

Margot Smith née Lövy

This is the abridged story of my mother, born Margot Lövy in 1916; she reached England as a refugee in early 1939, joined the Auxiliary Training Service (ATS) and then married an English army officer.

Thanks in part to good fortune, but mainly to the UK's Co-ordinating Committee for Refugees and to the ATS, Margot survived the war, and lived in England until 2002. Some family and friends also survived, but her mother, sisters and many other family members died in the Holocaust. This is as much their story as it is hers.

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The Hirschfeld - Lövy Family

1700s - 1800s

In 1772 the city of Grudziądz, on the Vistula River in present-day Poland, was annexed by the German Kingdom of Prussia; Frederick the Great brought in families to colonise the city and it was re-named as Graudenz. In 1871 the region was known as East Prussia and became part of the unified German Empire.

1920s

On January 23 1920 the Treaty of Versailles became effective; a newly reborn Polish state was created; East Prussia was incorporated into the new Second Polish Republic and Graudenz returned to its Polish name Grudziądz. At that time Józef Włodek, the newly appointed Polish mayor, described his impression of the town as "modern but unfortunately completely German". The majority of the ethnic minority German population were forced to re-locate to Germany. They included Johanna Lövy and her family, who moved to Bonn; her brother Arthur already lived there with his family. Johanna had been widowed in about 1917 when her husband, Sally, died of natural causes; she was in her mid-30s and had three daughters:

- Dorothea (Thea) born 27 August 1911
- Ruth born 3 April 1913
- Margot born 22 November 1916

The girls can be seen on the right in a family photograph with their Grandfather, Markus Hirschfeld, and four cousins: Manfred, Betty and twins Willi and Dorothea (Doris).



Figure 1; (l-r) Manfred, Betty, Willi, Markus, Doris, Margot, Thea, Ruth (abt 1925)

Margot's birth certificate, issued in 1938, is in a mixture of Polish and German.

Rzeczpospolita Polska
Województwo Pomorskie

AD.

Dokument urodzenia.

Nr. 856

Grajewo am 27 November 1936

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschien heute, der Persönlichkeit nach _____, be _____, kannt.

die Hebamme Friederike Herrmann geborenen Lewin

wohnhaft in Grajewo, Untere Thornerstrasse 11

Religion und zeigte an, dass von der Johanna Löwy geborenen Hirschfeld, Ehefrau des Händlers Sally Löwy beide mosaischer Religion.

wohnhaft in Grajewo, Obere Thornerstrasse 34

Grajewo in dieser Wohnung am zwölften zwanzigen ten November des Jahres tausend neun hundert achtundsechzig um zwölf Uhr ein Kind weib lichen Geschlechts geboren worden sei, welches den Vornamen Margot

Die Anwesende erklärte, dass sie bei der Hiederkunft der Löwy geborenen Hirschfeld zugegen gewesen sei. Vorstehendes ein Druckwort gestrichen

Vorgelesen, genehmigt und unterschrieben

Friederike Herrmann

Der Standesbeamte

In Vertretung: Bohrsch

Zugodność powyższego wywaga z księga główną urodzeń Urzędu Stanu Cywilnego w _____ powiat _____

niniejszym poświadczam się

Grajewo, dnia 25 października 1936 r.

Urządnik stanu cywilnego

Figure 2; Margot Smith birth certificate

1920s - 1930s; Bonn

By 1938 Margot Smith was working as a well-qualified personal assistant (PA) in the main office of the 'Herz & Cie' factory in Siegburg, near Bonn; she could speak English as well as German and could take shorthand in both languages.

Her cousin Willy Hirschfeld was working at the same factory. But on 9-10 November 1938, there was a series of coordinated attacks on Jews and Jewish property across Germany. Houses and property were seized, people were forced to relocate to smaller houses, and there were 'foreclosure sales' with the revenue being kept by the state. Willy was one of those who was arrested and sent to Dachau; however, he was extremely fortunate to be released after a few months, and returned home.

