

Alien Doctors: The Western Australian Medical Fraternity's Reaction to European Events 1930–50*

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IN JANUARY 1933, ADOLF HITLER BECAME CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY with a popular mandate of 33.1 per cent of the general vote.¹ Hitler had made his political agenda clear in *Mein Kampf* published some years earlier in 1925. Then at Nuremberg in 1935 his regime's harsh racial laws were laid bare for all to see. On 13 March 1938, Germany annexed Austria in a move Hitler described as the recovery of his homeland and the reincorporation of Charlemagne's eastern province. In November of that year, *Kristalnacht*, the most notorious of many anti-Jewish pogroms, was perpetrated across the entire territory of the Nazi Reich. If there had been any doubt about the fate of the Jewish people under Nazism, this was now thoroughly dispelled.

In the resultant exodus, German Jewish medical practitioners went mainly to the United States and the United Kingdom, although some did make it to Australia. Of the 6558 doctors in Berlin in July 1933, 3423 (52 per cent) were classified by the Nazis as non-Aryan. Of the 4900 doctors in Vienna in 1938, 3200 were Jewish (65 per cent).² Upon migration to the United Kingdom, many of these doctors obtained a Scottish diploma and wanted to move on to Australia or South Africa. 'Alien' doctors were allowed into Australia provided they had sufficient capital.³ This did not mean, however, that they could register and practice medicine in any of the Australian states.

How did the medical fraternity in Western Australia respond to the crisis in Europe and the arrival of the European doctors? This paper shows the response was most conspicuous in its dearth of compassion for these so-called 'alien' doctors. It was a response built on fear, protectionism and isolationism, and on a lack of humanitarian understanding as to the magnitude of the events that were unfolding in central and, later, Eastern Europe.

The seriousness of the situation in Europe had not escaped the attention of the Australian State Medical Boards.⁴ In September 1937, a meeting of the boards took place in Melbourne. Submissions had been

sent to the Commonwealth⁵ ‘to stop the free admission of these people’, while other submissions called upon the government to ‘allow opportunities for employment to be afforded all scientific workers, including medical men from Nazi-controlled countries’.⁶ The conditions inhibiting doctors from practising that had existed in Australia

were somewhat relaxed. No landing permit was, however, issued by the Department of the Interior to any ‘alien’ doctor on the understanding or condition that he could practise his profession in Australia. An application by an alien who happened to be a doctor was dealt with under the general rules which applied to all aliens generally.⁷

In July 1937, an appeals case was heard because the Medical Board of Victoria refused to register a graduate of the University of Leipzig. He was also a licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow. The appeal was successful.⁸ This case heightened Australian public awareness of the plight of refugee doctors.

In the years 1938–43, the plight of refugee doctors became a pressing political issue Australia-wide. Its seriousness in Western Australia is indicated by a meeting on 23 October 1939 between the State Minister for Health and the Western Australian branch of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society. Harold Boas, a Perth City councillor and one of the city’s leading architects, told the Minister that the Australian Jewish Welfare Society understood the government and the immigrant doctors’ practical difficulties:

First of all they [the government] had the law to contend with which did not permit certain foreign medical men, and then they had the British Medical Association (BMA) which was attempting to protect their profession. The position was, however, that these men had been invited to come into the country i.e. Australia as distinct from the casual use of the term country for rural or outback Australia and should be permitted to practise their trades and professions which they had used all their life.⁹

Some of the other Australian States attempted to address the problem of ‘alien’ doctors with the following outcomes:

1. Under the provisions of section 17(2) of the *New South Wales Medical Practitioners Act 1938*, nine ‘alien’ doctors were registered as possessing special qualifications and experience.

2. Under section 17(A) of the New South Wales Medical Practitioners Act, ten 'alien' doctors were allowed to practise after completing a three-year course at the University of Sydney.
3. The University of Adelaide and the University of Queensland also introduced special three-year courses.
4. In Victoria, the University of Melbourne gave no such concession.
5. 'Alien' doctors practised in New South Wales and stated on their name-plates 'not registered in New South Wales'.¹⁰

Let us now focus on the situation in Western Australia. Why were there so few 'alien' doctors in Western Australia particularly? In the 1930s Perth was a sleepy, peaceful city on the shores of the Swan River. On 4 April 1934, the Western Australian medical fraternity numbered only 309: 183 metropolitan and 126 country doctors,¹¹ all isolated from the rest of the continent by what historian Geoffrey Blainey has called the 'tyranny of distance'.¹² The State's *Medical Act 1894* detailed the requirements for registration with the Medical Board of Western Australia (the board):

Section 11

Every person (male or female) shall be entitled to be registered under this act, who proves to the satisfaction of the board that

- a) He is registered under 'The Medical Ordinance, 1869' hereby repealed; or that
- b) He holds any one or more qualifications in the Second Schedule hereto mentioned; and that
- c) The *testimonium*, diploma, license, certificate, or other document testifying to such qualification was obtained, after due examination, from some university, college, or other body duly recognised for the purpose in the country to which such university, college or other body may belong; and that
- d) He is a person of good fame and character, and still entitled to practise under the qualification by virtue of which he applies to be so registered in the place where the same was granted.¹³

The majority of Perth's medical men (there were few female practitioners at this time) obtained their medical qualifications in Adelaide or Melbourne. Reciprocity existed between the General Medical Council of Great Britain and Italy and Japan, and the *Medical Act 1894* also recognised this. Section 13 of the Second Schedule of the Act made explicit provision for foreigners:

Any person who shall prove to the satisfaction of the Board that he has passed through a regular course of medical study of not less than three years' duration in a British or Foreign School of Medicine, and has received after due examination from some British or Foreign University, or College, or body duly recognised for that purpose in the country to which such university, college, or other body may belong, a medical diploma or degree certifying to his ability to practise medicine or surgery, as the case may be.

