

‘Enemy Aliens’ and Human Rights

INFORMATION SHEET AND ACTIVITIES FOR LEARNERS

1. ‘Enemy aliens’: classification and internment

After the outbreak of war in September 1939, all Germans and Austrians in Britain became ‘enemy aliens’ and had to register with the police. The Home Office set up internment tribunals throughout the country, to examine all ‘enemy aliens’ over the age of 16 and classify them as either Category A, B, or C:

- Category A, to be interned.
- Category B, to be exempt from internment but subject to the restrictions decreed by the Special Order.
- Category C, to be exempt from both internment and restrictions.

Although most remained at liberty, in the summer of 1940, restrictions tightened due to the risk of German invasion, and tens of thousands were interned regardless of their classification.

The increase in numbers of those interned exhausted the capacity of existing sites and, although most refugees were interned in camps in Britain, some were deported to other countries, notably Canada and Australia. During wartime, these were dangerous voyages. One ship (the SS Arandora Star) carrying over 1,600 people, several hundred of whom were German refugees, was torpedoed by a German submarine on its way to Canada in July 1940. Over 800 people drowned.

2. Activities

ACTIVITY 1

- a) Read the [Enemy Aliens and Internees card for Heinrich David Pinkus](#):

Reclassify C. Return and Release auth.

MALE ENEMY ALIEN—EXEMPTION FROM INTERNMENT—REFUGEE

(1) Surname (block capitals) PINKUS **INTERNEED (B)**

Forenames Heinrich David. *Released on board*

Alias Heinrich David Israel PINKUS. *USA 28.11.41*

(2) Date and place of birth 16 October, 1922, in Berlin.

(3) Nationality German.

(4) Police Regn. Cert. No. 731872 Home Office reference if known P.5261.

Special Procedure Card Number if known

(5) Address ~~prior to internment~~ 5 Park Grove,

Cardiff.

(6) Normal occupation Schoolboy.

(7) Present Occupation Trainee employment (Tool maker)

(8) Name and address of employer Aero Zip Fasteners, Ltd, Treforest, Glam.

(9) Decision of Tribunal Exempted from internment Date 7, November, 1939.

(10) Whether exempted from Article 6(A) (Yes or No) No.

(11) Whether desires to be repatriated (Yes or No) No.

(7535) 25717/835 25m 9/39 G & S 704

B.B.W.
25/9/41
AGE 68
11/2
OCC. GR
DI
EX. GA
and 9A
NO

[Enemy Aliens and Internees card for Heinrich David Pinkus.](#)

The National Archives, Kew, London, England, HO 396 WW2 Internees (Aliens) Index Cards 1939-1947, Archive Reference: HO 396/135.

Image: People's Collection Wales.

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Note about the card:

In August 1938, all Jews with 'non-Jewish' names in Nazi Germany had to have their passports and other identification cards marked with an additional name: 'Israel' for men and 'Sara' for women.

b) Discuss as a class:

- What information about Pinkus does the card provide?
- Why is Pinkus's middle name listed as 'Israel'?
- What does "Reclassify C" mean?
- Why were so many people who were initially exempted ultimately interned?

ACTIVITY 2

a) Read Heinrich Pinkus's and Walter Finkler's biographies and then listen to the audio clips from oral history interviews with [Gaby Koppel](#) and [Evelyn Ruth Kaye](#). In the clips, Gaby and Evelyn speak about their fathers' internment.

Heinrich Pinkus's Biography

Heinrich Pinkus was born in Berlin in 1922. His stepfather, Joachim Koppel, was a businessman who fled to Britain in 1938 and set up a factory at Treforest Trading Estate near Pontypridd. Heinrich and his younger sister, Ilse, followed soon afterwards and stayed with the rest of the family in Cardiff. In May 1940, both Heinrich and Ilse were interned as enemy aliens, and Heinrich was then deported to Canada. Ilse was released in February 1941, while Heinrich came back to the UK and was released in November 1941. After the war, Heinrich changed his name to Henry Koppel and became chief engineer for Aero Zipp, the family business.

Heinrich's daughter, Gaby Koppel, grew up in Cardiff and now works as a journalist in London.

Oral history transcript:

[Gaby Koppel talks about her father's internment in the Hutchinson Camp on the Isle of Man and about his deportation to Canada.](#)

My dad was—must have been one of the younger ones, 'cause he was 17. A lot of people have written about the hardships of internment, but my dad just had funny stories to tell, and regarded the whole thing as a bit of an adventure, which maybe because of his age, it was. He—one thing he said, it was very cold. In Canada, so, he went—first he was interned, he was sent to Huyton in Liverpool, which was a holding camp, then he was sent to the Isle of Man, and he did tell all these stories. I mean, I heard them fresh from him, without any sense of cliché, about how the Isle of Man, it was like a university to him, he learned such a lot about music, the Amadeus Quartet, he heard them play, he learned to play bridge, which was his lifelong passion, and he learned all sorts of things; it was really—a real education. And obviously, he was surrounded by the Mittel European Jewish people, who were the milieu that he was used to, so there was a sort of comfortable...

And he, he'd tell you stories about the, the food, 'cause you had the rations, you know, were absolutely rubbish in Canada, but, you know, you had all these Viennese pastry chefs, and they'd take all the rations and they—all this sort of awful meat, quality of meat, they were being sent—make it into salami and sell it back to the Canadians at a profit. But one thing that must have been missing, so I've got all my—not all, but I've got about 15 or 20 letters that my dad wrote home from the internment camp, and it was, "Please send..." – I mean, he wasn't very, he didn't say very much, quite large writing, quite small paper—"Please send warm trousers and chocolate."

About Hutchinson Camp:

The Hutchinson Camp became known as the 'Artists' Camp', after the high number of intellectuals and artists who were interned there. The internees put on musical performances, held lectures, and created artworks during their time at the camp. Some sculptors created sculptures using porridge since there was no other material available.

Walter Finkler's Biography

Walter Finkel, a musician and journalist, was arrested and sent to Dachau concentration camp after *Kristallnacht* but was released and managed to flee to Britain on a forged visa. On his arrival, he stayed briefly at Kitchener Camp, a welcome camp for Jewish refugees in Kent. In 1940, he was arrested and interned on the Isle of Man.

Walter's daughter, Evelyn Ruth Kaye, came to Britain from Vienna in Austria on the Kindertransport. She went to school in Builth Wells in mid-Wales during the war. Her mother had also escaped on a domestic visa and worked in London and the Isle of Wight. The family were reunited in England after the war ended.

Oral History transcript:

[Evelyn Ruth Kaye talks about her father almost boarding a ship containing refugees that was sunk while en route to Canada](#) (in her testimony, she mistakenly refers to Canada as Australia).

Oh, we had one bad moment. You know they sent some of the people from the Isle of Man to Australia, and we had a letter from my father to say he was being sent to Australia, and the ship was sunk, and only ten people were saved, and the BBC announced the names, and my father's name was amongst them. And we waited for about a fortnight, and then he was only allowed to write once a month and he wrote, he had got on the ship, but being absent-minded he'd forgotten his passport so they turfed him out.

b) Consider and discuss in pairs or small groups:

- How might internees who were being deported have felt? What about their family who were left behind?
- How would you have tried to pass the time in an internment camp?
- What might you have requested from a loved one while you were interned?

c) Communicate the main discussion points to the whole class.

ACTIVITY 3



a) Consider, individually, what words could describe the feelings of the internees and their families.

b) As a class create a word cloud (for example on a board or piece of paper) and add your word(s).