Mr Herz, the owner of the factory, had contacts in England, and made arrangements to leave Germany; he also helped Margot and Willy to get the necessary documents.¹

¹ As a small *quid pro quo* Margot smuggled some family jewellery out of Germany for him! Possibly she just took it as part of her own baggage and personal allowance; there was a limit not only on how much money each emigrant could take, but also a limit on how much jewellery a Jew could have; the Herz family had probably reached their personal limit, whereas Margot's family was not wealthy and she had no jewellery of her own. See Figure 4

Despite her secretarial qualifications Margot could only get a visa to enter England in order to work as a domestic servant, and she needed appropriate references. For example, Frau Feldmann had 'nothing but the best' to say about her. Of course, Margot had taken the trouble to type out a few templates to pass around to family and friends

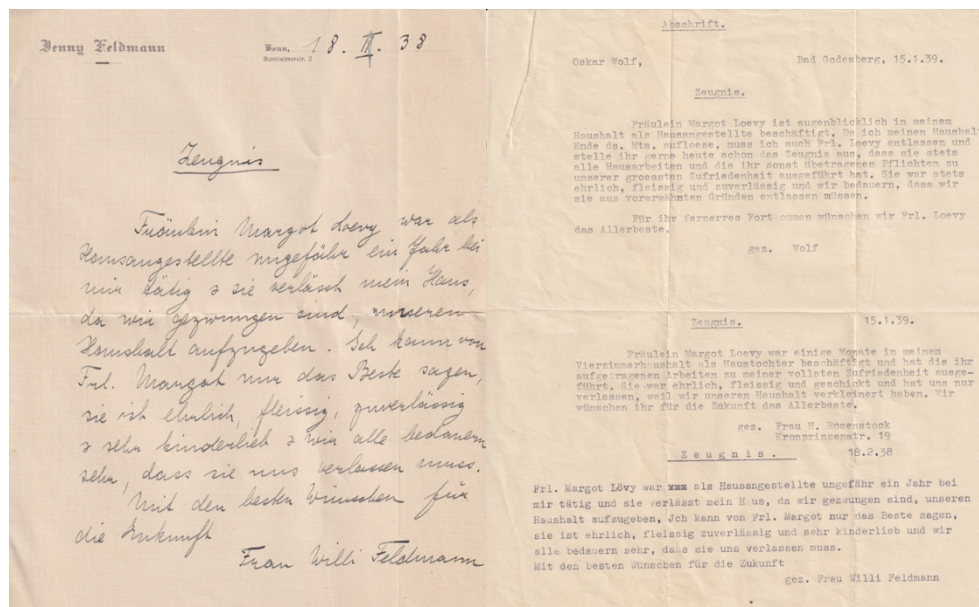


Figure 3; Margot Lövy - Reference from Frau Feldmann

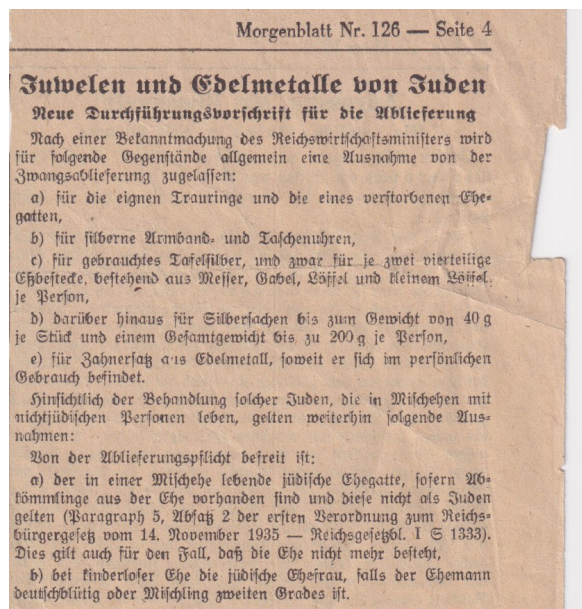


Figure 4; Jewels and Precious Metals

1939-1940; to London

British paperwork

The process of applying to get to England started late in 1938, but there were various German and English administrative hurdles in the way. A 'Permit Card' in German, dated 13 February 1939, was sent with confirmation of Refugee status from the Co-ordinating Committee for Refugees. Accompanying the letters were various official documents from the British refugee agencies, also in German, giving advice such as not accepting unsolicited job offers and not speaking German in public.