Yet it would appear that the board did not use this clause to address the difficulties facing Jewish doctors forced to flee continental Europe.

From 1934 onwards, there was an increasing number of inquiries to the board seeking registration for Jewish doctors.¹⁴ For example, in October 1934 Mr Hanneman of Sydney inquired as to whether his brother (who held a German degree from Breslau) would be allowed to practise. He, and many who followed him, were informed that in the absence of a British degree registered with the General Medical Council of Great Britain, registration would be refused. The board president told his fellow members on 4 April 1934 that the State of Western Australia does not 'want an influx of German Jewish doctors—the act in this state needs to exclude them'.¹⁵

The matter of the German, and later Austrian, refugees became more complicated when some of the Scottish medical schools allowed these doctors to obtain a registrable degree for the United Kingdom. But the British Government, mindful of the supposed threat these persons might pose to the British medical establishment, prohibited them from residing in the United Kingdom using the Aliens Act. The possibility of large numbers of now registrable German doctors coming to Western Australia prompted the Honorary Secretary of the BMA in Western Australia, Dr Leslie LeSouef (later to serve his country in a distinguished capacity as a military surgeon), to write to the Western Australian health department on 10 April 1937:

My association desires the Government of this State to consider the advisability of immediately amending the Medical Act to protect Australian and British subjects, and also to consider the advisability of appealing to the Commonwealth Government to use within their means the provisions of the Immigration Restriction Act as has been done in Great Britain also.¹⁶

On 6 May 1937, a meeting was held in Perth between Mr Munsie, State Minister for Health; Dr Carter, President of the BMA in Western Australia; Dr E. Atkinson, Commissioner of Public Health and Chairman of the Western Australian Medical Board; Drs Paton and McWhae, members of the local BMA; and federal councillors of the BMA. The object of the meeting was

[t]o discuss the advisability of immediately amending the Medical Act to protect Australian and British subjects by preventing the registration of Jewish doctors who have found it necessary to leave Germany and who have obtained diplomas after one year's clinical study in Scotland.¹⁷

Dr Paton, an eminent medical practitioner, outlined the position of the local BMA branch by referring to a letter he had written to the Commonwealth Director General of Health on 9 November 1934: 'My Board view with alarm the possibility of the influx of German Jewish refugee practitioners.'¹⁸ He continued by reminding the Minister for Health that Victoria and NSW had already acted to safeguard their practitioners from the threat of the 'alien' doctors. Paton was most concerned about the German graduates who had obtained a British diploma but who would not be allowed to reside in the United Kingdom. He pointed out that these practitioners were attempting to reside in South Africa but that regulations were being introduced there to restrict them.

Dr McWhae, another eminent medical practitioner, when called upon to speak at this meeting said that

he had two sons of his own, whom some day he hoped would enter the medical profession and those boys would not be given the same opportunities if these aliens were not prevented from practising. They asked the Government for protection not so much for themselves but for the young people.¹⁹

The Minister said that as Parliament was not due to sit, little could be done: even the regulations of the Act would be difficult to change. So the 'medical men' of Perth could feel safe from threat.

In spite of the growing concern of the BMA and the increasing pressure from refugee doctors, the Medical Act was not altered until 1940, and then for very different reasons. The outbreak of war in September 1939 changed the situation. Medical personnel were forced to leave their positions and enlist in the armed forces. This created a dangerous shortage of medical practitioners to service the Australian population. The dearth of medical expertise prompted some shires to write to the government requesting that 'alien' doctors be allowed to practise there. A letter to the *West Australian* on 3 August 1940 from Kenneth Young, Secretary of Kondinin District Hospital,²⁰ states

that the Hospital Board be requested to petition the Minister for Health to use his best endeavours to have fully qualified refugee doctors admitted to practice in Western Australia, who may be prepared to practise in country districts.

The same letter argues for the nationalisation of the medical profession and for an increase in the guaranteed base income from £600 to £800 per annum. Young also wrote about the matter to Mr Seward, parliamentary member for Pingelly,²¹ on 25 September 1940. The letter stated that Dr Otto Schlafrig, originally of Vienna but now living in Perth, had already expressed his willingness to go to the country (all areas outside metropolitan Perth are referred to as ‘the country’).²² The matter was brought before the Parliament of Western Australia.

Like many other refugees, Otto Schlafrig worked selling Watkins Products door-to-door. One of the most notable of these products was Watkins Menthol Camphor. On his detailing rounds he had become acquainted with a Miss Ottaway, who was either employed by or knew the Minister for Health. She alerted the minister to the plight of foreign doctors and of Schlafrig in particular. As a consequence, Schlafrig sat and passed the examination of the Commonwealth Alien Doctors Board and became eligible for regional registration.²³

An amendment to the *Medical Act 1894* was proposed in the Western Australian Parliament. Seward explained that its purpose was ‘to relieve the position in the country districts where increasing difficulty is being experienced in securing the services of doctors’. He continued by saying that ‘two districts in his electorate having had well established and well appointed hospitals for the past twenty years are unable, despite persistent advertising, to obtain the services of medical men’. He argued again that the guaranteed income for doctors needed to rise from £600 to £800 per annum. He insisted that it was not reasonable to expect people to have to travel up to 100 miles to seek medical help. He said:

[T]he second motive for the Bill is to provide for registration under the Medical Board of persons holding diplomas or degrees who cannot be registered under our Act as it now stands. There are many countries—Austria, Germany and others—in which there are qualified men who, however, cannot become registered here.

