

## Notes for Teachers (questions for discussion relating to the Jewish experience)

The aim of these notes is to guide teachers in the kinds of answers that might be encouraged from pupils in classroom discussion. As teachers are not expected to be experts in the history of Jews of the Channel Islands, or where they fit into the wider experience of the Holocaust, guidance is given here so that discussions can take advantage of recent scholarship and thought. Each section below effectively answers the questions posed in each of the case studies.

### *The Jewish experience (overview)*

In discussing the reactions of the local authorities to the antisemitic legislation, it is useful to remind students of the millennia of antisemitism that Jews have faced. In a period long before political correctness, antisemitism had been a growing problem in Europe that Hitler capitalised upon. We must also remember that a number of the Jews of the Channel Islands had arrived in the 1930s as refugees. We need only reflect for a moment on how refugees are treated today and their problems in obtaining citizenship of other states, to recognise that the way that Jews were treated at this time was nothing unusual. No state wanted to be flooded with refugees and it was made extremely difficult for such Jewish refugees to enter the UK and Channel Islands.

If the local authorities had protested against the antisemitic legislation, there is *no evidence* that they would have been shot – this is a lazy answer with no basis in fact. It is useful to emphasise that although the Germans may have ignored them, it is important in life to act in an ethical and moral way and to take a stand. It doesn't reflect well on anybody to stay silent in the face of such unethical behaviour. By staying silent and allowing the antisemitic legislation to be enacted, the local authorities were complicit. They facilitated the Germans' legislation. Clifford Orange, the Aliens Officer in Jersey, went further and was proactive in his job in carrying out the wishes of the occupiers rather than leaving it to them.

The civilian authorities could have done more to protect the Jews. They might have been proactive in hiding them, in providing them with false papers, and in hindering the work of the occupiers. This would have been dangerous but it was the right thing to do. It is important to get students to think about what is ethical and moral behaviour – what is the ideal response in each situation, and to think about why this course wasn't always taken.

We can argue that the Channel Islands were involved in the early stages of the Holocaust because Jews there were subject to antisemitic legislation and stripped of many of their rights. Three women were deported from Guernsey to France and from there to Auschwitz. Other British Jews were deported from both Islands to civilian internment camps in France and Germany.

With regards to roles during the Holocaust, a *bystander* was someone who stood by and did not intervene in wrong-doing. An *upstander* is someone who stood up and spoke out or acted to help Jews. Rescuers include those who hid Jews. A facilitator is someone who helped the Germans achieve their aims, even if they didn't understand the full repercussions of what they were doing.

It is important to learn about pre-war and post-war Jewish life so that our understanding of Jews is not limited to the Holocaust and the war years. Jewish culture was and is so much more than this.

### *Therese Steiner*

The British government interned Therese because she was Austrian; Austrians became 'German' after the Anschluss of 1938, when Germany annexed Austria. Germans were, of course, the enemy. They were interned so they could not in any way help the Germans invade Britain. The British was scared that these people would be 'fifth columnists' and betray them.

While Therese did not know precisely what lay in store for her, people in Britain were very aware of the Nazis' attitudes towards the Jews. The events of *Kristallnacht*, a very well publicised pogrom against the Jews of November 1938, was widely reported in British newspapers, along with the destruction of Jewish property and incarceration of many Jews in concentration camps such as Buchenwald at this time.

The police in Guernsey did have a choice. If they had refused to help the Germans deliver deportation notices, or relay any messages from the Germans, the Germans would have had to have done it themselves. The women would still have been deported but the policemen would have made a stand and acted ethically. We might observe that in Jersey, at the time of the 1942 deportation of civilians, the States of Jersey refused to let the police get involved in delivering deportation notices and nothing happened to them.

### *Esther Pauline Lloyd*

Esther probably chose to register with the Germans out of a combination of fear of what would happen if she didn't, perhaps a little ignorance of what lay ahead, and also in the knowledge that plenty of people would have known of her heritage and so there was a risk in someone informing on her at some point. Esther's husband and children were included on this list because they were married to a Jew / children of a Jew, which made them liable for deportation.

Esther is the only Jewish person we know who kept a diary during the occupation of the Channel Islands, so her views are really invaluable in trying to assess how Jews felt.