'You are Great Britain's guests. Courtesy and good behaviour will assure you warm welcome and sympathy everywhere ...'

Date 13.2.39. Instructions 'R,' Paragraph 13.
2304 Refugee to be admitted to the United Kingdom on condition that she does not enter any employment other than as a resident in service in a private household.

Full Name of Applicant LOEVY Margot
Date of Birth 22.11.1916 Place of Birth Graudenz an der Weichsel
Single, Widow or Divorced Single
Nationality German
Address abroad Bonn am Rhein, Kaiserplatz 16,
Occupation abroad Not stated
Visa to be applied for on behalf of Applicant
Signed on behalf of the Co-ordinating Committee for Refugees (Domestic Bureau)
Holle German

For Authentication by The Home Office.

Figure 5; Refugee Status approval

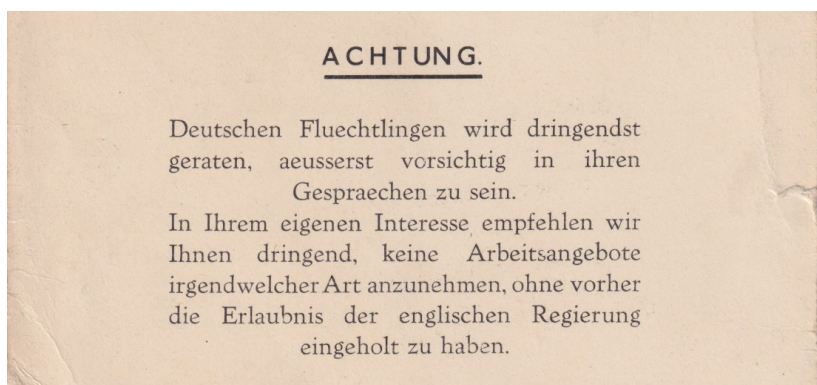


Figure 6; Advice to Refugees

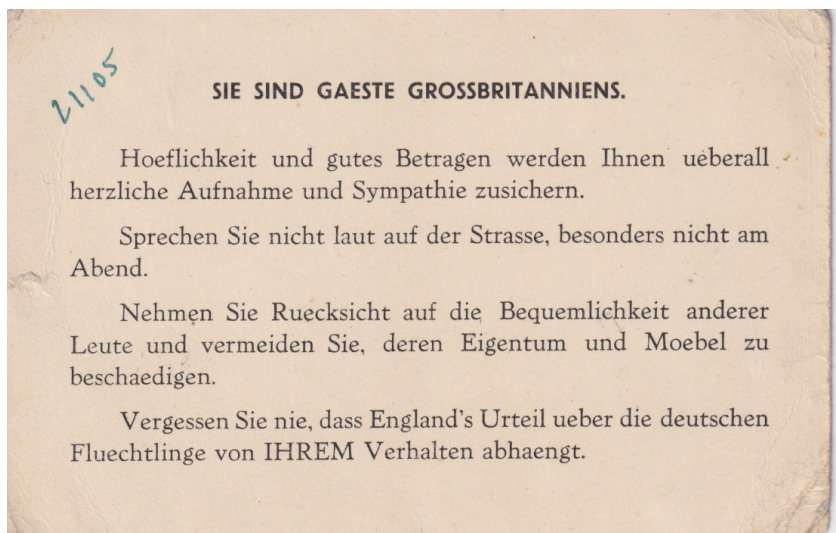


Figure 7; You are Guests of Great Britain

TELEPHONE: MUSEUM 1971/5 (PRIVATE BRANCH EXCHANGE)

CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES
DOMESTIC BUREAU
LICENSED BY THE L.C.C.