Seward said it was not his intention to lower standards or ‘get behind our Medical Board’. He stated that the Bill was not new to Australia, as New South Wales had already enacted similar legislation. ‘The only effect the Bill will have is to broaden the field from which medical men may be appointed.’²⁴

A long debate about this proposed amendment followed. The Minister for Health listed for Parliament those towns—Koorda, Wyalkatchem, Dowerin, Kununoppin, Wickopin, Dumbleyung, Naremben, Kondinin and Toodyay²⁵—that no longer had a medical practitioner because of the war effort. The Minister also claimed that

even in the city there was a crisis: Perth Hospital was going to be five doctors short.²⁶ Of the 300 members of the medical profession in Western Australia in 1940, fifty had been absorbed into military service. The problem of inadequate remuneration for country doctors was also discussed at length. The BMA's Western Australian branch continued to have reservations about the proposed legislation. It was concerned that when its members returned from military service, there would be no positions available for them. Another concern raised in Parliament was that even though the overseas doctors were adequately trained, some were not trained to be country doctors. The member for York,²⁷ Mr Latham, said:

My anxiety is that country people should have proper medical assistance. We know there are large numbers of refugee doctors in Australia; probably they are possessed of high medical qualifications, but not qualifications recognized by the BMA. In Germany and Austria previous to the war there were medical practitioners, highly qualified who were consulted by persons from Great Britain and Australia. These medical practitioners are coming to Australia, but at present we are debarred from availing ourselves of their services.²⁸

He suggested that the overseas doctors should do a probationary course at Perth Hospital to ascertain their competency, 'because we cannot afford to allow our people to be killed'. The member for North Perth, Mr Abbott, summed up the situation by crediting the foreigners with significant medical expertise:

The medical profession has little to fear from this Bill, and should therefore not begrudge the people in the country receiving reasonable medical attention. The BMA has made some comments about Germany and Austria, but that did not prevent members of the profession before the war, when they wished to become experts, journeying to Austria and Germany to get specialist training. Undoubtedly many of the men who imparted that training have had to leave Germany and Austria and other parts of Europe. If some of those highly qualified men could be induced to practise in Western Australia, it would be beneficial not only to the medical profession but also the state.²⁹

The member for West Perth, Mr McDonald, expressed a concern that once the foreign doctors had done their country service, they would return to Perth and set themselves up as specialists.³⁰

The Legislative Council passed the Bill on 5 December 1940. It received assent from the Governor of Western Australia on 30 December of the same year and was enacted as the *Medical Act*

Amendment Act 1940. It allowed the Governor to declare a locality or a hospital in need of a medical practitioner a 'region', which would then enable a medical practitioner to be appointed to that region. Upon completion of seven years of service as a regional practitioner, foreign doctors would be permitted to apply for full registration.

On 4 February 1942, the regions of Kununoppin and Kondinin were advertised in the *West Australian*, *Daily News* and *Sunday Times* newspapers as being in need of a doctor. Although the advertisement was to be only run within Western Australia, it was also sent to medical practitioners from other States who had previously shown interest in the scheme.³¹ There were three applicants from residents of Western Australia: Drs Schlafrig, Rosenstein and Maunsell. Maunsell was a British applicant who was already registered and practising in New Norcia.³² Schlafrig and Rosenstein were summonsed to appear before the medical board, and told that they had to do terms as residents at Perth public hospitals before they could be considered.³³ Only upon completing satisfactory terms would they be appointed. There were also thirteen applicants from other States, but no women as they were deemed not suitable for appointment.

Schlafrig's experience was examined in detail, as was Rosenstein's.³⁴ Concurrent with the declaration of Kondinin and Kununoppin as regional centres in need of a medical practitioner, Perth Hospital was also declared as such a region. Throughout the first part of 1941, Schlafrig spent time at Perth Hospital as a resident, attempting to satisfy his consultants as to his competency. This was in spite of his comprehensive previous experience in Vienna, where he had more than three years in clinical medicine with terms in medicine, surgery, midwifery and gynaecology, radiology, ear, nose and throat (ENT), ophthalmology, paediatrics, dermatology, and venereal disease.³⁵

In August 1941, Rosenstein was appointed resident radiologist at Perth Hospital.³⁶ He died in late 1944 while still in practice there.³⁷ The medical board confirmed Schlafrig in his appointment at Kondinin on 1 October 1941.³⁸ Dr Alfred Samuel was to fill the position at Kununoppin after a period at Perth Hospital. By this time, the area of Meekathara was declared as a regional area in need of a doctor. There were two applicants for this position: Dr Ernest Fabian and Dr Charles Greer, both resident in Melbourne.³⁹ The medical board appointed Greer on the basis of his interview with Dr John Dale, Medical Officer of Health in Melbourne. Dale wrote:

I am of the impression that he is a very well educated, cultured, humane individual. He speaks and understands English well. And though one would not say that his colloquial English is perfect, I do not think he would have any difficulty in respect of language. He has very good experience of surgery,

mid-wifery and gynaecology, and would, I feel sure, be quite competent to act as a medical officer anywhere'.⁴⁰

Greer was later to transfer to Wooroloo Hospital on grounds of ill health.⁴¹

By mid-1942, the only persons authorised to practise were those who had passed the examinations set by the Commonwealth Alien Doctors' Board.⁴² In December 1943, a meeting took place between Commonwealth and State health ministers to discuss 'alien' doctors. At that time, there were 116 medical men and thirty-two medical women holding foreign degrees in Australia. The purpose of the meeting was to extend the special licence granted under the Commonwealth Alien Doctors Board. The responsibility of this Commonwealth-established board, chaired by the Director General of the Health Department Dr J. H. L. Cumpston,⁴³ had been to administer the examination process established by the Commonwealth for State registration of 'alien' doctors. By the end of 1942, fifty-four licences had been granted to the 110 people examined. The largest number of these graduates were German (eleven men and two women), and Austrian (nine men and four women); Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Dutch, and Russian graduates constituted the rest. There were only two such licences granted in Western Australia.⁴⁴

