

Worksheet: Jewish refugee doctors, dentists and nurses in Wales

TASK 1

a) Read the information about the persecution of Jewish doctors and dentists by the Nazis in the 1930s:

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.

b) Working in pairs or individually, arrange the events relating to the persecution in chronological order

Jewish doctors banned from having 'Aryan' patients.
Jewish doctors expelled from the public health insurance programme.
Jewish doctors/dentists decertified.
Nazi seizure of power.
Cooperation between Jewish and non-Jewish doctors banned.
Jews forbidden to qualify as new doctors or dentists.

TASK 2

a) Read a short biography of Josephine Bruegel:

Josephine Bruegel was born in 1914 in Stráž in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (modern-day Czech Republic). She was a medical student in Prague when the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia. She fled to Britain, where she worked as a nurse in London before being evacuated to Cardiff in 1944. After the war, she and her husband moved back to Czechoslovakia, but returned to Britain following the Communist takeover of her homeland in 1948. She continued to practise medicine and was a founder of the National Schizophrenia Society. She died in 2005.

b) [Listen to an audio clip of Josephine talking about qualifying for her 'MD Czechoslovakia' while in Britain.](#)

c) Working in pairs or individually, answer the following questions:

- 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?

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TASK 3

a) Read about the difficulties Jewish doctors and dentists encountered as refugees in the UK:

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”.¹

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

¹ ‘Obituary: Herta Feiner’, in *AJR Information*, March 1977, p. 12 https://ajr.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1977_march.pdf [accessed 28 July 2022].

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.

b) Working in pairs or small groups, consider and discuss:

- 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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