MEMBERS:
German Jewish Aid Committee
Austrian Self-Aid Committee
Catholic Committee for Refugees
The Society of Friends
(German and Austrian Committees)
British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia
W.I.Z.O.

5 MECKLENBURGH SQUARE,
(OFF GUILFORD STREET)
LONDON, W.C.1.
16.2.1939

IN REPLY KINDLY QUOTE REFERENCE No. **Margot Loewy**

REFERENCE: PERMIT CARD. **2304**

BETRIEFT IHRE STELLE BEI: **Mrs. Phoebe Cohen**
3, Cheesington Avenue
London, North Finchley
N.12.

Anbei ueberreichen wir Ihnen Ausweiskarte Ihrer Arbeitsbewilligung fuer eine Haushaltstelle seitens der britischen Behoerden und bitten Sie, mit dieser Karte bei dem zustaeendigen britischen Konsulat vorzusprechen um die Ausstellung des Visums zu beantragen. Diese Karte ist gut aufzubewahren und bei der Einreise in England dem Einreisebeamten vorzuzeigen.

Wollen Sie sich gleichzeitig mit Ihren zukuenftigen Arbeitsgebern in Verbindung setzen und diesen das Datum Ihrer Ankunft mitteilen.

Sollte Ihr Zug zu spaet in London ankommen, um noch Ihre Reise zu Ihrem zukuenftigen Arbeitsplatz fortzusetzen, so wenden Sie sich bitte an den Vertreter des

Jewish Shelter, 53 Mansell Street, London, E.1.

der jeden Zug abwartet und Ihnen Nachtquartier besorgen wird. Sollten Sie diesen Vertreter nicht auffinden koennen, so wenden Sie sich direkt an diese Adresse und zeigen Sie unseren Brief dort vor.

Sollten Sie die Permitskarte nicht mehr in Anspruch nehmen wollen, so retournieren Sie dieselbe bitte postwendend unter Angabe des Grundes.

Hochachtungsvoll

A. BERMAN
SECRETARY

Figure 8; Work Permit

German paperwork

Once she had the English Permit Card, she could start getting the various German documents. These included not only her tickets for the trains and ferry, but a passport, medical certificate, finance certificates, and various export documents for luggage. One of the restrictions placed on Jewish citizens in Germany was that all women were officially given the second name 'Sara', while all men were given the second name 'Moses'. The attached passport and most of her travel documents show 'Margot **Sara** Lövy' as her name; but not those where she signed her own name. The passport, issued on 8 March 1939, has a prominent capital letter 'J' for 'Jewish' stamped on it.

Eventually she had all the necessary paperwork from both countries, including a UK Visa 'good for a single journey'. Shipping paperwork for her luggage is dated 21 April. Margot and Willy travelled to England together, via Venlo and Harwich, on 22 April. She had to report to the nearest police station on arrival in London, and received a Metropolitan Police stamp in her passport on 27 April. Willy's sister Doris was eventually able to join them a few months later, just before the war started. However, Margot's mother and sisters, and many more members of the extended Hirschfeld family, had to stay behind in Germany. Max and Ruth certainly tried hard to get exit visas, and documents show that Max applied for jobs in London and in Manchester.



Figure 9; Margot Lövy - German Passport



Figure 10; Margot Sara - Visas

FEMALE ENEMY ALIEN—EXEMPTION FROM INTERNMENT—REFUGEE

(1) Surname (block capitals) LOZY
 Forenames Margot
 Alias _____

(2) Date and place of birth 22.11.1916 - Goudenz

(3) Nationality German

(4) Police Regn. Cert. No. 726801 Home Office reference, if known _____
 Special Procedure Card Number, if known _____

(5) Address 20 Woodlawn, N.W.11.