By September 1946 the following doctors were practising in Western Australia under the provisions of so-called regional registration: Dr Otto Schlafrig in Kondinin; Dr Alfred Samuel in Kununoppin; Dr Charles Greer at the Wooroloo Tuberculosis (TB) Sanatorium; Dr Thiess Lubbe as a pathologist at Perth Hospital; Dr Bernhard Glessinger at Claremont Mental Hospital; Dr Edgar Herz in Derby; Dr Wechsler at Heathcote from March 1944;⁴⁵ and Dr Peter Zygmunt Fisher in the Ashburton district, who transferred to Wooroloo TB Sanatorium in 1947. By comparison, there were nearly 3000 European physicians and dental surgeons in the United Kingdom at the end of 1945. Of these, 12 per cent were Austrian, 30 per cent were Polish and 23 per cent were German.⁴⁶ These numbers are of an entirely different scale to the figures for Western Australia. In May 1949, there were nine clearly identifiable medical practitioners in the State who were European Jewish refugees.⁴⁷ This represented less than 2 per cent of the State's medical expertise.⁴⁸ There are clear historical reasons why so few 'alien' doctors came to Western Australia. Dr D. Mossenson, a historian of Western Australian Jewry, states:

The [Australian Jewish] Welfare Society made no moves to attract refugees to the state, and those who did so came of their own initiative or were sponsored by individuals and Jewish agencies. Moreover, an abundance of

anecdotal evidence confirms the fact that the leaders of the Welfare Society encouraged new arrivals to travel to Melbourne or Sydney, and in some instances funded them to do so.⁴⁹

Prior to 1948 not a single German or Austrian refugee doctor received full registration in Western Australia. Only three refugee doctors with Italian qualifications were registered in Western Australia at this time: Drs Minc, Einihovici and Dalla Torre. Minc and Einihovici had studied in Italy because restrictions were imposed on Jews studying in their native countries of Poland and the Ukraine. Dalla Torre was an Italian graduate and national who had fled Italy in February 1939.

The end of World War II was not the end of the problem of 'alien' doctor medical migration to Western Australia. Debate continued within the profession over the registration of persons such as Doctors Jansen, Steiner, Winterton and Kovacs (who had served the Crown with distinction in other parts of the British Empire). These doctors had become eligible for registration by the General Medical Council of Great Britain under the provisions of the *British Medical Practitioners and Pharmacists Act 1947* and were, therefore, reciprocally registrable by the Medical Board of Western Australia. The provisions of the British Act were a cause of concern for the board, as they envisaged a rush of applicants who were now registrable in Great Britain, and who could not, therefore, be legally prevented from practising in Western Australia.⁵⁰

Winterton obtained a British registrable degree in London in 1948, and thus became registrable in Western Australia on those grounds. Such was not the case for Steiner and Jensen. In 1950, there are further records of 'alien' doctors seeking registration in Western Australia as a consequence of the events of Nazi Europe, and by then others were attempting to escape the tyranny of Soviet Communism enveloping Eastern Europe. The story of these medical refugees from the post-war Soviet state falls outside the scope of this paper.⁵¹ Suffice to say that, like their earlier Jewish colleagues, these men made a significant contribution to medicine in Western Australia and fostered the concept of multiculturalism that has become a cornerstone of Australian society.

Medical migration to Western Australia has continued, with significant contributions being made by British medical migrants leaving the UK's National Health Service in the 1960s, and Chinese and Vietnamese doctors arriving after the Vietnam War. The next wave of Jewish medical migrants to Western Australia after those fleeing Nazism and its aftermath were from South Africa.

Eminent 'alien' doctors

The lives of some of the men who migrated to our shores as a consequence of the events in Nazi Europe are outlined below.⁵²

DR WALTER WINTERTON MD (Vienna, 1935) left his native Austria in June 1938 and arrived in Hong Kong in August 1938. He worked in a mission hospital in southern China until he became ill with malaria and typhus in mid-1941. A Japanese military medical specialist and two German missionaries in self-imposed exile from Nazi Germany saved his life. He was carried out of China to recuperate in Hong Kong. On Christmas day 1941 Hong Kong fell to the advancing forces of the Japanese army. Winterton continued to practise medicine in Hong Kong throughout the Japanese occupation, and then in 1946 and 1947 for the British Colonial Medical Service. Because of his unblemished service to the British Crown, he qualified for full recognition under the *Medical Practitioners and Pharmacists Act 1947*. He left Hong Kong in June 1947, obtained his LMSSA in London in 1948, and arrived in Western Australia in November 1948. He practised in the small country town of Pingelly for three years and then set up practice in Mount Hawthorn, Perth, in late 1951. He was active in many facets of Western Australian life, including the St John's Ambulance Association and the Freemasons. He died in Perth in March 1993.⁵³

DR AVZUM (TIM) EINIHOVICI MD (Pavia, 1924) was born on 7 March 1892 in a small village in the Ukraine. Until the age of eleven he received a strict Jewish education. He was then admitted to a Russian primary school, and matriculated in 1916 from a Jewish grammar school. He was interested in and active in the stage. During World War I he served for a brief period with the Imperial Russian Army. Rising anti-Semitism forced the family to flee to Romania, and in 1920 Einihovici enrolled at the University of Jasi. Once again anti-Semitism forced the family to shift, this time to Italy, and in 1924 he graduated in medicine from the University of Pavia. He worked as a general practitioner in a small Italian country town for a short time, later shifting to Milan where he specialised in ENT. He met Idyss Kleinmann and, after a four-week romance, they married in 1935. His work in Milan included being the ENT surgeon to La Scala. The political situation in Italy deteriorated with the ascent to power of Mussolini, who had become dictator in 1922. Following the introduction of anti-Semitic legislation by Mussolini's government in 1938, the family fled once again; this time to Palestine. The situation in British-controlled Palestine was difficult, so Einihovici set sail on the *Strathnaver*, arriving in Perth in August 1939. Having an Italian degree allowed him to register without obstruction. Einihovici's emigration to Perth had been encouraged by his mentor, Professor Cyrus Caldera, an ENT specialist who had been his

professor and was now living in Perth. Einihovici established a successful practice within a short time in Corrigin.⁵⁴ Here he was not only the doctor, but also the dentist, the veterinary surgeon and the local council's adviser and interpreter in dealings with Italian POWs working on local farms. After the war, Einihovici moved to Perth and returned to his specialisation of ENT. He was culturally active in Perth, involving himself in the Rostrum Club, the Debating League, the Esperanto Society, the Dante Alighieri Club, the Friends of the Hebrew University and the Jewish Stage. Einihovici had a strong interest in the Bahais, Quakers, Moral Rearmament and the Freemasons. He is particularly remembered for his gentle and encouraging manner. He died in Perth in March 1988, one day after his ninety-third birthday.⁵⁵

