Thompson, A.F. ‘"Dear Sir Rabbi": The Correspondence of Rabbi L. A. Falk, 1938–1939” Australian Journal of Jewish Studies XXXIII (2020): 165-192

“Dear Sir Rabbi”: The Correspondence of Rabbi L. A. Falk, 1938–1939

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Abstract

This article examines the correspondence of Rabbi Leib Aisack Falk, acting chief-minister of the Great Synagogue, Sydney, during the critical years of 1938 and 1939. Through an analysis of letters from refugees seeking to migrate to Australia, this article highlights the desperate conditions that affected Jews across the European continent and the limited response of the Australian government to their plight prior to the outbreak of World War Two. This study contributes to a broader understanding of Australia’s role within the historiographical debate concerning the inaction of the allied democracies to the refugee crisis and provides insight into the impact of Australian policy on the lives of individuals. Through examination of Falk’s actions on behalf of those who wrote to him, this article highlights the complex dynamics between the individual and societal institutions concluding that it was the imposition of rigid government regulations that limited the efficacy of individuals and the Jewish communal establishment to facilitate refugee migration.

At this moment I feel that I act as the ‘sh’liah zibbur–the messenger’ of hundreds and thousands of men, women and children who live at present in countries of unspeakable persecution and oppression. At this moment I feel that they send a message through me unto you … We beseech you do not send us away empty; we beseech you have mercy upon our babes and upon our children.

Rabbi Falk’s Appeal, 29 September 1938,
published in The Hebrew Standard of Australasia *6 October 1938*

Introduction

On 29 September 1938, Rabbi Leib Aisack Falk, Acting Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue in Sydney, presented this address to the New South Wales Jewish community at the Maccabean Hall, Sydney. His appeal refers to the inundation of letters that Falk had received concerning hundreds of Jewish refugees seeking to emigrate to Australia in the immediate prewar period.

For many years this collection of letters sat in a plain manila folder, largely unlooked at, in the archive of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, located under the historic Maccabean Hall. The plain exterior of this folder belied its significance, as the letters it held reveal the diverse voices and experiences of prewar Jewish refugees who attempted to seek sanctuary in Australia.

Throughout 1938 and 1939, Falk received letters concerning approximately 100 individuals and their family members. These refugees either personally appealed to Falk for help or had their case presented to him through an intermediary, such as an acquaintance in Australia, or a rabbinical leader in Europe. Although it is not immediately apparent why the correspondence was directed to Falk, the letters often allude to, but do not explicate, networks based in a sense of Jewish spiritual connection that caused many to turn to him.

Since the declassification of pertinent government documents held by the National Archive of Australia in the 1980s, the nature of government regulations pertaining to Jewish refugee migration to Australia has been a subject of significant scholarship. The Australian Jewish Welfare Society (AJWS), as the official channel through which Jewish refugees could seek landing permits, has come under criticism for their conservative approach and strict adherence to government policy (Blakeney 1985, 169).

This article aims to give voice to the plight of the individuals and refugee crisis at the personal level. The exchange of letters between Falk and European Jews, Falk's petitions to the AJWS, and his mediation with the Department of the Interior highlight the complex dynamics between individuals, Jewish communal powers, and the Australian Government during this period.

This article also illustrates the significance of letters as a source of testimony. Where personal details of names, ages and occupations are recorded in the correspondence, insight into the impact of aspects of identity, such as class and gender, on a person's ability to seek refuge in Australia can be gained. Written in English, German, Hebrew and Yiddish, the correspondence highlights the circumstances affecting Jewish refugees across a wide geographic area, with letters originating from Jews of Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Romania and Italy. In addition, letters were also received from German and Austrian Jews who had already fled to the Netherlands, Belgium and France.

However, there remain distinct challenges when approaching this collection as an historical source. Each correspondent made deliberate choices to express or omit information in constructing and presenting their case to Falk, which can interfere with understanding the letter writer's context and the nature of their relationship to Falk. Additionally, a lack of preserved material restricts insight into the nature of Falk's responses and his actions on behalf of refugees. In some cases, copies of his personal replies or correspondence with external bodies have been retained. Examination of these communications highlights the dynamics of both Falk's power and powerlessness to influence the outcome for those who appealed to him for help and provides insight into his tense relationship with the Anglo-Jewish establishment in Australia.

The collection of letters elucidates the response of European Jewry to their own predicament, demonstrating the efforts taken, both individually and collectively, to seek asylum. However, the correspondence often conveys the inability of such individuals and communities to reach safety due to the exclusionary immigration policies of the Australian Government.

Letters from Germany and Austria

The letters written to Falk articulate the severe disenfranchisement and impoverishment of Jews within Nazi Germany prior to the outbreak of war. The majority of the letters written to Falk originate from Jewish residents of Germany and Austria, in the period following the *Anschluss* of Austria in March 1938. The *Anschluss* precipitated domestic and international consideration of the situation of European Jewry and intensified pressure on the Australian Government, which subsequently sought to invoke limitations on Jewish migration to Australia (Bartrop 1994, 51).

In June 1938, the Australian Government imposed a numerical quota for the issue of landing permits to Jews: 3,600 permits per annum for those who possessed the requisite landing money of £200 and 1,500 per annum for nominated migrants. This figure was not disclosed to the public, but the Australian Jewish leadership was informed of its implementation (Rutland 1998, 181). While this quota constituted a comparatively generous intake relative to other nations, this still only allowed for a small proportion of those appealing for help to come to Australia (Andgel 1988, 16). Australia's statement at the intergovernmental Evian Conference in July 1938 was that Australia could not do more to alleviate the desperate situation faced by European Jews, an approach that was paralleled by other nations present (Blakeney 1985, 140).

Following the pogrom of *Kristallnacht,* John McEwan, the Minister for the Interior, publicly announced the Department's policy on 1 December 1938. He proclaimed that Australia would absorb up to 15,000 refugees over a period of three years (Markus 1983, 21). Of the 5,000 places per year, 1,000 positions per annum were allocated for 'Aryan' and 'non-Aryan' Christians, and 4,000 positions for Jewish refugees (Markus 1983, 22). These visas were further apportioned by the Department of the Interior based on the amount of capital the refugees possessed, or the presence of a guarantee from the AJWS or a private sponsor (Bartrop 1994, 136).

Due to an excess number of suitable applicants eligible under existing conditions, many Jewish refugees were prevented from being able to come to Australia through this demarcated quota intake, with the Department acknowledging that it would be 'possible to select from among the applicants considerably more than the quota who could be regarded as desirable immigrants' (Bartrop 1988, 79). Additionally, the intake of 15,000 was never filled due to the outbreak of war. From Falk's correspondence, it is possible to ascertain the grounds on which these individuals attempted to support their

applications and the constraints that could affect their ability to obtain landing permits to Australia.

