The Holocaust and Varieties of Migration

New Perspectives on Modern Jewish History

Edited by
Cornelia Wilhelm

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Edited by
Sebastian Musch and Cornelia Wilhelm

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of our late colleague and friend,
Edith Raim (1965–2025)

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Sebastian Musch and Cornelia Wilhelm

Introduction: Forced Migration and Flight Before, During, and After the Holocaust

The links between Nazi persecution, the Second World War and the Holocaust on the one hand and forced migration and flight on the other were especially evident during the 1930s and the 1940s, particularly for those suffering under Nazi policy. As early as January 30, 1933, when Hitler was named chancellor, the antisemitic policies of the National Socialist regime caused the flight of tens of thousands of German Jews and the political opponents of the new regime.[1] What started with political opponents and German Jews fleeing abroad in the 1930s proliferated into myriad global dimensions by the 1940s. During its twelve years in power, the Nazi regime's politics would cause an unprecedented wave of forced migration on a truly global scale.

The Second World War was a period of unprecedented carnage, mass extermination, and global warfare. It was also a time of unprecedented global mobility—almost all forced in various ways—that led to millions leaving their homelands as they were expelled, displaced, and deported.[2] As war spread across Europe and Asia, its effects on migration were felt even in places not directly touched by fighting. Estimates vary widely, but a few examples illustrate the dimensions. The German invasion of France alone caused an estimated five million people to flee their homes.[3] Roughly six million were displaced by the Germans and their allies in Cen-

1 See Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997). For a good overview, see Frank Caestecker and Bob Moore, eds., *Refugees from Nazi-Germany and the Liberal European States 1933–1939* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010). See also Herbert Strauss, "Jewish Emigration from Germany: Nazi Policies and Jewish Responses," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 25.1 (1980): 313–61; David Jünger, *Jahre der Ungewissheit: Emigrationspläne deutscher Juden 1933–1938* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017). See Wolfgang Benz, "Emigration as Rescue and Trauma: The Historical Context of the Kindertransport," *Shofar* 23.1 (2004): 2–7.

2 See the classic study of Eugen M. Kulischer, *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917–1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948). See also Malcolm J. Proudfoot, *European Refugees: A Study of Forced Population Movement* (London: Faber, 1957).

3 Peter Gatrell, "Forced Migration During the Second World War: An Introduction," *Refugees, Relief, and Resettlement*, Gale, last modified 2000, accessed June 23, 2025, https://www.gale.com/intl/essays/peter-gatrell-forced-migration-second-world-war-introduction. Cf. Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 200f.

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tral and Southeast Europe.[4] Across the whole of Europe, at least forty million were subjected to different varieties of forced migration during the Second World War.[5] At least as many—perhaps significantly more—people were displaced across Asia, especially in China.[6]

Forced migration was thus a common occurrence during and following the war.[7] In those years, this shaped the experience of those directly subject to forced migration in profound ways. Even for those who did not directly experience it, forced migration was often experienced through family members, who were sometimes its witnesses and sometimes its executors (i.e. those who used force to secure others' involuntary removal from a particular place, often their homes). One could even say that the experience of forced migration in its different varieties—flight, displacement, forced labor, forced conscription and military movements, forms of racial reorganizations, arrest and deportations, as well as other sorts of forced mobility—dominated European (particularly Jewish) lives in the 1930s and 1940s. Even today, images of refugees—often with luggage and huddled together on a train platform or waving as they depart on a long ocean voyage—remain closely associated with the fate of European Jewry or the European theatre as a whole, further attesting to its centrality.

Taking the historical link between the Holocaust and forced migration as starting point, this volume is located at the intersection of Holocaust studies and the history of migration. It reexamines several aspects of the period of Nazi persecution, the Holocaust, and their aftermath by applying insights from the burgeoning field of the history of migration, including the lens of forced migration. The volume thus builds on a deeper, more detailed understanding of migration as a historical phenomenon that has emerged in recent decades, both in the academy and among the public. This has been a necessary, enriching addition to the intellectual landscape because it has enabled the placement of refugees and forced migration during the 1930s and 1940s within the larger arc of historical development, emphasizing not only the contemporary dimension of migration (as is still often the case) but also its role over the *long durée*.[8] These continuities extend

4 Phillip Ther, *Die Außenseiter. Flucht, Flüchtlinge und Integration im modernen Europa* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017), 104.

5 Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 89.

6 Gatrell, "Forced Migration."

7 See, for example, Petti Ahonen et.al., *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and Its Aftermath* (Oxford: Berg, 2008)

8 For the case of forced labor, see Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880–1980: Seasonal Workers, Forced Laborers, Guest Workers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990). See also: Claudena Skran, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe. The Emergence of a Re-*

into the postwar period and can easily be bridged with the Cold War era, especially in regard to the fate of Displaced Persons (or later *Heimatlose Ausländer* in the Federal Republic of Germany), issues concerning reparations of those subjected to one of the varieties of forced migration, as well as questions of remembrance.[9] In this sense, the ramifications of the forced migrations of the 1930s and 1940s can still be felt today, not only in how they permanently changed the global population mosaic, but also through a proliferation and persistence of concepts related to migration. In the West, such concepts were molded in reaction to forced migrations under Nazi policies and their devastating consequences, forming the bedrock of how we think and talk about migration (especially forced migration) today.[10]

However, this contemporary effect is only one side of the coin. The newfound relevance of the history of migration links forced migration during the Holocaust not only to the present but also to the past. Strong lines of continuity became apparent, in the sense that some aspects of asylum and forced migration during this period have been shown to have antecedents.[11] How far back one follows these lines often depends on disciplinary, political, and (at times) personal proclivities. Regardless, the connections with the politics of empire, nation-building, and the ideological battles of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are most apparent. Displacement and expulsion, prime examples of forced migration, were not new during the Holocaust, nor did they fade afterward. Nevertheless, their scope was unprecedented during the 1930s and 1940s.

In addition to the more conceptual aspects that can be derived from current understandings of forced migration, recent shifts in perspective and an increased attention to the history of migration have led to what historian Atina Grossmann called a "remapping" of flight and transit routes for both Jewish and non-Jewish

gime (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion. West Germany and Eastern Europe, 1945–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

9 For example, see Jean-Michael Palmier, *Weimar in Exile: The Antifascist Emigration in Europe and America* (London: Verso, 2017), esp. Chapter 19.

10 See for example Tony Kushner, *Journeys from the Abyss: The Holocaust and Forced Migration from the 1880s to the Present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017). See also Imogen Bayley, *Postwar Migration Policy and the Displaced of the British Zone in Germany, 1945–1951* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024). See also here Greg Burgess, *The League of Nations and the Refugees from Nazi Germany: James G. McDonald and Hitler's Victims* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

11 See the valuable Richard Bessel and Claudia B. Haake, eds., *Removing Peoples: Forced Removal in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

refugees from Europe.[12] One crucial development is that a more global perspective on Jewish forced migration has illuminated migrations from Europe to other parts of the world—for example South and East Asia and Latin America—that had been previously neglected. This includes case studies of countries and individual lives, with Iran and India receiving the most attention.[13] While the main focus has been on these two countries, others, such as Africa or Australia, have also garnered attention.[14] These excavations of previously untold or ignored (at least by academic historians) stories has significantly altered the imagination of global Jewish refugeedom during this period, which was often centered around migration to Mandate Palestine, the United States (US), and the United Kingdom (UK). Underlining this development and how it has addressed previous lacunae is the fact that even the Jewish flight to the Soviet Union (USSR) was underexplored until recently, an oversight that has been remedied by two important studies.[15]

Taking all this into account, it can be suggested that in recent decades, the study of migration has entailed a welcome broadening of perspectives and has

12 Atina Grossmann, "Remapping Relief and Rescue: Flight, Displacement, and International Aid for Jewish Refugees during World War II," *New German Critique* 39 (2012): 61–79. See also Swen Steinberg and Anthony Grenville, "Forgotten Destinations? Refugees from Nazi-Occupied Europe in British Dominions, Colonies and Overseas Territories after 1933: An Introduction," in *Refugees from Nazi-Occupied Europe in British Overseas Territories*, ed. Steinberg and Grenville (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 1–17; Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, "Navigating Liminality: Jewish Refugees in Global Transit (I)," *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 69.1 (2024): 3–13.

13 Daniela Gleizer Salzman, *Unwelcome Exiles: Mexico and the Jewish Refugees from Nazism, 1933–1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Marion A. Kaplan, *Dominican Haven: The Jewish Refugee Settlement in Sosúa, 1940–1945* (New York: Museum of Jewish Heritage, 2008); Sandra Gruner-Domić, "Holocaust Refugees in Bolivia: Immigration Through a Postcolonial and Microhistorical Lens," *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 69.1 (2024): 89–109. See also Atina Grossmann, "Jewish Refugees in Soviet Central Asia, Iran, and India: Lost Memories of Displacement, Trauma, and Rescue," in *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union*, ed. Mark Edele, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Atina Grossman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 185–218.

14 For examples, see Jochen Lingelbach, *On the Edges of Whiteness: Polish Refugees in British Colonial Africa during and after the Second World War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020); Natalie Eppelsheimer, *Roads Less Traveled: German Jewish Exile Experiences in Kenya* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2019); Sarah Schwab, "'No Single Loyalty': Processes of Identification among German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany in South Africa," in *Refugees from Nazi-Occupied Europe*, 68–85; Jutta Vinzent, "The British Internment of Refugees from Nazi Germany in Kenya during World War II," in *Refugees from Nazi-Occupied Europe*, 159–82.

15 Eliyana R. Adler, *Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Markus Nesselrodt, *Dem Holocaust entkommen: Polnische Juden in der Sowjetunion, 1939–1946* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

become a crucial aspect of the history of the twentieth century in general and the Holocaust in particular.[16] If one were to extrapolate a core insight, it could be that specific varieties of forced migration (including flight, mass displacement and expulsion) were intrinsic parts of the National Socialist persecution and extermination of European Jewry. Furthermore, because the Second World War is considered tantamount to a war against Jews, Jewish experiences of antisemitism, persecution, deportation, and extermination are central to the global upheaval subsumed here under the rubric of forced migration. However, while developing the insight that forced migration was a central part of the Holocaust, scholarship has simultaneously been stuck in a disciplinary silo, resulting in the evaluation of this period *as* a history of migration and not *through* the history of migration. As such, although valuable, most attempts to bring together the history of migration (as a field) and Holocaust studies have been limited to integrating the time of Nazi persecution and the Holocaust into the history of migration. This has provided the rationale for this volume, which brings together articles that analyze various aspects of the Holocaust, the policies that laid its foundations, its effects on Jewry across Europe, and its aftermath *through* the history of migration, including forced migration. Some of these perspectives have received considerable attention in scholarship, while others have been hardly or rarely scrutinized. What unites them is their focus, which is not so much on the Holocaust as part of the history of migration but rather on how considering some aspects of the Holocaust through the history of migration and the conceptual lens of forces migration and flight can shed new light on them.

Refugeedom, Migration, and Forced Migration

This volume approaches migration in a way that partially goes against the current common usage of the term, especially in the public arena. Despite its wide application in conventional usage, the term "refugee" is today primarily tied to the nation-state, as its legal definition applies to individuals forced to flee their home countries and cross international borders.[17] As such, it has an ingrained political

16 Marrus, *The Unwanted*; Philipp Ther, *The Outsiders: Refugees in Europe Since 1492*, trans. Jeremiah Riemer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

17 A bit outdated but still a good theoretical discussion about the legal stakes tied to this narrow understanding is Jacques Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-war World* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1953), esp. Chapter 1.

connotation, especially in its differentiation from the term "migrant."[18] "Migrant," although frequently used interchangeably with "refugee," is a wider concept: migration is not necessarily tied to the nation-state system but can be described as a type of mobility. This casts a very wide net. However, the concept of forced migration restricts this net, often falling into the trap of essentializing human mobility but also enabling a sharper analytical focus.

Forced migration, in the sense of involuntary mobility, addresses migration resulting from outside pressure. Forced migration can thus refer to the displacement of individuals through war and persecution or, more generally, through violence and coercion. This includes most refugees, prisoners of war, civilian and military captives, deportees, war-trafficked victims, asylum seekers, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).[19] However, this conceptualization is inherently ambiguous: the pressure to migrate can take many forms, which can either be individually decisive or accumulate over time. Forced migration can also be driven by uncontrollable factors like natural disasters, although these are less relevant in this context. Additionally, economic pressures—such as the inability to make a living, discriminatory economic practices and discrimination based on racial laws (an important factor when discussing the context of Nazi persecution)—can play a role. These factors can also fall under forced migration but, despite being potentially devastating on an individual level, they fall on the "softer" side of the wide forced migration spectrum. On the extreme side of the spectrum of forced migration are denationalization, population transfer, displacement, resettlement, repatriation, and even deportation or death marches.[20] All together these different varieties of forced migration (broadly understood) amount to what has been described as a "mobile Holocaust," an important addition to the prevalent view of the Holocaust as an event of fixed sites with a particular focus

18 From the myriad studies on this question, see for example Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis, "Refugees, migrants, neither, both: categorial fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's 'migrations crisis'," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44.1 (2018): 48–64. See also: B. S. Chimni, "The birth of a 'discipline': From refugee to forced migration studies," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22.1 (2009): 11–129.

19 See Danilo Mandić, "What is the Force of Forced Migration? Diagnosis and Critique of a Conceptual Relativization," *Theory and Society* 51 (2022): 61–90.

20 See Thomas Nail, *The Figure of the Migrant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2025), 108f. P. Adey, "Evacuated to Death: The Lexicon, Concept, and Practice of Mobility in the Nazi Deportation and Killing Machine," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 110.3 (2019): 808–26; Simone Gigliotti, "Conflict transport: Holocaust histories, routes, and witnesses," *The Journal of Transport History* 45.2 (2024): 189–93; Matthew J. Gibney, "Is Deportation a Form of Forced Migration?" *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 32.9 (2013): 116–29.

on the main killings sites, i.e. concentration camps and ghettos.[21] Additionally, military movements may play a role in forced migration, as exemplified during the Second World War by numerous Red Army soldiers who were stranded in occupied Germany and were either repatriated (often forcefully) or effectively became Displaced Persons (DPs) due to their reluctance to return to the Soviet Union.[22]

This spectrum indicates that at least some discussion about agency is required in analyses of forced migration. If the context involves extraordinarily violent circumstances, questions concerning the agency of the victims of forced migration leads to sensitive terrain. Ascribing agency to victims of such extreme examples of forced migration as deportation might seem to place undue emphasis on the role of the victims of these crimes rather than the perpetrators. However, one could argue that even under extremely violent and oppressive structures, agency remains a vital component of being human. Acknowledging this helps maintain victims' dignity under such circumstances. In this volume, several articles tackle the question head-on and show that analytical work based on the concept of forced migration in its different varieties can illuminate long-running scholarly debates on agency during the Holocaust.

This rather broad understanding of forced migration is not without its issues, the most obvious being the muddying of the water, i.e. the overlaps between voluntary migrants, refugees, and forced mobility. Hesitation over this should not be discarded lightly and has prompted scholars to use terms and concepts like "forced mobility" or "forced population movements."[23] Nevertheless, putting this broad spectrum of characteristics and phenomena under the conceptual umbrella of forced migrations also has its advantages; the articles collected in this volume attest to that.

The most apparent advantage of this volume's approach to forced migration is that it illuminates links between policies, experiences, contexts, and outcomes that otherwise elude attention while maintaining a focus on the individual, which

21 Simone Gigliotti, "A Mobile Holocaust? Rethinking Testimony with Cultural Geography," in *Hitler's Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich,* ed. Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 329–47.

22 Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Lost Souls: Soviet Displaced Persons and the Birth of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024).

23 See for example Pertti Ahonen, Gustavo Corni, Jerzy Kochanowski, Rainer Schulze, Tamás Stark, and Barbara Stelzl-Marx, eds., *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and Its Aftermath* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), esp. Chapter 5. See also Christoph Rass and Ismee Tames, "Negotiating the Aftermath of Forced Migration: A View from the Intersection of War and Migration Studies in the Digital Age," *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 45.4 (2020): 7–44.

can be lost when speaking of, for example, "forced population movements." In a sense, this undertaking positions forced migration as a master key for understanding various (but not all) aspects of the Holocaust's persecution and extermination. Without pushing the assertion too far (and one should, of course, be suspicious of such pronouncements), understanding forced migration as a historical fact is a key component of so many different Holocaust contexts that applying it as a concept suggests a promising means of revisiting multiple assumptions, as the essays in this volume demonstrate. The various resettlement plans made during the interwar period and the Second World War, often explored from the viewpoint of Holocaust Studies, are here integrated into a larger history of population transfer and resettlement before and during the Holocaust. By adopting a migration history perspective, these plans—for Jews and non-Jews alike—can be connected to the racial (re)design of central Europe as envisioned by the Nazis.[24] This also involved a massive transfer of population to industrial centers as a labor force, which is still underexplored as a specific case of forced migration during this period.

In a more abstract sense, forced migration is paramount for understanding the Second World War and the Holocaust in a way that surpasses the focus on the fates of those moved forcefully from Point A to Point B. In this light, forced migration can be situated in myriad ways at the center of several key policies linked with the Nazis' racial organization project, its ideological foundation, the crucial place of antisemitism within Nazi ideology, and the murderous execution of this ideology.

Even before extermination was implemented, forced migration was a primary feature of Nazi racial policies. Only the spatial expansion achieved during the Second World War allowed the Germans to implement their policies of racial cleansing and mass killing. Meanwhile, the insecurity and enhanced vertical and horizontal "mobility" surrounding the Nazis' invasions and policy rollout helped destroy local societal cohesion (especially for those deemed racially inadequate), solidarity, and joint action in occupied countries. The German occupation, the classification of people according to their supposed "racial" qualities and the German occupiers' policies of ethnic cleansing and reorganization thus became a major catalyst for the displacement of Jews and other groups across the European continent, with consequences that again reverberated around the globe when refugees fled from Europe. In fact, removal, displacement, and the loss and erosion

24 See Michael R. Marrus, "Population Movements in Eastern Europe and the 'Final Solution' – Root Causes: The Case of Jewish Refugees from Hitler and the Nazi Holocaust," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees/Refuge: Revue Canadienne Sur Les Réfugiés* 5.2 (1985): 3–7.

of social networks facilitated the victimization and control of all those targeted by the Nazis, Jews and non-Jews alike. The Japanese conquest had similar effects in the Asian theatre.[25]

Even after the Second World War ended, forced migration remained globally accepted as a tool to solve supposed social and political problems, both in Europe and Asia, in what in most cases amounted to ethnic cleansing.[26] This broadening of perspectives uses a wider global and temporal scope to establish a narrative of force, migration, and violence that left few places untouched. However, most have acknowledged the central role played by the Nazi extermination policies against Jews.

Another paramount development is the extension of this approach beyond common periodizations. While the Second World War was a global event of forced migration, the conclusion of the war did not bring an end to either global mobility or forced migrations. The conferences in Yalta in 1944 and Potsdam in 1945 laid the foundation for the postwar order. This included the restoration of nation-states devastated by the war and the homogenization of much of Eastern Europe, which led to new waves of expulsion and displacement.[27] These tendencies were already evident in the later phases of the war with the advance of the USSR's Red Army. Others who had fled their homes during the war wanted to return or, if unable to do so, resettle in different countries.[28] Millions would remain in transit for years. Others, while not displaced during the war, were displaced afterward due to the various re-drawings of national borders and ethnic homogenization that marked the beginning of ideological realignments and the Cold

25 Though focusing on one Chinese province (Zhejiang), a foundational study is Keith Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness: Refugees during the Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

26 See for a long durée narrative Norman M. Naimark, *Fire of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in the in Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Benjamin Lieberman, *Terrible Fate: Ethnic Cleansing in the Making of Modern Europe* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006). For a focus on the Nazi regime and the politics of ethnic cleansing, see Götz Aly, *"Endlösung": Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Verlag, 1995).

27 See for an overview Jessica Reinisch and Elizabeth White, eds., *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion, and Displacement in Postwar Europe, 1944–1949* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). See also Philipp Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene: Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ/DDR und in Polen 1945–1956* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018).

28 See Ruth Balint, *Destination Elsewhere: Displaced Persons and their Quest to leave Postwar Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).

War.[29] Thus, after the 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany and its allies, though tens of millions of people wanted to return home, many remained uprooted for various reasons.

Thus, the post-1945 mobility of Jewish and non-Jewish refugees as DPs (or otherwise) can be viewed not only as a *sui generis* situation influenced by complex legal and (geo-)political factors like the emerging Cold War, which shaped the lives of those stranded, but also as the ongoing repercussions of the nationalism, racism, and antisemitism enacted by Nazi Germany and its allies.[30] Examining Jewish refugeedom throughout the history of migration thus reveals ongoing patterns that extend beyond the 1945 cutoff. Not coincidentally, this approach also emphasizes individual migrant stories and aligns with the enduring interest in biographical research. Focusing on the lives of migrants reveals what was known to many who experienced that period: their flight and plight did not end in 1945 but persisted for years. Biographical research thus complements a focus on the macro level and reveals how different scales can illuminate different historical contexts.[31]

This volume represents an attempt to demonstrate the myriad ways in which understandings of this period can be changed or challenged by applying the concept of forced migration and flight to the Holocaust. It addresses three main areas of interest, which are represented by its three parts. Starting in the 1920s and early 1930s, the chapters of Part I address the events, sentiments, and global trends that highlight important constellations that led to, legitimized, and failed to solve the emerging antisemitism and refugee crisis. The authors underscore the internal conflicts, dual standards, conflicting goals, and public presentations of forced migration, all of which were central at the intersection of the Holocaust and migration.

Examining the developments preceding the persecution of Jews by the Nazis in "Polish Plans of Forced Jewish Emigration on the Eve of the Second World War," Zofia Trębacz illuminates the intriguing (yet not widely known) challenges a highly ethnically diverse interwar Poland faced while building a nation-state and highlights how this contributed to Polish plans for either the forced expulsion or encouragement of voluntary emigration of Polish Jews during that period. She presents the various means by which Polish state entities developed plans to

29 Anna Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism: Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

30 See Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

31 See for example: Sebastian Huhn, "'Plausible Enough': The IRO and the Negotiation of Refugee Status After the Second World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 58.3 (2023): 398–423.

achieve these goals and utilized international bodies and bilateral relations to present their ideas for mass Jewish emigration. In 1937, the Polish government even commissioned a task force to examine the possibility of resettling Poland's Jews in Madagascar, a precursor to the Nazi regime's Madagascar Plan of 1940. Trębacz's chapter thus is an extraordinary example of how linking approaches from the history of migration and migration studies can lead to new insights.

In her wide-ranging chapter, "'To Prevent the Accumulation of Undeportable Aliens': International Reactions to the Refugee Crisis of the 1930s," Susanne Heim uses multiple sources to provide a detailed picture of the multidimensional ways international actors and aid organizations responded to the Nazi policy of Jewish expulsion. While the flight of German Jews during the 1930s has received the most scholarly attention in studies of the Holocaust and the history of migration, Heim points to it as a precedent, examining the relevance this crisis still has today in discussions of current refugee crises. In this context, she identifies the fundamental perspective this volume aims to contribute to the scholarly discussion around the Holocaust while also demonstrating that the study of the past offers valuable lessons for understanding migration today.

In her contribution, "Nazi Ghettoization, Forced Migration, and Himmler's Negotiations over the Jews of Europe, 1943–1945: International Dimensions of Holocaust Collaboration and Rescue," Wendy Lower discusses how National Socialist policies used ghettoization as a method of displacement, concentration, confinement, and death in a multifaceted and unprecedented manner. Focusing on Heinrich Himmler, she demonstrates how one man's genocidal ambitions were intrinsically linked to the development of Theresienstadt through the ghetto system. The multiple ways forced migration—broadly understood—played a role in the murderous policies, either through forced displacement (as in Lower's contribution) or flight in the extreme circumstances of the Nazis' war of annihilation. She thus demonstrates that linking Holocaust studies and the history of migration can illuminate central aspects of the mass murder of European Jewry.

Part II of this volume turns to case studies that examine how the Nazis' racism, occupation, and ideology of destruction directly led to identity loss and denial. These effects had a substantial impact on Jewish families, challenging their decisions to flee or stay. These studies thus examine the connections between racial design and economic exploitation.

Ayelet Eva Herbst supports this argumentation in her chapter, "Flight and the Jewish Family: Reimagining Holocaust and Migration – Personal Testimonies of Polish Jews from Lwów (1941–1944)." She focuses on the agency Jews developed within their families, their survival strategies, and their attempts to (re)gain control over their lives in perilous circumstances. Putting families at the center of

analysis offers a window into intimate connections forged under the duress of forced migration.

Similarly, Hana G. Green's chapter, "'Actually, We Were Always on the Run': Jewish Identity 'Passing' as a Migratory Response Mechanism During the Nazi Period," explores the dexterous agency of "passers." These individuals tried to hide their Jewishness and thus "illegally" survive in spaces deemed *judenfrei*. Green skillfully explores the fascinating, underexplored topic of "passing" by means of theorems borrowed from migration studies, providing an example of how Holocaust Studies can be invigorated by new theoretical approaches.

Edith Raim meanwhile takes a new look at foreign labor and prisoners of war (POWs) during the Second World War in her essay, "Foreign Laborers and Prisoners of War in the German War Economy: A New Look at Forced Labor and the Aftermath of the Holocaust in Postwar Germany." She demonstrates the value of applying concepts like forced migration to topics researched since the 1980s. Her re-evaluation of policies that have generally been understood as "forced labour" offers a sweeping *tour de force* examination of the pillars of the National Socialist regime and links it directly to forced migration and forced population transfers. Raim also emphasizes the long-term effects of forced labor stretching far beyond the Second World War, explaining how these measures scarred individual lives and wider societies for decades.

Following this macro-level perspective, Iris Helbing makes a micro-level examination of the Polish children who were selected for their racial hygiene based on the *Volksliste* and abducted to Germany to "Germanize" as a means of destroying the future of the Polish nation. She examines how this abduction has affected their lives, explores postwar initiatives to realign these children with their culture of origin, and discusses how this "displacement" could sometimes be lifelong. This article is a prime example of how a phenomenon usually not considered to be part of the history of migration (i.e., child abduction) can be reconsidered through the prism of forced migration.

Reorganization and memory stand at the center of Part III as the concluding section of this volume. Annika Heyen's chapter, "Conceived Reluctantly, Brought to Birth Grudgingly, Straitjacked from Birth: The Bermuda Conference, the World Jewish Congress, and the Emergence of the Postwar Migration Regime," explores a commonly dismissed episode, the Bermuda Conference on Refugees in April 1943, which deserves a second look. From the perspective of Holocaust studies, the Bermuda Conference is typically only mentioned in relation to Allied inaction in assisting Jewish refugees or rescuing Jews still within the Axis realm of power. As such, the Conference usually serves as another knot in the long string of failures of Allied refugee policies. However, Heyen's re-evaluation from the perspective of migration history proves that the Bermuda Conference was

more consequential than this. It gave an important impetus—or even the institutional bedrock—for the design of postwar global migration governance. Thus, the Holocaust was not only cataclysmic for the history of the Jewish people and humanity but is also paramount for understanding the history of migration. Adding this often-neglected dimension opens ways of demonstrating how the Holocaust has shaped today's world.

Peter Gatrell, like Heyen, delivers a fruitful examination of the history and evolution of institutions that became part of the global migration regime after 1945, including the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), International Refugee Organization (IRO), and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). His chapter, "Points of Departure, Points of Reference: Jewish Refugees and UNHCR in the Aftermath of the Second World War," discusses the immediate postwar interactions between Jewish refugees and intergovernmental organizations. His focus is on Jewish refugees' requests for legal or material support or resettlement, made especially to the UNHCR. Based on new archival findings, letters, and petitions to the UNHCR from Jewish refugees, Gatrell reveals protracted antisemitic discrimination against the backdrop of a shifting political landscape on the eve of the Cold War.

Cornelia Wilhelm uses innovative methodology and a digital humanities database to explore the lifelong implications that expulsion and the Holocaust had on the lives of German rabbis as refugees in the US. Her chapter, "Building a Future for the Past: German Refugee Rabbis in the United States after 1933," demonstrates how these rabbis, all victims of Nazi persecution, gained back unexpected agency in an intense process of reflection and communication of their past. They engaged in shaping and re-organizing postwar modern Judaism and did not give up the hope of bringing their schools of thought back to German-speaking Central Europe after 1990. Wilhelm evaluates the biographical data of 250 refugees to analyze the multiple factors that impacted their lives and careers in the communicative process of (re)forming "the last generation of the German rabbinate."

In recent decades, migration has been a hotly debated topic as Western societies wrestle with the influx of refugees. However, it has also prompted a closer examination of history. This scrutiny has revealed that most postwar societies are less homogenous than previously assumed and are the results of various migration movements, including those that occurred during and after the Second World War. This societal reckoning with national identity and history has elevated the field of migration studies, which was previously of marginal interest at best. Consequently, migration studies—that is, the history of migration—has increased in both significance and output. This field has not only shed new light on flight and displacement but has also expanded beyond traditional conceptions, offering a more comprehensive view of migration that includes aspects beyond the

well-known elements of flight and displacement. In this vein, Tony Kushner's passionate contribution, "From Mauritius to Rwanda via the *Kindertransport*: Remembering and Forgetting Forced Migration in the UK," takes lessons from the past and applies them to the present. In this forcefully argued chapter, Kushner shows how a selective memory of the Second World War that excludes migrations that do not fit the current political climate has shaped the discourse surrounding migration in the UK. In this sense, it is a fitting end to this volume.

Most of these contributions were first presented at the conference "The Holocaust and Migration: Beyond Flight and Displacement," held in May 2023 and organized by the two editors in cooperation with the Georg-von-Vollmar-Akademie of Kochel am See, Germany. The conference was generously funded by the Gerda-Henkel-Foundation and was supported by the Abteilung für Jüdische Geschichte und Kultur der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation), the Institut für Migrationsforschung und interkulturelle Studien (Institut for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies) at Universität Osnabrück, the Alfred Landecker Foundation and Ludwig Spaenle, Beauftragter der Bayerischen Staatsregierung für jüdisches Leben und gegen Antisemitismus für Erinnerungsarbeit und geschichtliches Erbe (Special Envoy against Anti-Semitism in the State of Bavaria).

As editors of this volume, we are grateful for the broad support that has made this publication possible. We thank the authors for their engagement, hard work, and research and are happy to present a publication that develops further the conference topic and discussions that were brought forward during the workshop. We are also grateful to Gero Leege for his indefatigable assistance both during the conference and in the preparation of this volume. As a late tribute to our colleague Edith Raim, who was an important contributor to the conference and to this volume, we would like to dedicate this volume to honor her memory. She passed away on July 1, 2025 and will be remembered as an esteemed scholar and fine colleague.

We hope that this publication becomes a starting point, a cornerstone for a new perspective, and a catalyst for further research. Since many of our contributions connect the past with ongoing discussions, we are particularly grateful that this publication will reach a larger audience as an open access publication. The open access publication of this book was made possible by the financial support of the Open Access Fonds of Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and the Gerda-Henkel-Foundation.

The Holocaust, Forced Migrations, and Global Reactions

Zofia Trębacz

Polish Plans of Forced Jewish Emigration on the Eve of the Second World War

The dramatic situation of European Jews who at the dawn of the Second World War unsuccessfully sought escape routes from countries under the rule or influence of the Third Reich has already been the subject of considerable literature. Many works have also been devoted to the Nazis' efforts to forcibly deport all Jews—first from Germany and then also from Eastern Europe.[1] The attempt to create a Jewish colony in Madagascar has come to have symbolic status. In my essay, I want to show how this openly anti-Jewish policy influenced the Polish government. Throughout the interwar period, anti-Semitic resentment played an important role in domestic politics, serving, especially in the 1930s, as a powerful tool of political mobilization. Polish plans for the forced emigration of Jews from the last decade before the outbreak of the Second World War were intended as a solution to the country's economic, social, and national problems. Describing the history of this idea in the context of Polish domestic politics, as well as the efforts of Polish diplomacy in the international arena, I will show how the idea developed and evolved. Framing the problem in this way also makes it possible to show it was neither a marginal nor insignificant issue for the Polish authorities. It seems that the rulers of interwar Poland understood perfectly well the gradual meltdown of the international order catalyzed at the Versailles conference and wanted to take advantage of this moment to bring about a situation in which the number of Polish Jews would fall dramatically and decrease every year.

1 See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1992); Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution: Nazi Germany & the Jews 1933–1939* (London: Phoenix, 1997); Emanuel Melzer, *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935–1939* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997); Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Christopher Robert Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939 – March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); *Heimat und Exil: Emigration der deutschen Juden nach 1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006); Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Wolf Gruner, *The Persecution of the Jews in Berlin 1933–1945: A Chronology of Measures by the Authorities in the German* (Berlin: Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, 2014); Capital David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–1949* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016); Christian Gerlach, *The Extermination of the European Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Kenneth B. Moss, *An Unchosen People: Jewish Political Reckoning in Interwar Poland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022).

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Poland serves as a notable example due to the size of its Jewish community—approximately 3 million before the outbreak of the Second World War. Additionally, Poland is characterized by a significant shift in domestic policy toward Jews, as a policy of national assimilation supplanted the policy of state assimilation. While the former program maintained that there should be a place for minorities in the Republic and deemed the state a supreme value, the latter rejected such an eventuality. Notably, this fundamental policy change occurred within the same political camp, which, under social and political pressure, adopted nationalist and anti-Jewish rhetoric and practices.

This new policy toward the Jewish community certainly deserves to be presented in the context of changing policies toward minorities in other European countries—notably Germany and Romania. Such a treatment of this topic should expand on my theses and findings. I wish to focus on Poland's domestic policy to illustrate the phenomenon of a state drastically changing its attitude toward its Jewish citizens. Also of interest is how the change in this policy was presented in both the domestic and international arenas. Attempting to capitalize on the migration crisis, the rise of anti-Jewish tensions in Europe, and Polish colonial aspirations would have seemed an impossible task. Yet, this was precisely the policy that the Polish government sought to pursue on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War.

This essay will demonstrate that Poland, while cooperating in the dismantling of the Versailles order, sought to exploit this process to enforce the emigration of its Jewish citizens and, furthermore, to bolster the power and prestige of the state on the international stage. The anti-Semitism of the Polish government not only helped garner support for the actions of those in power, but above all became a remedy for the problems faced by the Second Polish Republic as a developing country.

Emigration Conditions in Interwar Poland

After 1918, Poland began to create its migration policy amid changes in global migration. Therefore, the Polish government had to regulate the issue of emigration under new, complicated circumstances. The system of international relations formed after the First World War, along with the resulting political tensions, had a great impact on how the migration policy was conducted. The Paris Conference caused far-reaching changes in the existing colonial division. First and foremost, it took away Germany's colonies and thus eliminated their physical presence in Africa.

Thus did the process of decolonization begin.[2] Of course, the end of the German colonial empire did not mean the end of colonialism in general, since its system of overseas possessions held by France, Great Britain, and Italy remained intact. One must point out that the introduction of the mandate system did undermine the existing arrangement and was a starting point of changes that finally led to the collapse of the colonial empires after the Second World War. Because of this ambiguous system of dividing overseas territories, some European politicians soon started undermining the division. Indirectly, this issue was raised in Poland in the late 1930s, where growing nationalism merged with anti-Semitism and imperial ambitions. The so-called "Jewish Question" and the approach of the Polish authorities to it may indicate how acceptance of the principles developed at the Paris Conference was in decline. The post-1919 world order proved fragile due to the revisionism of states, but not only that. The international institutions lacked the tools to protect the order put in place, and this fact only reinforced these tendencies. The Peace of Versailles was undermined from the beginning by Germany and Soviet Russia (since 1922, the USSR), as was particularly evident in the late 1930s.

Also, the creation of many new states in Europe that emerged after the collapse of the former Russian, Habsburg, German, and Ottoman empires was a significant change. These states, although they pretended to be national, were far from possessing ethnic homogeneity, and their creation was associated with many forced migrations. At the same time, the era of the great transatlantic migrations (1850–1914), which drew millions of Europeans to the US and other American countries, was ending. Each year, the migration restrictions introduced by many countries, especially those on the American continent, increased. Such measures put emigration countries, including Poland, in a difficult position, further compounded by economic changes.[3]

The national diversity of Poland was an important internal condition that influenced Polish migration policy and its concepts. In the Second Polish Republic, national minorities constituted over one-third of society. The share of Poles is estimated to have been 65–66%, that of the second largest national group—Ukrainians—about 15–16%, and of the third largest national group—Jews—about 10%. Belarusians constituted about 6%, Germans 2%, Lithuanians and Russians 1% each. There is no precise data on Roma, Tatars, Karaites, Slovaks, Czechs, and Lemkos. Therefore, we can talk about a great national, cultural, and religious mosaic. This diversity caused prejudices and often led to serious antagonism. Hence,

2 See more: Raul Carstocea, "Historicizing the Normative Boundaries of Diversity: The Minority Treaties of 1919 in a Longue Durée Perspective," *Studies on National Movements* 5 (2020): 43–79.

3 Andrzej Pilch, ed., *Emigracja z ziem polskich w czasach nowożytnych i najnowszych (XVIII–XX w.)* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), 132–33.

especially in the 1930s, ideas emerged that assumed a striving towards shaping the national composition of emigration from Poland in such a way as to strengthen the "Polish possessions" and encourage the emigration of primarily national minorities. The ideas of the "Polonization" of those economic sectors dominated by Jews had a similar conceptual basis, which was related to emigration.

What is more, at the beginning of the 1920s, the creation of a Jewish national state and the establishment of Mandate Palestine aroused great hopes.[4] However, that small territory was not able accept all the Jews who wanted to settle there. In addition, due to its central location, it was of exceptional strategic importance, especially for anyone seeking control in the Middle East. However, Great Britain pursued a policy of balance, or even concession towards the Arabs, over their opposition to the influx of Jews.[5] Indeed, the Balfour Declaration contributed to the growth of hostility between the incoming Jewish settlers and the Arab population. Moreover, as early as May 1921, the first anti-Jewish riots broke out in Palestine.

Pogroms took place in several cities, 95 people were killed, and 219 were seriously injured. Military intervention was necessary. Therefore, the British authorities decided to issue special immigration permits through Jewish organizations. These specified exactly the annual quotas of Jews arriving permanently in Palestine. They were justified by the difficulties that could be caused by a sudden influx of many settlers with neither sufficient capital nor adequate professional qualifications. Such a policy was to prevent the destabilization of the country and a drastic change in the national structure. All this caused the Mandate authorities to reduce the already insufficient immigration quotas. On June 3, 1922, the Churchill White Paper that limited the annual amount of Jewish emigration to Palestine was issued. Contrary to assumptions, however, it did not resolve ethnic conflicts in this part of the world. Further serious riots occurred in 1929 (249 people died) and then again in April 1936, the latter escalating into a three-year armed conflict. On October 20, 1936, the Passfield White Paper was announced, which limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to a much greater degree. It considered the activity of the Zionists harmful to Arab economic and social development and stated that because of the shortage of arable land, Jewish settlement would be permitted only under strict government supervision. On May 19, 1939, the third White Paper was published. It limited immigration to 75,000 Jews within 5 years and stipulated that later immi-

4 Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 198–205; Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

5 Ben Halpern and Jehuda Reinharz, *Zionism and the Creation of a New Society* (London: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 276; Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, 234–36.

gration should be dependent on Arab consent. Winston Churchill called the Paper "new Munich [. . .] capitulation to Arab violence."[6] Over time, among other things, due to the limits imposed by the British government, all those involved started to realize the necessity of finding new territories which could accommodate such a large number of Jews.

The issue of Palestine was not the only problem. In the interwar period, emigration possibilities became more limited, and many countries closed their borders. In 1919, Great Britain strengthened immigration control in its colonies and then the United States—the traditional destination for many Jews.[7] First, the Immigration Act of 1917 (also known as the Literacy Act), which restricted immigration by imposing literacy tests on immigrants, was passed.[8] Then, in 1921, the National Origins Quota system was introduced, which limited the annual number of immigrants to 3% of the total number of an ethnic group resident in the United States, determined by place of origin based on the 1910 census. Earlier provisions on the prohibition of immigration of people who might become a burden on society have also been scrupulously observed. In the following years, settlement opportunities in America were further reduced. The decisive factor limiting these possibilities proved to be the introduction of the National Origins Acts in the spring of 1924 (also known as the Immigration Act of 1924 and the Johnson-Reed Act). The new law limited the number of immigrants to 2% of any given ethnic group given its population in the US as of 1890. At that time, the limit for Poland dropped to 6,000 people from the previous approximately 30,000. A law similar to the US law was passed in 1934 by the Brazilian government. The Quota Act set the annual immigrant quota at 2% for each nationality based on the 1884 census. However, it did not come into force until the spring of 1936. As a result, the United States lost its dominant position as the main destination for overseas emigration from Poland. It is estimated that more than 600,000 Jews from Poland emigrated to the United States from 1920 to 1939.[9] However, this is probably an underesti-

6 Konstanty Gebert, *Miejsce pod słońcem. Wojny Izraela* (Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 2009), 106.

7 The United States was also the first non-European destination for all permanent emigrants from the Second Polish Republic, accounting for almost 63 percent of all overseas emigration between 1919 and 1925. The decisive factor limiting these opportunities proved to be the introduction of the National Quota Acts in 1922. See Stephen Castles and Mark Miller, *The Age of Migration* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003), 63.

8 Also, the Immigration Act of 1917 created new categories of inadmissible persons and banned immigration from the Asia-Pacific zone.

9 Eastern European Jews emigrated to the United States for various reasons. These included the desire to improve their economic situation as well as to escape the oppressive policies of the Russian Empire. The wave of anti-Jewish violence that swept through Eastern Europe at the turn of the 20th century was another relevant factor that led to emigration. Andrzej Brożek, "Polityka imi-

mate, as some settlers reached there via other European countries or through Canada, Cuba, or Mexico.[10] Due to the growing restrictionism of immigration countries, new emigration opportunities for Polish Jews began to be sought.

The Change of Polish Ethnic Policy in the 1930s

Over the years, the importance of this issue for the Polish government increased. European politics radicalized, and the situation in Germany affected other countries and reinforced emigration trends. This included Poland. In the 1930s, the Polish government started realizing a policy of "ethnic assimilation." It was accompanied by efforts to remove Jews from economic, cultural, and intellectual life. Many of these sentiments behind these policies were already present earlier in the Second Polish Republic. They had appeared in the national press and journalism for years. Nonetheless, the open support of these ideas by the government, flirting with extreme-right politics and increasingly drifting towards antidemocratic solutions, was new. Until then, Poland's government had opposed right-wing arguments regarding the threat that the Jewish minority was imagined to pose to the integrity of the country. During the last decade of the interwar period in Poland, there was a political power struggle between moderate and extreme right-wing nationalists. This occurred amidst an economic crisis and the growing influence of Nazi Germany. The Jewish Question was a significant part of this political struggle, aimed to "determine who would rule the country."[11]

After 1935, the Polish government lacked public support. Moreover, in many respects it became ideologically closer to the nationalist camp, and parties

gracyjna w państwach docelowych emigracji polskiej (1850–1939)," in *Emigracja z ziem polskich w czasach nowożytnych i najnowszych (XVIII–XX w.),* ed. Andrzej Pilch (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), 132–33, 136; Halina Janowska, "Emigracja z Polski w latach 1918–1939," in *Emigracja z ziem polskich w czasach nowożytnych i najnowszych (XVIII–XX w.)*, ed. Andrzej Pilch (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), 386–87; Andrzej Gawryszewski, *Ludność Polski w XX wieku* (Warsaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, 2005), 422; Andrzej Kapiszewski, "Emigracja Żydów z Polski do Stanów Zjednoczonych," *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego* 137–138 (1986): 81–85.

10 "It should be noted that the declaration upon departure to Cuba or Mexico as the destination country of emigration was most often a strategy aimed at circumventing the increasingly restrictive US immigration regulations. Those going to Cuba or Mexico then attempted to enter the US through the green border in the case of Mexico or illegally on cargo or merchant ships from Cuba." Anna Kicinger, *Polska polityka migracyjna 1918–2004* (PhD diss., University of Warsaw, 2011), 57.

11 Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 68–69.

adopted anti-Semitism as a tool of political struggle. It moved from the periphery of socio-political life to its center and became increasingly a state problem. For the first time, the government began to combine the issue of nationality with Polish efforts to obtain overseas territories. Certainly, the effects of the Great Depression, especially the bad situation in rural areas, had some impact on that as well as on the immigration restrictions mentioned before.[12] Also, serious attention raised the possibility of solving the Palestinian issue.

In the second half of the 1930s, the idea of the mass emigration of Jews became a fact. The major political groups approved of this, and plans for Jewish emigration were created at the Consular Department in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was supposed to be an antidote for almost all the problems of Poland—economic, political, social, and primarily ethnic. After 1935, such demands were not only openly expressed by extremist groups but also became one of the principal themes of Polish politics. A shift from a pro-state to a pro-national policy was clear at that time.

The ways in which the authorities tried to achieve this goal were different, from submitting certain postulates in the parliamentary forum, through the acceptance of economic boycott—and with time also social boycott, limiting access to universities and various types of organizations and associations, depriving of property, calling for the deprivation of civil rights, up to the proposal to use violence to accelerate the emigration process. "We want to limit Jewish influence by enabling their emigration. Other political directions strive for the same differently: here they demand the deprivation of civil rights, the legal restriction of their life and economic possibilities," wrote a conservative newspaper *Czas* in May 1937.[13]

During that time, the Polish authorities pursued a policy aimed at increasing Jewish emigration from the country. Beginning in the mid-1930s, legal restrictions implemented in Poland hit various segments of Jewish society, but this did not reflect the growing numbers of Jews leaving Poland.[14] The international situation

12 Jerzy Tomaszewski, "Between the Social and National – The Economic Situation of Polish Jewry, 1918–1939," *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 1 (2002): 55–70; Piotr J. Wróbel, "The Rise and Fall of Parliamentary Democracy in Interwar Poland," in *The Origins of Modern Polish Democracy*, ed. Mieczysław B. Biskupski, James S. Pula, and Piotr Wróbel (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 110–64; Szymon Rudnicki, *Równi, ale niezupełnie* (Warsaw: Midrasz, 2008), 190–209.

13 "Konsekwencje nacjonalizmu żydowskiego," *Czas* 127 (1937): 1.

14 Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe*, 68–81; Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland 1919–1939* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1983); Celia Stopnicka Heller, *On the Edge of Destruction: Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994); Emanuel Melzer, *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry 1935–1939* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997); Joanna Michlic-Coren, "Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland

in the interwar period was not only unfavorable to such solutions but even made them impossible. Nevertheless, the Polish government still tried to find new ways to achieve its goal, and between 1937 and 1939 it intensified the efforts to encourage Jewish emigration. The Foreign Ministry became particularly involved in these plans, using international bodies and bilateral relations to present their ideas of mass Jewish emigration. Moreover, Poland did not change the anti-Jewish tenets of its policy in the face of events in the Third Reich and Austria. Paradoxically, events across the western border further strengthened the anti-Semitic tendencies of the Polish authorities.[15]

In September 1937, Tadeusz Bielecki, a politician from the National Democratic Party, noted: "The issue of the emigration of Jews was raised from various sides, from various circles. They stood next to each other, with similar projects, the Jew-socialist [Jan Maurycy] Borski, the Jew-nationalist [Ze'ev] Jabotinsky, and the representative of the Camp of National Unity colonel [Jan] Kowalewski."[16] His words seem to be the best summary of the whole issue. There is no doubt that in the last years before the outbreak of the war, the vast majority of Polish political parties and a large part of Polish society agreed on at least one fundamental issue: the need for an increased emigration of Jews from Poland.

1918–1939 and 1945–1947,"*Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* 13 (2000): 34–61; Rudnicki, *Równi, ale niezupełnie*; Kenneth B. Moss. *An Unchosen People: Jewish Political Reckoning in Interwar Poland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021).

15 In March 1938, the US Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles expressed his concern to the Polish Ambassador Jerzy Potocki, whose answer was not very promising: "the Jews in the United States were deeply and profoundly concerned with the course of events in Europe during the past weeks and particularly the tragedies which they now envisaged as likely to take place in Austria. I said that the Ambassador was fully familiar with the very strong feeling which had been created as a result of the policies of the Goga Government in Rumania and that the spread of anti-Semite activities which are now anticipated in Austria would provoke even greater anxiety in this country among that element of our population. I said that I hoped that the policy of tolerance which had been pursued by the Polish Government would not now be modified [. . .]. The Ambassador told me that he was confident that his Government would not modify the policy to which I had referred. He said, however, that the Jewish problem in Poland was a very real problem and that his Government felt that some start at a solution must be made in the near future.' Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers (thereafter: FRUS), 1938, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, vol. II, doc. 515, Memorandum of Conversation by the Under Secretary of State (Welles), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1938v02/d515.

16 Tadeusz Bielecki, "Emigracja czy manewr?," *Młody Narodowiec* 8 (1937): 1.

Possible Locations for Polish Emigration Plans

In the second half of the 1930s, the implementation of the emigration program concerning Jews did not raise any doubts among Polish authorities.[17] However, the direction of future settlements gained importance. As already mentioned, immigration restrictions and the unresolved Palestine status led to a search for a "new national home." New ideas for possible alternative locations for colonization emerged in Polish government circles, primarily involving Africa and South America. There were many ideas about the creation of "a second Jewish national home" or a "new Palestine," as such expressions were used in the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Most of these ideas, if not all, had no real chance of being implemented. Some projects seemed more likely than others, but their nature was still theoretical.

In June 1936, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared a draft of motions for the Council of Ministers on increasing Jewish emigration from Poland with a supporting memorandum.[18] A key document illustrates well that it was not the features of a given area (apart from the accessibility itself) that were important, but the fact of consent (now or soon) to the reception of Jewish settlers. It clearly stated that due to very limited immigration opportunities, "Palestine cannot become a base for the colonization of the Jewish masses."[19] The fact that a limited number of certificates had been issued in mid-1936 was pointed to as an additional difficulty. Therefore, the memorandum recommended other areas that should be considered for the future emigration of Jews from Poland.

It is worth taking a closer look at some areas for which there were high hopes of organizing Jewish colonization. These will shed some light on the scale of the Polish government's efforts in this matter, as well as on its determination. They also acquaint us with the rhetoric used by the authorities in regard to the hypothetical areas of Jewish emigration.

In the second half of the 1930s, Polish authorities referred to the East African settlement plan from the beginning of the 20th century, initiated in Jewish circles.[20] In 1903, at the 6th World Zionist Congress in Basel, Theodor Herzl, the founder and main ideologist of political Zionism, proposed these areas as an alter-

17 See FRUS, 1937, The British Commonwealth, Europe, Near East, and Africa, vol. II, vol. II, doc. 434, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State (Welles), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1937v02/d434.

18 Memoriał. Problem emigracji żydowskiej z Polski, 14, 9903, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, Archiwum Akt Nowych (hereafter as MSZ, AAN).

19 Memoriał. Problem emigracji żydowskiej z Polski, 14, 9903, MSZ, AAN.

20 Memoriał. Problem emigracji żydowskiej z Polski, 15, 18, 9903, MSZ, AAN.

native to Palestine for Jewish settlement. It was to be a new British colony with its own autonomous government. According to Herzl, the anti-Semitic tendencies of trying to removing Jews from Europe should have been used to build their state. He expected such trends to grow and tried to get support from different European countries for this idea. Herzl emphasized the temporary nature of such a solution—he was still striving to create a Jewish state in Palestine. The temporary settlement was supposed to be a place of refuge for the growing number of Jewish refugees from Tsarist Russia due to their deteriorating situation. The East African settlement plan soon became the subject of dispute and caused a major crisis within the Zionist movement. This idea was finally rejected at the 7th Congress in 1905, after Herzl's death.[21] More than thirty years later, within a completely different political context, the idea of the project returned.

Polish authorities recognized this territory as suitable for settlement in terms of climate and economy. It wondered if Great Britain would like to renew its old offer, but this was not considered crucial to possible settlement action. "Without settling the question for the moment whether England would be ready today to designate any area of East Africa as a base for creating a colony of the future Jewish state, one thing would be possible probably, with appropriate effort on the Jewish side, achieve, namely: enabling planned Jewish immigration to Kenya and colonization large areas in this country."[22] Despite these pompous declarations, in the 1930s, the issue of Jewish settlement in Africa remained unresolved.

Advocates of Jewish settlement in Africa looked in another direction – Madagascar, French territory then. Not only were the greatest hopes for the implementation of the government's intentions connected with this area, but also the most serious efforts were made on the way to their implementation. In Poland, the idea was first taken up in 1926 as a solution to the problem of overpopulation in rural areas. It turned out that conditions on the island did not allow settlement, and soon the idea fell through. However, it came back after ten years with a proposal concerning deporting exclusively Polish Jews. At the time, the project was taken much more seriously, and in 1937, the Polish government commissioned a task force to examine the possibility of settling Polish Jews in Madagascar, evaluating in particular the island's climate and working conditions. The reports of the commission members turned out to be full of contradictions. In addition, the French government showed growing caution on the matter. But that did not mean a complete abandonment of the idea of intensifying Jewish emigration

21 Ezra Mendelsohn, *Zionism in Poland: The Formative Years, 1915–1926* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 29–30, 249–50; Adam Rovner, *In the Shadow of Zion: Promised Land Before Israel* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 45–58; Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*.

22 Plan emigracji żydowskiej na rok 1938, 21–22, 10004, MSZ, AAN.

from Poland. Also, the idea of colonizing Madagascar has not been completely abandoned. Over the last few months before the outbreak of the Second World War, the issue of Jewish settling in Madagascar came back in French-Polish discussions. Again, the governmental plans were probably interrupted only by the outbreak of war.[23]

In the opinion of the Polish authorities, many more possibilities for mass emigration from Poland were identified vis-à-vis South American countries. "At the forefront is a real and at any moment feasible, albeit on a small scale, emigration to Argentina," wrote officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1936, although the premises on which it was based seemed trivial. In this case, reference was made to the story of Baron Moritz von Hirsch, German Jewish financier and influential philanthropist, who created the Jewish Colonization Association in 1891 and became its first president.[24] The organization provided assistance to Jews threatened with persecution or in difficult economic situations and facilitated mass emigration to agricultural colonies in South America. The aid was directed primarily to the inhabitants of Russia and Romania. Hirsch used large amounts of money to buy land and establish Jewish farming colonies in Argentina.

After he died in 1896, the Jewish Colonization Association continued the activities it had started. It set up offices to help newly arrived settlers purchase land and find work. Also, it enabled the organization of immigration societies in Argentina, Brazil, and Canada. However, part of the land remained undeveloped, and it was this area that the Polish authorities in the second half of the 1930s considered for the possibility of resuming emigration.[25] "The Argentine government does not make any difficulties in Jewish colonists' settlement, only demanding a guarantee that the arriving colonist would settle down on the land and not aban-

23 See further Leni Yahil, "Madagascar – Phantom of a Solution for the Jewish Question," in *Jews and Non-Jews in Eastern Europe 1918–1945*, ed. Bela Vago and George L. Mosse (New York: Wiley, 1974), 315–34; Magnus Brechtken, *Madagaskar für die Juden: Antisemitische Idee und politische Praxis 1885–1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997); Carla Tonini, "The Polish Plan for a Jewish Settlement in Madagascar 1936–1939," *Polin: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies* 19 (2007): 467–77; Adrien Mathieu, "Le Projet „Madagascar": Une tentative de colonisation juive les décideurs français (1936–1939)," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 125 (2011): 157–80; Zofia Trębacz, *Nie tylko Palestyna: Polskie plany emigracyjne wobec Żydów 1935–1939* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2018), 194–272; Zofia Trębacz, "'Jews to Madagascar': Poland in the Face of Ethnical Problems in the 1930s," *European Spatial Research and Policy* 28 (2021): 9–24.

24 See Matthias B. Lehmann, *The Baron: Maurice de Hirsch and the Jewish Nineteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022).

25 Memoriał. Problem emigracji żydowskiej z Polski, 16, 9903, MSZ, AAN; Plan emigracji żydowskiej na rok 1938, 22–23, 10004, MSZ, AAN; Notatka z rozmowy z ambasadorem Bullittem w sprawie emigracji żydowskiej do państw Ameryki Łacińskiej, 34, 10005, MSZ, AAN.

don the colony for easier earnings in the cities, as has recently happened."[26] In November 1938, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Józef Beck met with the newly appointed Argentine envoy Rodolfo Freyre, who expressed his willingness to cooperate with the Polish government regarding the admission of Polish farmers but considered Jews as "elements undesirable" (primarily due to widespread—in his opinion—communist influences among them), which spoiled the positive image of emigration from Poland. Beck tried to convince him of the diversity of the Jewish population in many respects and warned against identifying "radical and undesirable elements" with "loyal and unconcerned" Orthodox Jews. He even suggested appointing a shop steward who could provide assistance with the selection of accepted type of group emigrants. Nevertheless, plans for Jewish settlement in Argentina failed. In the last years before the Second World War, nationalistic and anti-Semitic sentiments based on the search for connections between the activities of local communists and Jewish immigration began to intensify. Also, Nazi propaganda had some influence, especially strong among German settlers. All these factors led to a gradual limitation of immigration possibilities.[27]

In addition, many South American countries introduced more and more immigration restrictions. For example, Argentina and Brazil banned the entry of people with mental and physical disabilities, those who had been convicted or prosecuted for certain offenses, and those who might become a burden on social welfare. Additionally, these countries used such instruments as increasing visa prices, introducing a mandatory amount of money that immigrants should have when entering the country, or nationality quotas similar to those in the United States. The situation worsened in the 1930s. Brazil, gripped by rising nationalism, introduced several restrictions on immigration (so-called quotas) and restrictions on immigrants' rights, e.g., foreign educational, cultural, and social organizations were closed down. One of the reasons for taking these steps was the growing influence of German capital and the power of the German minority, increasingly infiltrated by the NSDAP, which aroused concern both in the United States and a significant part of Brazilian society. Restricting immigration and attacking minority rights mainly affected immigrants from Germany, but also those from Poland.[28]

However, Ecuador seemed a bit more plausible. In the 1930s, it was still open to agricultural colonization. The local government had long shown a positive atti-

26 "Możliwości emigracji żydowskiej," *Gazeta Polska* 28 (1937): 1.

27 Notatka z konferencji u Pana Ministra Becka w dniu 13 listopada 1937, 5–6, 10004, MSZ, AAN.

28 Kicinger, *Polska polityka migracyjna*, 65; Brożek, "Polityka imigracyjna," 139.

tude towards the project of a compact Jewish settlement action, even despite the growing concern of the local population. It guaranteed equal rights and cultural autonomy for emigrants. Also, the government promised to grant concessions to Jewish agricultural settlements in areas suitable for colonization and allowed emigration "regardless of nationality or race." It was planned to bring 100 families in three years. In 1936, a Jewish delegation of experts carried out research on that area, positively assessing the condition of the soil and climatic conditions.[29] Although – as the officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote – "the opportunities for Jewish" emigration to Ecuador were relatively limited, the efforts of Jewish territorialists to allow Jewish emigration to Ecuador, as well as to other countries of Central and South America, should be supported.[30]

In July 1937 sociologist and political activist Arieh Tartakower approached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a proposal to organize a Jewish settlement emigration to Ecuador. He wanted to obtain support from HICEM[31] and asked about the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the government in this regard. In a letter to Apoloniusz Zarychta, head of the Department of Emigration Policy, his deputy Jan Wagner pointed out that due to the failure of the Palestinian issue, "territorialistic concepts will probably gain ground soon time of more concrete shapes." In response, Zarychta, as a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed a positive opinion on the initiation of such a project, "provided its organization and the financial resources mobilized for this purpose would constitute sufficient guarantees of success and sustainability." He did not rule out granting permission for the recruitment of settlers or providing material support for such an idea.[32]

However, the idea did not work out. Over time, society expressed growing concern about the influx of Jewish emigrants in Ecuador. There was fear about the spread of subversive ideas, the threat of "Bolsheviks disguised as Jews," and the destruction of local merchants and the domination of trade by newly arrived Jewish settlers. The increasingly difficult economic situation in Ecuador was not conducive to accepting new citizens. In addition, the Japanese were constantly

29 Memoriał. Problem emigracji żydowskiej z Polski, 15, 9903, MSZ, AAN; Wycinki prasowe z Naszego Przeglądu na temat możliwości emigracyjnych do Ekwadoru, 3, 6, 9926, MSZ, AAN; Pismo Inspektoratu Emigracyjnego, 10–11, 9928, MSZ, AAN; Notatka z rozmowy z ambasadorem Bullittem w sprawie emigracji żydowskiej do państw Ameryki Łacińskiej, 34, 10005, MSZ, ANN.

30 Memoriał. Problem emigracji żydowskiej z Polski, 15, 9903, MSZ, ANN.

31 It was created from the merger of three Jewish migration associations: the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), and Emigdirect.

32 Korespondencja w sprawie projektu osiedlenia Żydów w Ekwadorze, 103–108, 9928, MSZ, ANN.

trying to settle in this area. Several Sudeten Czechs were expected to arrive in Ecuador, and with the end of the Spanish Civil War, an influx of political emigrants was also expected. In the last months before the outbreak of the Second World War, the government's attitude was described as "completely negative," the main reason being the image of the Jew as a poor farmer. "These elements do not think about agriculture, they seek to settle in cities, crowd into trade etc., which the Ecuadorians view with reluctance and grumble," wrote the honorary consul of Poland, Kazimierz Frycz, in Quito in May 1939. He emphasized that there had been a significant influx of Jewish emigrants in recent years, but every attempt at agricultural settlement ended the same, with the flight of newcomers to the cities. This shouldn't have been surprising, as it was known from the beginning that Jews were not farmers. In the same report, Frycz reported that the Ecuadorian government would agree to Jewish settlement, but on two conditions: complete financing of this project by Jewish organizations and a ten-year guarantee that they would not leave the colony before this time. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and especially in the Department of Consular Affairs, the idea to look for a direction for possible colonization was not abandoned. On the contrary, diplomats undertook new efforts to stimulate the emigration of Polish Jews from the country, even when they seemed to be a bit desperate. The government's plans were interrupted only by the outbreak of war.[33]

The reluctance of the authorities of individual African or South American countries toward Jewish emigration was something that the Polish government tried to overcome through the mediation of other countries, England, or France, but this only resulted in the involvement of other factors without enhancing the success of the undertaking. In addition, more and more countries, such as Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Paraguay, and Uruguay,[34] introduced immigration restrictions, more or less directly aimed at Jews. Many of them were afraid of the mercantile or commercial nature of future colonists, not to mention

33 Korespondencja w sprawie emigracji żydowskiej do Ekwadoru, 49, 87–100, 9823, MSZ, ANN.

34 Kampania antyżydowska i antypolska na Kubie, "Emigracja i Kolonizacja" 1 XII 1938, nr 22, 30; Kolumbia, 19 I 1939, nr 7/537; Australia, 55, 3895, Ambasada Rw Berlinie, AAN; Nowa polityka imigracyjna w krajach Ameryki Południowej, "Emigracja i Kolonizacja" 1 VIII 1939, nr 64/594, 22–23, 9960, MSZ, AAN; Wycinki prasowe z "Naszego Przeglądu" na temat możliwości emigracyjnych do Ekwadoru, 3, 6, 9926, MSZ, AAN; Memoriał. Problem emigracji żydowskiej z Polski, 16, 9903, MSZ, ANN.

the stereotypes linking Jews and communists, which was also a cause for concern.

The Polish government also looked towards Australia. The British government had been trying to relocate its settlement there for years, and the growing threat of Japanese expansion and increased Asian colonization in this region created an opportunity to open the country to European emigration. However, without any doubt, this project was unrealistic for Jews from Poland, since it required enormous capital for travel costs or investments in the country of arrival. Such plans likely concerned Jewish refugees from Germany, in whom international public opinion was more interested. However, articles published in the press raised the hopes of Polish authorities by conveying the positive and even friendly attitude of the local people towards immigration.[35] This only shows the determination with which efforts were made to get at least a handful of Jews ready to leave Poland for the Antipodes, as if this would improve the situation of the Polish population.

Unwanted

"The world seems to be divided into two parts—those where the Jews could not live and those where they could not enter,"[36] said Chaim Weizmann, president of the World Zionist Organization, on May 23, 1936. Two years later, his words were confirmed in an upsetting way: On March 23, 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed to organize an international conference to facilitate the emigration of political refugees from Austria and probably from Germany. It was intended to be not only one event but the beginning of a new committee, composed of representatives of several governments, that would deal with this issue. "It has been prompted to make the present proposal [of the government of the United States – ZT] because of the urgency of the problem with which the world is faced and the necessity of speedy, cooperative effort, under governmental supervision, if widespread human suffering is to be averted." The invitation ensured respect for applicable immigration restrictions and did not expect that any

35 Memoriał. Problem emigracji żydowskiej z Polski, 17, 9903, MSZ, AAN; W sprawie emigracji Żydów z Polski do Australii, 3–4, 9923, MSZ, AAN; Plan emigracji żydowskiej na rok 1938, 23, 10004, MSZ, AAN; Numery biuletynu "Emigracja i Kolonizacja" z 20 maja, 11, 14, 18 lipca i 1, 5 sierpnia 1939 roku, 6, 8–11, 13, 17–19, 21, 23–24, 9960, MSZ, ANN.

36 Cited in Ari Joshua Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933–1939* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1994), 112.

of the countries would have to agree to accept more refugees than their existing legislation allowed: "it should be understood that no country would be expected or asked to receive a greater number of emigrants than is permitted by its existing legislation."[37] This highlights a difference between the declared goals and the limited means available to achieve them. On the one hand, this issue was considered urgent and important for humanitarian reasons, but on the other hand, no major changes were expected in the current policies of individual countries. Moreover, the document did not specify the nationality of the refugees.

A few months later, between July 6 and 15, 1938, delegates from thirty-two countries met at the French resort of Évian-les-Bains to discuss the growing Jewish refugee crisis. This group did not include any country from Central or Eastern Europe, although Poland unsuccessfully tried to place representatives at the conference. As the British Foreign Office emphasized, the Polish government would like to combine the issue of "its" Jews with the problem of Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria.[38] Limiting the emigration issue to Jews from Nazi Germany and Austria, a subject of international discussion at that time, was not conducive to Polish plans. As is well known, the results of the Evian Conference turned out to be minor. Most countries, including the United States, expressed sorrow and sympathy for the deportees, but not strong support. The delegates made excuses for not accepting more Jewish refugees.[39] Their responses at the conference demonstrated a reluctance to find a solution:

> Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama stated that they wanted no traders or intellectuals, code words for Jews. Argentina said it had already accommodated enough immigrants from Central Europe. Canada cited its unemployment problem. Australia said that it had no "racial problems" and did not want to create any by bringing in Jewish refugees. Imperial countries such as Britain, France, and the Netherlands said that their tropical territories offered only limited prospects for European refugees.[40]

Moreover, the stature of the conference was diminished by the fact that even Roosevelt, who had expressed a personal interest in the fate of German refugees, did not attend in person but sent Myron Taylor as a representative of the United States to Evian. The greatest disappointment was the position of Great Britain, the world's colonial power and the signatory of the mandate of Palestine, a key area

37 FRUS, 1938, General, vol. I, doc. 713, The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Kennedy), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1938v01/d713.

38 The National Archives, Foreign Office 371/22537, Intergovernmental Committee: Jewish problem in Poland, 42–47.

39 Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (London: I.B. Tauris Academic, 2003), 507–508.

40 Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013), 109.

for Jewish immigration. The British delegate, Edward Turnour, Lord Winterton, referred to this area only in his final speech, where he ruled out the possibility of mass refugees being sent there. But he was not alone in his views. The Dominican Republic was the only country that declared a willingness to accept Jewish immigrants. However, the delegates did take some concrete steps. They agreed to establish a new international organization to explore refugee immigration possibilities, apart from the League of Nations, and soon after the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR or ICR) was created. It coordinated efforts to resettle refugees from Nazi Germany and to prepare for the resettlement of future German emigrants.[41] Nevertheless, the results of the Evian Conference were insufficient. They offered no hope of solving the problem of Jewish emigrants and refugees, especially since anti-Semitic policy in the Third Reich was still gaining strength.

Shortly after, on September 30, 1938, the Munich Agreement was concluded by the governments of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Great Britain, and France. It provided for the German annexation of part of Czechoslovakia, called the Sudetenland, inhabited primarily by ethnic Germans. The number of Jewish refugees from the occupied areas was estimated at 15,000. However, about 5,000 to 6,000 deportees from Germany and Austria remained in the country. Many of them needed support. It was practically impossible for them to find work or study in the universities, and Jews were attacked as a "foreign element."[42] The Munich Agreement strengthened the Third Reich's position in the international arena. It also constituted the consent of the Western powers to decide the fate of Czechoslovakia, whose democratic character was destroyed. The Polish authorities had to accept these decisions with growing concern, looking at them as a return to the concept of a quartet of great powers.

The international situation in the second half of the 1930s clearly showed how unstable the Versailles order was. The ethnic issue and growing anti-Semitism compounded revisionist tendencies. The nationality policy of the Polish government during this period is an appealing example of how an average East-

41 Diane Afoumado, *Indésirables. 1938: la Conference d'Évian et les réfugiés juifs* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2018); Sherman, *Island Refuge*, 112–36.