(6) Normal occupation Artist

(7) Present Occupation Domestic

(8) Name and address of employer _____

(9) Decision of Tribunal Exempt Date 20.12.39

(10) Whether exempted from Articles 6 (a) and 9 (a) (Yes or No) _____

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

25m 9/39—[7815] 34361/803 50m 11/39 4070 G & S 704

[OVER]

Figure 11; Figure 11; Enemy Alien - Exemption from Internment

England 1939 – 1940

Internment Tribunal

Margot had to attend an 'Internment Tribunal' on 28 December 1939; a hand-written testimonial from her then-employer was kept with the official document directing her to attend Hendon Petty Sessions with her Registration Certificate and Passport.² She was declared 'Exempt from Internment'.

Domestic Work

Margot and Doris were both registered with the 'Domestic Bureau' and found occasional domestic service work in London, but it was not ideal. A leaflet 'for Employers and Employees' that was issued by the Bureau seems to have been written originally in German, and then translated into English by somebody whose first language was German, not English; note the translation of 'mädchen' as 'maids'.

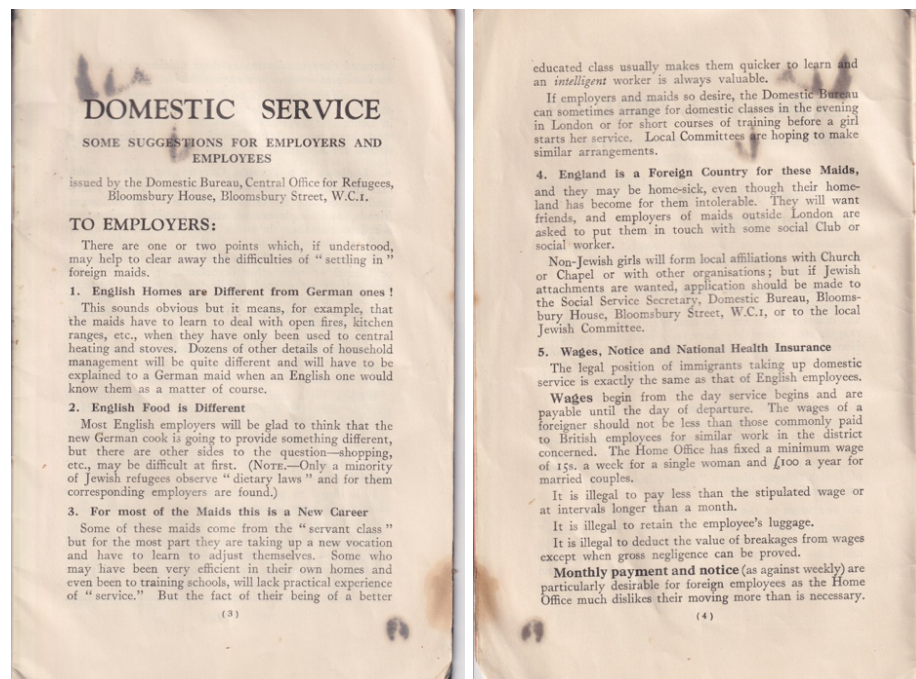


Figure 12; Domestic Service Leaflet – in English and German

² It was at this time that her cousin Willy Field (né Hirschfeld) was interned. He was sent to the Isle of Man, and later to Australia. Eventually he was able to join the British army, and returned to UK in time to be involved in the D Day Invasion. His full story can be found in 'From Dachau to D-Day' by Helen Fry.