The conditions outlined in the letters to Falk reveal the harsh curtailment of the civil rights of Jews already occurring within Nazi Germany by 1938. The writings of Austrian and German Jews elucidate how the implementation of Nazi regulations resulted in a degradation of their personal circumstances and deprived them of the ability to earn a livelihood. The ramifications of such circumstances, combined with restrictive immigration policies, had severe implications for those who sought to migrate to Australia.

Josef Strasser addressed Falk from Vienna in March 1939, as he saw 'no other way in my desolation to avoid a bitter finish of [me] and my family's life, soliciting the assistance of men, who are nearer to our Great God than I dare to be' (Strasser 1939). Although his family had been living and working in Austria for over 100 years and he, himself, had always held high positions in commerce and industry, he attested that since the *Anschluss* 'I don't see any possibility to maintain our life for the future. The means, I spared in better times are diminishing more and more, and if I should not find any assistance, there is no doubt that my family and myself will be lost, a fate, which I am not guilty for neither before my conscience nor before our Good God' (Srasser 1939). Strasser's letter implored Falk for assistance in order to emigrate, invoking this request as an expression of faith, attesting that he and his wife 'are both sound and strong, full of the best intentions and deep faith in our people and its future, we hope the fate will not keep us off continuing our life … I dare hope that our Great God will not leave us and will guide your blessed steps in our favour' (Strasser 1939). Strasser provided the particulars of his and his wife's employment history, as well as detailing their strength, health and determination to continue to make a life for the future, asserting that they would be willing to undertake any work and would never become a public charge. This same sentiment is reflected through numerous letters from refugees, who outlined their desire to work in any position in Australia, even if it was of a lower status than previously held. While Strasser expressed significant distress concerning his current financial and employment situation, which drove him to seek aid from Falk, his economic conditions did not yet prevent him from being able to emigrate. He stated that 'our means are yet sufficient to pay the expenses for the journey and for the outfitting as well' (Strasser 1939). This was not the case for many refugees who appealed for help.

Other letters highlight how the debilitating economic situation proved problematic in attempts to secure a permit. Marianne Einhorn appealed to Falk out of a situation of 'great misery and despair' from Vienna in January 1939 (Einhorn 1939). She wrote that 'having lived up to now in proper and comfortable circumstances, though, I was always in the habit of working to earn the livelihood for my mother and myself. I am fallen in great poverty and we cannot stay here any longer because we have neither means for our living

nor the possibility of earning anything' (Einhorn 1939). A second letter from Einhorn indicated that Falk had responded to her, had taken interest in her case, and had inquired into the means at her disposal. She replied that 'I am very sorry being forced to tell you we have fallen into great poverty … we had no possibility of earning anything this whole year, and therefore, our means are exhausted now' (Einhorn 1939).

Anna König also appealed to Falk from Vienna in February 1939, imploring him for help on behalf of herself and her mother, Hinde (König 1939). König was no longer allowed to work in her job as a beauty shop employee and producer of cosmetics, because she was a Jew. Her mother, a skilful seamstress, housekeeper and trained cook had also been excluded from work due to being Jewish. König's letter further provided a sense of the desperation of the situation emerging for European Jewry due to Nazi regulations:

> Now we are in deep despair. We are not allowed to work. We had to leave our lodging some weeks ago and we are forced to sleep at compassionate people. Now we have got the order to leave Vienna *at once* … We don't know where to go, because we have no friends and no relations in the world. For that I am addressing to you and I am asking you to help us, to save us *before it is to late* … we are in danger, do answer me as soon as possible, I beg you. (König 1939. Emphasis in the original.)

The economic restrictions, lack of access to assets, and exclusion from employment for Jews in Nazi Germany both compelled Jews to leave Europe and simultaneously rendered it difficult for them to emigrate to Australia, due to the landing money required by the government. For many this presented an inaccessible financial threshold, with one refugee commenting that due to this 'it is effectively nearly impossible to succeed in emigrating' (Stránský 1939). Moreover, these worsening economic conditions were also found to be debilitating even for successful applicants, many of whom, due to the protracted waiting period, had exhausted the required landing money by the time they received notice of their acceptance (AJWS 1938).

The letters highlight the increasing exclusion of Jews from German society, which, alongside the threat of escalating persecution, compelled Jews to seek urgent escape from their circumstances. Beyond exclusion from the workforce, the letters evidence the increased restrictions on Jews in universities and the most radical form of ostracism: the incarceration of Jews in the prewar concentration camps.

Susi Fuchs, a kindergarten teacher from Vienna, wrote to Falk anxiously in January 1939 regarding the situation of herself and her fiancé, who by this time had been incarcerated for seven months. Fuchs began her letter by apologising for writing in the German language, explaining that, 'it

is so much easier to say in your mother tongue what is in your heart' (Fuchs 1939). Fuchs explained the circumstances affecting her fiancé, Herbert Reiss:

> I write this letter on behalf of myself and my fiancé, who has been imprisoned since the 27th of May, because he is a Jew. Without having to read the whole letter you will surely know what it is about. I would like to ask you to help us Rabbi … In May 1938, as the youngest of his year group, he should have completed the last examination of the academic year to obtain his engineering degree. He was by then almost the only Jew permitted to take this exam. Then on the 27th of May he was suddenly arrested along with many others, young and old. He therefore missed the examination date, a new one for Jews was not granted, and furthermore immediately after his release he has to leave German territory. (Fuchs 1939)

Fuchs wrote in the hope of receiving Falk's assistance, as she and her fiancé did not have the requisite landing money to come to Australia, writing:

> I must still explain why I have not submitted an application to Canberra. It is due to two reasons. Firstly, neither of us possess the necessary pounds, nor the specified 200 pounds landing money. And the second reason is really a follow on from the first, namely that the department certainly does not concern itself with the applications of those who do not first possess these 200 pounds. (Fuchs 1939)

Fuchs was determined in the face of such challenges, stating, 'I will speak of nothing but the desire we have to build a future and we will not permit the world to dissuade us thereof. The harder the fight is, the more beautiful the victory will be!' (Fuchs 1939)

A similar sense of tenacity in response to the threat of incarceration is demonstrated through the case of Josef Bandel. Bandel was a rabbi in Emmendingen, Germany, who wrote to Falk pleading for help to find a position of employment in Australia in order to bolster his chances of receiving a permit (Bandel 1939a; 1939b).[1] His case was supported through a separate letter from Arthur Kahn, a refugee already resident in Australia, who explained that Bandel had been held in Dachau concentration camp between November 1938 and January 1939. Kahn stressed the depth of Bandel's need to secure a permit due to the dire consequences if he was unsuccessful, explaining that:

> now with the intensified power and brutality, the expulsion and forced emigration of all Jews still living in Germany will be practiced, if another country of immigration is not available … in the absence of early commitment from Canberra, Bandel runs the risk of being taken

> again to a concentration camp!! And then from there never coming out again. (Kahn 1939)

By the time Bandel approached Falk, he had already applied for a permit to Australia and, after receiving a negative response, had reapplied through the AJWS, who submitted an application on his behalf (Bandel 1939b).