DR GIACOMO DALLA TORRE MD (Rome, 1926) was born in Genoa on 3 October 1902. Upon graduation he became a general practitioner, then between 1926 and 1928 he undertook military service. Afterwards he became an assistant at the Town Hospital of Venice, later attaining the position of deputy head. In 1931 he became an assistant at the Medical Clinic of St Antoine in the Paris Medical School, and went on to specialise in cardiac medicine. He was appointed lecturer in clinical medicine at the Royal Universities in 1935. He was also head physician at the Marine Hospital of the Lido.⁵⁶ It is not clear from the extant records why Dalla Torre came to Western Australia. He was Jewish by faith and made contact with the Venetian British consulate in February 1939, where he obtained registration with the General Medical Council of Great Britain.⁵⁷ After registering with the Medical Board of Western Australia on 19 March 1940, he practised medicine at 242 St George's Terrace, Perth. He returned to his native Italy in 1947 and Dr Salomon Minc absorbed his Perth practice.⁵⁸

DR SALOMON (SALEK) MINC MD (Rome, 1930) was born in Seidlic, Poland in 1905. He was the son of well-to-do European Jewry. After being shunted through Russia and the Ukraine to avoid the pogroms that were always a problem in that part of the world, Minc entered a *gymnasium* in Warsaw. It was in this environment that he learnt the many languages in which he was fluent. He went from Warsaw to Ghent, and later to Rome, where he graduated in medicine in 1930. His mother and brother were living in Paris. Minc's financial position was precarious; he depended on an uncle in the United Kingdom for support. He had a fine baritone voice and he used this to earn money by singing in the Vatican Choir. After his arrival in Australia, he sang for the Australian Broadcasting Commission. In Italy, Minc established a strong interest in the visual arts, and in later life he was to have one of the finest private art collections in Australia. In 1938, in spite of being offered a chair in tropical medicine (location unknown), he recognised the perils that were about to descend on continental Europe, and

travelled to the United Kingdom. He worked in a refugee camp but was not granted residency despite his Italian qualification. He came to Australia as a ship's surgeon on board the *Centaur* after his destination was decided at the toss of a coin. His friend won the toss to go to the United States, while Minc and his new wife were bound for Australia. He registered with the Medical Board of Western Australia on 3 January 1940.⁵⁹ His was first a general practice, purchased from Dr Pallandri. Later he specialised as a physician, as he had a strong interest in cardiology and psychosomatic medicine. He was a man of exceptional linguistic skills, using eight languages on his ward rounds. He was a patron of the arts and a cultured, central European gentleman in the broadest sense. His death on 10 February 1983 left a chasm in many areas of Western Australian cultural life.⁶⁰

DR EDGAR HERZ MD (Vienna, 1938) was born in Vienna on 18 April 1914. He came from typical middle-class Viennese stock. He matriculated in 1932/33 and was granted his medical degree on 21 July 1938 after the annexation of Austria. Like many others, he migrated to Shanghai to escape the perils of the Nazi regime. He practised in Shanghai both in private practice and at the general hospital.⁶¹ He escaped from Japanese-occupied China to Australia. From 1 March 1943 until 22 March 1946 he practised in Nannup⁶² under the Commonwealth emergency medical services, as authorised by the National Security Regulations legislation. Then he transferred to Derby.⁶³ There was considerable debate in the Western Australian Parliament concerning Herz. At issue was whether he should receive full registration as other 'alien' doctors did under the provisions of regional registration, even though he had not served the stipulated seven years under the *Medical Act 1894*. Herz died in a drowning accident at Carnarvon in the north-west of Western Australia.⁶⁴

DR BERNARD GLESSINGER MD (Vienna, 1919) was born on 9 August 1888 in Woikowitz near Friedek in Silesia, Poland. He matriculated in 1908/09 and graduated in medicine on 3 April 1919. After arriving in Western Australia he worked for a number of years at Graylands Hospital, Perth, and later in general practice in Como, Perth. In the late 1960s he migrated to the United Kingdom, where he died.

DR OTTO SCHLAFRIG MD (Vienna, 1931) was born in Vienna on 20 June 1906, and was the eldest son of *Medizinalrat* Dr Albert Schlafrig.⁶⁵ He matriculated in 1925/26, and graduated in medicine on 2 December 1931. He then worked for a number of years in the Viennese hospital system. In June 1938 he married Trude Knofelmacher and they went to Italy. They travelled to Australia on the *Vimanale* in September 1939. Schlafrig's father, Albert, and his brother, Robert Sheldon, had migrated earlier to Western Australia. Albert worked there as a general practitioner and ran a chicken farm in Stoneville, on the outskirts of Perth,