42 Igor Lukes and Erik Goldstein, *The Munich Crisis, 1938: Prelude to the Second World War* (London: Routledge, 1999); Marcel Jesenský, *The Slovak–Polish Border, 1918–1947* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Sherman, *Island Refuge*, 137–65; Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929–1939* (Skokie: Varda Books, 2001), 260–63. Also Piotr M. Majewski, *Niemcy Sudeccy 1848–1948: Historia pewnego nacjonalizmu* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007); Piotr M. Majewski, *Kiedy wybuchnie wojna? 1938. Studium kryzysu* (Warsaw: Krytyka Polityczna, 2019).

ern European country tried to "find itself" amidst international realities while at the same time pursuing an increasingly open policy of discrimination against national minorities. This shows how the progressive decomposition of the Versailles system, which was also dangerous for Poland, became an incentive for its authorities to pursue aggressive policies toward its neighbors and the national minorities of the Second Polish Republic.

The Polish government had been pursuing such a policy since the mid-1930s. It had escalated more and more each year. The Polish citizenship law of March 31, 1938 was the next step in anti-Jewish state policy.[43] It threatened to revoke the passports of Polish citizens living abroad who had not visited Poland in the past five years. The Polish authorities, concerned about the situation of Jews and the anti-Semitic persecution in the Third Reich and Austria, wanted to prevent them from entering Poland.[44] The subsequent decree of October 6, 1938, required passports to be revalidated by the end of that month. This meant that on October 30, 1938, all passports became invalid. In this way, Polish citizens living abroad lost the ability to return to Poland, and their property became the property of the Polish state. It was officially claimed that the Act was to be used against communists, but the actual motives, which Drymmer revealed in May 1938 at a conference of Polish consuls in Berlin, left no doubt: the stated goal was

> raising the dignity of the Polish citizen by excluding all those who are unworthy, and, above all, getting rid of the uncertain/unreliable element (minorities, and especially Jews as a destructive element). This is the purpose of the Act, although it is written in general terms so as not to reveal its true intentions in writing. [. . .] The blade of the Act is primarily aimed against the Jews.[45]

German authorities, wishing to anticipate this step, decided to expel all Jews with Polish documents from the country before their passports expired. The Polenaktion was organized in direct response to Polish legislation. On October 28, 1938, two days before the Polish law came into force, German authorities forcibly deported approximately 17,000 Jews of Polish origin. They were brutally expelled and could only take the most necessary possessions. They were put on special

43 Dziennik Ustaw 1938, nr 22, poz. 191, Ustawa z dnia 31 marca 1938 r. o pozbawianiu obywatelstwa.

44 Between 1934 and 1936, approximately 1,000 people of various nationalities returned to Poland from Germany. In 1937, this number increased to 11,000, mainly Jews. The government was afraid of the influx of several dozen thousand more Jewish nationals within a short period. Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Preludium Zagłady. Wygnanie Żydów polskich z Niemiec w 1938 roku* (Warsaw: PWN, 1998), 74.

45 Tomaszewski, *Preludium Zagłady*, 88.

trains, but many deportees had to cross the border on foot at night, accompanied by armed guards with dogs. Some of them died, and others were later hospitalized. Most of the deportees were sent to the small Polish-German border-town of Zbąszyń. At the beginning, Polish authorities believed that detaining Jews would pressure Germany to take them back and thus refused to accept "refugees from Germany," claiming that they were not Polish citizens. Several thousand people—men, women, and children—were stranded between the border cordons, waiting for the decision of one of the sides. A transit camp was established in Zbąszyń, where Jews waited for the end of Polish-German negotiations. Conditions were very bad there, as the Polish government was unprepared to accept so many people. The lack of medical care quickly became a significant problem. Also, there were difficulties with bedding, heating, warm food, and sanitation. What is more, the approaching winter raised concerns. The activities of the Central Jewish Rescue Committee and Joint Distribution Committee provided some support. For ten months, prisoners in the transit camp tried to obtain permission to enter Poland or emigrate to other European countries, as well as to the United States and Palestine. Finally, on January 24, 1939, both countries agreed that no further expulsions would take place, and that the Jewish deportees would be granted limited rights to visit Germany in order to wind up their affairs there or to arrange for final emigration to other countries. The last deportees left the transit camp literally at the last minute—on September 1, 1939.[46]

Conclusion

All three events of 1938—the Evian Conference, the Munich Agreement, and Polish citizenship law—significantly influenced the situation of Jews in Europe, and especially in Poland. They combined global and regional issues, worldwide ac-

46 371/21808 C 13019/2259/55, C 13137/2259/55, C 13138/2259/55, Foreign Office, National Archives United Kingdom. "The Expulsion of Polish Jews from Germany, October 1938 to July 1939: A Documentation," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 29 (1984): 169–99; Trude Maurer, "Abschiebung und Attentat: Die Ausweisung der polnischen Juden und der Vorwand für die "Kristallnacht," in *Der Judenpogrom 1938: Von der "Reichskristallnacht" zum Völkermord* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1988), 52–73; Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper*, 243–50; Karol Jonca, "The Expulsion of Polish Jews from the Third Reich in 1938," *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 8 (1994): 255–81; Tomaszewski, *Preludium Zagłady*; Bonnie M. Harris, "From German Jews to Polish Refugees: Germany's Polenaktion and the Zbąszyń Deportations of October 1938," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* 230 (2009): 175–205.

tions, and domestic and national legislation. On the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War, the Second Polish Republic closed its borders to Jews with Polish citizenship. This situation, however, was not particularly surprising, considering that in the second half of the 1930s, the Polish government developed a program to increase emigration, which was consistently implemented until the beginning of the war and was aimed at the Jewish minority. Officially, Polish authorities promoted voluntary and approved emigration, or at least agreed with Jewish communities, trying not to give these plans the stigma of discrimination nor to expose themselves to negative reactions from other European countries. The real reasons remained tacit and were only occasionally mentioned in governmental documents.

Poland's economic weakness, intensified by the Great Depression and overpopulation of villages, and the consequent widespread hunger among peasants due to a shortage of crops, led to the intensification of national antagonisms. Consequently, the effort to shape the ethnic composition of those emigrating from Poland sought on the one hand to strengthen the Polish "element" in the Second Polish Republic and on the other to weaken the influence of minorities within the country. Due to the growing immigration restrictions among destination countries, new emigration opportunities began to be sought, mainly in South America and Africa.

All areas considered as targets for Jewish emigration required agricultural colonization. Moreover, countries ready to accept Polish settlers often opposed incoming merchants and artisans for fear that they would dominate local markets. The socio-professional structure of the Jewish population was characterized by a small percentage of agricultural workers. In interwar Poland, Jews were employed mainly in trades and crafts (tailoring and shoemaking prevailed), which raised concern in South American and African countries. Therefore, areas requiring agricultural colonization were to be immediately excluded by supporters of Jewish emigration. However, this did not happen.

Moreover, this openly anti-Jewish policy on the part of Polish authorities, aimed at creating a more homogeneous nation-state, met with little reaction from international public opinion. Western diplomats showed caution toward and even criticized Polish plans, but such criticism proved purely rhetorical. The necessity to work out a joint "solution," including mass territorial resettlement, was discussed many times, and all agreed that the situation required cooperation on the international level. However, the Evian Conference turned out to be a visible sign of powerlessness and helplessness, and of the reluctance of the world powers to take the steps necessary to solve the problem of Jewish immigrants and refu-

gees. A good summary of the resonance of this situation within broader society may be found the words of a journalist from the largest newspaper in the United States, *The Washington Post*, which 'headlined one story on the conference, "YES, BUT—." It noted, "it has been a disappointment, if not altogether a surprise . . . that delegates take the floor to say, We feel sorry for the refugees and potential refugees but—."[47]

47 Breitman and Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews*, 109.

Susanne Heim

"... To prevent the Accumulation of Undeportable Aliens." International Reactions to the Refugee Crisis of the 1930s

Compared to today's refugee numbers, the situation at the beginning of the Nazi era appears manageable. In 1933 about 65,000 Jews and Nazi opponents had left Germany, but only 37,000 remained abroad permanently. Those who came to regard the difficulties of exile as greater than the dangers of Nazi rule eventually returned to Germany. Most of those who had fled tried to escape to a neighboring country, hoping to be able to return soon. The vast majority of German Jews did not initially consider leaving the country, believing that the Nazi government would be just as short-lived as many of its predecessors. Jewish organizations and public figures appealed to the pride of the Jews and called on them to face antisemitic attacks with self-confidence. However, neither the refugees nor the countries who received them were prepared for the refugees' permanent stay. By the end of 1933, it became obvious that many of the refugees would not return to their home countries in the near future, and the atmosphere in the receiving countries began to change. Within several months, the migration of several thousand Jews escalated into an international crisis.

As early as the mid-1930s, Jewish aid organizations warned of the existential threat and drew up plans for the emigration of the majority of German Jews. Why were their voices not heard, and why did they not stop the increasingly isolationist tendencies of the democratic states? In fact, it must be asked: why might their warning voices have even intensified feelings of fear and rejection toward the growing numbers of refugees?

Current migration research generally refers to the experiences of refugees from Nazi ruled Europe in very general terms at best.[1] In Holocaust research, on the other hand, the refugee policy of the 1930s is only viewed from its end, as a

1 Gerald Knaus, *Welche Grenzen brauchen wir? Zwischen Empathie und Angst – Flucht, Migration und die Zukunft von Asyl* (Munich: Piper, 2020); Philipp Ther, *Die Außenseiter: Flucht, Flüchtlinge und Integration im modernen Europa* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017); Kelly M. Greenhill, *Massenmigration als Waffe: Vertreibung, Erpressung und Außenpolitik* (Rottenburg: Kopp, 2016), Paul Collier, *Exodus: Warum wir Einwanderung neu regeln müssen* (Munich: Pantheon, 2016).

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prehistory of the genocide and thus as a failure.[2] However, such a view obscures the concrete experiences and scope for action of the various actors and makes historical events appear inevitable.

This essay analyzes the complex interplay between expulsion, forced flight, and the reactions of the international community, international organizations, the various countries of refuge and the refugee movement of the 1930s in more depth and from the perspective of contemporaries. It also examines the concepts which the—mostly little-noticed—aid organizations for refugees presented as potential solutions to the crisis. Since none of this is possible without summarizing at least roughly the Nazi expulsion policy, this essay provides a multidimensional approach to international reactions to the growing plight of Central European Jewish refugees during the Nazi era.

After Hitler's seizure of power on January 30, 1933, refugee aid organizations were established in most of the neighboring countries. Jewish communities started to support co-religionists in need, vouched for their brethren so that they not become public charges, and helped them to find a place for permanent settlement.

In France, hatred of refugees and foreigners in general rapidly spread throughout the country following the assassination of the Yugoslav King Alexander, who had been killed by a foreign assassin during an official visit in Marseille on October 9, 1934. From then on, according to Bernhard Kahn, the European representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee,[3] or "Joint," even the organization of French Jews tried to prevent every attempt to help the refugees settle in the country and instead urged them to continue their emigration.[4]

Other countries tried to rid themselves of refugees as well: The Dutch government, Kahn reported, had decreed that Jews who had resided in Holland already

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2 Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, vol. 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 248–49. While Christopher R. Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939 – March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), Götz Aly, *"Final Solution": Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (London: Arnold, 1999), and Donald Bloxham, *The Final Solution: A Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) mention emigration in passing at best, Peter Longerich deals with it only as a displacement strategy of the SD: Peter Longerich, *Politik der Vernichtung. Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung* (Munich: Piper, 1998), 67–69, 142–46. Cf. Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), who discusses it in detail in one chapter.

3 The Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) was founded in 1914 in the United States to coordinate the relief efforts of American Jews in aid of Jews in Eastern Europe. After 1933 "the Joint" also supported Jews suffering from Nazi persecution and Jewish refugees.

4 Bernard Kahn to Max M. Warburg, October 16, 1934, AR 33/44 #250, Joint Distribution Committee Archives (hereafter as JDC).

before January 1933, most of whom were Polish citizens, should be expelled from Holland. Originally they had entered the country from Germany legally. The decree affected 600 to 700 families, or more than 2,000 individuals, among them a number of small merchants, some of whom were businesses owners, who had to leave their businesses behind.[5]

Polish Jews had experienced extreme pressure to leave Germany after the passing of the German Denaturalization Law on July 14, 1933. According to this law, people who had been naturalized as German citizens after 1918 were threatened with having their German citizenship revoked; it particularly targeted Jews of Eastern European origin.[6]

Gradually, Jewish organizations came to the conclusion that Jews, and especially the Jewish youth, would no longer have a future in Germany. Although emigration was not prohibited by Nazi legislation until October 1941, only between 270,000 and 300,000 out of 500,000 German Jews ultimately managed to leave the country.[7]

The practice of forced emigration and the destruction of the economic existence of the Jews already made clear in the first years of the Nazi era that the Jewish minority was to face marginalization and expulsion with a hitherto unknown brutality and that their persecutors ultimately would not shy away from murder, even if the systematic murder of European Jews, as it was implemented a few years later, still seemed unimaginable at the time.

Economic Aspects of the Refugee Crisis

As early as April 1934 the Gestapo Central Office in Berlin worried about slowing opportunities to rid Germany of the Jews by emigration. A report of the Gestapo explained that a growing number of Jews who emigrated from Germany were "complaining about the bad conditions," namely the effects of the economic crisis in the receiving countries, causing prospective emigrants to postpone emigration or abandon it completely. This "led not only to a sharp drop in emigration, but also (. . .) to the return migration of emigrants to Germany." The neighboring Eu-

5 Bernard Kahn to Max M. Warburg, October 16, 1934, AR 33/44 #250, JDC.

6 Trude Maurer, "Abschiebung und Attentat: Die Ausweisung der polnischen Juden und der Vorwand für die 'Kristallnacht'," in *Der Judenpogrom 1938: Von der "Reichskristallnacht" zum Völkermord*, ed. Walter H. Pehle (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch, 1988), 52–73.

7 Herbert Strauss, "Jewish Emigration from Germany: Nazi Policies and Jewish Responses," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 25 (1980): 313–61, here 327.

ropean countries, the report goes on, "take a disapproving stance towards Jewish immigration and the bleak situation of Jewish emigrants in these countries offers their fellow believers who remain in Germany little incentive to settle there [in Germany's neighboring countries]."[8]

In order to stop remigration, the Gestapo in Prussia had already decreed on January 15, 1934 that returning emigrants were to be arrested if they returned to Germany.[9]

The "bleak situation" of Jews in exile, which discouraged others from emigration, was to a large degree a product of the German policy of forced migration. A sophisticated system of fees and taxes, the tight control of the bank accounts of prospective emigrants, combined with the depreciation of their property due to mass emigration, led to most of the Jews leaving impoverished—unless they were able to smuggle some money out of the country. However, destitute refugees were seen as a burden by the authorities in the receiving countries. In the United States, this was reflected in the terminology of the immigration provision: According to the LPC clause—the "likely to become a public charge" clause—immigrants were rejected if they seemed likely to become dependent on public welfare. They had to prove that they were able to maintain themselves (which most of them were not) or had an affluent relative or friend who could act as a guarantor for them, i.e. who could provide an affidavit.[10]

By 1935, the situation, already bad in 1934, became even worse: The outcome of the Saar referendum in January, when 91% of voters opted for the reunification of the Saar Basin with Germany instead of its remaining under the mandate of the League of Nations or being unified with France, boosted the prestige of the German government.[11] For France this meant an international defeat, and it led to the arrival of even more refugees on French territory. In the summer of 1935, the anti-

8 Draft of a memorandum "The Jews in Germany," unsigned, dated April 1934, in *The Persecution and Murder of European Jews by Nazi Germany, 1933–1945* (PMJ), vol 1, ed. Wolf Gruner (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), doc. 116.

9 Decree of the Prussian Prime Minister – Secret State Police, concerning: Return migration of German emigrants from abroad [translated by the author] in *Das Sonderrecht für Juden im NS-Staat*, ed. Josef Walk (Heidelberg: C.F. Müller, 1981), 67–68.

10 Henry Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust 1938–1945* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 16.

11 After the German defeat in the First World War, the Saarland was placed under the mandate of the League of Nations in the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. France was put in charge of the responsible League of Nations Commission and the rights to the Saarland coal mines were transferred to France. As stipulated in the treaty, the population of the Saarland was to decide in January 1935 whether the region should belong to the German Reich or France in the future, or whether the status quo should be maintained.

Jewish riots on Berlin's Kurfürstendamm boulevard intimidated not only the city's Jewish community but Jews throughout the country. In September the Nuremberg laws were passed and made Jews second-class citizens with strongly curtailed civil rights: They were no longer allowed to marry non-Jewish partners and had no right to vote or stand for election. As a result of the growing social exclusion, the economic basis of German Jewry was shrinking constantly. About two million state and municipal employees had already been forced to leave the civil service in 1933, following the introduction of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service.[12] Jewish lawyers and doctors were severely restricted in practicing their profession. Although the anti-Jewish boycott of April 1, 1933 had officially been called off after one day, it went on insidiously. Jewish shops lost their non-Jewish customers, Jewish companies were no longer awarded public contracts. Between 1933 and 1937 the number of Jewish businesses halved.[13] Due to several job-creation programs, the unemployment rate among the non-Jewish population dropped by two-thirds between 1933 and 1936 while the numbers of out-of-work Jews rose.[14]

All this increased the pressure to emigrate—while the prospects of being accepted elsewhere were dwindling.

Especially in France and the Netherlands, the middle class perceived the refugees as competitors in the professional or economic field. They successfully pushed for economic restrictions such as the introduction of work permits or a temporary work ban (lasting for years!), which made it difficult for refugees to develop a long-term perspective. For the refugees, the work ban meant that they either became dependent on the aid organizations or were forced to accept illegal work. They thus ran the risk of coming into conflict with the police or being exploited or blackmailed by employers. In any case, refugees were an easy target for scammers who promised to help them cross the border, smuggle their money out of Germany, or organize a visa—only to take their money and disappear. The economic restrictions in the countries of refuge exacerbated the effects of the German policy of expropriation against the Jews and made it more difficult for them to make a new start abroad.[15]

12 Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, vol. 1*, 27.

13 Avraham Barkai, *From Boycott to Annihilation: The Economic Struggle of German Jews, 1933–1943* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1989), quoted in *PMJ*, vol. 1, 52.

14 *PMJ* vol. 1, 51.

15 Susanne Heim "International refugee policy and Jewish Immigration under the shadow of National Socialism," in *Refugees from Nazi-Germany and the liberal European States 1933–1939*, ed. Frank Caestecker and Bob Moore (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 23–26.

In the long run, this had severe consequences for the aid organizations as well. They were forced to raise funds in order to support refugees who were not allowed to work and didn't have enough money to stay afloat. From mid-1934 onwards, more and more Jewish organizations reached their financial limits and were not able to keep their promise to fund the refugees anymore. And—like the above-mentioned French Jewish committee—they were afraid that the repudiation of incoming Jews by the public would also affect the established domestic Jewish community. Thus, they tried to avoid everything that might deteriorate the atmosphere and foster antisemitism. In Great Britain, refugees were asked not to talk loudly in the street and were admonished that they were guests of Great Britain and should behave accordingly. Instructions distributed to incoming refugees reminded them: "Never forget that England's verdict on the German refugees depends on *your* conduct."[16] In the United States, Jewish organizations that supported immigrants had a clear view on how many and what kind of refugees would be welcome: preferably those who spoke English and had a chance of finding employment in the near future, as well as those who were not visibly religiously observant.[17]

Meanwhile, in Germany, the economy seemed to recover. The economic boom earned the Nazi leadership the respect of other governments. It also affected the way refugees were regarded in the receiving countries. Moral indifference or even skepticism towards them grew because of their alleged incapability to adjust to the "new order" in Nazi Germany.

Despite such success, the shortage of foreign exchange was and remained one of the main problems of the German economy in the 1930s. Time and again, balance-of-payments difficulties brought the Nazi state to the very brink of economic collapse. This resulted in increasingly rigid foreign exchange regulations. From June 1933, German citizens had to declare their possession of foreign currency worth more than 200 Reichsmarks and their assets abroad worth more than 1,000 Reichsmarks or exchange them for Reichsmarks, which constituted an immense loss given the exchange rate. As a result, the German treasury took in foreign currency amounting to 100 million Reichsmarks in the same year.[18]

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16 Instructions given to Jewish immigrants arriving in Great Britain, published in *PMJ*, vol 2, ed. Susanne Heim (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), doc. 263.

17 Zosa Szajkowski, "The Attitude of American Jews to Refugees from Germany in the 1930's," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* LXI.2 (1971): 131–33.

18 "Gesetz gegen den Verrat der deutschen Volkswirtschaft," RGBl. I, 1933, 360–63; Ralf Banken, "Das nationalsozialistische Devisenrecht als Steuerungs- und Diskriminierungsinstrument 1933–1945," in *Wirtschaftssteuerung durch Recht im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Entwicklung des Wirtschaftsrechts im Interventionsstaats des "Dritten Reichs,"* ed. Johannes Bähr and Ralf Banken (Frankfurt am

In 1934, the exemption limit for taking cash foreign currency with you when emigrating initially fell from 200 to 50 Reichsmarks, and by the end of September of the same year to just 10 Reichsmarks. Finally, from June 1, 1936, taking foreign currency was forbidden altogether.[19] The newly established Agency for Foreign Currency Violations (*Devisenfahndungsamt*) strictly observed Jews who were preparing for emigration and who, it was suggested, intended to smuggle sums of foreign currency.

Following the boycott of April 1, 1933, foreign governments had intervened against the persecution of the Jews, and in the United States and several other countries an anti-German boycott movement had emerged. The above-mentioned Kurfürstendamm riots of July 1935 further damaged Germany's image abroad. Referring to these riots, the financial experts of the German Reichsbank were concerned about the negative effect of antisemitic policies and increasing emigration pressure on Germany's foreign exchange balance. According to an internal Reichsbank memo from early September 1935, a "new wave of Jewish emigration" was expected, which would result in "a considerable deterioration of the foreign exchange balance, even if we refuse any direct allocation of foreign exchange."[20] Without taking along "considerable capital," however, mass emigration was impossible, since poor Jews would not be accepted in other countries. Moreover, the assets left behind in Germany would sooner or later become debts of the German economy to foreign countries, which would have to be paid at some point, "as long as we refrain from a general expropriation of the emigrants."[21] Such concerns were the reason why in 1935 the Reichsbank was still prepared to make compromises, and why Jewish businesses were not officially forbidden before the pogrom of November 1938.

The banker Max Warburg, a leading personality of German Jewry, had been a member of the General Council of the Reichsbank for many years. Thus, he

Main: Klostermann, 2006), 148; Ralf Banken, "Die Wirtschaftspolitische Achillesferse des 'Dritten Reiches': Das Reichswirtschaftsministerium und die NS-Außenwirtschaftspolitik 1933–1939," in *Das Reichswirtschaftsministerium in der NS-Zeit: Wirtschaftsordnung und Verbrechenskomplex* (Wirtschaftspolitik in Deutschland 1917–1990, vol. 2), ed Albrecht Ritschl (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 125.

19 Dieter Ziegler, "Die deutschen Großbanken im 'Altreich,' 1933–1939," in *Die politische Ökonomie des Holocaust: Zur wirtschaftlichen Logik von Verfolgung und „Wiedergutmachung,"* ed. Dieter Stiefel (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001), 139–40; Banken, "Das nationalsozialistische Devisenrecht," 169, 179.

20 Reichsbank memorandum for Hjalmar Schacht, submitted by W. on September 7, 1935, in *PMJ*, vol 1, doc. 194.

21 Reichsbank memorandum for Hjalmar Schacht, submitted by W., on September 7, 1935, in *PMJ*, vol 1, doc. 194.

knew Reichsbank president and then minister of economy Hjalmar Schacht personally and had excellent contacts with some very influential German bankers and entrepreneurs. In the antisemitic atmosphere of 1935, he had already lost much of his former prestige in the German business world. Nevertheless, he presented a plan as to how Jewish emigration could be financed with Jewish capital if only the German treasury department would abolish the Reich Flight Tax and allow the step-by-step transfer of Jewish assets in exchange for German export goods. According to Warburg's assessment, a third to one half of the Jews were to emigrate from Germany over a period of several years. He suggested that an internationally controlled trust agency should regulate the sale of Jewish-owned real estate and companies remaining in Germany and thus prevent the pressure to sell, which would lead to an oversupply and ruin real estate prices. In order to enable the Jewish owners to emigrate even before their property was sold, Warburg expected wealthy Jewish personalities and organizations in the United States and Great Britain to pre-finance the emigration. The property of Jewish emigrants in Germany would serve as a security for loans which would be repaid later. Once this property had been sold, the money could be used to buy German export goods. The proceeds from the sale of these products abroad would be paid out to the emigrants. Warburg demanded that the German government not only drop the Reich Flight Tax, but also that emigrants be given the opportunity to complete retraining and language courses in preparation for emigration, or to train in professions that were in demand abroad.[22]

Until then, there had only been a transfer agreement with regard to Palestine on terms that were much better for Germany and yet controversial among the German leadership. But at a time when even Reich Economic Minister Schacht warned of the catastrophic consequences of anti-Jewish policies for the German economy, German authorities indeed considered the abolishment of the Reichs Flight Tax. Thus, Warburg's plans were not as unrealistic as they sound today, and they expressed considerable trust in Jewish agency and the fundamental rights of German Jews. A similar plan was presented by the British department store owner Simon Marks, co-founder of the retailer Marks & Spencer. He suggested financing the emigration of tens of thousands of young Jewish men and women through donations. After these young people had established themselves, they could have their relatives join them abroad. According to both plans the majority of German Jews would have been transferred to foreign countries within a

22 Fritz Kieffer, *Judenverfolgung in Deutschland – eine innere Angelegenheit? Internationale Reaktionen auf die Flüchtlingsproblematik 1933–1939* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2002), 93–106; David Jünger, *Jahre der Ungewissheit: Emigrationspläne deutscher Juden 1933–1938* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 272–80.

couple of years, leaving behind only those who were too old to make a new start abroad. In December 1935 both plans were combined and presented to the Jewish public in the United States. There the plan met the vehement opposition by those Jewish circles that were expected to pre-finance the emigration, because it would have meant fostering German foreign trade and undermining the anti-German boycott.[23]

International Efforts to Secure the Legal Status of Refugees

After a few months of Nazi rule, in the early summer of 1933, several of Germany's neighboring countries felt overwhelmed by the large numbers of arrivals and began to take restrictive measures against the refugees, and a group of international lawyers started to appeal to the League of Nations to condemn the persecution of Jews in Germany as a violation of international law. However, in 1933 Germany was still a member of the League and thus was expected to veto such an initiative.[24]

Within the League, the Nansen office was responsible for refugee affairs, but it had a very limited mandate, valid until 1938, and was authorized only to deal with specific groups of refugees. In order to expand its mandate to new groups, such as the refugees from Germany, the member states of the League had to agree. It took several months to find a compromise: the establishment of a new institution, i.e. the High Commissioner of the League of Nations for refugees coming from Germany. In the fall of 1933 James Grover McDonald was appointed to the post of High Commissioner. McDonald, a US citizen and a professor of History and Political Science at various universities, was a co-founder and long-standing president of the Foreign Policy Association. He was considered acceptable to the Germans as well, since he had defended Germany during the First World War against the accusation of war crimes in Belgium.[25]

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23 *David S*ilberklang, "Jewish Politics and Rescue: The Founding of the Council for German Jewry," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 7.3 (1993): 333–71.

24 Barbara McDonald-Stewart, *United States Government Policy on Refugees from Nazism 1933–1940* (New York: Garland, 1982), 87–97; Haim Genizi, "James G. McDonald: High Commissioner for Refugees, 1933–1935," *The Wiener Library Bulletin* XXX.43/44 (1977): 40–52.

25 Report of the German Embassy in Washington (Hans Luther) on a conversation with James G. McDonald, January 15, 1934, R 49412, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (hereafter as PAAA). R 49412; *Advocate for the Doomed: The Diaries and Papers of James G. McDonald*

To avoid the expected German veto, some far-reaching concessions were agreed upon:

- Due to German pressure, the High Commissioner was not responsible to the General assembly of the League; and he should have his official residence not in Geneva, the forum of international diplomacy, but in Lausanne, 60 km away.
- The High Commissioner was not to be financed by the League of Nations but by what the Germans called the "interested states."[26]

This seriously weakened the position of the High Commissioner from the very beginning and limited his ability to address an international audience. Furthermore, those states that had voted in favor of the establishment of the High Commission didn't want to pay for it but left the financial burden to the refugee aid organizations, most of which were Jewish.

The League's member states had agreed to a compromise with Germany because it was supposed that the refugee problem could not be solved without German concessions. Only if the German government would allow the Jews to take their money with them when they left the country could they have a chance to establish themselves in exile. The Germans, however, refused to negotiate this point. According to their antisemitic convictions, they claimed that Jews had amassed their wealth using dishonest means at the expense of the Germans. Only a few days after the office of the High Commissioner had been established under the conditions imposed by the Germans, Germany left the League.

Not even a year after McDonald had accepted his new task it became obvious that he could not fulfill the expectations that had been placed upon him. Germany's neighbors had expected him to distribute the refugees to other (far away) countries as quickly as possible. But only very few Latin American states had agreed to take in a limited number of refugees with agricultural or mechanical skills, which most of the German Jews did not have. McDonald himself had no illusions: In a letter to Felix Warburg, he wrote in August 1934: "With one or two exceptions the countries which have considerable numbers of refugees have, from the beginning, tried to use the High commission merely as an instrument to rid themselves of their refugees."[27] They only grudgingly granted them the per-

1932–1935, ed. Richard Breitman, Barbara McDonald Stewart, and Severin Hochberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 4, 260.

26 Heim, "International refugee policy," 21.

27 McDonald to Felix Warburg, August 16, 1934, Folder 2, Papers of James G. McDonald, D 361, Lehman Library at Columbia University.

mission here and there to work or otherwise to establish themselves where they had arrived.

In the fall of 1935, McDonald prepared his resignation, frustrated by the failure to find settlement opportunities for the refugees in other countries. His final statement was seen as a last chance to draw the attention of the international public to the persecution of Jews by the Nazis "before Germany is accepted as a sister-state, as a normal government, by the Powers," as one of his assistants put it.[28]

McDonald's letter of resignation, published in December 1935, received much international attention, but didn't change anything. His successor, British former general Sir Neill Malcolm, set himself far more modest goals. Asked about his political program, he answered he had none. He didn't regard negotiations with the German government as part of his job because he didn't want to interfere in Germany's supposedly "internal matters." The League of Nations, Malcolm stated, had to take care of people when they had become refugees, not before.[29]

At least he organized an international conference early in July 1936 that brought about certain improvements for a limited number of refugees: According to the Provisional Agreement which was decided during the conference, those refugees who had already left Germany could receive an identity card that entitled them to move freely within the borders of their new country of residence and allowed them to return to the country that issued the card after a stay abroad. However, this only applied to people who were living legally in one of the signatory states at the time the agreement came into force, but not to future refugees, who were only German subjects. All those who turned themselves in to the authorities within a transitional period after this date could, under certain circumstances, also receive such a permit—and legalize their residence status. The situation had thus improved for those refugees who had left Germany by 1936, while all those who fled later were left with no legal protection in their host countries. As a rule, the refugees were still not allowed to work in the receiving countries, and under certain conditions they could even be expelled to Germany. Therefore, their legal situation was still worse than that of the Nansen refugees had been.

The Provisional Arrangement came nowhere close to meeting the demands of the refugee relief organizations, who had requested a broader definition of the term "refugee," including all those who had to flee their countries of residence due to persecution because of their political, trade union, pacifist, or scientific ac-

28 Melvin Fagen to Morris Waldman (Secretary of the American Jewish Committee), November 29, 1935, Folder 2, Box 317, MS 457, American Jewish Archives (hereafter as AJA).

29 Arthur D. Morse, *While 6 Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Ace Publishing Corporation, 1968), 157.

tivities. In two conferences in June 1936, the organizations had urged the League of Nations to introduce internationally recognized passports without visa limitations for refugees. They also demanded an amnesty for all those who had received expulsion orders from a country of refuge and continued to live there illegally.[30] A representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee criticized the Provisional Arrangement as being too vague, "unnecessarily precautious," and "in need of clarification."[31] Emil Engel, head of the welfare centre of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde [Jewish religious community] in Vienna, regarded it as "far from the ideal situation." To make things worse, the Arrangement had not even been signed by all countries represented at the conference. Especially the "unfortunate stateless Jews," Engel stated in a speech in November 1937, had to live "the life of a hunted animal," constantly in danger of being arrested.[32] Using welfare benefits or accepting work without permission could be a reason for expulsion from Austria, which then was not yet part of the German Reich. Therefore, Engel suggested that foreign aid organizations like the Joint or HICEM[33] support stateless refugees with foreign money. Engel even considered the possibility of establishing waiting areas outside the country of refuge where the stateless could be settled, at least for a while until they had all the necessary documents arranged and, in the meantime, learn a language or a profession to prepare for life in exile.[34]

Like Engel, many aid organizations saw it as their task to steer the refugee movement in an orderly fashion. As the organizations were responsible for the upkeep of many refugees, they had an understandable interest in checking that no one received aid without permission and legal approval and often felt compelled to turn away applicants if they believed that they were not in immediate

30 Heim, "International Refugee Policy," 29–31; Hans Uwe Petersen, "Viel Papier aber wenig Erfolg," *Exil: Forschung Erkenntnisse Ergebnisse* 2 (1985): 60–85, here 71. Memorandum des Comité National Tchéco-Slovaque pour les Réfugiés provenant dAllemagne, 10, ED 201/4, Archiv des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ).

31 Jacob B. Lightman (JDC, New York), Confidential memorandum Some analytical notes on second revised text of "Provisional Arrangement concerning the status of German Refugees" as agreed upon by the League of Nations Intergovernmental conference for the adoption of the Statute of the Refugees coming from Germany, AR 33/44 #252, JDC.

32 Protocol of the interterritorial conference for migration welfare in Vienna (interterritoriale Wanderfürsorge-Konferenz), November 15, 1937, 9–12, File no. IV-8, Microfilm MKM 15, reel 11, HIAS/HICEM, New York Offices, RG 245.4, Series I, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

33 In 1927, three aid organizations joined forces to form the HICEM: The Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of America, the Jewish Colonization Association, and the Emigdirect.

34 Protocol of the interterritorial conference, 9–12, File no. IV-8, Microfilm MKM 15, reel 11, HIAS/HICEM, New York Offices, RG 245.4, Series I, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

danger of returning to Germany. However, they found themselves in an ambivalent position if they allowed themselves to be involved in the restrictive refugee policies of the destination countries and thus part of the decision-making about the "right" and "wrong" motives for flight. Even if not expelled from their countries of refuge, many refugees were urged to go back to Germany. In the Netherlands, the Committee for Special Jewish Affairs assisted the incoming refugees to travel on to countries where they could stay permanently. But in 1936 nearly 25% were sent back to Germany because they came to the Netherlands without any financial means and could not be supported by the committee.[35]

In February 1938, the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees organized another conference in Geneva aimed to specify the Provisional Arrangement. The convention approved there defined the term "refugee from Germany" more precisely as a "person possessing or having possessed German nationality and not possessing any other nationality" and who didn't enjoy the protection of the German government.[36] It strengthened the rights of stateless people, who had previously only been subject to the—usually very restrictive—regulations of the host country, requiring, for instance, a visa where German citizens didn't need them. According to the new arrangement they were supposed to be treated in the same way as other refugees from Germany. Still, "persons who leave Germany for reasons of purely personal convenience" were excluded from protection. In fact, this was meant to ensure that only a person forced out of the country by political, racial, or religious persecution would be protected, while those who left Germany because they had got in trouble with criminal or fiscal law could still be excluded. However, the vague term left considerable space for interpretation and provoked a debate at the conference in February 1938 about who could be regarded as a "voluntary emigrant."[37]

The regulations regarding the right to work meant definite progress compared to the Provisional Arrangement of 1936. Refugees who had been resident in the receiving country for at least three years or who were married to a citizen of that country or had children possessing the nationality of the country of residence received the permission to work. In addition, the education of refugees was to be promoted to facilitate their emigration overseas.[38] Gerhart Riegner, who ob-

35 Monthly report July/August 1936 of the Comité voor Bijzondere Joodsche Belangen (G.v. Tijn), MF 97 (HIAS-HICEM Collection reel 3 of 4), HIAS/HICEM, New York Offices, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

36 *Conventions, Agreements and Arrangements Concerning Refugees Adopted Before the Second World War* Office of the UNHCR,...; HCR/120/34/80, 41.

37 Hermann Bekaert, *Le Statut des étrangers en Belgique* (Brussels: Larcier, 1940), 369–71.

38 UNHCR, *Conventions*, 45–46.

served the conference for the World Jewish Congress, saw this regulation as a decisive improvement compared to the Provisional Agreement. However, he feared that the liberalization of labour regulations for the refugees who already had left Germany might reduce the chances of future refugees being admitted at all.[39]

In any case, the effect of the new convention was limited because, out of the fourteen participating countries, only seven signed it, each of them with some reservations about individual articles,[40] and only Belgium and the United Kingdom ratified it before the beginning of the Second World War in September 1939.[41]

1938: The Turn to Chaotic Mass Flight

Most of the Jews who had fled Germany during the early years of the Nazi era did so with a minimum of preparation and some leeway (albeit limited) in their decision-making. In March 1938, with the annexation of Austria, things changed. Panic-stricken flight was the rule after pogroms which started on the eve of the "*Anschluss*." Refugee aid organizations, which had been trying for years to organize the mass flight and to stop the "wild" emigration, were overrun by the development. Almost overnight the neighboring states sealed off their borders: Switzerland, Great Britain, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark introduced visa requirements for travelers with Austrian passports. In Norway visa applicants of "mosaic faith" or who were merely suspected of having Jewish ancestry were rejected.[42] After all, Austrian passports had been replaced by passports of the German Reich, and the Danish border police was ordered to reject refugees who were not allowed or not willing to return to their country of origin "and who arrive in Denmark without having obtained an entry permit in advance."[43] In France new regulations were invented to separate "desirable" from "undesirable"

39 Gerhart Riegner, Report of the International Conference for the Adoption of a Definitive Statute for Refugees from Germany, 7, File 5, Box A8, World Jewish Congress (WJC) Collection, Series A, Subseries 1, AJA.

40 Otto Kimminich, *Der internationale Rechtsstatus des Flüchtlings*, Schriftenreihe der Hochschule für Politische Wissenschaften München, N. F. Heft 1 (Cologne: Carl Heymanns, 1962), 233.

41 *A Study of Statelessness* (New York: United Nations Department of Social Affairs, 1949), 114.

42 Einhart Lorenz, *Exil in Norwegen: Lebensbedingungen und Arbeit deutschsprachiger Flüchtlinge 1933–1943* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1992), 51.

43 Petersen, *Viel Papier*, 77.

immigrants, the latter meaning "clandestine foreigners, irregular guests . . . unworthy of living on our soil" and thus to be rigorously expelled.[44]

The options for taking refuge were limited anyway because other European countries that would theoretically have been easy to reach, such as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, brought rather strong pressure on their Jewish minorities to make them leave the country. By the beginning of 1938, the right-wing Romanian government had enacted several decrees which rendered large parts of the country's Jewish population stateless, among them many families that had been residing in Romania for generations. The government openly declared its aim to force 50,000 Jews out of the country every year.[45] In Hungary, a new law was decreed in May 1938 that limited the percentage of Jews in business and in the liberal professions. In Bulgaria, Jews of foreign citizenship were ordered to leave the country.[46] The Yugoslav government followed suit in 1939 by forcing all Jews with foreign passports to leave the country within six months. In March 1938 the Polish government enacted the Law on the Revocation of Citizenship, which aimed at preventing Jews with a Polish passport who lived in Germany or Austria from fleeing to Poland. Antisemitic decrees in Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece prompted Turkey, for its part, to take measures against the entry of Jews.[47] In June 1938 Turkey prohibited the entry or the stay of any person without a valid passport. Although Jews were not mentioned, it became obvious that they were targeted by the fact that Turkish authorities "suggested marking the passports of German Jews with a secret mark known only to the police and the consulate general, which would not attract the attention of the passport holders."[48]

The chaotic mass flight following the "*Anschluss*" caused the US government to convene the conference of Evian, which was attended by the delegates of 32 states. In their statements at the conference, they expressed great compassion for the refugee's plight but finally made clear that no country was willing to take in a considerable number of refugees. German propaganda gleefully cited this as a proof of antisemitism among those governments which had criticized Germany's

44 Vicky Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish refugee crisis, 1933–1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 174.

45 World Jewish Congress, Executive Committee, Memorandum to the Committee of Three appointed by the Council for the League of Nations to examine the petitions regarding the situation of Romanian Jewry, Geneva, January 15, 1939, File 12, Box A4, WJC Collection, Romania and Transylvania, reports, 1936–1948, Series A, Subseries 1, AJA.

46 European Executive Council, February Report, 1939, AR 33/44 #189, JDC.

47 Corry Guttstadt, *Die Türkei, die Juden und der Holocaust* (Hamburg: Assoziation A, 2008), 232.

48 Corry Guttstadt, "Turkey – Welcoming Jewish Refugees?," in *Bystanders, Rescuers or Perpetrators? The neutral countries and the Shoah,* ed. International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (Berlin*:* Metropol, IHRA, 2016), 59.

anti-Jewish policy. It is likely that the US and the British government, when preparing for the conference, had expected Latin American or other countries with vast territories of what was perceived as empty land to be willing to accept large numbers of refugees. But since the cost of their resettlement was not covered and most Latin American governments wanted to maintain good economic relations with Germany, none of their representatives volunteered such an offer. The organizers of the conference bore considerable responsibility for its poor results because they refused to change their own immigration provisions and told all those invited that they didn't expect other countries to take in more refugees than allowed by existing law. Antisemitic motives were made explicit only by the Australian representative but certainly played a role in the background for others too.

The case of the Argentine government is most telling: Even during the conference of Evian the Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed the country's consuls to deny visas "to anyone they have reason to believe is leaving or has left his country of origin as an undesirable or having been expelled, whatever the reason for the expulsion." The decree stressed "the need to maintain strict controls at present and to reinforce all means of selection in order to prevent disorderly waves of immigration to our country."[49] The term "Jew" was not mentioned in the decree but it is obvious that they were being targeted. Only a few weeks later the liberal immigration law, in force since 1876, was abolished.[50] Immigrants to Argentina now needed a visa from the consul in their country of origin, a disembarkation permit from the immigration authority, and had to prove that they were going to work in agriculture. This made legal Jewish immigration from Germany nearly impossible.

The Peruvian government reacted in a similar way. In Evian its representative, Francisco García Calderón Rey, had praised the "prudence and wisdom" of the United States, which had stopped the "flood of immigrants by a far-sighted legislation" (i.e., the quota system that limited immigration to the US). Like his country, the diplomat went on, the United States would "strive for a safe and peaceful integration of the immigrants, and also for the defense of their Nordic heritage, their Saxon race, against the invasion of other peoples."[51] Minorities of different origins should not be created, and the "elements not be mixed too hastily."

49 Circular no. 11 from the Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs, José Maria Cantilo to all embassies, July 12, 1938; published as PMJ, vol. 2, doc. 61.

50 Frédéric Bonnesoeur et al., eds., *Geschlossene Grenzen: Die internationale Flüchtlingskonferenz von Évian 1938* (Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, 2018), 387.

51 Ralph Weingarten, *Die Hilfeleistung der westlichen Welt bei der Endlösung der deutschen Judenfrage: Das Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees (IGC) 1939–1939* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1981), 66.

While an "unorganized influx" would be dangerous, a moderate immigration could be beneficial, according to Calderón.[52] Obviously, Jews were not regarded as beneficial to Peru, as only two months later, in September 1938, the Peruvian Foreign Office instructed all consulates not to issue visas to people they identified as Jews. The diplomats were supposed to recognize Jews by their names, their "ethnic characteristics," or by any reliable information.[53]

The only commitment came from the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, who promised to take in up to 100,000 Jewish refugees. His offer was met with scepticism, because it was all too obvious that he just wanted to improve his image, which had been severely damaged by a pogrom he had instigated against Haitian migrant workers in the Dominican Republic. Nevertheless, a settlement project was finally started in Sosúa on the Atlantic coast of the island in 1940. But no more than a few hundred people lived there at any time.[54]

In Evian the representatives of the Jewish and charitable organizations arrived with detailed plans on how the emigration of Jews from Germany could be promoted and organized. But in the end, each organization had just three or four minutes to present its plans to a subcommittee. "The various speakers found themselves back in the Commission's anteroom before they had even realized that they had already appeared before the Commission," as Salomon Adler-Rudel, one of the participants, described it. This rushed job likely dashed all hopes that the aid organizations might have placed in the conference.

In contrast to today's refugee conferences, the delegates at least deplored that due to the difficult economic situation they were not able to accept any further refugees. The declared main aim of the conference was to accommodate the refugees, not to shield the countries against them. But the reaction of several countries during and immediately after the conference demonstrated that the professions of their representatives at the conference were just lip service, while in reality their politics were guided by national self-interest.

In the final resolution of July 14, 1938, the same diplomatic considerations that had dominated the negotiations in the run-up to the conference were reasserted: Switzerland ensured that the wording was toned down, as did the Latin

52 Bonnesoeur et al., *Geschlossene Grenzen*, 365.

53 Bonnesoeur et al., *Geschlossene Grenzen*, 365.

54 Hans Ulrich Dillmann and Susanne Heim, *Fluchtpunkt Karibik: Jüdische Emigration in der Dominikanischen Republik* (Berlin: Chr. Links, 2009), 9.

American states interested in trade with Germany. Any condemnation of Germany's anti-Jewish policy was avoided.[55]

The report of the Jewish Department of Germany's Security Main Office, where Eichmann also worked at the time, stated with satisfaction: "It is noteworthy that an amendment to the resolutions was made at the request of Switzerland. It expressed the fear that the German government might regard the expression 'disorderly emigration' as an attack on its authorities. This request was met by amending the expressions."[56]

As a consequence of the conference, the German Gestapo and the Security Service expected that Jewish emigration would become more difficult in the future and numbers would decline because only very few countries were willing to admit Jewish refugees. The cynical conclusion of the Nazi agency was rather simple: "It therefore appears to be the most urgent task for the near future to get as many Jews as possible to emigrate under the present conditions (. . .)."[57]

The Gestapo now increasingly deported Jews to neighboring countries by stealth at night and threatened them with arrest if they considered a return. Jews were forced to board trains or ships bringing them to the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, or Lithuania, or the Gestapo deported them into Switzerland, Luxembourg, and France.[58] At the end of September, after the Munich Agreement and the annexation of the Sudetenland, the situation became even more chaotic and the practice of deporting Jews to "no man's land" between the borders became widespread. On the western borders of the Reich, too, the authorities of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg after the annexation of Austria urged illegal refugees to move on to one of the neighboring countries. On October 27, 1938, German police arrested about 17,000 persons holding Polish passports who were living in Germany. Due to the above-mentioned Polish law, their documentation was to expire on November 1, 1938, and the German authorities feared that they would no longer be able to deport these people once they were stateless. This fear motivated their decision to deport them to Germany's eastern border. However,

55 Actes du Comité Intergouvernemental. Compte rendu des Séances Plénières du Comité, Résolutions et Rapports: Archives de la Societé des Nations, Genève Annexe IV, R 5801, 34658/34225; English version in Bonnesoeur et al. *Geschlossene Grenzen*, 108–109.

56 Report of the SD Main Office to the Reich Führer SS and Chief of the German Police about the refugee conference in Evian, 15.8.1938: RGVA, 500k-1–612, fol. 18–30.

57 Report of the SD Main Office to the Reich Führer SS and Chief of the German Police about the refugee conference in Evian, 15.8.1938: RGVA, 500k-1–612, fol. 29–30.

58 Bob Moore, *Refugees from Nazi Germany in the Netherlands 1933–1940* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986), 96; Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, vol. I, 266. Robert Pell to Pierrepont Moffat, March 8, 1939; decimal file 840.48 Refugees/1538, M-1284, roll 25, RG 59, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter as NARA).

Polish guards prevented them from entering Polish territory. For days these "unwanted" were pushed back and forth in the "no-man's land" before humanitarian and hygienic concerns convinced the Polish side to admit these citizens to makeshift camps.[59]

Potential host countries reacted to the German practice of illegal deportation by complaining or admonishing the German authorities and threatening to deport those who had entered the country under the pressure of the German border police. At the same time, they reacted in an increasingly authoritarian fashion against the refugees: police checks, registration requirements, imprisonment and criminalization of refugees, the establishment of camps, deportations, etc. The German policy of forced deportation contributed to the undermining of democracy in other countries and thus to the destabilization of the political situation. As can be seen today on the Polish-Belarusian border, the forcible expulsion of migrants across the border into a country where they are not wanted is destabilizing and leads to a dangerous increase in international tensions. Above all, however, this approach endangers the health and lives of the deportees. The German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt, referring to the refugees of the 1930s, argued that it was often not laws, but police and administrative measures that were used to ward off refugees and turned stateless refugees into "illegal aliens." Even in non-totalitarian countries, Arendt argued, this "led to a form of lawlessness organized by the police which practically resulted in a co-ordination of the free world with the legislation of the totalitarian countries."[60]

Far-reaching Projects and Short-lived Successes

At the very least, the conference of Evian spurred on the search for settlement opportunities for larger groups of Jews in allegedly empty spaces in Africa, Asia, or Latin America. The British government wanted to avoid the discussion about Palestine at the conference and was particularly eager to present alternatives. Jewish settlements were seriously discussed or even prepared for Australia (the Kimberley Project), Angola, Abyssinia, Tanganyika, Kenya, Rhodesia, British Guyana, Madagascar, Canada, Alaska, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, the Phil-

59 Sybil Milton, "The Expulsion of Polish Jews from Germany, October 1938 to July 1939: A Documentation," *Leo Baeck Yearbook* XXIX (1984): 169–99; Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 172–73; see also the article of Zofia Trębacz in this volume.

60 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Penguin, 2017), 377.

ippines (Mindanao), Manchuria, and the Jewish Autonomous Soviet Republic of Birobidjan.

Few of these projects made it past the planning stage. The interests of the governments and non-governmental organizations often contradicted each other and frequently had little to do with the interests of the Jews who were expected to live in the settlements. Sosúa in the Dominican Republic was among the few which, at least in a rudimentary fashion, were realized. From the perspective of the receiving countries, Jews were welcome if they brought large sums of money to develop the economy, if they were willing to settle in remote areas, and if they had the potential and the means to establish an infrastructure there. But most of the German Jews were neither pioneers nor trained for such a prospectus. The local elites, even resident Jews, considered Jewish refugees from Europe often as competitors.[61]

Whatever motives Roosevelt might have had to convene the Evian conference, such an initiative suited his idea of a global migration policy very well. Roosevelt looked at migration management based on scholarly analysis as a means to guarantee economic well-being, as well as to secure long lasting peace. In addition, he considered this an opportunity to settle existing minority conflicts. Accordingly, global population management was needed to direct people from overpopulated areas to places where they could be usefully employed. Apart from solving immediate post-war problems, the management of population and resources was seen as a social and economic corrective and the basis for a splendid future. One of his close consultants in migration matters quoted Roosevelt as follows: "I want to make North Africa the granary of Europe, just as it was in Roman days. We can pump desalinated water from the Mediterranean for irrigation and build air-conditioned cities in the desert. Technicians will be recruited from among the Displaced Persons. Steel pipe and housing materials can be manufactured as each European country converts from wartime production to peaceful economy."[62]

It was in spring 1940 that Roosevelt initiated his M project—"M" standing for "migration"—in order to prepare for the post-Second World War era, when millions of people would be uprooted in Europe, a circumstance already anticipated at that time. A team of experts was hired to collect all available information about resettlement projects, population policy, and migration management. They

61 Susanne Heim "Zwischen Notlösung und Utopie: Projekte zur Kollektivansiedlungen von Jüdinnen und Juden," in *Going East – Going South: Österreichisches Exil in Asien und Afrika*, ed. Margit Franz and Heimo Halbrainer (Graz: Clio, 2014), 57–74.

62 Henry Field, *"M" Project for F.D.R. Studies of Migration and Settlement* (Ann Arbor: Edwards, 1962), 328.

were instructed to work secretly because the results might be "politically explosive." The team was organized by anthropologist Henry Field and supervised by geographer and geologist Isaiah Bowman, President of the Johns Hopkins University. In Roosevelt's opinion, the project was politically explosive and was kept top secret.[63] During the following years, the staff of Project M compiled information about the population increase in Italy, Spain, and Burma, about white settlements in Africa, and about refugees in Great Britain and in Switzerland. For the project the immigration of Mexican workers into the United States was likewise of interest, as well as the birth rate in Palestine and projected settlement chances in Europe, Latin America, and Manchuria. In addition, experts involved in the project tried to analyze why so many Jews hesitated to resettle in the so-called autonomous republic of Birobidjan in the Soviet Union. Hundreds of reports and surveys were edited and circulated in a limited set of numbered editions among carefully selected readers, most of them members of the US administration.[64] Although Truman did not continue the project after Roosevelt's death, the studies collected likely shaped the views of leading demographers and politicians with regard to the problems in post-war Europe.

Considering his ideas on migration management, Roosevelt's initiative to organize the conference of Evian appears in a somewhat different light: The refugees from Nazi Germany constituted just one of many migration problems, and thus Evian can be seen as an attempt to distribute the refugees and fix larger population problems according to political criteria under the leadership of the United States. The admission of large numbers of refugees, especially Jewish refugees, was unpopular in the US, to say the least. Roosevelt sought a way to combine a restrictive migration policy with an attempt to redirect the refugees to other countries, thus keeping the initiative in what he considered to be a key field of politics. In any case, by convening the conference, Roosevelt had taken the reins of action out of the hands of the High Commissioner for Refugees, thus further disempowering the already weak institution.

In the short term, the ten-day conference of Evian launched the establishment of the Intergovernmental Committee (IGCR) based in London. Most of the countries participating in the conference were represented in this committee by their diplomats stationed in London. Along with the US, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and France—some of the states that, apart from Palestine, had so far taken in the most refugees—set the tone.

63 Susanne Heim, "Projekt 'M' – Roosevelts Pläne zur globalen Migrationsregulierung," *Leidschrift: Historisch Tijdschrift* 22.1 (2007): 121–39, here 123.
64 Heim, "Projekt 'M'," 127.

The American lawyer George Rublee, an old acquaintance of Roosevelt, was the elected director of the committee. The IGCR was tasked with both finding new emigration possibilities and pushing the German government to release the assets of the Jewish refugees. However, for months, the Germans refused even to meet Rublee. Only after the November Pogrom, when facing an extreme lack of foreign currency, did they agree to enter a discussion with the IGCR—not least because they saw the chance to improve their foreign exchange balance by linking the emigration of Jews to the promotion of German exports. In November 1938, secret negotiations started between Rublee and Schacht and, after his dismissal as President of the Reichsbank, with Helmuth Wohlthat. As head of the Department of Foreign Exchange Control in the Office of the Four-Year Plan, Wohlthat was quite experienced in the dispossession of the Jews.[65]

The plan that emerged from the talks suggested that two-thirds of Germany's Jews would be allowed to emigrate, with the final third, comprised mostly of the "elderly"—i.e. older than 45 years—remaining untouched in the country. Twenty-five percent of Jewish assets would be used to buy equipment for the emigrants to take with them and to cover travel expenses. The money was to be paid into a trust fund administered by a board consisting of two Germans and one foreigner, who would decide the products to be bought. The imported raw materials contained in these products were to be reimbursed to the German government in foreign currency. The German tax authorities would retain 75 per cent of the Jewish emigrants' assets. Among other things, these funds were to be used to support the elderly that were deemed unfit for emigration. The plan thus created a direct economic incentive to provide as meagerly as possible for the Jews who remained in Germany and had been robbed of their assets. The most critical point, however, was the international corporation, later named the Coordinating Foundation. This corporation was to be built under the auspices of the IGCR and to be funded by wealthy Jews in the US, Britain, and France in order to pre-finance the costs of resettling Jewish emigrants.[66]

A formal agreement between the ICGR and Germany never materialized, only a strictly confidential memorandum, which Rublee and Wohlthat had read but did not sign. The results of the negotiations were controversial on both sides.[67]

Jewish organizations such as the Joint, the World Jewish Congress, and parts of the American Jewish Committee that did not want to undermine the anti-

65 PMJ, vol. 2, *Introduction*, 48.
66 Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, 55.
67 Kieffer, *Judenverfolgung*, 423–27.

German boycott or pay for the fund from which emigration was to be pre-financed, opposed the unofficial agreement.[68] In Evian, they had not been accepted as negotiating partners but were forced into the role of petitioners. Accordingly, they saw it as an imposition, being now expected to pay for the costs of a plan that they were not involved in drawing up.[69] Prominent Zionists such as Chaim Weizmann, the president of the World Zionist Organization, and Joseph Tenenbaum, chairman of the Jewish boycott council, also rejected the plan. They not only feared that financing other settlement projects with Jewish donations would jeopardize the construction of Palestine as a home for the Jews. They were also worried that the agreement would allow the Germans to appropriate a good deal of Jewish assets and make the Jews vulnerable to blackmail. Ultimately, the money earmarked for the livelihood of the Jews remaining in Germany would only last a short time, meaning that Jewish donors from abroad would have to keep raising new funds.[70]

On the German side there was a strong faction opposed to negotiations with the IGCR anyway because they regarded German anti-Jewish policy as an internal affair. The German Foreign Office saw itself not least as the representative of the economic interests of Germans abroad who would be threatened with losses if they could no longer monopolize trade between Germany and their countries of residence.[71]

The British and US governments, particularly the US State Department, had considerable reservations about the plan because it promoted German exports, competing with products from other countries on the international market. Meanwhile, Hermann Göring, who as plenipotentiary for the four-year-plan was responsible for the preparation of the German economy for warfare, applauded: If emigration of German Jews could be financed by a loan in foreign currency (to be provided by foreign governments and Jewish personalities) and later amortized by additional German exports, "this would, of course, considerably ease our

68 Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013), 156.

69 Nahum Goldmann at the Meeting of the Administrative of the World Jewish Congress in Paris, January 14–16, 1939, Opening Session, January 14, File 6, Box A6, WJC Collection, Series A, Subseries 1, AJA.

70 Joseph Tenenbaum to Stephen Wise, May 1, 1939, Jewish Refugees, Box 1, Joint Boycott Council Records, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, New York Public Library.

71 Reports of German embassies and consulates in various countries with the Foreign Office in Berlin, R 99391, PAAA.

export and foreign exchange difficulties at a stroke." He quite frankly stressed that for this reason, the plan was "greatly supported by the Führer."[72]

In some respects, the memorandum was similar to the proposals presented by Max Warburg a few years earlier. Warburg had also spoken out in favor of pre-financing emigration through foreign financiers and viewed Jewish assets in Germany as security for this. But Warburg assumed an organized transfer of all assets of Jewish emigrants, while the memorandum negotiated with Schacht stipulated that 75 percent of Jewish assets should remain in Germany. Only the remaining 25 percent should be transferred, under the direction of a board with a majority of German members.

In the early summer of 1939, President Roosevelt personally intervened in the refugee debate. He probably feared the failure of the Intergovernmental Committee and, in connection with this, growing pressure to liberalize US immigration regulations, which the Evian initiative had just been intended to avert.[73] In addition, he realized that the stagnation of settlement efforts allowed the German government to point out with satisfaction that the biggest critics of its racial policy were not themselves making any practical efforts to take in the Jews.[74] In his negotiations with Wohlthat, Rublee had agreed to present concrete settlement opportunities for Jews outside of Germany which neither he nor his successor Robert Pell could provide.[75] According to US diplomats familiar with the situation in Germany, Göring was threatening that, if this promise were not kept, the hardliners in the Nazi party might take matters into their own hands and solve the Jewish Question their way.[76]

On May 4, 1939, Roosevelt brought together leading personalities among American Jews[77] who had thus far prevented the creation of the aforementioned Coordinating Foundation, and committed them to cooperation—albeit with limited success. Although Jewish organizations had insisted that the costs of settlement could not be borne by private individuals and requested that foreign governments at

72 Susanne Heim and Götz Aly, "Staatliche Ordnung und 'organische Lösung': Die Rede Hermann Görings 'Über die Judenfrage' vom 6. Dezember 1938," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 2 (1992): 378–404, here 386.

73 Feingold, *Politics of Rescue,* 74–75.

74 FDR to Sumner Welles, June 21, 1939; Sumner Welles to Myron Taylor, June 22, 1939: M. Taylor Collection, Box 5, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park (FDRL).

75 Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, 60.

76 Breitman and Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews*, 155.

77 Namely Paul Baerwald, Henry Ittleson, Joseph Proskauer, Nathan Straus, Lewis L. Strauss, Solomon Stroock, and Stephen Wise; see *Refugees and Rescue: The Diaries and Papers of James G. McDonald 1935–1945*, ed. Richard Breitman, Barbara McDonald Stewart, and Severin Hochberg (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 171.

least contribute, finally the Joint agreed to provide one million dollars. Thus, the Coordinating Foundation was established on July 20, without, however, the question of financing having been definitively clarified.[78] And only in August 1939, immediately before the start of the Second World War, was a director of the Foundation chosen—the economist and former Belgian prime minister Paul van Zeeland. According to the Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer, by putting pressure on the American Jews to save their European co-religionists, Roosevelt possibly recognized the signs of the times better than his interlocutors.[79] Nevertheless, the initiative came too late. On September 1, 1939, the German Wehrmacht invaded Poland and dashed all hopes of large-scale resettlement and well-organized emigration.

Most countries where Jews sought refuge tightened their immigration regulations quickly. In addition to antisemitism and general xenophobia, economic motives played a major role in the discussion. Considering the global economic crisis, which had not yet been overcome, the restrictive attitude may seem obvious. However, it was disastrous for the refugees that various national self-interests reinforced each other, setting off a chain reaction of sealing off borders and weakening both the instruments of the League of Nations and Roosevelt's initiatives, which were based on his own worldview, until the original impetus was barely recognizable. The Jewish aid organizations tried to counter this with their own proposals for solutions. However, they lacked not only influence in the international diplomatic arena, but also unity. Ultimately, this meant that the refugees were largely on their own, at the latest after the November pogrom, when it became life-threatening for them to remain in the country.

The refugee crisis of the 1930s still shapes the debate on migration today. As in the 1930s, many states nowadays continue to see themselves as caught in a tension between humanitarian demands and domestic political considerations and economic interests when it comes to migration policy. Deterrence is still one of the most important instruments of refugee policy. Even today they continue to fear that a liberal immigration policy will not only encourage unwanted migration but will render them victims of the policies of expulsion or persecution implemented by dictators or undemocratic regimes. Refugees then and now, despite differences in their motives for fleeing, share the experience of fundamental legal uncertainty and the loss of familiar surroundings and of possessions. They leave family and friends behind and put their lives in danger on unseaworthy ships to elsewhere, where they are rarely welcomed with open arms.

78 Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, 78.

79 Yehuda Bauer, *Jew for Sale? Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933–1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 42.

In situations of growing international tensions, refugees can be caught between the fronts, while states militarily secure and arm their borders. Large-scale population transfers, as envisaged in Roosevelt's Project M, are also discussed today as ways to mitigate the depopulation of war-torn regions and foster their conversion into a "rivieras." The role of aid organizations has changed considerably since the 1930s. But they still play an important part in humanitarian work, while only a few are accepted as interlocutors in the refugee policy debate.

In many countries of refuge, refugees are still largely prohibited from working, which forces them into illegal employment, facilitates their exploitation, and brings them into conflict with the law. This makes their integration more difficult and sometimes delays a new start in the host country by years, if it does not prevent it altogether.

Seen in this light, it seems no less urgent today than in the years before the Second World War to strengthen the rights of refugees.

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Nazi Ghettoization, Forced Migration, and Himmler's Negotiations over the Jews of Europe, 1943–1945: International Dimensions of Holocaust Collaboration and Rescue

The 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question', a policy term used by Nazi leaders to articulate, pursue, and realize their antisemitic aims, was in retrospect an evolving, expanding system of genocidal persecution that developed over twelve years. Five of the wartime years were consumed with systematic campaigns of mass murder, by gassing and bullets, of an estimated six million Jews, ending in the collapse of the German state and total military defeat. As the main gassing centers were shut down in Poland in 1943 and 1944 and the Allies advanced toward the Reich from all directions, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler's terror apparatus and camp system contracted; prisoners were evacuated by foot, train, and boat. A central feature of this history of radicalization and collapse was the use of forced migration and confinement as a Nazi policy and tool of the Holocaust.

In 1939, there were approximately ten million Jews living in Europe facing persecution, flight, deportation, and possible murder. During the war another thirty million Europeans experienced some form of voluntary or forced migration. Furthermore, this Nazi chapter was not an anomaly. It was preceded by centuries of mass expulsions and flight in Europe and followed by several postwar cases of forced migration due to violence, most alarmingly today with Putin's attack on Ukraine. The historical links between forced migration and genocide were first observed and criminalized by legal scholar Raphael Lemkin, who defined genocide as a composite crime distinguished by its totalizing intent to destroy another "nation" or racial, or religious, group. One of the criminal actions of genocide was displacement or forced removal, often done in conjunction with war and empire-building.[1] At the Nuremberg trials, Nazi leaders convicted of crimes against humanity faced charges that included "deportation," specifically defined in article 6 of the London Charter as:

1 Raphael Lemkin's Memorandum on the necessity to develop the concept of genocide in the proceedings, 1946 in the Robert Kempner Papers, Box 140, Correspondence 1946, US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives.

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> murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war; or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.[2]

Deportation referred to forced migration abroad or removal from one's home, possibly to a concentration camp, or, for Jews and Roma/Sinti, to a ghetto and/or gassing center.

Does the Holocaust's history of forced migration in the form of ghettoization and forced evacuations shed any new light on migration studies, or vice versa? Although Holocaust history and migration studies have much in common, they have rarely cross-cultivated as fields of inquiry. Migration studies tends towards public policy-making, diplomacy, law, and is less of a topic of sweeping historical analysis. Through a contemporary lens, migration studies explores the reasons individuals and groups leave their homes, their choices and adjustments to new environments, and the limits or successes of their integration based on gender, destination country, age, occupation, etc.[3] It theorizes human agency in the international system and wrestles with concepts of mobility, transnationalism, temporality, and identity formation. More recent work has focused on case studies of forced migration in conflict zones, such as the Rohyngia, looking for patterns or inherent causes of forced migration that might be applicable to UNHCR's "early warning and preventive diplomacy."[4] The impact of climate change and natural disasters has increased in the past fifteen years, leading to the new category of the climate refugee. Indeed, fleeing life threatening violence (civil and international wars, especially genocides) or unlivable climate zones (water and food insecurity) are the two clearest predictors for determining whether migration on a large scale will occur.

Most of these themes have not entered into Holocaust historiography in a holistic way. Yet the recent global turn in Holocaust studies has shown an increased interest among Holocaust scholars in the migrations of victims and survivors beyond Europe, and the movement as an experience unto itself. Hannah Arendt's early writings on statelessness, and later Michael Marrus's book on the refugee,

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2 United Nations, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocity-crimes/Doc.1_Convention%20on%20the%20Prevention%20and%20Punishment%20of%20the%20Crime%20of%20Genocide.pdf.

3 Katherine Donato, Donna Gabaccia, and Patricia Pessar, "A Glass Half Full? Gender in Migration Studies," *International Migration Research* 40.1 (2006): 3–26.

4 Susanne Schmeidl, "Exploring the Causes of Forced Migration: A Pooled Time-Series Analysis, 1971–1990," *Social Science Quarterly* 78.2 (1997): 284–308.

The Unwanted, dealt with migration as part of the entangled histories of the nation-state, notions of citizenship, international agencies, and discriminatory quota systems. As a refugee herself, Arendt spoke early on about homelessness, loneliness, and totalitarian terror.[5] The postwar rise in victim studies, biographies and memoirs of survivors, and more recently on transgenerational transmission have dealt more specifically with migration. In Holocaust studies, these developments mostly involved the study of German and Austrian Jews who were able to emigrate in the 1930s, Polish wartime Jews, and then those who left Europe after 1945. Yizkor books aside, the migration of certain Jewish communities during the Holocaust, whether voluntary or coerced, has not developed into a major subfield, though there have been some outstanding pioneering studies by Atina Grossmann, Marion Kaplan, Beate Meyer, and a few more recent doctoral dissertations on the migration paths of persecuted Jews.[6]

In this essay, I will focus on the role of ghettoization as forced displacement and relocation, or migration, and the dissolution of ghettos in 1944–45. In Nazi leaders' plans for the "Final Solution," the ghetto was a central mechanism of forced migration and confinement that developed in a systematic and ad hoc manner, with specific yet changing strategies over time. By early 1945, in a desperate attempt to gain favor with the western Allies, Himmler began using the remaining prisoners in the last ghettos and camps as bargaining chips for a peace settlement. These prisoners, like pawns in his secret negotiations, could be forced to relocate to safety in Switzerland or Sweden, or sent on death marches into the shrinking battle zones of the Reich.