The ongoing difficulty of the protracted length of time taken to assess applications resulted in significant anxiety for those awaiting a response, particularly evident in Bandel's case due to the threat of reimprisonment. This issue was exacerbated by the sheer volume of applications received in Canberra, which far outweighed the quota of landing permits made available to Jewish refugees.[2] This problem was repeatedly acknowledged by the AJWS, who made representations to Canberra, urging the Department of the Interior to come to a final decision regarding the cases already in their possession in order that 'applicants in various parts of Europe be advised whether or not they would eventually be granted permission to enter Australia and thus eliminate long periods of anxious waiting which could otherwise be utilised in seeking avenues for migration to other countries' (AJWS 1939a).

The correspondence with Falk further highlights this acute sense of anxiety, with many refugees requesting a response to their appeal as soon as possible. Grete Friedmann (n.d.), of Vienna, asserted that 'any day sooner one can leave is a gift from God' while Charlotte Stern (1939), also of Vienna, began her letter to Falk stating that 'I do not know an other [sic] way to try to get out of my despairing situation than to appeal to your goodness well known in the Jewish world.' Willingness to approach a stranger in Australia displays understanding of the necessity to leave Germany as soon as possible.

Johanna Kamm was one of the few of the correspondents who managed to emigrate from Nazi Germany. Johanna, aged 35, wrote to Falk from Berlin in February 1939, begging for his intervention to help her family procure landing permits, having already made a direct application to the Department of the Interior in December 1938 concerning herself, her sister Irma, her brother Max, and her parents, Georg and Gertrude (Kamm 1939a). Johanna enclosed a letter of recommendation from Dr Ernst Simon of the Hebrew Teachers College of Jerusalem and provided Falk with extensive details pertaining to her and her siblings' education, linguistic abilities and occupational history. She outlined that she was proficient in German, English, French, Italian and Spanish, as well as being an experienced bookkeeper and bank worker. While for the past six years she had been employed by a jewellery business in Berlin, the deteriorating circumstances compelled her to seek to leave Germany as 'this business has now been taken over by aryians and I have therefore been discharged. Now I earnestly desire to emigrate as quickly as possible' (Kamm 1939a).

Her sister, Irma, also wrote a short biography, detailing her employment history. At the time of writing, Irma was employed in a

wholesale export business. However, she wrote that 'this Jewish shop must shut in the end of this year, and I am discharged' (Kamm 1939a). Johanna forwarded further information to Falk regarding her parents, stating that 'our parents are vigorous and healthy … We all together are leading a harmonious life of family and we like to build up a new future all together' (Kamm 1939a).

In April 1939, Johanna sent another letter to Falk. This letter contained a response from the Department regarding the progress of her application, which informed her that 'the matter is receiving attention' (Kamm 1939b). No further correspondence was recorded between the family and Falk. Following the outbreak of war, a highly restrictive immigration policy was implemented in Australia. By the end of January 1940, 'persons of enemy nationality' or 'aliens generally who reside in German-controlled territory' were officially no longer able to obtain new landing permits to Australia (Bartrop 1990, 33). This policy excluded Johanna and her family and any other Jewish refugees of German origin from being admitted to Australia after the onset of hostilities; however, legal emigration from Germany remained operational until October 1941 (Strauss 1980, 332).

Johanna and her siblings were eventually issued permits for the USA in 1941, travelling to New York via Lisbon in August of that year. However, their parents remained in Berlin.[3] Georg and Gertrude were deported to Theresienstadt in August 1942, where Georg died six months later.[4]

Further letters regarding this case bear witness to the repercussions for families fragmented by emigration and the distress that individuals carried concerning family left behind. Immediately following the end of the war, both Johanna and Irma wrote to the Central Tracing Bureau seeking information to locate their mother. Irma expressed that she had received contradictory information, one account attesting that her mother was deported in May 1944 to an unknown location in the east, while another stated that her mother still remained in Theresienstadt in February 1945. Irma wrote that she had 'tried everything what could be done from here to locate my mother now or at least to receive a reliable record' (Kamm Spicker 1945). The ongoing anguish experienced by refugees after the war, due to the loss of family from whom they were separated and the difficulties in tracing those who may have survived, is exemplified through this letter.

Several refugees who wrote to Falk were successful in securing refuge in America or the United Kingdom but, in most cases, it is not possible to determine whether this was as a result of rejection by Australia, the earlier reception of a permit to another country, or due to other factors. However, the provision of US permits to the Kamm siblings did not occur until well after any chance of coming to Australia had already subsided, demonstrating that their survival occurred in spite of Australian policy, not because of it.

Letters from Belgium, the Netherlands and France

Safety was not guaranteed for those who escaped from the Reich to other countries within western Europe. Appeals to Falk from several individuals demonstrate the continued necessity of rescue efforts beyond the geographic limitations of the Reich, as those in adjacent countries continued to seek more permanent asylum. The initial three years of the Nazi Regime saw 72 to 77 per cent of Jewish émigrés find refuge in western European countries, but by 1937 this only accounted for 25 per cent, as these countries increasingly became points of intermediate settlement with re-emigration to a destination beyond Europe being perceived as the only viable solution (Strauss 1980, 351).

This is evidenced by the case of Viktor Schneider, who managed to flee to Brussels from Vienna, along with his wife and three young sons. He wrote to Falk in May 1939, 'I am jew, 35 years old, fugitive from Vienna, Ex Austria, with my wife and 3 boys of 3, 7 and 9 years, to escape the throat to be sent to a camp-of-concentration. We succeeded to leave Germany and to enter illegally in Belgium, where we found a temporary shelter for a short time' (Schneider 1939) The family applied to the Department of the Interior in Canberra and appealed to Falk, hoping that his intervention could accelerate the application process and stating that 'in spite of our terrible experiences we never lost our hope in God, who led us out of the hell of Germany's Nazis and now it is our greatest wish to be able to enter Australia, the beautiful country where we would be able to live unmolested as true Jews' (Schneider 1939). Even though they had fled the immediate threat of Nazism, the family now lived in danger of expulsion and incarceration in a concentration camp, due to the impending expiration of their temporary visa.

Inability to gain employment was a significant problem affecting those who had escaped Germany. From Rotterdam in the Netherlands, 21-year-old Josef Bamberger wrote to Falk, describing himself as a German fugitive. Bamberger detailed that he had been working as an auto-electrician, but as a refugee was restricted to doing so only in a voluntary capacity and was therefore unable to earn any money (Bamberger 1939). For this reason, he requested help from Falk to obtain employment in Australia and also sought information about Jewish life within Sydney, particularly about the possibility of securing a job that would allow him to observe *Shabbos*.