with Mrs Kate Rosendorf. Robert later became one of Perth's leading architects. Prior to leaving Austria, Albert Schlafrig had spoken to a leading Viennese physician, possibly Dr Sigmund Freud, who was in contact with a prominent Sydney practitioner, Dr Mary Boyd Burfitt-Williams. Burfitt-Williams obtained a permit for Otto Schlafrig to land in Australia, and at the end of 1939 he arrived in Sydney. But he was unable to obtain work there, and he went to Perth to join his father and brother. Otto Schlafrig, as discussed earlier in this paper, then worked selling Watkins Products door-to-door, until Miss Ottaway raised his plight with the Minister for Health and the legislation on alien registration was eventually changed. Schlafrig then passed the examination of the Commonwealth Alien Doctors Board and was appointed to the region of Kondinin. He worked there in general practice until shifting to Coolgardie in 1948. In 1953, he purchased the practice of the late Dr Edward Morley in Guildford Road, Bayswater, who later became one of Perth's first specialist anaesthetists. The practice is still in existence, and is managed by the son of one of Schlafrig's former partners. Otto Schlafrig died in 1964 in Perth from multiple myeloma. His daughter, Gillian, is a general practitioner in Perth. Albert Schlafrig died in his nineties some years after his son.

DR MAX STEINER MD (Vienna, 1914) was born on 4 January 1891 in Leitmeritz, Bohemia. He matriculated in 1909/10, and graduated in medicine on 30 October 1914 from the University of Vienna. He served in the British Army in Burma with the rank of major, and registered in Great Britain under the provisions of the *Medical Practitioners and Pharmacists Act 1947*.⁶⁶ He arrived in Western Australia after World War II, and died in Perth in July 1967.

DR CHARLES GREER MD (Vienna, 1924) worked as a specialist obstetrician and gynaecologist in Vienna. On arrival in Western Australia he worked in Meekatharra and later became deputy medical superintendent of Wooroloo TB Sanatorium. He contracted TB himself but refused to be treated at Wooroloo. In 1941/42, he was a resident medical officer at Perth Hospital. He practised in Perth as an obstetrician and gynaecologist in Glendower Street, Highgate. Later he returned to Austria. He and his wife Karola, from whom he later separated, had one son, Stephen, who trained as a psychiatrist.⁶⁷ He died in 1959.

DR ALFRED SAMUEL MD (Berlin, 1921) was born in Germany and graduated in medicine in 1921. He worked in Kununoppin until 1948 as part of his regional registration.

DR THIES RICHARD LUEBBE MD (Hamburg, 1937) graduated in medicine from the University of Hamburg in 1937 and from the University of St Andrew's in 1943. He worked as a pathologist at Perth Hospital, and then went to live in Melbourne after the war. He died in April 1996.

DR GEORG ROSENSTEIN MD (Koenigsberg, 1922) received regional registration on 3 July 1941 and practised for a short time in Kununoppin, WA. In 1942 he transferred to Perth Hospital as a radiologist. He worked there until his death in 1944.

DR PETER ZYGMUT FISHER MD (Prague, 1937) was born in Poland and obtained his medical degree in Prague in 1937. Realising the political perils that lay ahead, he escaped to the United Kingdom and spent the war years in the British merchant navy. At the end of hostilities he came to Western Australia, did a three-month training period, and practised in the Ashburton district in 1946. He later transferred to Wooroloo TB Sanatorium at the suggestion of Dr Lynley Henzel, then medical superintendent of Wooroloo. He became fully registered in Western Australia in 1953. He married Patricia, a nursing sister at Wooroloo, in 1948 and they had a son, Robert, who became a psychiatrist, and a daughter who went to Melbourne. Patricia had contracted TB at Wooroloo and recovered. When Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital opened on 1 August 1958, Fisher was one of its first consultants, along with Drs John Smyth and H. R. Elphick. The hospital admitted its first patients on 25 August 1958. Fisher died in Perth in 1961. He is remembered for his kindness to his patients.⁶⁸

DR MAX JENSEN MD (Berlin, 1918) registered in Western Australia in 1949. He had served the British Crown during World War II and thus was eligible for registration under the *Medical Practitioners and Pharmacists Act 1947*. He practised for many years in general practice in Cape Street, Osborne Park, Perth. He died in April 1965.

Post-1950 immigrants

These immigrants included a few Jewish refugees but were, in the main, practitioners escaping from the communist regimes of Eastern Europe.

DR NIKOLAUS KOVACS MD (Vienna, 1928) was born on 4 December 1899 in Budapest, Hungary. His father was a postal inspector in Steinamanger (then part of the Austro–Hungarian Empire). He matriculated in 1919/1920, and graduated in medicine from the University of Vienna in 1928. In 1935 he joined the Austrian State Sero-Therapeutic Institute and became its director. Following the *Anschluss* in 1938, he and his wife Emilie migrated to Egypt where he continued work on bacteriological and serological problems. He and Emilie moved to Western Australia in response to political events in Egypt in the early 1950s. In Western Australia he did pioneering work on atypical tubercle bacilli, and became an international expert in this field. He died in Perth.⁶⁹ His record of more than forty publications in both German and English indicates his knowledge in the field of bacteriology. Like so many

of his fellow 'alien doctors', his adaptability and his multilingual skills are inspirational. Upon the death of his wife, their estate was bequeathed to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

DR CZESTAWA ALTER graduated in 1931 from the University of Lwow (Lemberg), which was then in Poland. From 1951 he worked for the Red Cross blood transfusion service in Perth.

DR BOGOSLAWA GRIGOROFF graduated from the University of Sofia in 1940. On his arrival in Western Australia he went into practice in Northam, and later transferred to Highgate (in inner-city Perth), where he had a legendary practice looking after the many new central European migrants of the 1950s. He died in tragic circumstances in Perth in September 1988.

DR WOŁODYMYR KOWAL graduated from the University of Kiev. On his arrival in Western Australia he went to the north-west of the State, and later started a practice in Mt Hawthorn, Perth.

DR HENRYK JOSEPH THIEBERG graduated from the University of Lemberg in 1923. He practised in Perth at Claremont Mental Hospital.⁷⁰ He died in November 1968.

