after the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, Jews were banned from qualifying as new doctors or dentists. In July 1938, they were prohibited from having 'Aryan' patients and in September 1938 they were decertified completely; unable to work, many decided to emigrate.

Working in pairs or individually, students should first read information about the persecution of Jewish doctors and dentists by the Nazis in the 1930s and then arrange the events relating to the persecution in chronological order (**Task 1**):

Then, display the correct order of the events on the board:

1. Nazi seizure of power (January 1933).
2. Jewish doctors expelled from the public health insurance programme (April 1933).
3. Cooperation between Jewish and non-Jewish doctors banned (July 1933).
4. Jews forbidden to qualify as new doctors or dentists (September 1935).
5. Jewish doctors banned from having 'Aryan' patients (July 1938).
6. Jewish doctors/dentists decertified (September 1938).

## DEVELOPMENT

Ask students to first read a short biography of Josephine Bruegel, Jewish refugee from Czechoslovakia (student worksheet) and then listen to the [audio clip, where she talks about qualifying for her 'MD Czechoslovakia' while in Britain](#).

Working in pairs or individually, students should answer the following questions (**Task 2**):

- Why was the Czechoslovak government based in London in 1941?
- Why might Josephine want her degree to be valid in Czechoslovakia?
- Would you want to return to your home country if you were a refugee?

## MAIN

An estimated 1,200 doctors, mostly Jewish, arrived in Britain from Germany and Austria between 1933 and 1939. However, due to reluctance from the British Medical Association, General Nursing Council and British Dental Association to recognise their qualifications, they had to study and pass a further British examination.

The Welsh National School of Medicine set up a 'special scheme of instruction for refugee students' and 12 German students were enrolled here between 1933 and 1934; in 1938-39, they were joined by seven Austrians and 15 Czechoslovaks.

One of these was Alfred Feiner, a Jewish refugee from Vienna, who worked as a general practitioner in Pontypridd between 1941 and 1977. Alfred's wife, Herta, worked as a cook and housekeeper to enable Albert to complete his qualifications. According to Herta's obituary, they had to overcome "a great deal of suspicion and animosity" in Pontypridd, but ultimately "gained the respect and admiration of the local population".<sup>2</sup>

Dentists from other counties were even more strictly controlled, but, following a review in 1938, the rules that severely restricted them from practising in the UK were relaxed and 40 Austrian refugee dentists were permitted to enter the UK; one of these was Jacques Kurer, who retrained at Manchester in 1939 and opened a practice there. In 1941, the family's home was bombed, and they were evacuated to Llandudno, where Jacques opened another practice, the high standard of which was popular among the local population. The family moved back to Manchester in 1944.



[Jacques Kurer.](#)

*Image courtesy of Peter Kurer.*

Ask students to first read about the difficulties the Jewish doctors and dentists encountered as refugees in the UK (**Task 3**).

Then, working in pairs or small groups, the students should consider and discuss the following questions:

- What difficulties did Jewish doctors, dentists and nurses encounter as refugees in the UK?
- What difficulties might refugees face in retraining?

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<sup>2</sup> 'Obituary: Herta Feiner', in *AJR Information*, March 1977, p. 12 [https://ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1977\\_march.pdf](https://ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1977_march.pdf) [accessed 28 July 2022].

## PLENARY

Working in small groups or pairs, ask the students to consider why different countries have different qualifications and what are the advantages or disadvantages of this.

Why might it be necessary to retrain or requalify when moving to another country (e.g., relative levels of education, differences in culture, infrastructure and technical standards)?

Why have some schools in Wales elected to teach the Welsh Bacalaureate?

### Sources.

Bruegel, Joža, *Memoirs* <<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/5304881/joza-bruegel-memoirs-blueyonder-welcome-to-pwp>> [accessed 29 July 2022]

Kaplan, Marion A., ed., *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618-1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Kater, Michael H., 'Unresolved Questions of German Medicine and Medical History in the Past and Present', *Central European History*, 25 (1992), 407-23

*Refugees from National Socialism in Wales: Medical Services* <<https://wp-research.aber.ac.uk/nsrefugeeswales/history/life-for-refugees-in-wales/medical-services/>> [accessed 12 July 2022]

Zamet, John, *German and Austrian Refugee Dentists: The Response of the British Authorities 1933-1945*, PhD thesis (Oxford: Oxford Brookes University, 2007)  
<<https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/items/e0d3e236-585a-4c8e-a61f-ee0830585b0a/1/>> [accessed 29 July 2022]

## Transcript

### [Josephine Bruegel on attaining her MD Czechoslovakia](#)

And then...it must have been February or March [1941], the Czech government-in-exile, which came from France, established itself here, and with the Czech army there came about fifty soldiers who were in the same position as I was – that they had not quite finished their medical studies but had done the clinical years, so it was arranged that they and I could finish their studies here. So, we were all put into various universities.

[...]

And then came the queer situation that...what the kind of degree to give us. This degree had to be valuable also in Czechoslovakia, because everybody wanted to go back, and didn't want to do any of the examinations again. So, what happened was, that Oxford University adopted the Prague University, which was closed, so I got this diploma in Oxford in a great kind of glory. It was called MD Czechoslovakia.