These letters of appeal to Falk demonstrate that Jewish refugees, who managed to escape from Nazism to adjacent countries that later came under occupation, continued to desire and require sanctuary away from Europe.

Letters from Czechoslovakia

The persecution of Jews under Nazism compelled those who came under the expanding German Reich to seek refuge in other countries; it also precipitated an attempted exodus from countries within Europe that were not under Nazi rule in the period preceding the outbreak of war. Alongside increasing locally

implemented antisemitic legislation within other European nations, Jewish refugees outside the Reich remained affected by Nazi policy in a number of ways. Pervasive fear of Nazi advancement and political influence in their home countries, as well as changing borders and legal statuses, were influential forces in compelling Jews to seek to emigrate from countries across Europe.

The Nazi annexation of the Sudetenland after the Munich Agreement created significant upheaval and apprehension for nearby Jewish populations, who sensed impending disaster and realised the necessity to emigrate (Gilbert 1993, 28). This is reflected through the content and dates of letters of Jewish refugees from these areas, whose efforts to leave Europe preceded the expansion of Nazi control to their homelands.

Rabbi Hugo Stránský wrote from Žilina, in February 1939, a month before the establishment of the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, that, 'most Jews, at least of the younger generation, think about emigration … I don't want to wait around with the possibility that things will get worse and be forced to emigrate' (Stránský 1939). This expression of urgency emphasises the anxiety felt across Europe due to the spectre of Nazism.

The dire implications that the shifting borders had on the conditions for, and legal status of Jews in countries outside of Germany demonstrate the wider impact of Nazi policy across Europe. Both Evzen Schwimmer and Eugen Lax wrote to Falk concerning their position and status as a result of the cession of Czechoslovakian territory to Hungary.

Schwimmer, writing in May 1939 from Nový Bydžov, part of the German Protectorate of Bohemia, explained that his home community had come under Hungarian rule, leaving him in a precarious position: 'Due to the present circumstances in the former Czechoslovakian Republic and considering that my home community has fallen to Hungary and my citizenship is contestable, I will be recognized as a citizen neither here nor in Hungary' (Schwimmer 1939). Due to this situation he pleaded for an opportunity to secure employment in Australia as his only chance to emigrate, asking Falk, 'please do not regard my request as presumptuous, but rather as a cry for help of a castaway, for whom despair is already near, to his luckier coreligionist' (Schwimmer 1939).

Lax, writing from Tornalja in March 1939, recounted how the change of this territory from Czechoslovakia to Hungary had annihilated his livelihood as he could no longer finish his studies, nor begin any occupation due to being Jewish. He began his letter:

> When you read this letter, anywhere far on the Globe an unknown brother waits afraid how these lines will be listened. Since the change of the frontiers of Czechoslovakia I am again a citizen of Hungary … Now as I became a citizen of Hungary I cannot finish here my study

> because I am a jew; although many predecessors of my parents lived here, my parents are now in great poverty. (Lax 1939)

He pleaded with Falk for help to send money that would allow him to survive:

> In my grievousness I do not know how to describe my days it is not yet only some weeks that I felt myself for an equal citizen and to be protected … When sometimes in your pleasant moments you see the life for beautiful, think! that there are people who have forgotten how to smile. I implore you again! Think on the cruel of the lot and listen to my call for help. (Lax 1939)

Lax's letter provides insight into his sense of hopelessness shaped by these conditions, writing that 'I thought that the life could be nice, and working has a reward, but these are refuted, by the mothers tears, by the wakeful fathers, by the shy crys of the little children' (Lax 1939).

Both the letters of Lax and Schwimmer emphasised their appreciation for a Jewish 'communal spirit,' (Schwimmer 1939) on which they were reliant in order to escape their situation, with Lax concluding that, 'at the beginning of my letter, I felt myself as a foreigner and unknown, but now I finish it, it seems me that the two thousand years of the "Goleth" were not able to destroy the jews' [sic] spiritual connexion, and therefore I believe to be not so alone in the world … don't let me wait unhopefully' (Lax 1939).

Letters from Hungary

Increasing antagonism towards Jews within Hungarian society became a volatile political issue in the 1930s (Katzburg 1981). The introduction of the anti-Jewish laws and the imposition of economic restrictions compelled many to seek to emigrate abroad. Even by December 1938, Falk had received notice from Hungary of the desperate conditions affecting Jews through the letter of Rabbi Ignacz Krausz of Körmend, who wrote that:

> We live – if this can be called a [life] here in Hungary in a little village I am the rabbi of 120 families. And now as you know we are [persecuted]. Many and many of our brethren lost their position and have no what to eat. We fear that soon comes the time and we must leave our home and go abroad. (Krausz 1938)

While many letters focus on the situation of an individual or a family group, this introduction in Rabbi Krausz's letter explicates the impact on a whole community, with the rabbi commenting that, 'anyone in my congregation would like to go abroad' (Krausz 1938). This sentiment is shared by the letter of Rabbi Meyer Frey, from Nagy Šurany, who stated that 'in our country the troubles are only growing and many of my brothers are forced to wander

across the sea' (Frey n.d.). As 1939 progressed, Falk received more cries for help from Hungarian Jewry.

The Budapest Jewish Community projected the devastating implications of the implementation of the anti-Jewish legislation, anticipating the impoverishment of 100,000 persons within five years, due to rising rates of dismissal from positions and a lack of ability for young people to secure employment on the completion of their studies (Katzburg 1981, 271). These conditions were reflected by a number of individuals writing to Falk, who highlighted the deteriorating economic situation in Hungary. For example, Andrew Stern, a 22-year-old writing in January 1939 from Györ, cited that, despite his professional abilities as a mechanic of cars and agricultural machines, he had been forced to turn to Falk for assistance in procuring a landing permit for Australia (Stern, A. 1939). Stern wrote: 'I beg your pardon making you trouble, but the difficult situation of us jews forced me to turn myself to you Sir! I hope that your kind heart will do something for a poor one of the same faith in need and will not let him to remain in hopelessness' (Stern, A. 1939) Stern stressed that he was reliant on the help and kindness of Falk, stating that 'I put my trust in you Sir and if it is exists one possibility to send me a ray of hope I would thank you a thousand times' (Stern, A. 1939).

The problem of employment and the lack of hope for the future livelihood of young people was also reflected in the case of Georg Papai, whose situation was brought to Falk's attention by the Budapest Jewish Community (BJC 1939). Papai had completed textile school in Reichenberg in the Sudentenland but, despite all efforts of the Budapest Jewish Community, they were unable to find a position for him and therefore 'for four months Herr Papai has resided in Paris, [but] he also could not secure a livelihood there' (BJC 1939).