DR ARTURUS ULMANIS graduated from the University of Riga in 1928. On arrival in Western Australia he practised at Claremont Mental Hospital.⁷¹

DR ARNOLDS KRIEVS graduated from the University of Riga in 1939. He worked at Fremantle Hospital pathology department after his arrival in Western Australia in 1951. When Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital opened in 1958 he was in charge of a ward of TB patients. He had two daughters. He died of a coronary.⁷²

DR ARTUR EKSTEINS graduated from the University of Riga in 1937. He practised at Fremantle in Western Australia in 1950 and later went to Wiluna.⁷³ He died in June 1960.

DR VLADIMIR MYRCHKO graduated from the University of Paris. On migrating to Western Australia he practised at Fremantle Hospital and then in Derby.

DR JOSEPH INCZE graduated from the University of Budapest. He emigrated to Australia and initially worked on the South Australian railways. In 1951 Incze had a chance meeting with Lynley Henzel, Director General of Health in Western Australia, in the change rooms of an Adelaide beach at which they had both been swimming. Incze told Henzel of his misfortune that he could not work as a doctor, and Henzel offered him a job in the laboratory at Wooroloo, which he took. Incze later went to the United States of America and worked at Onandaga Sanatorium and was held in high regard internationally.⁷⁴

Summary

This paper has given an overview of the Western Australian medical profession's response to the European crisis of the 1930s and '40s. There were many practitioners in Europe who wanted to migrate to Australia. Each of the Australian States faced the same problem with restrictive legal Acts limiting the registration of these 'alien' doctors. In Western Australia the pressure for a change in attitude to these migrant doctors was brought about by a shortage of medical expertise in remote and regional areas. This shortage had been exacerbated by the war effort. It was the local population, not the medical profession, who were to call for the recognition of this vast source of unused medical expertise. The introduction of 'regional registration' allowed a few of the 'alien' doctors the chance to re-establish their medical careers. In the postwar period other migrant doctors continued to fill the regional shortages. The lack of medical expertise in rural and regional Australia still continues. The 'alien' doctors provided a wonderful service to the rural and city communities that they eventually served. This paper has also recorded the lives of the medical men who came to Western Australia during this period of migration, and acknowledged the richness of their lasting contribution to Australian society in general.

Perth, Western Australia

* The word 'alien' has many meanings. These include: 'unfamiliar', 'not in accordance or harmony', 'hostile', and 'from a foreign country'. 'Alien' was the term used to describe foreign doctors at this time. In recent usage 'alien' has become associated with extraterrestrial beings.

1. Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century: Volume One: 1900–1933*, Harper Collins, London, 1997, p. 818.

2. Paul Weindling, 'The Contribution of Central European Jews to Medical Science and Practice in Britain, 1930–1950', in Werner E. Mosse (ed.), *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German-Speaking Jews in the United Kingdom*, JCB Mohr, Tübingen, 1991, p. 244.

3. 'Alien Doctors': Record of a Health Ministers' conference in Canberra in December 1943, State Records of Western Australia (SROWA), Health Department of Western Australia (HDWA) File 1235/43 AN 120/4 Accession 1003, Alexander Library, Perth.

4. The regulation of the medical profession is a State responsibility. Each State has its own medical board. The Commonwealth only becomes involved in times of crisis. The Medical Board of Western Australia dates from 1 January 1895.

5. The Commonwealth Department of Immigration controls immigration into Australia.

6. 'Alien Doctors'.

7. *ibid.*

8. *ibid.*

9. *The Medical Act of Western Australia*, SROWA, HDWA File 1056/36 AN 120/4 Acc 1003, Alexander Library, Perth.

10. 'Alien Doctors'.

11. Minutes of the Medical Board of Western Australia, 4 April 1934.

12. Geoffrey Blainey is a leading Australian historian. One of his renowned publications is *The Tyranny of Distance*, Sun Book, Melbourne, 1966.

13. The *Medical Act 1894* remains the regulatory Act for medical practitioners in Western Australia.

14. 'Registration of Medical Practitioners in Western Australia', SROWA, HDWA File 646/32 AN 120/4 Acc 1003, Alexander Library, Perth. In this document are the names of many doctors who wanted to migrate to Western Australia, including: Dr Samuel Schleyer from Vienna; Dr Elb, living in Batavia but originally from Vienna; Dr Ernest Bauer, originally from Germany and living in Melbourne; and Dr Sugars from Vienna.

15. Minutes of the Medical Board of Western Australia, 4 April 1934.

16. 'Registration of Medical Practitioners in Western Australia'.

17. *ibid.*

18. *ibid.*

19. *ibid.* Dr McWhae's son, Dr Douglas McWhae, did enter the medical profession. He died in Perth in 2001.

20. Kondinin is approximately 250 km east of Perth in the heart of the wheat-belt region of Western Australia.

21. Pingelly is approximately 150 km east of Perth. It is noted for its fine agriculture.

22. 'Registration of Medical Practitioners in Western Australia'.

23. Personal communication with George Sheldon, nephew of the late Dr Otto Schlafrig; Mrs E. Sheldon, sister-in-law of the late Dr Otto Schlafrig; John Schlafrig, son of the late Dr Otto Schlafrig; Ms Lina Schlafrig and Dr Gillian Schlafrig, daughters of the late Dr Otto Schlafrig.

24. Proceedings of the Western Australian Parliament, Legislative Assembly, 14 November 1940, pp. 1981–2.

25. Parliamentary debate, 21 November 1940

26. At this time there was only one major adult hospital in Perth. Today it is known as Royal Perth Hospital.

27. York is approximately 100 km east of Perth. It lies at the centre of a rich agricultural region. In the 1890s York was a staging town for people heading east to the goldfields at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie.