In the 1950s eminent Holocaust scholar Raul Hilberg constructed the Nazi machinery of destruction in stages based on German documentation, and sought to

5 Hannah Arendt's *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994). On statelessness and the refugee problem, see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975), 276–80; Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

6 Atina Grossmann, "Trauma, Privilege, and Adventure in Transit: Jewish Refugees in Iran and India," in *Jews and Colonialism*, ed. Stefan Vogt (London: Bloomsbury, 2022); Marion Kaplan, *Hitler's Jewish Refugees: Hope and Survival in Portugal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); Beate Meyer, ed., *Deutsche Jüdinnen und Juden in Ghettos und Lagern: Lodz. Chelmno. Minsk. Riga. Auschwitz. Theresienstadt* (Berlin: Metropol, 2017); Beate Meyer and Birthe Kundrus, eds., "Die Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland: Pläne – Praxis – Reaktionen (1938–1945)," *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus* 20 (2004); Sara Halpern, "'A Problem of Some Delicacy': Chinese Sovereignty, Jewish Refugees, and the West, 1945–1946," in *The History of Shanghai Jewish Refugees: New Pathway in Research*, ed. Kevin Ostoyich and Yun Xia (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2022), 173–202.

understand where the ghettos fit in the history of Nazi problem-solving, decision-making, and radicalizing antisemitism.[7] Hilberg created a chart with his key words: definition, expropriation, concentration, and from there killing, either via mobile shooting squads (the Einsatzgruppen) or in mass deportations to stationary killing centers. The ghetto, Hilberg argued in a later essay, was a form of government that was self-destructive for the Jews, a mirage of a semi-functioning society while Germans prepared them for deportations to their deaths. He assumed an inexorable logic in their purpose and structure that research has since tested and in many ways taken apart in detailed case studies by Andrea Loew, Gustavo Corni, Dan Michman, Sara Bender, and others. Numerous ghetto histories now account for the regional variations and different phases of Nazi decision-making, especially the role of local leaders and ghetto administrators, and the extreme Jewish experiences and leadership models. Given Himmler's dual role as the architect of the genocide and the master of Germanization of Europe, ghettos also served larger aims of the Reich's population politics, primarily the forced resettlement of ethnic Germans into the vacated homes of ghettoized Jews.[8]

The Nazis used ghettoization as a method of displacement, concentration, confinement, and death in a manner that was multi-faceted and in important ways unprecedented. Closed ghettos became de facto prisons, transit camps, and sites of immiseration and mass murder that broke with traditional European practices of Jew-hatred. Historically Christian Europeans had used expulsions and ghettoization as a form of anti-Jewish displacement, territorial restriction, extortion, and persecution, such as the banishing of Jews from Spain in 1492 or the creation of ghettos in 16th-century Venice, where pope Pius IV called for 'a place of obligatory Jewish residence'. In Hebrew the term *get* means 'divorce, separation, segregation'. For centuries, Jews in Europe were restricted to various types of spaces, like a pier, jetty, foundry, and of course, most famously in the late 18th and 19th centuries, the Pale of Settlement in Tsarist Russia. The last western European ghetto was abolished in Rome in 1870. When Tsar Nicholas II abdicated in spring 1917, the Russian provisional government abolished The Pale. Forced mass

7 Rene Schlott and Walter H. Pehle, eds., *Raul Hilberg: The Anatomy of the Holocaust: Selected Works from a Life of Scholarship* (New York: Berghahn, 2019).

8 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), 53–55; Raul Hilberg, "The Ghetto as a Form of Government," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* volume 450.1 (1980): 98–112; Guy Miron, "Ghettos and Ghettoization-History and Historiography," in *A Companion to the Holocaust*, ed. Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl (New York: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 247–61; Eric Sterling, ed., *Life in the Ghettos During the Holocaust* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Martin Dean and Geoffrey Megargee, eds., *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945, Vol. II: Ghettos in German-occupied Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

migration, removal, and concentration was and continues to be central to the creation and dissolution of empires and nation-states, often referred to as ethnic cleansing or purification within modern racializing discourse. Most of the roughly ten million Jews in Christian Europe, about two percent of the population in 1933, knew firsthand or through a family member of the continuous Jewish experience of estrangement, displacement, and violent persecution amidst imperial expansion and collapse, and during wartime.[9]

The Enlightenment era of democratic revolutions and human rights offered Jews another path besides flight and emigration. The Nazis pushed back against Jewish emancipation, assimilation, and integration in a perversely genocidal manner by combining traditional ghettoization and modern methods of deportation and destruction. In discussions over the 'Jewish Question' on the eve of the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Nazi leaders, including the Reich Minister of the Occupied Eastern Territories, Alfred Rosenberg, spoke of a Polish model of ghettoization, which had developed in 1939 and 1940 but had proved insufficient since the ghettos created additional problems, economic burdens, epidemics, and security concerns. As more territory was conquered, more Jewish populations would come under Nazi rule, and plans for deportation beyond Europe, to places such as Madagascar, were not feasible. The Germans interpreted the failure of the 1938 Evian Conference and western, especially American, rejection of Jewish refugees as tacit assent to a global consensus that Jews were an unwanted 'inferior race'. In Nazi thinking, it was a German problem to be solved, and necessary for achieving global hegemony as the 'master race'.

With the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, the mass shootings of Jews began in conjunction with military warfare. Hitler boasted to his Croatian ally that this time the Jews of Europe would not get away, that historically when they had been expelled from empires, they or their descendants had always come back to seek revenge. No Jewish family would be left on the continent of Europe, Hitler asserted, to reproduce as a race and to return to Europe. In order to remove Jews from their homes, Nazi leaders used ruses to gather them at town centers, declar-

9 Howard M. Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (New York: Random House, 1990); Dan Michman, *The Emergence of Jewish Ghettos During the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Richard Bessel and Claudia B. Haake, eds., *Removing Peoples: Forced Removal in the Modern World* (London: Oxford University Press, 2009); Isabel Heinemann, *"Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut": Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003); Alexa Stiller, *Völkische Politik: Praktiken der Exklusion und Inklusion in polnischen, französischen, slowenischen Annexionsgebiete, 1939–1945*, 2 Volumes (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2022); Goetz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung: Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2004).

ing that they should pack their bags because they would be migrating to their promised land of Palestine, or because a ghetto was being formed. Rosenberg, military leaders, and SS-police saw ghettos as a measure to facilitate the killing—as a historical, cynical ruse in the process, openly calling for the creation of a ghetto and then gathering Jews into Soviet cinema houses, former Polish fortresses, churches, barns, green houses, any structure that could be used to rapidly organize their confinement and relocation to a killing site, usually a mass grave at the edge of town. The Germans also used ghettos as forced labor and manufacturing sites, such as in Lodz, Poland; other, smaller versions cropped up across the former Soviet Union, in Lida, Belarus, for example, where (in historian Christopher Browning's analytical categories) the "productionist" model of sustaining Jewish laborers for the war effort and colonial development co-existed for a while with the "attritionist" model of more rapid decimation through famine and other means. By 1942, the Germans had established more than 1,150 sites across Eastern Europe, the most famous and long-lasting in Poland, but also in Lithuania (Kovno, Vilna), Latvia (Riga), and near Prague at Theresienstadt. By the end of 1943, there were a handful of ghettos left with remnant laboring populations, and two-thirds of the Jews who would be killed in the Holocaust were already dead. In the words of eminent scholar and survivor of the Lvov ghetto, Philip Friedman, Nazi-created ghettos were "not of a spontaneous or accidental nature but were rather part and parcel of an unfolding plan, which began with the concentration of the Jews, [. . .] ghettos were designed to serve the Nazis as laboratories for testing methods of slow and "peaceful" destruction of whole groups of human beings."[10]

Fundamental to the role of ghettoization, a decentralized process starting in Poland in late 1939, was the spatial segregation and isolation of the Jewish population. Self-governed by Jewish leaders who were cut off and fully reliant on the outside population, the ghetto population was subjected to the whims and aims of local German leaders and their collaborators. Himmler did not concern himself with the day-to-day issues and lacked direct control over them; even the timing of their complete destruction did not always go according to his wishes, as was the case in Lodz, but not Warsaw. For example, in June 1943, Himmler ordered the Lodz ghetto be shut down and converted into a concentration camp, but the regional governor Arthur Greiser stalled, seeking to profit from Jewish labor longer.

10 Philip Friedman, "The Jewish Ghettos of the Nazi Era," *Jewish Social Studies* 16 (1954): 61–88. Also see Christopher Browning, "Introduction," in *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos: Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe,* Vol. II, ed. Geoffrey Megargee and Martin Dean (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012), xxvii–xxxix.

During the war, the life of a ghetto and its inhabitants hinged on a complex interplay of central demands and local priorities of regional leaders.[11]

In Holocaust historiography, ghettos appear as islands in a sea of blood, as case studies with internal histories often thematized around Jewish responses, everyday life and death, collaboration, resistance, cultural expressions, survival strategies, barter economy, etc. There was often little connection to the international, transnational dimensions of the ghettos as far as regional negotiations among the Axis powers or with the Allies are concerned.[12] An exceptional case study is the history of the international port of Shanghai, China, where one of the largest groups of Jews emigrated overseas (at least 17,000) to a 'ghetto' of refuge. Their transit and resettlement involved open and secret negotiations and cooperation among private and public officials representing the Chinese, Japanese, British, American, Italian, Dutch, Soviet Russian, and Polish governments, as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). While, as Browning pointed out, there was no single interpretive framework for ghettoization during the Holocaust, what has come to light in recent years is that both the Germans and their Axis allies used ghettoization as an international mechanism for rezoning the map of Europe, by segregating, isolating, reducing, and then ransoming prominent Jews in designated spaces. Published in 2018, the third volume of the USHMM's *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* covers countries allied with Nazi Germany, presenting more than 700 ghettos and camps created and managed by the French, Romanians, Hungarians, and Bulgarians, often in coordination with the Germans. During the mass murder operations (Summer 1941 to Fall 1944), Germans and Hungarians used them as transit camps, holding areas for those destined to killing fields, and forced labor battalions in Ukraine, and then to gassing centers in Poland. Ethnic German and Hungarian populations moved into the emptied Jewish houses. These international operations involved higher-level negotiations between Hungarian fascists and German SS-Police leaders, high-ranking military as well as civil service diplomats. On the lower echelons, Hungarian gendarmes ghettoized Jews in spring and summer 1944 as a preparatory measure for first consolidating the rural populations then deporting them to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The remote rural and mountain populations of Carpathia in Munkacs and Sighet, among them the family of Elie Wiesel, still had no idea about their destination in Poland.

11 Catherine Epstein, *Model Nazi: Arthur Greiser and the Occupation of Western Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 262–63.

12 With few exceptions, such as the work on the Budapest Ghetto, Theresienstadt, Shanghai, and the Warsaw Ghetto.

1945, The Last Ghetto

In the panic of looming defeat, Himmler's approach to the 'Final Solution' changed, not that he suddenly developed moral misgivings about the murder, or became less antisemitic; rather, Himmler the pragmatist, ideological fanatic, and self-identified 'Great German' searched for a pathway to save Germany from Stalin's revenge and occupation while angling to secure his own future in a West allied with the Americans and British. Already in December 1942, Himmler had gained Hitler's permission to trade prominent Jews for much needed foreign currency or resources necessary to carry on the war. In 1944, Jews became valuable in another sense. Himmler could potentially divide the Grand Alliance, using these Jewish prisoners as pawns in peace negotiations with western Allies usually mediated through representatives from neutral countries, such as the diplomat Folke Bernadotte from Sweden. Theresienstadt's history, one of more than 2,000 ghettos in Nazi dominated Europe, illustrates the shifts, contradictions, ambiguities, and delusions of Himmler's strategy. Yet he was constant in his cruelty and unchanging in his view of the Jewish prisoners as nothing more than material, to be removed, ghettoized, murdered, or ransomed.[13]

Annexed to the Reich in March 1939, the historical Theresienstadt fortress and walled town was established by Habsburg Emperor Joseph II to honor his mother Empress Maria Theresa. In 1940, the Gestapo took over the site as a prison for political resisters, and later designated it a ghetto and concentration camp for Jews from Bohemia-Moravia. Jews first arrived in November 1941, and more than 150,000 would follow from Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark. It developed into a 'model' ghetto in that it served several functions of destruction: as a prison; a transit camp; and a waiting station for international elites/hostages, ordinary Jews, and both broken and intact families. There was some measure of self-rule granted to the Jewish leadership, but always under conditions of confinement and under the threat of lethal deportation. It was a place of suffering, starvation, isolation, as well as creative production, of possible rescue or release. And one must always stress the sadistic irony of the ghetto's use as a propaganda stage, a Nazi 'Potemkin village' campaign of denial, as well as the paradoxes of its official welfare agencies, distinguished prisoners, and theatrical performances alongside deliberate deprivations. Hierarchies among prisoners cut across several axes (age, class, and gender). Prisoners included Reich Jewish elites, elderly First

13 Yehuda Bauer, *Jews for Sale? Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933–1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Richard Breitman, "A Deal with the Nazi Dictatorship? Himmler's Alleged Peace Emissaries in Autumn 1943," *Journal of Contemporary History* 30 (1995): 411–30; Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler* (London: Oxford University Press, 2012), 724–29.

World War vets, and protected categories, e.g. the so-called prominents of leading Jews from the Reich, including the president of the German Jewish community, Leo Baeck (1873–1956), who arrived in January 1943 and became the Ghetto Elder. The prominent ones provided Nazis with future hostages or a cover for deflecting the international community's criticisms of Nazi anti-Jewish policy even well after the US Department of State and the British had confirmed in autumn 1942 that the Nazi's "Final Solution" meant mass murder. According to historian Anna Hajkova, 'There is often confusion about whether Theresienstadt was a ghetto or a concentration camp'. In her detailed study, she delineates "four overlapping functions": "transit ghetto", "an advantage ghetto (that is, a destination for groups deemed exceptions, such as the elderly), a propaganda ghetto, and eventually a camp to hold Jews for exchange."[14]

The arrival of the first Jews in November 1941 coincided with Himmler's moves to establish gassing centers in Poland and deport western European Jews to the East for killing.[15] Among the leaders in-the-know were Reinhard Heydrich and Adolf Eichmann, who selected a fellow Austrian, Dr. Siegfried Seidl, to serve as commander of the ghetto at Theresienstadt, just as Eichmann was planning the Wannsee Conference. While conditions in camps, killing centers, and ghettos worsened in 1942–1943, Nazi leaders embarked on a beautification campaign at Theresienstadt. Chief of the Sipo-SD, Reinhard Heydrich, expanded the size of the Altersghetto (Elderly Ghetto, its official designation at the Wannsee Conference) by forcibly removing the Czech non-Jewish population from town and bringing in Jews over 65 years of age and distinguished persons with international connections from Germany, Austria, Denmark, and the Netherlands.[16]

Nazis continued the bogus fiction of Theresienstadt, and Jews clung to it too. After the Stalingrad defeat in January 1943, Himmler "decided to expand Terezin's role as an advantage [privileged] ghetto in order to appease the Allies, with whom he hoped to negotiate." In May 1943, he renamed the ghetto a "Jewish settlement area," while more than 17,000 Jews were deported from there to Auschwitz- Birkenau "to prevent over-crowding." Mortality rates jumped fifteen-fold. Meanwhile, to prepare for official tours from the International Committee of the

14 Anna Hajkova, *The Last Ghetto: An Everyday History of Theresienstadt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 7.

15 Christopher Browning with Juergen Matthaeus, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

16 Geoffrey Megargee and Martin Dean, eds., *USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, Vol. II, Part A, Terezin, 181.

Red Cross, prisoners created a children's playground, flower beds, and a restaurant on a terrace, which one Jewish prisoner described as "eye wash."[17]

As of summer 1943, Himmler pursued multiple aims at once by destroying the ghettos in the Baltics and Ukraine and their non-laboring Jewish populations, managing his forced labor in the camp and factory system, and relying on fewer Jews. He sought to strengthen Germany's war economy, continue implementing the 'Final Solution', gain more power over his rivals, and counter Allied propaganda.[18] Himmler had seen in the Warsaw ghetto uprising that Jewish resistance was possible and likely to grow with the Red Army advancing westward and Soviet partisans expanding in the countryside. Among the first Ostland ghettos to be liquidated on August 16, 1943 was Bialystok, where some 30,000 inhabitants were located near the eastern front. A week after its destruction, 1,200 Jewish children from the former ghetto arrived unexpectedly at Theresienstadt. According to historian Anna Hajkova, Himmler planned to exchange the children for war material or money collected from Jewish organizations in Switzerland and North America. The children were supposed to be sent to Palestine. However, in Hajkova's words, "the exchange negotiations were not successful; the Jewish aid organizations did not pay; and six weeks later the children, together with fifty-three caretakers, were sent to Auschwitz and killed."[19] By 1944, more than 87,000 Jews had passed through Theresienstadt and were deported further east to Riga, Minsk, Lodz, Auschwitz, most to their deaths in mass shootings and gas chambers.[20]

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited Theresienstadt on June 23, 1944, after the Allied invasion at Normandy and while French and Hungarian Jews were still being deported to Auschwitz and gassed. The ICRC representative Maurice Rossel described Theresienstadt as a haven, neither a transit camp to death nor a ghetto. In his report, he quoted the Jewish Elder Dr. Paul Epstein,

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17 Megargee and Dean, *USHMM Encyclopedia*, 181 and Hajkova, *The Last Ghetto*, 10. The original 'eye wash' quote is from survivor Ludwig Hilft, "The Bank of the Jewish Self-Government Administration in Terezin," in *Terezin,* ed. Frantisek Ehrmann, Otta Heitlinger, and Rudolf Litis (Prague: Council of the Jewish Communities in the Czech Lands, 1965), 164–68.

18 Himmler order on the liquidation of the Ghettos of Ostland, June 21, 1943 (Prosecution Exhibit), RG 238, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter as NARA). Jews were to be collected in concentration camps, and Himmler sought to take over workshops supplying the Wehrmacht to ensure no shortfalls in production. Jews who could not work were to be 'evacuated to the East', by now a euphemism for murder: Prosecution Exhibit, Nuremberg Trials, NO-2403, RG 238, NARA. Though Himmler set a deadline for the reorganization into camps for August 1, the actual liquidations of the ghettos in Belorussia and the Baltics states began in fall 1943 in Vilna and Minsk. Longerich, *Himmler*, 667.

19 Hajkova*, The Last Ghetto*, 210–11; Bauer, *Jews for Sale?*, 112–15.

20 Megargee and Dean, *USHMM Encyclopedia*, 181.

declaring Terezin "a normal provincial town." Rossel's delegation even suspected that the Jewish settlement was fully communist and "led by a 'Little Stalin' of high value: EPSTEIN." Epstein was an esteemed professor of sociology from Mannheim, who chose to remain in Germany rather than emigrate to England, to help lead and protect the Jewish community. After this official visit, which Nazi leaders celebrated as a propaganda success, they carried out an obscene, cynical action by annihilating the Theresienstadt family camp in Auschwitz, where 6,000 to 7,000 prisoners had been kept together as hostages for the prior six months. Before they were gassed and cremated July 10–12, 1944, the SS forced the victims to write friendly postdated postcards to relations back in Theresienstadt to deceive them into thinking they were still alive and well in Auschwitz. Then in August and September the SS produced the bogus film, *Theresienstadt: Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet* (also known as *The Führer Gives a City to the Jews*) [See figure 1]. The film depicted lavish conditions, including a swimming pool, and well-fed and clothed Jewish prisoners. It was a fiction meant to counter the reality of what Allied forces were uncovering about the fate of Jews in Europe.

After the film, in which which Epstein was forced to act, was completed, Commandant SS-Obersturmführer Rahm (Seidl's successor) ordered Epstein's execution; he was shot on the grounds of the fortress on September 27, 1944. The rest of the Jewish council members and their families were rounded up and deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau on September 28, 1944; more than 18,000 followed them in subsequent weeks. In Fall 1944, 1,400 Slovak Jews who had been rerouted from Auschwitz arrived at Theresienstadt and informed the ghetto inhabitants about the gassing operations and the fates of those deported east.

In January 1945, Himmler expanded the prisoner categories to 'Mischlinge', Aryan-Jewish spouses in mixed marriages, and he designated Theresienstadt as their destination. From the Central Office for Reich Security, Himmler decreed on January 13 that stateless Jews and those in mixed marriages capable of labor were to be transported to Theresienstadt.[21] The "Mischlinge" continued to arrive until April 1945, ultimately numbering 5,736 prisoners from the Reich and surrounding region. With this influx, Commandant Rahm "sought to resume the destruction process." In mid-February 1945, he commandeered inmate engineers to create a "vegetable warehouse" as a sealed chamber. Rumors spread that the chamber would be used to gas Jews, causing an uproar. The initiative was shelved by Rahm.[22]

21 Kevin Mahoney, ed., *1945: The Year of Liberation* (Washington, DC: USHMM, 1995), 274.

22 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Vol. III (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1985), 986. Both Seidl and Rahm were executed in separate trials in 1947 for their crimes at Terezin.



Fig. 1: Still Photograph from the Nazi Propaganda Film, *Der Führer Schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* [*The Fuehrer gives the Jews a City*]. Members of the Altestenrat (Jewish council) at a meeting in the Theresienstadt ghetto. Pictured standing up from left to right: Otto Zucker (1892–1944), Paul Epstein (1901–1944), and Benjamin Murmelstein (1905–1989). This image was provided to the USHMM by Ivan Vojtech Fric. Fric donated a series of photos of transport arrivals at Theresienstadt which he had secretly taken. He was also forced by the Nazis to work on *Der Fuehrer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* in 1944. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Ivan Vojtech Fric.

Meanwhile, Himmler's brief stint as a military commander (Army Group Vistula) ended in failure and humiliation. How could he save Germany off the battlefield? Anticipating defeat, he extended feelers to the western Allies concerning peace and responded to more requests to save prisoners in 1945. Through his intermediaries, Himmler allowed the International Red Cross to intervene and agreed to the release of a relative handful of select prisoners, to distribute food packages, and to slow the forced evacuation of camps and death marches.

On January 15, 1945, Himmler met with former Swiss President Jean Marie Musy. During the discussions, Himmler obscured the fate of the Jews by asserting to Musy that they had been used for heavy war-related work, which was said to have resulted in the higher mortality rates. But, he added, now that negotiations were underway, he had placed Jews in regular work assignments, similar to ordinary Germans. According to historian Katrin Paehler, Himmler's 'interactions

with Musy were confrontational. He wanted it to be understood that he was not a pushover when it came to a central tenet of Nazi Germany's policy and ideology; and he strove to ensure that his ultimate goal, establishing contact with the US government, would be achieved'.[23] On February 5, a Himmler-approved transport left Theresienstadt, in which 1,200 Jews were sent to Switzerland as the result of transfer of funds from Musy to Himmler.[24]

The possibility of rescuing Jews in Theresienstadt became a reality. On March 16, Himmler's deputy Ernst Kaltenbrunner concluded an agreement with International Red Cross President Carl Burkhardt, allowing Red Cross parcels to be sent to prisoners, and the repatriation of women, children, and the elderly.[25] On April 6, an International Red Cross delegation led by Paul Dunant arrived at Theresienstadt. Adolf Eichmann was there to greet them with his entourage of SS officers. They told Dunant that there were 17,556 inmates. A week later, the Swedish Red Cross brought 425 prisoners to safety.[26]

Another delegation of international observers arrived in early April and continued to play into the hands of the Nazi fiction of Theresienstadt; this delegation described the prison as a "little Jewish State." The international representatives seemed too willing to accept the Nazi propaganda and thus betrayed their own bias. On April 19, the day before Himmler said his last good-bye to Hitler in the Berlin bunker, knowing that his open negotiations and prisoner releases would betray the Fuehrer, Himmler authorized Kaltenbrunner to allow Burkhardt's Red Cross delegation to enter Theresienstadt and release selected Jewish prisoners and Czech political prisoners. Already the Jewish inmates had been divided into groups, based on lists of prominent Jews, Jews with relatives abroad, and connections to foreign organizations.[27]

Besides Switzerland, the other hub of international rescue and espionage activity was neutral Sweden. The Swedish Red Cross (represented by Count Bernadotte) and representatives of the World Jewish Congress in Stockholm (Hillel

23 Paehler, *The Third Reich's Intelligence Services: The Career of Walter Schellenberg* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 290.

24 Hajkova, *The Last Ghetto*, 211.

25 Mahoney, *The Year of Liberation*, 279.

26 Mahoney, *The Year of Liberation*, 281. Also Hajkova, *The Last Ghetto*, 10.

27 See Peter Witte and Stephen Tyas, *Himmler's Diary 1945: A Calendar of Events Leading to Suicide* (Gloucestershire: Fonthill Media, 2014), 240 n. 126. Radio message Kaltenbrunner to Fegelein, undated [April 1945], IMT Nuremberg doc. PS-2519 (published in blue series, vol. 30, 587), RG 238, NARA. Miroslav Kàrný, 'Kaltenbrunners Reise nach Theresienstadt und der Prominententransport im April 1945', *Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente* 1 (2000): 66–85, at 67. Also noted by the Jewish Council leader in Theresienstadt Benjamin Murmelstein, IMT Nuremberg Doc, L-637, RG 238, NARA.

Storch and Norbert Masur) were also in negotiations with Himmler over the release of Jews. They sought the release of Scandinavian Jews, mostly Danish and Norwegian, from Theresienstadt and the surrounding region. Those prisoners were brought through the Reich northward on white buses under Allied aerial bombardment.[28] As these lucky few flowed out, thousands of prisoners from death marches converged on Theresienstadt, as many as 13,000, causing a typhus epidemic.[29]

The release of prisoners from Theresienstadt figured in Himmler's secret negotiations with World Jewish Congress representative Norbert Masur, which occurred in the wee hours of April 21 in Germany. After leaving Hitler's Berlin bunker on April 20 Himmler traveled north to his massage therapist's country estate for this secret meeting with Masur (who had been flown in from Stockholm). In their discussions, Himmler estimated the number of Jews still alive in the camps off the top of his head as: Theresienstadt 25,000; Ravensbrück 20,000; Mauthausen 20,000–30,000; he also estimated those still alive in recently liberated camps like Auschwitz 150,000; Bergen-Belsen 50,000; and Buchenwald 6,000. These were inflated figures meant to cover up the scale of the murder and to focus attention on those still alive rather than those who had been murdered.[30] Masur pushed back, asking about the fate of half of Hungary's missing Jews; what had happened to those more than 400,000 people? Himmler deflected by bewailing his earlier decision to release prisoners and the bad press which had resulted. Last fall, Himmler said, I allowed 2,700 prisoners to Switzerland, and the newspapers just said "I was looking for an alibi." To this he retorted forcefully: "I don't need an alibi, as I only did what I thought necessary for my people, and I will stand on that." Presenting himself as a man of honor, he stressed that he did not personally profit: "I always got a bad rap in the dirty press; even in Germany people wrote whatever they wanted." Facing his last meeting with the representative of the world Jewish community in April 1945, Himmler, the architect and executor of the Holocaust, presented himself as the victim, complaining about how much he had to endure and the unfair press coverage that used atrocities as an incitement against him. If the press continued to demonize him, he warned, he would not be as motivated

28 Witte and Tyas, *Himmler's Diary 1945*, 240 n. 112, which cites the translation of a highly confidential letter from F. Bernadotte at Wisborg to G. Storch, Stockholm, April 17, 1945: MF Document 054, roll 2/46 (Fleming Papers), The Wiener Library.

29 Mahoney, *The Year of Liberation*, 284–85.

30 Masur report on meeting with Himmler, April 1945 (English translation), Doc Accession #1995.A.021, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (hereafter as USHMM).

to release prisoners, halt death marches, and negotiate with the Allies.[31] Himmler believed that the Jews controlled the press, and Masur could help him improve his public image and even cover up his atrocities.

Masur maintained his composure, first mentioning freedom of the press, and then stressing that deeds matter more than what is printed. The liberation of those 2,700 prisoners was well received in the press; those from Theresienstadt were in better health too. Masur urged Himmler to continue releasing prisoners in order to make a favorable impression on the Allies, and so as to be better judged by history.

Himmler asserted that Theresienstadt was not really a camp: "it was a town run by Jews, it's their own show there, labor too. The way my friend Heydrich and I wanted it to be." At this critical time in April 1945, Masur knew that Nazi radicals like Himmler could not be trusted. They were liable to go on a scorched-earth killing spree and take out all those left in the camps and the last ghetto, so as "to cause the complete disappearance of the remaining concentration camps, to wipe out any living evidence, and witnesses to these atrocities." The last days of the Third Reich could therefore also "be the death knell" for the "remaining inmates who had came through all the tortures alive."[32] At the end of his meeting with Masur, Himmler conceded that he was willing to free 1,000 Jewish women from Ravensbrück, 50 Norwegians, and some French and Swedish prisoners. Himmler worked down a list prepared by the Swedish Foreign Ministry, checking off 20 here, 50 there at Theresienstadt, etc. He allowed the Red Cross to enter the sites to pick them up. As for the largest number of Jews, 1,000 from Ravensbrück, he instructed that they be passed off as Polish rather than Jewish women. Himmler reminded Masur that their meeting needed to remain secret, as did the arrival of the released Jews in Sweden.

The now famous white buses and white boats of released prisoners from Ravensbrück, and other camps including Theresienstadt, were significant symbols of Himmler's desperate attempts to curry favor with the western Allies and play a role in a post-war Germany. But the remnant German government, holding out in Flensburg after Hitler's suicide, deemed Himmler a liability and discharged him of his offices and duties. Himmler fled, donning a disguise and carrying false identification papers. He hid in northern Germany for several weeks, from May 2 until his capture on May 22 at a check point manned by Red Army soldiers near

31 Masur report on meeting with Himmler, April 1945, Doc Accession #1995.A.021, USHMM.
32 Masur report on meeting with Himmler, April 1945, Doc Accession #1995.A.021, USHMM.

Bremervörde. He committed suicide during a British interrogation in a villa in Lüneburg on May 23.

Meanwhile, on the same day that Himmler went underground, the International Red Cross, led by Swiss Delegate Paul Dunant, took control of Theresienstadt from the SS.[33] Yet medical aid could not save the roughly 1,500 prisoners who died in these last days from rampant diseases. In the chaos of the refugee flows, Theresienstadt became a dumping ground for bedraggled death marchers from some twenty-two Reich subcamps. The ghetto was easy to reach via railway and was among the last regions still in German hands as the Red Army and US army advanced toward Prague. The SS fled on May 4 and the Red Army arrived May 8, V-E day. On May 9, the First Ukrainian Front liberated the Theresienstadt ghetto.[34]

Conclusion

From the first weeks of the war until its final days, Himmler and other Nazi leaders ghettoized Jews as a form of displacement, and temporary confinement, but for various purposes over time. Pioneering Holocaust scholar H. G. Adler pointed out the importance of mutability as a genocidal strategy as circumstances changed. The comparatively fixed and finite purpose of the Aktion Reinhard gassing centers (Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka) as the penultimate killing operations obscures the expanding and evolving histories of thousands of camps and ghettos that served a multitude of short and long-term goals. Himmler's institutions of state violence grew exponentially from 1933 to 1944, and then were nearly liquidated into historical oblivion along with their victims. Furthermore, Nazi methods of forced migration, ghettoization, and internment were shared by their Axis allies in a network that expanded into Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Vichy France. These Allies also shared a discourse of displacement, euphemisms that concealed whether the population movement was voluntary, made under duress, or coerced. The typical terms of the day used to convey displacement were "emigrated," "evacuated," "resettled," or "sent to the East."

At the height of the Nazi conquests, ghettoization also became a euphemism for facilitating mass murder, and for the internment and exploitation of selected Jews as laborers to bolster the war economy. By 1944, the ghettos were mostly gone, and surviving Jewish prisoners were kept in the camp system as laborers.

33 Hajkova, *The Last Ghetto*, 10.
34 Hajkova, *The Last Ghetto*, 8.

Yet this change in Nazi anti-Jewish policy and the looming defeat of Germany by the Allies did not stop the killing. Indeed, for two months after the Allies landed at Normandy, French Jews continued to be deported from Drancy to Birkenau, where they underwent selection and gassing. Isolated in his bunker in Berlin in spring 1945, Hitler and others would claim a victory in the war against European Jews as they tallied the millions murdered.

These last days illuminate how systems come undone, as well as the international and transnational dimensions of leveraging genocide victims for other agendas and aims. Once displaced in gray zones of camp and ghettos, the most vulnerable of refugees, political prisoners, and stateless peoples became pawns of international negotiators with various agendas and resources, and above all fully dependent on outsiders to survive. Several governments, private organizations, and intermediaries on the Axis and Allied sides, with neutral countries such as Sweden and Switzerland playing a leading role, rescued prisoners from Bergen-Belsen, Theresienstadt and Ravensbrück. This was possible only at the very end, when Himmler found it necessary for Germany's future and as a way to brandish his own power.

The history of genocide denial also includes the Theresienstadt ghetto, where this site of displacement was used in propaganda by persecutors. First it served as a 'Potemkin village' movie set, produced to project the image of a comfortable Jewish city instead of a place of mass death. In the ghetto itself more than 35,000 Jews died during the war. Himmler also thought that he could deny culpability for the missing six million Jews, to the Allies and even the Jewish community abroad. In his secret meeting with Masur on April 21, 1945, he minimized, obfuscated, and defended the killing of millions. Himmler was satisfied, even smug about the number he had murdered as a sufficient 'solution'. He assumed that the Allies were antisemitic enough to understand this, perhaps even to appreciate what he had done, and that in time (if he could hang in there long enough) they would all get over it. These assumptions and delusions help us understand Himmler's antisemitism and his general propensity to downplay the atrocities at Theresienstadt. And he convinced some. Certain international visitors openly expressed suspicions of Jews after visiting the ghetto. It is chilling to realize that Himmler earnestly believed that the Allies would retain him as a German leader, and that until his suicide on the evening of May 23, he actually had reason to believe this.

Forced Migration and the Politics of Race: Family, "Passing," Forced Labor, and Abduction

Ayelet Eva Herbst

Flight and the Jewish Family: Reimagining Holocaust and Migration – Personal Testimonies of Polish Jews from Lwów (1941–1944)

The Second World War and the Holocaust initiated the mass population movement of millions of Jews across Europe as they were driven to move by targeted migration policies, deportations to ghettos and camps, and as they initiated their own movement by fleeing persecution across borders or escaping camps and ghettos within Nazi territories. When researching the intersection of Holocaust studies and migration studies, scholarship tends to focus on forced migration and expulsion based on anti-Jewish policy carried out by Nazi perpetrators. Not all movements of Jews stemmed directly from Nazi policies and were organized by perpetrators, however; some movements were initiated by Jewish victims who chose to move. Without attention to the victim-initiated movements, we have a less complete picture of the Holocaust and migration.

In this essay I call for a shift in scholarly focus from the movement of Jews promoted by Nazi perpetrators to the movement initiated and undertaken by Jewish victims. Addressing the flight of Polish Jews, I will conduct a qualitative analysis of memoirs, diaries, and interviews of Jews who fled Lwów[1] between 1941 and 1944 and survived the Holocaust under the Nazi occupation. I will argue that not all movement of Jews during the Holocaust was the direct result of Nazi policy organized by perpetrators. Sometimes Jews initiated their own movement, for two main reasons: a) Movement was a survival strategy through which Jews evaded persecution, or b) Jews moved in order to regain control and self-agency over their situation. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that the structure that facilitated this movement was the family unit, rather than institutions or state organizations. Here, the initiators of movement were not the state organizations supported by the Nazis, but rather individual Jews and the family structures to which they belonged.

1 The name of the city varies in different languages. In its present-day Ukrainian name, it is called "Lviv"; in Polish "Lwów"; in Russian "Lvov"; and in German and Yiddish "Lemberg" (לעמברג). This diversity reflects the various cultural influences that have shaped the city over the centuries. For consistency, this essay will use the Polish name "Lwów" to reflect the historical integration of Lwów's pre-war Jewish community into Polish Jewry, with the majority identifying as Polish Jews. All references and citations will adhere to the naming conventions of the author or quoted sources.

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The rationale for examining flight in and from Poland is simple: this country not only represents the largest number of Jewish victims who were persecuted by the Nazis, but the Jewish community of Poland also suffered the largest number of casualties. Out of the 5.6 to 5.7 million Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust, 3 million were Jews who lived in Poland, meaning that at least half of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust were Polish Jews. Before the outbreak of the war, there were approximate 3.3 million Jews living in Poland proper, which means that more than 90 percent of Polish Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. Another reason for the examination of Polish flight is the crucial role flight played in the survival of Polish Jews during the Holocaust, as the overwhelming majority of Jewish survivors from Poland survived the Holocaust as a result of their flight across borders to neighboring countries, with the majority of them reaching territories of the Soviet Union while others fled ghettos and concentration camps and hid on the "Aryan side" across occupied Europe.[2]

Of the population movements under discussion, one can identify two waves of flight. The first wave describes Jewish flight that took place from the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 until Germany occupied the rest of Poland with its invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. In this first wave, Jews fled western and central Polish territories and crossed borders to Eastern Poland, at the time under Soviet occupation.[3] According to estimates, approximately 300,000 Polish Jews fled in this wave.[4]

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2 For the flight of Polish Jews to the Soviet Union, see Eliyana R. Adler, *Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in Wartime Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020); Mark Edele, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Atina Grossmann, eds., *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017). For an example of the internal flight of Polish Jews within Nazi territories, see my work on the Lwów-Dnipropetrósvk Rescue Trail: Ayelet E. Herbst, "'I was a Jew, I was a Pole, I was a Ukrainian Woman . . .': The Genealogy of Passing on the Lwów-Dnipropetrósvk Rescue Trail," in *Ha-Tov v'ha-Meitiv: Contemporary Scholarship in Jewish Studies: Essays in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of Touro University*, ed. Simcha Fishbane and Eric M. Levine (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2024), 27–44.

3 On September 1, 1939, Germany's invasion of Poland triggered the outbreak of the Second World War. Between 1939 and 1941 Poland was divided between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The north-western parts of Poland were incorporated directly into Germany and became part of the Third Reich. In the mainland of Poland, the General Government was established, and eastern Poland— namely eastern Galicia—was incorporated into the Soviet Union. Eastern Galicia remained under Soviet occupation until the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, and it was incorporated into the General Government in August 1941.

4 For a comprehensive discussion on these statistics see Mark Edele and Wanda Warlik, "Saved by Stalin? Trajectories and Numbers of Polish Jews in the Soviet Second World War," in *Shelter*

The second wave of Jewish flight began after Germany occupied Eastern Poland with its invasion of the Soviet Union, in June 1941. While flight in the second wave began in June 1941, the majority of Jews fled between the summer of 1942 and the liberation of Poland from Nazi occupation in January 1944, including Jews who escaped ghettos and camps.[5] In the second wave, a large number of fleeing Jews were not able to cross borders and remained in hiding places or hid under false identities in territories of the General Government, the Reich Commissariat Ukraine, and the Third Reich, as well as territories of Hungary and Romania. Due to the clandestine nature of flight in the second wave, it proves difficult to estimate how many Jews survived in this way; historians estimate no more than 50,000 Polish Jews.[6]

Current historiography pertaining to the flight of Polish Jews primarily focuses on the first wave of flight.

The first section of this essay will set the stage by reviewing trends in historiography at the intersection of Holocaust studies and migration studies. It will suggest that scholarship emphasizes a German-centric approach that often neglects population movements initiated by individual Jews, and prioritizes the deportation and expulsion, activities, and roles of Nazi organizations and institutions and policies of forced migration. The following sections will concentrate on the analysis of the second waves of the flight of Polish Jews with an emphasis on the case study of Lwów: the second will argue that the most immediate collective structure through which Jews organized flight was the family unit. The third will argue that self-initiated movement provided agency for persecuted Jews who took action to flee, as well as serving as a survival strategy. Thus, this essay aims to enhance the existing scholarship on Jewish flight by offering a glimpse into how the

from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union, ed. Marek Edele, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Atina Grossmann (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 95–131.

5 In this essay, the terms "flight" and "escape" are used basically interchangeably, with subtle distinctions. "Flight" generally refers to the broader movement of populations fleeing danger and persecution, while "escape" specifies movement from one specific location to another. For example, "the flight of Jews from Lwów between 1941 and 1944" describes the general exodus of Jews fleeing persecution in Lwów. In contrast, "in September 1942, survivor X escaped the Janowska camp through an opening in the fence" describes a specific instance of escape from one place to another.

6 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Volume III (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1110; Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews: Betrayal and Murder in German Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 171. For the case study of Lwów, see Philip Friedman, "The Destruction of the Jews of Lwów," in *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust*, ed. Ada June Friedman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1980), 244–321.

decision-making process and organization of flight functioned in the second wave of flight from Lwów between 1941 and 1944.

Historiographical Trends at the Intersection of Holocaust and Migration Studies

Within historiography of the Holocaust, a significant point of discourse revolves around incorporating perpetrators' and victims' perspectives in narrating the history of the Holocaust. Positioned at one end of the pole is the German-centric approach, which relies heavily on the examination of Nazi policies and the scrutiny of the actions of perpetrators, using Nazi documents that shaped anti-Jewish policies. The most prominent of the scholars espousing this approach is Raul Hilberg.[7] At the opposite end of the spectrum, scholars such as Yehuda Bauer and Lucy Dawidowicz emphasize Jewish victims, prioritizing accounts and experiences of Jews affected by Nazi policies.[8] The middle ground in scholarship adopts an integrative stance, drawing upon a range of sources from both perpetrators and victims to construct a comprehensive historical narrative that incorporates diverse viewpoints. The most prominent scholar to adopt this position has been Saul Friedländer.[9] Each of these positions within Holocaust historiography emphasizes sources from different populations.

The German-centric position tends to emphasize three areas of research: a) deportation and expulsion, b) the activities and roles of Nazi organizations and institutions (in deportation and expulsions), and c) documented policies on forced migration. A prime example of German-centric emphasis is found when considering the emphasis upon deportation of Jews to concentration and death camps. This emphasis is apparent in pioneering works such as *The Destruction of European Jews* by Raul Hilberg, with an entire volume (out of three) dedicated to de-

7 See for instance Hilberg's fundamental work: Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews, Volume III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

8 Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975); Yehuda Bauer, *The Jewish Emergence from Powerlessness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); Yehuda Bauer, *Jüdische Reaktionen auf den Holocaust* (Münster: Lit, 2012).

9 See Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews the Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New-York: Harper Collins, 1997); Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews the Years of Extermination: 1939–1945* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007).

portations; the tendency appears as well in more recent studies on deportations,[10] as well as on the mobilization of laborers.[11] Furthermore, one should consider studies conducted on migration policy, such as the excellent work of historian Susanne Heim, who has written extensively on German forced migration policies in the 1930s and on the international refugee crises these policies created.[12]

Indeed, most Jewish population movements under the Nazi regime were driven by persecution or its threat. It is therefore essential that we understand how Nazi policies and organizations responsible for those movements operated. A narrow focus on Nazi actions, however, obscures the full dynamics of how Jewish population movements functioned during the Holocaust. One consequence that arises from reading scholars at the intersection of Holocaust studies and migration studies who focus primarily or solely on Nazi policy, organization, and

10 In the case study of Lwów, consider the research of historian Robert Kuwałek regarding the Bełżec death camp. While his book covers various aspects beyond deportations, the chapter dedicated to it is notable for its length. See Robert Kuwałek, *Das Vernichtungslager Bełżec* (Berlin: Metropol, 2014), 129–28. For other case studies, see Kundrus, Birthe, and Beate Meyer, *Die Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland: Pläne – Praxis – Reaktionen; 1938–1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004); Kampe Norbert and Herbert A. Strauss, *Restrictions on Emigration and Deportation to Eastern Europe* (Munich: Saur, 1992); Andrzej Strzelecki, "The Initial Deportation of Zagłębie Jews to KL Auschwitz as Recorded in Nazi Documents," *Auschwitz Studies* 26 (2012): 7–48; Axel Karenberg, Martin Michael, and Heiner Fangerau, "Verfolgung, Vertreibung Und Vernichtung Deutschsprachiger Neurologinnen Und Neurologen Während Der NS-Zeit: Versuch einer Bewertung," *Der Nervenarzt* 93 (2022): 138–59.

11 See for example Kaienburg Hermann, "Jüdische Arbeitslager an Der 'Straße Der 'SS'," *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* 11.1 (1996): 13–39; Wolf Gruner, *Jewish Forced Labor Under the Nazis: Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938–1944*, trans. Kathleen Mitchell Dell'Orto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Angrick Andrej, "Annihilation and Labor: Jews and Thoroughfare Iv in Central Ukraine," in *The Shoah in Ukraine*, ed. Ray Brandon and Wendy Lower (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 190–223; Witold Wojciech Mędykowski, *Macht Arbeit Frei? German Economic Policy and Forced Labor of Jews in the General Government, 1939–1943* (New York: Academic Studies Press, 2018); and Martin Christopher Dean, "Forced Labor Camps for Jews in Reichskommissariat Ukraine: The Exploitation of Jewish Labor within the Holocaust in the East," *Eastern European Holocaust Studies* 1.1 (2023): 175–96.

12 See Susanne Heim, "Refugees' Routes: Emigration, Resettlement, and Transmigration," in *A Companion to the Holocaust*, ed. Simone Gigliotti and Hilary Earl (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Son, 2020), 363–79; Susanne Heim, "The Year 1938 and the International Reactions to the Forced Emigration of German Jews," in *Right-wing Politics and the Rise of Antisemitism in Europe 1935–1941*, ed. Frank Bajohr and Dieter Pohl, trans. Gaëlle Fisher (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2019), 81–93; Susanne Heim, "The Attitude of the US and Europe to the Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany," in *Refugee Policies from 1933 Until Today*, ed. Steven T. Katz and Juliane Wetzel (Berlin: Metropol: 2018), 55–62; and Susanne Heim, "'Deutschland muß Ihnen ein Land Ohne Zukunft Sein': Die Zwangsemigration der Juden 1933 Bis 1938," in *Arbeitsmigration und Flucht*, ed. Christoph Dieckmann (Berlin: Buchläden, 1993), 48–81.

actors is that the reader tends to associate the movement of Jews during the Holocaust with passivity and lack of agency, when the truth is, in fact, more complicated. This essay seeks to illuminate that point.

Certainly, within the historiography of the Holocaust, there does exist scholarship with a notable emphasis placed upon migratory pathways, but many of these scholarly works are not based on sources representing a Jewish perspective, because they largely rely on non-Jewish sources. For example, in her scholarly work mentioned above, Heim references the Evian conference and the subsequent establishment of the Intergovernmental Committee of Refugees, which made efforts to support Jewish immigrants who tried to leave Germany and find them refuge in other countries; however, she does not provide a Jewish perspective, as she relies entirely on non-Jewish sources in her research.[13]

For many years scholarship that drew on Jewish sources did not emphasize Jews' initiative in their own movement as a survival strategy, but rather focused on the initiative of Jewish organizations and individuals acting in support of persecuted Jews. Such works may present a Jewish viewpoint, but predominantly from an organizational context outside of the family unit. Examples include studies on the activities of Zionist organizations involved in illegal immigration from Europe to Palestine, such as those conducted by Dalia Ofer and Yehuda Bauer.[14] While these studies indeed emphasize Jewish activities, they still look at it through an organizational and institutional framework, as they focus on Jewish institutions that tried to move Jews, and not on the Jewish individuals and families who moved. Thus, this approach still portrays victims as people being moved in a fundamentally passive way, and not as active agents moving and saving their own lives by their agency.

An important precedent in scholarly work that emphasizes the Jewish role in Holocaust historiography is represented by the renowned historian Yehuda Bauer. In much of his work, Bauer emphasizes the importance of recognizing Jews as both *subjects* and *objects* for understanding the Holocaust, underscoring that Jews were not merely victims of persecution but also active subjects reacting

13 Heim, "The Attitude of the US," 58–59, as well as Heim, "The Year 1938," 86–90.

14 Dalia Ofer, "Jews Rescue Jews: Immigration and Illegal Immigration During the Holocaust," in *All Our Brothers and Sisters* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2021), 307–19; Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel, 1939–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Bauer, *Jüdische Reaktionen*, 51–56. For other studies on Jewish rescue efforts, see Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz and Alan M. Schneider, eds., *All our Brothers and Sisters: Jews Saving Jews During the Holocaust* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2021).

to persecution.[15] I argue that we must keep this premise in mind in the context of the Holocaust and migration. And indeed, scholars are taking this path.

Previously an understudied topic, in the past decade Holocaust scholars have begun paying increased attention to the flight of Polish Jews from occupied territories under Nazi Germany to those under the control of the Soviet Union. Primarily working with Jewish sources such as war-time diaries, memoirs, interviews, and survivors' statements, scholars have traced Jews' experiences of flight, reconstructed different aspects of refugees' everyday lives and experiences in transit, as well as in their places of refuge, providing various explanations for the factors influencing Jews' decisions to flee or remain under Nazi occupation.[16] The studies of Markus Nesselrodt and Eliyana R. Adler, for example, have illuminated a previously overlooked group of Holocaust survivors, bringing the experiences of Jewish refugees in the Soviet Union from the margins to the center of the field of Holocaust studies.[17]

While contributing greatly to our understanding of the movements of Jews promoted by Jewish individuals, studies pertaining to the flight of Polish Jews largely focus on the first wave of flight, i.e. flight made between 1939 and 1941 by Jews who successfully crossed borders into the Soviet Union. Indeed, the flight of Polish Jews in the second wave—from 1941 to 1944 within Nazi territories—does come up indirectly in historical work on Jews who hid on the "Aryan side";[18] however, such studies tend to focus on Polish-Jewish relations, or on the phenomenon

15 Bauer, *Jüdische Reaktionen*, 1–2.

16 After Yosef Litvak's groundbreaking research on Polish-Jewish refugees in the Soviet Union was first published in the late 1980s, scholarly interest in this subject remained limited until the past decade. See Katharina Friedla, "'From Nazi Inferno to Soviet Hell': Polish-Jewish Children and Youth and Their Trajectories of Survival During and after World War II," *Journal of Modern European History* 19.3 (2021): 274–91; Mikhal Dekel, *Tehran Children a Holocaust Refugee Odyssey* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2019); Eliyana R. Adler and Natalia Aleksiun, "Seeking Relative Safety: The Flight of Polish Jews to the East in the Autumn of 1939," *Yad Vashem Studies*, 46.1 (2018): 41–71; Eliyana R. Adler, "Hrubieszów at the Crossroads. Polish Jews Navigate the German and Soviet Occupations," *Holocaust and genocide studies* 28.1 (2014): 1–30; Atina Grossmann et al., *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018); Yosef Litvak, *Pelitim Yehudim Mi-Polin Bi-Verit-Ha-Mo'atsot, 1939–1946* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem – Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1988).

17 Markus Nesselrodt, *Dem Holocaust entkommen: Polnische Juden in der Soviet Union, 1939–1946* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019); Eliyana R. Adler, *Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in Wartime Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

18 "The Aryan Side" describes areas in occupied territories outside the ghettos and camps. It refers to regions under German occupation, or areas in which anti-Jewish policies were implemented, where Jews were not allowed to live.

of "passing."[19] To date, there appears to be insufficient academic research examining flight decisions and the family in second wave of flight based mainly on Jewish sources.

Given the distinct characteristics of the second waves of flight, particularly the inability of Jews to cross borders and their subsequent survival in Nazi-occupied territories, we must ask to what extent historiography at the intersection of Holocaust and migration studies accounts for the entirety of flight experiences among Polish Jews. This essay will endeavor to address this gap by focusing on the case study of flight from Lwów between 1941 and 1944.

The Family as an Organizational Unit of Flight

The common understanding of Jewish movement in Holocaust historiography examines flight as initiated and promoted by organizational and institutional frameworks. Here I will offer an alternative view, arguing that for the Jews who moved themselves, the organizational framework most immediate to this task was not Nazi organizations or even Jewish relief agencies, but rather the family unit. The family unit was the framework through which the decision-making process of flight was made, and the family worked together to organize it. Within the family structure, mobility and the potential for movement was a shared resource that allowed for vulnerable family members to flee.

As mentioned above, this represents a shift in emphasis and source methodology: Jewish sources are emphasized over perpetrator sources and Nazi documentation. Moreover, scholars who have examined the first wave of flight of Pol-

19 For studies on Polish-Jewish relations, see for example Barbara Engelking, *Such a beautiful sunny day . . .: Jews Seeking Refuge in the Polish Countryside, 1942–1945*, trans. Jerzy Michalowicz (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2016); Jan Grabowski, *Hunt for the Jews. Betrayal and Murder in German Occupied Poland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Eva Fogelman, *Conscience & Courage. Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995); Philip Friedman, *Their Brothers' Keepers: The Christian Heroes and Heroines Who Helped the Oppressed Escape the Nazi Terror* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1978); Peter Tammes, Yoav Ben-Shlomo, and Zeev Ben-Shlomo, "Survival of Jews During the Holocaust: The Importance of Different Types of Social Resources. Commentary: Social Epidemiology," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 36.2 (2007): 330–37. For studies on passing, see Malgorzata Melchior, "Holocaust Survivors who passed as non-Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland and France: A Comparison of the Survivor's Experiences," *Iggud: Selected Essays in Jewish Studies* 2 (2005): 157–75; Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Lenore J. Weitzman, "Living on the Aryan Side in Poland: Gender, Passing, and the Nature of Resistance," in *Women in the Holocaust*, ed. Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 187–222.

ish Jews have already established the centrality of the family unit in the decision-making process of flight, yet it appears that the family role in flight decisions has yet to be fully examined in the second wave of flight, hence the present essay.

In her article, "Hrubieszów at the Crossroads," Eliyana R. Adler asserts that "family ties emerge as perhaps the single most important factor"[20] that influenced Jews' decisions to flee to the Soviet Union or to remain under German occupation. Exploring Jewish choice and flight decisions from the Polish town of Hrubieszów in the early months of 1939, Adler claims that whatever were their reasons for staying or leaving, whether they were reached through agreement or involved the resolution of conflicting opinions through persuasion, in the end, flight decisions were determined by the family. For example, in families who were conflicted as to whether to flee or stay, a decision was reached either when family members who wished to flee were convinced to stay or when others imposed their wish to stay on the rest of the family. In other instances, decisions were made in order to protect different family members. For example, a perceived asymmetry of safety between men and women led some families to send husbands and children across the border into the Soviet Union while women and wives remained under the German occupation. Adler's argument not only shows that in some instances Jews initiated their own movement, it also demonstrates that the family unit was the structure within which these decisions were made.

In a subsequent study, Adler and Natalia Aleksiun utilized a broader case study that yields similar results, reinforcing Adler's original claim that flight decisions were made collectively within the family unit. In their article, "Seeking Relative Safety: The Flight of Polish Jews to the East in the Autumn of 1939," they examine the flight decisions of Jewish refugees who fled from German-occupied western and central Poland to Soviet-controlled eastern Poland, and their early experiences under Soviet occupation. Examining the decision-making process through the lens of gender, Adler and Aleksiun argue that whatever position or role men and women took in flight decisions, concern for the family stood at the center of their decisions.[21] Their research not only reaffirms Adler's earlier claim to the centrality of family in flight decisions, but also showcases that it was not only true for Jews who fled from one location—Hrubieszów—but to the majority of Polish Jews under German occupation in the early months of 1939.

As their research primarily focuses on the early months of 1939, namely the first wave of flight, decision-making processes in the second wave of flight have not yet been examined from the perspective that holds family structures as the

20 Adler, "Hrubieszów at the Crossroads," 19.

21 Adler and Aleksiun, "Seeking Relative Safety," 42.

primary contexts of decision-making. As the conditions from which Jews escaped during the first wave are different from the conditions of the second wave, an application of this model to the second wave is necessary for understanding the choices of Jews who fled within that particular timeframe.

By the time the second wave of Jewish flight began, borders between Nazi Germany and its neighboring countries had undergone significant changes, and Jews found themselves in the midst of the Nazi sphere of influence. Thus, crossing borders became almost impossible and flight necessitated either a transitory or a permanent place of refuge within territories under Nazi control—a risky endeavor that only a minority of Jews pursued.[22] What is more, while in the first wave of flight, Jews fled Nazi persecutors whose genocidal policies were not fully formed, the overwhelming majority of fleeing Jews during the second wave were fully aware and experienced the genocidal nature of the Nazi extermination policy. Thus, the question remains whether under the latter changed conditions, family still stood as the organizational framework of flight decisions.

Sources of Jews who fled Lwów in the second wave of fight suggest that even under altered conditions—territorial changes, an advanced stage of persecution, and Jewish knowledge of genocidal Nazi policies—the validity of Adler and Aleksiun's claim holds: family remained pertinent in flight decisions made during the second wave. Furthermore, such sources suggest that the family was not only the primary framework for flight decisions, but also provided the organizational structure of the flight itself. What is more, the family unit facilitated the movement of vulnerable family members who would have not been able to flee otherwise.

Family remained the main framework within which decision-making processes took place, whether to remain under German occupation or to flee. The German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941 took the Soviet authorities, who were not prepared for a full-scale invasion, by surprise. This resulted in the quick and frantic evacuation of Soviet authorities and the drafting of civilians into the Red Army.[23] In their memoirs, some Jewish survivors recall deliberating with their families about whether to withdraw with the Soviet forces toward central Asia or remain in Lwów. For example, at the time of the invasion, Marian

22 To the West Polish territories under General Government control on October 26, 1939 and subjected to German occupation for nearly twenty-two months. In the East, German forces rapidly established domination of Soviet Ukraine, and in October 1941 established the Reich Commissariat Ukraine. In the South, North Bukovina and Transnistria came under Romanian rule, who joined the Axis powers in 1940.

23 Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, trans. Ora Cummings (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009), 72–73.

Pretzel, who was enrolled as a student in the art institute of Lwów, was included in the Soviet evacuation plan. In his memoir, he recounts a family deliberation and describes a conversation in which his father, mother, and he himself gave their opinions as to whether it was more likely for him to survive the war under German occupation or in the Soviet Union. Ultimately, Pretzel rejected the evacuation order and decided to remain in Lwów with his family.[24] The Kot family conducted a similar discussion around the enlistment of their oldest son, Yien. Similarly to the Pretzels, the family made a joint decision in which each member weighed in: the younger sister, Erica, initiated the conversation, and Yien asked for his parents' opinions. It was only after each family member weighed in that Kot made the decision to try and enlist to the army.[25] The Lichter family discussed escape twice. First, when their eldest son, Uri, escaped alone to eastern Ukraine, and the second time when he returned to Lwów to smuggle the rest of his family outside of the ghetto. The first time, the father's voice appears to be more prominent, and the second time it is the mother's, but in both instances escape was discussed within the family.[26] In all of these cases, we can see that throughout the German occupation of Lwów, families collectively made flight decisions, even those that pertained only to individual family members. These decision-making processes show that it was indeed the family unit that facilitated Jewish movement in the period of the second wave, not (only) the actions of Nazi policies.

Movement and flight, decided upon within the family unit, were often organized as a joint effort by multiple family members. Jan Berger remembers what appears to be a collaborative effort within his family, in which his mother made the escape decision for him and his brother, whereas the planning was done by all three together. According to Berger, in 1942 his mother decided that he and his brother would be safer hiding under false identities outside of the ghetto. She purchased false documents for the two brothers and instructed them to register with companies that were recruiting workers at construction sites in eastern Ukraine. Then the brothers got outside the ghetto and registered to companies themselves.[27] In 1943, Miriam Barer made a similar decision for her two sons, Jacob and Yosef. Here, while Miriam made the decision for the boys to flee, Jacob and

24 Marian Pretzel, *Portrait of a Young Forger: A Memoir of Wartime Adventures* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1987), 43–46.

25 Yien Kot, *Roletat Ha'Armonim, Sipour Amiti Al Neurim Dehushim Le'Toch Bigrot Moteret Ba'-Shoah* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2003), 61–62.

26 Uri Lichter, *In the Eye of the Storm: A Memoir of Survival through the Holocaust* (Stamford: Ray Friedman & Co., 1987), 53–55.

27 Interview with Jan Berger (in England), June 20, 1998, conducted by Anthony Grenville, interview 45203, segments 63–69, USC, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive (hereafter as VHA).

Yosef took assumed all responsibility for coordinating it: they brought to bear all of their joint resources—professional skills and relationships within and outside the ghetto with Jews and non-Jews—to buy false documents indicating non-Jewish identity. Then, they escaped the city and boarded a train to eastern Ukraine.[28] Similarly, Yanek Fuks and Naḥum Ya`ar made the decision to flee, while their fathers organized their flight.[29] These instances illustrate that the impetus for movement could be collectively organized by the entire family.

Additional testimonies indicate that the family consistently served as the primary organizational structure facilitating movement, remaining pivotal even subsequent to flight. An example can be seen in the case of the Shenker brothers, who shared the decision and the coordination of their escape following the loss of their parents in the August 1942 deportation. They bought false documents with non-Jewish identities, with which Henryk, the younger brother, went into hiding in Kraków, while Kurt and Leo escaped to eastern Ukraine. Following their escape in December 1942, the brothers repeatedly coordinated escapes together: after arriving at Sevastopol, Kurt and Leo were identified as Jews and decided to escape together to Simferopol. By the summer of 1943, living conditions in Henry's hiding place were insufferable: he was malnourished and neglected. This led his brothers to organize his movement from Kraków to join them in eastern Ukraine.[30] The example of the Shenker brothers underscores that family could be not only the structure that facilitated decision-making and organization in the first instance, but also the catalyst of post-flight actions. Moreover, it served as a resource for safeguarding vulnerable members.

To demonstrate further how movement was shared as a resource among family members, I refer to the work of sociologist Lenore J. Weitzman as a way of offering a more comprehensive account of the distribution of roles between family members. Weitzman examined the function of traditional family roles in the coping strategies of Jewish families in eastern European ghettos during the Holocaust. According to Weitzman, families who were successful in coping with the extreme conditions of the ghetto were those who exercised flexibility, fluidity, and rapidity in performing traditional roles between parents and children, and between husbands and wives. Broadening the sociological concept of *role rever-*

28 Interview with Yaakov Barer (in Israel), March 2, 1997, conducted by Nathan Lavie, interview, 28816, segments 57–79, VHA.

29 Interview with Yaneḳ Fuḳs (in Israel), August 11, 1996, conducted by Moshe Granot,, interview 18881, segment 31–35, VHA, Los Angeles; Interview with Naḥum Ya`ar (in Israel), Januar 7, 2001, conducted by Irena Motkin, VHA.

30 Interview with Leo Shenker (in New-York), June 1, 1995, conducted by Sherry Amatenstein, interview 3007, segments 43–74, VHA.

sal, she asserts that this flexibility did not constitute complete role-reversal, but rather *role-sharing*, in which the sum of all family functions was distributed among the different family members in accordance with family needs and the ability of different members to perform different roles in particular timeframes. For example, a father's traditional role in the family could shift in instances where children or wives took on the breadwinner role at times when men faced heightened risk due to their identifiable Jewish appearance. Conversely, men could resume their provider role when women and younger children needed to hide because they had been targeted for deportation. During these shifts, a father could consistently retain his position of leadership, guiding the household's decisions at all times. Thus, we can appreciate role-sharing as a survival strategy, adapted by Jewish families in ghettos.[31]

Weitzman's role-sharing model emerges in the Lwów case study as well. On one hand, we see an evident transition in conventional roles between parents and children, with children assuming leadership responsibilities in the organization of flight. On the other hand, traditional roles persisted as older family members shielded younger children. Further testimonies underscore the observation that movement was a resource shared by family members within the familial framework. For example, mobility was shared among family members who were considered vulnerable because of their older or younger age. In other cases, families gathered all of their resources together in order to enable the escape of one or more family member when the individual resources they had were not enough. Without family, I argue, vulnerable people would often have been unable to flee.

For example, Rina Nudel (née: Stramer) was nine years old when Germany conquered Lwów. She was too young to have had any resources that would have allowed her to escape, nor could she sustain herself outside of the ghetto. She would probably not have survived the Holocaust without the support of her older siblings, Michel and Zwi, who found a temporary hiding place for her in Lwów, physically moved her outside of the ghetto, and later forged documents for her with which they brought her to eastern Ukraine, where they were hiding.[32] In other instances, young children were separated from the rest of the family, with efforts made to place them in the care of gentile families. This practice was most notable among young girls, and can be seen in case of the Lichter family, whose

31 Lenore J. Weitzman, "Resistance in Everyday Life. Family Strategy, and Role Sharing in the Holocaust," in *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939 – Present: History, Representation and Memory*, ed. Joanna Beate Michlic (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 46–66.

32 Interview with Rina Nudel (in New-York), June 2, 1996, conducted by Mildred Gelfand, interview 10611, segments 46–54, VHA.

youngest child, 10-year-old Rosia, was entrusted to the care of a Polish family until the end of the war.[33]

There are also instances where old parents were moved by their children. For example, Abraham Stiegliz came from a religious family from Kraków that fled to Lwów at the outbreak of the war. Following the August deportation in 1942, he arranged for the smuggling of his parents from Lwów back to Kraków, where their extended family lived. This caused a short period of separation, ending two months later when he successfully joined them in the Kraków ghetto.[34] Similarly, the Lichter brothers enabled and maintained the mobility of their father throughout their flight and survival in eastern Ukraine.[35] In a similar manner, as the five sisters of the Zwerling-Weizberg family planned an escape from the ghetto, caring for their mother was their first priority. Tamara, the second older sister, remembered: "this was our plan. Get mother out and then we will look how we can survive."[36] Using the help of a former Polish neighbor, they arranged false papers for her, with which she traveled to Kraków, where she found employment.[37] Here, Mina, the second eldest child in the family, took the role as family leader, sharing her resources—including her husband, a professional forger—and created forged documents for her stepmother Klara and her three young sisters, Tamara, Irene, and Vera, as well as organizing their escape and hiding place in Kraków. In their escape plan, the family first prioritized the movement of members perceived to be more vulnerable: namely Klara and Tamara, who did not have a work permit (and were therefore targeted for deportations), and Vera, who was the youngest family member.[38] These examples demonstrate that the family structure allowed vulnerable members of the family to gain a kind of agency through other family members. Movement, however, was not only

33 Lichter, *In the Eye of the Storm,* 49–50.

34 Interview with Abraham Stegliez (in Canada), November 24, 1997, conducted by Max Wallace, interview 35740, segment 52–53, VHA.

35 Lichter, *In the Eye of the Strom*; Interview with Wolf Lichter (in Florida), May 22, 1997, conducted by Bonnie Slavin, interview 29342, VHA, Los Angeles. Interview with Abraham Lichter (in Florida), January 14, 1998, conducted by Arline Reinhard, interview 37412, VHA.

36 Interview with Tamara Branitsky (in Canada), April 24, 2001, conducted by Lisa Newman, interview 51593, segments 101–10, VHA.

37 Interview with Tamara Branitsky (in Canada), April 24, 2001, conducted by Lisa Newman, interview 51593, segments 101–10, VHA.

38 Interview with Tamara Branitsky (in Canada), April 24, 2001, conducted by Lisa Newman, interview 51593, segment 107, VHA, Los Angeles; Interview with Irene Herz (in Belgium), September 14, 1998, conducted by Michele Polla, interview 47426, segment 67–144, VHA.

shared with vulnerable family members, but was generally shared regardless of whether family members were vulnerable or not.[39]

The use of resources necessary for movement among family members underscores the centrality of the family as a framework that facilitated flight. This is further exemplified in cases in which movement was achievable but could not be shared. Jews who fled after the death of their parents recount acquaintances who decided not to flee and to remain with their families, a decision that resulted in their death. For example, Yien Kot remembered trying to convince his friend, Artek Shapira, to escape with him to eastern Ukraine. In his memoir, he underscores the particular circumstances of each. Having tragically lost his entire family, Kot found the decision to flee relatively uncomplicated. Conversely, his friend Shapira, bearing responsibility for his family, grappled with a more complex decision. Eventually, this led Shapira to remain in Lwów, where he, like his entire family, did not survive the Holocaust.[40] We may also note here Marian Pretzel's interview for the Shoah Foundation, in which he recounted proposing to create counterfeit documents for his friend, Milek, to enable him to join him in his escape to Kiev. However, Melik ultimately declined due to the responsibility he felt for his sick mother and young sister. Pretzel acknowledged his friend's sense of responsibility and reflected upon his own circumstances: "did my parents have to die, so I wouldn't have any responsibility and could escape? Because obviously, if my parents were still alive, I wouldn't have."[41] The juxtaposition between memories of friends who decided to remain in order to care for their families and those who decided to flee after having lost their parents underscores not only that movement was a shared undertaking, but also the centrality of family within flight decisions.

39 In fact, several sources suggest that some families chose to allocate resources in order to facilitate the flight of members who were more likely to survive due to their non- Jewish appearance and behavior. See for instance Yaneḳ Fuḳs, interview 18881, segment 31, VHA, Los Angeles; and interview with eliyahu Ṿelerṣṭayn (in Israel), January 25, 1998, conducted by Martha Goren, Interview 40218, segment 108, VHA.

40 Jan Kot, *Roletat Ha Armonim*, 129–30.

41 Interview with Marian Pretzel (in Australia), March 30, 1995, conducted by Paula Iland, Interview 1762, Segments 75–76, VHA.

Flight as Survival Strategy and Preservation of Agency

From here, the essay will move to the examination of the claim that self-initiated Jewish movement provided agency to persecuted Jews who took action via flight. I will demonstrate how Jews from Lwów at this period made the choice to flee, and will argue that this flight often provided them with safety and survival, as well as providing many of them with a sense of agency and self-possession.