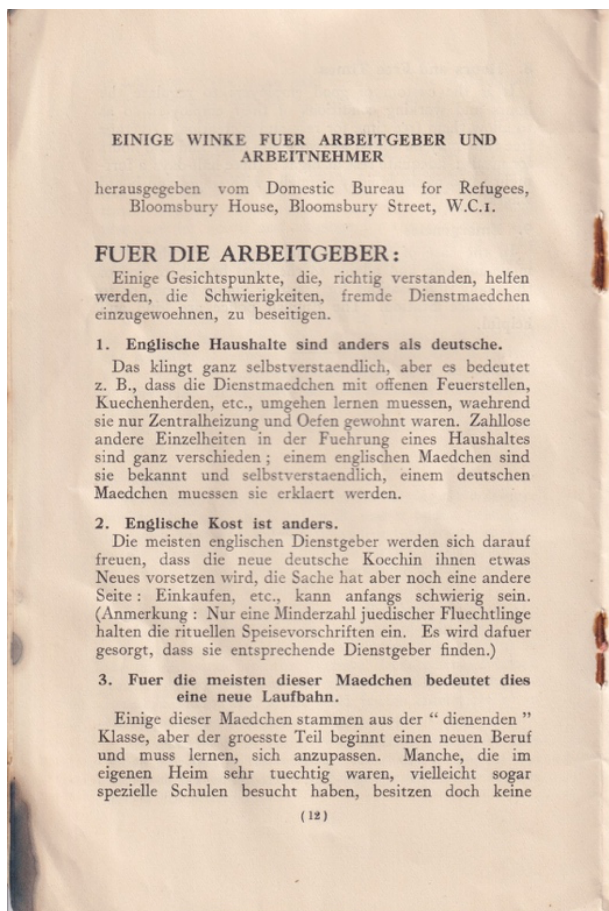


Figure 13; Domestic Service Leaflet – in German

Reg. No	12024	4.10.40	BT
DOMESTIC BUREAU - REGISTRY OFFICE			
BLOOMSBURY HOUSE, BLOOMSBURY STREET, W.C.1			
Name	LÖVY Maccot		
Address	68 Highfield Ave. NW11		
Age	23	Religion	Jewish
Nationality	German	G.J.A. Reg. No.	21105
Permit No.	P.13	Date of Arrival	22.4.39
Type of work	domestic help		

Figure 14; Domestic Bureau

Auxiliary Territorial Service

The Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), formed in 1938, was the women's branch of the British Army. In 1940 the ATS was opened up to allow refugees, of whatever nationality, to join up. The recruiting documents stressed the wide range of jobs and duties that could be undertaken in the ATS; however, the jobs available to 'friendly aliens of enemy origin' in the ATS were restricted to storewomen, cooks and orderlies. However, these jobs were still more attractive than the part-time domestic work which was all they could do in London.

Margot's diary notes that basic pay started at 1/8d a day, increasing to 2/10d or even 3/4d a day as a Private. So one of the attractions of joining up was that she would get paid more than as a domestic. Especially taking into account the perks:

What free issue of clothing do I receive?

Not only uniform, cap, shoes, gloves, and greatcoat, but all your underclothes and necessities, down to a toothbrush, are issued and replaced, free. You are not obliged to wear the issue underclothing... But you will want to when you try them!

Both Margot and Doris joined up in early 1941, and moved together to the north-west of England and then north Wales. They were joined by other refugees, many of whom remained friends for the rest of their lives. Margot met an English Army officer and Doris met a Scottish scientist; they both settled in England for the rest of their lives.



Figure 15; Margot and ATS friends abt 1942

ALLIED VOLUNTEERS FOR A.T.S.

Refugee Girls' Army Life EXCELLENT TREATMENT

The appeal to refugee women and girls for recruits for the Allied Volunteer Forces is meeting with a satisfactory response. This statement was made to me by Mrs. Lionel Cohen, a Senior Commander of the A.T.S., in a special interview, writes a JEWISH CHRONICLE representative.

Several platoons had been formed, Mrs. Cohen said, and officers of the Allied Volunteers had spoken in high praise of their recruits, who also, in their turn, had sent happy reports of their life in the A.T.S. A very large proportion of the recruits were Jewish refugees.

All types have joined up—business women, secretaries, musicians, dancers, lawyers, and wives of Pioneers, I was told, and they are adapting themselves well to their new and strenuous life. The officers find the girls particularly receptive and intelligent. Their training lasts four weeks. Mrs. Cohen related that a British company, on whom these girls had been waiting, had been ordered away, and to show their appreciation of the services they had received, had made a collection and given each girl 4s. 3d.

One week's leave is granted every three months, and the girls are off two hours a day and one day a week, subject, of course, to military duties. Those women whose husbands are serving have their leave at the same time.

"It's a hard life," said Mrs. Cohen, "but recreational facilities are very good, and they are given occasional concerts, lectures, and dances."