The letter appealed to Falk to assist Papai to find permanent residence in Australia 'in order that this brave, fair and well nurtured young man would not, God forbid, lay to waste' (BJC 1939). The letter concluded by quoting the Babylonian Talmud, 'Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world' (BJC 1939). This both served to invoke a sense of the severity of the situation in Europe and simultaneously provide an understanding of the potential significance positive intervention could have for an individual life. For religious Jews, the action of imploring Falk for help often reflected their sense of a Jewish spiritual connection, offering a final recourse in which they could place hope for intervention.

Letters from Poland

The letters emanating from Poland highlight the persecution of Jews due to locally implemented laws, exacerbated by the influence of Nazism. Dov Szulkies, of Warsaw, wrote to Falk in August 1938, presenting himself as 'a young Hebrew man … now standing in front of terrible news without any

hope and without a chance for a future' (Szulkies 1938). Szulkies had finished his university studies, which should have allowed him to serve as a magistrate in Poland. However, he explained that the association of lawyers, 'mostly self-proclaimed antisemites,' were not accepting Jewish graduates for court experience (Szulkies 1938). Szulkies, therefore, implored Falk to find employment for him in Australia, asserting that he was willing to undertake any job and emphasising that he did not believe that it was beyond an educated man to do manual labour (Szulkies 1938). He asserted that this appeal was his last hope to 'save a young Jewish soul in a desperate situation' (Szulkies 1938).

The impact of the evolving geopolitical realities of Europe is further evidenced through the situation of Polish Jews who had been living within the Reich. Beginning on 28 October 1938, immediately preceding the enactment of changes to Polish citizenship laws, the Gestapo and the German Foreign Office began a coordinated effort to expel Polish-Jewish residents from Germany (Milton 1984, 169). Jews were transported from across Germany to Polish border stations in Upper Silesia and Poznań province, with over 8,000 Polish Jews being deported to the border between Neu-Bentschen and Zbąszyń, where an overcrowded refugee camp was established (Milton 1984, 170).

In February 1939, one such refugee, Leiser Ehrlich, wrote to Falk about his situation in the Zbąszyń camp. Ehrlich was born in Janów, Poland, but had been working in Germany as a carpenter, publican and polisher since 1915. He described that he:

> Owing to the expulsion of approximately 30,000 Jews from Germany, currently resides in the Refugee camp of Zbąszyń, naturally suffering an inhumane existence. My wife, as well as my daughter remained in Germany, naturally also without any funds for their livelihood. They have heard through the newspapers, how we were all called out of bed in the night without money and without luggage and forced over the border. (Ehrlich 1939)[5]

Ehrlich asked Falk for assistance in attaining a landing permit for himself and his family and funds to support them to leave.

In a similar situation, writing from Kraków in February 1939, Rabbi Goldmann explained that despite having been a rabbi in Germany for 30 years, he and his family 'were dragged out in the middle of the night and like prisoners sent to Poland' (Goldmann 1939). The family's possessions had been confiscated and they had only been allowed to take ten German marks per head with them, leaving them with insufficient funds to rent a home or finance a business. Goldman further explained their suffering due to death of his son Josef in a concentration camp, asserting that 'we now find ourselves in this miserable city in a bitter situation and often I tell myself that death

would be better than this miserable life … may our suffering, my sleepless nights and broken hearts reach the heavens and may pity be taken on us' (Goldmann 1939).

Letters written to Falk evidence the escalating persecution faced by European Jewry outside the Reich, as well as the personal suffering that such oppressive conditions created for individuals. Regardless of the deteriorating situation, the Australian Government still did not categorise Jews from these regions as 'refugees.' Despite awareness of the circumstances of Jews resident in countries outside the Reich, Australian Government legislation was not revised to facilitate their migration (Bartrop 1998, 28).

The precarious situation of Jews outside the Reich is clear in the testimony of those who wrote to Falk. However, potential rescue was impeded by the Australian Government, which hoped to enforce a stricter policy regarding all Jewish migration due to negative perceptions of eastern European Jewry (Bartrop 1998, 28). Falk's ability to affect change in response to this situation was through his extensive network and ubiquity across the Jewish world. This allowed him to be both a point of contact for refugees and to subsequently take action upon their requests through representations to the Jewish establishment in Australia, both informally through his connections with members of the Jewish community, and in an official capacity through the AJWS, as well as directly with government representatives.

Falk's Response

Falk's personal correspondence and sermons reveal that he was deeply affected by the plight of those who wrote to him. He took significant time, additional to his regular duties, to diligently answer these letters and to make further representations to networks throughout Australia, to the AJWS, and to the Australian Government. Although he usually worked in conjunction with the AJWS, in several cases with individuals of exemplary character, Falk intervened with the Department of the Interior personally, with limited success. His undiplomatic and uncompromising approach to matters he felt strongly about often precipitated conflict with colleagues and the authorities and resulted in strained interactions with the AJWS. External restrictions imposed by the Australian Government continued to limit the scope of impact of the AJWS, and Falk's representations, while concentrated, were similarly constrained.

Falk's attitude towards refugees was reflected in his sermons at the Great Synagogue, through which he regularly employed the historical narrative of the Jewish people as an impetus to respond to the current crisis. Falk publicly challenged the Jewish establishment to advocate more fervently for the plight of refugees, impressing upon the community that it was a sacred duty to protest against the oppression afflicting their co-religionists (Falk 1938a).

Falk undertook ongoing practical efforts, which accompanied his appeals from the pulpit, to assist the migration and integration of refugees. He became a central intermediary, communicating with many illustrious rabbis in Europe regarding members of their congregations who had already obtained landing permits. Falk persistently involved himself in aiding the settlement of refugees through providing letters of introduction and character assurances to potential employers.[6] However, his ability to facilitate the granting of landing permits was far more limited.