Scholars have already established flight as one survival strategy among others of Jews in the Holocaust. The pioneering Holocaust scholar Raul Hilberg recognized in his foundational work that, for Jews, flight was indeed a possible survival strategy among others. He terms flight "evasion," which, he argues, happens when "victims try to remove themselves from the effect of force by fleeing or hiding."[42] While Hilberg introduced survival strategies and Jewish responses to the Holocaust on which scholars agree upon to this day, his exploration of this topic was brief and lacked in-depth development. More recently, political scientist Yevgeny Finkel has addressed evasion as a survival strategy of Eastern European Jews.[43] According to Finkel, evasion was one of six coping strategies of Jews by which they coped with the Nazi persecution by leaving their communities hiding outside the ghettos.[44] Contrary to Hilberg, who did not develop his understanding of evasion further, Finkel asserts that evasion was a strategy that Jews employed, through which they gained agency.[45]

Methodologically, Hilberg and Finkel represent different ends of the spectrum: while Hilberg's research is based largely on perpetrator documentation,[46] Finkel bases his findings on documents produced by Jews, which include the kind of documents that form the basis for the current study: videotaped interviews and written biographical testimonies of Holocaust survivors. While Hilberg generalizes his claims about Jews in the Holocaust when discussing concepts such as

42 Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews*, 1110.

43 Evgeny Finkel, *Ordinary Jews: Choice and Survival During the Holocaust* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

44 Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*, 7.

45 Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*, 156–58.

46 Hilberg draws on both perpetrators and victims sources; however, his scholarly emphasis on perpetrators means he primarily relies on perpetrators documents. For a list of sources see Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews*, 1323–32.

evasion (in this paper termed "flight") as a coping strategy, Finkel focuses his attention on the Jews of Eastern Europe, including Jews from Poland.[47]

Here I will address Jews' agency by presenting examples of Jews who fled because they decided to, rather than being moved against their will. These Jews who made their own decisions to flee represent what Hilberg and Finkel defined as evasion, an important part of the Jewish experience, precisely because they had the ability to take action and thereby escape their circumstances.

For instance, the Goldberg family—Gitel, Zeev, and their two children, Avraham and Etel—were German Jews who were deported from Germany to Poland in 1938. The Goldbergs survived the German occupation intact until summer 1943, when Gitel and Etel were executed in mass shootings while Zeev and Abraham were interned in the Janowska camp.[48] The loss of Gitel and Etel prompt Zeev and Avraham to escape the camp, as they realized that only death awaited them there and that they could no longer save the lives of their now-deceased family members.[49] While Avraham and Zeev's movement by deportation from Germany to Poland in 1938 was forced, four years later their movement resulted from a decision that they made on their own and that offered them the best chance for survival.

Another survivor, Marion Pretzel, a native of Lwów, decided to escape the Ghetto in August 1942 following the deportation of his parents in August to the Bełżec concentration camp. Following his decision, Pretzel took active measures to organize his escape. Within the next five months, he sold forged documents to other Jews, and together with the proceeds that came from selling his remaining possessions he gathered enough money to maintain himself outside of the ghetto under a false identity. In December 1942 he escaped Lwów and sustained himself in eastern Ukraine and Romania until the end of the war.[50]

Diaries, memoirs, and interviews with Holocaust survivors of the second wave indicate that this survival strategy was crucial for Holocaust victims to remain alive. The majority of sources gathered for the purpose of this study tell stories of survival similar to those we have seen with Pretzel and Goldberg. In fact,

47 Finkel examined three case studies of three Jewish centers: Minsk, Kraków, and Białystok. See Finkel, *Ordinary Jews*, 5–10; Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews*, 1104.

48 The Janowska camp in Lwów functioned as a labor camp, concentration camp, and as a killing site for mass shootings. For more on the threefold character of the camp, see Waitman Wade Beorn, "Last Stop in Lwów: Janowska as a Hybrid Camp," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 32.3 (2018): 445–71.

49 Avraham Goldberg, *Yemim Charukhim Be'Esh: Yoman Megeto Lvov U'Machane Yanubski*. (Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz: Ghetto Fighters' House, 1987), 99–101.

50 Pretzel, *Portrait of a Young Forger*, 77–147.

more than two-thirds of known survivors from Lwów were liberated outside of the city in territories of the General Government, the Reich Commissariat Ukraine, the Third Reich, and Romania, as a result from their escaping from Lwów.[51] Had they remained in those places, they very likely would have died, as statistics show us that less than one percent of the prewar community survived the Holocaust.[52]

These cases of Jews from Lwów show that very often the choice to flee ended up being a choice for survival. But flight also offered additional benefits: some of these survivors documented an increased sense of agency and self-possession that came from having made the choice to move. For example, in his memoir and interview, Yien Kot remembers contemplating flight twice; the first time was June 22, 1941, as the Germans declared war on the Soviet Union and he enlisting in the Red Army in order to be included in the army's retreat. The second time was following the August deportation of 1942, when his remaining living family members—his mother and his sister—were deported to the Bełżec death camp. Recounting both of these occasions, his arguments for fleeing demonstrate that it was not only a survival strategy, but was also a way for him to take control of his circumstances. During his first deliberation he wrote in his memoir: "If I have to I will die [fighting for the Soviet army], I do not want to be slaughtered like a chicken [by the Nazis]."[53] In this way, he portrays remaining as a kind of willful subjection to slaughter, and retreating with the army as something that might have resulted in death, but with a difference: in this case, death would be met in the act of fleeing circumstances that were sure to lead to slaughter. Further in his memoir, Kot describes a discussion he had with his friend, Artek Shapiro, during his second contemplation of flight. After his mother and sister were deported to Bełżec in August, he remained the sole survivor of his immediate family. When Shapiro described escape as dangerous, Kot replied: "I don't have any delusion. I'm acting as if I'm drowning in the sea, and I'm grabbing at a razor in order to save myself."[54] When he says he has no delusion, he acknowledges the high possibility of his own death. The metaphor of grabbing the razor shows that

51 For example, among 175 Visual History Archives testimonies of Jews who resided in Lwów during the German occupation, only 49 of the Jews represented were liberated in Lwów. Similarly, in a sample of 30 testimonies from the Jewish Historical Commission in Poland, only three represented Jews were liberated in Lwów.

52 Friedman, *The Destruction of the Jews of Lwów*, 254.

53 Kot, *Roletat Ha'Armonim*, 97.

54 Kot, *Roletat Ha'Armonim*, 101.

his attempt to save himself from death (by drowning) was self-consciously dangerous and likely to lead to death. But this would be a death that he chose.

In both entries, the reader can see that Kot's reasons for choosing flight were not only based on the pragmatic potential for survival, but also reflect Kot's attempt to take control of his circumstances and regain a sense of agency.

These three examples of the Goldberg family, Yien Kot, and Marian Pretzel suggest that movement was an effective survival strategy for Jews during 1941 to 1944 and also had the benefit of giving the Jews who fled a sense of agency and self-possession. These examples demonstrate that individuals actively chose to flee, thereby securing their survival and asserting a degree of agency. Further inquiry into this aspect of flight will contribute to a deeper understanding of how movement was more than a survival strategy in the Holocaust, being also a means of regaining agency and control.

Conclusions

In this essay, the flight of Jews from Lwów between 1941 and 1944 forms a case study that examines the role of family structure and self-agency in flight decisions and planning. A qualitative analysis of memoirs and interviews of Jewish survivors shows that Jewish individuals initiated flight as a survival strategy to evade persecution, and as a means to regain control and assert self-agency over their circumstances. Furthermore, this analysis demonstrates that the fundamental structure facilitating flight was the family unit, with Jews initiating and organizing movement through familial networks. Thus, movement should be seen as a resource that was shared among family members. Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, individuals frequently collaborated with other family members in making the decision to flee. The family tended to work together as a collective, dividing the responsibilities for decision-making and organization of flight among different members. This organizational structure existed prior to flight, but also remained relevant after flight, evident in continued decisions made in the post-flight period. There are also cases in which flight was possible, but Jews did not seek it because they felt responsibility to remain with other family members who could not flee. Likewise, there were Jews who acknowledged they could only choose flight once released of the responsibility for other family members who had since died; responsibility to family often constituted a central value in the decision to flee or to remain, which further reinforces the idea that the family unit functioned as a central structure in the context of Jewish flight.

This essay contributes to the growing scholarship on the flight of Polish Jews during the Second World War and the Holocaust by addressing a gap in knowledge on the flight that took place following the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the liberation of Poland from Nazi Germany in January 1945, and on the flight of Jews who could not cross borders into the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the research of Eliyana R. Adler and Natalia Aleksiun on the centrality of the family in deciding to flee in the beginning of the war in 1939 help to inform an understanding of the decision-making process for the flight of Jews from Lwów between 1941 and 1944. The work of Lenore J. Weitzman on the survival strategies of families in Eastern European ghettoes helps to illuminate how roles were shared among different family members in flight decisions. Additionally, the case study of Lwów suggests that family was not only central in the decision-making process, but also in the further organization and planning of flight, as well as the facilitation of flight for vulnerable family members. It is important to note that the family structure usually remained central after flight, since family members continued making decisions together after their flight took place.

In this context, it becomes evident that the actors driving the movement of Jews during the Second World War and the Holocaust included, in addition to the more obvious agents (such as Nazi perpetrators, state organizations, and Jewish organizations making rescue efforts), also individual Jews and their family members. This is important to highlight, since in the intersection of Holocaust studies and migration studies there is a tendency to overlook self- initiated movement by Jewish individuals and instead to emphasize movements promoted by the Jews' persecutors. In fact, this often-overlooked set of actors—individual Jews and their families—may often have been the most immediate structure facilitating the flight of Jewish people during the Second World War and the Holocaust.

It is important to note that the act of organizing flight is one that had several possible benefits. In addition to the obvious positive outcome in which flight led to survival, flight also gave the organizers a sense of agency and self-possession in a context where very little individual agency was otherwise available. This outcome is suggested in survivor accounts, as there are references made that acknowledge that taking actions that led to one's own movement generated a sense of control over certain circumstances irrespective of the outcome of the flight (i.e., regardless of whether the flight led ultimately to survival or not).

This study examines a restricted set of accounts as a case study that illuminates flight and its consequences on those who undertook it. This research, as well as the work of scholars such as Adler, Aleksiun, and Weitzman, highlights the importance of family structures and their role in facilitating flight. More work is needed in examining the role that family plays in other places where flight

took place, both in larger urban centers such as Warsaw, and Kraków, as well as rural zones and spaces on the periphery. Additionally, it would be useful to expand the examination of other family structures, such as single-gender families, orphans, or family structures defined more broadly, such as those networks that extend beyond the nuclear family.

Hana G. Green

“Actually, We Were Always on the Run.” Jewish Identity “Passing” as a Migratory Response Mechanism during the Nazi Period



Fig. 1: Post office identification card for Annelies Stein, alias of Annelies Herz, issued September 7, 1943, in Berlin-Schöneberg.[1]

1 Post office identification card of Annelies Stein, issued September 7, 1943, in Berlin-Schöneberg. From the Collection of the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust; Gift of Annelies and Helmut Herz, 393.89. The quote in the chapter’s title, “Actually, we were always on the run,” comes from an oral history interview with Annelies Herz. See Oral History interview with Annelies H., mssa.hvt.1866, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

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The Holocaust, including its eve and aftermath, were necessarily periods of mass displacement and migration. Holocaust migration narratives are primarily concerned with these issues as they pertain to individuals who migrated in the prewar and postwar eras, those who managed to flee beyond Nazi-occupied and allied Europe during the war, as well as with tracing the trajectories of forced-migration in the form of violent expulsion, roundups, transports, and deportations. Following the spatial turn in Holocaust studies, advances in technological approaches to humanities research, and greater intersectional collaboration between historians, geographers, and others, we've begun calling into question the spatial and geographic dynamics of the Holocaust. This process necessitates both a reframing of how we approach the study of the Holocaust and a critical reevaluation of our sources.

Identity passing, or the attempt to disguise one's preferred or assigned identity by operating or presenting as a member of another group, is a phenomenon common to marginalized individuals *in extremis*.[2] During the Holocaust, thousands of individuals employed various passing practices as mechanisms of evasion and survival. Though I am primarily concerned with instances of Jewish identity passing, such practices were employed widely as a response to ever-worsening conditions across an occupied and war-torn Europe. In the context of the Holocaust, passing generally refers to attempts made by Jews to disguise their Jewish identities and effectively function as gentile or "Aryan" by hiding in plain sight.[3] As with other persecution responses, Jews employed what I deem "passing practices" for the express purpose of mitigating persecution and pursuing survival under a regime determined to murder them.

Passing was a trans-European, migratory phenomenon and in practice demanded both literal and figurative displacement. That is, it often required a physical shift, be it bodily or migratory, as well as mental, emotional, and spiritual

2 Though outside the scope of this essay, my research is firmly steeped in the broader study of identity passing as a response to discrimination and oppression in myriad transhistorical contexts. The term passing itself is "believed to be derived from the written pass given to slaves so that they might travel without being taken for runaways." See Sinéad Moynihan, *Passing into the Present: Contemporary American Fiction of Racial and Gender Passing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 5. The study of identity passing is thus primarily rooted in racial passing in the context of race relations the United States in general and the American South in particular, but extends to the study of sexuality, gender, religion, and class passing.

3 In my work I take an expansive view of passing and assess also what I call "soft passing" practices. This term qualifies passing practices which may not fit within traditional understandings of the term. For example, passing off a business as "Aryanized" may not fit within the presumed idea of passing as the act of adopting a fully-fledged false identity and passing as a person with a different identity.

transformations—those of a more abstract nature. Passers habitually crossed borders and boundaries, ranging from ghetto walls to various zones of occupation, in their attempts to evade detection, undergoing a never-ending process of identity renegotiation. As such, in the context of the Holocaust or otherwise, passing can be characterized as a profoundly spatial act, one necessitating near-constant emotional and physical displacement

The study of this phenomenon has largely been situated within literature on evasion, resistance, and gendered responses to persecution during the Holocaust. In his *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Raul Hilberg proposed evasion as one of five possible categories of Jewish responses to persecution during the Holocaust.[4] While I refute and aim to correct some of Hilberg's core assumptions and conclusions, which unfairly suggest a lack in Jewish responses to Nazi subjugation, these categories have produced useful, if flawed, classifications for shaping further research. Hilberg's third proposed response, evasion—a phenomenon he himself regarded as "more difficult to analyze"[5]—has, as Gunnar Paulsson suggests, been largely and puzzlingly ignored.[6] Moreover, Paulsson notes that, when examined, the category of evasion is both lost in the broad polemics surrounding Jewish responsa and blurred with other categories, chiefly with resistance, with its central narratives focused on gentile-directed rescue.[7]

Thus, a closer examination of the wide spectrum of evasion responses through the assessment of first-person documents allows historians to counter Hilberg's suggestion that the difficulties surrounding evasion effected its futility as a response leading to victim paralysis.[8] Rather, recent scholarship on evasion has demonstrated that, while presenting unique challenges, evasion proved efficacious as a survival method for thousands of Jews fleeing persecution throughout the Nazi period. Historians Michał Borwicz, Marion Kaplan, Gunnar Paulsson, and Zoë Waxman and sociologists Nechama Tec, Małgorzata Melchior, and Lenore J. Weitzman laid much of the early historical groundwork on hiding and passing during the Holocaust.[9] Their cumulative work exposed and narrated not

4 Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews, Volume III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1104. He proposed that the primary Jewish responses to persecution were resistance, alleviation or nullification, evasion, paralysis, and compliance.

5 Hilberg, *Destruction of the European Jews,* 1110.

6 Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940–1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 7.

7 Paulsson, *Secret City*, 7.

8 Hilberg, *Destruction of the European Jews,* 1110.

9 Additionally, early sociological studies on rescue, resistance, and the illegal status of Jews during the Holocaust provide useful quantitative and qualitative data. See Avraham Seligman, "An Illegal Way of Life in Nazi Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 37 (1992): 327–61 and Simone

only key statistical and demographic information but presented nuanced reflections concerning victim experience. In recent years scholars including Susanna Schrafstetter, Brigitte Ungar-Klein, and Richard Lutjens have published comprehensive work exploring hiding and passing in Germany and Austria. Yet literature on passing remains largely enmeshed in scholarship on hiding or limited to local or regional case studies that neglect to address passing as a broad-scale, migratory, and transnational phenomenon during the Holocaust.[10]

Gender also critically impacted passers' experiences, and often determined the very prospects of their motility. Beyond one's bodily markings, gender impacted the ways passers perceived and responded to persecution; their worldview and their day-to-day decision-making; the ways in which they moved in or interacted with different spaces and in different social settings; the power dynamics they negotiated; gender-specific obstacles including the threat of being drafted for military services or for various forced labor assignments; the risk of sexual assault and its possible sexed-consequences for women and men; the dangers of pregnancy and access to safe abortions; societal, communal, and familial pressures and responsibilities; access to opportunity and resources; bodily autonomy; and more. As one will see in this chapter, though it was often riskier for men, there are myriad examples of men who employed passing practices throughout the duration of the Nazi period and managed to navigate the full-scale adoption of false identities on the so-called "Aryan side," in concentration camps, and across Nazi-occupied and -allied Europe.[11]

Erpel, "Struggle and Survival—Jewish Women in the Anti-Fascist Resistance in Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 37 (1992): 397–414.

10 For early writings about "illegal life," "passing," and the "Aryan side" during the Holocaust, see Michał Borwicz, *Arishe Papirn* (אַרישע פאַפּירן) (Buenos Aires: Tsenṭral-farband fun Poylishe Yidn in Argenṭine, 1955); C. Gwyn Moser, "Jewish *U-boote* in Austria, 1938–1945," *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 2 (1985): 52–61; Małgorzata Melchoir, ניצולי השואה שהתחזו ללא-יהודים בפולין ובצרפת תחת הכיבוש הנאצי: השוואה של חוויות הניצולים... . Holocaust Survivors Who Passed as Non-Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland and France: A Comparison of the Survivors' Experience," *Iggud: Selected Essays in Jewish Studies / איגוד: מבחר מאמרים במדעי היהדות* (2005): 157–75; Nechama Tec, "Sex Distinctions and Passing as Christians during the Holocaust," *East European Quarterly* 18.1 (1984): 113–23; and Avraham Seligman, "An Illegal Way of Life in Nazi Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 37 (1992): 327–61. Recent scholarship includes Richard Lutjens, *Submerged on the Surface: The Not-So-Hidden Jews of Nazi Berlin, 1941–1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019); Susanna Schrafstetter, *Flucht und Versteck: Untergetauchte Juden in München: Verfolgungserfahrung Und Nachkriegsalltag* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015); Dan Michman, ed., *Hiding, Sheltering, and Borrowing Identities: Avenues of Rescue during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2017); and Brigitte Ungar-Klein, *Schattenexistenz: Jüdische U-Boote in Wien, 1938–1945* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 2019).

11 An additional challenge for male passers were their marked bodies. Circumcision and fear about being "visibly" Jewish was long believed to be a key factor in men pursuing alternative methods of survival. That military-aged men on the "Aryan side" were conspicuous, which held

Tim Cole advocates that applying a geographical lens to this research, "makes us confront the actual sites of destruction, including not just pits, forests, and forts where Jews were shot, ghettos and camps where they died or were murdered en masse, but also the warehouses, collection points, rail termini, and ordinary streets, roads, and fields . . ."[12] Studying passers' trajectories further expands this perspective to places both pedestrian and unexpected, redefining a spatial binary of Jewish presence and absence, of fixedness and permeability, and of sanctuary and suffering. As Simone Gigliotti reconsidered "the symbolic geography of the Holocaust as *necessarily* linked to fixed and visible sites of confinement"[13] by examining testimonies of women's movements to and from Auschwitz, similarly, this chapter assesses the "spatial trajectories of victimization"[14] of individuals and families who survived the war by passing. Regularly omitted from forced migration or migration studies during the Holocaust, motility was an oft-integral component of identity passing, and in some respects, passers were rendered migrants, forced to flee their homes and shed their Jewish identities in order to survive.

Migratory impulses are inherent to situations of *extremis* and, given the violence of the Nazi regime and its allies, Jewish and gentile Europeans alike pursued various migration strategies throughout the Nazi period. The term migrant itself implies myriad delineations in both historic and contemporary contexts. In addition to referring to emi-/immigrant populations, it can be used to describe someone who is displaced, forcibly or otherwise, transient peoples, individuals experiencing homelessness, and others. Most commonly, however, the term refers to individuals who move from one place to another seeking better living conditions, work, or refuge. Sustained legislation centered on the identification of German Jewry across the 1930s, in addition to the almost universal unwillingness of other nations to open their doors to Jewish emigres, together made migration increasingly difficult as time progressed. And with the outbreak of war in 1939 and sustained Nazi expansion into the 1940s, migratory trajectories continued to evolve, usually becoming more arduous.

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true depending on a given context, particularly in Germany and its annexed territories, has also precluded greater inquiry into men's passing experiences.

12 Dan Stone, "Holocaust Spaces," in *Hitler's Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich,* ed. Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 47.

13 Simone Gigliotti, "A Mobile Holocaust? Rethinking Testimony with Cultural Geography," in *Hitler's Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich,* ed. Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 331.

14 Gigliotti, "A Mobile Holocaust?," 329–47.

As most Holocaust narratives are indeed defined by restriction—the inability to escape, forceable relocation and confinement, and the limitation of autonomous freedom of movement—tracing the experiences of passers offers an entirely new perspective on movement and migration during the Holocaust. Passing narratives disrupt a "hermeneutic model of site-specific contemporaneous chronicle" of "fixed entities such as ghettos, camps, and prisons . . ."[15] and, in doing so, help us understand more fully "the nature of the Holocaust as a genocidal project."[16]

Rather than fixed confinement, passers moved much in the way of others around them in a given context, while attempting to exist as "unobtrusively as possible."[17] Though the scholarship increasingly suggests that there were indeed very few entities (e.g., ghettos) that remained entirely fixed, passers in particular regularly transgressed boundaries both fixed and imagined.

Passers' perspectives—those of Jews existing "illegally" in spaces deemed *judenfrei*—were defined by their spatial parameters: where they sought shelter, where they worked, where they "lived," and the spaces in between. Thus, there is a spatial dynamic inherent to experiences of and testimonies about passing. In addition to offering a singular vantage point of Jewish presence in spaces defined by Jewish absence, applying a spatial lens to passers' experiences and interactions demonstrates the centrality of movement, and how different milieu either enabled or prevented passers' movements. From the employment of false identity and transit documents to cross borders and checkpoints to moving as unassumingly as possible down city streets to avoid suspicion or recognition, passers regularly relied on migration as an essential part of their survival strategy.

Cole proposes that individuals had three options when attempting to evade German-controlled spaces, one of which was "to try to take on a new identity and pass as a non-Jew living on false papers in the anonymous space of a large city or a rural area far from where anyone knew you."[18] He further describes that "for those who felt that they could not survive passing as a non-Jew outside the ghetto or camps, there were two options left: flight or hiding."[19] In this chapter, I instead demonstrate the deep entanglement of these responses and the ways in which passing required the employment of an amalgamation of various hiding and flight practices. In her article concerning the geography of living underground in Germany, Susanna Schrafstetter explains, "Jewish submarines all across Europe

15 Gigliotti, "A Mobile Holocaust?," 329.

16 Stone, "Holocaust Spaces," 46.

17 Annelies Herz, Interview 1100 (1995), *Visual History Archive,* USC Shoah Foundation, retrieved May 2, 2019.

18 Tim Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 279.

19 Cole, *Holocaust Landscapes*, 280.

traveled in order to avoid capture,"[20] and their stories, along with those who tried to survive in hiding, offer "a transnational and mobile history of embodied geographies."[21] Though Schrafstetter's study focused on the experiences of flight and mobility of German Jewish *U-boote,* it provides essential context and a foundation with which to consider passing and its connection with movement and migratory practices more broadly. Therefore, like those assessed by Gigliotti relating to deportations and evacuations, these testimonies are largely "mobility narratives."[22]

Indeed, in building on this foundation and reframing passers as migrants, we can better understand the ways in which migratory practices were fundamental to their survival, and we can begin to see the dynamic interplay between identity renegotiation and physical displacement.[23] Alongside the literal crossing of boundaries, both naturally occurring and man-made, passers traversed figurative and symbolic boundaries. In 1942, passer Blanca Rosenberg escaped from the Kolomyja ghetto, boarded a train to Lwów, and recalled, "I tried to force myself into the mind of the woman I was to impersonate. I had to obliterate the person I was, get out of myself and into someone else. I kept repeating this as if it would help the transformation. I was now an Aryan, with a right to life, and no longer a Jewess, hunted like prey."[24]

Rosenberg, like other passers, navigated myriad treacherous roadblocks in pursuit of survival, including corporeal escape as well as internal psychological, spiritual, and emotional transformation. For passers, migration thus denoted both the characteristic loss of home and familiarity with the additional, and critical, loss of identity. The case studies assessed in this chapter range from individuals who used false papers to escape from Nazi Germany to those who, inversely, sought shelter in "the lion's den" to those who remained in zones of Nazi occupation. Some chose

20 Susanna Schrafstetter, "The Geographies of Living Underground: Escape Routes and Hiding Spaces of Fugitive Jews in Germany, 1939–1945," in *Lessons and Legacies XIV: The Holocaust in the Twenty-First Century; Relevance and Challenges in the Digital Age,* ed. Tim Cole and Simone Gigliotti (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 109–38, at 112. Jews who attempted to live "illegally" in Germany and Austria were often referred to as *U-Boote,* shorthand for *Unterseeboote*, submarines, because they lived just below the surface. Schrafstetter notes that, indeed, the very term *U-Boote* implies mobility.

21 Schrafstetter, "Geographies of Living Underground," 113.

22 Gigliotti, "A Mobile Holocaust?," 340.

23 Feminist geographical scholars McDowell and Sharpe argue that the body can be considered "as a surface to be mapped, a surface for inscription, as a boundary between the individual subject and that which is Other to it, as the container of individual identity, but also as a permeable boundary which leaks and bleeds and is penetrable," See Linda McDowell and Joanne Sharp, eds., *Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 3.

24 Blanca Rosenberg, *To Tell at Last: Survival under False Identity, 1941–1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 80–81.

to remain, and others did so because there were no viable alternatives, successfully adopting semi-permanent false identities for the duration of the war.

Marrying the life stories of Jewish passers with migration studies and frameworks born of the field's spatial turn, this chapter explores the migratory nature of Jewish identity passing. In introducing and analyzing three distinct case studies of Jewish passers in Central Europe, I aim to make several important interventions.[25] Foremost, I formally situate passing narratives within the framework of borderland and migration studies. Each case study explores the ways in which movement and adaptation were critical forces impacting the opportunities for and experiences of these passers before, during, and after the war. In doing so, it addresses key factors affecting an individual's ability to pass, including language skills, cultural competencies, and the critical role of relationships and networks. On a second level, the chapter addresses both small and large migrations. That is, it discusses the traversal of controlled boundaries such as ghetto walls, and their porosity, as well as the crossing of national borders. Finally, it seeks to contribute to our thinking about the geography of movement, disrupting a "traditional" "spatiality of process" assigned to Holocaust narratives (concentration, deportation, dispersal, dislocation)[26] by introducing analternate spatiality of the Holocaust through the experiences of Jewish passers.

Case I: Kaethe Cohn

Kaethe Cohn neé Gassenheimer was born in Eschwege, Germany in 1907. After moving to Berlin in the mid 1920s to be a kindergarten teacher, she met and married Jewish doctor Ernst Cohn. Together, they "lived the lives of the ordinary free, peace-loving, democratic Central European between the years of 1920 and 1932."[27] Following the 1938 November pogrom, the couple sought shelter with acquaintances in the countryside and decided it was time to emigrate.[28] Cohn and her hus-

25 Central Europe is a particularly rich setting to study this phenomenon as the landscape presents a coherent discourse of Jewish presence, absence, and movement, but moreover, because it became a zone of flight and mass border-crossing for passers during the war.

26 Waitman Beorn, Tim Cole, Simone Gigliotti, Alberto Giordano, Anna Holian, Paul B. Jaskot, Anne Kelly Knowles, Marc Masurovsky, and Erik B. Steiner, "Geographies of the Holocaust," *Geographical Review* 99.4 (2009): 563–74, at 563.

27 Catherine Klein [Kaethe Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, trans. Livia Laurent (London: Victor Gollancz, 1944), 12.

28 Catherine Klein [Kaethe Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, trans. Livia Laurent (London: Victor Gollancz, 1944), 12.

band concluded, "We must escape this hell. We are too young to rot here." Seeking refuge in both America and Britain, Ernst successfully received a British transit visa, and the couple decided that he should go ahead of Kaethe to London. He moved on August 1, 1939, and shortly thereafter received a work permit for Kaethe. However, due to the outbreak of war, the permit never arrived.[29]

After this disappointment, Cohn visited the American Consulate in search of further information about her status. While waiting, she made the acquaintance of an American reporter named James Harriman who would later help her escape from Berlin. The following spring, in May 1940, she began her forced labor service at Siemens. In her memoir she recounts her life as a forced laborer, the worsening conditions of life in Nazi Germany, and, crucially, illustrates the ways in which passing practices were sometimes employed as a practical part of the process of escape out of Nazi-occupied territories. This demonstrates that, in addition to passing as a primary wartime survival mechanism, it was also often employed as a means to other ends, such as emigration or flight.

Harriman encouraged that Cohn pass as "Aryan" to help prepare her for an eventual escape. He explained, "I shall rid you of your fear of the Nazis. You shall get used to being amongst them in no time. Do you know how the Roman soldiers were trained to overcome their fear of the enemy? Hordes of Teutons in full war paint were sent into the arena howling and screaming for blood until the Romans had mastered their fear."[30] While out passing Cohn was sometimes struck by her own gall. In July 1940 she reflected, "You cannot play with fire without getting burnt eventually. To continue with this double life was becoming far too dangerous."[31]

Though the imposition of the so-called *Judenstern* was not yet required for so-called "Reich Jews" in 1940, Cohn, like her co-religionists, had long been banned from the public and private spaces she attended with Harriman.[32] Cohn was inti-

29 For background on Kaethe Cohn, see Charles Rubens, "Kaethe Cohn's 'Escape from Berlin' to London in 1942," *Jewish Historical Studies* 35 (1996–1998): 277–85.

30 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 40.

31 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 35–36.

32 Jewish badges were first imposed following the German invasion of Poland in 1939. All Jews in the General Government were ordered to wear a badge beginning in late November 1939. Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, the Jewish badge was mandated widely across the newly occupied eastern territories. Beginning on September 1, 1941, all Jews in the Reich (aged 6 years or older) were required to wear one, including Jews in Germany and across its annexed territories of Alsace, Bohemia-Moravia, and the *Warthegau.* For more on the introduction of Jewish badges, see "Jewish Badge: During the Nazi Era," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum), accessed February 16, 2022, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-badge-during-the-nazi-era.

mately aware of the consequences of such behavior, knowing of several other Jews who had been sent away to labor or concentration camps "as the result of most harmless actions."[33] As time passed, Harriman continued to search for a way to facilitate Cohn's escape. Hoping to secure for her a falsified passport, he explained, "But no one would take you for anything but a hundred percent. Aryan. You are of such a Nordic type, completely inconspicuous."[34] While waiting for his plan to pan out, the pair continued their ruse, with Cohn attending parties, sporting events, restaurants, and the opera disguised as an "Aryan" woman.

Though masquerading as "Aryan," moving in spaces familiar to her pre-war identity brought Cohn an unexpected degree of comfort. When having dinner at the Eden Hotel, an old favorite, she recalled,

> Contrary to all expectations I felt not a vestige of fear. To be suddenly back in surroundings I had missed for so long filled me with tremulous excitement. How soothing it was to sit in a well-appointed room, surrounded by waiters anxious to be of service, to see well-dressed women and listen to soft music; even the uniforms of the men did not disturb me.[35]

The pair encountered a party member later that evening, and impressed by her comportment during the conversation, Harriman said "You behaved magnificently. Do you realise that we were right in the lion's den?"[36] References to "the lion's den" are common within passing narratives—both individuals who stayed in Germany as well as those who, as will be seen in the next case study, fled their home countries believing it might be easier to survive the war in Germany.[37] Here, supported by her American helper, Cohn was not simply in the lion's den but rather its mouth—sitting in restaurants and attending events in the company of Nazis. This notion of safety in the heart of the Nazi Reich, while perhaps incongruous, occurred for several reasons.

First, Jews in Poland and elsewhere in Nazi occupied zones often feared their neighbors more than their Nazi occupiers, noting that Germans were unable to tell the difference between Jews and their gentile counterparts. This allowed, for example, individuals to sometimes pose as forced laborers and seek shelter within Germany. Additionally, as is so often the case in times of war, this was a period of mass movement and displacement for myriad groups. It was therefore

33 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 35.
34 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 40.
35 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 40.
36 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 42.
37 These references are also prevalent in oral histories and other postwar texts referencing attempted survival in hiding or by passing in Germany and within cases where clandestine Jews either worked for or lived in close proximity to National Socialist leadership or institutions.

not unusual for people to move from place to place in search of food, shelter, or work. Further, and very often in the case of passers, movement alleviated risk of recognition for Jewish passers across Central Europe. Another reason, as Kaethe explains, is that "it would not occur to any of them that a non-Aryan could have sufficient impudence to appear in their midst."[38]

For a time, Cohn successfully navigated life in the lion's den. Of course, in addition to the help she received, there were other factors at play. She was middle class, educated, well-connected, and described as good looking—all of which further enabled her ruse. Yet, as the noose slowly continued to tighten,[39] and she found out about the death of a dear friend, Vera Holzacker, she no longer felt capable of maintaining this con.[40] She rationalized:

> If only by staying here I could serve a useful purpose, but there is nothing I can do, no one would be helped by my presence. Whereas if I should manage to escape, I might be able to impress on the people in the free world outside this terror of Nazi rule, and the fate awaiting Europe should this war fail to stamp out Fascism . . . Should I not rather take this last desperate chance of escape before I let annihilation catch up with me? I know I haven't much of a chance; it is my life that is at stake. Yet it would amount to suicide if I did not brave the danger. In order to win a life worth living I shall have to risk it first.[41]

Terrified to remain in Germany and share the fate of her friend, Cohn was anxious to find a way out. Harriman vowed to do whatever he could to help her escape and connected her to an Italian living in Berlin, Francesca Borelli. In exchange for a sum of money, two Persian rugs, and a fur coat, Cohn secured Signora Borelli's documents. After dying her hair red to look more like Borelli's passport photo, it was time for Cohn to employ her now-habitual passing strategies in a more enduring, and perilous, way: flight and escape out of Germany.

She purchased "a ticket to Rome via Basel, Zurich, Lugano, Milano, and return via the Brenner and Munich."[42] Cohn narrated her harrowing journey in detail, laser-focused on the train's onward movement, her withdrawal from Berlin, and her dread at being discovered.

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38 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 43.

39 Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6.

40 According to Cohn, a policeman delivered an official paper notifying her of her friend Vera Holzacker's death. The paper explained that Holzacker had died in a women's concentration camp and that Cohn was responsible for her ashes. See Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 120–21.

41 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 121.

42 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 118.

> Looking out I discover in the first grey light of dawn that we have reached Frankfurt-am-Main. While I was asleep we must have passed through that part of the country where I spent my childhood . . . In another six hours' journey we will reach the frontier; I am frightened of these six hours . . . Each turn of the wheels brings us nearer the frontier . . . The train stops at Mannheim . . . The train is steaming towards the frontier . . . In a few minutes' time we will reach Weile, the last German station before Basel . . . [43]

Interspersed in her narration are moments of extreme fear of being caught: sharing a train car with reticent civilians, a chatty elderly gentleman, and an antisemite she described as a "pseudo Gestapo-man" who Cohn believed suspected her true identity—and who she later discovered was indeed a Gestapo agent.

After disembarking in Switzerland, Cohn faced a new set of worries and challenges. She recalled, "I have achieved what I set out to do. Or haven't I? I have certainly beaten the Nazis at their own game. But what if they send me back after all? What is to become of me now? I don't know anyone here . . . The only thing I have got is more of a liability than an asset: the forged passport . . .. Where am I to start?"[44] After wandering Zurich, she met a man who, through roundabout means, connected her with a refugee officer. She was provided with a pass to remain in Switzerland indefinitely until she could secure passage to her husband in England. After a time, she received legitimate travelling papers and began her journey to England, by train and airplane, and happily reflected that the papers were "complete with my own photograph, my own name and all the necessary visas."[45]

This case is particularly noteworthy due to its entanglement of passing and flight. While her primary response to persecution was flight, Cohn employed passing as her principal migration strategy. This also illustrates how, using passing practices, she prepared for her eventual escape in the months and years leading up to it. Prior to her flight out of Germany in February 1942, Kaethe regularly moved in spaces deemed *judenfrei*, spaces reserved only for those allotted space in the German *Volksgemeinschaft*. Yet, this exposure was part of her very flight strategy, equally important in preparing her for migration as her simultaneous endeavor to secure the appropriate papers. Using false papers or roleplaying as "Aryan" provided a degree of protection as well as means of survival, however fleeting, for passers. Later, as Cohn's situation worsened, we see an alternate iteration of passing wherein Cohn adopted a false identity as part of her escape from Germany.

43 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 132–35.
44 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 141.
45 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 148.

Cohn's case is striking for an additional reason: her mother, Ida Gassenheimer, also passed as a so-called "Aryan" in Germany. Unlike Kaethe, Ida was unable to escape from Germany. Yet, she survived the war by adopting an "Aryan" identity. After visiting friends one evening, she came home to find that her apartment had been sealed. The concierge explained, "They wanted to take you away but I just said to them that you were too respectable to run away . . . "[46] The concierge left behind instructions that Gassenheimer should go to the collection point at the synagogue in Levetzow Street, but she did not go. Instead, she began her life in "illegality." After being turned away from several acquaintances in desperation she went to a man named Dr. Hirschfeld from the Jewish hospital who had previously treated her. Dr. Hirschfeld helped her acquire false papers, and she notes:

> I became Frau Anna Landgraf, Aryan. And took the Jewish star off my clothes. With this, my time of living illegally underground began. However, first of all I had to live through about four weeks of constant wandering around, searching for a room, which were the worst of my life. Without food (I did not have any food ration cards), without a roof over my head, my life constantly in danger.[47]

In her quest for safe haven, she traveled to the suburbs of Berlin, waiting until the evenings in order to avoid recognition.[48] She tried address after address, hoping to find a place to stay for a couple of nights at a time. After weeks on the run, she finally found a small room with a woman named Elfriede Wilde where she lived "illegally" from May 1943 through May 1945.

While Kaethe and Ida's wartime experiences were vastly different, passing strategies were critical for both mother and daughter. Kaethe remained in Berlin for a time, simultaneously working as a forced laborer and playacting as "Aryan," removing the Star of David and finally changing her appearance and adopting the identity of an Italian national in preparation for her flight from Germany. Her mother, on the other hand, was unable to emigrate by legal or illegal means, and even with decent false papers she feared being recognized in Berlin, opting instead for a quieter life in its suburbs. Whether passing as part of a flight plan or

46 Ida Gassenheimer, Eyewitness Account, *Mein Untergrund Leben in Berlin*, 1958. Ref 1656/3/4/854, translated from the German, https://www.testifyingtothetruth.co.uk/viewer/metadata/105368/1/.

47 Gassenheimer, *Mein Untergrund Leben*, 8.

48 Another passer, Anne Weinstock, who passed in and around Berlin throughout the duration of the war, stated, "When you live in hiding in Berlin, you don't stay in one place. You move." See Anne Weinstock, Interview 33234 (1997), Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation, retrieved April 29, 2019.

living with false papers in a Berlin suburb, both employed various passing practices in pursuit of survival.

Clearly, in addition to being a highly multifaceted persecution response, passing was also a decidedly individuated experience, particularly when considering the various push and pull factors impacting each passer's decision-making: age, family ties, aesthetics, language fluencies and cultural competencies, able-bodiedness, social class, access to social networks, luck, and a host of other reasons. The very factors enabling some to flee might have been the same that encouraged others to stay. Yet, movement—on a small or large-scale—remained a critical factor for individuals attempting to survive by passing.

Case II: Maurice Rinde

Maurice Rinde lived with his wife, Stella, and their two children, John and Irene, in Przemyśl, Poland. After the war, Rinde wrote a memoir detailing his family's wartime experiences. In addition to bringing in a uniquely male perspective, Rinde's narrative addresses the plight and movement of an entire family unit, first from the ghetto and later through their daring move to Lublin, where they remained under false aliases for the duration of the war. Moreover, once settled and passing in Lublin, Maurice facilitated the escape, procurement of papers, and hiding of myriad relatives and acquaintances attempting to evade Nazi persecution.

When the Germans reached Przemyśl on September 7, 1939, Maurice and his brothers, like many other Jewish men, fled the city. He described, ". . . the whole population was moving by foot direction east. We were lucky, to get a carriage with two horses, all the male members of the family, my brothers in laws, sat down and we started moving eastward direction Lemberg."[49] Eventually they reached the borderland between Poland, Russia, and Romania and crossed the river to the other side where they remained for a short time before returning home to their families. Upon his return, Rinde felt that though they were living under the lesser of two evils, the Soviet occupation, they should leave Przemyśl. He explained, "we were deprived of the right to work, our only privilege was to starve, or be deported to Siberia." They fled to Lwów, 100 km away, seeking shelter in a bigger city where Rinde posed as a bookkeeper.

49 Maurice Rinde (alias) Wiktor Kroczykowski My Experience During the Second World War, 2., 1994.A.0419, Maurice Rinde Collection, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (hereafter as USHMM).

Yet, shortly after the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, the family fell under German occupation. Rinde and his family moved to the area of the future ghetto and shortly thereafter he obtained a job on the *Judenrat.* With news about deportations and liquidations in other parts of the country, Stella became nervous about their own future, insisting that Maurice find forged "Aryan" papers for the family and that they flee town as gentiles. He explained, "this attitude was strange to me, against my national pride and education, and I resisted it continuously. However I did not oppose her to do it, and to try for herself, with one or both children, or without them. I rejected the idea for myself."[50]

Sensing the approaching danger, she placed the children with gentile friends. After securing her children, Stella borrowed an identification card from her cousin and crossed the ghetto boundary to find papers for Maurice. It was common for ghettoized Jews across Nazi-occupied regions to traverse ghetto walls in an attempt to smuggle in food, weapons, goods, false documents, or even to smuggle people out. These actions posed a great risk to all involved. One of Rinde's sisters went out without the mandatory Star of David on her left arm, was recognized by a Ukrainian militiaman, imprisoned, and two weeks later shot for her offence.[51] Yet, many in the ghetto, including Rinde's family, knew that they had little chance of survival if they remained in the ghetto—where their options were limited to starvation, disease, or deportation. In this case, moving between the ghetto and the "Aryan side" was a dangerous but necessary survival strategy. It was Stella's foresight that facilitated their eventual escape.

Finally convinced by his wife, Maurice crossed to the "Aryan side." He recalled, "I was aware that I will not be able to pass the German guard without being recognized by my fear, but luckily there was at that time still a street car going through the ghetto, but forbidden for the Jews. I put away the David Star band, entered the car, and in this way went out from the ghetto and into the arien [*sic*] part of the city."[52] After a series of misfortunes resulting in John and Irene losing their hiding places, the Rinde family found temporary shelter in a honey factory where they had a connection. Maurice and John remained hidden, while Stella and Irene, though

50 "Rinde: My Experience," 16. For more on the gendered elements of evasion and flight, see Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair, 1998.*

51 "Rinde: My Experience," 13.

52 "Rinde: My Experience," 17.

they had to pretend not to be mother and daughter, remained in the open. With better papers, good "Aryan" looks, and lacking physical identification of their Jewishness, Stella and Irene were less conspicuous.[53] Surviving a host of close calls, the family remained there for two weeks until the major deportations from Lwów were complete.



Fig. 2: Stella Rinde's original Polish passport, altered in Lwów, Poland to reflect the birth information of Genowefa Kroczykowska.[54]

Rinde decided that they could no longer continue in the same way and resolved "to make it in a new condition and to take the risk of posing as an arien

53 Jewish men were typically circumcised and therefore had physical evidence of their Jewish identity on their body.

54 Forged Polish Passport of Stella Rinde under the alias Genowefa Kroczykowska, 54 2014.015.001, gift of Dr. John and Toni Rinde, Florida Holocaust Museum.

[*sic*] (non-Jew)."[55] He had forged documents made under the alias Wiktor Korczykowski,[56] and decided the best way to try to survive was to leave Lwów. He met with a gentile who made money helping Jews relocate and chose Lublin as the family's destination. He explained, "Warschau was already full of Jews with alien papers and the Poles sensed it, and were blackmailing them and extorting money, but later turned them over to the Germans. . . . Similar conditions prevailed in Kraków, furthermore I had to find a city where I have never been before, and where nobody knows me."[57]

Surviving an arduous train journey, the Rinde family arrived in Lublin. Once there they wandered the city in search of shelter, valises and children in tow. They found temporary sanctuary first at a "Christian tavern," and then at a hotel until they finally secured an apartment in the former Jewish ghetto—in the home of deported Jews. After obtaining an apartment, Rinde was then tasked with finding a job to have "coverage" for the family. This was critically important for Polish passers as, in addition to being discovered, they faced the added danger of being picked up for forced labor assignments in Germany or elsewhere in the Reich. Of course, as will become clear in the third case study, many passers jumped at the opportunity to live as Polish forced laborers. Yet Maurice was determined to keep his family, and later others, together.

He found work and successfully attained the necessary certificates and registrations for the family to settle there. Due to his fluency in German, Maurice found a bookkeeping job and was even able to use his position to help others—Jewish passers and Polish gentiles alike—avoid forced labor deportations. Having good "Aryan" looks and a forged *Kennkarte*, an identification card required by the Nazi occupiers,[58] Stella was also able to work and move with freedom and relative ease. She traveled with a friend to Warsaw in order to secure a better counterfeit *Kennkarte* for Maurice. When she encountered a policeman during her travels who accused her of being Jewish, she showed him her documents from Lwów, stated she was on vacation in Warsaw, laughed and said, "It is a good joke to tell me that I am a Jewess, I will have what to tell my friends back in Lwów, what could happen to one when going to Warschau."[59] Maurice attributed

55 "Rinde: My Experience," 22.

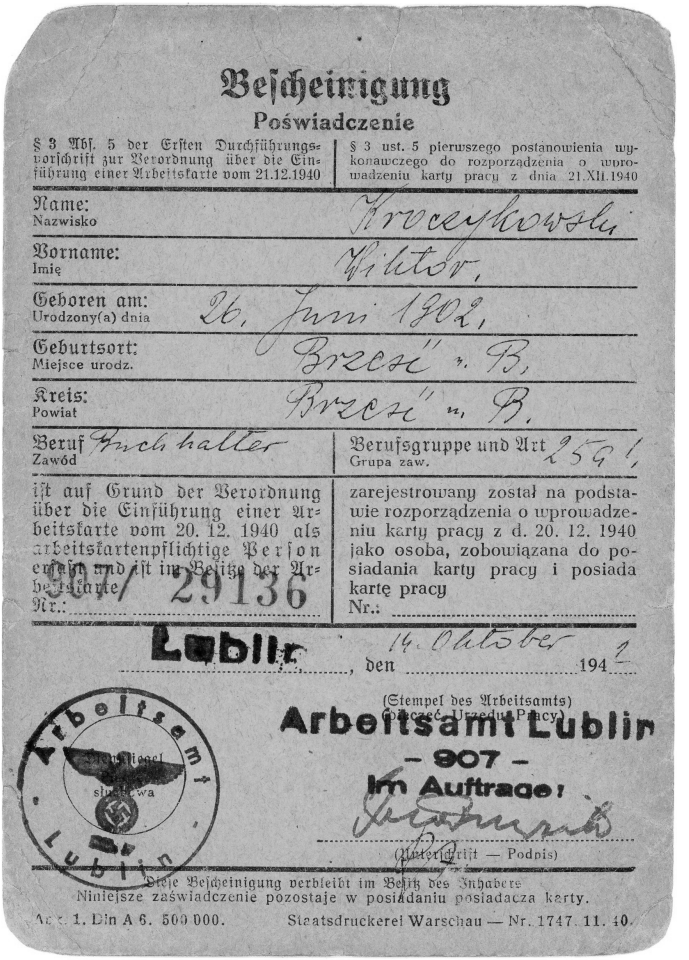
56 The forger made an error when writing the name in the document, which later proved problematic for the couple. Maurice's papers were made out to Wiktor Korczykowski, whereas Stella's papers were under the name Kroczykowski. The forger accidentally inverted the "r" and "o."

57 "Rinde: My Experience," 24.

58 Forged Polish Passport of Stella Rinde under the alias Genowefa Kroczykowska, 2014.015.001, gift of Dr. John and Toni Rinde, Florida Holocaust Museum.

59 "Rinde: My Experience," 34.

her success in moving between cities in equal parts to her false papers, her appearance, and her *chutzpah*, i.e. her boldness.[60]



Bescheinigung

Poświadczenie

§ 3 Abs. 5 der Ersten Durchführungsvorschrift zur Verordnung über die Einführung einer Arbeitskarte vom 21.12.1940 | § 3 ust. 5 pierwszego postanowienia wykonawczego do rozporządzenia o wprowadzeniu karty pracy z dnia 21.XII.1940

Name: Nazwisko — Kroczykowski

Vorname: Imię — Viktor,

Geboren am: Urodzony(a) dnia — 26. Juni 1902,

Geburtsort: Miejsce urodz. — Brześć n. B.

Kreis: Powiat — Brześć n. B.

Beruf: Zawód — Buchhalter | Berufsgruppe und Art: Grupa zaw. — 259 I,

ist auf Grund der Verordnung über die Einführung einer Arbeitskarte vom 20. 12. 1940 als arbeitskartenpflichtige Person erfaßt und ist im Besitze der Arbeitskarte Nr.: 907/29136

zarejestrowany został na podstawie rozporządzenia o wprowadzeniu karty pracy z d. 20. 12. 1940 jako osoba, zobowiązana do posiadania karty pracy i posiada kartę pracy Nr.:

Lublin, den 14. Oktober 194[illegible]

(Stempel des Arbeitsamts) Pieczęć Urzędu Pracy)

Arbeitsamt Lublin

– 907 –

Im Auftrage!

(Unterschrift — Podpis)

Diese Bescheinigung verbleibt im Besitz des Inhabers
Niniejsze zaświadczenie pozostaje w posiadaniu posiadacza karty.

Ausg. 1. Din A 6. 500 000. Staatsdruckerei Warschau — Nr. 1747. 11. 40.

Fig. 3: *Arbeitskarte* issued to Wiktor Kroczykowski, alias of Maurice Rinde.[61]

60 *Chutzpah* is a Yiddish term meaning gall or nerve.

61 Document certifying that the *Arbeitskarte* (Work Card) numbered 907/29136 was issued to Wiktor Kroczykowski, alias of Maurice Rinde, 2014.015.003, Gift of Dr. John and Toni Rinde, Florida Holocaust Museum.

Their lives in a new city became increasingly more complicated as members of their extended family, also living on false papers, in hiding, or attempting to flee the Nazi scourge relied on their help. Throughout the war the Rindes remained in contact with their family in Przemyśl, Warsaw, and Lwów. Stella's brother was the first to arrive to Lublin, followed closely by Maurice's brother Henry and his wife, who came after placing their two daughters in a convent. Henry soon found out that his daughters had been discovered, and they also came to Lublin. While Henry "looked like a Polak,"[62] his daughters had a "Jewish appearance." This proved problematic "since in the suburb, like in a village, everyone knows anyone else, and people immediately noted strange faces with a Jewish appearance."[63] They decided that the two girls would live permanently in hiding. Altogether they were at this point nine people in a two-bedroom apartment.

Things continued in this way for some time, with family members coming to Lublin—some on a temporary and others on a more permanent basis—throughout the duration of the war. Maurice was also sometimes sent away on business trips to Lwów and Kraków, each time risking being caught with forged papers, fearing being picked up for forced labor, and worrying about his immediate and extended family passing and in hiding in Lublin. But it was his very position in the business that allowed them the security to maintain their ruse and continue to protect the others in their care. He reflected,

> People who were living in hiding, lost their security, common sense, and what was the most important at that time, posture, freshness, and self-confidence. After living as a gentile for a long period, and having contact continuously with the German authorities, I became accustomed to such situations, forgot about the dangers to which I was exposed being a Jew, and behaved always freely, sure of myself, fresh if necessary, and never lost my presence of mind in front of any danger. This only helped me to go out safe in all circumstances. And dangers were looming continuously.[64]

The case of the Rinde family, as well as the other hiders and passers they encountered, underscores both the similarities and the differences between hiding and passing. Of course, there were migratory elements to hiding—with many individuals moving from hiding place to hiding place—as did some of Rinde's extended family. This testimony clarifies the parameters between these circumstances. Unlike their immediate family, other members of the family had to constantly remain below the surface, sometimes not moving for days, in order to survive. This

62 "Rinde: My Experience," 43.
63 "Rinde: My Experience," 46.
64 "Rinde: My Experience," 72.

throws into stark relief the way that hiders' experiences were often defined by immobility. Alternatively, we see the agency, albeit limited, that passing enabled. While passing carried its own particular risks, there was an element of agency afforded to passers, enabling them to move, to manipulate their identities and spaces, and in some cases to survive "in the open." With strong aliases, solid papers, and respectable positions, the Rinde family felt somewhat secure in Lublin and believed it would be riskier to leave again. Beyond their own security, remaining in Lublin allowed them to help others.

In June 1944, Maurice explained, "we saw the end of our torture approaching. But it was still dangerous, because the Germans kept killing the Jews, as if nothing had changed. I did not have the condition to move and look for another hiding place . . ."[65] He and his family encountered threats from blackmailers as they waited for liberation. At his boss's suggestion, Maurice moved his family out to a village as the warfront came toward the city. The entire family returned together to a German-free Lublin several days later. Though the war had ended, like many other passers, Maurice and Stella decided to maintain their gentile identities for the first weeks and months following liberation. He explained,

> At that time a Jewish committee had been formed, where all the surviving Jews were registered. This I also did, but on the other hand I preserved my gentile identification. The Polish population showed a hostile attitude to the surviving Jews. I had heard often sayings: "we thought that we got rid of the Jews but here they are again. There is no way to get rid of them."[66]

Holding onto one's wartime false-identity provided an additional layer of security in the tumultuous postwar period. After liberation, Maurice Rinde and his family remained in the Lublin district, where he worked at the former Majdanek concentration camp for a short time before relocating to France in 1946 and eventually to the United States in 1952.

Written as a family history, this case study offers a unique perspective into the ways passing and the employment of various passing practices impacted not only the Rinde family but myriad others. It also offers a singular perspective on the challenges of passing with children and the various tactics Maurice and Stella employed to ensure their children's safety: telling their daughter to pretend to be "too shy" to speak so as not to let something slip, keeping their son out of school for a time because he was too advanced and it might make others suspicious, telling him to forget all the Hebrew he learned from his private tutor, and making sure he kept his pants on when he went swimming with the neighborhood boys. That this family narrative of

65 "Rinde: My Experience," 101.
66 "Rinde: My Experience," 104.

passing is written by a man is also striking. So often family narratives are centered only within women's first-person testimony, yet Maurice's entire memoir is dedicated to their experiences as an extended family unit. Moreover, he touches on many of the gender-specific elements of passing, ranging from his reflections about circumcision, crediting his wife, Stella, for her early concerns about the family's future and her acquisition of their requisite gentile documents, and addressing the ways in which certain migratory trajectories were gendered, to demonstrating that Jewish men, too, employed similar passing strategies to their female counterparts.

In Germany, Austria, Poland, and elsewhere, it was initially believed that Jewish men were at greater risk than Jewish women, particularly at moments of rupture such as the November pogrom, Austrian *Anschluss*, and the first days of the Nazi occupation of Poland. It was thus common for families to focus their efforts—pooling funds and devoting resources—toward sending fathers, sons, and other male relatives out of harm's way. As Maurice described, he and his male relatives traveled away from Przemyśl when the Nazis arrived in September 1939, whereas his wife, sisters, and other female family members remained. Further, when the Rinde family was temporarily hidden in the factory in Lwów, Maurice and John were forced to remain fully hidden, while Stella and Irene posed as a worker and her young daughter with relative safety. Both their marked bodies and concerns over their conspicuous presence required that they conceal themselves and necessitated their move to a city where they were entirely unknown. Highlighting the mass movement of dozens of individuals centered around the nexus of one family and their resettlement in Lublin, the Rinde family offers a truly remarkable case study. From traversing ghetto walls and risking dangerous train journeys across Poland to moving family members across the country and between hiding places, we see how one family of passers enabled other Jews—in hiding, attempting to pass, or trying to flee—to survive the war.

In addition to Maurice's unpublished memoir and the published work of his children, Irene and John, another constructive source for tracing the Rinde family's general experiences, and their movements in particular, are the International Tracing Service (ITS) digital archive. Using this digital platform, I was able to find ancillary documentation concerning the family and their movements from their ghettoization into the postwar years. These supplementary sources proved useful in more narrowly tracing the family's mobility story, which in turn helped paint a sharper and more vivid chronology of their experiences.[67] When overlayed onto their nar-

67 For more on the uses and limitations of the International Tracing Service (ITS) Arolsen Archive for thematic research, see Elizabeth Anthony, "Representations of Sexual Violence in ITS Documentation: Concentration Camp Brothels," in *Freilegungen: Spiegelungen der NS-Verfolgung und ihrer Konsequenzen*, Jahrbuch des International Tracing Service 4 (2015): 49–60.

rative remembrances, the details and dates provided through ITS enable a fuller reconstruction of the family's responses and provide a corresponding timeline of their experiences. Beyond the period of their liberation, one can continue to trace the family's movements through these records, from their postwar flight to Paris to their eventual emigration to the United States in January 1952.[68] Integrating these digital archives, which contain sources ranging from early written testimonials to photos and deportation files, allows one to reconstruct the spatial trajectories of millions of persecuted individuals and is an especially rich resource for tracing movement and migration, forced or otherwise.

Case III: Irma Ferber Broclawski

The final case study traces the experiences of Irma Ferber, a Galician Jew who survived the war on false papers: first seeking shelter among both acquaintances and strangers near and around Kraków and later by working as a Polish forced laborer in Germany and Austria. This example demonstrates yet another passing response and the inverse of that of Cohn: rather than flight from Germany, this case study explores flight *to* Germany, "into the lion's den," as it were. However, like Cohn, who employed passing practices as part of her flight from Germany, blurring the lines between flight and passing, Irma Broclawski's experience entangles hiding, passing, and flight responses—all constituent to the migratory nature of her survival strategy.

Fourteen years old when the war broke out, Irma Ferber lived in the town of Nowy Wiśnicz, just south of Bochnia, with her family. Just before the liquidation of the Jewish community of Wiśnicz in August 1942, a Polish friend of the family provided Irma and her mother with false papers. Receiving the papers of a deceased woman six years her senior, she explained, "since then I never was Irma anymore, I was Bronislawa Jalowiecka."[69] Shortly thereafter, another Pole took Irma and her mother to the forest, promising to pick them up in a few days. Un-

68 The International Tracing Service (ITS) digital archives were useful in confirming the Rinde family's postwar pathways, clarifying their chronologies beginning with their escape from the ghetto, period in hiding, and time living as "Aryans" in Lublin. Maurice Rinde Tracing and Documentation File, 6.3.3.2/102393628, ITS Digital Archive, USHMM.

69 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, conducted by Judith Backover, November 14, 1991, RG-50.477.0667 (Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project), USHMM.

fortunately, this never materialized. By chance, the two met a farmer who hid them in the attic during the day and allowed them to sleep downstairs during the night. However, their stay was short-lived. Irma's mother had a dream that the Gestapo came to the house and found them hiding. Rattled by this premonition, they abandoned the farmer's house, the next day heading first to acquaintances near the Czech border, who turned them away, and ending up in Kraków, where Irma had an uncle.

Once in Kraków, Irma and her mother reevaluated their options. They knew that Germans were rounding up Polish women and girls for forced labor in Germany, and they decided that Irma should go. She explained, "I had the false papers so I—nobody knows that I was Jewish. When they took us for a bath before the transport, one Polish officer, a police officer, recognized me and asked me, Irma, where are you going? And I was not anymore Irma, and I say I am going to Germany. He didn't—he didn't report me."[70] Her mother, on the other hand, decided to stay. Broclawski explained, "my mother was speaking fluently German because Galicia belonged to Austria, Austria-Hungary empire and she was attending German-Austrian school so she spoke fluently German, that I will be no so safe, because they will think, why, you know?"[71] Her German fluency was not only a risk to herself but would also put Irma in jeopardy.

Instead of joining Irma in Germany, her mother went Lwów because it was "in this time safe and nobody knows her. She was having false paper, too. And she was a very capable woman . . . and because nobody know, you know, in Poland, wherever you can go and they don't know you, you try to go there, you know?"[72] Unfortunately, she was later recognized in the streets of Lwów and killed. About being rounded up and taken to Germany in the summer of 1941, Irma recalled that she "was scared to death, all the time. But when you have to, you have to. You live it."[73] Under her alias, Irma was sent for labor in Berlin to work as a turner along with other Polish girls, pretending to be a woman of twenty-one as opposed to a girl of fifteen. She worked there for two months before the girls were moved to a new factor in another city.

One day a man came and introduced himself as a friend of her brother, Arthur Ferber, and inquired if she was Bronislawa Jalowiecka. He told her he was going on vacation and then back to Dormagen, where her brother was also passing, and invited her to go with him. She decided that she had nothing to lose and

70 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, RG-50.477.0667, USHMM.

71 Poles, or Polish Jewish passers, who spoke German were considered suspicious due to its similarity to the Yiddish language.

72 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, RG-50.477.0667, USHMM.

73 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, RG-50.477.0667, USHMM.

joined him. No one else knew who she was, and after her brother told everyone that she was his cousin, she remained in Dormagen for two years working as a spinner in a factory and later in a kindergarten.

Eventually, her brother was questioned under suspicion of his identity and, after a narrow escape, decided they needed to flee Dormagen. Arthur asked his boss to write him a pass to travel to Bonn. Once he received the papers, he forged them on his own, changing "Bonn" to "Wien," and Irma remembered, "on this pass, false pass, we escaped to Wien."[74] When they arrived in Vienna her brother found work in an ammunitions factory while Irma was sent to work as a maid in a Viennese household. Her position soon fell through and she, too, was sent to work at the factory. Shortly before the war ended, the Germans evacuated workers from Vienna and she was sent 30 km outside the city where she, along with others, took shelter in a wine cellar for a whole month, trapped between the Germans and the Soviets. On the May 7 or 8 they went back to Vienna, and the war ended on May 9, 1945. At the end of the war she recalled,

> I went to special office to—I turn my Bronislawa Jalowiecka—I didn't even have the paper. I turned them, you know—torn them on pieces and throw them out and I went and I told them I am Irma Ferber and I would like to go back to Poland, and I did it, and my journey to—from Vienna to Budapest was three weeks. Normally you go by train, three days. [. . .] and from Budapest to Krakow, seven weeks in the wagons.[75]

Immediately reclaiming her true identity, Irma's journey home was tumultuous and trying. Her movement did not cease with the end of the war, but rather became even more complex. Further, as she survived the majority of the war in Germany, Broclawski knew very little of the fate of Polish Jewry and the Poland to which she was returning "home." She explained,

> I didn't know what happened . . . I didn't know what happened in Poland. I know because we were, we were not with Jewish people. I didn't know. I got the papers. I was in the forest. And then, I was like, you know, beaten dog, looking for place that I can sleep. Everybody was scared to give me . . . place . . . Anyhow, I didn't know anything what happened in Poland.[76]

While Broclawski ultimately found safe haven in Germany and Austria, this westward migration also limited her context: physically and emotionally removing her from her home country and keeping her unaware of the fate of her coreligionists. Unlike Cohn, who found security, and sometimes even comfort, in the

74 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, RG-50.477.0667, USHMM.
75 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, RG-50.477.0667, USHMM.
76 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, RG-50.477.0667, USHMM.

familiarity of her surroundings, or Rinde, who remained in Poland, actively aware of the progress of the war and its ever-mounting risks, living amongst young Polish women in Germany, Broclawski remained largely ignorant of the events unfolding across eastern Europe. Her movement between various cities and towns in the heart of the Reich both saved and stifled her.

Moreover, it also caused her to qualify her experiences as lesser than those of other survivors. She explained, "I was taken, in labor camp, what was not a concentration camp, what was a heaven in comparison to concentration camp."[77] Her physical removal from sites of mass violence, her ignorance of the events unfolding across Europe, including the fate of her own family, as well as her own identity transformation, challenged her self-perception of survivorship. Sociologist Nechama Tec, who also survived the war by passing, explained that "most Jews who managed to survive in the Christian world . . . were convinced that what happened to them was not as horrendous as what the concentration camp survivors had endured."[78] From these and other sources it becomes evident that evading the label "Jew," and its accompanying fate, affected passers' identities and challenged self-perceptions as victims or survivors.

Thinking about this case in tandem with that of the Rinde family—who worked tirelessly to avoid forced labor deportation—helps paint a picture of some of the particularities of the Polish context and the ways in which passing practices, though often similar across national contexts, were indeed defined in many ways by circumstantial particularities on micro, meso, and macro levels. For example, whereas passers in Germany were largely not at risk for being rounded up for forced labor, passers in Poland faced this double threat. However, unlike the Rinde family's dread of separation and forced deportations, voluntarily getting "caught" as a Polish forced laborer was Irma's primary survival strategy, providing her with an additional layer of protection, removing her from a context where she might have been recognized or more regularly threatened by blackmailers.

We also see a contrast in the role of language fluency between these cases. Broclawski's mother feared that her German fluency would put herself and her daughter under greater risk of suspicion, and while Rinde shared the same fear, he took the gamble when accepting a job that required German proficiency. Though he encountered many close calls, it luckily worked in his favor. Of course, passing as an Italian woman en route to Switzerland, Cohn also encountered chal-

77 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, RG-50.477.0667, USHMM.

78 Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 209.

lenges with language. When speaking to the Italian train conductor, Cohn simply replied with "Si," having only learned a few words and phrases before her departure.[79]

Although not to the same extent as the Rinde Family, I was able to find information about Broclawski through the ITS archives. Unfortunately, her files are currently unavailable for research due to privacy laws. Yet what is interesting is that she is searchable by her birth and married names, "Irma Ferber" or "Irma Broclawski," as well as her false name, "Bronislawa Jalowiecka," as they are each listed as "given names."[80] Given that one can search for any known alias for an individual within ITS, these archives offer an important supplementary source for evidence concerning individuals who survived or attempted to survive the war under a false identity. This may be particularly useful in cases where Jewish passers were deported for forced labor, voluntarily or otherwise, or attempted to use a false, non-Jewish alias within the concentration camp system, as ancillary documentation such as transport lists, labor assignments, or incarceration records are often available.

In addition to her physical mobility as part and parcel of her passing strategy, Broclawski's testimony in particular reflects on the internal transformation necessary to pass. When reflecting on using a borrowed identity, she explained, simply, "I had different paper, and I was not Jewish this time. I was Bronislawa Jalowiecka, nice polish girl, who was in this time in grave, and I was living her life."[81] During the war she was both constantly worried about being discovered, but also about losing her identity as Irma Ferber. Immediately returning to her true identity upon liberation, she reflected on the difficulty of living under a false alias, and her eagerness to become herself again. She recalled, "it is not easy to talk about it because I was hiding under different name, and all the time I have to think that I am not who I am. And the four years was enough for me, so every moment was scary."[82] She was impatient to reclaim her identity, her connection to her parents, and to return to Poland as Irma Ferber, a Jew.

79 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 128.

80 Irma Broclawski Central Name Index Card, 0.1/16402575, ITS Digital Archive, USHMM.

81 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, RG-50.477.0667, USHMM.

82 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, RG-50.477.0667, USHMM.

Conclusions

With the end of the war came another period of mass Jewish migration across the continent. The Central European lands in particular became the site of mass eastward migration for passers, and others, returning home to the east and also mass westward movement towards Displaced Persons camps in the immediate postwar period. Kaethe Cohn arrived in England in early 1943 from Switzerland via Portugal as a so-called "stateless person." After Lublin's liberation, the Rinde family remained in Lublin for a brief period before relocating first to France in 1946 and eventually to the United States in 1952. Irma Broclawski endured a 7-week journey home to Kraków, where she remained for several years before marrying and moving to Łódź. Eventually, she and her family decided to go to America via Vienna, but not having the correct papers, emigrated instead through Rome.

In addition to continued physical migrations in the months and years following the end of the war, passers faced the additional burden of reclaiming, or choosing not to retrieve, their prewar identities. Beyond the highly emotional process of returning to one's Jewish identity, those who wished to retrieve their prewar identities also faced challenges related to the legal, social, and emotional processes of doing so. Often, they didn't have the necessary paperwork or proof to substantiate their experiences, and in some cases passers were simply denied the legitimacy of their survivorship. Therefore, "return" signaled something different to wartime passers. Cohn described her escape and arrival in England as a "rebirth."[83] Similarly, in regaining her identity, Broclawski explained, "it was like a big stone, you know, left my heart and I can be myself again. It was terrible, because you have to hint so much before you open your mouth, because you can say something wrong and they will recognize that you are not who you are. It was wonderful. It was like, like newborn person you know."[84] In contrast, due to the uncertainty of Lublin's postwar milieu, Maurice and his family retained their gentile identities while also registering as Jews.