Mrs. Cohen stressed the fact that there was no differentiation as far as uniform was concerned, except a tiny "A.V." which is attached to the epaulet. She made it clear also that the Allied Volunteers were not segregated from the British girls.

What the Girls Say

Here are some extracts from letters received from the girls:

"The officers who are giving lectures are specially nice to us aliens and treat us better than we ever dreamed of. We were pleasantly surprised by the way those ladies (meaning the officers) behave. They are simply grand. Everyone of them talks to us individually and apologises for not being able to make use of us according to our qualifications and talents."

"The food is very good. . . . We are all afraid we are getting too fat. . . . We feel most happy here. The officers are sweet."

"We had a lovely time in London, but are happy to get back. So were the others who went on leave. There is something about being in the Army that makes you feel terribly happy and contented."

Allied and neutral nationals are absorbed individually into the Service, except the French, who have their own unit. Almost all categories are open to them.

Friendly aliens of enemy origin—that is, Germans, Austrians, and Italians—are formed into platoons of 20 or over. For them the categories open are: storewomen, cooks, and orderlies.

Conditions for all alien recruits are the same as for the British A.T.S. Registration and curfew are dispensed with, and protected areas can be visited during leave. Special leave can be obtained on compassionate grounds.

Application forms can be obtained from the Labour Exchange Recruiting Office, or from the A.T.S. Recruiting Office, 32 Grosvenor Gardens, London, S.W.1.

Figure 16: ATS Newspaper advert (no date)

DO's for Non-British Members of the A.T.S.

Was man als nicht-englisches Mitglied der A.T.S. tun soll.

DO talk English as much as you possibly can. Bad English is preferable to German. The average person does not know what your nationality is by your English Accent, but a woman in the Uniform of H.M. Forces talking German lays herself open to the gravest suspicion.

Sprechen Sie soviel englisch wie moeglich. Es ist besser, schlechtes englisch zu sprechen als deutsch. Die Durchschnitts-person erkennt Ihre Nationalitaet nicht aus Ihrem Akzent, aber eine Frau in des Koenig's Uniform, die deutsch spricht, setzt sich ernstem Verdacht aus.

DO obey Police regulations. This is in your own interest.

Beobachten Sie die polizeilichen Gesetze. Es ist in Ihrem eigenen Interesse.

DO obey Orders given by your Senior Officers. You are in the British Army now. British soldiers do not question Orders.

Gehorchen Sie den Befehlen Ihrer Vorgesetzten. Sie sind jetzt in der Britischen Armee und Britische Soldaten zweifeln Befehle nicht an.

DO be as quiet and modest as possible.
Seien Sie so ruhig und bescheiden wie moeglich.

DO be as cheerful as possible. Everyone sympathises with you, but there are thousands of people in just as difficult a position and you will not gain anything by going around with a long face.

Seien Sie so froh wie moeglich. Jeder fuehlt mit Ihnen, aber tausende von Menschen sind in einer genau so schweren Lage und Sie machen nichts besser, wenn Sie mit einem langen Gesicht herum-laufen.

DO carry out the work given to you as thoroughly and perfectly as you possibly can—even if it is only tidying up. If things are not kept straight, it hampers important work.

Fuehren Sie die Ihnen aufgetragenen Arbeiten so gut und gruendlich wie Sie koennen aus—selbst wenn es sich nur um Auf-raeumen handelt. Wenn nicht alles in Ordnung ist werden wichtige Arbeiten gestoert.

DO remember that everyone already in the A.T.S. wants you to join too. Your nationality does not matter to them at all and they will welcome you to their ranks.

Vergessen Sie nicht, dass alle, die schon in der A.T.S. sind, Sie auch gern dabei sehen wollen. Ihre Nationalitaet hat nichts zu sagen und Sie werden gern in ihren Reihen aufgenommen werden.

Figure 17: Bilingual do's and don'ts



Figure 18; ATS Advert

Central London Recruiting Depot,
5 Great Scotland Yard,
London, S.W.1.
27/2/41.