Falk's position challenged existing attitudes and regulations within the Jewish establishment through continued advocacy for greater attention to the plight of refugees, but in his personal intervention he retained a selective approach. Falk consistently redirected letters from European Jews seeking to obtain landing permits to the AJWS. The letters of a number of Jews in Europe were responded to by L. Schulman, the organising secretary of the AJWS, who stated that he was in receipt of their letters 'through the courtesy of Rabbi Falk' (Schulman 1938).[7]

Falk often acted in accordance with government stipulations, which cautioned against attempts to interfere in the cases of those who had received unfavourable responses from the Department.[8] Falk's compliance with this approach, which mirrored the position of the AJWS, was reflected in his response to Viennese Jew Sigmund Hechinger. In response to Hechinger, whose application had been rejected by the AJWS, Falk affirmed that 'it is not within my power to compel the authorities to act contrary to their considered judgement' (Falk 1938g).[9]

However, Falk undertook fervent personal intervention in the cases of fellow rabbis and those whom he considered would bolster the Jewish spirit in Australia. In October 1938, Professor Moritz Bauer, a rabbi from Vienna, wrote to Falk concerning the prospect of migration for himself, his wife, and his daughter and son-in-law. Falk affirmed to Bauer that he was doing everything in his power on behalf of the family and had brought the case to the attention of the committee, as issues relating to emigration were the responsibility of the AJWS (Falk 1938d). In a subsequent letter, Falk assured Bauer that 'I do not neglect my duty and have once more placed your case before the Jewish Welfare Society, and by every means that lie in my power I will help you. Do not think for one moment that I slacken my efforts on your behalf. I am meeting the Committee this week and will place your case before them for special consideration' (Falk 1938i). Bauer and his family were ultimately successful in emigrating to England and no longer required Falk's advocacy. However, Falk's repeated representations, in this case and others, display his dissatisfaction with the approach of the AJWS.

Falk's persistent attempts to influence the outcome of applications through appeals to the AJWS convey a sense of his disillusionment with it. Falk was particularly troubled by the priorities of the AJWS, believing that they were more concerned with the amount of capital that refugees possessed

than their character (Drummond 1939b). This is demonstrated through Falk's involvement in the case of Dr Laszlo Roth, of Budapest, which was presented to Falk by Rabbi Hevesi. Falk replied to Hevesi, outlining the difficulties encountered in attempting to gain a permit for Roth: 'Firstly, our community cannot yet find any suitable employment for him. Secondly, that, as he is not a skilled tradesman, I cannot find anyone who would guarantee him employment, as required by the Commonwealth of Australia. Thirdly, Jews from Hungary do not come under the category of Refugees' (Falk 1939d).

Despite these problems, Falk assured Hevesi 'that I have not slackened my efforts on his behalf, and I still hope that I will succeed in obtaining him a permit' (Falk 1939d). Subsequently, Falk petitioned the AJWS to further consider the case of Roth, as well as that of Rabbi Babad, of Vienna, whom he described as 'gentlemen … of outstanding merit, and who are bound to be of great spiritual help, and a moral asset, to the Australian Jewish community' (Falk 1939d). Although Falk had already discussed the case of Roth with leading figures of the AJWS, he felt it necessary to reiterate this appeal as he was still 'of the opinion that it is within the scope of the Jewish Welfare Society to facilitate his entry into Australia' (Falk 1939d). In response, the AJWS requested that Falk submit all the documents pertaining to these cases for its consideration (AJWS 1939b; Silverman 1939). In some cases, Falk criticised the AJWS for the manner in which it had treated various refugees. He judged the AJWS to be ineffective, asserting that he had been able to successfully obtain permits for cases which had been rejected by the AJWS (1939c).

Under exceptional circumstances, Falk disregarded the official channel of the AJWS and personally tried to mediate on behalf of refugees. Representations made directly to the Department of the Interior were marked by Falk's overarching confidence in the highly commendable character of the applicants, displaying his conviction that it was on these grounds that permits should be granted. This was first demonstrated in the case of Ernst Rosenmann, who had initially applied for a permit to Australia in June 1938 and whose case was brought to the attention of Falk through another rabbinical connection, his father, Dr Moritz Rosenmann, the Chief Rabbi of Vienna. Falk forwarded this letter to the AJWS and assured Dr Rosenmann that everything was being done to obtain a landing permit to Australia for his son (Rosenmann 1938a; Falk 1938b; 1938c).[10] However, Falk also stressed that 'a personal approach to the Authorities on their behalf would not be advisable [as] our special committee is the only body recognised to communicate with the Government on such matters' (Falk 1938b). Similarly, the AJWS reinforced to Falk that it was not in the practice of interfering in cases that had been submitted directly to Canberra (Schulman 1938). Nonetheless, after Ernst Rosenmann, who did not have a visa, personally wrote to Falk from aboard the ship *Nieuw Zeeland* bound for Sydney, Falk

disregarded the AJWS procedure and appealed directly to the government to take action (Rosenmann 1938b; Falk 1938e).

The imminence of Rosenmann's arrival compelled Falk to approach the Department of the Interior, stressing that 'this is the first occasion on which I have personally appealed on behalf of an unfortunate Refugee, and I only do so because it is a matter of extreme urgency and a very deserving case' (Falk 1938e). Falk endorsed Rosenmann on the basis of his academic capabilities and was confident that he would be easily absorbed in his profession, guaranteeing that Rosenmann would never become a charge on the community. Falk advocated that Rosenmann should be provided with a six-month permit on his arrival, as Falk trusted that by 'the end of that period he will have proved himself a desirable citizen and worthy of being permanently domiciled in this country' (Falk 1938e). He received a response from the Department of the Interior informing him that the customs authorities had issued Rosenmann a Certificate of Exemption, allowing him to remain for three months. While Rosenmann's previous application had not been approved, despite his possession of over £200 landing capital and guaranteed employment, Falk was informed that 'in view of your guarantee, further consideration will be given to the question of permitting your nominee to remain in Australia' (Peters 1938). This displays the potential positive influence of Falk's direct intervention, which was in contradistinction to the general approach of the AJWS. However, the reconsideration of Rosenmann's case and its eventual outcome must be viewed in conjunction with the favourable circumstances pertaining to his application. Rosenmann possessed both £1,400 and a guaranteed position in his field, and most notably was already bound for Australia (Rosenmann 1938b). In other cases, Falk's interactions with the government proved to be less effective.

Even when unsuccessful in influencing government decisions, Falk continued to pursue other avenues to bring refugees, whom he considered suitable, to Australia. Falk again approached the Department of the Interior personally in December 1938 with regards to Hans Wolfgang Cohn, a 22-year-old Jewish man from Berlin. Falk urged the Department to grant a landing permit to Cohn as soon as possible, 'as it is very urgent that this young man should leave Germany in the next few weeks' (Falk 1938j). In order to support this application, Falk asserted that the Jewish community would be able to absorb Cohn as a Hebrew teacher, with guaranteed funding and employment from a respectable member of the community. He emphasised that Cohn would be 'an acquisition to Australia' and Falk assured Cohn of his confidence that permission for him to enter Australia would soon be granted and, in anticipation of this, advised that he should 'leave Germany as soon as possible and to stay in the meantime in another country' (Falk 1938j; Falk 1938b). However, on 10 March 1939, Falk received notice from the Department that the application had not been approved (Department of the Interior 1939).