Through these and related cases the scope and scale of passing narratives come more clearly into focus. Beyond their illustration of the relationship between passing and movement, these cases reflect the importance of weak and strong social ties and networks, language, the role of familiarity, or nonfamiliarity, with new spaces and cultures, and contextual dynamics of gender and agency. Each demonstrates the significance of relational aspects of passing—most commonly in the form of passers supporting other Jews. While passers were

83 Klein [Cohn], *Escape from Berlin*, 147.

84 Oral History interview with Irma Broclawski, RG-50.477.0667, USHMM.

sometimes able to pass entirely alone, without the direct support of others, the importance of individual connections and networks enabling both direct and indirect support cannot be overstated. In cases of direct support, like the Rinde family, who were afforded the security to help others evade Nazi persecution, or those of indirect support, as when people turned a blind eye to a suspected passers' real identity, passers regularly relied on the goodwill, or even indifference, of others to maintain their subterfuge. Further, these cases also underscore that while passing experiences were highly individuated, with many passers fearing they were the only remaining Jews alive in Europe, passers often encountered or were supported by other individuals or clusters of passers.

Whether individuals passed alone or with others, their experiences were defined in large part by their gender, the agency it empowered or disallowed, and by its performance and perception by others. From the cases discussed here and elsewhere, it becomes clear that irrespective of gender's bearing on survival, gender identity palpably impacted the daily lives and strategies available to passers.[85] These and other passing narratives also fundamentally call into question the challenges of assessing the multifaceted category of agency during the Holocaust, underlining the very complexities—the possibilities and limitations—of individual agency and action in response to Nazi persecution. Of course, the bounds of agency were limited when defined within the context of the National Socialist genocidal regime and must be assessed with these constraints in mind. Notably, Joan Scott contends that agency should be understood as something "created through situations and statuses conferred on" historical subjects rather than as-

85 For more on gender and passing, see Richard N. Lutjens, *Submerged on the Surface: The Not-So-Hidden Jews of Nazi Berlin, 1941–1945* (New York: Berghan Books, 2019) and Nechama Tec, "Sex Distinctions and Passing as Christians during the Holocaust," *East European Quarterly* 18.1 (1984): 113–23. For more on gender in the Holocaust more broadly, an extensive and ever-growing field of study, see Esther Katz and Joan Miriam Ringelheim, eds., *Proceedings of the Conference: Women Surviving the Holocaust* (New York: Occasional Papers from The Institute for Research in History, 1983); Elizabeth Roberts Baer and Myrna Goldenberg, *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003); Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Nechama Tec, *Resilience and Courage: Women, Men and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Zoë Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Judith Tydor Baumel, *Double Jeopardy: Gender and the Holocaust* (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell & Co., 1998); Marion Kaplan, "Did Gender Matter during the Holocaust?" *Jewish Social Studies* 24.2 (2019): 37–56; Denisa Nešťáková, Katja Grosse-Sommer, Borbála Klacsmann, and Jakub Drábik, *If This Is a Woman: Studies on Women and Gender in the Holocaust* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021).

suming those subjects to be "unified, autonomous individuals exercising free will."[86]

Fruitful to thinking about this in tandem with Holocaust spatiality is what Julie Dawson refers to in her research on testimony, diary writing, and agency in the postwar period as "spaces of agency." About a set of recorded diaries from a survivor of the Transnistrian Holocaust, Dawson explains, "they indicate spaces in which individuals were able to perform acts of agency despite totalitarian strictures and also those places where the cold machinations of the totalitarian state devastated individual lives."[87] Reframing discussions of agency in this way, as the actions of complex individuals within particular spaces or circumstances rather than the wholesale application or preclusion of agency as a category of analysis of the Holocaust, is useful for several reasons. It underscores the merits of focusing on first-person writings and testimony, as opposed to prioritizing so-called "hard documents" and other sources derived from positions and offices of power,[88] and encourages researchers to, as Lynn M. Thomas suggests, rethink agency by "attending to the multiple motivations that undergird meaningful action."[89]

Additionally, as is done in this volume, it also demonstrates how applying the lens of spatiality and migration as a methodological approach to a wide array historical sources can promote the frank reconsideration of issues including, but not limited to, agency in the study of the Holocaust. Through narratives of movement and mobility we can see a wide array of agential practices employed by passers including helping, or refusing to help, others, participating in resistance efforts, acting as witnesses to the crimes committed against their ghettoized and incarcerated coreligionists, and self-help. Furthermore, these and other first-person narratives demonstrate the striking impact of individual choice, imbuing historical actors with agency, which in turn both contributes to and pushes forward continuing conversations on the topic.[90]

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86 See Lynn Thomas, "Historicising Agency," *Gender & History* 28.2 (2016): 324–39, at 326 and Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991): 773–97, at 793.

87 Julie Dawson, ""What meaning can the keeping of a diary have for a person like me": Spaces of Survivor Agency under Postwar Oppression," in *Places, Spaces, and Voids in the Holocaust*, ed. Natalia Aleksiun and Hana Kubátova, European Holocaust Studies 3 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021), 297–312, at 299–300.

88 Thomas, "Historicising Agency," 326–27.

89 Thomas, "Historicising Agency," 335.

90 For more on the assessment of agency in assessing historical subjects, see Lynn M. Tomas, "Historicizing Agency." For volumes dealing with the varied and complicated nature of agency during the Holocaust, see Natalia Aleksiun and Hana Kubátova, eds., *Places, Spaces, and Voids in the Holocaust*, European Holocaust Studies 3 (Göttingen, Wallstein, 2021); Thomas Kühne and

Beyond securing the necessary paperwork, language knowledge, and affect appropriate to a particular region or circumstance, an understanding of religious, social, and cultural norms of the local gentile population, and an aesthetic which was not "pronouncedly Jewish,"[91] were crucial for passers. Passing often required a mixture of familiarity and anonymity—a simultaneous awareness of language and customs and a need to remain unrecognizable. This negotiation of identity necessitated a near-impossible balancing act and performance wherein one had to blend in perfectly while remaining unseen, which posed particular challenges for migrant passers existing on the run or attempting to convincingly settle in a new place.

Also worth noting, these narratives distinguish passers' experiences from those who attempted to survive in hiding, working to further disentangle evasion narratives.[92] Unlike those in hiding—whose knowledge of the outside world was limited to what their helpers told them, or sometimes knowing nothing at all—passers often had direct access to information or were at least clued into the goings-on in their surroundings. Access to this kind of information had lifesaving potential and offered the opportunity for passers to assist themselves and others. Thus, passing necessitated at once a marginal and an integrated lifestyle, which sometimes provided access to tangible goods like food, ration cards, and false papers, as well as immaterial goods such as information. Gleaned from employers, on public transportation, or in public settings, e.g. by eavesdropping, such knowledge further armed passers and gave them access to better protection for themselves and others.

Tracing the experiences of these individuals and families through their own remembrances and conceptions of space, movement, and displacement supports

Mary Jane Rein, *Agency and the Holocaust: Essays in Honor of Debórah Dwork* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

91 Richard N. Lutjens, Jr., "Jews in Hiding in Nazi Berlin, 1941–1945: A Demographic Survey," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 31.2 (2017): 268–97, at 273.

92 In her family memoir, Irene Skolnick elaborates on the differences between her immediate family, who survived by passing as Polish Catholics in Lublin, and her extended family, who largely survived in hiding, harbored by Irene's family. In doing so, she draws into sharp contrast the experiences of the two groups, but most centrally the agency passers experienced in contrast to her extended family's dependency. See Irene R. Skolnick, *In the Shadow of Majdanek: Hiding in Full Sight, A Holocaust Survival Story* (Sanibel, FL: Stella 15 LLC, 2013), 110: "I have come to the conclusion that being sheltered they could not grasp the dangers that lurked beyond the door of our house. There is a difference between understanding danger intellectually and feeling it in your gut. The four of us, my parents, John and I, were keenly aware of the dangers surrounding us the moment we stepped outside. We were like actors on the stage—scrupulously saying our lines, mindful that the slightest error would be picked up . . ."

Gigliotti's call for returning the spatial turn in Holocaust Studies "to the ground level and to the victims."[93] Continually in motion, in search of temporary reprieve or permanent sanctuary, passers were rendered migrants. In their preoccupation with space, focus on movement and mobility, and critical reflections on passing in various locales (e.g., the city, the countryside, or suburban landscapes), passing narratives invariably converge with the study of space and geography during the Holocaust. By referring to the inhumanity of deportations, transports, and death marches, Gigliotti aptly concludes that mobility was "redefined to suit the aggressive character and violence"[94] of these circumstances. That is, passers employed mobility strategies and adapted in such a way—hunted,[95] "living like animals, on streets, in parks, on railroad stations . . ."[96]—in response to the fervor of the Nazis and their collaborators to seek out and purge Jewish elements. Moreover, highly traceable, passers' narrative testimonies offer a new perspective on geographic analyses of the Holocaust, allowing us to think about different ways individuals moved through various landscapes in pursuit of survival: flitting between ghettos and the so-called "Aryan side" to existing perpetually on the move, across cityscapes and villages, crossing borders and occupation zones.

Alongside my colleagues featured in this volume and elsewhere, this chapter aims to contribute to a collective examination of flight, displacement, and an ever-broadening understanding of mobility and migration practices before, during, and after the Holocaust. In addition to the issue of the spatiality of the Holocaust, this chapter is in conversation with spatiality's entangled themes, including gender and agency. Applying spatial questions to passing narratives depict the agential nature of Holocaust migration experiences and narratives, uncovering the ways in which migration practices provided security to passers, and in some cases facilitated temporary or long-term survival. Moreover, it reframes Holocaust movement beyond narratives of forced flight. Standing in contrast to geographic studies of movement centered on the forcible relocation and transfer of Jews across the continent to sites of concentration and mass murder, these cases instead illuminate the ways that migration and movement were often self-directed, and, as identity passing was a profoundly spatial and bodily act, elucidate how passing both enabled, and was enabled by, mobility.

93 Gigliotti, "A Mobile Holocaust?," 344.

94 Gigliotti, "A Mobile Holocaust?," 342.

95 Feeling "hunted" and comparing one's experience to living like a wild animal are common refrains within passers' testimonies and writings.

96 Annelies Herz, Interview 1100, USC, Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

Edith Raim

Foreign Laborers and Prisoners of War in the German War Economy: A New Look at Forced Labor and the Aftermath of the Holocaust in Postwar Germany

Historiography on Prisoners of War and Forced Labor

Since the 1980s, scholars have scrutinized forced labor.[1] Still, the interrelationship between forced labor and forced migration, forced population transfers, and the circumstances of displacement and dispossession as part of a refugee history deserve further consideration, especially as they are characteristics of both World Wars and their aftermaths. Interestingly enough, forced labor in both World Wars received more scholarly attention than forced migration, which was considered a mere side-effect, although forced migration tended to have a longer-lasting impact. While at least forced labor in and for Nazi Germany stopped once the war was over, the aftermath of forced migration was bound to continue for a longer span of time. Even if repatriation went swiftly, re-integration into the society of one's homeland was more difficult and often took time. Furthermore, the end of the Second World War was the prelude to a continuation of forced migration from Eastern Europe. Ethnic Germans were either expelled or fled, Eastern Europeans who feared Soviet rule or were suspected of previous collaboration escaped in order to avoid persecution. Thus, forced migration affected far larger groups of human beings than forced labor, and although all forced labor is intrinsically linked with forced migration, forced migration is not necessarily connected with forced labor.

Considering other fields of historiography on the Second World War, forced labor and the subject of prisoners of war during the Second World War were latecomers to research. Not until 1978 did Christian Streit publish his seminal work *Keine Kameraden,* which described the fate of up to 5.7 million Red Army prison-

1 Jochen Oltmer, *Migration im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 2nd edition (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013), 112, 116; Andreas Kossert, *Flucht: Eine Menschheitsgeschichte* (Munich: Siedler, 2020), 92–111.

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ers of war (POWs) at German hands.[2] About 3.3 million of them perished under unspeakable conditions, starving or freezing to death or were murdered shortly after capture. Despite the genocidal streak obvious in the treatment of Soviet POWs, which oscillated between outright murder and deliberate neglect, scholarly interest hardly existed until Streit's research opened the door.

A similar omission in historiography is discernible in the case of forced labor, which the Nazis euphemistically termed foreign labor, *Fremdarbeit*. This is even more striking: while the murder of the Soviet POWs took place mostly in the occupied territories and "behind closed doors" in the Reich,[3] i.e. in POW camps, concentration camps, and hidden away from the public eye, forced labor was a very palpable phenomenon of everyday life in the National Socialist Reich during the Second World War.[4] Especially towards the end of the war, its ubiquity struck even indifferent Germans.[5] However, the history of foreign forced labor in the Reich raised the interest of historians even later, and it was only when Ulrich Herbert published his dissertation, *Fremdarbeiter*, in 1985 that the conditions of foreign labor in the Reich were reflected in historiography and public awareness.[6] The full extent of the Nazis' varied uses of labor as a means of control, stigmatization, humiliation, and destruction of foreign nationals still requires much research. One of the main problems for research in this field is semantic: The German word *Zwangsarbeit* (forced labor) is commonly applied to the deployment of forced foreign labor, but also to POWs and concentration camp inmates, thus obfuscating the historical situation. The term "slave labor," coined by Benjamin B. Ferencz in order to distinguish Jewish and non-Jewish labor, is sometimes also

2 Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941 bis 1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1978).

3 The term "Reich" is used in this text in reference to the source material and refers to the territory of Germany, which changed its boundaries considerably during the period concerned.

4 Forced laborers were under close surveillance by the Security Service and feature in secretreports; For the problems of recruiting new laborers in the East and their attempts to flee see "Report Nr. 349, January 11, 1943" in: Heinz Boberach, ed., *Meldungen aus dem Reich: Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS 1938–1945*, vol 12, (Herrsching: Pawlak, 1984), 4669–70.

5 Robert Gellately, *Hingeschaut und weggesehen: Hitler und sein Volk* (Munich: dtv, 2004), 213–54; Andreas Heusler, "Prävention durch Terror. Die Gestapo und die Kontrolle der ausländischen Zwangsarbeiter am Beispiel Münchens," in *Die Gestapo im Zweiten Weltkrieg: "Heimatfront" und besetztes Europa*, ed. Gerhard Paul et al. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 222.

6 Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter: Politik und Praxis des "Ausländer-Einsatzes" in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches* (Bonn: Dietz Verlag, 1985), English translation: Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler's foreign workers: Enforced foreign labour in Germany under the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

used for work in concentration camps.[7] Another problem is that forced laborers rarely produced sources of their own, which limits historical documents mainly to official (and thus often racist) regulations and papers. In the last two decades, historians have tried to fill this gap with interviews as oral histories of victims of forced labor to reduce this gap. However, the ratio between the vast number of former forced laborers and the small number of ego-documents in the form of diaries, letters, and memoirs remains dishearteningly large.

Why did it take so long for German historians to acknowledge the enormous scope of these crimes? Why were they so reluctant to touch upon topics that defined the Nazi dictatorship, its violence and racism? The broad tolerance of forced labor suggests that both imprisonment of POWs and forced labor were considered "normal" hazards of war. From time immemorial, soldiers had become prisoners of war and been used for work,[8] even in pre-modern times. So forced labor was not considered a worthy topic for monographs or essays, although the extent of both phenomena could be gleaned from the "Catalogue of Camps and Prisons in Germany and German-Occupied Territories 1939-1945," compiled and updated by the International Tracing Service (ITS) from 1949 to 1951. As the archives of the ITS were not accessible to the public for many years, Martin Weinmann published a voluminous book containing the ITS catalogue as an alphabetic index of camps.[9]

The number of camps for forced laborers was staggering: Düsseldorf had about 155, Munich more than 400, and Berlin at least 666 camps housing hundreds, often more than 1,000 people from many different nations.[10] The specifically National Socialist form of labor as a means of persecution with its racial and genocidal aspects, which can be traced in both captivity of former soldiers and forced foreign labor, was regrettably ignored for a long time.

During the last three or four decades, scholars have been filling many of these gaps, so that now, due to the abundance of publications, the field is difficult to summarize. German unification and the end of the Cold War eased and enhanced research on Nazi persecution in Europe and brought questions of restitution to the fore. A profound summary of research on forced labor was provided

7 See also Marc Buggeln, *Slave labor in Nazi concentration camps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

8 For the First World War, see e.g. Kai Rawe, *"Wir werden sie schon zur Arbeit bringen!" Ausländerbeschäftigung und Zwangsarbeit im Ruhrkohlenbergbau während des Ersten Weltkrieges* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2005).

9 Martin Weinmann, ed., *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Zweitausendeins, 1990).

10 Gellately, *Hingeschaut und weggesehen*, 215–16.

by the 2010 exhibition project *Zwangsarbeit: Die Deutschen, die Zwangsarbeiter und der Krieg*. This project had a large audience, it generated critical acclaim in several German and European cities including Berlin, Moscow, Dortmund, Warsaw, Prague, Hamburg, and Steyr, and is now a permanent exhibition at the former *Gauforum Weimar*.[11]

This article is indebted to this research and attempts to give a survey of the field; it also seeks to outline existing research gaps. While forced labor in the Reich has by now been covered in many of its aspects, research on forced labor in the occupied territories still leaves a lot to be desired. The book edited by Dieter Pohl and Tanja Sebta provides an excellent overview.[12] For easy initial access to the topic, the website *Bundesarchiv/Zwangsarbeit im NS-Staat* offers fundamental information on both research and former sites of forced labor.[13] The project *Zwangsarbeit 1939-1945* stands out among other projects, as it centers on the experience of forced foreign laborers and presents 600 oral history interviews of former forced laborers[14] for research and learning purposes, a much needed body of work for reference and for narrating displacement on the basis of accounts from its victims, since traditional sources originate mainly from various Reich authorities, which tend to ignore personal suffering. Also, forced laborers or later "Displaced Persons" often lacked resources to gather their own testimonies.[15] Both platforms list sources and literature for scholars and students alike. The homepage of the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation (*Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft*) is also worth visiting for students and scholars interested in the topic.[16]

11 Volkhard Knigge, Rikola-Gunnar Lüttgenau, and Jens-Christian Wagner, eds., *Zwangsarbeit: Die Deutschen, die Zwangsarbeiter und der Krieg* (Weimar: Stiftung Gedenkstätten Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora, 2010).

12 Dieter Pohl and Tanja Sebta, eds., *Zwangsarbeit in Hitlers Europa: Besatzung, Arbeit, Folgen* (Berlin: Metropol, 2013).

13 Bundesarchiv, "Zwangsarbeit im NS-Staat," Bundesarchiv, accessed August 30, 2023, https://www.bundesarchiv.de/zwangsarbeit/html.

14 See also Alexander von Plato, Almut Leh, and Christoph Thonfeld, eds., *Hitlers Sklaven: Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2008), translated into English: *Hitler's slaves: Life stories of forced labourers in Nazi occupied Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Stiftung EVZ, ed., *Geraubte Leben: Zwangsarbeiter berichten* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2008).

15 Project Zwangsarbeit 1939–1945, accessed August 30, 2023, https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/html.

16 Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft, accessed August 30, 2023, https://www.stiftung-evz.de/themen/ns-zwangsarbeit/html.

The Scope of Forced Labor

Forced labor was a means of disciplining perceived delinquents long before the war, and as a form of social engineering it was obviously not limited to Germany.[17] Workhouses had already existed in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century in Germany,[18] and the interrelation between imprisonment of delinquents, work, and a later reintegration into society had a long tradition as means of disciplinary action, which the National Socialists would utterly pervert. The Dachau concentration camp recruited its early inmates not only from among the political prisoners of Bavarian prisons but also from inmates of *Arbeitshaus Rebdorf* in Eichstätt.[19]

Persecution in camps or prisons during the Nazi era was often linked to humiliating work assignments. Even from the beginning, work details of concentration camp prisoners at Dachau were deployed to various tasks, even if the work fulfilled only the purpose of producing agony and humiliation and had no productive function or economic value.[20] Propaganda photographs showed groups of inmates sweating at hard, often pointless, labor.

In the mid-1930s, mass unemployment had been mostly overcome, and a stark coercive streak evolved in the National Socialist employment market as racial criteria gradually excluded Jews or Sinti and Roma from the job market, while the inhabitants of the Reich who were deemed racially superior Germans were subjected to *Dienstpflicht*, i.e. a duty for all young men to regular work with the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*.[21]

Those labelled *Asoziale*, i.e. anti-socials, were characterized as slackers and shirkers, living off the hard work of "proper" Germans, were consequently arrested and sent to concentration camps. In spring 1938, no less than 10,000 people fell victim to this policy of the Reich labelled *Aktion "Arbeitsscheu Reich."*[22] Con-

17 For an overview for Britain see Simon Fowler, *Workhouse: The People, The Places, The Life Behind Closed Doors* (Kew: The National Archives, 2007).

18 For a recent work see Elisabeth Elling-Ruhwinkel, *Sichern und Strafen: Das Arbeitshaus Benninghausen (1871–1945)* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005).

19 For transports from Rebdorf to Dachau on November 17 and 21, 1933, see Stanislav Zámečník, *Das war Dachau* (Luxemburg: Stiftung Comité International de Dachau, 2002), 61. For Dachau see Barbara Distel and Wolfgang Benz, *Das Konzentrationslager Dachau 1933–1945: Geschichte und Bedeutung* (Munich: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 1994).

20 Zámečník, *Das war Dachau*, 58–61.

21 Wolfgang Benz, "Vom freiwilligen Arbeitsdienst zur Arbeitsdienstpflicht," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 4 (1968): 317–46.

22 See the pioneering work by Wolfgang Ayaß, *"Asoziale" im Nationalsozialismus* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta,1995).

centration camps Flossenbürg and Mauthausen were deliberately built near stone quarries where prisoners were literally put to back-breaking work; countless prisoners plummeted to their deaths. The Reich Labor Exchange Offices (*Arbeitsämter*) coerced German and Austrian Jews, who in previous years had been made redundant due to occupational bans from many professions to an employment of labor limited to German and Austrian Jews (*geschlossener Arbeitseinsatz)*.[23] This meant mainly construction or agricultural work, hard manual labor by any definition. Social and professional exclusion was followed by a public demotion to manual labor, subjected to close social control as a blatant reminder of the social and economic demotion German and Austrian Jews were experiencing. After the war had begun, Jews—and not only those dependent on social welfare—were forced to register for the work deployment and mainly worked in the armaments industry in Berlin.[24]

In 1939 and 1940, during the war against Poland and France, forced labor evolved on an even larger scale. As German laborers turned into *Wehrmacht* soldiers, replacements for the ever-increasing needs of the armament industry were needed. German women, who were not affected by the aforementioned *Dienstpflicht*, could only be mobilized to a certain degree, but many of them already had joined the workforce as part of the war-effort, while others were excluded from the job market for ideological reasons. For example, female teachers were forced out of their jobs once they got married and were reluctant to take up work once they were mothers. A first "emergency measure" was the compulsory recruitment of Polish civilians who, together with Polish POWs, became the first forced laborers in the winter of 1939/40. By the summer of 1940, 700,000 individuals of this group worked in the Reich. Like Western European civilians and POWs who fell into German hands after the spring of 1940 and faced deportation from their homelands, they were mainly put to work in the agricultural sector of the Reich. Forced labor, however, played a much more important role outside the borders of the Reich: in occupied Poland, and in the Soviet Union (after 1941), but also in West, North, and Southeastern Europe, forced labor for the native population in support of German goals became routine during German occupation. The German labor exchange coordinated the workforce in occupied Europe, coercing about 10 million people to

23 Wolf Gruner, *Der geschlossene Arbeitseinsatz deutscher Juden: Zur Zwangsarbeit als Element der Verfolgung 1938–1943* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 1996).

24 Jens-Christian Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus – Ein Überblick," in *Zwangsarbeit: Die Deutschen, die Zwangsarbeiter und der Krieg*, ed. Volkhard Knigge, Rikola-Gunnar Lüttgenau, and Jens-Christian Wagner (Weimar: Stiftung Gedenkstätten Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora, 2010), 180–93, here 193.

operations of the *Wehrmacht*, for the infrastructure-providing Todt Organization or for German-controlled enterprises.[25]

Forced foreign labor and the imprisonment of former enemy soldiers were closely interlinked, as soldiers below officers' rank turned into foreign laborers. By early 1941, more than 8 percent of the German workforce consisted of non-Germans, i.e. mainly French prisoners of war (1.2 mill.) and Polish civilian workers (1.3 mill.).[26] Yet the bulk of forced labor deployment evolved during the second half of the Second World War. One important step towards the systematic exploitation of forced labor was the appointment of Thuringia's Nazi Party district leader *(Gauleiter)* Fritz Sauckel to a newly created position as general plenipotentiary for labor mobilization (*Generalbevollmächtigter für den Arbeitseinsatz*). From the spring of 1942 onwards, Sauckel began what Adam Tooze called "one of the largest coercive laborprograms the world has ever seen."[27] Sauckel's staff, i.e. mainly members of the German labor exchange offices (*Arbeitsämter*), mobilized millions of workers across the whole of Europe by brutal means, with the lion's share of this operation centering on Eastern Europe. The ideology of anti-Bolshevism and the racially "inferior" Slavs tied well into economic requirements of a maximum of exploitation of human and other resources.

Often complete villages were raided, with men, women, and children no matter what age dragged into trains and carted off to the Reich. Targeted in particular were young workers. Half of the drafted Eastern European females had not even reached the legal age. The German captors tightened a net over most of Europe in their effort to requisition as many laborers as possible and coerced them into their labor project. From the beginning of 1942 until the first half of 1943, a staggering 2.8 million men, women, and children from all over Europe were sent to Germany. In mid-1943, the foreign workforce had risen to 6.5 million people. Most of them—4.95 million—were civilians, not former prisoners of war. These men and women were used in nearly all sectors of the German economy, including agriculture, industry, mining, and construction.[28]

Obviously, after the summer of 1943, the course of the war and the imminent German defeat slackened the pace, yet the operations of the network continued. While recruitment in Western Europe dried out by late 1943, the activities of the

25 Dieter Pohl, *Verfolgung und Massenmord in der NS-Zeit 1933–1945*, 3rd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011), 59–62.

26 Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 517.

27 Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction*, 517.

28 Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, 160.

network shifted mostly to Eastern Europe. In February 1944, foreign civilians and prisoners of war numbered 7.3 million in the Reich. Numbers for August 1944 were 5.7 foreign civilian workers and 1.9 million POWs, all in all more than 7.6 million.[29] In the autumn of 1944, the number is estimated at nearly 8 million (7.9 million) people. Twenty percent of the German workforce were now foreign workers. Their number was particularly prominent in the armament industry, where more than a third of the workforce was non-German. In certain plants of the *Luftwaffe*, more than 40 percent of the workforce consisted of foreign labor, in some more than 80 percent. It is no exaggeration to point out that the German war economy depended on forced labor to keep the Reich's armament industry functioning.[30]

According to estimates by historian Mark Spoerer, 8.4 million foreign civilian workers, 4.6 million prisoners of war, and 1.7 million concentration camp prisoners were held captive in the Reich between 1939 and 1945.[31] The fluctuation between different categories—POWs turning into civilian workers, civilian workers becoming concentration camp inmates due to penal measures—as well as dropouts from the system—pregnant female forced laborers returning to their homelands—is estimated at a 1.5 million double count (as they were counted twice: once when they were doing forced labor in the East, and a second time when they were deported to the Reich and deployed there). Thus, about 13 million foreign forced laborers lived inside the Reich.[32] The number of forced laborers in the occupied territories is estimated at about ten million. About seven million of them were exclusively deployed in the occupied territories and never reached the borders of the Reich, while another three million were deployed in both Germany and the occupied territories. It is thus likely that at least 20 million Europeans were coerced to work at one point or another for the German war economy. Forced labor was thus a mass phenomenon both in the Reich and in the occupied territories.[33]

In the second half of the war, nearly a quarter of the workforce in the Reich consisted of foreign workers or POWs, and there was hardly any village or town

29 Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter*, 271.

30 Manfred Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," in *Zwangsarbeit: Die Deutschen, die Zwangsarbeiter und der Krieg*, ed. by Volkhard Knigge, Rikola-Gunnar Lüttgenau, and Jens-Christian Wagner (Weimar: Stiftung Gedenkstätten Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora, 2010), 208.

31 Mark Spoerer, *Zwangsarbeit unter dem Hakenkreuz: Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und Häftlinge im Deutschen Reich und im besetzten Europa 1939–1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001), 223.

32 Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus," 180.

33 See Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus," 180.

in the Reich where foreign laborers, POWs, or concentration camp prisoners were not present, working in agriculture, various enterprises, and armament industries as well as for the German civil service authorities, in private households, and even in Catholic and Protestant churches. Living and working conditions varied and were wildly antagonistic: Some foreign workers, especially from Western nations such as the Netherlands, or those working in agriculture, enjoyed relatively normal conditions that were not unlike those of regular farmhands or agricultural day laborers, while most foreign workers in the industrial labor force suffered long hours at work, poor nourishment, and lack of medical care as well as inadequate housing and mistreatment in camps and at work. This was due to the National Socialist racial hierarchy, which was applied to all forced labor and had dire consequences for housing assignments, rations of food, surveillance by guards, and restrictions on work and life. Soviet laborers were subjected to the worst conditions. Their camps were usually primitive, barely heated in winter, stiflingly hot in summer, their food and clothing provisions minimal, and medical care hardly existent.[34] Polish workers had slightly better conditions, as had Czech workers. Nationals of Western European states could hope for better treatment at work and more spacious living quarters.[35] However, as the war progressed, working and living conditions were bound to deteriorate; overcrowded living quarters, malnourishment and overwork, and lack of medical care accelerated the spread of epidemics such as tuberculosis and other contagious diseases.

POW camps had quite varied conditions, with captured officers from the Western nations enjoying a privileged status, while regular former soldiers, especially from Eastern Europe, suffered from bad living conditions. In contrast to concentration camps, where the inmates were completely at the mercy of their tormentors and despotism ruled supreme, foreign workers were granted certain rights, such as furlough, the possibility to communicate with family via mail, and liberty of action in a limited radius at their site of residence. Rules, interdictions, and curfews curtailed these freedoms considerably. Polish and Soviet forced labor camps were surrounded by fences, their occupants forced to wear badges that marked them as Poles or Soviet laborers (with only the latter being called *Ostarbeiter)*, and sexual intercourse with Germans punishable by death, which led to several Polish or Soviet men being publicly executed, their German female partners publicly shamed. A self-determined change of job was forbidden, and numerous rules determined misdemeanors to be punishable offences punished by transfer to euphemistically termed "labor education camps"

34 Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus," 187.
35 Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus," 188.

(*Arbeitserziehungslager*), which often resembled concentrations camps.[36] Compliance with the many prohibitions of contact between Germans and foreign nationals was kept under close surveillance by Gestapo, police, authorities, and German civilians. Informers set murderous action into operation when they told authorities of alleged misbehavior by foreign workers. When foreign workers were in the hands of the Gestapo, they could be executed without sentence, while the Gestapo was even absolved from registering the deaths of the Polish or Soviet foreign workers with the civilian authorities. The death toll of all forced labor is reckoned to amount to 2.7 million due to work, starvation, murder, diseases, and mistreatment.[37]

The labor regime towards the end of the war was characterized by constant radicalization: even more brutal methods of recruitment, even less consideration of age or gender when foreign laborers were deported, and even more terror applied at work or in the dwellings in the camps. Tens of thousands of enforced foreign workers were transferred to concentration camps. Polish and Soviet forced workers who had fallen ill and were considered no longer fit for work were left to their own devices to meet an inevitable death or were deliberately murdered. The Hadamar State Sanatorium in Hesse, where mentally disabled German patients from the asylums had been killed in 1940/41, was turned into a killing site for forced laborers from Eastern Europe who were murdered with lethal injections in 1944/45.[38] Foreign workers who took to supplementing their meager diets with groceries obtained in buildings damaged by air raids risked incarceration in a concentration camp or being executed on the spot. In the last days of the war, massacres among foreign laborers took place as Nazi functionaries feared retribution and tried to eliminate as many potential retaliators as possible. Evacuations of camps and chaotic conditions shortly before and after the end of the war rendered even the moment of liberation life-threatening.

The position of the Reich population is difficult to gauge and ranged from arbitrariness and strict enforcement of even the most irrational refusals to (limited) solidarity with the foreign workers. There was little concern for the fate of the deported men, women, and children from all over Europe—indifference was rife. As daily life during the war became more challenging even for Reich nationals due to Allied air raids and as loss of human life became more widespread, sympa-

36 Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus," 188.

37 Spoerer quoted in Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus," 189.

38 Gedenkstätte Hadamar, accessed May 21, 2024, https://www.gedenkstaette-hadamar.de/geschichte/dezentrale-euthanasie-1942–1945/.

thy or compassion for the plight of the enslaved probably declined.[39] Furthermore, communication with forced laborers from Eastern Europe was limited due to lack of linguistic proficiency on both sides. A deeply imbued fear and loathing of "Bolshevism," which was associated with defeat in the First World War and the subsequent revolution (and civil war), contributed significantly to popular diffidence towards Eastern European nationals.

Ideological Primacy, Economic Necessity, and the Nazis' Racial Design

In all the described operations, ideological considerations within National Socialist policy were pivotal. Sauckel's agents scoured Europe in their quest for laborers, and at the same time Nazi Germany's genocidal program was under way and not stopped by economic considerations, as Europe was to be freed of Jews.[40] Jewish slave labor in the East was to serve German needs in infrastructure and construction; those incapable to work—the elderly, women, and children—were killed first. Himmler had no use for Jewish labor apart from manual labor, as he "opposed the employment of Jews in manufacturing."[41]

The SS and the *Wehrmacht* were killing potential workers by the tens of thousands in German camps. As is well known, millions of Soviet prisoners fell into the hands of the *Wehrmacht*; according to the order directed against political commissars of the Red Army (*Kommissarbefehl*),[42] so-called *untragbare* (intolerable) prisoners (Jews, functionaries of the communist party, other so called "undesirables") were immediately selected and killed, with the others left to their own devices, which led to rapid deterioration of health and subsequent death. By the summer of 1941, representatives of the Reich Department of Labor voiced an interest in the potential Soviet POW work force, a suggestion that drew stern ideological opposition from the NSDAP, *Wehrmacht*, and the Reich

39 Dietmar Süß, "'Herrenmenschen' und 'Arbeitsvölker': Zwangsarbeit und deutsche Gesellschaft," in *Zwangsarbeit: Die Deutschen, die Zwangsarbeiter und der Krieg*, ed. Volkhard Knigge, Rikola-Gunnar Lüttgenau, and Jens-Christian Wagner (Weimar: Stiftung Gedenkstätten Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora, 2010), 222–31.

40 Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction*, 524.

41 Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction*, 526.

42 For further details, see Felix Römer, *Der Kommissarbefehl: Wehrmacht und NS-Verbrechen an der Ostfront 1941/42* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008).

Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*).[43] Under the pressures of the labor market, Hitler finally agreed to the deployment of the Soviet POWs and civilian workers in the territory of the Reich, but gross ill-treatment and cruelty towards these inmates led to mass deaths in POW camps in Germany. Soviet POWs also found their fate in mass executions in the concentration camps of Dachau, Sachsenhausen, and Buchenwald. As the harrowing handling of the Soviet POWs had decimated their numbers so markedly, the German labor exchange increasingly focused on the forced deportation of Soviet civilians for labor. For the most part, compulsion dominated the recruitment. The civilian forced labor from the Soviet Union *(Ostarbeiter)* deported to the Reich from 1941 to 1944 numbered nearly three million.[44]

"Operation Barbarossa," the invasion of the Soviet Union, also drove the mass murder of the European Jews. The process of discrimination, exclusion, isolation, concentration, deportation, and finally extermination took place in many European countries under National Socialist rule. Similar to their murder of the Soviet POWs, German SS task forces murdered the Jewish population in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. Again, the potential of the Jewish population as workforce for the Reich was not taken into consideration. Non-Jewish labor was there in abundance, so there was no need for a Jewish workforce. In Lithuania, the assault on the Jewish population following the invasion of June 22, 1941 had been so complete that by the end of 1941 only about 20 percent of the Lithuanian Jews were still alive.[45]

Work and death went hand in hand in the National Socialist forced labor regime in the Reich and the occupied territories,[46] but never more so than in the case of Jewish slave labor. Death, minimal chances of survival, and brutal exploitation characterized the situation for the Jews, especially in occupied Eastern Europe, although one should account for developments at different times and in different regions.[47] After its assault on Poland, Germany established a system of forced labor. Highway (*Autobahn*) construction by Jewish laborers started in the summer of 1940. In Upper Silesia A whole complex of nearly exclusively "Jewish camps" was set up as part of the Schmelt Organization (*Organisation Schmelt*) in autumn of the same year, as *SS-Brigadeführer* Albrecht Schmelt was appointed special envoy of the *Reichsführer SS* for the foreign-ethnic work deployment in Upper Silesia

43 Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus," 185.

44 Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus," 185.

45 Christoph Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016), 1528–38.

46 Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," 208.

47 Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," 208.

(*Sonderbeauftragter des Reichsführers der SS für den fremdvölkischen Arbeitseinsatz in Oberschlesien*). The special envoy status was to back Schmelt and his project with its human resource against competing interests of the SS or Wehrmacht concerning the workforce. The Jewish inmates of the camps were coerced into arduous construction work on the *Autobahn*, and soon the death rate rose. A similar pattern characterized the situation after the German assault on the Soviet Union. As the *Wehrmacht* found fault with the existing roads in the Soviet Union, extensive motorway construction was undertaken by the Todt Organization and building firms, which supplied the *Wehrmacht* with the much-needed infrastructure of roads or bridges in these foreign parts of their area of influence. For transit road no. IV (*Durchgangsstraße IV)*, a through-road planned to cover 2,175 kilometers between Przemyśl and Stalino via Tarnopol, Winniza, and Dnjepropetrowsk, the first site offices were set up in September 1941.[48] The work force was to be supplied by the SS. Friedrich Katzmann, the head of SS and police for Galicia (*SS- und Polizeiführer*, *SSPF*), provided about 4,000 Polish Jews for the route section in Galicia and instantly proclaimed indifference, whether one or 10,000 Jews were to perish per kilometer built. Those unfit for work were to be shot, as were those Jews trying to escape or those recaptured.[49] The SS had explicitly erected exclusively Jewish camps (*Judenlager*) close to the transit road, but the provisional dwellings consisted of ramshackle barns or similar buildings. Unsanitary living conditions and scant foodstuffs resulted in premature incapacity for work and subsequent liquidation.

In the late autumn of 1941, the Jewish population of Poland was classified into three categories, namely *Facharbeiter*, *Zwangsarbeiter*, and *Arbeitsunfähige*. The first term referred to workers in the ghettos, the second to a more or less expendable workforce to be exploited to the maximum while being exposed to ruthless guards, and the third group—labeled unfit for work—was earmarked for rapid extermination in mass killings by the SS. Subsequently, the inhuman deployment of human beings led to various groups of forced laborers working at transit road no. IV: Ukrainian forced laborers, Soviet POWs, Ukrainian and Transnistrian Jews from Romania.[50] The miserable living and working conditions defy description. The Jewish camps along the transit road were an amalgamation of the dominant National Socialist aims of work and destruction. Due to the course of the war, work on the transit road ceased at the beginning of 1944, and the last

48 Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," 210.
49 Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," 210.
50 Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," 211, 212.

inmates of the camps were murdered. More than 25,000 had lost their lives during construction of the transit road.[51]

Historians of the Holocaust have pointed to the different functions of the National Socialist ghettos erected under compulsion in many of the occupied countries for the Jewish population.[52] They served for the concentration of the Jewish population and their rapid liquidation, if considered necessary. The work carried out in the ghettos is evaluated varyingly: Was it just a side-effect of Nazi policy aimed at lulling the ghetto population into the ultimately vain hope of survival if they proved their worth as a work-force? Or was it a genuine asset for the war economy, considered useful by the *Wehrmacht* and other Nazi agencies? Only those ghettos "granted" a longer existence by the Germans could run industrial plants and workshops that supplied goods for the war economy. This applied mainly to ghettos in Poland, such as Litzmannstadt, or Lithuania, such as Kaunas, which existed from 1940 to 1941 and 1944 respectively. Here, ideological priorities always triumphed over economic considerations, and based on such thinking, even ghettos that had withstood many assaults were finally liquidated.[53]

The ghettos also served as a resource for the recruitment of forced labor. While (short-lived) ghettos were established in many European countries, the most characteristic and most widespread ghetto manifestation was to be found in Poland. The first big ghetto was erected in Litzmannstadt in the annexed Warta Land (*Reichsgau Wartheland*). Here, about 160,000 Jews were crammed into a quarter of the city, referred to as "the ghetto," which was sealed hermetically with barbed wire. Initially, isolation and concentration were the main purposes; productive work was not high on the agenda of the German authorities.[54]

While the German administration planned to generate income from the ghetto by catering to the *Wehrmacht*'s needs, the Jewish ghetto inmates hoped to integrate as many Jews as possible into the workforce in order to secure food. Workshops in the Litzmannstadt ghetto included tailors' shops, furriers, cobblers, and cabinetmakers. Augmented death rates and an increasing demand for labor went hand in hand in the ghetto. Many of the ghetto dwellers died of hunger. At the same time, deportations from the Reich raised the number of inmates and generated constant overcrowding. Facing this situation, German authorities or-

51 Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," 212.

52 Dieter Pohl, "Ghettos," in *Der Ort des Terrors: Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager*, vol. 9, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009), 161–91.

53 Dieckmann, *Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Litauen 1941–1944*, 1530.

54 Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," 212.

dered the chairman of the Jewish Council to select 10,000 ghetto dwellers for *Aussiedlung*, the term for deportation to nearby extermination camp Kulmhof. The overriding criterion for staying in the ghetto was the ability to work; those perceived as criminals, the unemployed, and those on welfare benefits were among the first to be selected for deportation to Kulmhof.[55] The mass selections included the removal of children and the elderly, which ultimately turned the ghetto into a work ghetto (*Arbeitsghetto*). And yet, productivity was always limited. As the Nazi-designated Jewish leaders understood that work could be a means of survival, they endeavored to find employment even for children and teens in the ghetto factories, but these young workers lacked experience and strength; that challenge was compounded by the shortage of machines, tools, and technology. The health of the workers was bound to deteriorate under the conditions of constant cold, the absence of food, and long working hours. The SS considered the economic accomplishments of the ghetto too meager and an economic failure and felt that it only secondly served the purposes of the German war economy.[56] In August 1944, ghetto Litzmannstadt was liquidated, the majority of its inhabitants were gassed in Auschwitz immediately after arrival.

As Dieter Pohl pointed out, the most murderous months of the Holocaust were from July to November 1942, when in fact the Reich was already desperately in need of laborers.[57] This was after the SS mobile killing squads[58] (*SS-Einsatzgruppen*) had laid a bloody path through Eastern Europe, and before Auschwitz-Birkenau turned into the center of the "final solution" in 1943/44. During the summer and autumn of 1942, most ghetto liquidations took place in Poland. The youngest and oldest and the infirm were often murdered on the spot, while the others were either killed in mass shootings or forced into deportation trains heading to the extermination camps Kulmhof, Treblinka, Sobibor, and Belzec. Only a tiny portion of workers was allowed to remain in the ghettos if they were classified as useful—meaning "fit for work"—for the German war effort. The ability to work turned into the lynchpin of selection in Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek and other concentration camps. The "work assignment" (*Arbeitseinsatz*) of the European Jewish population formed an important part of the *Wannseekonferenz* of January 20, 1942, which was but a euphemistic term for the Nazi plan to exterminate Europe's Jews. In September of the same year, Hitler ordered the deportation of the so-called armament Jews (*Rüstungsjuden*), i.e. Jews

55 Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," 214.

56 Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," 215.

57 Pohl, *Verfolgung und Massenmord in der NS-Zeit 1933–1945*, 93–96.

58 "Einsatzgruppen - An Overview," Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed May 21, 2024, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/einsatzgruppen.

in the Reich employed in the armament industry who had initially been exempted from deportation to the East. Other forced labor was still available, and the ideological goal of a Reich free of Jews reigned supreme.

Adam Tooze estimates that during the Holocaust at least 2.4 million potential workers were killed. This number does not yet include the victims of concentration camps (about 800,000 non-Jews) and about a million Soviet POWs (after they had reached the territory of the Reich). Tooze argues that about 4.8 million (potential) workers were murdered by the Nazi dictatorship after 1941/1942, based on their racial or ideological classification by the Nazi leadership, while they were urgently needed in the workforce.[59] This was even more illogical as the shortage of workers became ever more pressing in the German war economy and the *Wehrmacht* was confronted with difficult choices between either drafting male German laborers or risking an unnecessary prolongation of the war.

At this point, racial and political considerations and ideological requirements prevailed over economic necessity. As other labor appeared available, Jewish workers and Soviet POWs seemed dispensable and unnecessary. In the spring of 1944, when the German concentration camp system reached a last phase of economization, conditions deteriorated. The situation for Soviet POWs in the Reich had become perilous to an unexpected degree. Shortage of food, heightened danger of infection and epidemics due to lack of hygiene, absence of medical care, and increased accidents, repression, and terror as well as an elevated risk of air raids dramatically augmented the death rate of Soviet POWs.[60]

When the German defeat was imminent, rivaling interests of the SS and *Wehrmacht* and Sauckel's efforts typically ended in the murder of the Jews, even if the usefulness of the workers was discussed. Therefore, when the National Socialists got hold of the Hungarian Jewish population in Spring 1944 and deported them to Auschwitz, only a small proportion was saved and selected for work. The vast majority of the deportees was killed immediately after arrival in the major effort to eliminate Jews from Europe.

A "compromise" between ideology and a more pragmatic approach was the program "destruction through labor": This program suggested putting the inmates of the concentration camps in the Reich (where only a tiny segment was Jewish) at the disposal of the armaments industry and the war economy. The program involved overwork, mistreatment, and starvation, resulting in a massive death toll. Thus, the utilization of concentration camp labor became essential when Sauckel's efforts of recruiting more workers started to fail. And yet again,

59 Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 523.

60 Grieger, "Vernichtung und Arbeit im NS-Zwangsarbeitssystem," 216.

only when the mortality rate reached enormous proportions did the SS order better food rations and a bonus system for good work in the concentration camps in order to secure the desired economic profit.[61] When in early 1944 Allied bombing destroyed up to one third of the German aircraft manufacturing, Hitler himself granted the deportation of Jews from Hungary as well as surviving Jews from the ghettos Litzmannstadt and Kaunas into the Reich; they too then became part of the program of "destruction through labor." Their task was to build underground factories for the manufacturing of fighter airplanes. Living conditions were forbidding, as the Jewish slave laborers were to be deployed only for the building of the construction sites, but not for the manufacturing of aircrafts. Again, ideological concerns carried the day.

Research Questions and Scope for Further Study

As has been pointed out above, forced migration and forced labor were intertwined. A major desideratum of research is a (digital) mapping project for forced migration and forced labor, somewhat similar to Holocaust historian Martin Gilbert's *Atlas of the Holocaust*.[62] It should be possible, as so much more knowledge is now available, to trace, if exemples only, deportations of forced laborers as well as their work sites in the Reich, and to show the fates of forced laborers before, and preferably also after, 1945. This could be linked to oral history sources and documents or photographs. If properly carried out, such a major research project, presumably involving many European nations and a commemorative impetus, would ensure that the victims and their labor are not forgotten.

A methodological necessity for future scholarship involves semantic discipline. The German term *Zwangsarbeit* (forced labor) is ambiguous. Furthermore, often not even inmates were familiar with the vast Nazi camp system, and camps also changed their denomination or purpose, i. e. a camp started out as POW camp and turned concentration camp, as occurred at Bergen-Belsen. Concentration camps and their satellite camps were only one type of camp; there also existed forced labor and Soviet workers' camps (*Fremdarbeiter*- and *Ostarbeiterlager*), prisoners of war camps called *Stalags* (*Stammlager*) and *Dulags* (*Durchgangslager*) for POWs proper, Labor education camps (*Arbeitserziehungslager*), and internment camps (*Internierungslager*), to name but a few.

61 Marc Buggeln, *Das System der KZ-Außenlager: Krieg, Sklavenarbeit und Massengewalt* (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012).

62 Martin Gilbert, *Atlas of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988).

Also, one has to keep an eye on the ever-changing political situation of the National Socialist dictatorship. An Italian laborer might have been in a relatively privileged situation before 1943, but an Italian military internee was considered a member of a "traitor" nation and treated accordingly, which resulted in a high death rate. Historians estimate a death toll of at least 45,000 Italian military internees from 1943 to 1945.[63] Often, Germans were not fully aware of the identities of their forced laborers: German testimonies confuse Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian nationalities, and to some degree also Dutch, Belgian, or French nationalities were amalgamated in the minds of German eyewitnesses. While the terminology tends to be vague, the long-term consequences of forced labor as a civilian or, on the other hand, as a POW, were grave: Due to the Geneva Convention of 1929, enemy nations were entitled to use POWs for certain labor that decades later precluded compensation, as became clear when the Remembrance, Responsibility and Future Foundation (*Stiftung Erinnerung*, *Verantwortung*, *Zukunft*) was created in the year 2000 to settle the claims of forced laborers.[64]

Another important reason why the subject of forced labor came to the attention of historians at such a late stage is that the judicial prosecution of slave labor remained deficient. The Nuremberg tribunal sentenced Sauckel to death for war crimes and crimes against humanity (including slave labor and deportation of millions for forced labor), but it failed to define forced labor as a criminal offense. Instead, deportation and mistreatment or other elements of crime were the basis for Sauckel's death sentence. Fellow-defendant Albert Speer was found guilty of active participation in the deployment of forced laborers. Further trials against industry (IG Farben, Flick, Krupp) and the SS economic administration main office indicted Nazi persecutors for slave labor, but defendants of enterprises, such as Friedrich Flick or Alfred Krupp, were granted mitigating circumstances, as they claimed their enterprises had been forced by the state to employ forced labor. This view of forced labor as not a criminal offense in itself is reflected in the Federal Compensation Law (*Bundesentschädigungsgesetz*). The definition of persecution (for political, religious, and racial reasons) excluded forced labor. The federal law for compensation of forced labor again did not define forced labor but looked instead into the living conditions of the camps. If inhumane conditions, lack of nourishment, and lack of medical care prevailed, then forced laborers were entitled to the highest sum of compensation.

63 Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus," 188.
64 Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus," 181.

In West Germany, the prosecution of Nazi crimes against foreign nationals was initially not possible at all, because the Allies prohibited it; they did not grant Germans the right to deal with cases concerning Allied victims. In the early 1950s, West German courts could have prosecuted Nazi crimes against foreign laborers, but by then many of the survivors who could have testified had either left Germany or had lost interest in pursuing justice. Only the most blatant cases found their way to the courts, for example the murder of foreign workers during the last days of the war or the hangings of Polish or Ukrainian foreign workers ordered by the Gestapo. All in all, crimes against foreign workers constituted only four percent of all investigations and trials carried out in West Germany from 1945 to 2005. War crimes (*Kriegsverbrechen*), a much vaguer category that includes crimes against POWs, constituted 12.9 percent of all cases.[65]

The division of Germany from 1949 to 1990 did not allow for a uniform process of prosecution of crimes: In East Germany, trials against Germans who had mistreated forced laborers or POWs, especially from Poland, Ukraine, and the Soviet Union in general, took place frequently; about 14 percent of all Nazi crime trials dealt with forced labor.[66] Quite often these trials were directed against ordinary Germans such as farmers or shop owners who had either smacked or slapped their foreign laborers or who had informed on them. In Germany in the 1940s and 1950s there was little appreciation that this very common behavior (especially under war conditions) was inacceptable, as physical violence against children or spouses was still widespread and continued unpunished by the state for many years to come. There was little sympathy among the population as these comparatively minor crimes against forced laborers became court cases in East Germany.

An important issue is the profit German industry gained from forced labor. This question underpinned many requests for redress and compensation.[67] Requests for compensation had to be addressed not to the Federal Republic of Germany, but to private enterprises that had been part of the German war economy.[68] The private enterprises argued—implausibly, given today's wealth of

65 Andreas Eichmüller, "Die Strafverfolgung von NS-Verbrechen seit 1945: Eine Zahlenbilanz," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 4 (2008): 621–40, at 628.

66 Edith Raim, "East and West German prosecutions of Nazi crimes and public reactions," in *Making Justice Visible. War Crimes Trials, Media and Memory after World War II*, ed. Ruth Leiserowitz et al. (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2022), 51.

67 A fundamental analysis of the vast topic is Constantin Goschler, ed., *Die Entschädigung von NS-Zwangsarbeit am Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012).

68 Constantin Goschler, "Die Auseinandersetzung um Anerkennung und Entschädigung der Zwangsarbeiter," in *Zwangsarbeit. Die Deutschen: die Zwangsarbeiter und der Krieg*, ed. Volkhard Knigge, Rikola-Gunnar Lüttgenau, and Jens-Christian Wagner (Weimar: Stiftung Gedenkstätten Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora, 2010), 232.

evidence to the contrary—that they had not been responsible but were coerced to contribute to the war economy. At the beginning of the 1950s, compensation for forced labor was considered part of a settlement of German obligations resulting from the Second World War in order to regulate reparation and debt questions between Western Germany and several Western European states.[69] The London Agreement on German External Debts of 1953 was very favorable for the West Germans. A settlement was reached with the Western European states and Israel. However, a similar regulation with all nations beyond the Iron Curtain—who had formed the majority of victims of deportation and forced migration—was postponed until an anticipated peace treaty was concluded. Any wage payments of forced laborers were deferred until this unknown date—which at the height of the Cold War meant that compensation was indefinitely postponed.

While from the German state's perspective the conflict concerning compensation for forced labor was gratifyingly settled on an international level, former forced laborers could theoretically take the path of litigation with private companies. But in the 1950s, at the height of the Cold War, only a handful of slave laborers could undertake legal action against large German businesses. Only a few survivors—like the German Jew Norbert Wollheim—had the support and endurance to sue IG Farben (in liquidation) for wage payments and received the amount of 10,000 German Marks as compensation in a separate settlement outside the courtroom.[70] In many other cases, compensation was categorically denied, and few former forced laborers had the financial capacity and physical endurance to pursue their cases from abroad, especially if they lived in Eastern Europe. The Jewish Conference on Material Claims Against Germany (Jewish Claims Conference) in New York City, which represented more than 20 Jewish organizations outside of Israel, represented the claims of Jewish forced laborers and negotiated agreements with several German companies in the 1950s and 1960s.[71] Forced laborers from Eastern Europe, who represented the vast majority of Nazi forced labor, were not incorporated in settlements and negotiations at all, as at the height of the Cold War any financial transfers to Eastern Europe were considered funding for undemocratic states.

69 Goschler, "Die Auseinandersetzung," 234.

70 Joachim Robert Rumpf, *Der Fall Wollheim gegen die I.G. Farbenindustrie AG in Liquidation: Die erste Musterklage eines ehemaligen Zwangsarbeiters in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Prozess, Politik und Presse* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010).

71 Benjamin B. Ferencz, *Less than Slaves: Jewish forced labor and the quest for compensation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Concerning East Germany, the Soviet Union declined offers of compensation from East Germany as a socialist "brother" state. For more than 30 years, the Second World War's material aftermath seemed to have settled most favorably for Germany due to the stalemate caused by the international situation. By the 1980s, forced labor entered the political agenda again, as its omission from redress and compensation had been so blatant. Since the beginning of the 1980s, forced labor, concentration camps, and their satellite camps became subjects of historical research, raising new questions about moral guilt. Political parties in West Germany, in particular the Green Party and the Social Democrats, urged the federal government to reach a settlement of the material claims of the (by then, much reduced in numbers) surviving former forced laborers. While the government refrained from opening negotiations, German companies financed research into their corporate history, which often revolved around forced labor, e.g. Daimler-Benz, Volkswagen, and BMW.[72] Some of them initiated aid projects for former forced laborers.[73] It is not accidental that major car manufacturers that strongly relied on exports felt increasing pressure from Eastern European survivors then living in the West.

Only with Germany's re-unification in 1989/90 did the topic reenter the government's horizon. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* seemed to open new vistas for Eastern Europe's future. As a definite peace treaty was still missing, the provisional nature of the London settlement was clearly no longer applicable and feasible, and the Allies felt compelled to settle the post-war status of the two reunited Germanies. Legally a final settlement of compensation to former forced labor was at stake. German courts affirmed a general legal claim of forced laborers to compensation, as even the Federal Constitutional Court qualified the claims as legitimate. Eastern European states approached the Federal Republic in the name of their nationals who had been forced laborers during the Second World War.[74] Furthermore, the unsettled compensation question for the Eastern European forced laborers became an untenable position for German businesses. After all, Germany's economy—unlike those of other Western states—depended on exports of German goods, and German businesses were very present on a global market. They were signposts for "made in Germany" and were globally judged for their old and new business ethics. As a consequence, the German government felt compelled to stress that they had an ongoing responsibility toward Nazi-era forced laborers. It was high time for a final settlement, which was designed as follows.

72 For an overview see Sebastian Brünger, *Geschichte und Gewinn: Der Umgang deutscher Konzerne mit ihrer NS-Vergangenheit* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2017).

73 Goschler, "Die Auseinandersetzung," 235.

74 Goschler, "Die Auseinandersetzung," 235.

German government and German enterprises promised the payment of 10 billion German marks. Conflicts between the Jewish Claims Conference (representing former Jewish slave laborers) and non-Jewish Eastern European forced laborers pointed to an increased Europeanization of the Holocaust, focusing on the complicity of European nations in the crimes. On the whole, the compensation settlement and the subsequent establishment of the Remembrance Foundation, Responsibility and Future led to an increased prestige of Germany as a stakeholder in the business of coming to terms with the past.[75] Apart from compensating for former forced labor, the new foundation was to further research and public educational programs on Nazi crime and its victims.

In this last round of compensation for forced labor, East European former forced laborers were finally compensated. Payments started in 2001. The newly established the Remembrance Foundation, Responsibility and Future was to take care of a final settlement for all forced laborers; remaining funds were to go into public history projects.

Fifty-five years after the end of the Second World War, only a small proportion of millions of slave laborers were still alive, so that only around 1.7 million people benefited from the foundation's trust. Two main problems were connected with this settlement: 1. The Jewish Conference on Material Claims and the non-Jewish Eastern European former forced laborers competed for the available funds. The bone of contention was the distinction between slave labor (i.e. Jewish labor) and forced labor (i.e. non-Jewish labor). 2. Former POWs who had been coerced into working for the Reich were excluded from the settlement (due to the Geneva Convention on the treatment of POWs, dating from 1929). The complete report on sums paid as compensation has been published.[76]

For researchers, one of the main problems continues to be the lack of access to important files from German industry. But apart from industrial enterprises, there were other employers, too, such as German communal authorities (mayors, district administration), the Todt Organization, and the churches. Archival material from German employment offices and social security records have long been neglected as sources for research.

75 Goschler, "Die Auseinandersetzung," 236.

76 Michael Jansen and Günter Saathoff, *"Gemeinsame Verantwortung und moralische Pflicht": Abschlussbericht zu den Zahlungen der Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007). For an English description of the program, see Günter Saathoff, et al., eds., *The German Compensation Program for Forced Labor: Practice and Experiences* (Berlin: Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft, 2017).

Also, the relationship between German society on the one hand, and POWs and forced laborers on the other, has to be scrutinized further. Obviously, this is a methodological challenge. Let me just give one example: The Stalag VII b, located in Memmingen, which by comparison with other POW camps was relatively small, still had no less than 800 satellites, i.e. work assignments and living quarters for its inmates, spread all over southern Upper Bavaria and Swabia, with differing conditions, and POWs from several nations. Even an ambitious researcher could not cover these 800 branch camps or work sites exhaustively.

Another point that still needs clarification is the childcare facilities for forced laborers (*Ausländerkinderpflegestätten)* and the inhuman treatment of children in their care. Apart from a pioneering study by Bernhild Vögel,[77] not many of these children's homes have received scholarly attention.[78] Considering that by 1944, about one third of the 5.7 million civilian foreign workers were women, and the majority of them of childbearing age and without access to contraceptives, the extent of the known children's homes (and their frequently lethal "care" for the Soviet and Polish children in their hands) is pitifully low; for some regions no such homes are known at all. Initial investigations by Allied teams ceased in the early post-war years and were only rarely continued by West German prosecutors.

Other issues include the long-term effects of deportation, displacement, and forced labor. Nobody who reads acclaimed German author Natascha Wodin's childhood memoir (e.g.) can be in doubt about the long-lasting consequences of the uprooting of forced laborers from Eastern Europe and their inability to grow roots in German post-war society.[79] Wodin describes most movingly how the lives of her parents, both deported from Ukraine as youngsters, disintegrated despite their efforts at settling into a normal life. This shows that it would be well worthwhile to study the after-effects of displacement and forced labor on the first and second generations, and the meaning attributed to the experience, or its commemoration. In fact, commemoration seems to be very difficult: while concentration camp memorials exist, the majority of sites of forced labor camps, *Ostarbeiter*- and *Fremdarbeiterlager*, are gone forever, with only a handful of original remnants surviving until today, as the relics of former barracks in Berlin-

77 Bernhild Vögel, *Entbindungsheim für Ostarbeiterinnen: Braunschweig, Broitzemer Straße 200* (Hamburg: Hamburger Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts, 1989).

78 A forthcoming dissertation by Marcel Brüntrup deals with the *Ausländerkinderpflegeheime*. See also Marcel Brüntrup, *Verbrechen und Erinnerung. Das Ausländerkinderpflegeheim des Volkswagenwerks* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2019).

79 Natascha Wodin, *Sie kam aus Mariupol* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2017).

Oberschöneweide or Munich-Neuaubing testify.[80] National memorials commemorate many groups of victims of National Socialist violence, but there is no memorial for the "unknown" forced laborer, which points to the fact that the criminal aspect of this phenomenon still awaits recognition.[81]

Forced laborers became Displaced Persons after liberation. The history of the Displaced Persons (DPs) in post-war Germany and Austria also came late to research. Here it was Wolfgang Jacobmeyer's study *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum heimatlosen Ausländer: Die Displaced Persons in Westdeutschland 1945–1951 [From Forced Laborer to Stateless Foreigner: Displaced Persons in West Germany, 1945–1951]*,[82] published in 1985, which kickstarted research.

By the end of the Second World War, seven to nine million people had been uprooted and become homeless, most of them former forced laborers, POWs, or concentration camp prisoners. They were in a peculiar situation: on the one hand, now the Displaced Persons were on the side of the victors, and some felt entitled to take revenge on the defeated Germans. On the other hand, those who stayed on in Germany were once again pushed to the margins of society. For most, the time as a Displaced Person was very limited. Nearly 80 percent of the West European deportees to Germany were repatriated by September 1945, and a large segment of the Polish Displaced Persons community returned home as well. By the end of the year 1945, over six million people had left Germany and were back in their homelands. About one and a half million to two million people could not or did not want to return to their countries of origin. Soviet forced laborers were reluctant to return, as they were compelled to prove their loyalty to the Soviet Union or risk being sent to Gulags as alleged collaborators. One group of Displaced Persons lingered in West Germany, as their plight was particularly severe: Jewish survivors of the Holocaust.[83] For them, the Americans established separate DP camps, the large ones located in Föhrenwald, Feldafing, and Landsberg am Lech, which was truly ironic inasmuch as Upper Bavaria, where the NSDAP once had originated, turned into a vibrant Jewish community during the early post-war years. Relationships between DPs, American officials, and local in-

80 Das Lager in Neuaubing, accessed May 21, 2024, https://www.nsdoku.de/erinnerungsort-neuaubing/das-lager-in-neuaubing; Dokumentationszentrum NS-Zwangsarbeit, accessed May 21, 2024, https://www.ns-zwangsarbeit.de/home/.

81 Mainly efforts of the *Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft*, and various projects financed by them safeguard the commemoration of the plight of the forced laborers.

82 Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum heimatlosen Ausländer: Die Displaced Persons in Westdeutschland 1945–1951* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1985).

83 For Jewish DPs, see Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

habitants tended not to be free of friction. The Jewish DPs were stuck in several ways: They could not return to countries behind the Iron Curtain, where their families had been murdered and their homes re-possessed, and where antisemitism was still rampant. An immigration to Palestine, still a British mandate territory, was difficult, too, and a new life in the US, Canada, or Australia required preparation, applications, and contacts. For quite a few of them, the status of a stateless and homeless foreigner prevailed for many years. It would be worth researching how this shaped a collective identity of DPs with special needs and demands. The course and aftermath of wars in the 20th and 21st centuries will have to include research on forced migration, repatriation, and resettlement.

Iris Helbing

Forced Migration, Germanization and Repatriation: Abducted Polish Children in the Care of UNRRA in the British Occupation Zone

After the end of the Second World War—according to Allied estimates—over 310,000 children under the age of 14 were among the group of Displaced Persons (DPs). This includes thousands of Polish children and young people who were forcibly deported from their homeland in order to be 'Germanized' as part of Hitler's racial ideological policies.[1] During the Second World War, the Germanization policy of the National Socialists aimed to "upgrade" the German people in numbers and to decimate the population of the country of origin, in this case Poland. This forced migration had an impact on the Polish state. After 1945, members of certain age cohorts that were urgently needed to build a new, socialist state were lacking. However, the abducted children and young people either disappeared into German-majority society through a successful Germanization process or ended up in third countries, especially Australia and the USA, through the IRO resettlement program. Very few children and young people returned to their homeland after 1945.

Organized Forced Migration of Polish Children and Young People

Geographically, the Germanization campaigns were concentrated on the Warthegau province and particularly on the cities of Posen (Poznań) and, above all, Litzmannstadt (Łódż), where the central control points of the Germanization campaign involving Polish children were located.[2]

The organized abduction and re-education of these sections of the population, which were considered "racially valuable" on the basis of the "people's list" com-

1 Care and Protection of Unaccompanied Children in Enemy Territory, S-400–4-3, United Nations Archives (hereafter as UNA).

2 Ines Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität: Die gewaltsame „Eindeutschung" von polnischen Kindern in der NS-Zeit* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010), 78.

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piled by the National Socialists, was not only about increasing or decreasing the numbers of entire nations, but also about hitting the enemy demographically at its most sensitive point with this variant of population policy. The National Socialist People's Welfare (*Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt, NSV*) and *Lebensborn e.V.* played particularly prominent roles in this. The main task of both institutions was the Germanization of Polish families and children, taking "racial" criteria into account, as well as the weakening of a supposedly inferior people by robbing it of its future generations and thus calling it into question politically and culturally.[3] In this sense, occupied Poland was, according to Ines Hopfer-Pfister, "like an experimental field for the power-political plans of the German Reich."[4]

Beginning in the fall of 1940, the starting point for the campaign for the systematic abduction of Polish children was the Łódź (Litzmannstadt) area, where the investigative procedures for checking the ability to be "Germanized" were tested.[5] Similar actions to those tried out in Poland also took place in other occupied European countries, such as the Netherlands and Czechoslovakia, in the subsequent years of Nazi rule. In 1942, Lebensborn e.V. began the forced deportation of these children for the purpose of Germanization.[6] The abducted children and young people experienced the loss of their parents and foster parents, their social environment and their identity. At first they were forced to forget their Polish origins and only learned when they later returned to Poland that they were actually Polish, not German, citizens. The repeated forced relocation and removal from familiar surroundings and the acclimatization to a new culture psychologically overwhelmed most children and young people. The organized abductions focused primarily on children from Polish orphanages and from (foster) families who received no protection from their families and were deemed "suitable" on the basis of the German people's list.

Care and Repatriation After the End of the War

> It is the Polish Youth, however, who are the most deprived. Anything we can do for them is to the good. Thousands of them brought into Germany as Slave-laborers have lost their families, their education, their chance at learning trades, their self-respect and often their spiritual values. Almost adult they need guidance in almost every phase of their lives. The men-

3 Georg Lilienthal, *Der „Lebensborn e.V.": Ein Instrument nationalsozialistischer Rassenpolitik* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2003), 195.
4 Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität*, 31ff.
5 Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität*, 32.
6 Lilienthal, *Lebensborn*, 207.

> tal vacuum and moral neglect fostered by the Germans for these youngsters is one of the most diabolical that happened in these last years.[7]

After the liberation of Germany from National Socialist rule, the Allies and employees of international aid organizations came into contact with the children and young people who had been deported to Germany from occupied Poland and who had been taken from their home countries by the National Socialists as part of their Germanization and forced labor policy.[8] In the summer of 1945, the extent of the deportation of Polish children and young people was not yet known. The Allied military personnel and the aid workers did not know which institutions were involved in the organized abductions.

The activities of *Lebensborn e.V.* in the occupied countries of Europe began after the invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, and were closely linked to euthanasia campaigns against children in the autumn of 1939, the systematic killing of the Jewish population, and from 1941 onwards to the Holocaust in the extermination and concentration camps. Starting in the Fall of 1939, thousands of children in the German Reich were murdered because they were mentally or physically disabled. About a year later, starting in the fall of 1940, thousands of children were deported from the "incorporated areas" of occupied Poland to the German Reich because, according to the People's List, they were considered "racially valuable." The murder and preservation of these groups of abducted children sometimes took place in the same facilities and were mutually dependent: In one case, several hundred children who were considered "psychopathic" were murdered to make room for "valuable Aryan" offspring in order to misuse institutions for Germanization purposes.[9]

After the end of the war, the world aid organization United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), together with the Polish Red Cross

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7 Einschätzung des Child Welfare Specialist aus der Region Hannover, Child Search Reports 1946, S-408–27-4, UNA.