28. Parliamentary debate, 21 November 1940.

29. Parliamentary debate, 21 November 1940.

30. Parliamentary debate, 21 November 1940.

31. Minutes of the Medical Board of Western Australia, 5 February 1941.

32. New Norcia is a Benedictine monastic town 80 km north-east of Perth.

33. In 1942, there were only two adult teaching hospitals in Western Australia: Perth Hospital and Fremantle Hospital.

34. Minutes of the Medical Board of Western Australia, 26 February 1941.

35. *ibid.*, 26 February 1941.

36. *ibid.*, 6 August 1941.

37. *ibid.*, 12 January 1945.

38. *ibid.*, 1 October 1941.

39. *ibid.*, 1 October 1941.

40. *ibid.*, 5 November 1941.

41. Woorloo was a tuberculosis hospital on the outskirts of Perth. It is now a low-security prison.

42. Minutes of the Medical Board of Western Australia, 9 October 1942.

43. J. H. L. Cumpston was a leading figure in public health reform in Australia. He was the founding Director General of the Commonwealth Health Department, which was established in 1919. There is still no authoritative biography of his life, apart from the privately published biography by his daughter Margaret Spencer, *John Howard Lidgett Cumpston 1880–1954*, 1987.

44. It is unclear from the records who the Western Australian recipients were. It is supposed they were Drs Herz and Schlafrig.

45. Mental health services in the 1940s in metropolitan Perth were divided between Heathcote Mental Hospital, on the southern shores of the Swan River, and Claremont Mental Hospital, isolated in bushland to the west of the city.

46. P. Weindling, 'Austrian medical refugees in Great Britain: From marginal aliens to established professionals', *Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift*, vol. 110, no. 4–5, 1998, pp. 158–61.

47. In addition, there were a small number of practitioners who had been interned as enemy aliens who went into medical practice after being released.

48. Government Gazette of Western Australia, Perth, May 1949.

49. D. Mossenson, *Hebrew, Israelite, Jew: The History of the Jews of Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 1990, p. 145.

50. The Minutes of the Medical Board of Western Australia in May 1949 outlined the consideration of inquiries about registration from: Dr D. Gutmann MD (Bratislava, 1933); Dr D. F. Orosz MD (Budapest, 1925); Dr F. J. Teen MD (Beirut, 1936); Dr M. Jensen MD (Berlin, 1918); Dr L. G. Gelber MB ChB (Edinburgh, 1943); and Dr E. F. Gelber MB ChB (Edinburgh, 1941). The Medical Board considered recommending an end to reciprocity with Great Britain.

51. On 11 October 1949, the board was advised that the Governor had declared Fremantle Hospital a regional area in need of doctors. There were eleven applicants; none were Jewish refugees. They were: Dr Baranowski MD St Petersburg, Dr Brazowski MD Marburg, Dr Eksteins MD Latvia, Dr Kaire MD Riga, Dr Lalnenas MD Kaunas, Dr Kreuzburg MD Moscow, Dr Thieberg MD Lemberg, Dr Mrytchko MD Sorbonne, Dr Meniuski MD Koenigsberg & Cracow, Dr Sakalo MD Lemberg & Odessa, and Dr Wynne MD Madras.

52. The lives of many of the practitioners put on record here have not been recorded elsewhere. Little is known about some of the doctors. The author is indebted to Mrs R. Winterton, widow of the late Dr Winterton; Dr Oswald Tofler, a Perth cardiologist; Mrs Louise Hoffman, a local historian who has recorded the lives of many Jewish migrants; Mrs Lee Paltridge at the AMA (the successor of the BMA) in Perth; and to the University of Vienna Archives for biographical information on graduates. Where possible, sources have been recorded in specific endnotes.

53. P. Winterton, 'Edelweiss to Kangaroo Paw', *Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift*, vol. 110, no. 4–5, 1998, pp. 167–73.

54. Corrigin is a small country town 200 km east of Perth in the wheat-belt region.

55. This information is taken from unpublished manuscripts written by the late Dr Einihovici and his daughter Laura Raiter.

56. Letter from Dr Della Torre to the Medical Board of Western Australia, 7 March 1940.

57. Medical Board of Western Australia records.

58. Mr A. Gild, personal communication, 1999, a distinguished surgeon who shared rooms with Dr Solomon Minc in St George's Terrace. Gild served with the British army in India during World War II and then moved from his native Adelaide to Perth. He was a leading figure in the Jewish Community in Perth.

59. Minutes of the Medical Board of Western Australia, 3 January 1940.

60. Professor Alex Cohen in *Medicus*, April 1983 and Mrs McDiven on 8 June 1999. The McDiven family was the beneficiary of his estate and now curate his collection, which is housed in York, WA.

61. *Emigranten Adressbuch fuer Shanghai* (1939), Old China Hand Press, Hong Kong, 1995.

62. Nannup is a small country town in the south-west region of Western Australia.

63. Derby is a town in the north-west of Western Australia.

64. Parliamentary debate of the Western Australian Legislative Assembly, 1946.

65. *Medizinalrat* was a title of distinction that was used in Austria. In the days of the Empire it signified that the recipient of the title could advise the Imperial court in their area of expertise.

66. Minutes of the Medical Board of Western Australia, 10 December 1948.

67. Dr H. R. Elphick, first medical superintendent of the Perth Chest Hospital, personal communication, 7 June 1999. Dr Elphick was for many years WA's pre-eminent chest physician. He had worked as medical superintendent at Woorloo TB Sanitorium.

68. *ibid.*

69. *The Macabean*, 6 November 1992, p. 6. Written at the time of the death of his beloved wife Emilie.

70. Minutes of the Medical Board of Western Australia, 19 December 1949.

71. *ibid.*

72. Dr H. R. Elphick, personal communication, 7 June 1999.

73. Wiluna is a remote town 1000 km from Perth. It is known as a gold mining centre.

74. Dr H. R. Elphick, personal communication, 7 June 1999.