Esther's British nationality really saved her. In Nazi racial ideology, Western Europeans were superior to Eastern Europeans, especially those who the Germans considered to be 'slavic' (e.g. Poles, Russians). Nordic countries ranked especially highly. The British were still fighting the Germans – they were not a defeated people but a force to be reckoned with. They were treated with more respect.

### *Hedwig Goldenberg*

November 1938 is the date of a particularly pogrom against Jews which we know by the name of *Kristallnacht* (night of broken glass) when Jewish property was destroyed and thousands of Jews sent to concentration camps. It might have been the last straw to many Jews to witness such destruction. This time they knew that things were really serious and could no longer convince themselves otherwise.

Dorothea might have hidden Hedy for a number of reasons. She might have been a really nice person, or might have been Hedy's friend. Alternatively, Hedy's boyfriend might have

contacted Dorothea's husband – the men might be the link. Dorothea may have been something of an outcast herself: she was illegitimate and had married an Austrian (now German) citizen – she had become a 'jerrybag'. She might have sympathised with someone being persecuted. In hiding Hedy, she was taking a great risk – both women might have been sent to a concentration camp if discovered. They would both have faced the common problem of fear of discovery and hunger through sharing Dorothea's meagre rations. Yad Vashem, the world Holocaust research and memorial centre in Jerusalem, rightly honours non-Jews who were prepared to take such risks to help Jews.

It was very unusual for these two German soldiers to have helped a Jew. As it was so rare, we cannot be sure what the punishment would have been for them, especially as they were not high-ranking or powerful. They may have had powerful friends, which may have helped cover it up. But if caught, it is likely that they would have faced being sent to the Russian front (the worst posting for a soldier because of the high mortality rate and extreme cold). They might have been sent to a camp or even executed. We cannot be at all sure.

### *John Max Finkelstein*

Finkelstein probably moved to Jersey because it would have been a more tolerant society than Romania at this time, which saw a lot of antisemitic persecution. He might also have preferred the climate and higher standard of living. These are all guesses.

Finkelstein applied for British citizenship because he would have been aware, too late, that it offered him some protection from future persecution.

It is important that we study testimonies such as Finkelstein's because we need to know what we're fighting against when we stand up to fascism and antisemitism. We need to understand what people suffered in order to understand why we commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

Indeed, the million dollar question. Why didn't the local government protect Finkelstein? They may have felt that they didn't need to as he wasn't British. They may have felt that he was not their responsibility as an immigrant. This reminds us of the importance of ethical and moral behaviour towards all human beings.

### *Miriam Jay*

We might assume that Ridgway did indeed know Miriam's Jewish identity. It is a matter of conjecture how he squared his public and private life. Maybe he felt he could protect Miriam? Maybe he didn't know that there were other Jews in the Island. Maybe he didn't care enough about immigrants? We don't know, but it's worth talking through and trying to figure it out.

Miriam likely changed her name because she saw how antisemitic Britain and Europe were becoming. We don't know her family's origins. Might they have come from elsewhere in Europe and faced discrimination or pogroms in earlier generations?

We think Miriam got away without registering as a Jew because she was a relatively new incomer who might have simply not spoken about her Jewish heritage, especially as the vast majority of her friends in Guernsey would not have been Jewish. If nobody knew her heritage, nobody could denounce her. Her identity cards did not state her religion, whereas other non-British Jews had paperwork and passports which stated that they were Jewish.

We cannot know how Miriam felt inside, but putting ourselves in her place, we can only imagine that she would have been pretty scared of being discovered.

*Lucy Schwob*

Lucy was from an intellectual family and it is highly likely that, being a politically aware woman, her identity as a person from a persecuted minority would certainly have informed her political stance in life.

Lucy's Jewish heritage made it more dangerous for her to carry out acts of resistance because there was a risk that if she was caught, the Germans would have found out about her heritage and given her a far worse punishment. It was fortunate that she was caught after the period that Germans could deport people, otherwise she would almost certainly have been sent to a concentration camp. Lucy was still prepared to take the risk because she believed strongly in her fight against Nazi ideology.

Lucy and Suzanne's age and gender protected them because the Germans were looking for a soldier or a group of soldiers. At the least, they expected men to be behind the resistance campaign, not a pair of middle-aged women living quietly by themselves.