8 In general, it is very difficult to give exact figures for Polish children or repatriations. The sources are not reliable in this regard. In most cases, absolute figures for the zones are missing. This was partly because the reports of the UNRRA teams contradicted each other in relation to statistics and partly because the search process only really got underway in 1946 and the statistics therefore had to be constantly modified. The figure of 200,000 abducted children and young people is still sometimes mentioned in documentaries or popular science books today. More recent estimates assume that between 20,000 and 50,000 children fell victim to the violent Germanization policy of the National Socialists. See Hopfer, *Geraubte Identität*, 222 and Tara Zahra, *Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe´s Families after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 201. Hopfer assumes at least 20,000 children, Zahra 20,000 to 50,000.

9 Childrens Homes in Silesia and Poland, February 28, 1946, Ordner CSB 9. ITS/ARCH/HIST, Arolsen Archives (hereafter as AA).

(Polski Czerwony Krzyż, PCK), tried to find and repatriate these children and young people, i.e. to return them to their homeland. That was not easy because, for example, after Lebensborn e.V. took over the children, the association falsified the children's names. Dates and places of birth were also falsified, and memories of the birth parents were erased through the deliberate spreading of lies about the parents, as well as through psychological terror and violence. Knowledge of the Nazi crimes against Polish children only leaked out in 1946, when the UNRRA was able to interview children from the Displaced Persons camps and came into contact with Polish liaison officers and employees of the PCK; the Nuremberg trials revealed further details. It was not until the spring of 1946 that UNRRA began to specifically search for Polish children in German institutions and families where they were identified as victims of Nazi abduction.

Unaccompanied Polish minors in Postwar Germany

One of the first initiatives to care for Polish children in the British occupied zone came from the Polish Association in Lübeck. As early as the summer of 1945, the Polish Association, whose function or goals of action are not defined in detail in the documents, looked for a location for a children's home in which Polish children could recover.[10] The Polish Association refurbished two hotels in Travemünde for the establishment of the house, which were located directly on the beach. In the summer of 1945, the UNRRA took over responsibility for the house and asked for assistance from a staff member from the British aid organization Save the Children Fund. The first report from this facility is dated to August 1945. The staff were very surprised by the orderly behavior of the children. They had probably expected a group of completely demoralized teenagers and traumatized children, but the children's polite behavior and the fact that not a single child was a bedwetter were both mentioned. Regarding the participants in the first "recreational holiday," it should be mentioned that they were not unaccompanied children, but rather Polish children who lived with their parents as Displaced Persons in the British zone. The parents of these children struggled with the fact that their children were invited to this summer camp, and in some cases they forbade them from taking part for fear of losing their children entirely.

10 Childrens Centres, Schleswig-Holstein Region, Polish Childrens Homes, March 24, 1947, S-407–30-5, UNA.

Conversely, in the fall of 1945, staff discovered that the majority of the children then in the home were actually unaccompanied children or orphans.[11] The home management was now forced to change its "summer camp character." These children could no longer be sent back after the end of their vacation, but were to be permanently housed in what was then the province of Schleswig-Holstein. Most of these unaccompanied Polish children came from German families and institutions. The children were characterized as being rather difficult, according to a report by UNRRA's child welfare officer. At the beginning of 1946, a total of around 60 children between the ages of a few months and 15 years were staying at the facility. They were accommodated in rooms that they shared with two to six other children, depending on the size of the room. The UNRRA representative provided support for the children with clothing and other necessary items. At this time, employees of the Save the Children Fund, the British Red Cross, and Polish teachers as well as a priest were working and managing the home. UNRRA's sole function was to inspect the home and provide assistance. But UNRRA was not represented in the home itself.[12]

In the spring of 1946 the facility moved to Rohlstorf into a manor house on the lake that was built in 1912 and was relatively modern.[13] Another home for Polish children was established in Müssen, five kilometers away. Both facilities were known as the Polish Children's Center and are listed in UNRRA files as the Rohlstorf Children's Center. 160 children and young people could be accommodated there, 90 in Rohlstorf and 70 in Müssen.[14] In the summer of 1946, a total of 85 children were there, the youngest born at the end of May 1946, the oldest teenager born in September 1927.[15] For some children, their date of birth was not clear, and in some cases only the year of birth was known. The houses were located on Lake Wardersee and were equipped with sanitary facilities, a kitchen, and a dining room. The children in Rohlstorf had enough space to play inside and outside. But there was a lack of suitable furniture for small children in Rohlstorf and of sufficient utensils for the kitchen and school.[16] The food rations from UNRRA and supplies from the German authorities were also not sufficient, and

11 Childrens Centres, Schleswig-Holstein Region, Polish Childrens Homes, March 24, 1947, S-407–30-5, UNA.

12 Report from Childrens Home Travemunde, January 25, 1946, S-407–27.7, UNA.

13 Since 1962 the house has been a boarding school.

14 Progress Report for July and August, Polish Childrens Home Rohlstorf, S-407–27-7, UNA.

15 Rohlstorf. List of Children admitted in July and August 1946, S-407–27-7, UNA.

16 Report Childrens Centre Rolsdorf-Mussen, April 4, 1946, S-407–27-7, UNA.

they had to rely on aid from the British and Polish Red Cross and other aid organizations.[17] This critical condition, especially in connection with the feeding of infants, remained a constant problem. In addition, deliveries of food from the Polish Red Cross stopped in the summer of 1946.[18]

Theoretically, the house in Rohlstorf accommodated children up to the age of ten, while the older children were housed in Müssen. Those children who were not yet able to follow the Polish lessons in Müssen came to Rohlstorf at short notice to develop a routine in their native language.[19] For the further development of young people, vocational courses were to be offered in the future, aimed to give them meaningful employment. Housekeeping and handicraft classes, which had already been proposed in Travemünde, would be offered to the girls. The focus on the domestic sphere in educational opportunities for girls,[20] which was suggested by the UNRRA staff member, was consistent with UNRRA's goals at the time, which aimed to prepare girls for their traditional roles as wives and mothers. Furthermore, the organization of a scout group and thus tools and skills for self-management were to be cultivated, as well as increasing the number of staff, as the employees urgently needed help due to high levels of exhaustion.[21]

In general, great importance was attached to sticking to timetables and taking part in joint activities. These structures within the small communities in the children's centers helped the children and young people to achieve inner stability and to identify themselves as part of a larger group. For the management of the home, setting up rules made the work process easier and encouraged the children to take on responsibility. The principle of self-administration, which was not yet applicable in Rohlstorf due to the age structure of the children, proved successful in Müssen. There the home director appointed a boy to be in charge of the house, with a girl appointed the boy's deputy. The two of them were responsible for keeping the house tidy and for matters involving the small children. Then, to settle minor disputes, there were three judges, each of whom had a deputy, a boy or a girl who took responsibility for the library, a boy or a girl who wrote a chronicle of the house, a child who was responsible for the mail, both the incoming and outgoing mail and the delivery of so-called "thank you letters," and a girl and a

17 Report Polish Childrens Home Rohlsdorf, May 6, 1946, S-407–27-7, UNA.

18 Progress Report for July and August, Polish Childrens Home Rohlstorf, S-407–27-7, UNA.

19 Childrens Centres, Schleswig-Holstein Region, Polish Children's Homes, March 24, 1947, S-407–30-5, UNA.

20 Zahra, *Lost Children*, 110.

21 Visit to Polish Childrens Centre Rolsdorf/Mussen, March 1946, S-0407-27–7, UNA.

boy who were supposed to ensure peace and quiet in the respective corridors or in the rooms and during meals.[22]

This principle of self-government introduced in Müssen is reminiscent of Janusz Korczak's pedagogical approaches in his "House of Orphans" set up in Poland. Korczak, a doctor and educator, was born Henryk Goldszmit in Warsaw in 1878 and came from an educated and wealthy Jewish family.[23] In 1942, the children of the orphanage he set up and ran were deported to the Treblinka extermination camp. Korczak accompanied his protégés to the extermination camp and died with them there. His reformist educational approaches were popular in Poland at that time and his pedagogy, which emphasized personal responsibility and self-management early on, probably influenced the employees at the Müssen children's center, who were almost exclusively qualified in the field of education, care, and upbringing and came from Poland as DPs.[24] Order and responsibility for certain things were central aspects in the orphanage Korczak ran, as was self-government in the form of a "children's republic" and its own "jurisdiction" controlled by children themselves and courts staffed by children who punished offenses and settled conflicts that arose.[25] Unfortunately, no more is known about the self-administration of the Müssen children's center, but it can be assumed that educational reform approaches were also used in this home to help the young people and children take responsibility for their lives, an approach that supported UNRRA in its desire to turn the occupants, a group of people greatly affected early in life by the National Socialist regime and beholden to a unique kind of violence, into self-responsible people who would be able to live a self-determined, structured life in the future.

Leisure activities and school education in the institutions also emphasized introducing children and young people to Polish, i.e. to their own native language and culture, which they had lost due to deportation and National Socialist politics. The children were first introduced to Polish folk songs and dances as well as small plays, which were also presented as part of community life and during visits.[26] In June 1946, for example, the young people from Müssen performed "Snow White" on the occasion of a visit by representatives of the military government and UNRRA.[27]

22 Report Polish Childrens Home Rohlsdorf, May 6, 1946, S-407–27-7, UNA.
23 Kees Waaldijk, *Janusz Korczak: Vom klein sein und groß werden* (Weinheim: Beltz, 2002), 16.
24 Report Polish Childrens Home Rohlsdorf, May 6, 1946, S-407–27-7, UNA.
25 Waaldijk, *Janusz Korczak*, 50ff.
26 Report Polish Childrens Home Rohlsdorf, May 6, 1946, S-407–27-7, UNA.
27 Progress Report for June, Polish Childrens Home Rohlstorf, S-407–27-7, UNA.

In contrast to the more playful teaching of Polish culture through dance and singing, it was considerably more difficult to teach the children in a targeted manner. Their level of education was very low and the children no longer had any knowledge of Polish. Neither in Müssen nor Rohlstorf could the lessons be carried out according to normal standards, but had to be individually adapted to the needs of the children. In addition to teaching elementary subjects in kindergarten and school, the children and young people were also taught housekeeping and crafts and learned sewing, knitting, carving, and gardening. Home economics, basket weaving, leather processing, and the basics of mechanics were taught, as were physical education and gymnastics, all of which were viewed as suitable measures for helping these children rehabilitate.[28] For older girls in Müssen there were vocational classes available in sewing, cooking, and baby care, while boys had the opportunity to be trained in mechanics and gardening.[29] The children and young people went on excursions in their free time and on the weekends. This didn't just include visiting each other and exploring nature, but also cultural encounters, such as steamboat trips, visiting the German circus and the Baltic circus of the UNRRA in Lübeck, trips to the cinema,[30] visiting the Hamburg planetarium and the zoo, and visiting the caves in Bad Segeberg.[31]

Since all the children and young people in the two homes were Catholic, Catholic doctrine was taught twice a week. A Catholic priest came to the two homes on special occasions and Sunday services.[32]

During their stay in Rohlstorf and Müssen, the children and young people were under constant psychological observation by the nurses and teachers. Every detail about the children's behavior was to be documented.[33] The facilities received support from an Estonian and a Latvian psychologist and Latvian students who developed specific programs for different groups. The proposed programs were to be carried out by those teachers who seemed most suited to them.[34]

Measures taken by individual employees were perceived as counterproductive, such as the work of "Miss A" in the Rohlstorf children's center, who spoke German to the children contrary to regulations and is also said to have kept them from attending classes. The UNRRA punished such behavior and decided not to

28 Report Polish Childrens Home Rohlsdorf, May 6, 1946, S-407–27-7, UNA.

29 Plan for Vocational Training, S-407–27-7, UNA.

30 Report Polish Childrens Home Rohlsdorf, May 6, 1946, S-407–27-7, UNA, New York; Progress Report for June, Polish Childrens Home Rohlstorf, S-407–27-7, UNA.

31 Progress Report for July and August, Polish Childrens Home Rohlstorf, S-407–27-7, UNA.

32 Report Polish Childrens Home Rohlsdorf, May 6, 1946, S-407–27-7, UNA.

33 Report Polish Childrens Home Rohlsdorf, May 6, 1946, S-407–27-7, UNA.

34 Report of UNRRA Regional Child Welfare Officer from July 25, 1946, S-0407-27–7, UNA.

cooperate with Miss A in the future. She was transferred to the children's center in Haffkrug, where she also appeared unpleasant and her behavior had to be monitored.[35] Apparently, the permanent shortage of staff meant that UNRRA often had to rely on German staff, especially for work in the kitchen and garden, and could not simply get rid of unpleasant staff. Falling back on German society to organize staff for the homes was not a problem when it came to gardening and kitchen work. Things became difficult when German women had to look after people considered "inferior" in National Socialist ideology; these people, viewed as second-class citizens, were those who would ultimately be exploited, mistreated, and eventually murdered during the Nazi era. The aim was to protect people of non-German origin from German racism. If a German employee stopped Polish children from classes and forced them to speak to her in German, this meant a continuation of National Socialist politics, which had to be prevented. Unfortunately, it is not clear from the documents, for instance, how long Miss A worked for UNRRA.

In August 1946, 75 children from Rohlstorf and Müssen were repatriated. At the same time, more children who were still found in the assembly centers came into the houses. The search for abducted Polish children in German facilities was far from complete. The teams found around 50 children in the area and brought them to Rohlstorf.[36] By the fall of 1946, most of the children in both facilities had been repatriated. The unaccompanied children who were still in the home came to the coast in Haffkrug.[37] The facility was then used for Latvian children between the ages of five and ten.[38]

The children's center in Haffkrug, located directly on the Baltic Sea shore, was to be opened on July 1, 1946 as the children's recreation home of the newly founded consumer cooperative "Production," authorized and founded by the British military authorities.[39] After the war, the building was used as a hospital for Polish DPs and POWX (former Prisoners of War).[40] Since there were only a few sick Poles left in the home in the summer of 1946, the UNRRA decided to continue using the house as a holiday home for around 90 Polish children from the DP

35 Report on Visitung Haffkrug, July 3, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.

36 Monthly Welfare Report, August 28, 1946, S-408–11-8, UNA.

37 Childrens Centers, Schleswig-Holstein Region, Polish Childrens Homes, March 24, 1947, S-407–30-5, UNA.

38 Childrens Homes in British Zone, Lemgo, May 15, 1947, S-407–23-4, UNA.

39 Today the house is a retirement home. The home's website, http://www.pro-haffkrug.de/Geschichte.htm, at least mentions that the house was confiscated by the UNRRA in 1945. The Rohlstorf boarding school's homepage does not refer to the post-war period.

40 Letter to Miss Warszavjiak, Childrens Welfare Officer, UNRRA Headquarter, Lubeck, June 7, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.

camps in the cities of Schleswig, Lübeck, and Hamburg. During a fourteen-day stay, they were able to take part in sports and games and have fun on the beach, in the forest, or on the playground.[41] The newly founded cooperative tried to prevent the opening of the children's center in June 1946. In a letter to UNRRA representative Warszavjiak, they asked that the home be left to the cooperative and that they refrain from using the building any further.[42] However, this request was not granted by the UNRRA.

The first children and staff arrived at the home at the beginning of July 1946. A service took place on July 7, 1946, to which the parents of the children housed there were also invited and expressed their gratitude for the facility.[43] The children took part in competitions or games where they could win sweets. Other activities included visiting the children in Klingberg, excursions, exploring nature, sewing traditional Polish costumes from old German flags, and rehearsing singing and dancing for the farewell party on the last evening of the stay.[44] On Saturdays, flowers were picked and wreaths were made to decorate the space made available for Sunday services. The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) organized film screenings for the children.[45] It is nothing unusual that the YMCA, an American organization, became active in the British occupied zone. UNRRA exchanged experienced employees, especially social workers, and the various aid organizations also rotated between the three western occupation zones.

The children's stays had a positive impact on their health: Most children experienced an improvement in health and an increase in weight.[46] In the period from July to October 1946, 555 children were able to relax and go on vacation in the home, of which 243 were boys and 312 girls.[47] In November it was converted into a home for unaccompanied children; they were to be repatriated there, and another 50 children were to spend the winter there.[48] The situation in winter was drastically different from that in summer. The home quickly became overcrowded. This resulted in an acute lack of space and water for the residents. The

41 UNRRA Rest Childrens Home, Haffkrug, Welfare Report, July 31, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.

42 Letter to Miss Warszavjiak, Childrens Welfare Officer, UNRRA Headquarter, Lubeck, June 7, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.

43 Report on Visit at Haffkrug, July 6-7, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.

44 UNRRA Rest Childrens Home, Haffkrug, Welfare Report, July 31, 1946; Monthly Narrative Report, September, 20, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.

45 Monthly Narrative Report, September 20, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.

46 UNRRA Rest Childrens Home, Haffkrug, Welfare Report, July 31, 1946; Monthly Narrative Report, September 20, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.

47 List of Children being Sent to our Rest Home for Recreation, October 12, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.

48 Monthly Report, October 18, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.

central heating didn't work because there wasn't enough fuel and it was extremely cold.[49]

In December 1946, 31 children from the island of Wangerooge came to Haffkrug, all of whom were malnourished. Because of their poor condition, they could not be repatriated and would first be nursed back to health for the next two months. The increasing number of repatriations led to the resident doctor also returning to his homeland. Three Polish teachers were hired for Haffkrug in his stead.[50] Furthermore, 27 Polish DPs and former POWs worked as teachers, trainers, nurses, cooks, and cleaning women in the home, a Lithuanian as a driver and a Latvian as a translator, as well as two Russian women as auxiliary nurses. A total of 16 Germans were employed in the household.[51] During inspections of the home, the warm atmosphere emanating from the staff and the employed DPs was praised. The position of the home manager, a doctor, and a nurse were provided by the Save the Children Fund. Despite the adversity caused by the lack of petrol during the winter, in the spring of 1947 it was advised that the home should be kept because of its magnificent location and associated health benefits.[52] In the summer of 1947, there were in addition to the 46 Polish children twenty Russian, four Czech, two Finnish, and one Belgian child in the home.[53] The home probably continued to operate until 1948. From October onwards, the Hamburg consumer cooperative "Production" took it over and carried on using it as a children's rest home.

Conflicts Between the Polish Organizations and UNRRA

In other places in the British occupation zone, initiatives to establish homes for Polish DP children also came from Poles staying in the region. In Seesen, money was collected to build a children's home before UNRRA or the PCK came to the region. The thrust behind this came from Dr. Lech, who worked on site as superintendent of the Polish hospital.[54] Dr. Lech studied medicine before the war but was unable to finish his studies. After his liberation from a concentration camp

49 Heating of Children's Home Haffkrug, January 10, 1947, S-407 -29-4, UNA.
50 Report on Haffkrug Childrens Home, December 19, 1946, S-407–29-4, UNA.
51 Monthly Statistic and Narrative Report, March 15, 1947, S-407–29-4, UNA.
52 Report on Haffkrug Childrens Home, April 12, 1947, S-409–7-13, UNA.
53 Monthly Statistic and Narrative Report, March 15, 1947, S-407–29-4, UNA.
54 Polski Czerwony Krzyż, Childrens Home at Seesen, January 31, 1947, S-409–7-15, UNA.

in the region, he first organized the construction of a hospital for Polish DPs and then devoted himself to building the children's home.[55] The British occupation authorities requisitioned a building, which they made available to Dr. Lech and in which approximately 35 children could be accommodated. The costs for the equipment were met with donations; the volunteers did not accept any payment. On June 1, 1946, the home in the Harz Mountains was built for malnourished and sick children of DPs who were housed in the DP camps near Seesen. The wish of Dr. Lech was that the children could relax in the house. After the first Polish orphan arrived in the house in July 1945, Dr. Lech decided to use the house as an orphanage and sent the other children back to their parents. They could, however, receive additional meals or take part in classes at Seesen House.[56] In the same month, Wanda Lech became director of the facility. In September 1945 the first contacts were made between UNRRA and Dr. Lech. UNRRA offered to send some of the orphans to Switzerland for treatment. The local Polish committee rejected this suggestion, while the older children were left to decide for themselves. But regarding the younger children who had only recently come into the institution's care, Dr. Lech and his employees felt responsible and didn't want to leave them with strangers.[57]

When searching for Polish children in the region, Dr. Lech helped the responsible UNRRA officer. At that time, UNRRA had no success in locating children. But Dr. Lech was able to help with information concerning 70 unaccompanied children in the Braunschweig region. Appropriate lists of children were handed over to UNRRA.[58] As the search for children continued, UNRRA reached an agreement with Dr. Lech stipulating that the Polish unaccompanied children found would be brought to the house in Seesen and UNRRA would provide food rations. Before UNRRA allocated the DP rations, the mayor of Seesen was responsible for supplying the house with food. From January 1946, the London PCK began to supply the home with food, clothing, and medicine and to pay the staff. After the London section was no longer allowed to operate in the British zone, the Warsaw PRK took over this job and was responsible for the facility.[59] According to the annual report of the Warsaw PCK, after taking it over, it was responsible for hiring and paying the pro-repatriation staff. The atmosphere in Seesen is said to have encouraged repatriation, and the children there were raised in the "national

55 Polish Childrens Home Seesen, September 8, 1945, S-409–7-15, UNA.
56 Polski Czerwony Krzyż, Childrens Home at Seesen, January 31, 1947, S-409–7-15, UNA.
57 Polish Childrens Home Seesen, September 8, 1945, S-409–7-15, UNA.
58 Polish Childrens Home Seesen, September 8, 1945, S-409–7-15, UNA.
59 Polski Czerwony Krzyż, Childrens Home at Seesen, January 31, 1947, S-409–7-15, UNA.

spirit."[60] UNRRA was to continue to supply the home with DP food rations and only act as an intermediary between the PRK and the military authorities. The fact that UNRRA did not want to be reduced to this position will be explained elsewhere. The largest facility for babies and toddlers in the Hanover region was the Auermühle children's home, with places for up to a hundred children and associated staff. The facility was located in the Auermühle manor on the Lüneburg Heath and was opened as a DP children's home in January 1946.[61] The estate was built at the beginning of the 20th century on behalf of Fritz Beindorff, the owner of Pelikan, the well-known stationery company. In addition to the three-story castle-like villa, there were several smaller outbuildings on the 1,000-hectare property that were intended for the Beindorff family's staff.[62]

In September 1945, a German doctor presented herself to the local military authorities and reported that she was taking care of Dutch babies in the villa and was told by the German authorities that she should vacate the villa because they wanted to accommodate former prisoners of war there.[63] The 25 Dutch teenagers and children were evacuated from Nijmegen and Arnhem in the summer of 1944, presumably to be used as "human capital" by the National Socialists.[64]

UNRRA and the military authorities thwarted the district administrator's plans and expanded the villa into a large children's center in December 1945.[65] Ms. Jurzynska, a Polish woman from Warsaw, took over its management. UNRRA's search operations for foreign children in the Hanover region were in full swing in the summer of 1946 and brought found children from eight nations to Auermühle. While searching for children, UNRRA staff learned more about the "value" ascribed to a foreign child. A German woman wanted to sell a child that the search team found with her to UNRRA for a little coffee. Another woman tried to get rid of a baby by offering two summer dresses to anyone who would be willing to take the child.[66]

When the children were admitted, Ms. Jurzynska discovered that some of these children had already had to change institutions several times. The Polish children in particular were in very bad condition. The younger children were afraid of adults and were behind in their physical and mental development.

60 Annual Report Polski Czerwony Krzyż 1946, 284/228, Archiwum Akt Nowych (hereafter as AAN).

61 Special Report on Auermühle Childrens Home, August 1946, S-408–21-6, UNA.

62 Special Report on Auermühle Childrens Home, August 1946, S-408–21-6, UNA.

63 Division of Public Information, UNRRA, British Zone, August 10, 1946, S-410–3-6, UNA

64 Division of Public Information, UNRRA, British Zone, August 10, 1946, S-410–3-6, UNA.

65 Special Report on Auermühle Childrens Home, August 1946, S-408–21-6, UNA.

66 Division of Public Information, UNRRA, British Zone, August 10, 1946, S-410–3-6, UNA.

> When the children came to Auermühle, they did not know how to be clean. They were quite wild, with the faces of old people who had been in a concentration camp. They couldn't walk properly and, although they were between the ages of 2 or 5, very few could speak at all.[67]

In July 1946, the Canadian Irene Page, one of the few child-search experts in the British zone, was tasked with determining the identity of the children and making arrangements for repatriation or emigration. Known problems arose in confirming their identities, namely because of the children's memories and the fact that most of the relevant documents had been destroyed. In order to avoid the children being subjected to further transfers from one home to another, Irene Page tried to make Auermühle the last place of residence until the children were repatriated to their homelands or emigrated.[68]

Since Auermühle was a facility for small children, the home's management repeatedly reached the limits of what was possible. For around 80 small children, appropriate staff, sufficient food rations for the children's needs, toys, and adequate medical care were needed. But all of this remained an ongoing problem in 1946, and the lack of necessary items such as toys, clothing, and suitable personnel could not be mitigated.

Despite repeated requests for improvements, the sanitary facilities were not sufficient for the number of children. There was also a lack of qualified staff in this facility. Attempts to find personnel among the DPs in the nearby DP camps were unsuccessful, as very few were willing to leave their location. In addition, the furnishings of the rooms for the staff and the food were not inviting. Although it was common for Germans to work in the facilities, in most cases they were employed in the kitchen or for gardening work. They tried to avoid having direct contact with the children. But due to the lack of staff, German nurses had to be used in Auermühle. Difficulties quickly arose between UNRRA and the German staff, as some of the Germans had to be dismissed for theft.[69] There were also difficulties between the German and Polish personnel. A German Red Cross sister made no secret of the fact that she didn't like Poland. She explained her dislike under the pretext that her father had been killed there.[70] Another German nurse openly expressed her antipathy towards a Polish employee. She was fired after two months, not only because of her dislike of the Polish woman, but also because she did her job poorly, couldn't deal with children, and stole things from the facility.[71] Other examples show that

67 Division of Public Information, UNRRA, British Zone, August 10, 1946, S-410–3-6, UNA.
68 Division of Public Information, UNRRA, British Zone, August 10, 1946, S-410–3-6, UNA.
69 Special Report on Auermühle Childrens Home, August 1946, S-408–21-6, UNA.
70 Auermühle Childrens Home, March 25, 1946, S-409–7-8, UNA.
71 Auermühle Childrens Home, March 25, 1946, S-409–7-8, UNA.

cooperation between Germans and Poles was harmonious. A fifteen-year-old Polish girl from a nearby DP camp worked in Auermühle. She cried every day, but voluntarily gave up attending classes in the DP camp to be with other Polish young people. She got along very well with her German colleagues and was popular with them.[72] Despite everything, it was clear to UNRRA that she should not be in Auermühle, but rather in her own camp and the school there so as to be part of the rapid process of repatriation and renationalization.

In order to avoid having the children exposed to poorly trained and probably equally bad-tempered staff, the accommodation and leisure program for the staff was to be improved in the future and adequate UNRRA nurses were needed to work in Auermühle.[73]

The supply of food, suitable clothing, and toys for the children remained a problem. Reports from other facilities show that this was not limited to Auermühle. The difference with the facility in Auermühle is that here a consistent attempt was made to satisfy the staff in order to ensure that frustrations were not taken out on the children. To ensure that the staff did not help themselves to the children's food rations, those in charge of the home ensured that the staff's rations were increased.[74]

Although Polish children made up the majority in the home, German was spoken in Auermühle. There is no information in the files about specific educational programs aimed at teaching children their native language, unlike in the reports from some other children's centers. It can be assumed that the lack of staff and the disputes among them meant that the children in Auermühle were looked after without a focus on renationalization, as anything else would have overwhelmed the staff. In comparison to the facilities described previously, the initiative to set up a children's center in Auermühle did not come from the Polish side, but rather a German doctor brought the facility to the attention of the military authorities.

72 Auermühle Childrens Home, March 25, 1946, S-409–7-8, UNA.
73 Special Report on Auermühle Childrens Home, August 1946, S-408–21-6, UNA.
74 Auermühle Childrens Home, March 25, 1946, S-409–7-8, UNA.

Pregnancies, Abortion, and Children: Family Policy in an UNRRA Hospital

As previously mentioned, UNRRA social workers found some Polish babies and children who had been neglected or abandoned by their mothers. It was not only rape that led to pregnancies and attempted abortions, which could be fatal for the woman as well, but also relationships with other forced laborers or with German men. Contraceptives were not available to DPs and did not fit into the Catholic social teaching for young girls and women. The high birth rate among Polish DPs noted for some camps is therefore not comparable to the "baby boom" among Jewish DPs that Atina Grossmann notes in her study "Jews, Allies and Germans." Among the Jewish DPs, children were seen as a visible sign that the National Socialists had failed to destroy the Jewish people. Jewish women, deprived of their femininity through imprisonment in concentration camps and often medical experiments performed on their bodies, were able to demonstrate their resilience through pregnancy.[75]

The majority of Polish young women and girls among the DPs were forced laborers and were not exposed to the racial ideology of the National Socialists to the same extent as the Jewish population of Europe. Young people got married in the DP camps, and there is good evidence of many weddings and baptisms in the camps. However, the pregnancies of Polish DPs were not a response to the Nazis' campaign of eliminating Jewish women, who were killed not only because they were Jewish but because they were women "who may carry and give birth to the next generation of Jews."[76] Polish DPs married and started families to signal a new beginning, a central motive for all survivors. Nevertheless, there were some mothers among Polish DPs who tried to get rid of their babies by any means possible.

One means of getting rid of pregnancies was illegal abortions, which both Jewish and Polish girls and young women had.[77] The military authorities and the UNRRA were aware that illegal abortions were carried out in the DP camps in Belsen and Fallingbostel, for example.[78] Lt. Col. Clemenson, Senior Health Officer of the British Military Government of the 30th Corps, therefore suggested building a home for young, pregnant women and mothers from the Hanover region,

75 Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Allies and Germans: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 189ff.

76 Grossmann, *Jews, Allies and Germans*, 202.

77 Loccum Home for Young Women and Babies, July 11, 1946, S-408–12-8, UNA.

78 Loccum Home for Young Women and Babies, July 11, 1946, S-408–12-8, UNA.

where these women could live and have their babies far from the influence of the older DPs who would persuade them to terminate their pregnancies and perform the abortions. Apparently, the need for such a facility was great, as a letter from UNRRA officer Irene Page states that the abortion rate was very high, although there were no statistics on this.[79] Certainly, the death rate associated with these illegal abortions was also high, as was the desperation of the young girls who felt they were in a hopeless situation. Col. Clemenson believed that many young unaccompanied girls found themselves in this situation. His wish was to help them out of their hopelessness and offer them alternatives to dangerous abortions. He asked UNRRA officer Miss Barton for help in implementing his plan. But Miss Barton was skeptical, because every DP camp had a medical ward, and at least in the prenatal area there were enough preventative care options. In terms of repatriation efforts, removing these young women from their families or national groups was counterproductive. Basically, it was the job of the relatives or the camp community to help and support these young women. For Miss Barton, there was no question of helping these young women, but the help should be embedded in camp life and work within the group. Removal from the camps and placement in a special home would amount to stigmatization.[80] Therefore, only selected cases that met certain criteria were earmarked for Loccum. These included:

- Married or unmarried women or girls who had no friends and were despised in their group for whatever reason
- Women who were at risk of being influenced by women who had abortions
- Women who might be tempted to abandon their children
- Women who needed help with childcare and household management and needed support.[81]

The home for young mothers and babies was housed in a rather small DP camp about six kilometers from Bad Rehburg. The facility, consisting of former barracks of the Loccum air base, was located in a small forest on the Loccum heath. Due to the location in the countryside, the young women were able to relax there and use the green spaces as a garden. Scout Team 106 was responsible for the home, and the staff was to be provided by qualified DPs. UNRRA later took over its management. The necessary medical care was provided by the Montgomery

79 Loccum Home for Young Women and Babies, July 11, 1946, S-408–12-8, UNA.
80 Loccum Home for Young Women and Babies, July 11, 1946, S-408–12-8, UNA.
81 Loccum Home for Young Women and Babies, July 11, 1946, S-408–12-8, UNA.

Hospital in Bad Rehburg, which was run by the British Red Cross. Infant and childcare methods were to follow established British best practices closely.[82]

Women could apply to be admitted to the home. Priority for admission was given to young girls, although women of any age and marital status could apply. Another admission criterion was that admitted women should be in need of special help. Close contact was maintained, particularly with the DP camp in Fallingbostel and the UNRRA medical staff there, and the first patients came from this camp in February 1946. With the repatriations carried out in the British zone in the summer of 1946 and the associated closure of DP camps, young pregnant women but also mothers with small children in particular applied to be admitted to Loccum, as the children's centers in particular were overcrowded. The experiences of the early days brought with it the realization that, despite initial skepticism, this home was urgently needed, but more for young mothers with children than for pregnant girls, as the children were at risk of being abandoned or neglected.[83] However, the women were not allowed to be brought to Loccum against their will; rather, they were advised to stay, but they had to make the decision themselves.[84]

This changed the target group and, in addition to the women already mentioned who were considered for accommodation in Loccum, there were also mothers with small children, for whom the following categories could be observed:[85]

- Risk of serious neglect of children or their abandonment due to camp issues, loneliness, ignorance
- Neglect or abandonment of children due to emotional instability
- Risk of neglect of one's own children due to a suspected mental deficiency.

By removing these girls and young women from the large camps, an attempt was made to limit illegal abortions and protect children from neglect. It is questionable whether the care in Loccum had any lasting effect on the future fate of the children and young women. In addition, they were among women who were in similar situations. Ultimately, however, these women and their children should also have been repatriated. Unfortunately, it is not possible to learn how they fared after they returned home and whether the rather isolated accommodation had any positive effects in terms of the care of their offspring.[86]

82 Loccum Home for Young Women and Babies, July 11, 1946, S-408–12-8, UNA.
83 Loccum Home for Young Women and Babies, July 11, 1946, S-408–12-8, UNA.
84 Recommendation Re Policy and Procedure for Loccum Home, July 13, 1946, S-408–12-8, UNA.
85 Recommendation Re Policy and Procedure for Loccum Home, July 13, 1946, S-408–12-8, UNA.
86 Loccum Home for Young Women and Babies, July 11, 1946, S-408–12-8, UNA.

Conclusion: The abduction of children and young people as an extreme case of forced migration

The main purpose of setting up the children's centers described here was to collect unaccompanied children and young people, eliminate the consequences of Germanization, and repatriate them. For some children from the large DP camps, such a stay was also an option if they were severely neglected or were in danger of being abandoned by their mothers. But the majority of Polish children and young people stayed in the large camps, together with their families or other accompanying persons. The identification of the children and young people with their Polish homeland was important, among other things, for a successful repatriation. Especially for the children who were forcibly Germanized, a successful return to Polish identity was a real challenge for the aid organization employees.

An attempt was made to renationalize the children and young people through numerous educational offerings in camps and children's centers. This process began in the established kindergartens and continued in various types of schools. Through the vocational training and courses offered, young people acquired professional qualifications, which in some cases led to young people wanting to increase their chances of being accepted into a resettlement program. Therefore, vocational training could also counteract the aims of repatriation projects.

Although UNRRA was responsible for establishing the centers and they were also subject to its further supervision, in most centers or homes it was members of other aid organizations, above all the PCK and smaller organizations set up by the DPs for self-help, which looked after the children. The process of renationalization was successful when Polish-speaking people or Polish DPs looked after the children in the children's centers. In some centers this could not be achieved, and German staff often had to help provide their care.

Even if some children's centers could not live up to the requirement for successful renationalization, the children's centers created social spaces in which to grieve or rehabilitate psychologically to some extent, an opportunity that was limited for the other Displaced Persons in the large DP camps.

In the British occupied zone, repatriation efforts in the education system were undermined by the influence of Polish opponents of repatriation. Often these were members or supporters of the Polish government in exile in Great Britain and former Polish soldiers who had achieved victory over Hitler's Germany fighting on the side of the British military.

Although the cooperation between the western occupying powers or UNRRA and the members of the new communist government in Warsaw was initially satisfactory, the first misunderstandings arose in the course of 1947. This was be-

cause Poland insisted that it had lost 200,000 children to National Socialist Germany, a number that could never be verified and had more of a propaganda value. Nevertheless, this number increased the pressure from Warsaw on the military government and aid organizations, as Poland demanded the repatriation of these children. However, lists with corresponding names from Poland were not published. Above all, the assumption of responsibility for the children and young people by the IRO, which replaced UNRRA in the summer of 1947, exacerbated the conflict, as the IRO tried to prevent the children and young people who did not want to return to their homeland from emigrating to another country. This was not in Poland's interest. The Polish state could not tolerate the decision not to repatriate a child, as keeping the children with German families would have meant the continuation of Hitler's and Himmler's Germanization policies. In addition, the will of a child or young person was subject to the collective. Everyone under the age of 18 should return to their homeland to rebuild the destroyed country and make their own contribution to leading Poland into a new, socialist order.

The influence of a stay in a children's center before repatriation was viewed as positive by everyone involved. The children who were repatriated before the winter of 1946 were able to recover physically and mentally in the children's centers.[87] Staying in the centers also had an impact on their emotional and social development. Children and young people who were immediately returned to their homeland from German institutions or families appeared to be emotionally and physically neglected, as they were not given the special care and attention or the contact with the Polish language and culture that they would otherwise have received in the children's centers.[88]

With the takeover of individual facilities by the IRO, the focus was no longer on repatriation but resettlement. The IRO camps aimed to train workers for possible emigration. Teenagers and young adults in particular tried to acquire professional skills that would qualify them for one of the attractive resettlement programs in order to migrate to the USA or Australia. Most of the abducted children and young people thus never came back to Poland. The fate of Polish children and young people therefore represents an extreme case of forced migration. The forcible deportation initiated a process with irreversible effects. This also makes it clear that forced migration was not a single, punctiliar process, but—as is so often the case—the start of further migration phases that followed.

87 Report on a Trip to Poland, November 19–27, 1946, Liste nach Orten, polnische Kinder, Nr. 156, ITS/ARCH/HIST, AA.

88 Report on a Trip to Poland, November 19–27, 1946, Liste nach Orten, polnische Kinder, Nr. 156, ITS/ARCH/HIST, AA.

Reorganization and Memory: Postwar Ramifications

Annika Heyen

"Conceived Reluctantly, Brought to Birth Grudgingly, Straitjacked from Birth." The Bermuda Conference, the World Jewish Congress, and the Emergence of the Postwar Migration Regime

Introduction

From April 19 to April 30, 1943, six gentlemen met at the Horizon Hotel on Coral Beach, Bermuda. The scenery was dreamlike, the easter lilies in full bloom. Sadly, they had not come to the remote subtropical paradise to enjoy their charming surroundings but for a far more serious reason. Over the past two years, news of Nazi atrocities had begun to spread beyond Europe, and by 1943, the world knew that thousands of Jews were being killed daily in German-occupied territories. As a result, these six gentlemen—three delegates each from the United Kingdom and the United States of America—assembled for the Bermuda Conference to discuss what to do about what they called "the Refugee Problem."[1] Neither state showed a willingness to make changes to its existing refugee policy or divert resources from the war effort to the rescue of persecuted people. Thus, the conference concluded without any ground-breaking decisions having been made.

Disappointment with the apathy shown by the UK and the US in regard to the humanitarian catastrophe in Europe was particularly great among Jewish nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Their verdict on the "failed conference" was correspondingly devastating: In their eyes, it had been a complete waste of time and effort, a belief that persisted among those few historians paying attention to the event.[2] The majority of historians researching the history of the Second World War

1 United Kingdom Delegates to the Bermuda Conference on the Refugee Problem to Mr. Eden, June 28, 1943, CO 323/1846/14, National Archives United Kingdom (hereafter as NAUK).

2 Irving M. Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Yehuda Bauer, *Jüdische Reaktionen auf den Holocaust* (Berlin: Lit, 2012); Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Debóra Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich: Refugee Jews, 1933–1946* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009); Rebecca Erbelding, *Rescue Board: The Untold Story of America's Efforts to Save the Jews of Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 2018); Henry L. Feingold, *Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust 1938–1945*

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and the Holocaust or even migration and refugee movements during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s have ignored the conference and its consequences entirely.

What little history has been written on the decision-making processes of the Bermuda Conference presents events primarily as being driven by a dichotomy between all-powerful state actors and powerless nongovernmental actors, mainly the Jewish NGOs and the Jewish victims of the Holocaust themselves.[3] While this narrative fits with traditional—mainly state-centered—concepts in not only Migration Research and Holocaust Studies but also disciplines such as International Relations, it does not comply with newer, more inclusive theories in either of those first two fields. These include, for instance, the increasingly used theoretical and methodological approach of the *migration regime*, which, according to migration historian Jochen Oltmer, is "a contact zone, an arena in which more or less powerful actors, ranging from persons to organizations and state institutions,

(New York: Holocaust Library, 1970); Saul S. Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed: United States Policy toward Jewish Refugees, 1938–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017); Tony Kushner, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth Century* (London: Cass, 1999); Tony Kushner, "The Western Allies and the Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 5.4 (1990): 381–402; Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Michael Marrus, *Die Unerwünschten. Europäische Flüchtlinge im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Schwarze Risse, 1999); Medoff, *The Jews Should Keep Quiet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019); Sebastian Musch, "Zwischen Bermuda und Palästina: Arieh Tartakowers und Kurt R. Grossmanns Suche nach Rettung für jüdische Flüchtlinge 1944," *Zeithistorische Forschung/Studies in Contemporary History* 15 (2018): 576–82; Joanna Newman, *Nearly the New World: The British West Indies and the Flight from Nazism, 1933–1945* (New York: Berghahn, 2019); Avinoam Patt, "No Place for the Displaced: The Jewish Refugee Crisis before, during and after the Second World War," in *Refugee Policies from 1933 until Today: Challenges and Responsibilities*, ed. Steven T. Katz and Juliane Wetzel (Berlin: Metropol, 2018); Monty Penkower, "The Bermuda Conference and Its Aftermath: An Allied Quest for "Refuge" during the Holocaust," in *The Nazi Holocaust, Part 8: Bystanders to the Holocaust, Vol. 1*, ed. Michael M. Marrus (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989); Christoph Rass and Ismee Tames, "Negotiating the Aftermath of Forced Migration: A View from the Intersection of War and Migration Studies in the Digital Age," *Historical Social Research* 45.4 (2020): 7–44; Günter Schubert, *Der Fleck auf Uncle Sams weißer Weste: Amerika und die jüdischen Flüchtlinge 1938–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2003); Meier Sompolinsky, *Britain and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999); Becky Taylor, *Refugees in Twentieth-Century Britain: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939–1945* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999); David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York: New Press, 2007); David S. Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference: Bermuda* (New York: Garland, 1990).

3 Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 4–5.

constantly negotiate the migration regime's structure and hierarchy."[4] Treating the migration regime as an "arena" rather than an active formation in itself, in the eyes of Christoph Rass and Frank Wolff, allows an "agency-based approach":[5] "This assumes a heterogeneity of actors that needs to be uncovered, named [. . .] and situated in the power setting. [. . .] This naturally includes all social actors relevant to explaining migration processes, such as migrants, relief providers, analysts, administrators, border patrol, law makers and many more."[6]

This resonates with both the practice in Holocaust Studies of embracing the "active and even proactive stance of Jews who at every turn did what they could to defend and preserve their lives"[7] and the increasing tendency in International Relations to treat NGOs as powerful transnational actors[8] who influence (international) decision-making processes and policies by putting neglected topics on the political agenda, advocating for specific groups of interest, mobilizing the public, collecting and sharing knowledge, and collecting, providing, and diverting resources.[9] Providing humanitarian aid to persecuted people and refugees certainly plays a role in the traditional narratives surrounding the Holocaust.[10] However,

4 Jochen Oltmer, "Migration aushandeln: Perspektiven aus der Historischen Migrationsforschung," in *Was ist ein Migrationsregime? What is a Migration Regime?*, ed. Andreas Pott, Christoph Rass, and Frank Wolff (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018), 239–54, at 248.

5 Christoph Rass and Frank Wolff, "What Is in a Migration Regime? Genealogical Approach and Methodological Proposal," in *Was ist ein Migrationsregime? What is a Migration Regime?*, ed. Andreas Pott, Christoph Rass, and Frank Wolff (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018), 19–64, at 44.

6 Rass and Wolff, "Migration Regime," 45.

7 Peter Hayes and John K. Roth, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, ed. Peter Hayes and John K. Roth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). See also Dan Michman, "Jews," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, ed. Peter Hayes and John K. Roth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 185–202; Thomas Kühne and Mary Jane Rein, "Introduction," in *Agency and the Holocaust: Essays in honor of Debórah Dwork*, ed. Thomas Kühne, Mary Jane Rein, and Debórah Dwork (Cham: Springer, 2020), 6–7.

8 Christiane Frantz and Kerstin Martens, *Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NGOs)* (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006), 121; Andreas Nölke, "Transnationale Akteure und internationale Politik: Theoretische Forschungsperspektiven und empirische Illustration am Beispiel Nichtregierungsorganisationen," in *Handbuch internationale Beziehungen*, ed. Frank Sauer and Carlo Masala (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017), 779–802, at 780. See also Marcel Berni and Tamara Cubito, "The Diplomatic Role of Transnational Actors in Wartime Captivity," in *Captivity in War during the Twentieth Century: The Forgotten Diplomatic Role of Transnational Actors*, ed. Marcel Berni and Tamara Cubito (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

9 Frantz and Martens, *Nichtregierungsorganisationen*, 58–59; see also Nölke, *Nichtregierungsorganisationen*, 788–89, 798.

10 Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1939–1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017); Meir Dworzecki, "The International Red Cross and Its Policy vis-à-vis the Jews in the Ghettos and Concentration Camps in

the agency—understood in the migration regime, according to Rass and Wolff, as the ability to bring about or prevent changes in an existing system[11]—of Jewish NGOs in decision-making processes surrounding the emergence of the postwar migration regime has received little attention so far.

The Bermuda Conference and the events leading up to and following it served as an arena for these decision-making processes and thus provide us with a frame in which we can discover how Jewish NGOs influenced international policy, especially with regard to the emergence of the postwar refugee regime. Being well aware of the variety of Jewish NGOs, their different mandates, and their goals, I chose one organization to serve as a case study for this essay: the World Jewish Congress (WJC), founded in 1936 to represent the interests of all Jews worldwide, was not only one of the most prominent organizations existing when negotiations were carried out for the rescue of Jews, but its members also actively sought to involve themselves in events leading up to and those occurring during and after the Bermuda Conference. The WJC campaigned emphatically to save the remaining Jews of Europe from the systematic murder that posterity was to call the Holocaust—and in doing so, it initiated developments that still affect those fleeing persecution today.

Nazi-Occupied Europe," in *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference*, ed. Israel Gutman and Efraim Zuroff (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977); Elizabeth E. Eppler, "The Rescue Work of the World Jewish Congress during the Nazi Period," in *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Efraim Zuroff (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1977); Anne Klein, "Solidarität und Hilfe für Flüchtlinge in Vichy-Frankreich, 1940/41: Praktiken – Hindernisse – Entscheidungen," in *Asyl: Das lange 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Maria Mesner, Gernot Heiss, and Jared Manasek (Vienna: Löcker, 2012); Jan Láníček and Jan Lambertz, eds., *More than Parcels: Wartime Aid for Jews in Nazi-Era Camps and Ghettos* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2022); Zohar Segev, *The World Jewish Congress during the Holocaust: Between Activism and Restraint* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); Gerald Steinacher, *Humanitarians at War: The Red Cross in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Gregory Wallance, "The World Jewish Congress during World War II," in *The World Jewish Congress, 1936–2016*, ed. Menachem Z. Rosensaft (New York: World Jewish Congress, 2017).

11 Rass and Wolff, "Migration Regime," 50–51.

Doubting—Knowing—Campaigning: The Road to Bermuda

As early as the summer of 1941, British radio reconnaissance units had begun intercepting "success reports" concerning mass murders of European Jews carried out by the *Einsatzgruppen* in Poland and the Soviet Union.[12] Reports of commercial travelers and journalists from neutral countries corroborated the content of the intercepted messages. Evidently, those who were willing to listen knew of the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe well in advance of the Bermuda Conference.[13] However, these reports were heard neither by the governments of the Allied Powers nor by the public. For a long time, only small Jewish newspapers reported on the mass murder of the Jews. When media with wider coverage (quite reluctantly) took up the issue, there was widespread skepticism in the UK and the US about the authenticity of the stories. The horrors reported were beyond the imagination of most.[14] WJC representatives were not excluded from this general skepticism, but in the summer of 1942, it dawned on them that the reports were, in fact, true.[15]

In May 1942, a detailed report by Warsaw resistance organizations associated with the Jewish socialist party *Bund* provided numbers and other details on the systematic mass murder of Jews and articulated demands to stop it or, at least, to retaliate reached the Polish government-in-exile in London. When attempts to gain the interest of the press and public failed, Szmul Zygielbojm and Ignacy Schwarzbart, both Jewish members of the Polish government-in-exile, turned to the British branch of the WJC.[16] Sidney Silverman, head of the WJC in the UK and a member of the British Parliament, joined Schwarzbart in presenting the *Bund* report in a large-scale press conference. Even if the skepticism of society at large had not been completely eliminated, influential people now supported the de-

12 Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 151.

13 Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 151–54; similar to Kushner, *Refugees*, 193, 195–96 and Frank Bajohr and Dieter Pohl, *Der Holocaust als offenes Geheimnis: Die Deutschen, die NS-Führung und die Alliierten* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2020), 86–88.

14 Erbelding, *Rescue Board*, 73.

15 See for the entire paragraph Sebastian Musch and Annika Heyen, "The Bermuda Conference in April 1943: Allied Politics, Jewish Organizations, and the Emergence of the International Migration Regime," *Holocaust Studies* 30.2 (2024): 290–307, at 293.

16 Colin Shindler, "The 'Thunderer' and the Coming of the Shoah: The Times of London, 1933–1942," in *Why Didn't the Press Shout? American & International Journalism during the Holocaust: A Collection of Papers Originally Presented at an International Conference*, ed. Robert M. Shapiro (New York: Yeshiva University Press: 2003), 151–73, at 163.

mands for rescue measures for the persecuted Jews: representatives in both the House of Lords and the House of Commons tried to put pressure on the government on the Jews' behalf, an attempt supported by the press and, consequently, the general public.[17]

While a grassroots movement was already forming in the UK, the situation west of the Atlantic remained relatively calm. US newspapers showed even greater skepticism than their UK counterparts regarding the authenticity of the *Bund* report. According to Deborah Lipstadt, this was an anti-Semitic reflex: Jews as both a source and an interested party were not considered credible.[18] Even though, under the organization of several American Jewish NGOs—among them the American Jewish Congress (AJC) as the US branch of the WJC[19]—several thousand people gathered in Madison Square Garden in New York on July 21, 1942 in protest against the Nazi atrocities,[20] the issue was not taken seriously by either the government or the mainstream press.[21] This changed rapidly when on August 28, 1942, a telegram from Gerhart Riegner, a WJC staff member in Geneva, reached Rabbi Stephen Wise, co-founder and president of the WJC, in New York that confirmed what had previously been only the worst possible rumor: the Germans planned the extermination of all Jews.[22]

The telegram arrived late in more than one regard: Firstly, even as Riegner was reporting the plans for the systematic mass murder of the Jews of Europe, the German perpetrators had long since been putting these plans into practice in Eastern Europe;[23] by the end of 1942, they would murder more than 1.5 million

17 Bauer, *Jüdische Reaktionen*, 104–105. Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 153–54; Shindler, "The 'Thunderer'," 162–63. See also Susan Cohen, *Rescue the Perishing: Eleanor Rathbone and the Refugees* (London: Valentin Mitchell, 2010), 168–74.

18 Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (New York: Free Press, 1985) and Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 154–55.

19 The AJC was established in 1918. When the WJC was founded in 1936, it was intended to serve as an umbrella organization for branches worldwide. See Segev, *World Jewish Congress*, 6.

20 20,000 according to Kalb, or even 50,000 according to Abella and Irving. See Marvin Kalb, "Journalism and the Holocaust, 1933–1945," in *Why Didn't the Press Shout? American & International Journalism during the Holocaust: A Collection of Papers Originally Presented at an International Conference*, ed. Robert M. Shapiro (New York: Yeshiva University Press: 2003), 1–13, at 3–4; Abella and Irving, *None*, 132.

21 Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6.

22 Kalb, "Journalism," 4–5.

23 Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 164–65.

Jews in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union alone.[24] Secondly, the telegram had to take a diversion. The US Department of State had refused to forward Riegner's message to Wise. The "fantastic nature of the allegation,"[25] paired with anti-Semitic tendencies widespread within the State Department,[26] led to general disbelief among the responsible members of the Division for European Affairs, who sought to prevent people like Riegner from misusing the US diplomatic communication channels to spread unfounded war rumors.[27] The members of the WJC, however, were well connected worldwide. Riegner had sent an identical telegram to Silverman, who passed it on to Wise.[28] Although the Riegner telegram was neither the only nor the first reliable source attesting to the systematic mass murder of the Jews, it is often considered a final trigger for the large-scale campaigns of the WJC for the rescue of the remaining Jewish population of Europe.[29]

Wise, in historian Gregory Wallance's opinion "perhaps the most politically powerful rabbi in American history,"[30] knew how to assert himself among politicians and—most importantly—had the ear of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.[31] Even if, according to historian Raphael Medoff, Wise tended to confuse access with actual influence,[32] it cannot be denied that the rabbi had many contacts not only within the Jewish community but also in the US government. Knowing that Roosevelt would pass on his concerns to the Department of State in any case,[33] he directly contacted Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles. The investigation arranged by Welles confirmed the contents of the telegram by November 1942.[34] Riegner provided key information for the US diplomats in Switzerland collecting evidence for Welles, and the latters' report left no room for doubt about the ongoing systematic mass murder of the Jews.[35] Shocked, yet resolute, Wise held a

24 "Der Einmarsch in die Sowjetunion und der Beginn des Massenmordes," *Yad Vashem Internationale Holocaust Gedenkstätte*, accessed January 10, 2024, https://www.yadvashem.org/de/holocaust/about/final-solution-beginning/mass-murder-in-ussr.html.

25 Memorandum of the Division of European Affairs from August 13, 1942 in Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 27.

26 Shlomo Aronson, "The Allies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, ed. Peter Hayes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 265–73, at 271.

27 Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 163–64, 180.

28 Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 27–28.

29 Segev, *World Jewish Congress*, 24; Patt, "No Place," 111–12.

30 Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 28.

31 Medoff, *The Jews*, 301; Ronald D. Gerste, *Roosevelt und Hitler: Todfeindschaft und totaler Krieg* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2011), 219.

32 Medoff, *The Jews*, 302.

33 Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 29.

34 Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 28–29.

35 Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 29–30.

press conference in Washington, D.C. on the evening of November 24 and another after his return to New York the next day.[36] He also arranged a meeting with other Jewish leaders to plan a large-scale campaign for rescue measures for Europe's Jews.[37] As a consequence of this dialogue, several major Jewish organizations formed the Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs (JEC) in order to coordinate their work more effectively: alongside the AJC, B'nai B'rith, the Synagogue Council of America, the American Zionist Emergency Council, the Hadassah, the American Jewish Committee, the Jewish Labor Committee, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, and the Agudas Israel of America became members.[38] In addition to sending telegrams to more than 500 newspapers and inviting several hundred non-Jewish people of influence to speak out on Nazi crimes, Wise and his allies called for a national day of mourning.[39] This was held just a week later, not only in the US but in other Allied countries.[40] This time, the press responded. According to Laurel Leff, Wise and the WJC "took pride in the press attention [the WJC] had helped generate and that most US publications had condemned the Nazis" extermination plan in editorials.[41] Moreover, the press coverage did not go unheard or unread: letters soon piled up in the British Foreign Office, the US Department of State, and the White House with demands from civilians for rescue measures for the persecuted Jews.[42]

By December 1942, the grassroots movement was in full swing in both the US and the UK. Nevertheless, both governments remained hesitant. Even a personal meeting between Wise, other Jewish dignitaries, and President Roosevelt on December 8 did little to change this. However, the president was open to the

36 Ron Hollander, "We Knew: America's Newspapers Report the Holocaust," in *Why Didn't the Press Shout? American & International Journalism during the Holocaust: A Collection of Papers Originally Presented at an International Conference*, ed. Robert M. Shapiro (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2003), 41–49, at 45.

37 Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 30.

38 "American Jewish Congress," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed January 10, 2024, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/american-jewish-congress; Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs Dissolved," *JTA News Bulletin* 10.257 (1943): 3, accessed January 10, 2024, https://www.jta.org/archive/joint-emergency-committee-for-european-jewish-affairs-dissolved.

39 Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 30.

40 Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 30; see also Medoff, *The Jews*, 146; Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 177; Erbelding, *Rescue Board*, 23; Leff, *Buried*, 156; Bauer, *Jüdische Reaktionen*, 104–105; "The United States and The Holocaust," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed January 10, 2024, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-united-states-and-the-holocaust-1942-45.

41 Leff, *Buried*, 161.

42 Bauer, *Jüdische Reaktionen*, 104–105.

British proposal to publicly condemn the crimes of the Nazis in a joint declaration by the Allies.[43] In contrast, the Department of State was opposed to the publication of such a statement. Borden Reams, who served as the specialist on Jewish issues for the State Department's Division of European Affairs, argued that only a swift Allied victory could save the oppressed peoples of Europe, whereas an Allied declaration would only provoke the Nazis to take even more brutal action against the Jews.[44] Despite this resistance, State Department officials were ultimately unable to prevent the publication of the declaration on December 17, 1942. On this point, the US and UK governments gave in to the demands of the grassroots movement and the Jewish NGOs.[45] Yet, as Richard Breitman already observed in 1985, "one effect of the declaration of 17 December, Foreign Minister Eden wrote later, was to stimulate complaints about the inadequacy of government efforts to save those threatened by nazi [sic] persecution."[46] For the WJC, too, the publication of an Allied declaration as a "stern warning by the United Nations" was only an intermediate victory.[47]

Still, neither the US nor the UK government had any interest in going beyond a mere gesture such as the joint declaration and devoting wartime resources, especially ships, to a rescue or changing its existing restrictive immigration policies. In protest of this continuing inaction, the AJC initiated another massive rally in Madison Square Garden on March 1, 1943. Participants numbered more than 20,000 inside the arena and approximately 10,000 on the surrounding streets.[48] In response to growing public pressure, the British government proposed an Anglo-American conference to discuss the "refugee problem."[49]

43 Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 172–73; Gerste, *Roosevelt und Hitler*, 220–21; Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 30–31.

44 Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 174–75; Erbelding, Rescue Board, 30; Declaration of December 17, 1942, December 17, 1942, United Nations, RG-59, Central Decimal File 1940–1945, 740.00116/European War/1939/749, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), accessed January 10, 2024, https://perspectives.ushmm.org/item/declaration-of-december-17-1942.

45 Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 174–75.

46 Richard Breitman, "The Allied War Effort and the Jews, 1942–1943," *Journal of Contemporary History* 20.1 (1985): 135–56, at 144.

47 Leff, *Buried*, 161.

48 "Bermuda Conference Communiqué Says Saving European Jews Is Not Feasible," Center for Israel Education, accessed January 12, 2024, https://israeled.org/bermuda-conference/; and "Summary of Bermuda Conference Recommendations," Experiencing History. Holocaust Sources in Context, accessed January 12, 2024, https://perspectives.ushmm.org/item/summary-of-bermuda-conference-recommendations.

49 "Bermuda Conference Communiqué." See also Musch and Heyen, "The Bermuda conference," 293.

Officially, such a framing of the conference's topic served to raise the debate to a more general level.[50] Underlying factors, however, suggest that referring to "refugees" rather than "Jews" offered an easy escape from a potentially tricky situation. The Allied governments were cautious about fueling existing German propaganda to the effect that the war was orchestrated by "World-Judaism" and stirring up anti-Semitism in their own countries by using resources for the rescue of Jews rather than feeding their own citizens or winning the war as quickly as possible.[51] Additionally, speaking of "refugees" allowed the organizers not to deal with rising anti-Semitism in their own countries.[52] Indeed, a not insignificant number of anti-Semites held key positions in the UK and US governments.[53] Furthermore, the British were particularly keen to avoid the connection of Jewish persecution with refugee status and thus the explosive topic of Mandate Palestine as a possible safe haven for Jews. The demands of Jewish organizations, including the WJC, for an opening of Palestine to Jewish immigration had been present since the mid-1930s and had, over the preceding few months, increased in both volume and emphasis. The British government was rigidly against Jewish immigration to Palestine due to its desire to uphold the peace with the Arab residents of the region, leaving it constantly susceptible to fears of a Zionist ploy.[54] Despite these doubts, the State Department and the Foreign Office decided to pursue the idea of a joint conference. After the Canadian government showed little enthusiasm for the original plans to hold the meeting in Ottawa, Bermuda was chosen as the venue.[55]

50 Wyman, *The Abandonment*, 105; Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 184.

51 Musch, "Zwischen Palästina und Bermuda," 577; Aronson, "The Allies," 271; Abella and Troper, *None*, 127; Bajohr and Pohl, *Der Holocaust*, 86–94; Gerste, *Roosevelt und Hitler*, 219–20; Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 26–30; Wyman, *The Abandonment*, 61; Bauer, *Rethinking*, 220; Patt, "No Place," 111–12; Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 151–55, 172, 177–78, 183–84; Kushner, *Refugees*, 193–99; Medoff, *The Jews*, 146; Marrus, *Die Unerwünschten*, 321; Michael Fleming, "Knowledge in Britain of the Holocaust during the Second World War," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Britain and the Holocaust*, ed. Tom Lawson and Andy Pearce (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

52 Benjamin David Lieberman, *Terrible Fate: Ethnic Cleansing in the Making of Modern Europe* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 215.

53 Diary of Oliver Harvey, April 25, 1943, quoted by Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, 34. See also Breitman, "The Allied War Effort," 148; Marrus, *Die Unerwünschten*, 321–22; Wallance, "World Jewish Congress," 33.

54 From the beginning, the British government ruled out deviating from the White Paper policy of 1943. Directive to Sir Bernard Reilly: Palestine, March 30, 1943, Middle East Department, CO 323/1846/12, NAUK.

55 Abella and Troper, *None*, 135–36.

Conference Preparations, Memoranda, and the Struggle for Influence

In view of the fact that neither government was prepared to use resources to rescue the persecuted Jews or to relax its own immigration regulations—or those of mandated territories—in their favor, it could be guessed ahead of time that the Bermuda Conference would be another gesture by the two major Western powers to reduce public pressure.[56] Despite this and UK Foreign Minister Anthony Eden's warning not to expect too much of the meeting,[57] Jewish NGOs, especially the WJC, regarded the planned conference as a further victory. They expected that the UK and US governments would follow up on the Declaration of December 17 and use the conference to develop concrete rescue measures for the persecuted Jews. Their hopes, however, dwindled rapidly when they did not receive an invitation to participate in the conference. The State Department ignored requests by Wise and other representatives of the Jewish communities, and the British Foreign Office dismissed the plea of WJC official Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig for Jewish representation by informing him that the conference was merely preparatory in nature, its purpose being "For United Kingdom and Union [sic!] Governments to exchange information and views informally in preparation for wider discussions with remaining interested nations".[58]

While Jewish NGOs were not allowed to send delegates to Bermuda, there were Jewish representatives at the conference, most notably the Jewish Democratic Congressman Sol Bloom from New York, who served as one of the three official US delegates. However, Nahum Goldmann, co-founder of the WJC, saw the non-Zionist Bloom's nomination as an "alibi," allowing the conference organizers to avoid addressing Zionist demands.[59] Wise even went so far as to refer—albeit privately—to Bloom as "the State Department Jew," because at that time Bloom had already advocated for the interests of the US government rather than the needs of persecuted Jews at the Evian Conference in July 1938.[60] The Zionist rab-

56 Marrus, *Die Unerwünschten*, 322.

57 Marrus, *Die Unerwünschten*, 322.

58 Viscount Halifax, Telegram No. 1798, April 16, 1943, CO 323/1846/11, NAUK.

59 Medoff, *The Jews*, 155–56.

60 Viscount Halifax, Telegram No. 1650, April 7, 1943, CO 323/1846/11, NAUK. Medoff, *The Jews*, 155–56. At the Evian Conference from July 6 to 15, 1938, on the initiative of President Roosevelt, an attempt had been made to help the persecuted Jews and solve the question of their orderly emigration from Nazi Germany to places of refuge. See Diana Packer, Britain and Rescue: Government Policy and the Jewish Refugees, 1942–1943, PhD diss., Northumbria University, 2017, 40–411; Paul Batrop, *The Evian Conference of 1938 and the Jewish Refugee Crisis* (New York: Pal-

bi's protest that the non-Zionist Bloom was not a representative of Jewry, however, was brushed off with the argument that the delegates were meant to represent the US as a whole.[61] The fact that George Backer, president of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, was allowed to accompany the US delegation as an adviser also made no great difference, as he faced four advisers from the ranks of the conservative State Department, led by Borden Reams as secretary of the delegation, who was opposed to any rescue measures.[62] In the words of the British delegates in their report to Eden, these State Department officials "took their delegates in hand,"[63] because neither Bloom nor his colleagues Harold W. Dodds, political scientist, president of Princeton University, and head of the US delegation, and Senator Scott Lucas of Illinois were very knowledgeable on refugee matters, a fact they admitted upon arrival in Bermuda.[64] The UK delegation, meanwhile, was made up of non-Jewish middle and senior officials from different departments: Richard K. Law, a Conservative politician and parliamentary undersecretary of state for foreign affairs, served as head of the delegation and was accompanied by Osbert Peake, undersecretary of state at the Home Office, and George Hall, financial secretary to the Admiralty and previously junior minister at the Colonial Office.[65]

At this point, Jewish NGOs still hoped to influence the Bermuda negotiations and submitted memoranda with demands to the State Department and the Foreign Office. In the "Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference by the World Jewish Congress," signed by Wise and Goldmann, the authors emphasized the urgency of the situation by describing in strong terms what was already known about the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews. According to the memorandum, "The Nazis have never concealed their determination to destroy

grave Macmillan, 2018); Jochen Thies, *Evian 1938: Als die Welt die Juden verriet* (Essen: Klartext, 2018); Roland Bank, "Die Bedeutung der Evian-Konferenz für den Flüchtlingsschutz nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg" *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 28 (2019): 106–119.

61 Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, 189.

62 Medoff, *The Jews*, 155.

63 United Kingdom Delegates to the Bermuda Conference on the Refugee Problem to Mr. Eden, June 28, 1943, CO 323/1846/14, NAUK. Regarding the State Departments attempt to keep control, see Kushner, "The Western Allies," 386.

64 United Kingdom Delegates to the Bermuda Conference on the Refugee Problem to Mr. Eden, June 28, 1943, United Kingdom Delegates, CO 323/1846/14, NAUK. Newman, *Nearly the New World*, 232–33; "Bloom, Sol," The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, accessed January 15, 2024, http://enc.wymaninstitute.org/?p=81; see also Musch and Heyen, "The Bermuda Conference," 296.

65 Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*, 190.

European Jewry."[66] Supported by the eyewitness accounts of a nameless Swedish journalist and a "Hungarian visitor," it went on to describe the systematic pauperization and starvation of the Jewish population of Europe, its confinement, and the terrible living conditions in the ghettos, especially for children:[67] "The result of these starvation rations is a decimation unparalleled in any other group. So, for instance in the Warsaw ghetto alone, during the year 1941, 47,428 Jews perished. This would amount to about one out of ten. Spotted typhus and tuberculosis are rampant."[68]

Deportations, the memorandum argued, were an instrument of extermination just as efficient as starvation. The authors reflected on the assessment of Heinrich Himmler's expert on deportations, *Oberstürmführer* Hiege, that around 30 percent of the hundreds of thousands of Jews transported to "unknown destinations" in cramped cattle wagons with inadequate food and hygiene did not survive the long journey.[69] After their arrival in the East, their suffering only increased:

> The greater part of these people may be used by the Nazis for their war effort as long as they can serve the purpose. There is no doubt that they are destroyed as soon as they are no longer of any use to the Nazi war machine. In the meantime, conditions of living, housing, and labour are such that the process of destruction continues automatically.[70]

Strangely, the authors of the WJC memorandum did not refer to the already known method used by the German perpetrators and their collaborators of systematically killing Jews using poisonous gas, although both Riegner and the US diplomats had mentioned it in their reports.[71] One reason for this was their desire to force the

66 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.
67 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, 3-5 ,RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.
68 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, 4, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.
69 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, 5, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.
70 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, 5, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.
71 Kalb, "Journalism," 4–5.