Falk continued to petition for reconsideration of Cohn's case. In March 1939, New South Wales Minister for Education, David Henry Drummond, wrote to Falk in order to arrange an interview to discuss a number of issues pertaining to refugees (Drummond 1939a). During their subsequent meeting, Falk presented Cohn's case to Drummond, which compelled Drummond to appeal to John McEwan, the Minister for the Interior, in a personal capacity. In his letter to McEwan, Drummond extolled Falk's personality and credentials in order to posit him as a suitable judge of character and to impart a sense of the gravity and dependability of his guarantee (Drummond 1939b). Drummond wrote that Falk 'is a highly cultured, sincere and able man, possessing a character which I wish were more common among some of his gentile friends' (Drummond 1939b).

Falk also wrote to McEwan, requesting a personal meeting with the Minister to discuss further issues relating to refugees (Falk 1939e). While it is unclear whether this meeting eventuated, McEwan appeared receptive to Falk's approach, asserting that if there were any 'particular matters you would like to forward for my consideration, I should be glad if you would send these on to me at your convenience' and giving assurance that he would make enquiries into Cohn's case (McEwan 1939). However, Cohn was still awaiting a resolution in May 1939 and a permit does not appear to have been granted (Cohn 1939). Throughout this period, Falk continued to advocate on Cohn's behalf through appeals within the Jewish community (Cohn 1939). While Falk's representations could influence the AJWS and the Australian Government to reassess their position in individual cases, pressure from Falk did not necessarily alter the overall actions of the AJWS, nor influence subsequent decisions at the governmental level.

Falk attempted to bolster the chance of the success of refugees' applications through seeking employment opportunities for them, as he perceived this to be 'one of the chief grounds on which applications are granted' (Falk 1939a). Falk appealed to connections within the wider Jewish community in Australia for assistance in this matter. He undertook persistent efforts to secure a position for 46-year-old Jacob Dobschiner, of Breslau, who was an experienced cantor, religious teacher and *schochet*, as well as choir leader and shofar blower within his home community (Falk 1938f). Dobschiner wrote to Falk in October 1938, requesting help to find a position in Australia: 'If there are no free positions in your community, I would be grateful if you could perhaps confer with a neighbouring community about an appointment, even if it is a lowly position. Through your kindness, Sir Reverend Rabbi, you would do a great Mitzvah if you help me so that I can support my family' (Dobschiner 1938).

In November 1938, Falk recommended Dobschiner to the Broken Hill Jewish community as a suitable minister for their congregation (Falk 1938k). Failing to receive acknowledgment of his letter, Falk wrote again in December 1938, emphasising the importance of the case, asserting that 'as

the matter is of an urgent nature I would be glad to know your decision. Please take care of the documents I sent you' (Falk 1938k). Dobschiner was arrested on *Kristallnacht* and imprisoned in Buchenwald. Upon his release he was forced to leave Germany, finding refuge in England and leaving behind his wife and two children. Dobschiner did not hear from his family again and was the sole survivor of his family (Dobschiner 1958). Despite Falk's efforts to support the family, his ability to impact their migration was limited.

The response of the AJWS to refugees who conformed to government standards highlights the external limitations imposed upon them by the Department. Max Wiener, a prominent rabbi within the Liberal German rabbinate in Berlin, approached Falk concerning Erich Wolpert, a 47-year-old member of his congregation (Wiener 1938). Wolpert requested Falk to recommend his application to the AJWS, stating: 'I beg you once more very much to support my application with your well known influence' (Wolpert 1938). Subsequently, Wolpert's application was forwarded to the Department of the Interior, likely supported due to his agricultural background and intention to undertake farm work on his arrival, an occupation that was considered desirable under governmental provisions. However, despite the endorsement of the AJWS and his professional attributes, Wolpert did not immigrate to Australia[11] (Falk 1938h) and was deported to Auschwitz from Berlin in May 1943. The reason he did not come to Australia cannot be ascertained: whether a landing permit was not granted by the Department, or whether there were other preventative causes, such as a lack of funds, remains unknown.

However, this case demonstrates the conditions which constrained the AJWS, as even some refugees who they guaranteed and recommended to the government did not reach Australia. Within the literature, debate has arisen regarding the conservative polices of the AJWS and their impact on government policy throughout the period leading up to World War Two (Rutland 1988, 184). Blakeney has derided the record of the AJWS, asserting that 'Australian Jewish leaders failed to support their European co-religionists' through pursuing a 'policy of self-interest' (Blakeney 1985, 161). However, as illustrated by the case of Wolpert, the AJWS cannot be retrospectively ascribed a power they did not possess to mitigate all factors that prohibited Jewish migration to Australia.

Falk's correspondence highlights the terms of selection that rendered migration to Australia inaccessible for some refugees. In June 1939, Falk was approached by Drummond to intervene in the case of Professor Nathan Rubenstein, a 60-year-old mathematics professor from Vienna (Drummond 1939c). Due to Rubenstein's excellent qualifications, Drummond had already presented this case to the Department of the Interior, instilling in Rubenstein the hope that he would be able to gain a position working in a private school in Australia and therefore obtain a landing permit for himself, his wife and his daughter.[12] Despite Rubenstein's qualifications and his declaration that

family abroad would be able to provide the requisite landing capital, the family's application was rejected. He wrote again to Drummond in June 1939, despairing that 'I have not only to fight for my own existence but also that of my family' (Rubenstein 1939a). Rubenstein postulated that his rejection was a result of his age and lack of a guarantor (Rubenstein 1939c). Due to Falk's role in a number of similar cases and Drummond's knowledge of Falk's deep interest in the plight of refugees, Drummond appealed to him, saying that 'if you could establish the fact that Professor Rubenstein could be placed in suitable employment here it might alter the decision of the Commonwealth authorities' (Drummond 1939c). This highlights again the importance placed on securing employment, as it was this aspect that Drummond sought to address in order to influence the Department to alter its decision. This correspondence discloses dissatisfaction with the terms of government selection from both Drummond and Falk, who were frustrated by their limited impact. Falk continued to advocate for a change in the government's approach to refugees in order to exert more influence and further aid his oppressed co-religionists.

Conclusion

The letters written to Rabbi Falk throughout 1938 and 1939 are a testimony to the impact of both oppressive conditions across Europe, and the restrictive Australian immigration policy on the lives of individuals. The correspondence with Falk reveals the economic destitution, loss of livelihood, imprisonments, expulsions and exclusion from society, which compelled Jews to seek refuge with great urgency from 1938–39. These appeals illustrate the implications of complex national identities, movements of people and groups, and changing borders, demonstrating that the ramifications of Nazi policies were not confined by the borders of the expanded German Reich and continued to afflict those elsewhere in Europe. The correspondence provides insight into the *Anschluss*, the expulsion of the *Ostjuden*, the terror of *Kristallnacht*, and the implementation of anti-Jewish legislation, demonstrating the impact such events had on degradation of personal circumstances for Jews across Europe.