To:

Dear Madam,

Will you please come to the above address for a *medical*
Exam an interview *on Monday March 3rd at 9 am*
In view of your nationality there will be some delay
before you may be enrolled.
Please bring your glasses with you.
As your acceptance cannot be guaranteed you
should not give up your employment, until your
enrolment is completed.

A railway Warrant for your journey is enclosed.
Your bus fares will be refunded.

Yours faithfully,
J.K.
Senior Commandant, R.O.,
Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Please bring this letter with you.

Central London Recruiting Depot
32, Grosvenor Gardens
S.W.1
2nd April, 1941

Dear Madam,

Will you please come to the above address for
enrolment and instructions on
MONDAY, APRIL 7th at 10 a.m.

If you wear eyeglasses, please bring them with
you, and, if possible, bring all particulars in
connection with your insurances, if you are
an insured person.

You will proceed to the Reception Depot Lancaster
on Friday, April 11th.

Yours truly,
Arthur Cohen
Senior Commandant Cohen
Auxiliary Territorial Service

Figure 19; ATS Recruitment and Enrolment March-April 1941



Figure 20; W/53536 Private M Lövy

Margot's family

During the early 1940s Margot was able to exchange some very brief letters with her family in Germany. These were mainly very short notes of just 3 or 4 lines, through the Red Cross. Most of the letters took 2 or 3 months to get to her, as she was not able to give her actual ATS address.

Margot did receive one longer letter from her mother that had reached her via a friend in the USA in early 1941; there was possibly no restriction on Johanna's letters to the USA before Pearl Harbour. Margot was able to learn that her sister, Thea, had had a baby son called Uri. And her mother and sisters were able to learn that Margot had married. However, eventually the letters to England stopped arriving; one from Thea dated January 1943 was the last letter that she had from her family.

The image shows two handwritten letters from Thea Sara Nathan to Margot Lövy, sent via the German Red Cross (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz) in Berlin. Both letters are addressed to Margot Lövy in London and are dated September and October 1942.

Letter 1 (Left): Dated 23.9.42. The sender is Thea Sara Nathan, Paderborn, Germany. The recipient is Margot Lövy, London, England. The letter is addressed to the German Red Cross, Präsidium / Auslandsdienst, Berlin SW 61, Blücherplatz 2. The letter is dated 23.9.42 and signed Thea Sara Nathan.

Letter 2 (Right): Dated 3.10.42. The sender is Thea Sara Nathan, Paderborn, Germany. The recipient is Margot Lövy, London, England. The letter is addressed to the German Red Cross, Präsidium / Auslandsdienst, Berlin SW 61, Blücherplatz 2. The letter is dated 3.10.42 and signed Thea Sara Nathan.

Both letters are written in German and contain personal messages to Margot. The letters are addressed to the German Red Cross, Präsidium / Auslandsdienst, Berlin SW 61, Blücherplatz 2. The letters are dated 23.9.42 and 3.10.42. The letters are signed Thea Sara Nathan.

Figure 21; From Thea to Margot, September and October 1942³³

³³ Like Margot, Thea had also had to adopt the second name 'Sara' and had to use it on the letters from Germany; see German paperwork (above).



Figure 22; Thea and Ruth, 1938



Figure 23; Thea, Ruth and Margot 1919

After the war ended Margot made enquiries with the Jewish Refugees Committee, trying to find any information about what might have happened to her mother and sisters. On response on 3 June 1946 informed her that her mother could not be found and that her last known address in Bonn, had been destroyed.

Further enquiries were made with various agencies in Europe and in Palestine / Israel throughout the late 1940s. Eventually she learned that all her close family had died.⁴



Figure 24; Margot Smith, 1943

⁴ Only three of the children in the 1925 family photo (Figure 1) survived. Margot eventually learned that her closest family members had been victims of the Holocaust. Ruth and Uri had been killed in about April 1941 and Thea in about May 1944. Johanna had been killed in about July 1942, at the same time as cousin Manfred. (Betty had died in 1938.)