Allied governments into action. To this end, it was important to create the impression that a large proportion of the people under threat could actually be saved.[72] As cruel as the prospect might be of thousands of people being transported to the East, forced to work for the German war machine under the worst possible living conditions, and suffering a slow, agonizing death, it made the window of opportunity to act and save these people from their fate seem larger than that available if poison gas were being used to exterminate hundreds of people in a matter of seconds. Another, perhaps more likely reason for the WJC officials' silence on the use of poisonous gas could be that such a procedure was still beyond the imagination of both the authors of the memorandum and its recipients—indeed, of everyone. From a warfare perspective, it made no sense to kill thousands of potential forced laborers instead of using them for the war effort. Equally importantly, the world had not previously witnessed systematic mass murder on this scale and lacked even a concept of or a name for it.[73]

In the next section of the memorandum, Goldmann and Wise summarized the response of United Nations (UN) members to the systematic mass murder of Jews, including the declaration of December 17 as well as separate individual resolutions by the US and UK governments.[74] However, these political gestures, according to the authors of the memorandum, had not stopped the Germans carrying out their deadly intentions. Thus, the remnants of Europe's Jewry could only be saved by "their removal to places of refuge."[75] In the resulting "need for action," the authors pointed out that "[All of] the Jewish organizations concerned with the problem, whether in the United States, Great Britain or elsewhere, have worked out plans for submission to the Conference, and the substance of these

72 Marrus, *Die Unerwünschten*, 328.

73 The term "genocide" was not used until 1944. "Holocaust" as a term for the fate of the Jews during the Nazi era was introduced in the 1960s and "Shoah"—after an increasing application of "Holocaust" to non-Jewish groups—as a Hebrew alternative only in the 1980s. See Dan Michman, "The Jewish Dimension of the Holocaust in Dire Straits? Current Challenges of Interpretation and Scope," in *Jewish Histories of the Holocaust: New Transnational Approaches*, ed. Norman J. W. Goda (New York: Berghahn, 2017), 18–19. See also Erbelding, *Rescue Board*, 273–74; Bauer, *Jüdische Reaktionen*, 92.

74 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, 7-8, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.

75 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, 9, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.

several proposals is virtually the same."[76] They underlined this point by stating that the rescue program submitted to the Bermuda Conference was not solely the work of the WJC but that of the JEC and thus of representatives of all major Jewish organizations in the US. A "virtually identical program" had been designed by the British Joint Committee.[77] The memorandum nonetheless "urge[d]" its addressees "most earnestly," not in the name of the JEC but in that of the WJC, "to give a close study to these proposals. If the gravity of the problem is not recognized, and action not taken immediately, the victory of the United Nations may mean nothing to the worst victim of Nazi barbarism. Dead communities cannot be restored to life."[78]

To save these communities from death, with the support of the JEC, the WJC officials went on to propose a twelve-point rescue program. First, the UN, through the mediation of neutral states, was to negotiate with Nazi Germany for the release and emigration of Jews from its sphere of influence; second, safe havens were to be created for those Jews in Allied territories; and third and fourth, existing entry and immigration laws were to be changed in favor of those who wished to seek refuge. In addition, possibilities were to be explored of accommodating Jews in, fifth, British Overseas Territories and sixth, Latin America. Seventh, the UK should open up Mandate Palestine to Jewish immigration. Eighth, the UN should give neutral states that had taken in and continued to take in Jewish refugees a guarantee that it would pay for the care and, if necessary, the evacuation of those refugees and ensure their accommodation in permanent sanctuaries. Ninth, the refugees should be provided with an identification document comparable to the "Nansen passport" of the interwar period and placed under comparable international protection clauses. Tenth, to counteract the starvation of persecuted groups by the Nazis, the UN was to develop a system to feed those victims of the regime who were unable to flee. Eleventh, the UN should bear the costs of the rescue program set out in the previous ten points. Twelfth, and finally, the UN

76 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, 10, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.

77 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, 10, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.

78 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, 10, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.

was to create an appropriate international agency and provide it with the power and authority to organize and initiate the required rescue measures.[79]

Dismissed Proposals, Limited Terms, and Meager Results

When the Bermuda conference began, the first step for the delegates on April 20 was to define who was within their mandate and, more importantly, who was not. The name given to the conference had already indicated that its target group would differ fundamentally from that with which the WJC was concerned. Additionally, by framing the meeting's topic as the "refugee problem" rather than a more general debate, the delegates narrowed down the group of people within their mandate drastically. According to the US minutes of the Bermuda meetings, Richard K. Law defined the conference's mandate as the "15,000 or 20,000 refugees in Spain, about one-half of which are Jews and one-half non-Jews. There are also the children that we are trying to get out of the Balkans. There are the refugees in Persia and Greek refugees in Cyprus."[80] Finally, he added the question of the neutral countries, Switzerland, Spain, and Sweden:

> As regards the last, it is almost impossible for refugees to enter because of Nazi restrictions . . . [T]he view of the British Delegation is that it would be profitable to define the problem in these limited terms and forget the solutions proposed that are manifestly impossible and [Law] concluded it by suggesting that the Conference approach the problem in these limited terms.[81]

Law's definition of the "problem" clearly shows which refugees the conference would seek to find a solution for and which they would not. Refugees, by this definition, were only those who had successfully fled Germany and the German-occupied territories. Nevertheless, one of Law's colleagues, who remains nameless in the US minutes, argued that

79 The World Jewish Congress, Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, April 14, 1943, 11–12, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, 3, NARA.

80 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 77.

81 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 77.

> The question of potential refugees should be thoroughly discussed. Many of the potential refugees are empty mouths for which Hitler has no use. He would estimate that there must be 20 or 30 million people who are really a liability rather than an advantage to Hitler and whom he would therefore be glad to get rid of. Moreover, it would be relieving Hitler of an obligation to take care of these useless people.[82]

These 20 or 30 million "potential refugees," most of them destitute or sick older people, women, or children and unfit to contribute to the war economy, constituted a strong argument to remain within the "limited terms" set by Law and not to adopt the Jewish NGOs' understanding of the conference's target group. With the discussion limited to the topic of "refugees" in the sense of those who had already fled, far fewer people fell within the mandate of the Bermuda Conference: around 12,300 Polish civilians stranded in Persia, 16,500 Greeks who had fled their country, 4,000 children and 500 adult refugees in Bulgaria, and about 20,000 refugees in Spain, including 14,000 French, 800 other Allied nationals, and 6,000–8,000 Central Europeans, most of whom were Jews. Even by the most generous calculations, the delegates of the Bermuda Conference were thus to spend the remaining days until April 29 seeking solutions for no more than 56,100 people.[83]

Not only did the Bermuda Conference's target group differ drastically from that of the NGOs, but the latter's proposals for the rescue of those endangered in Europe were almost collectively dismissed on the first day of discussions. The delegates broke down the NGOs' demands into three key points, and the words used in the respective minutes of the meetings show that the delegates did not take the proposals seriously. To "make a deal with Hitler" did not sound like a sensible thing to do at that time.[84] The proposal—not made by the WJC but other NGOs—to "exchange Nazi prisoners and other persons in Allied hands for refugees" read

82 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, 4, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, NARA. A. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 80.

83 United Kingdom Delegates, Internal Report on the Bermuda Conference on the Refugee Problem for the US and U.K. governments, May 3, 1943, FO 371/36725, NAUK. See also United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, April 20, 1943, 1, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees, 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 77; See also Musch and Heyen, "The Bermuda Conference," 297; Annika Heyen, June 20, 2023, "'Millions of unwanted persons': 'Flüchtlinge' vor 80 Jahren – und heute? Gedanken zum Weltflüchtlingstag 2023," *NGHM@UOS Blog*, April 8, 2024, DOI: https://doi.org/10.58079/sc1h.

84 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, 1, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 77.

just as unreasonably in the report of the delegates.[85] The third collective request by the Jewish NGOs, to "send food through the blockade to feed the peoples in Europe," read equally unrealistically.[86] How could two countries, no matter how powerful, feed an entire war-torn continent? All three proposals were dismissed in a single statement by Richard K. Law before the discussions had even begun: "[All] of these problems are fantastic and [. . .] we could not embark on them without jeopardizing the course of the war."[87] With regard to the proposal to enter into negotiations with Nazi Germany on the release of Jews from German-controlled territories, he elaborated,

> [If] Hitler accepted a proposal to release perhaps millions of unwanted persons, we might find ourselves in a very difficult position. For one thing, Hitler might send a large number of picked agents which we would be advised to take into our own countries. On the other hand, he might say, "Alright, take a million or two million." Then because of the shipping problem we should be made to look exceedingly foolish.[88]

After it was "quickly decided that [the second proposal to exchange Nazi prisoners for refugees] is out,"[89] the delegates turned to the question of sending food through the blockade. The British delegation took the position that—despite "considerable public opinion in England that food should be sent to many places such as occupied France"—this was "a question of blockade policy" and, therefore, not within the mandate of the conference.[90] Dodds agreed that "the question of sending food to occupied countries is entirely outside of our terms of welfare and that

85 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, April 20, 1943, 1, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees, 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 77.
86 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, April 20, 1943, 1, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees, 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 77.
87 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, April 20, 1943, 1, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees, 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 77.
88 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, April 20, 1943, 2, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees, 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 78.
89 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, April 20, 1943, 5, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees, 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 81.
90 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, April 20, 1943, 5, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees, 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 81.

we cannot make any recommendations about the Allied blockade."[91] Bloom agreed and suggested "that we throw this question into the military situation in which we are naturally not competent."[92]

Since it was now established that none of the NGOs' three amalgamated proposals would be implemented, the delegates used the remainder of the conference for extensive discussion of the "shipping problem," which was primarily concerned with the fact that neither of the two states saw itself in a position to withdraw ships from the "war efforts" for the transport of refugees. Instead, they considered asking neutral states for the use of their vessels. Neutral states also played a role in the question of possible refuges: Switzerland, Spain, and Sweden were the most important receiving states, but all three showed little willingness to accept more refugees. A British delegate suggested that "we can arrange to take more refugees from neutral countries, then possibly other refugees can enter such neutral countries from Germany."[93] However, the delegates agreed that they would be unable to take these measures themselves and preferred to leave them to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR), which had been revived during the conference.[94] The initiative for this revival came from the US delegates, of whom their British counterparts wrote in their internal report to Eden,

> On one thing, however, the whole American delegation was emphatic, [. . .] the re-establishment of the Inter-governmental Committee as the chief means of satisfying public opinion that an effective international organisation [sic!] was to be created, and that to it should be diverted some of the fire now so deliberately trained on the two Governments principally concerned.[95]

In the eyes of the British delegates, their US colleagues treated the IGCR as "*a kind of deus ex machina*, to be produced on the stage whenever any apparently insolu-

91 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, April 20, 1943, 5, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees, 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 81.

92 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, April 20, 1943, 6, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees, 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 82.

93 United States Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Morning Session April 20, 1943, April 20, 1943, 5, RG 59, No. 52 D 408, Intergovernmental Cmte on Refugees, 3, NARA. Also published in Wyman, *The Mock Rescue Conference*, 81.

94 The IGCR had been established in 1938 as part of the Evian Conference and was to negotiate with both receiving countries and Nazi Germany on the orderly emigration of "potential refugees," but the work of the committee soon came to a standstill due to the outbreak of the Second World War. See Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 56.

95 United Kingdom Delegates to the Bermuda Conference on the Refugee Problem to Mr. Eden, June 28, 1943, CO 323/1846/14, NAUK.

ble problem of finance, shipping or politics confronted us" and sought to delegate to it "difficult or disagreeable tasks which the United States Government was clearly unwilling to carry out alone."[96] According to the judgment of the British, however, the IGCR as it had been established in 1938 did not meet the current requirements. As a result, the delegates spoke at length about the committee's financial and staffing structure, as well as the expansion of its membership.[97]

After nine days, the revival of the IGCR was the only tangible resolution produced by the participants of the Bermuda Conference. In addition, the delegates made thirteen recommendations to their governments, in which the IGCR played a central role. As mentioned above, its competencies, personnel, and financial resources were to be expanded, and its mandate henceforth included refugees from all Nazi-controlled areas.[98] Better positioned than before, it was to negotiate with neutral states for the reception and care of refugees and the provision of ships and possibly, at a later date, negotiate with Nazi Germany for the release of "potential refugees."[99] According to the conference recommendations, the US and UK governments were to "consider" accepting refugees from Spain into their own territories and "make the approach" to persuade the French National Committee to accept refugees into Madagascar.[100] The two governments further committed themselves to making a joint declaration on the repatriation of refugees after the end of the war and to taking "immediate steps to implement [these] recommendations (7)–(10)."[101]

Disappointment and Long-Term Reception

The Bermuda Conference did not produce the results the WJC and other Jewish NGOs had hoped for. Instead, not only were they prevented from participating,

96 United Kingdom Delegates to the Bermuda Conference on the Refugee Problem to Mr. Eden, June 28, 1943, CO 323/1846/14, NAUK.

97 United Kingdom Delegates, Minutes of Bermuda Conference, Session 6, April 22, 1943, Morning, FO 371/36725, NAUK. See also: Musch and Heyen, "The Bermuda Conference," 296–99.

98 United Kingdom Delegates, Bermuda Conference, Final Report, April 29, 1943, FO 371/36725, NAUK.

99 United Kingdom Delegates, Bermuda Conference, Final Report, April 29, 1943, FO 371/36725, NAUK.

100 United Kingdom Delegates, Bermuda Conference, Final Report, April 29, 1943, FO 371/36725, NAUK.

101 United Kingdom Delegates, Bermuda Conference, Final Report, April 29, 1943, FO 371/36725, NAUK.

but almost all of their pleas were dismissed: There would be neither negotiations with Nazi Germany about the release of Jews or their exchange for German prisoners of war nor any supplies sent through the Allied blockade to aid Jews threatened with systematic starvation. Although the IGCR was revived as a consequence of the conference, it did not meet the requirements of the NGOs and was generally considered a fairly useless by-product of the inconsequential Evian Conference. One might conclude that the WJC and other Jewish NGOs had exerted enough public pressure for the conference to take place but not enough to bring about any real political change. However, that is not the only possible inference. While the direct effects of the conference were admittedly meager, later developments can be observed for which, though their origins may not lie solely with the Bermuda Conference, the meeting in April 1943 nonetheless played an important role alongside the WJC and other Jewish NGOs. Those groups, as outlined above, were already among the most important actors to pressure the UK and the US government into reacting to the systematic murder of the Jews of Europe.

Of course, these developments were not immediately visible after the conference. Consequently, judgment on Bermuda was scathing, both from Jewish communities and non-Jewish actors. The press treated the conference as a "Second Munich,"[102] referring to the 1938 Munich Agreement and Neville Chamberlain's failed appeasement policy, as well as a new potential catchphrase for "compromise and deferred hope."[103] In the British Parliament, Eleanor Rathbone, chair of the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror, referred to the results of the Bermuda Conference as laughably minor, while in the US Congress, the US delegates, particularly Congressman Sol Bloom, were the subject of anger and ridicule, especially from Jewish members: referring to Bloom's name, Emmanuel Celler, congressman for Maryland, labeled the Bermuda Conference a "Blooming Fiasco."[104] For Jewish organizations, Bermuda was a "failure and a great disappointment,"[105] a "mockery and a cruel jest."[106] The JEC took its time over its statement and only commented on the Bermuda Conference after a thorough study of its final report. In a long letter to Sumner Welles on June 1, the committee finally expressed its deep disappointment at the meager results of the conference and attacked the Allied governments' argument that only an

102 Newman, *Nearly the New World*, 236.

103 Newman, *Nearly the New World*, 236.

104 Medoff, *The Jews*, 160; Newman, *Nearly the New World*, 238; Marrus, *Die Unerwünschten*, 323. See also Kushner, *Refugees*, 200.

105 Medoff, *The Jews*, 159.

106 Erbelding, *Rescue Board*, 32; see also Musch and Heyen, "The Bermuda Conference," 291–92.

Allied victory could save the Jews, arguing that waiting for that victory would condemn them to the very fate Hitler had chosen for them.[107]

Some members of the WJC were somewhat restrained in their critique. Rabbi Stephen Wise, for instance, dubbed the conference a "woeful failure" and—unwilling to criticize President Roosevelt or his refugee policy—blamed the British.[108] In contrast, Rabbi Israel Goldstein, Zionist leader and head of several Jewish organizations throughout his life, including the AJC, found much harsher words, describing the

> fundamental disappointment [. . .] that the proposals dealing with the centre of the problem have been ignored by the Bermuda conference. [. . .] Victims are not being rescued because the democracies do not want them; and the job of the Bermuda conference apparently was not to rescue victims of Nazi terror but to rescue our State Department and the British Foreign Office from possible embarrassment. [. . .] Bermuda will go down in the record as an unfortunate sequel to Evian. If the Evian Conference to consider the plight of the refugees was a failure, Bermuda was a mockery. It was a mockery because it had before it the ghastliness of the Nazi horrors and the imminence of Jewish extermination, which the Evian conference might have apprehended but did not yet encounter. [. . .] Conceived reluctantly, brought to birth grudgingly, straitjacked from birth, [the Bermuda Conference's] chances for worthwhile results are meagre indeed.[109]

Thanks not least to those WJC officials who continued to write about the Bermuda Conference for posterity, the image of the "failed conference" manifested itself in historiography.[110] Kurt Grossmann and Arieh Tartakower's book *The Jewish Refugee*, published in 1944, along with Grossmann's article "The Final Solution," published in 1955, are two examples of such writings.[111] Grossmann, a German-born journalist and publicist, and Tartakower, a Polish-born political activist, historian, and sociologist, were both WJC officials in the field of humanitarian issues, assistance, and organization of flight, with Tartakower even serving as WJC director of department for relief and rehabilitation. According to Sebastian Musch, the fact that the second refugee conference (after Evian) had also failed, now in the face of millions of murders, gave *The Jewish Refugee* additional urgency, and it was written

107 Medoff, *The Jews*, 161.

108 Medoff, *The Jews*, 160–61.

109 Israel Goldstein, "Bermuda Failure," in *The Bermuda Conference on Refugees: Documents and Essays*, ed. The World Jewish Congress, Australian Section (Sydney: World Jewish Congress, 1943), 35–37.

110 See Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*; Penkower, "The Bermuda Conference"; Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews*; Medoff, *The Jews*.

111 Arieh Tartakower and Kurt Grossmann, *The Jewish Refugee* (New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs of the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress, 1944); Kurt Grossmann, "The Final Solution," *The Antioch Review* 15.1 (1955): 55–72.

not only to condemn the Bermuda Conference but to persuade politicians and the public to be more receptive to Jewish refugees; it was meant to serve as a guide for political decision-makers, civil servants, and community leaders.[112] In their work, Tartakower and Grossmann condemned the inactivity of the Allied governments in rescuing the Jews and their meager commitment to refugee aid, which, compared to the efforts shown by Jewish NGOs—especially the WJC—"fade[d] into insignificance."[113] In their concrete proposals for action, they shifted their focus from the current conditions to the future postwar period and the problem of millions of Displaced Persons (DPs) that the UN would then face. Despite the manifold accomplishments of private organizations, because of their "inadequate authority"[114] to meet this future crisis, relief work must be done (and even more efficiently) by a public, intergovernmental refugee aid organization, which should pursue the goal of finding lasting solutions to the refugee problem—repatriation or resettlement—instead of short-term charity.[115]

Long-Term Effects: NGOs as Actors in the Postwar Migration Regime

As Grossmann and Tartakower's remarks demonstrate, the establishment of the image of the failed Bermuda Conference in public memory was only one step in a broader paradigm shift undergone by not only the WJC but numerous NGOs toward the end of the Second World War and, increasingly, in the postwar period. This manifested itself in two ways. Firstly, the Jewish NGOs no longer trusted that state actors would understand their situation, let alone provide effective aid, in a future crisis. Despite their call for an effective intergovernmental agency, they realized that nongovernmental help would be the only truly reliable source of aid. Secondly, while NGOs before and during the Bermuda Conference had limited themselves to making demands for immediate rescue measures, they now focused on shaping a postwar order in which the Jews would have a secure place. To ensure that the Jews would never again find themselves persecuted with no state willing to take them in, a Jewish state, a safe haven, was needed.

There is disagreement among historians as to whether and to what extent the demands and increased commitment of Jewish NGOs to the establishment of a

112 Musch, "Zwischen Bermuda und Palästina," 578–79.
113 Tartakower and Grossmann, *The Jewish Refugee*, 494–95.
114 Tartakower and Grossmann, *The Jewish Refugee*, 496.
115 Tartakower and Grossmann, *The Jewish Refugee*, 498.

Jewish state after the Second World War ultimately led to the formation of the state of Israel in 1948.[116] Avinoam Patt, for instance, directly links the "the perceived abandonment of the Jews by the international community before, during, and after the Second World War" with "significant political and diplomatic ramifications" for the behavior of Jewish NGOs "that would alter the course of postwar history, particularly with key diplomatic decisions leading to the creation of the state of Israel."[117] In distinct contrast to this position, Dan Michman argues that, although the Holocaust increased the popularity of Zionism in the US, it was less the efforts of Jewish NGOs and the compassion of the international community following the Holocaust that led to the founding of the state of Israel than Zionist structures within Palestine that had been forming since the nineteenth century.[118] More moderately, Michael Cohen states that "the ramifications of the Holocaust, and the plight of the Jewish refugees who had survived [. . .], profoundly moved the large American Jewish community,"[119] and Henry Feingold argues that another effect of the disappointment over the failed Bermuda Conference was a temporary—in fact, quite short-lived—alignment between Zionist and non-Zionist organizations in the US in support of the common goal of shaping a better future for Jewish communities, resulting in an increased interest in the topic by the public.[120]

According to Zohar Segev, the foundation of a Jewish state was only one aspect of Jewish campaigning after the end of the Second World War.[121] Especially for the WJC, the rehabilitation and reestablishment of Jewish life in Europe and the shaping of a Jewish nationality in the diaspora were goals equal to the formation of a Jewish state.[122] As a result of the WJC's efforts to advocate for the needs of Jewish DPs in Europe, its members sought to involve themselves in shaping the policy of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which, following its founding in 1943, provided relief and organized repatriation for people uprooted by the war in Europe.[123] Wise and Goldmann, in a memorandum from September 1944, requested that "those discriminated against by the Nazi oppressors must be given the same opportunities of recovery as the others.

116 Boaz Cohen, "Israel," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, ed. Peter Hayes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 575–89, at 576.

117 Patt, "No Place," 98; see also Schubert, *Der Fleck*, 11.

118 Michman, "Jews," 198.

119 Michael J. Cohen, *The British Mandate in Palestine: A Centenary Volume, 1920–2020* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 198.

120 Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue*, 217–20.

121 Segev, *World Jewish Congress*, 168.

122 Segev, *World Jewish Congress*, 168.

123 Segev, *World Jewish Congress*, 174–75.

Thus, the Jews should be given equitable priorities in the distribution of food, medical aid and shelter, as well as in the return, repatriation, and resettlement of displaced persons."[124] The WJC itself became involved in the care of Jewish DPs and the search for a permanent place of residence for them by collecting and providing large amounts of funding, as well as by supporting education and culture in DPs' camps and the care of orphaned children.[125]

In its efforts to provide relief to the distraught people of Europe, the UNRRA was joined by none other than the IGCR. Despite being severely handicapped by the war, the committee entered into negotiations with potential host countries for refugees—later DPs—and providers of transportation. By doing so, together with the UNRRA, the IGCR became one of the most important elements in the care of victims of the Nazi regime and a major organizer of repatriations in the early postwar years. In the eyes of George Warren, a staff member of the State Department, one of the advisers who had accompanied the US delegation to Bermuda, and from 1944 onwards, a member of the IGCR, the committee's work even marked the beginning of international collaboration on migration.[126] Both the IGCR and the UNRRA were dissolved after only four years and the International Refugee Organization (IRO) took over. The IRO intensified existing international collaboration on migration and resettled more than 1 million people before it, in turn, handed over responsibility to other agencies, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), founded in 1950 and signed into international law in 1951 in the *Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*[127] with a very familiar definition of what a refugee was and is: a person of unspecified nationality forced to flee and cross national borders as a result of persecution during the Second World War.[128] Although transformed and broadened across the decades since their creation, both the institution and the international law remain active today and are important, if not the most important, pillars of the modern migration regime.[129]

124 Memorandum quoted in Segev, *World Jewish Congress*, 175.

125 Segev, *World Jewish Congress*, 175–83.

126 George L. Warren, "The Development of Intergovernmental Collaboration in Migration (Part I)," *The Catholic Lawyer* 4.2 (1958): 112–17.

127 Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 107–108.

128 "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," United Nations Treaty Collection, accessed January 31, 2024, https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1954/04/19540422%2000-23%20AM/Ch_V_2p.pdf.

129 See Musch and Heyen, "The Bermuda Conference," 301–302.

Conclusion

For historians Christoph Rass and Ismee Tames, "Bermuda did prompt Western Allies to develop their multi-level approach at the end of the war, hands-on humanitarian relief and the organizational building of international institutions."[130] Therefore, we could argue that Jewish NGOs, such as the WJC, that campaigned for the rescue of the European Jews and thus brought about the meeting on that subtropical island and the discussions about the "European refugee problem" were involved in the emergence of these international institutions that followed and, thus, the foundation of the postwar migration regime. Agency in the context of the migration regime, according to Rass and Wolff, means the ability to bring about or prevent changes in an existing system.[131] With this concept in mind, what conclusions can be drawn from the case study of the WJC in the context of the Bermuda Conference about the agency of NGOs in negotiating the postwar—and post-Holocaust—migration regime in general?

The WJC was not only one of the most active Jewish organizations in the campaign for rescue measures for Jews persecuted by the Nazi regime but was also in a key position to intervene in negotiation processes on this issue through its connections with other organizations and political figures at the highest levels. As an international network, the members of the WJC were able not only to gather information on the ongoing systematic mass murder but to share it outside of state infrastructure and even in the face of resistance by state institutions. In alignment with other Jewish and non-Jewish NGOs, the WJC distributed that information and drew attention to the issue at a time when the eyes of the public, media, and politicians were primarily focused on the war effort and were reluctant to turn away from it. Through the public pressure they built up by way of large-scale protest events with thousands of participants, on the one hand, and through their personal contacts, which reached as far as the British Parliament and the White House, on the other, the WJC and its allies were able to force the reluctant US and UK governments to act, even if these actions were mainly limited to symbolic gestures: the UN Declaration of December 17 was the first success for their campaign; the Bermuda Conference was the second.

Despite its efforts, the WJC was unable to influence the actual conference proceedings. The framing of the Bermuda Conference as a meeting concerning "the European refugee problem" already revealed that the organizers had no intention of pursuing rescue measures solely for the persecuted Jews but planned to discuss

130 Rass and Tames, "Negotiating the Aftermath," 18.
131 Rass and Wolff, "Migration Regime," 50–51.

the issue on a (supposedly) more general level. In addition, neither the WJC nor any other NGO, Jewish or non-Jewish, was allowed to send delegates to Bermuda. There was no hope that the only Jewish delegate, Democratic congressman Sol Bloom, would stand up for the NGOs' demands, and as the only adviser to the US delegation who did not belong to the ranks of the Department of State, George Backer of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency was in a very weak position to influence the negotiations in their favor. The memorandum submitted by the WJC—in the name of the JEC—was as quickly dismissed as "fantastical" as the proposal of any other NGO. The only tangible result of the Bermuda Conference, the reinstitution of the IGCR, met one of the WJC's demands. However, the committee was regarded at the time as an ineffective, toothless remnant of 1938's failed Evian Conference, in which neither the NGOs nor the global public had any confidence.

The reactions to the meager results of the Bermuda Conference were devastating and shaped the memory of the events of April 1943 for a long time thereafter. Although the organizers of the conference, particularly the US Department of State, hailed it as a success, the image of the failed conference without results persists, thanks not least to the ongoing campaigns by the WJC and other NGOs, to this day. What little research there is on the Bermuda Conference has used and continues to use it as an example of the inactivity of the Allied governments in the face of the murder of millions and as an emblem of their failed refugee policy.

Nonetheless, and rather coincidentally, by making the issue of Jewish refugees a matter of importance, the WJC triggered long-lasting developments for refugees worldwide. The IGCR worked alongside the UNRRA to ensure the care of refugees and DPs until the IRO took over in 1947; the latter did the same before again handing over its responsibilities for the displaced in Europe to other international institutions such as the UNHCR, which, together with its legal manifestation in the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, still forms the framework of the modern migration regime today. NGOs like the WJC were not the only actors who brought about this development. However, their involvement in the negotiation processes surrounding the Bermuda Conference opens our eyes to the power to bring about or prevent changes in a system wielded by non-governmental actors that form worldwide networks, who are well-connected within their own ranks and beyond, and know how to attract public attention to their issues.

Peter Gatrell

Points of Departure, Points of Reference: Jewish Refugees and UNHCR in the Aftermath of the Second World War

This chapter mines a rich seam of newly available sources from the archives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and draws upon an extensive literature on post-1945 population displacement in and beyond Europe to consider how Jewish refugees in particular approached intergovernmental organizations responsible for protection, and with what results.[1] The immediate background includes the launch of UNHCR in December 1950, the adoption by several UN member states of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the prior formation of the state of Israel in 1948.[2] Based in Geneva, and with a number of branch offices and representatives in Europe and beyond, UNHCR heard from thousands of individuals, a significant minority of them being Jews requesting legal protection and material support, including assistance with their resettlement beyond Europe. Along with state actors and non-governmental organizations, UNHCR considered the options available to European and non-European Jews after the Second World War and the Holocaust.

What did Jewish refugees have to say about their situation? What tactics did they adopt and what information did they vouchsafe to UNHCR? Which options did they entertain and advocate, and what strategies did they devise to circumvent the various constraints they faced? What tone did they adopt: did they attach more importance to victimization and vulnerability, as opposed to resilience and resolve? Did they mention their rights as refugees? Did they speak primarily on their own behalf, or did they express a sense of collective persecution, as happened frequently in the DP camps?

1 Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Pamela Ballinger, "Impossible Returns, Enduring Legacies: Recent Historiography of Displacement and the Reconstruction of Europe after World War II," *Contemporary European History* 22.1 (2013): 127–38.

2 The standard modern history of UNHCR is Gil Loescher, *The UNHCR and World Politics: A Perilous Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). On the Refugee Convention, see Gilad Ben-Nun, "The Israeli Roots of Article 3 and Article 6 of the 1951 Refugee Convention," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 27.1 (2014): 101–25; Irial Glynn, "The Genesis and Development of Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25.1 (2012): 134–48.

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To answer these questions, this chapter draws upon the letters and petitions of Jewish refugees who wrote to UNHCR in the quarter-century after its creation in December 1950. This material was accumulated and preserved as case files by UNHCR to create a body of precedent to determine the eligibility of refugees for recognition and assistance. The case files thus served an internal purpose. They were—and remain—confidential to most outsiders.[3] Much of the extant documentation is terse, but refugees often wrote at greater length to narrate their experiences and advance their claims to recognition and assistance. Not surprisingly, their testimony sheds light on the impact on individuals of war, revolution, and genocide from the early twentieth century onwards. In addition to the personal case files relating to European Jews of different vintages, the source material also illuminates the experiences of non-European refugees of Jewish heritage. This provides an opportunity to consider not only the experiences of Jewish survivors of the maelstrom of the Second World War and the testimony of newly arrived refugees from East-Central Europe (chiefly Poland), where Jews faced renewed discrimination and persecution, but also the stories told by Jewish refugees from Iraq and North Africa who drew attention to the ongoing persecution of the Jewish minority in those countries. In short, the accounts that Jewish refugees provided to Geneva emanated from different locations and against the background of fresh political upheaval.

Refugee history deals in part with the voices of refugees, but these cannot be separated from the operation of the international refugee regime.[4] It is important to ascertain the response of UNHCR eligibility and protection officers and aid workers engaged by non-governmental organizations to these claims. Questions therefore arise about their perspectives. How seriously did UNHCR officials take the rights and demands asserted by Jewish refugees? Whose applications were turned down, and why? What efforts did they make to enable Jewish refugees to resettle, and to which countries? The answers require a close attention to the nature of the available archival material and the circumstances of its creation and preservation, issues that have been addressed elsewhere.[5]

3 I am very grateful to UNHCR Records and Archives for giving me permission to consult the case files. I have anonymized the names of individual refugees.

4 There is an extensive literature on the international refugee regime as well as its regional and national incarnations. A helpful starting point is J. Olaf Kleist, "The Refugee Regime: Belonging, Sovereignty, and the Political of Forced Migration," in *Was ist ein Migrationsregime? What is a Migration Regime?*, ed. Andreas Pott, Christoph Rass, and Frank Wolff (Wiesbaden: VS Springer, 2018): 167–85. See also Lauren Banko, Katarzyna Nowak, and Peter Gatrell, "What is Refugee History, Now?," *Journal of Global History* 17.1 (2022): 1–19.

5 Peter Gatrell, "Raw Material: UNHCR's Individual Case Files as a Historical Source, 1951–1975," *History Workshop Journal* 92 (2021): 226–41.

By way of background, UNHCR was the successor body to the International Refugee Organization (IRO), which itself replaced the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). The main purpose of UNRRA had been to facilitate the repatriation of forced laborers—men, women, and children, mainly from Eastern Europe, deported from their homes during the war to work for the Nazi economy—whom the wartime Allies classed as Displaced Persons. Given the reluctance of a significant minority to return to their country of origin, especially as a result of the communist seizure of power, the IRO instead devoted its energies to providing routes to resettlement, acknowledging that these DPs and other refugees would otherwise likely be exposed to further persecution.[6]

As Ruth Balint, Antoine Burgard, Daniel Cohen, Anna Holian, and other scholars have lately shown, Jewish DPs and refugees who survived the Holocaust were a visible presence in post-war Germany.[7] Apart from living in a country that bore responsibility for genocide, Jewish DPs faced the additional trauma of being held in assembly centers and camps alongside Ukrainian, Polish, Belarusian and Lithuanian DPs among whom were to be found other "persecutors of Jewry," many of them equally hopeful of being resettled in a third country.[8] Jewish leaders protested that Jewish DPs were being assigned to those groups on grounds of nationality. Following the publication of the famous Harrison Report in September 1945, which drew attention to the particularly dire conditions faced by Jewish DPs in the American zone of occupied Germany and in Austria, the Allied authorities agreed to treat Jewish DPs as a distinct group who had suffered collective persecution.[9] As a result, they faced less intrusive individual scrutiny at the hands of UNRRA and the IRO than did non-Jewish DPs, who were normally required to undergo an individual examination of their claims for recognition.[10] Jews who had endured enormous suffering in Nazi captivity and who survived were thus encouraged to sustain a sense of collective identity in the DP camp. Nevertheless, as they considered their options, it quickly became apparent that prospective host

6 Marrus, *The Unwanted*, 317–24, 340–45; Louise W. Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization: A Specialized Agency of the United Nations, its History and Work, 1946–1952* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956).

7 Anna Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism: Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

8 Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, 172; Marrus, *The Unwanted*, 331.

9 Angelika Königseder and Juliane Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope: Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-World War II Germany* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 31–42.

10 Note that, according to one informed observer, "the victorious Allies, though sympathetic, considered that all Jews were supersensitive, and probably suffering from a collective persecution complex." Malcolm J. Proudfoot, *European Refugees: A Study of Forced Population Movements* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1957), 324–34.

countries, including those in South America and Australia, did not welcome the arrival of European Jews. As is well known, the British authorities in Palestine imposed strict limits on their admission.[11] Faced with these and other obstacles, much depended on the efforts of Jewish organizations to assist their co-religionists, a process sometimes characterized by mutual tension between Jewish elites and Jews of more modest social origin.[12]

In addition to thousands of Jews who survived Nazi terror in Germany, Austria, and Italy, around 155,000 Polish Jews made their way from the Soviet Union to Western Europe at the end of the war. These so-called "infiltrees" were joined in the second half of 1946 by Jewish refugees from Poland, Romania, and Hungary who managed to find billets alongside DPs in Germany and Austria. Some Allied observers maintained that this exodus was orchestrated by Zionists in pursuit of their own political objectives, and that many ordinary Jews hoped to improve their economic prospects rather than fleeing from persecution, although to any dispassionate observer the Kielce pogrom in July 1946 provided clear evidence of the risks faced by Polish Jews in particular. The fresh prejudice they faced at the hands of the Allied authorities in Germany emerged in the work of otherwise fair-minded contemporaries: British officials who hoped to control immigration to Palestine constantly reiterated the demeaning and loaded term "infiltration."[13]

The momentum of Jewish emigration continued apace. Between May 1948 and the end of 1951, around 684,000 Jews arrived in Israel, just under half of them from Europe, along with 238,000 from Asia, and 93,000 from Africa. In addition, some 165,000 European Jews migrated to other countries, predominantly to the USA. This left just over 40,000 Jewish refugees in the Western-administered zones of Germany, Austria, and Italy, including the so-called "hard core" of sick and disabled persons, some of whom were eventually transferred to Israel, leaving others, including a non-Jewish "hard core," stranded in Europe.[14] The different trajectories followed by a majority of Jews must therefore be set alongside the immobility of a minority. There are many threads to disentangle.

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11 Ruth Balint, *Destination Elsewhere: Displaced Persons and Their Quest to Leave Postwar Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021), 121; (on Australia); Jacques Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-War World* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1953), 590 (on Latin America).

12 Ben Shephard, *The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War* (London: Bodley Head, 2010), 299.

13 Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, 62, 64; Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, 334–46, 350 (especially his remarks on p. 344); Cohen, *In War's Wake*, 126–49.

14 Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, 358–60, 362, quoting work by Grossmann and Wischnitzer. On the "hard core," see Peter Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees, 1956–1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

One thread concerns Polish refugees who fled communist Poland to escape continuing persecution in the 1950s and 1960s but whose life stories also reveal a prior history of displacement. The antisemitic stance of the Polish government emerged in the case of Maksymilian G., who approached UNHCR as he neared retirement age. The "social history" he provided for the record "outlines a life of great effort, complicated by illness and the turbulence of the war." He was born to Jewish parents in Lwów [Lviv] in 1909. He and his wife fled Poland in 1938 and moved eastwards. He was drafted into the Soviet army but was taken captive in 1941. Managing to conceal his Jewish identity, Maksymilian did three years' hard labor as a groom with the German cavalry, "swept along with the German army from the Ukraine to the Caucasus," until he managed to escape in 1944 during the retreat of the Wehrmacht to Hungary. At this point he re-joined the Red Army. However, in 1945 he was sentenced to ten years' hard labor in Siberia, subsequently reduced to six; he suffered from pleurisy and was one of the few Jewish prisoners to survive this fresh ordeal. He was finally permitted to return to Poland, where he was reunited with his wife.

Maksymilian explained to UNHCR that he was multilingual, that he had gained a PhD in philosophy and pedagogy in 1958 and had qualified as a therapeutic psychologist in a children's sanatorium. But he nevertheless did not escape official antisemitism. As he put it:

> Having at the price of great suffering and labor reached a high position in my field of psychology and pedagogy, as the result of the Polish Government's antisemitic campaign I suffered much stress and felt that I could no longer remain in Poland. Under such conditions I was not at liberty to work and think free from pressures all around me. On the ruse of going for a visit, I succeeded in getting my passport. It was my plan to defect once out of Poland and settle in a democratic country.

He secured a passport to travel to Italy in 1969, but his wife was forced to remain in Poland. UNHCR responded sympathetically to his appeal for help in being resettled: "In appearance, Dr G. is small and frail. He gives the impression of a man deeply absorbed in his intellectual preoccupations, and it is believed that he will make every effort to continue to do some work in his field of specialization." UNHCR planned to enlist the support of the renowned and long established American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) to resettle him in Switzerland and, although no outcome was recorded, it seems likely that this is what happened. In similar cases, the communist authorities usually relented, and perhaps his wife

was able to join him in due course.[15] Maksymilian's account demonstrated the mixture of persecution and determination that satisfied the requirement for recognition and made him eligible for resettlement. Indeed, not only were his anti-communist credentials impeccable, but his scholarly qualifications also likely appealed to UNHCR officials who came from a similar professional background and who were acutely conscious of the new political landscape in Eastern and Central Europe.

Many other stories told of vicissitudes that reflect a combination of persecution and contingent events, compounded by the fact that these refugees had reached retirement age and wished to enjoy a quieter and secure life in a third country. One tragic story emerged in an exchange of correspondence between UNHCR's Branch Office, Rome, and Mose (or Moise) R., born in Kumpulung (Câmpulung), Romania in 1895. By the late 1950s he was living as a stateless person in Rome. He explained how this situation came about. He arrived in Italy in 1915 to serve in the Italian army. He returned to Romania after the war and stayed there until 1924, when he moved back to Catania, Sicily, where he opened a barber shop. At the outbreak of war in 1939, the local authorities gave him just 24 hours to sell his belongings and leave. Moise left for Rome and applied for a Romanian passport, which he was denied because he was Jewish. This narrow escape enabled him to survive the war by doing various odd jobs. He re-opened a barber shop in the small spa town of Fiuggi after the war, but "had very little success" and returned to Rome, where he lived on public assistance. According to the file, "Mr. R. is in good health, but is quite senile and cannot perform any activities or jobs also because, despite his long stay in Italy, he does not speak Italian." He had married an Italian woman, but they separated and "for many years have heard nothing of each other." He had a brother in Israel who was in no position to help. In 1958 UNHCR assisted Moise to resettle in a retirement home in Vevey, Switzerland, but he soon fired off a letter to UNHCR in Rome, complaining that he had been made to share a room with an elderly Hungarian refugee who had TB and whose coughing kept him awake: "Can you put yourself in my place? This should be my home. When I was in your office, you told me that many people were unwilling to move to an old people's home. I now see their point. Have you sent me here simply to die?" Moise reminded UNHCR that he was a victim of Italy's fascist-era racial laws, despite having fought for that country in 1915–18. He asked UNHCR to intercede with the Italian president whose office replied that nothing

15 CV of Maksymilian G., with accompanying note, October 9, 1969, Individual Case Files, IC995, Fonds UNHCR 17, Records Relating to Protection, Subfonds 1, UNHCR Records and Archive (hereafter as UNHCR).

could be done on his behalf. A clipping in the case file from a local Swiss newspaper informed its readers that Moise R. "had been asking the Italian state for justice for more than 30 years." Years later, with no resolution in sight, UNHCR's Branch Office in Italy explained that Moise could have no claim against Italy because the government had not seized his property and that he had instead sold it to a private citizen. No one commented on this bizarre interpretation. The file ends with a letter from the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society (HIAS) stating that they were in touch with the director of the care home in Vevey, and "suggesting that he use his judgement as to how the information is to be passed on to Mr. R.," who was by now elderly and unlikely to be reassured by these exchanges.[16] All in all, the case file was a stark reminder of the painful and prolonged challenges that refugees encountered at the hands of the state and the refugee regime.

Other requests from Jewish refugees for assistance continued to arrive at UNHCR during the 1960s. In some cases, the approach came from family members on behalf of relatives who were prevented from speaking out, as happened with David L., whose surviving family members were living in the USA. Rachel, his sister, wrote from Los Angeles in 1965 to seek the help of the "United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights" in enabling him to leave the Soviet Union. She explained that he was "the only member of my family left in Europe." David was born in 1915 in the Sub-Carpathian village of Dubrava (Nižná Apša), at that time part of the Habsburg Empire, subsequently part of independent Czechoslovakia, and then ceded to the USSR after the Second World War. Before the war, David, his parents, and his seven brothers and sisters lived in Czechoslovakia: as Rachel put it, "we were a happy, devoted family." The Holocaust turned their world upside down. Their parents were murdered at Auschwitz, another brother was killed at Mauthausen. Only Rachel and two of her siblings survived Auschwitz. David had been conscripted into the Hungarian army of occupation at the beginning of the war but, faced with the prospect of being deported to Germany as a slave laborer—and a Jew—he escaped east, only for the Soviets to hold him as a prisoner of war. Rachel's surviving family members escaped, as she explained:

> When the war ceased, unable to live in the country where associations with the sufferings under the Nazis were constantly before us, all of us, sisters, and brothers, except David, left Europe. We sought refuge in countries that would help us start a new life and thus we became separated going to Canada, Israel, and the United States.

16 Jean Goldsmith, United HIAS Service, to J.B. Woodward, UNHCR, May 17, 1966, IC11144, UNHCR.

At the end of the war and having been freed from Soviet captivity, David made his way back to Czechoslovakia, "in search of members of the family." He planned to emigrate and join members of his family but was prevented from doing so by the territorial changes that had now brought his hometown under Soviet control. He applied for exit papers on seven occasions, but each time his application was rejected. Rachel asked UNHCR to show "compassion and understanding the appeal which I present to you . . . My brother is alone in Europe. He has only one goal and that is to be together. Is there no way for the Russian authorities to understand our need to be together?" HIAS got involved, so too did the International Committee of the Red Cross. The file was closed after the US State Department agreed to intervene on David's behalf, presumably treating this as a case of family reunion.[17]

Other Europe-born Jews had settled beyond Europe before the Second World War, but their letters to UNHCR told equally distressing stories of oppression and harm. Jacob G. was born in Poland but had lived outside Poland since 1923, mainly in Morocco. He faced persecution before and during the war, including being targeted by Himmler, no less, during his official visit to Morocco in 1936: Himmler had instructed the German Consulate in the northern city of Tétouan to compel Jacob to move to the Spanish coastal enclave of Ceuta. (Ceuta had just fallen to Franco's Nationalist troops.) As a result, he had to give up his clock-making and repair business. He added, "In Ceuta I was jailed and slept on a stone floor." He eventually managed to return to Tétouan where the local police kept a close eye on him and his shop premises (between 1940 and 1942 Morocco was under Vichy administration):

> No-one wanted to buy a watch or have one repaired . . . I became a beggar . . . I was singled out as a Polish Jew. I suffered even more because my entire family, living in my own country, suffered from Nazi torture. Now, I no longer have any family in Poland, and no property. My bad memories make it impossible for me to contemplate living out the remaining years of my life there. I don't want to go back at my advanced age to see their ashes. For me, with a heart condition, this would be horrific. I understand full well, High Commissioner, that the current regime in Poland is very different from the one that preceded it. Nevertheless, for the reasons I have just given I have no wish to return to Poland. I wish to be recognised as a refugee. My two daughters have never had a passport, and I would like them to have the same status as me.

He asked about the status of his Spanish wife, also Jewish, and whether she too could be given refugee status. If it was not possible to be recognized as a refugee, he would prefer to continue to be regarded as apatride. The international lawyer

17 Rachel L., Los Angeles, to UNHCR Geneva, August 25, 1965, IC5555, UNHCR.

Paul Weis, a key figure in UNHCR, took a close interest in the case.[18] He regarded Jacob G.'s eligibility as settled because he was in effect "a refugee sur place," namely someone who had established a well-founded fear of persecution after having arrived in the country. Jacob therefore satisfied the original criteria for recognition by the IRO and would have had "valid objections" to returning to Poland for "compelling family reasons . . . the fact that Mr G. was never formally recognized as a refugee by the IRO is irrelevant because recognition of refugee status is declaratory only." Given the prior persecution Jacob had suffered, "he has not ceased to be a refugee under the Convention . . . even if he has no well-founded fear of persecution with regard to Poland at the present time." Decades later, he remained vulnerable by virtue of his statelessness and expressed concern lest he be forced to return to Poland. He had fallen on hard times. This did not come near to compensating for the loss of Jacob's family in Poland, but thanks to UNHCR's flexibility it at least it gave him what he craved, namely refugee status.[19]

UNHCR also opened case files on behalf of European Jews who had found refuge in Shanghai and who after the Second World War requested resettlement.[20] Officials deemed some of them to be awkward, intransigent, and downright untrustworthy. A case in point is a fascinating file concerning the family of the elderly Romanian-Jewish refugee Leivi Itsokovitch I., a resident of Shanghai. (It is not clear precisely when he arrived in Shanghai.) Leivi contacted the United Nations in September 1952 to request emergency relief. Unfortunately for him, a former IRO welfare officer in Shanghai had already placed on record his wholly negative assessment of Leivi's character: "I. is a slippery, miserly and most obnoxious character and is known to be a criminal. Unfortunately, however, he has always been able to have an alibi ready and thus evade all police efforts to bring him to justice for his crimes. This person is a bad type and was taken off care and maintenance for withholding facts about his financial position." Equally vicious was the overtly antisemitic letter from the Director of IRO's Shanghai Office to UNHCR in October 1952, which described Leivi as "a typical element . . . [who] is in the habit of withholding facts about his financial position and often

18 Paul Weis (1909–1991), born in Vienna, had been interned in Dachau before fleeing to Britain in 1939. He was appointed as legal adviser to the International Refugee Organization between 1947 and 1951. He took part in the discussions leading to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and subsequently played a leading role in UNHCR, serving as legal adviser and later director of its Legal Department from 1951 until he retired in 1967.

19 Jacob G., Tangier, to UNHCR Branch Office, Morocco, December 4, 1961; Paul Weis to Branch Office, Morocco, January 5, 1962, IC1196, UNHCR.

20 Felix Gruenberger, "The Jewish refugees in Shanghai," *Jewish Social Studies* 12.4 (1950): 329–48.

tells ANYTHING BUT the truth." The file ended with a letter from UNHCR's Special Representative to Geneva in September 1955, which pointed out that the Central Jewish Committee (representing HIAS in Shanghai) flatly contradicted Leivi's account of his financial hardship. The committee launched a blistering attack on his character which is worth quoting at length:

> The case of the I. family is one of the most difficult and hopeless on our lists. Mr Leivi I., who is nearly 70 years old today and who is himself suffering from many serious ailments, has committed the fatal error of marrying and acquiring progeny at any age when normal persons are seriously planning for the hereafter. The results of his action have been disastrous: the two elder children are riddled with disease, the girl is tubercular, the boy is a complete cripple unable to move . . . As far as their migration or resettlement plans are concerned, there is this to consider: the marital bliss of which I. himself writes is a gross exaggeration. According to his own statement he is certain that should the whole family be approved for resettlement in Sweden as TB patients, his wife as a Chinese citizen would never be permitted to leave . . . According to Mr I's opinion his wife would have no objections to the rest of the family leaving China. We doubt this very much, however, as with the departure of Mr I., his wife's only source of income would cease. At present the whole family are living together in unbelievable squalor.

In short, no-one had a good word to say about Leivi I., including the local Jewish relief agency. He was condemned by character assassination.[21]

Where UNHCR proposed their resettlement, some Shanghai Jews objected on principle to the suggestion that they should go to Israel. Noach G. and his son Robert were Polish-born Jews who fled Berlin in 1938 and made their way to Shanghai via Siam (Thailand). In 1958 Robert wrote on behalf of his father, describing their family as "Polish Citizens" and complaining bitterly of the treatment they received at the hands of Jewish organizations:

> I lived in Germany for 22 years, left money, and business behind. We had already 2 German visas, which disappeared in shanghai [sic] by the Jewish agency, to whom you sold us. The Jewish agency boosted [boasted] that you sold us, DPs, to them, and can do with us as they please. If this is true, then I protest, because this is against the UN Charter. The Jewish Agency try by all means to bring us to the GHETTO of Israel, and this I refuse, I have no relations with them, and refuse there [sic] relief. I also declare that I have nothing to do with Israel, and don't want to be sold to the Jewish. I hope that you will answer to my appeal, that is, if you are not controlled by the Jewish Agency, you must do it. I hope you will favour my appeal, since my position is extremely difficult. My family is waiting for us, to bring me to a hospital there, for my operation. Please don't forget that I am a DP, and completely blind. All evidence of my accusations are available in photocopies if needed.

21 M.C. Liang, Director, Shanghai Office, IRO, to Thomas Jamieson, Special Representative, HICOMREF Hong Kong, October 17, 1952, IC2739, UNHCR; Kenneth Summers, Special Representative, to J.B. Woodward, September 6, 1955, UNHCR. An online search suggests that the family stayed in China.

Since neither the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee nor HIAS had any knowledge of the case, nor had the couple, as "difficult cases," been cleared for early placement by UNHCR's office in Hong Kong, Robert's letter went unanswered. An online search indicates that father and son were eventually able to move to the UK, where they joined Noach's daughter from his first marriage, who had managed to get out of Berlin in 1939 with the help of the Red Cross. The letter is remarkable for Noach's vitriolic denunciation of "the Jewish Agency" and the suggestion that he and his son had been treated as commodities rather than as human beings.[22]

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to non-European Jews whose stories of persecution and survival likewise emerge in the UNHCR case files. They were exposed to nationalist politics in countries of settlement, notably Iraq and Egypt, where Jewish communities had been established for generations. In the later 1960s, there are also files concerning a small number of Sudanese Jews.

Around 110,000 Iraqi Jews left between 1948 and 1951.[23] One file originated when Albert G., an Iraqi-born Jew currently living in Brussels, wrote to the IRO in December 1951. He held an Iraqi passport that was due to expire in six months, but the Iraqi Consulate in Belgium refused to renew it on the grounds that he could and should return to Iraq. As Albert put it, the decision was:

> For the only purpose, which you are certainly aware, to be persecuted, robbed, deprived from their jobs, exploited by every minute, and under the risk of being slaughtered at any minute . . . Within a few days I will be without a passport, nationality and without protection, but nothing than a POLITICAL REFUGEE . . . I am a desperate man who is under your mercy, who wants nothing [more] than to enjoy the rights which a human being is allowed, by the gentle democratic principles . . . Please note that I don't need any material support, but the usual moral support accorded to refugees. You possibly will advise me to go to Israel, but please note that I discovered by being in Israel will put the life of my parents and family who are still in Iraq, in danger. Therefore, I have no alternative than to ask your help and the help of the mercyful [sic] God.

In fact, Albert had lived in Iran since 1942 and returned there from Europe without difficulty after a business trip in 1947. His successful business had ended abruptly when the Iranian government confiscated his assets. A letter from the UN Resident Representative in Iran in March 1952 explained that the Iranian government did not recognize the authority of the UNHCR towards Iraqi Jews, whom it regarded as "*foreign elements* . . . many of the Jewish so-called refugees are

22 Robert N. to the United Nations Refugee Organisation, April 14, 1958, IC1202, UNHCR.

23 Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, 64–65; Moshe Gat, *The Jewish Exodus from Iraq, 1948–1951* (London: Frank Cass, 1997).

merely moneylenders who could no longer carry out their trade in Irak [sic]." UNHCR suggested that Iran "would never block the account of anybody for racial reasons," as Albert had alleged, but was nevertheless minded to intervene. Frustratingly, at this point the file ends abruptly.[24] Nevertheless, Albert's case points to the importance that refugees attached to legal recognition—in his words, "the usual moral support"—as well as material assistance. He was also acutely aware of the new risks that refugees ran in seeking resettlement.

Another case file concerned Victor M., who described himself as an Iranian subject born to Jewish parents in Cairo in 1909. He left Egypt temporarily in July 1949 to travel to France to see his two children who had been taken there by his wife who (as he put it) had "abandoned the conjugal home in 1948." He wrote to the UN in May 1953 to explain that he been arrested for having overstayed on his transit visa and had been held in prison since 1949. He was now threatened with expulsion. It is a rhetorically florid letter: "I have no hidden aims or interest. I ask myself and am astonished that a country such as France with its reputation for being a civilized and humane country that respects family life has taken the decision to separate a father from his children whom he cherishes and from whom he cannot bear to be apart." He could not return to Egypt because he was Jewish—"pious and devout"—in his words. He knew no Persian and had no family in Iran—his entire family was in Cairo. "Must I live like a wandering Jew," he pleaded. He hoped to be allowed to stay in France. His letter was forwarded to the UN in New York, unfortunately without any further information on file.[25]

The case files also contain letters from or on behalf of Egyptian Jews that tell of widespread harassment and persecution. In December 1956, Charles Caccia, a close friend of the family, wrote to UNHCR on behalf of Esther G. and her (unnamed) husband, urging the High Commissioner to help them find a way out of the United Arab Republic (UAR). Caccia explained that Esther was born in Salonika, her husband in Cairo. He described Egypt as being run by "the totalitarian and discriminating regime of a swashbuckler" and informed Geneva that the couple were willing to leave for any country in Western Europe, "where they could start afresh." They were well qualified, middle-aged people, who both spoke four languages, and in Caccia's words "thoroughly trustworthy and conscientious." He added, "Everybody is trying to relieve the pains and suffering of Hungarian refugees. Is nothing going to be undertaken for the victims of a looter's insane and

24 Albert G. to the High Commissioner, December 29, 1951; M. de Baer, Resident Representative, Iran, to UNHCR Geneva, March 9, 1952, IC707, UNHCR.

25 Victor M., Paris, to UN, 20 May 1953, IC7607, UNHCR. I cannot find any trace of him online.

oppressive policy?" This was not the only reference to events in Hungary—an Egyptian Jewish woman made the same point.[26] UNHCR's resettlement officer replied that the couple could be admitted to Israel without difficulty, but that they needed a sponsor if they were to seek to settle elsewhere.[27] Also striking is the reference to Nasser's "totalitarian regime," something repeated by other members of the Egyptian Jewish community who likened their situation to that of Jews in Nazi Germany.[28] The result of this lobbying was that UNHCR High Commissioner Auguste Lindt decided that Egyptian Jews who crossed the frontier came within his mandate. He also reached an agreement with the UAR that UNHCR could issue travel documents to Egyptian Jews.[29] Many of them left for Israel.

However, not all Jewish refugees who made their way to Israel found conditions to their liking. Romanian refugee Jancu K. survived the Holocaust but had no truck with the new communist regime in his country. He managed to get permission to leave Romania for Israel but after several years asked to be resettled elsewhere. UNHCR filtered the information he provided as follows:

> When the Communist Regime was installed in 1952 Mr K. felt the time had come to abandon the country, but because of his poor health he could not afford to escape illegally and had to take the way of Israel. Leaving Romania, he was obliged to abandon all his belongings and arrived in Israel with 50 kgs of luggage. As soon as he arrived he realised that he could not live in that country . . . He was obliged to work as labourer in a building carrying on his shoulders doors and windows to the 7th floor. Found life impossible there because of the regime which favoured Poles. Had to ask for a passport to leave Israel. Went to Italy, wrote articles against the regime in Israel. Cannot go back there.

It is impossible to ascertain what specific event drove him to despair in Israel, but evidently he struggled with arduous physical labor and believed that he faced discrimination on grounds of his former nationality. Eventually he too was resettled in Switzerland.[30]

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26 Claire-Erica M., Geneva, to Paul Weis, November 19, 1965; Ivor Jackson to Claire-Erica M., December 21, 1965, IC7603, UNHCR.

27 Charles Caccia, Geneva, to J.B. Woodward, UNHCR, December 6, 1956, IC1213, UNHCR.

28 Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 87–88, 91–94, 107–10 (with references to the "Hitler on the Nile").

29 Louise W. Holborn, *Refugees: A Problem of Our Time – The Work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951–1972*, 2 vols. (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975), vol. 2., 812.

30 Memo from BO Italy to Woodward, May 12, 1964; and E.G. Lapenna to Mrs. S.J. Sims, June 23, 1965, Interoffice memo, Lapenna to Woodward, January 11, 1966, IC4213, UNHCR.

UNHCR also received applications for assistance from Sudanese Jews.[31] Twenty-two-year-old Elie Simon T., described as "Sudanese of the Jewish faith," had left Sudan in May 1968 on an emergency travel document that took him to Switzerland. His parents and several siblings had already moved to the UK. Elie was born in Omdurman in 1945 and attended an Italian missionary school in Khartoum. He left school at the age of 17 and joined his father's business, importing consumer goods and sending consignments of crocodile skin to Europe. In the wake of the Six-Day War in 1967 things took a turn for the worse: "The political and public-opinion atmosphere which was never promoting easy Jewish living and trading in an Arab country has worsened more and more with the climax in the June war last year." Elie's brother Ibrahim explained vividly what happened to them:

> At that time, it happened that our lives were in danger if we walk in the street we feel that somebody is following us and wanted to kill me for I am a Jew . . . We were put in suspicion by the Government daily even at midnight 20 to 30 policemen with rifles knock our door when we were fast asleep wake us to search the house, when they search the house they search every personal effects, they take us to our shop to search the shop and investigate all our daily movements as if we are Israeli spies, suspected without any evidence we ourselves don't speak or read Hebrew but they don't believe us.

Their parents understandably had no wish to return to Sudan: "With no work and indecision about whether to establish in England or migrate elsewhere, they have suffered quite a lot in terms of their little possessions and health." Elie managed to obtain travel papers that took him from Khartoum to London via Geneva (where he had relatives, one of whom worked for the United Nations) and then back to Geneva via Italy. He went on to explain why he was conflicted about any suggestion of moving to Israel:

> Clearly, under no circumstances, I shall awish to return to Sudan. I have been discriminated against publicly and by being denied the nationality and passport which my father possess so far. Ten years ago the Jewish community numbered some 800 people, and today there are barely 20 who are all planning to leave. I understand your awareness with this problem, of course. What complicates matters a bit more is that I have acquired no diploma although some skill in management and our capital is very meagre. Besides the idea to migrate to Israel is against my principles which have been not without affection for the Arab cause. I cannot serve for a country which stands in war with a country I was born in and lived so far.

31 Eli S. Malka, *Jacob's Children in the Land of the Mahdi: Jews of the Sudan* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

He asked UNHCR for help in securing travel documents "to stay in one or the other neutral lands with the final aim of settling down." However, UNHCR's Branch Office in London believed that Elie did not have a well-founded claim for political asylum, because "there are many Jewish people still in the Sudan: I have myself seen the Synagogue which is continuing to operate in Khartoum." A follow-up memo went still further, arguing that Elie had not lost his nationality "on racial grounds" and that he had the right to return to Sudan. Besides, "Sudan is by no means an extremist country and it is difficult to assert that there is persecution of the Jews there. There may well be discrimination against Jewish businessmen by other businessmen, especially since the June 1967 war, and it is very likely that most Jewish people would like to leave. The same, however, is true of a great number of other minorities in various parts of the world, but it does not necessarily amount to persecution." Officials in Geneva disagreed with London. The file ended in April 1969 when it transpired that the UK Home Office no longer objected to Elie's entry to the UK, provided he supplied details of his proposed business and capital assets. Meanwhile, the entire family had arrived in Geneva and planned to stay in Switzerland. Questions about their refugee status went unanswered, however.[32] The file is remarkable because of the amount of personal detail that Elie and his brother provided about their persecution in a non-European country—remember that the 1951 UN Refugee Convention was originally designed to support European refugees—and because of the dismissive response of some UNHCR officials towards the plight of a beleaguered minority.

Most Jewish refugees who approached UNHCR did so as individuals rather than as members of a collective. This conformed to the provisions of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, according to which the recognition of refugee status depended upon an individual being able to demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution "for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion." Such a stipulation encouraged a singular narrative, the insistence that one's personal experience be uniquely credible, even if other refugees experienced similar persecution. Refugees were not invited to draw attention to systematic and general conditions—that is, to make a connection between the singular and the generalizable. To be sure, refugees might submit letters and petitions to UNHCR that situated their own circumstances within a broader frame of reference, connecting their personal experience to the situation

32 Elie T., statement to UNHCR, undated [August 1968]; Simon Elie T., Lausanne, to UNHCR, undated [August 1968]; Ibrahim T. to UNHCR Geneva, August 18, 1968; Ivor Jackson to UNHCR Branch Office UK, June 28, 1968; UNHCR Branch Office UK, memo to Jackson, July 1, 1968; Jackson to UNHCR Branch Office UK, July 9, 1968, IC13902, UNHCR.

of others who could not testify.[33] But the scope to do this was a tangential rather than an integral element of the claim, whereas the pre-war international refugee regime framed protection in terms of specific groups of refugees, primarily Russian and Armenian.[34] In the period covered by the UNHCR case files, by contrast, the sense of belonging to a collective became of secondary rather than of prime importance in securing recognition as a refugee.

As indicated above, the case files deserve close scrutiny on several grounds. The testimony of refugees, Jewish refugees included, points to protracted discrimination and persecution, not only in the immediate context of the Second World War and the Holocaust, but in the years before and after. The letters and petitions they submitted to UNHCR expose the consequences of global political transformations associated with the Cold War and the formation of new states. They also illuminate the interaction between refugees and the officials who wielded the power to determine their future. When refugees presented as victims, it was because the refugee regime expected them to do so as the condition of recognition and assistance. UNHCR normally supported the claims of European Jewish refugees but expressed skepticism about those advanced by some non-European counterparts, such as refugees in Shanghai and from Iraq and Sudan. In general, the case files provide a glimpse into the lives of Jewish refugees who experienced displacement and persecution, sometimes on multiple occasions and from different quarters, compounding the unimaginable loss of family and home. Nevertheless, refugees were not necessarily defined by victimhood. There are also stories of resolution and resilience: not only a determination to survive, but an insistence that their voices should be heard, and their rights respected. As one might expect, refugees drew attention to persecution in communist countries in Eastern Europe, but they also pointed to persecution in North Africa and the Middle East, including on occasion to shortcomings in the protection that Israel was assumed to provide to Jewish refugees.

The case files do not always provide a clear outcome, and it is frustrating for the researcher to discover that individual refugees, Jewish and otherwise, simply disappear from the bureaucratic record. There are gaps in their biographies and in their trajectory that are unlikely ever to be filled in. Yet, as Alison Light has

33 "I tell my story because people need to hear it. I tell my story because it is not just my own story, and because there are many like me who can no longer tell their stories," as Afghan refugee Abdallah put it, quoted in Cindy Horst and Odin Lysaker, "Miracles in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt and Refugees as Vanguard," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34.1 (2021): 67–84, at 78.

34 Claudena M. Skran, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergence of a Regime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

written about piecing together the history of her family, "What's missing is where another story begins, and if absences are gaps, they can also be portals through which we glimpse what went before and try to catch the shimmer of what is to come."[35] The historian of population displacement can perhaps be forgiven for ending on this positive and captivating note.

35 Alison Light, *Common People: The History of an English Family* (London: Allen Lane, 2014), 252.

Cornelia Wilhelm

Building a Future for the Past: German Refugee Rabbis in the United States

The transfer of Jewish knowledge by forced migration before, during, and particularly after the Holocaust stands right at the center of this essay. It seeks to highlight how German refugees from Nazism, namely rabbis, students for the rabbinate, and scholars of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* have reflected on their pasts, which used to be centered around the modern rabbinical schools in Berlin and Breslau, after their flight during the Nazi era. The paper underlines how these refugees from Nazism have attempted to save and revive their ideal of a modern inclusive Judaism and build a future for a heritage that had lost its distinctive European context at the moment of their forced flights.

The bigger picture of their lifelong attempts to build a legacy for their scholarship, rabbinical ethos, and German-Jewish tradition, and to carve out ways and means to transmit their experiences and knowledge into a new context, only becomes visible if their careers and biographies are analyzed in detail and their whole life cycle covered. To get a deeper understanding of this group, their careers, and their flight, and especially the long-term effects of their forced migration is difficult and a methodological challenge: it involves tracking, comparing, and evaluating their flight, their rescue, and their shifting careers under consideration of the dynamics of an individual's lifecycle. In this context, these challenges have been addressed as part of an innovative digital humanities project on this refugee group, which has opened up new means of data collection, analysis, and evaluation, namely, the digital research project "German Refugee Rabbis after 1933 in the United States (MIRA)."[1] It has researched and collected extensive data on this group amid a sea of dictionaries, research literature, and international archives, which has also led to the publication of a monograph.[2] The information collected focuses on the refugees' life-cycle and is currently undergoing reorganization as part of an effort to build a fully-fledged digital research portal.[3] The field of digital humanities has offered the possibility to research this previously unseen, dispersed, and difficult-to-research group in order to explore their

1 German Refugee Rabbis in the United States after 1933 (MIRA), ed. Cornelia Wilhelm, http://mira.geschichte.lmu.de/.

2 Cornelia Wilhelm, *The Last Generation of the German Rabbinate, 1933–2010* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2024).

3 Jüdisches Kulturerbe, DFG-Schwerpunktprogramm: https://spp-juedisches-kulturerbe.de/.

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collective biography and trace the cultural transfers launched by the expulsion and rescue of this professional group during the lifespan of the refugees.[4]

Their re-formation as a collective as "the last generation of the German rabbinate" with a common goal and legacy was not visible in studies that were only concerned with the Nazi period. Forced out of Germany at a time of turmoil and occupied with saving their lives, it took them years, sometimes decades, to reorganize, adapt, and continue their careers and new lives. Dispersed across the globe, historical research was unable to get a perspective on this group as a collective, its contours, and its communication networks. In addition, their cohesion, transformations, and activities were frequently only understood as related to the realities of their new environment, not as reflections of their past, traditions, and heritage.[5]

Only an in-depth analysis of this rather large, quite diverse, globally dispersed, and not equally well-documented group, whose biographies stretched over a period of over 150 years, from 1870 to today—consisting of different cohorts of age, knowledge, and religious affiliation, a changing self-awareness as rabbis as well as shifting parameters—allows us to gain a more comprehensive view of this group as a collective. Following the latest research on forced migration,[6] the project also decided to include the so-called "second generation"—that is, those who emigrated as children or young adolescents and were educated at American rabbinical seminaries but still demonstrated the ethos of the German rabbi. This youngest cohort proved to be particularly interesting and, like their older peers, strongly identified with the lost heritage of the German rabbi. Modern Judaism perceived itself as an integral part of society, while part of its definition was to be in constant communication with that society in order to provide timely answers to the questions of modern Jews. But it also came under pressure

4 Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: Norton & Co., 1980); Erik Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed* (New York: Norton & Co., 1997); Wilhelm Heinz Schröder, ed., *Lebenslauf und Gesellschaft, Vom Einsatz von kollektiven Biographien in der historischen Sozialforschung*, Historisch Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungen 18 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985), 7–17; Werner Fuchs, Martin Kohli, and Fritz Schütze, "Vorwort der Herausgeber," in *Methoden der Biographie und Lebenslaufforschung*, ed. Wolfgang Voges (Opladen: VS Verlag für Sozialforschung, 1987), 3–4; Thomas Winkelbauer, *Vom Lebenslauf zur Biographie* (Waidhofen: Waldviertler Heimatbund, 2000), 37ff.