Concomitantly, the letters reveal the obstacles and arduous processes that refugees encountered in their attempts to emigrate safely and the suffering resulting from these complications. The barriers imposed by the Australian immigration policy rendered many refugees unable to even apply for a landing permit due to rigid selection criteria. Examination of the cases in Falk's correspondence expose the inadequacy of the measures introduced to regulate refugee migration, as the scale of the crisis and consequent number of applicants far exceeded the government response. Moreover, the government did not attempt to alleviate this issue due to underlying hostility towards alien migration, exacerbated by the economic conditions in Australia

following the Depression, expressed in antagonism towards foreign Jews, particularly those from eastern Europe.

Due to the lack of detailed biographical information in the letters, the fate of all of the individuals who wrote to Falk could not be determined. It could be ascertained that at least two cases successfully immigrated to the USA[13] and five to the United Kingdom before the outbreak of war.[14] Five cases were able to find refuge in Australia.[15] However, these cases and their plight, as explicated through their writings to Falk, remain a stark reminder of the rupture that occurred in their lives. Their letters illuminate the fragmentation of families and significant loss that impacted even those who safely escaped Europe.

Nevertheless, more commonly, the experiences presented in Falk's correspondence demonstrate that individuals were unable to emigrate. Though Falk was able to exert influence in some cases, he was restricted in his ability to help, despite his strong desire to do so. Falk was dissatisfied with the government stipulations determining emigration and urged for change, although he remained realistic about the extent of his influence within his actions, choosing to mediate directly only in selected cases. Falk often worked in conjunction with the AJWS but was critical of its compliance with government regulations, exhorting both the AJWS and the government to take further action on behalf of refugees. However, the approval of the AJWS or the advocacy of non-Jewish State parliamentarians did not necessarily engender the admission of those refugees to Australia. This demonstrates that the unwillingness of the Australian Government to facilitate or expedite cases remained an overarching power prohibiting the immigration of European Jews, even those who fulfilled the selection criteria, let alone those who did not.

On 30 May 1939, Hans Wolfgang Cohn wrote to Falk following successive, failed attempts to gain entry to Australia, stating:

> I always hoped that I should be able in a short time to thank you personally for your kind help. But unfortunately I got this bad refusal and I could not go to Australia, at least not for the moment … I can only thank by promising that I will do my best if I succeed to come over … I hope that it will not take a long time untill I am able to emigrate to Australia. (Cohn 1939)

Cohn was deported to Auschwitz in April 1943. His words echo the intertwined sentiments of hope and anxiety expressed throughout the refugees' letters to Falk, who turned to him as a final recourse in 1938 and 1939. While the letters can only offer a partial understanding of the lives and fates of individuals, they bear witness to the complex and challenging decisions faced by refugees caught in the vortex of prewar events. By amplifying the voices and experiences of these prewar refugees, Falk's

correspondence significantly extends and deepens understanding of the reverberations of Australia's response to the European crisis.

Notes

1 The AJWS also noted that it was preferable that applicants be willing to be settled in districts away from the capital cities. See ROTA, 1938.
2 The protracted length of time involved in the granting of applications was a result of the 'shuttle-cocking of applications'. Draft for a press release, 16 February 1939, as quoted in Rutland 1988, 182.
3 Manifest of the *S.S. Mouzinho*, 2 September 1941, Johanna Kamm; images, "Passenger Search," Statue of Liberty—Ellis Island Foundation (https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org: accessed 29 June 2020).
4 Transport lists: "Transports of the elderly" 35-39 (I/36 - I/40) to Theresienstadt (a total of 512 names), 08/03/1942 – 08/07/1942, 15510016/ITS Digital Archive, Arolsen Archives.
5 A similar situation is described by Zachan Basser regarding his parents (Basser 1939).
6 Some examples of this type of communication are included in letters by Rabbi Falk (1939c; 1939f; 1939g).
7 The file of Rabbi Falk's correspondence contains copies of 17 such responses.
8 See General Activities and Functions of the Sydney Office of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society, 29 June 1939, as cited in Bartrop 1994, 137.
9 Falk iterated to Hechinger that the AJWS enacted government policy, which specified:

1) That the emigrants should be such that they can be readily absorbed in the economic life of Australia
2) That they must not be over 50.
3) That they must have £200 landing money.

10 In 1938, Rosenmann was 35 years old and had been employed for the past three years as the director of Assicurazioni Generali Insurance Co. Ltd. in Vienna.
11 Wolpert wrote that: 'I was formerly a merchant but since circumstances have obliged me to change my calling, have devoted myself, with my family, to agriculture, specifically cattle-breeding … I intend later on to acquire a farm, when conversant with the country and its methods; the means for this would be provided by relations abroad' (Wolpert 1938).
12 These qualifications were evidenced by a referee who described him as 'one of the best known and prominent teachers for Mathematics and Physics in Vienna.' Additionally, Rubenstein had received the highest distinction for

Educational Methods from the Viennese Board of Education in 1931 and had been working on a mathematical reference book for publication (Rostler 1939; Rubenstein 1939b).

13 Johanna Kamm immigrated to the United States with her brother Max and sister Irma, transiting through Lisbon in 1941. Susi Fuchs and Herbert Reiss also immigrated to the United States through Tangiers with aid from the Joint Distribution Committee.

14 Jacob Dobschiner immigrated to England in 1939. Moritz Bauer, of Vienna, along with his daughter and son-in-law, Anna and Friedrich Aldor, immigrated to England before the war. Paul Lichtenstern also immigrated to England in 1939, settling in London, where he married and was interned. Lichtenstern was a highly accomplished concert pianist and organist in Vienna and continued to work in this field in London. Josef Bandel escaped to England with his family. However, he was arrested in 1940 as an enemy alien and came to Australia aboard the *Dunera.* He returned to England upon his release. Rabbi Hugo Stránský of Žilina, Czechoslovakia, served as a rabbi in a boarding school in Wales during the war. He came to Australia in 1947 after being appointed to the position of rabbi to the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation.

15 Hans Levi and his wife Friedl immigrated to Australia in September 1938. In Berlin, he had been heavily involved in facilitating refugee migration and his involvement in issues pertaining to refugees remained in Australia. Ernst Rosenmann, son of the Chief Rabbi of Vienna, arrived in Australia in November 1938 with the personal guarantee of Rabbi Falk. Ludwik Nadel and his wife immigrated to Australia from Poland in April 1939. Ernest Grün, a doctor from Budapest, Hungary, arrived in Sydney in April 1939, where he retrained to practise medicine in Australia. However, in late 1941, he was interned as an enemy alien in Liverpool Internment Camp for approximately one month. Anton Bauer arrived in Australia in September 1939 with his wife and son, after receiving landing permits only a few weeks before the outbreak of war.

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