5 For a critical perspective on the term "heritage," see for example Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006).

6 See also Peter Gatrell, "Population Displacement in the Baltic region in the twentieth century: from "refugee studies" to refugee history," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 38 (2007): 43–60.

after the Holocaust over the question of whether the desire for integration had not paved the path to the destruction of European Jews.[7]

When the modern "German" rabbi emerged as the result of emancipation legislation in 19th- century South Germany, a new and unique professional profile emerged and gained enormous success after the erosion of the traditional rabbinate following the growing social integration of Jewish communities into civil society. The latter turned into a symbol of Jewish particularism and was seen to have an outdated role in the community, which was rapidly changing. Therefore, the traditional rabbi lost his appeal in a process of rapid social change, modernization, and social inclusion. The modern rabbi's decidedly scholarly and critical approach to Judaism was based on a dual track education in Jewish studies and secular studies, which was meant to guide the definition of a modern and relevant Judaism in a modern world, as well as to guide the process of the social and political inclusion of Jews in the modern state.[8]

During the Nazi period this effective intellectual and social leadership highlighted the role of the rabbi and underscored how the profession represented much more than merely scholarship and chaplaincy. The rabbinate thus demonstrated an unexpected and active political leadership in the *Gemeinde* and provided new and essential services to Jewish communities under duress that far exceeded their previous leadership roles. While their chaplaincy was also urgently needed, rabbis excelled as architects of Jewish spiritual resilience against Nazi chicanery and humiliation, and they soon became prime targets of Nazi persecution for that reason.[9]

Among the larger cohort of "rabbis," —communal rabbis, rabbinical students, ordained scholars—tracked in the MIRA database, it is apparent that the first group to leave Germany among these were Jewish scholars with rabbinical ordination. These were scholars of Judaism or Oriental Studies who had turned to scholarly careers at German state universities, libraries, museums, collections, research institutes, and who were forced to leave the country after the passing of the Act for the Restitution of the Professional Civil Service in April 1933, which simply destroyed the economic viability of their existence as employees in a university system funded by the state. Some of these men found temporary employ-

7 Amos Elon, *The Pity of it All: A Portrait of the German-Jewish Epoch, 1743–1933* (New York: Macmillan, 2003).

8 Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press: 1988), 211–42, 191.

9 For a thorough description, see for example Michael A. Meyer and Joachim Prinz, *Rebellious Rabbi: An Autobiography – The German and Early American Years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 98–102.

ment at Jewish institutions, like rabbinical colleges, before managing to relocate elsewhere in their professions. But these experts were basically forced into emigration. Among them were established scholars like Alexander Guttmann, Samuel Atlas, Altmann, and Eugen Täubler, but also promising graduates, such as Abraham Joshua Heschel and Franz Rosenthal, who qualified to become leading scholars in their field, but as Jews no longer had any chance of embarking on a career as state employees in this system.[10]

By the mid-1930s, German-Jewish rabbinical seminaries started to understand that their students no longer had a bright future in Germany. In addition, the classic dual-track education in Jewish studies and a doctorate at a German university were difficult to realize due to growing restrictions and quotas for Jews at German universities, which no longer allowed them to gain qualifications for leadership positions, like doctoral degrees. It was for this reason that W. Gunther Plaut, who had completed his legal studies and could not get a doctorate as planned, finally signed up as student for the rabbinate.[11] At the time, it became apparent that scholarship would no longer provide the groundwork for a rabbinate that was increasingly confronted with the practical and sometimes very political needs of the *Gemeinde*. Under these pressures, the seminaries started adapting their curricula and supported students to continue their studies abroad.[12]

The communal rabbinate faced the edge of a growing crisis just before and during the pogrom of November 8, 1938. Destroyed synagogues and rabbinical seminaries, atrocities, and humiliations were harbingers of even greater levels of destruction and of the launch of the mass expulsion of rabbis thereafter. Only few withstood such pressures as the Nazis repeatedly tormented their communities. During the pogrom, German synagogues were destroyed, rabbinical seminaries closed, and a large portion of the rabbinate was arrested and held in prisons or concentration camps.[13]

Only after committing themselves to leave the country immediately and "voluntarily" were they given permission to do so, after which they sought hasty refuge

10 Michael A. Meyer et al., ed., *German-Jewish History in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), vol. 4, 198.

11 W. Gunther Plaut, *Unfinished Business: An Autobiography* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1981), 36.

12 Joseph Abrahams to Cecilia Razkovsky, November 27, 1935, Box 19/19, A, RG1, JTS. See also Ernst Lorge Collection, MS-672, AJA. See also "Memorandum betreffend einige Punkte der Ausbildung der Rabbiner in der Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums," Professor Dr. Otto Toeplitz, undated (approximately 1937), Box 1/18, MS-663, AJA.

13 Emil Fackenheim, *An Epitaph for German Judaism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 71.

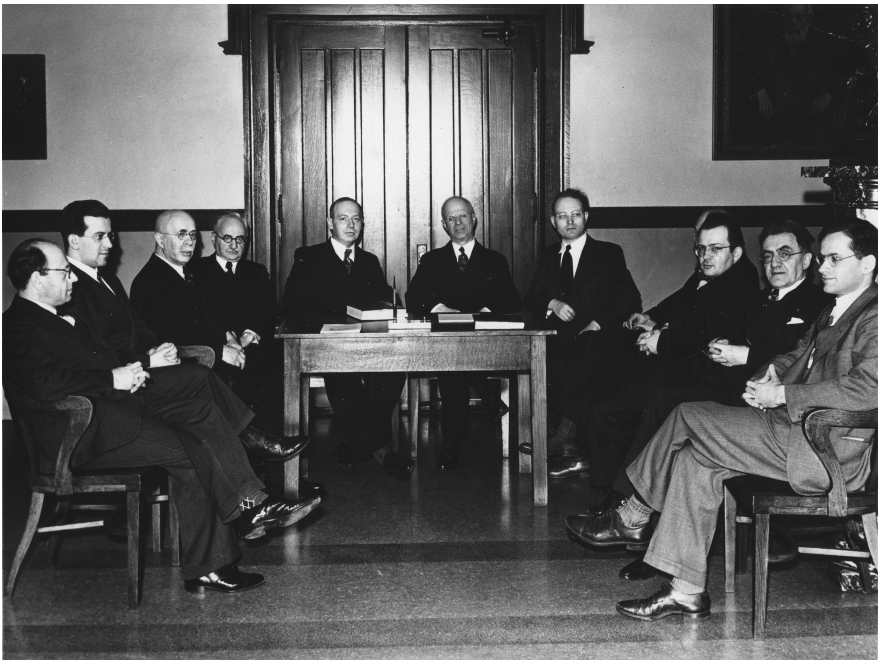

Fig. 1: German Refugee Scholars at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati (from left Samuel Atlas, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Michael Wilensky, Eugen Täubler, Julius Lewy, Julian Morgenstern, Alexander Guttmann, Isaiah Sonne (hidden in image) Eric Werner, Franz Landsberger, Franz Rosenthal): American Jewish Archives, picture collection, hucpc240cin.02.

abroad during the first months of 1939. The mass flight marked the beginning of the end of a Jewish civilization, the modern German rabbinate, its teacher seminaries and cantorial schools, its libraries and the centers of modern Jewish learning, which had shaped an essential part of Jewish life in German-speaking Central Europe since the 19th century. The seminaries, the *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Berlin (1872), the *Orthodoxes Rabbinerseminar zu Berlin* (1873), and the *Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar Fränkelscher Stiftung* in Breslau (1854) had become exceptional centers of modern Jewish learning but were forced to close. Only the *Hochschule* re-opened and continued to provide limited classes for adult Jewish learning, but not for regular rabbinical training, and it functioned on that basis until 1941. At the time, it served as a spiritual center for Jewish life in the city rather than as a rabbinical school.[14]

14 Wolfgang Hamburger, "Teacher in Berlin and Cincinnati," *LBIY* 2 (1957): 30. See also Richard Fuchs, "The "Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums" in the Period of Nazi Rule," *LBIY*

The United States crystallized into a favored emigration destination for the German rabbinate, as there was a uniquely close intellectual and personal relationship between the liberal German-Jewish seminaries and their American counterparts (specifically, the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati [1875] and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City [1886]), which resulted in intense personal and intellectual / exchanges in Berlin and Breslau and the hiring of European experts. The American rabbinical seminaries followed the German model of providing a dual track education in the training of their own rabbis according to the ideal of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* from the beginning, while maintaining a "cousinly" relationship with their European peers.[15]

In the 1930s, US immigration legislation also offered a unique loophole for the reception of European colleagues under duress, as America's dedication to religion in private and public life meant a special non-quota visa was available for "clergy," which facilitated these refugees' entry to the United States.[16] Since American immigration legislation offered special non-quota visas for clergy, and the American Jewish seminaries colleges could apply for such non-quota visas through their own institutions such as rabbinical colleges and congregations, and they were able to launch a unique rescue effort. With their responsibility for rabbinical education, but also being involved in the placement of graduates and organizing large congregational unions, they were able to reach out and rescue German and Austrian refugees by requesting non-quota visas, typically for a two-year period. Aside from the placement of ordained rabbis, they could also offer non-quota visas for students of the rabbinate and for visiting faculty, which turned them into rescue centers for European Jewish scholarship and learning. Consequently, starting in 1933, they organized and facilitated the rescue and placement of more than 250 rabbis, scholars of Judaism, and students for the rabbinate.[17]

12 (1967): 30. See also the autobiographies of Nathan Peter Levinson and Herbert Strauss for the last days of the Hochschule: Nathan Peter Levinson, *Ein Ort ist, mit wem Du bist* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1996), 48ff; Herbert Strauss, *In the Eye of the Storm: Growing up Jewish in Germany, 1918–1943* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 83ff. See also Hartmut Bomhoff, *Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich – Prägende Jahre: Eine Biographie* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 28–32.

15 Michael A. Meyer, "A Centennial History," in *Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years*, ed. Samuel Karpf (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976), 1–284; Jeffrey Gurock, *The Men and Women of Yeshiva* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). See also Jack Wertheimer, ed., *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1997).

16 Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 74, 49–58, 84–97.

17 Wilhelm, *The Last Generation*, 99–104.

Existing data shows that a portion of the older refugee rabbis could only continue their careers as spiritual leaders of German refugee congregations, sometimes consisting of some of their former congregants who had been able to leave Germany. Organized like *landsmanshaftn*, such congregations reproduced German-Jewish life for a limited time. Few of the members ever joined the established American Jewish movements. Instead, the majority closed themselves off from American Jewish religious life until an unavoidable generational change introduced an abrupt Americanization or threatened to destroy those congregations' existence as a unit of ethnic religion.[18]

It is significant, however, that most of the refugee rabbis in the United States consciously turned to make a future *within* American Judaism, as American Judaism offered great potential for the continuation of their careers once the refugees had managed to overcome the obvious challenges. No doubt they struggled with language, a change in prestige, the loss of any job security and status, and the need to fill political roles and different expectations. They were no longer leading a large *Gemeinde* as all-embracing superstructure of local Jewish life but were confronted with competing individual local congregations and ethnicity as a factor shaping Jewish identity and congregational life. Nevertheless, many of the refugees, especially those turning to the Reform and Conservative movement, managed to successfully master the English language and succeeded in building new careers as American rabbis. Unlike the liberal German rabbis, their German Orthodox colleagues had a much harder time connecting with and succeeding in the American Orthodox movement and its congregations, as the latter promoted a traditional Judaism following East European, especially Lithuanian, role models, and not the socially inclusive principle of *Torah im Derech Eretz*[19] that most German Orthodox leaders embraced.

Once the refugees had re-gained control over their broken lives and careers, they started grappling with the fact that the Holocaust and their people's annihilation had started in Germany, the country and culture they had once called "home" and had been very proud to embrace. Modern Judaism itself was a prod-

18 Joseph Abrahams to Cecilia Razkovsky, November 27, 1935, Box 19/19, Series A, RG 1, JTS; See also Ernest Lorge Collection, MS-672, American Jewish Archives (hereafter as AJA). And Memorandum betreffend einige Punkte der Ausbildung der Rabbiner in der Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, Professor Dr. Otto Toeplitz, undated (approximately 1937), Box 1/18, MS-663, AJA.

19 *Torah im Derech Eretz* is Hebrew for "Torah in the way of the world" and it explains the approach of "modern" German Orthodox Jews to adapt to the law and ways of the nation. Samson Raphael Hirsch, intellectual leader and rabbi of the Frankfurt separatist Orthodox congregation, was one of the most outstanding leaders of this school of thought and the educations models that resulted from it. See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Torah im Derech Eretz: The Educational Philosophy of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch* (Nanuet: Feldheim Publishers, 2018).

uct of this encounter and deeply affected their Jewish identity. Such a sense of trauma was particularly present at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, where the refugees had a strong presence and were part of a shared memory that resonated like nowhere else. Here, it became apparent that they were the last of a special group that was to write the final chapter on the German rabbinate, German Judaism, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, and a uniquely modern approach to Judaism itself.

Their teachers, historian Ismar Elbogen and rabbi Leo Baeck, were fully conscious of the paradigm change. In an article published in the *American Jewish Yearbook* just before his untimely death on August 1, 1943, Elbogen underscored that center and periphery in the long symbiotic relationship of American and German Judaism had changed and that regeneration within the movement was now exclusively possible from within the United States. Highlighting that knowledge, expertise, and the scientific methods of the refugees could become a last asset for American Jewish scholarship, he pointed at the potential and responsibility the refugees bore for the survival of modern Judaism and the final influx of a tradition of European knowledge.[20]

At the time, Hebrew Union College took ten refugee scholars into its faculty, namely Samuel Atlas, Abrahm Joshua Heschel, Michael Wilensky, Eugen Täubler, Julius Lewy, Alexander Guttmann, Isaiah Sonne, Eric Werner, Franz Landsberger, and Franz Rosenthal. While not all of them stayed at the college for the rest of their careers, their presence and scholarship, their style of teaching, and European cultural hybridity marked life at the college decades past their initial arrivals there.[21]

Leo Baeck regularly taught at Hebrew Union College between November and April starting in 1948 and assembled a small group of former students and students from refugee families around himself, among whom were Joseph Asher, Ernst Conrad, Wolfgang Hamburger, Robert Lehman, Jakob Petuchowski, Alexander Schindler, Albert Friedlander, Nathan Peter Levinson, and Steven Schwarzschild. How important these young men were becomes apparent when one considers that three of them, Asher, Schwarzschild, and Levinson, were selected by Baeck to be the first to return to post-war Germany to explore whether there was a future for liberal Judaism there.

Joseph Asher (Ansbacher), who had been interned in Australia and had served in the Australian army during the war, had met Baeck after his return to London, where he reconnected with his parents who had spent the war in British

20 Ismar Elbogen, "American Jewish Scholarship: A Survey. In Honor of the Centenary of Kaufmann Kohler," *American Jewish Yearbook* 45 (1943/44): 47–65.
21 Wilhelm, *The Last Generation*, 111–17.

exile. There he was recruited by Baeck to carry out an initial six-week exploratory mission to the British occupied zone and Berlin for the World Union for Progressive Judaism to find out about the fate of Jewish communities and explore if there was any potential for a return.[22] Almost at the same time rabbi Michael Munk, formerly rabbi of the Adass Jisroel Gemeinde in Berlin, returned from the United States to Berlin. His mission was financed by the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and orchestrated by Joseph Hertz, the British Chief Rabbi, to serve the Berlin Jewish community. At the time, German Jewish communities were



Fig. 2: Leo Baeck with students: American Jewish Archives, picture collection, hucpc0212.07.

22 Moses Rischin, "The German Imperative and the Jewish Response," in *The Jewish Legacy and the German Conscience*, ed. Moses Rischin and Raphael Asher (San Francisco: Judah M. Magnes Press, 1991), 3.

emerging again and were filled by a few surviving Jewish Germans and Displaced Persons, Jews from Eastern Europe who were stranded in Germany after the end of the Shoah. At the time, there was a dire need for rabbis and chaplains in the post-Holocaust setting, and almost all of them had to be "imported" from outside Germany. Munk, who had probably been driven by his frustrations with American Orthodox congregations[23] and his hope of being able to re-connect with surviving former community members, left Berlin after one year of service and started a new enterprise to make a living in New York state. Together with his wife Martha, a professional psychologist, he started a pedagogical project, a thriving private Orthodox youth camp in upstate New York, which the two ran until the end of their lives.

The World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) followed Asher's initial scouting trip by sending a successor, a young liberal rabbi and recent graduate, Steven Schwarzschild from Hebrew Union College to establish some sort of presence in Germany's capital, Berlin. Schwarzschild would minister to the liberal segment of Jews in Berlin from 1948 to 1950. His reports of the situation with congregation members, Displaced Persons, and the *Gemeinde* have been published by Atina Grossman and reflect a Jewish community under stress, suffering from the war, the Holocaust, and forced migration. Schwarzschild did not see a future for himself or for modern Judaism in Germany and returned to the United States in order to start a family of his own and pursue an academic career.[24]

While the World Union did send another young refugee rabbi to Berlin, Nathan Peter Levinson, who was born there, his experiences fell in line with those of Schwarzschild. However, Levinson developed a long-term perspective, as he was repelled by the racism he had found in the American South and was not eager to return to the United States either. When the WUPJ gave up on financing his position in Berlin, he decided to serve as a rabbi for the US Army in Ramstein, in the West-German state *Rheinland-Pfalz* until 1953, when he decided to return to the United States to receive training as a military chaplain and join the US army. The idea was to stay in Germany with the support of the army, but this plan only materialized many years later after he had been stationed in Japan.

At the time, none of the returnees saw any chance of rebuilding the world they had known in Germany, an insight that was not only based on the fact of the material destruction that had occurred, but in particular on the significant demo-

23 Interview Jack Wertheimer and Steven Schwarzschild with Michael Munk, July 11, 1972, Records of the Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration AR 25385, LBI. While there were boys taking part from the Breuer community in Washington Heights, the camp attracted a variety of American Jewish participants. For todays Camp Munk, see https://www.munkmemories.com/.

24 Atina Grossmann, "Rabbi Steven Schwarzschild's Reports from Berlin, 1948–1950," *LBIY* 60 (2015): 237–42.

graphic and religious changes in German Jewish communities, most of whom were now composed of East European Holocaust survivors with no connection to the modern German Judaism that had flourished in Germany prior to 1933.[25]

The majority of refugee rabbis, however, were not compelled to seek a permanent return at that time. In the United States they quickly noted that language and the lack of a deep knowledge of European history and culture constituted a major hurdle in transferring European Jewish knowledge to their new environment. As students they had proudly engaged in academic work on German Jewry, as many of their rabbinical theses confirm.[26] They also made use of their quickly growing proficiency in English with their teachers and colleagues: Albert Friedlander translated Leo Baeck's book *Dieses Volk* (This People) into English. Nahum Glatzer, while not an ordained rabbi but a refugee scholar, made the first translations of the works of Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber for an English-speaking audience. And Alexander Altmann published the first English-language study of Moses Mendelssohn in 1973.[27]

For many years, refugees like Steven Schwarzschild and Nahum Glatzer drove the intellectual endeavors of a Judaism that felt dedicated to modern society as editors of the scholarly journal *Judaism* and steered an intellectual discourse on postwar Jewish renewal. Likewise, Walter Würzburger served as editor of *Tradition: A*

25 Jay Howard Geller, Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany, 1945–1953 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 17–52. See also Oral History Interview with Ernst Lorge, April 27, 1984, Accession Number: 1989.346.43, RG-50.031.0043, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn507473; see also Interview with Hermann Dicker, November 29, 1974, Nr. 119, 18 A and B, Oral History Division, Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, Avraham, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_snbQzYLmc&list=PLZEGL2eD5gA1tO02gEP-Al-yMaM_Xd1VF&index=36; see also W. Gunther Plaut, *Unfinished Business: An Autobiography* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1981), 141–46.

26 Steven Schwarzschild, Two Modern Jewish Philosophies of History: Nachman Krochmal and Hermann Cohen, DHL diss., Hebrew Union College, 1955; Walter Jacob, The Contemporary Jew in the German Novel and Short History, 1800–1914, DHL diss., Hebrew Union College Cincinnati, 1961; W. Gunther Plaut, Contributions to the History of German Jewry in the Eighteenth Cen tury, from Hebrew and Missionary Sources, rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1939; Wolfgang Hamburger, Abraham Geiger as Reformer and Theologian: First Phase, as presented in Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift fuer Jüdische Theologie, rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College Cincinnati, 1952; Robert Lehman, Herzl's Zionist Ideology, rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College,1954; Ismar Schorsch, Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870–1914, PhD diss., Columbia University, 1972; Walter Würzburger, Brentano's Theory of A Priori Judgments, PhD diss., Harvard University, 1951; Joshua Haberman, The Validation of Revelation, DHL diss., Hebrew Union College, 1966.

27 Alexander Altman, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (London: Routledge, 1973); see also Allan Arkush, "The Contribution of Alexander Altmann to the Study of Moses Mendelssohn," *LBIY* 34 (1989): 415–20.

Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought from 1962 until 1988 and steered scholarly exchanges on contemporary themes within the American Orthodox movement.[28]

Very quickly the refugee rabbis noticed that the identity of the modern Jew had a chance to survive, precisely because it was modern and not tied to a place but rather to its people and the agency they developed. The concept was portable. Nathan Peter Levinson described this idea in his autobiography *Ein Ort ist, mit wem Du bist* (A place is not a place, a place is whom you are with [John Steinbeck]). This signaled that reconstruction was dynamic, did not depend on Germany as a physical center, and could thrive through social and intellectual interaction and the engagement of those who survived.[29] As a logical result they stimulated the founding of Jewish Studies Departments at American universities in order to spread a critical scholarly approach to Judaism and Jewish history in the country where they had found a new home.[30]

The process of critically questioning German Jewry's assimilationist path had already started in the 1920s against the background of a growing antisemitism and Jewish renewal. The former was enforced by Nazism but built demand for active intellectual deliberations in the post-Holocaust era if modern Judaism was to be equipped for long-term survival.

Contemporary discourses, the *Zeitgeist*, and the unexpected challenges American Jewry was facing as the largest diaspora community and new center of Jewish life provided projective surfaces upon which to communicate the professional, theological, and cultural expertise these men had accrued prior to and during the rise of Nazism and publicly enhanced their appearance as "the last generation of the German rabbinate." More specifically, these men were able to cultivate their role as "the last generation" and develop as the guardians of a special legacy in their new American environment thanks to the opportunities that opened up with the emerging American Civil Rights Movement, the reaction to the Vietnam War, growing alienation within the American congregation, the efforts to make sense of the Holocaust through educational or memorial projects, the survival of modern Judaism, and the confrontation with post-war Germany.[31]

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28 "Prof. Stephen S. Schwarzschild Dies," *St. Louis Jewish Light* (December 6, 1989): 30 and Emanuel Feldman, "Editor's Introduction," *TRADITION* 23 (Summer 1988): ii–iv.

29 Nathan Peter Levinson, *Ein Ort ist, mit wem Du bist* (Berlin: Hentrich, 1996), 104.

30 See for example Michael Lorge and Gary Zola, "The Beginning of Union Institute in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, 1952–1970: Creation and Coalescence of the First UAHC Camp," in *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*, ed. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 52–71; for a broader perspective, especially regarding the refugee rabbis, see Wilhelm, *The Last Generation*, 149–56.

31 Wilhelm, *The Last Generation*, 136–78.

Their engagement opened up new ways for them, as modern Jews, to connect to and address both Jewish and non-Jewish Americans alike in the post-Holocaust years. Unlike their American colleagues, who had also taken a stand on many of the topics the refugees addressed, the refugee rabbis had been there, had stood side by side with their congregations in the darkest hour of Jewish history, and had confronted Nazism. Their presence made them a living link between history and the present, and they impressed many Americans with their desire for renewal. Their history and experience gave them unparalleled authenticity, charisma, and authority when they talked about the past and the present, about the societal and religious problems that existed then and now, and about their suggestions for Jewish answers to the crisis facing the modern Jew.[32]

The refugee rabbis—especially those who had already officiated in Germany before their emigration, a cohort born after 1895 or 1900—provided meaningful and authentic answers to their American congregants in the synagogue or in the religious movements of American Judaism. Unlike their American colleagues, these first-hand witnesses to Nazism had stood by their communities until they were forced to flee. They had already departed from the 19th-century model of the German rabbi, had political messages, and promoted Jewish peoplehood and history as part of their religion.

It was the personal approach, the intellectual aura, and the level of self-awareness that gave the leadership, knowledge, religious perspectives, and social activism of "the last generation" such a special touch and created such a sense of ethnic Jewish pride. They demonstrated that modern Judaism could connect to its traditions, contained eternal messages that would never lose their appeal, and could serve as an important resource for finding answers to contemporary problems facing modern Jews.

While they did not rise to leadership ranks in their respective religious movements, they gained importance in congregations and Jewish organizations. Besides knowledge and training, it was their history, experience, and tenacity in standing with their communities and their demonstration of unusual skill, credibility, and authenticity that made these men role models in their synagogues and the organizations for which they worked. Their past and their experiences in Germany never left them; these became a central vehicle—a sort of social (or religious) capital—with which to generate new meaning and support their new roles and leadership in American society. Their experience was valued precisely be-

32 David Jünger, "In the Presence of the Past: Rabbi Joachim Prinz, Holocaust Memory, and the Fight for Jewish Survival in Postwar America," in *Reconstructing the Old Country: American Jewry in the Post-Holocaust Decades*, ed. Eliyana Adler and Sheila Jelen (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 306–13.

cause American Jews increasingly viewed the German-Jewish diaspora experience as paradigmatic of their own diaspora situation and dedication to a distinctly modern Judaism.[33]

The sermons of Max Nussbaum masterfully connected ancient Jewish history with current challenges and discourses while making the Bible come alive. On Yom Kippur 1953, Nussbaum described to his congregants how the concepts of "chosenness" and "forgiveness" were connected and what they meant for the modern Jew in light of the covenant. Chosenness was not a social privilege but a moral obligation and called for service to others in the spirit of God, even if personal suffering resulted from upholding these ideals.[34]

Joachim Prinz was shocked by the large-scale absence of Jewish knowledge in his new congregation in New Jersey and made a serious effort to offer timely Jewish education beyond the standard services. He consciously sought to motivate American Jews to hear their call to embrace modern Judaism within the context of the American Civil Rights Movement, a movement that spoke to German Jewish refugees in a unique way. For Prinz, the rise of a Jewish state that curtailed the right of America's Jews to speak on behalf of world Jewry caused a huge crisis of modern pluralistic diaspora Judaism in America, and one that had to be corrected.[35]

Prinz and Nussbaum entered the political arena not only as rabbis and religious leaders but also as presidents of a number of secular Jewish representations (such as the American Jewish Congress, World Jewish Congress, the Zionist Organization of America, and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany).[36]

Abraham Joshua Heschel stepped into the political arena as a theologian, one who emphasized that religion was not limited to the spiritual realm, and called for intense societal and political engagement supported by the Hebrew Bible.[37] While Heschel is often categorized as representing an "East European" Jewish tradition because of his Hasidic family background, which undoubtedly is an impor-

33 Wilhelm, *The Last Generation*, 156.

34 Lewis M. Barth and Ruth Nussbaum, eds., *Max Nussbaum: From Berlin to Hollywood. A Mid-century Vision of Jewish Life* (Malibu: Pangloss, 1994), 82–90.

35 Jünger, "In the Presence of the Past."

36 Wilhelm, *German Refugee Rabbis after 1933*, https://mira.geschichte.lmu.de/10001 and https://mira.geschichte.lmu.de/10044.

37 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: JPS of America, 1951); see also Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Cudahy, 1955).

tant part of his theology, his scholarship must be understood as resulting from his encounter with modern rationalism and modern Judaism.[38]

His mélange of traditional Hasidic Judaism and spirituality and a systematic philosophy of religion spoke to American Jews precisely because of its unusual blend of tradition and modernity. He wanted man to maintain "faith" in modern religion, which he considered essential to reintroducing the reality of God to modern-day life. In this theological model, God not only spoke to a person, but a person would also be in close communication with God and find answers to pressing current problems, guidance, and encouragement for political and social action. Putting the Hebrew prophets at the center of his theology, as he had already explored in his dissertation in Berlin, Heschel claimed that their texts reminded all people to speak out for the voiceless, the poor, and the oppressed, and encouraged social justice and political agitation as the result of the conversation between God and humankind.[39]

Like many of his refugee-colleagues, Heschel was very committed to interfaith dialogue, which they all found a necessary step to work toward a better pluralistic society with more respect and solidarity among religious groups, something they had gravely lacked in Germany.

A major factor of the future of American Jewish religious movements was that it had a younger age-cohort, most of whom had received their education in the United States and grew up as Americans with a refugee background. They were still affected by a unique professional ethos, experiences in the German youth movement, and the feeling of loss of a community, even as they grew up as Americans.[40]

Across all religious movements in American Judaism, they transformed Judaism's accessibility and meaning for America's next generation of Jews. Having themselves enjoyed programs especially geared to the youth of the 1920s, including a specially trained youth rabbinate, and a vast variety of Jewish youth movements (*Weiss-Blau, Kadimah, Wanderbund, die Kameraden, Ezra*), they developed programs in the United States that built on the connection of Jewish education, camaraderie, community, and character formation. Their learning concepts left traditional hierarchical notions behind and built on agency, exploration, and joint study. The outdoors, camping, hiking, and scouting were part of their concept,

38 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Das prophetische Bewusstsein* (Kraków: Verlag der Polnische Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1935 also PhD diss., Berlin, 1935); his dissertation was published in English in 1962: Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

39 See footnote 38.

40 See for example Eric Lidji, *The Seventeenth Generation: The Lifework of Rabbi Walter Jacob* (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Press, 2018), 62–68.

which revolutionized American Jewish youth work in a major way and raised curiosity about a new Jewish lifestyle. While they particularly impacted the American Reform movement, they also affected the Hillel campus organization, B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO), and the Orthodox Young Israel Movement.[41]

The Leo Baeck Institute, originally founded as a research institution to preserve the memory of German Jewry, turned into a central platform for highlighting the role models, institutions, and experiences of German Jewry and for analyzing why the once promising German-Jewish experiment had failed. This included reflecting on their own role in this process.[42] Unsurprisingly, the refugee rabbis were intensely involved from the beginning in setting up and supporting the institution as members, such as Leo Baerwald, Nahum Glatzer, Max Grünewald, Alfred Jospe, and Dagobert D. Nellhaus, with some serving the institution as presidents, like Rabbi Max Grünewald and Ismar Schorsch.

Frequently trained as historians, the refugee rabbis dedicated their energies to reflections on their own experience, their role models, their institutions, and their professional profiles during the initial years of the institute's existence.[43] The list of examples of such figures' active participation in writing their own history and shaping their memory is long and continues until this day. Their understanding of Judaism and their concept of history was dynamic, it had a scholarly perspective, and the study and research of German-Jewish history was more than just an effort to chronicle an extinct community from a lost time and place.[44]

41 Wilhelm, *The Last Generation*, 132, 150–56.

42 Max Gruenewald, "The Beginning of the 'Reichsvertretung'," *LBIY* 1 (1956): 57–67; Nahum N. Glatzer, "The Frankfurt Lehrhaus," *LBIY* 1 (1956): 105–22; Alexander Altmann, "Jewish Theology in 20th Century Germany," *LBIY* 1 (1956): 193–216; Wolfgang Hamburger, "Teacher in Berlin and Cincinnati," *LBIY* 2 (1957): 27–34; Kurt Wilhelm, "The Jewish Community in the Post-Emancipation Period," *LBIY* 2 (1957): 47–75; Max Gruenewald, "The Modern Rabbi," *LBIY* 2 (1957): 85–97; Adolf Kober, "150 Years of Religious Instruction," *LBIY* 2 (1957): 98–118; Fritz Bamberger, "Julius Guttmann: Philosopher of Judaism," *LBIY* 5 (1960): 3–34; Nahum N. Glatzer, "Leopold Zunz and the Revolution of 1948: With Four Letters by Leopold Zunz," *LBIY* 5 (1960): 122–39; Leo Adler, "Israelitische Religionsgemeinschaft of Wurttemberg: Development and Changes," *LBIY* 5 (1960): 251–61; Alexander Carlebach, "A German Rabbi Goes East," *LBIY* 6 (1961): 60–121; Alexander Altmann, "The German Rabbi, 1910–1939," *LBIY* 19 (1974): 31–49; Alfred Jospe, "A Profession in Transition: The German Rabbinate, 1910–1939," *LBIY* 19 (1974): 51–61; Max Gruenewald, "The Jewish Teacher in Germany," *LBIY* 19 (1974): 71–76; Ismar Schorsch, "German Anti-Semitism in the Light of Post-War Historiography," *LBIY* 19 (1974): 257–71; Emil Schorsch, "The Rural Jew: Observations on the Paper of Werner J. Cahnman," *LBIY* 19 (1974): 131–35. Fritz Bamberger, who joined the faculty of Hebrew Union College in New York in 1962, also contributed to this volume: Fritz Bamberger, "The Arden House Conference: 'Exploring a Typology of German Jewry'," *LBIY* 19 (1974): 3–10.

43 See footnote 42.

44 See footnote 42.

This younger cohort among the refugees, those trained and ordained in the United States, had a significant impact on the religious movements in American Judaism, particularly on the American Reform movement. The mix of Jewish knowledge they had acquired in Europe and the education they had received in the United States equipped them with a unique self-awareness and cultural hybridity that allowed them to bridge the dichotomy between the German past and an American future in a special way.

Gunther Plaut, Alexander Schindler, Hermann Schaalmann, Ismar Schorsch, Walter Gottschalk, Jakob Petuchowsky, Walter Jacob, Walter Würzburger, and Leon Feldman were among those who drew from these assets when defining their leadership in their respective religious movements. They had a lasting impact on American Judaism because they combined traditional knowledge with a progressive outlook and modern scholarship and turned Judaism into more than just a religion. In their hands, modern Judaism developed into a richly meaningful, contemporary, and lively experience of community, a lifestyle and informed attitude (*Haltung*) that spoke to American Jews in a new and unusual way, even within the Orthodox community.[45]

From the 1970s on to the millennium, they played important roles in American Judaism. Walter Würzburger, the Harvard trained orthodox rabbi-scholar served as president of the Rabbinical Council of America, while Alexander Schindler headed the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) as its president for 23 years, from 1973 to 1996.[46] Herman Schaalman was president of the CCAR from 1981 to 1983, and W. Gunther Plaut served the same organization as vice president until 1985, while Walter Jacob headed that organization from 1992 to 1994. Alfred Gottschalk (president and chancellor of Hebrew Union College from 1971 to the early 2000s) and Ismar Schorsch (chancellor of JTS for 18 years) played a central role in preparing both movements and their schools for the 21st century.[47]

Even though a return to Germany did not seem to be an option for most of them, for a long time temporary visits to West Germany were not unusual, especially, if the rabbis came as spokesmen for American Jewish secular organizations and visited on behalf of post-Holocaust businesses. Such visits offered an opportunity for intense political encounters in the light of history and allowed very open and sometimes critical conversations, which launched an important dialogue that

45 Wilhelm, *The Last Generation*, 25, 27–28, 113, 210.

46 Cornelia Wilhelm, *German Refugee Rabbis after 1933*, https://mira.geschichte.lmu.de/10170 and https://mira.geschichte.lmu.de/10042.

47 Wilhelm, *German Refugee Rabbis after 1933*, https://mira.geschichte.lmu.de/10073; https://mira.geschichte.lmu.de/10051; https://mira.geschichte.lmu.de/10036; https://mira.geschichte.lmu.de/10143.

guided West Germany's difficult path to becoming a modern pluralistic democracy.

Refugee returns also took place for post-war synagogue dedications, commemorations of the pogrom of November 9, 1938, and visits to the communities whom they served as the last rabbis before destruction—often based on invitations either from the German Foreign Office or from civic representatives of German cities. The "last generation of the German rabbinate" was increasingly involved in programs for Holocaust education and attempts to launch and support Jewish Studies programs in Germany in an effort to educate the next generation of Germans about Jews and Judaism in a more efficient way and pave the way for a different relationship between Germans and Jews.[48]

A unique turn in their relationship with Germany was launched by new and unexpected friendships, joint projects, the exciting rediscovery of their own roots, and a late victory over history after the destruction of the rabbinical seminaries in 1938, when the American Reform movement under the leadership of Rabbi Walter Jacob succeeded in founding the Abraham-Geiger-Kolleg in Potsdam in 1999. The establishment and integration of this liberal rabbinical seminary in a theological faculty at the University of Potsdam represented not just a return of modern Judaism to the country of its birth, introducing for the first time since 1938 a liberal rabbinical seminary to the European continent, but also corrected the historical birth defect of rabbinical training in Germany. Unlike its historic precursors, the new seminary was no longer humiliated by the exclusion of rabbinical training from theological faculties at state universities but was placed within a Jewish School of Theology at a German state university, just like Christian theological faculties. This created hope that a heritage long believed to be lost might be successfully taught to new generations of liberal rabbis from Germany. While this school has delivered a number of graduates to a growing and increasingly diverse Jewish community in Germany and Central Europe, the Conservative movement founded the Zacharias Frankel College[49] at the same university to train Conservative rabbis in Germany; in a similar fashion, a new Orthodox Rabbinerseminar zu Berlin[50] has also been founded.

The history of the German refugee rabbis highlights the long-term impact that the experience of Nazism and the Holocaust had on this cohort of Jewish leadership in their personal and professional lives. While the Holocaust had destroyed a whole culture of Jewish knowledge and a unique tradition, its recon-

48 Wilhelm, *The Last Generation*, 179–207.

49 Zacharias Frankel College, http://zacharias-frankel-college.de.

50 Rabbinerseminar zu Berlin, https://rabbinerseminar.de.

struction, re-examination, and re-organization in the post-Holocaust world gave them an unexpected agency and a leading role in the effort to open a new chapter for modern Judaism. Given the fact that forced migration and the loss of families, homes, and their European intellectual centers left a major mark on their lives, it sometimes took years to take the first steps in reconstructing their own professional lives and careers. Only then could they start exploring broader initiatives that reached into society and their religious movements.

Most important for their integration into American Judaism and the cultural transfers that followed was acknowledgement and authorization by the American Jewish religious movements that absorbed them, or by other organizations that employed them in the long run. Such authorization was strongest within the American Reform movement, where the German refugees, students as well as professors, had a large presence into the 1960s. On the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College in particular, the conviction seems to have prevailed that the refugees were not just new immigrants but the banner bearers of a tradition that had essentially contributed to Jewish history and growth writ large, and which would be necessary for its survival and development in the years to come. A precious relic of a lost civilization, they were supported by the college and its institutions without reservation. More difficult was the relationship of the American Orthodox movement toward established German-Jewish rabbis, who did not feel at home in the rabbinical school, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) of Yeshiva University, and were vice versa, also not seen as a good match as professors for American Orthodoxy there. As a result, only few were considered there until a "second generation" which had been educated at Yeshiva University, became visible as professors there. Nevertheless, the university did rescue a number of German scholars for its college and general studies program and also trained refugee children, some of whom took on important leadership positions as rabbis of the movement later in their lives.

The rabbis' cultural transfers did not just reproduce and preserve concepts of the past. Instead, they explored venues to develop Judaism in a timely fashion, in a new environment, and under challenging and changing conditions. The very nature of this Judaism that was able to adapt to changes in place and time supported such actions. Their past and their experiences resonated in their actions and in their careers and made possible the revival and growth of a Judaism that defined itself at the center of a modern society in the post-war world.

The agency the refugees gained in this process was important and empowering. For many, such activity embraced a late confrontation with the past and the country of their birth, Germany. Therefore, refugee returns and a confrontation

with people, places, and Judaism there were an essential part of the refugees' lives and careers. Here, the knowledge transfer was once again reversed and the late founding of new rabbinical schools in the tradition of their forcibly closed precursors was an act that, by the end of the refugee rabbis' lives, symbolized the achievement of a late victory over history.

Tony Kushner

From Mauritius to Rwanda via the Kindertransport: Remembering and Forgetting Forced Migration in the UK

Gary Lineker was a presenter on the world's most successful and longest running football program, the BBC's *Match of the Day*.[1] In his earlier professional career as an immensely successful poacher in the six-yard box, Lineker scored 238 goals at club level, mainly for his beloved Leicester City, the town where he grew up. He also totaled 48 goals for England, making him at the time of his international retirement in 1992 the second highest scorer in its footballing history.[2] Such soccer trivia may seem an odd way to start a chapter on forced migration, memory, and the Holocaust. Yet Lineker, an undoubted English national treasure, has been described by Mathew Goodwin, who has written extensively on the British far right, Brexit, and immigration and was professor of politics at the University of Kent, as a leading member of the "new elite"—indeed, as part of a "woke aristocracy" that runs Britain.[3] Lineker, according to one columnist (the content editor of the London *Evening Standard*), is the "famed Twitter Saint and self-elected MP for Virtue Signalling" and "an arch-hypocrite who talks Left but often lives Right."[4] In reality, Lineker is a gentle if astute commentator on football. He is known more for teasing his former rival striker Alan Shearer, who, despite his much higher goal tally, never won the FA Cup, and for Lineker's excruciating schoolboy puns at the end of *Match of the Day*. Why on earth, then, do Goodwin and others present Lineker as part of a left-liberal plot determined to undermine

1 Details on "Match of the Day," accessed February 19, 2024, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007t9y1.

2 Colin Malam, *Gary Lineker: Strikingly Different. A Biography* (London: Stanley Paul, 1993). Lineker is still (in 2024) the fourth highest England scorer.

3 Matthew Goodwin, "Nothing Better Illustrates how out of touch Britain's New Elite are with the rest of us than Gary Lineker furore," accessed February 19, 2024, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11874239. For his wider intervention against "woke" politics, see Matthew Goodwin, *Values, Voice and Virtue: The New British Politics* (London: Penguin, 2023). For critical comment, see Kenan Malik, "This obsession with a "new elite" hides the real roots of power," *Observer*, March 17, 2023.

4 Anna Van Praagh, "Lineker has now been endorsed by Hamas and that's a big problem for the BBC," accessed February 19, 2024, https://www.standard.co.uk/comment/gary-lineker-bbc-social-media-hamas-israel-b1132640.html.

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the UK, especially as Lineker himself has eschewed party politics and makes no secret of having voted "all ways" in past General Elections?[5]

The immediate answer, rather than a football purist's gripe against the type of opportunist goals Lineker scored, is Goodwin's anger at a tweet posted by the broadcaster in March 2023.[6] In it Lineker highlighted the dangers of the language used by Home Secretary Suella Braverman about forced migrants coming to England in small boats across the Channel. Using the language of Enoch Powell (the leading Conservative party shadow cabinet minister sacked in 1968 for his notorious and racially inflammatory "Rivers of Blood" speech), who, ironically, would have wanted to repatriate her Indian-origin migrant parents or barred them from entry,[7] Braverman argued that those coming to the UK were largely criminals whose culture was totally incompatible with that of the English. Several times in her brief stays as Home Secretary (September 2022 to November 2023 with a brief interregnum in October 2022), Braverman had said that Britain was being "invaded" by those coming on the small boats.[8] Even though the number of such incoming immigrants has gone up to around 40,000 per annum, this needs to be put in the context of the very few asylum seekers reaching the UK via other routes. In fact, the UK is well down the international league table for refugee entry.[9] Braverman believed those coming in were "jumping the queue"—a phrase I will return to later—which is somewhat laughable given the reality that there is no asylum line to join to get into Britain.[10] She outlined her vision to the right-wing *Daily Telegraph* in October 2022 at the time of the Conservative party conference. Here she shared her "dream," one that would have had Martin Luther King spinning in his grave. Rather than King's "dream that one day on the red hills of

5 Charlotte Edwardes, interview with Gary Lineker, *The Guardian*, January 20, 2024.

6 This was posted on Lineker's Twitter account (now "X"), on March 7, 2023, accessed February 19, 2024, https://twitter.com/GaryLineker/status/1633094764865126400?lang=en.

7 Shirin Hirsch, *In the Shadow of Enoch Powell: Race, locality and resistance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

8 Braverman warned about an "invasion" of the south coast by asylum seekers. BBC News, November 1, 2022, "Minister warns on language after Suella Braverman "invasion" comment," accessed April 4, 2024, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-63466532. In October 2023, at the Conservative Party conference, she warned that "a hurricane was coming" of illegal migrants. Sky News, October 3, 2023, accessed February 19, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=−0YoweDL-2Y.

9 "Asylum in Europe," Refugee Council, June 2022, https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Asylum-in-Europe-June-2022.pdf.

10 This was in a *Sky* Breakfast interview with Kay Burley, March 8, 2023. This was reported in *The Independent*, "Suella Braverman says UK 'can't go on' taking in people who 'jump the queue'," March 8, 2023, accessed February 22, 2024, https://www.independent.co.uk/tv/news/suella-braverman-migrants-asylum-policy-b2296378.html.

Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood," Braverman's aspiration was sordid and prejudiced, involving the use of Rwanda in East Africa as a place to send asylum seekers as a deterrent to others considering coming to the UK. "I would love to be having a front page of the *Telegraph* with a plane taking off to Rwanda [with asylum seekers]. That's my dream, it's an obsession." This was a prelude to the government putting forward its "Illegal Migration Bill" which, despite much opposition from the upper chamber, became law in 2023.[11]



Fig. 1: "Stop Rwanda" demonstration, Royal Courts of Justice, London, September 5, 2022, London, JCORE+HIAS collection.

Gary Lineker told his close to nine million twitter followers that the government's migration and asylum policy was "immeasurably cruel" and that Braverman's language was "not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the 30s."[12] This comparison led to anger from those on the right but also much support for Lineker, who has long defended and helped refugees. Taunted on social media that "You wouldn't

11 Lizzie Dearden, "Suella Braverman says it is her 'dream' and 'obsession' to see a flight take asylum seekers to Rwanda," *The Independent*, October 5, 2022, accessed February 19, 2024, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/suella-braverman-rwanda-dream-obsession-b2195296.html. The Illegal Migration Act, accessed February 20, 2024, https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-migration-bill.

12 Gary Lineker tweet, October 5, 2022, accessed February 20, 2024, https://twitter.com/GaryLineker/status/1633094764865126400?lang=en.

have them in your house, though, would you?," he signed up for the Refugees at Home charity.[13] Lineker opted for their "emergency foster service," which was for those in acute need of a short-term stay and hosted two young men, one from Turkey and the other from Balochistan.[14] For those determined to undermine Lineker's moral credibility, that was not enough—ignoring the temporary nature of "emergency fostering," it was asked: "could they have stayed longer?"[15] Such comments reflect a wider tendency: for those prejudiced against refugees, convoluted arguments are made to maintain the moral high ground. In what became known as the "Lineker affair," the BBC, fearing that the Conservative government would punish it with further and much threatened cuts, took Gary Lineker off the air and suspended him from *Match of the Day*.[16] His fellow former footballer pundits, including Alan Shearer and both male and female players, black and white, walked out in an act of unity, leading to the cancellation of all BBC soccer coverage.[17] In the face of such solidarity, the BBC relented and Lineker was restored.[18]

The relevance of this story to this volume is that Lineker's short tweet prompted a battle over history with the Holocaust and past refugee policy at its center. As the commentator David Aaronovitch noted, it seemed that "All of a sudden everyone was a historian."[19] It is telling that Lineker did not specifically reference Jews and confined his comments to the 1930s before the "Final Solution" had been implemented. Yet the discussion of whether Lineker's comments were valid or not focused solely on the Jews and the Holocaust. The Conservatives wheeled out Braverman's husband, who happened to be Jewish, and two ministers of Jewish origin—Grant Shapps and Robert Jenrick (more on him later)—to say how inappropriate and offensive his comments were.[20] The chief executive of

13 "Refugees at Home," accessed February 20, 2024, https://refugeesathome.org/.

14 Charlotte Edwardes, interview with Gary Lineker where he described them as "Really lovely guys. Amazing stories."

15 Anna Van Praagh, "Lineker has now been endorsed by Hamas and that's a big problem for the BBC" *Evening Standard*, January 17, 2024.

16 Jim Waterson, "Lineker suspended from BBC over social media row," *The Guardian*, March 11, 2023.

17 Vanessa Thorpe, Michael Savage, and Toby Helm, "Lineker row threatens to topple BBC chiefs and hit asylum plan," *The Observer*, March 12, 2023, and Jessica Elgot, Josh Halliday, and Aubrey Allegretti, "BBC bosses in race to end Lineker standoff and avoid staff rebellion," *The Guardian*, March 13, 2023.

18 BBC News, March 19, 2023, "Match of the Day: 'Great to be here', says Lineker as he makes TV return," accessed February 20, 2024, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-65003113.

19 David Aaronovitch, "Is it always wrong to make comparisons to 1930s Nazi Germany?" *Jewish Chronicle*, March 24, 2023.

20 See, for example, Grant Shapps, MP, tweet March 8, 2023, https://twitter.com/grantshapps/status/1633450092312031232?lang=en.

the Holocaust Education Trust (HET), Karen Pollock, wrote an opinion piece in *The Times* urging "caution from everyone when considering reference to this period of history to make any point . . . Comparing . . . current concerns to the almost unimaginable horrors of the Nazi period is wrong."[21] There is a certain irony in the logic of such a statement that the government-backed HET has, as its principal aim, "to ensure that people from every background are educated about the Holocaust and *the important lessons to be learnt for today*" [my emphasis].[22]

In terms of historical awareness, it is significant that in the media storm erupting from the "Lineker affair" there were no references to other groups persecuted by the Nazis during the 1930s such as Roma and Sinti, the mentally and physically disabled who by the outbreak of war had already suffered mass murder through the T4 euthanasia scheme, those on the left and trade unionists, Jehovah Witnesses, homosexuals, and so on.[23] Where there was support for Lineker in his evocation of history related to British policy and wider responses to refugees during the 1930s. To Kenan Malik, who had just completed a book on race thinking in the modern world,[24] the echo between the migration debate and that in the 1930s was not directly related to the Nazis, "but Britain's shameful response to Jewish refugees." Indeed, Malik went even earlier than the Nazi era. Malik referenced how those Jews coming from Eastern Europe before the First World War were not seen as genuine refugees but were an "alien invasion," paupers who would take the bread out of the mouths of the British.[25]

That Malik and others were aware of this deeper anti-refugee media and political discourse reflects that the works of scholars such as myself and Louise London over the past few decades has made some impact in certain pro-migrant, liberal, and radical quarters in the UK.[26] That popular historical knowledge,

21 Karen Pollock, "Let's Calm Down, Remember History and Keep Nazi Comparisons out of political rhetoric," *The Times*, March 10, 2023, accessed February 20, 2024, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/lets-calm-down-remember-history-and-keep-nazi-comparisons-out-of-political-rhetoric-j3vck2qs8.

22 Holocaust Educational Trust, accessed February 20, 2024, https://www.het.org.uk/about/work.

23 Michael Berenbaum, ed., *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis* (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

24 Kenan Malik, *Not So Black and White: A History of Race from White Supremacy to Identity Politics* (London: Hurst, 2023).

25 Kenan Malik, "'Stop the boats' does echo the language of the 30s – but those words were English," *The Observer*, March 19, 2023.

26 Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Louise London, "Whitehall and the Refugees: the 1930s and the 1990s," *Patterns of Prejudice* 34.3 (2000): 17–26. For similar

however, is patchy and sometimes confused. One letter writer, for example, showed off his knowledge of the Holocaust by noting that "Germany at one time considered sending Jews to Madagascar. Our government wants to send refugees to Rwanda. QED."[27] As we know, historians differ over whether the Madagascar scheme was seriously considered by the Nazis or not. If it was, the intention was not to find a new home for the Jews but a way of carrying out their destruction, knowing it was not a place that they could survive in any numbers.[28] The British government has considered a variety of different places to send asylum seekers in order to put them off thinking of coming to the UK, rather than killing them off. Rwanda is the only country that has agreed and has done so for the financial incentives offered. It did so in an earlier agreement with Israel—an agreement discontinued because it was unsuccessful and failed to provide adequate protection, forcing the asylum seekers "to continue their journeys in search of a safe haven," putting their lives at great peril in the process.[29]

It could be argued that the best historical parallel, although one that is now little known, was the use of Mauritius during the Second World War by the British authorities in Mandate Palestine. Sending what were victims who had escaped an ongoing genocide who had reached Palestine to this Indian Ocean island, some 2,000 kilometres from the coast of East Africa,[30] was an exercise used by the Colonial Office to deter what it had bureaucratically constructed as "illegal Jewish immigrants." Indeed, during the Second World War, leading Colonial Office figures believed, as one of them was convinced, that "illegal [Jewish] immigration [was] a conspiracy against the declared policy of His Majesty's Government and against

approaches looking at history and memory in the treatment of refugees today, see Philip Marfleet, "Refugees and History: Why we must address the past," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 26.2 (2007): 136–48; Klaus Neumann, "Uses and abuses of refugee histories," in *Refugee Journeys: Histories of Resettlement, Representation and Resistance*, ed. Jordana Silverstein and Rachel Stevens (Canberra: ANU Press, 2021), 211–29.

27 Mike Johnson, letter to *The Guardian*, March 14, 2023. In fact, Madagascar was discussed as a potential place for Jewish refugees to be sent to at the Anglo-American Bermuda refugee conference in 1943. See Sebastian Musch and Annika Heyen, "The Bermuda Conference in April 1943: Allied politics, Jewish organisations and the emergence of the international migration regime," *Holocaust Studies* 30.2 (2024): 290–307 (299). See also Annika Heyen's contribution to this volume.

28 Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on the Launching of the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

29 S. Shoham, L. Bolzman, and L. Birger, "Moving under Threats: The Treacherous Journeys of Refugees who 'Voluntary' Departed from Israel to Rwanda and Uganda and Reached Europe" (2018), accessed February 20, 2024, https://blogs.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies/blog/2018/10/moving-under. This report is based on ethnographic research of those who were pushed out of Rwanda and neighbouring Uganda.

30 Aaron Zwergbaum, "Exile in Mauritius," *Yad Vashem Studies* 4 (1960): 191–257.

the law of Palestine." Only deportation of Jewish refugees reaching Palestine's shores could help in "suppressing the traffic."[31]

Connecting the word "illegal" to "immigration" has a surprisingly short history. It was used a little, but not systematically, in the USA during the 1920s in relation to Chinese and Jewish migrants attempting to break racist quota and other discriminatory legislation.[32] It was only in 1933 that it became a state-constructed discourse as the British authorities tried to differentiate those Jews allowed into Palestine officially and those to whom the Zionist organisations referred as "clandestine" migrants—they realised that labelling them "illegal" was as much a cultural battle as a legislative one. Illegal Jewish immigrants were accused of jumping the queue—a French word but a concept that is seen as quintessential to Englishness (it is in that context that Braverman had attempted to differentiate asylum seekers from those at "home"). As quotas against Jews got tighter as the 1930s progressed, "illegal" immigration to Palestine grew, with official entry being effectively ended at the outbreak of war. A series of journeys involving increasingly unseaworthy vessels occurred from 1940 onwards, with some of those who managed to reach Palestine sent on to Mauritius as punishment/deterrent.[33] When the *Salvador* sank late in 1940 carrying over 200 Jewish refugees, including 70 children, who had escaped the grasp of the Nazis, a senior Foreign Office official wrote to his colleagues that "There could have been no more opportune disaster from the point of view of stopping this traffic."[34]

No doubt with their newfound identification with commemorating the Holocaust, successive Conservative governments from 2010 onwards and their anti-migrant Home Secretaries (of which Braverman was only the most performative in her prejudice) would regard such utterly insensitive comments unsuitable as a "usable past" in their attempt to keep the UK asylum seeker free. Instead, they have attempted to justify restrictionism by comparing the "genuine" refugees of the past, especially those fleeing Nazism, with the "bogus" asylum seekers of the present. Braverman, in a much heralded and reported speech to the American Enterprise Institute (a neo-conservative think tank) in September 2023, de-

31 H.F. Downie to T. Snow, February 8, 1941, CO 733/445/16, National Archives United Kingdom (hereafter as NAUK). More generally in relation to construction of the term "Jewish illegal immigration" in British Mandate Palestine from 1933 onwards, see Tony Kushner, *Journeys from the Abyss: The Holocaust and forced migration from the 1880s to the* present (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), chapter 4.

32 Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

33 More generally in relation to construction of the term "Jewish illegal immigration" in British Mandate Palestine from 1933 onwards, see Kushner, *Journeys from the Abyss*, chapter 4.

34 T.M. Snow, minute, December 17, 1940, FO 371/25242 W12451, NAUK.

nounced multiculturalism and pronounced that the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees was "outdated":

> It was created to help resettle people fleeing persecution following the horrors of World War Two and the Holocaust, and was initially, at least, centered around Europe. It was an incredible achievement of its age. But more than 70 years on, we now live in a completely different time.[35]

Rather than the island of Mauritius and the transfer of Holocaust survivors there by the British Mandate government, the past that *has* been evoked regularly in the UK with regard to the Holocaust and contemporary refugees, both inside and outside parliament, is the *Kindertransport*. Well-reported at the time, the arrival of roughly 10,000 children to the UK from December 1938 until the outbreak of war became obscure after the war until reunions were organized of the former young refugees from the late 1980s onwards.[36] Slowly it has become celebrated as an act of generosity and an example to follow—despite the limitations of the scheme, in which the children were separated from their parents and their treatment varied immensely, sometimes including economic and sexual abuse.[37] At the public level, however, any nuance in the memory of the *Kindertransport* has been lost, as was articulated in 2015 when the government announced over £100 million to create a UK Holocaust Memorial. The aim in *Britain's Promise to Remember* was

> Ensuring that the memory and the lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten lies at the heart of Britain's values as a nation. In commemorating the Holocaust, Britain remembers the way it proudly stood up to Hitler and provided a home to tens of thousands of survivors and refugees, including almost 10,000 children who came on the Kindertransports.[38]

The *Kindertransport* was used repeatedly as a historical example in 2015/16 when the UK, in contrast to Germany especially, and other countries, largely failed to respond to the enormity of the Syrian refugee crisis. Since Keir Starmer became leader of the Labour party in 2020, its response on asylum and migration issues

35 Keynote address to the American Enterprise Institute, September 26, 2023, accessed February 22, 2024, https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/230926-Keynote-Address-by-UK-Home-Secretary-Suella-Braverman-Transcript.pdf?x91208.

36 For the pattern of *Kindertransport* memory, see Kushner, *Remembering refugees*, chapter 4.

37 For recent, more critical, literature, see Jennifer Craig-Norton, *The Kindertransport: Contesting Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019) and Andrea Hammel, *The Kindertransport: What Really Happened* (London: Polity, 2024).

38 Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission Report, January 2015, accessed February 22, 2024, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7e51c1e5274a2e8ab47401/Holocaust_Commission_Report_Britains_promise_to_remember.pdf.

has been extremely cautious—it critiqued the Conservative's Illegal Migration Bill on the grounds that it would not work and would be expensive, rather than on the argument that it was ethically flawed.[39] In 2015, however, it showed greater moral certainty, repeatedly using the *Kindertransport* to attack the government's limited response to the international refugee crisis.

The Cameron government offered entry to 20,000 Syrians over 5 years. In 2015, acting leader of the Labour party, Harriet Harman, in the House of Commons, critiqued David Cameron, calling instead for a new child refugee scheme:

> We should not be talking about refugees as being a "burden" on us. Among the Syrian children we [should] take in now will be the future consultants at our hospitals besides the entrepreneurs who will build our economy, the professors in our universities and those who will be among the strongest upholders of British values, because that has been the story of refugees to this country – whether it be the Jewish children of the Kindertransport, the Asian families driven out of east Africa 20 years later or the Sierra Leoneans fleeing a brutal civil war.[40]

It was said of child refugee, Judith Kerr, who wrote some of the most loved children's stories in postwar Britain, that had she "never written anything longer than a note to the milkman it would still have been right to shelter her family from the Nazis."[41] Likewise, Harman, having outlined that refugees can be a great asset, corrected any impression that this was the reason to be generous again. Harman stated clearly that support for those movements she outlined was simply justified by the fact that "it was the right thing to do."[42] Worried that his and the government's ethical reputation might be damaged, Cameron responded tamely that some of the 20,000 Syrians Britain had pledged to let in (in fact that number was never reached) would include some children and these would be "the modern equivalent of the Kindertransport and this country should be proud of that."[43] When it came to asylum seekers who had managed to reach the migrant camps around Calais,

39 "Yvette Cooper Illegal Migration Bill statement," March 7, 2023, PolicyMogul, accessed February 22, 2024, https://policymogul.com/key-updates/27360/yvette-cooper-illegal-migration-bill-statement-and-labour-s-five-point-plan-to-reform-the-asylum-system.

40 *Hansard* (House of Commons debate), "Syria: refugees and counter-terrorism," September 7, 2015, vol. 599, col. 27.

41 Gaby Hinsliff, "Judith Kerr's life is something to celebrate in dark times," *Guardian*, May 25, 2019. Kerr was the author of children's classics such as *When Tiger Came for Tea* and *Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*.

42 *Hansard* (House of Commons debate), "Syria: refugees and counter-terrorism," September 7, 2015, vol. 599, col. 27.

43 *Hansard* (House of Commons debate), "Syria: refugees and counter-terrorism," September 7, 2015, vol. 599, col. 34.

however, any attempt to connect to the *Kindertransport* was rejected. Those in such camps could not be compared to those escaping "genocidal hatred" and, rather than being children at great risk, they were, according to the mass circulation British tabloids and Tory MPs, liars of military age—rather than young innocents, they were a menace to security and the well-being of the nation. The mass circulation tabloid *The Sun* claimed that the child refugees reaching the UK from the migrant camps on the French coast were "strapping, hairy-chested blokes in their late teens or 20s . . . There's not a young child, or a female of any age, among them."[44] In 2016, Gary Lineker was one of many campaigners who responded to this campaign: "The treatment by some towards these young refugees is hideously racist and utterly heartless. What's happening to our country?"[45]

So far, the memory of forced migration in British history has generally not succeeded in modifying the hostile environment to refugees, and even those long-settled in the country, of which David Cameron, alongside Teresa May, were the true architects.[46] It built on the Enoch Powell-inspired foundation established by Margaret Thatcher, who notoriously feared that Britain was going to be "swamped by people of a different culture."[47] History, or rather a mythological version of it, still matters, however, in justifying the moral necessity of control, and it was illustrated in the parliamentary debates on the Illegal Migration Bill during 2023, when the UK was (and is at the time of writing) boldly threatening to ignore international law in its determination to fulfil the dystopian vision of Suella Braverman.

In some ways the debate in parliament, certainly its upper chamber on which the following analysis will concentrate, represented progress. Baroness Chakrabarti, a left-wing labor peer, provided a more complex history than that offered by Harriet Harman some eight years earlier, though using exactly the same examples. Chakrabarti started her intervention, introducing herself as "both the child of migrants and as a human rights lawyer," by stating clearly that a "convention refugee can never – I repeat, never – be illegal." Low points in the UK's record, Chakrabarti acknowledged, included "Home Office obstruction of

44 "They're kidding," *The Sun*, October 19, 2016. It attempted to "prove" such allegations by investigative dentistry. See Jack Royston and James Mills, "Tell us the tooth," *The Sun*, October 19, 2016.

45 Gary Lineker tweet, October 18, 2016, accessed February 22, 2024, https://twitter.com/GaryLineker/status/788407048031600640?lang=en.

46 Maya Goodfellow, *Hostile Environment: How Immigrants Became Scapegoats* (London: Verso, 2019).

47 In an interview of January 27, 1978, Granada Television, "World in Action." There are slightly varying transcripts, which are provided by the Margaret Thatcher Organisation, accessed February 22, 2024, https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103485.

safe passage for so many fleeing the Nazis; the racist treatment of the east African Asians in 1968." She did not ignore "proud moments" but acknowledged overall "our mixed record."[48]

Harder hitting still was the Liberal Democrat peer, Baroness Kramer, whose mother was a Hungarian Jewish refugee. First, Kramer criticized Robert Jenrick, then Minister of State for Immigration, who had recently stated that illegal migrants would "cannibalize the compassion of the British public," undermining its cohesiveness through their different culture. Jenrick, like those who attacked Gary Lineker, claimed to be protective of the British public and refused to accept that people could be genuinely sympathetic and supportive of those escaping persecution. Jenrick, as Kramer emphasized, was using "deliberately divisive language and [his negative analysis was] certainly not borne out by the UK experience." Kramer then referenced the life story of her mother, who had been smuggled on Christmas 1945 into the UK by members of the Royal Air Force—she had met and married a British soldier during the war but had been refused entry to the UK after it. As she noted, with such an irregular route into the UK "This Government would send her to Rwanda as an undesirable." She also acknowledged that in 1938, when her mother was fleeing antisemitic laws in her native Hungary, across the world "no visas were to be had."[49] Her narrative of her mother's journeys reflected the generosity of ordinary people against the restrictionism of the British and other states.

Playing into mythologies of innate British decency, Lord Cashman, a Labour MP and campaigner for LGBT rights, which he and others argued would be at risk of exclusion through the proposed legislation, used the icon of Englishness, William Shakespeare, to make the case for welcoming the stranger and opposing the legislation. Cashman also quoted with approval Gary Lineker's reference to the 1930s and argued that it was his "profound belief that Parliament is better than this vicious, far-right piece of legislation, and the British people are better – a people known for compassion, understanding and basic human decency."[50] Such op-

48 House of Lords debate on the Illegal Migration Bill, 10 May 2023, accessed February 22, 2024, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2023-05-10/debates/A22D19A2-1B8F-43D0-B760-A6CD0A20FA68/IllegalMigrationBill.

49 House of Lords debate on the Illegal Migration Bill, 10 May 2023, accessed February 22, 2024, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2023-05-10/debates/A22D19A2-1B8F-43D0-B760-A6CD0A20FA68/IllegalMigrationBill.

50 House of Lords debate on the Illegal Migration Bill, 10 May 2023, accessed February 22, 2024, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2023-05-10/debates/A22D19A2-1B8F-43D0-B760-A6CD0A20FA68/IllegalMigrationBill. Cashman quoted from *Sir Thomas More*, although it seems likely that Shakespeare was only a minor contributor to this 1590s play.

position was not confined to the opposition parties. Conservative member of the House of Lords, Arminka Helic, who came to England as one of the few refugees allowed in from Bosnia in the 1990s, drew upon her experiences to critique the Bill:

> I reflected on the extraordinary support that I received 30 years ago and which I saw being extended by people across the United Kingdom to Ukrainian refugees. I hoped that we could take the lessons from our compassionate response to Ukraine. Instead, we face an outright ban on asylum. For most refugees, safe and legal pathways to the United Kingdom do not exist.[51]

With its large majority in the House of Commons, the populist Conservative party, led ironically by Rishi Sunak, whose parents were Asian refugees from East Africa, ignored the critical history outlined in the House of Lords and passed the first piece of legislation in the UK that formally links its title migration to illegality. Moreover, "outsourcing" asylum seekers, or what Suella Braverman euphemistically described as "policies of externalisation,"[52] is now being considered by a number of other European countries, most notably Italy, under the radical right wing government of Giorgia Meloni, and is gaining wider traction in the European Union as a whole.[53] Yet rather than end on a note of despair, the support that Gary Lineker has received, especially from a younger generation, suggests that racist populism may just have had its day in the UK, if not elsewhere (the defeat of the Law and Justice Party in Poland in 2023 gives some grounds for hope in an increasingly nationalist, intolerant, and inward-looking world). As the Liberal Democratic peer, Lord Roberts of Llandudno, argued, while Suella Braverman might have dreamed of planes deporting refugees to Rwanda, it was not one shared by the majority of the British public, who were "more likely to dream as Martin Luther King did of justice and fairness for all people."[54] While the populist right might claim to represent British public opinion, and declaim liberal "do-gooders" such as Gary Lineker, the former footballer has tapped into a more generous and widely accepted tradition of respecting the importance of granting asylum and being decent to those fleeing persecution. From this, we may move to a more self-critical approach to the UK's response to forced migrants, both past and present. From there the vision, as well as economic pragmatism, exemplified by

51 House of Lords debate on the Illegal Migration Bill, 10 May 2023, accessed February 22, 2024, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2023-05-10/debates/A22D19A2-1B8F-43D0-B760-A6CD0A20FA68/IllegalMigrationBill.

52 Keynote address to the American Enterprise Institute.

53 For comment and critique, see the editorial, "Migration," *The Guardian*, October 7, 2023.

54 House of Lords debate on the Illegal Migration Bill.

Angela Merkel in 2015 might be adopted by a country that on the one hand has still fully to move on from its colonial past and victory in the Second World War and yet, on the other, whose younger generation at least takes some pleasure in what Paul Gilroy has labelled "convivial culture"—relishing the difference created by migration, including the presence and welcoming of refugees.[55]

Postscript

On July 4, 2024, the Labour party won a landslide victory in the UK General Election. It had pledged to scrap the Rwanda scheme during the election campaign and the new Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, confirmed this in the House of Commons on July 23, when she also outlined how the Illegal Migration Act was unworkable. Cooper said she had discovered since taking office that the Rwanda scheme had cost £700 million, "the biggest waste of taxpayer money I have ever seen." In the end four asylum seekers had voluntarily travelled to Rwanda. Cooper told the Commons that "We had often warned that it would be frankly cheaper to put [asylum seekers] up in the Paris Ritz – frankly now it turns out it would actually be cheaper to buy the Paris Ritz."[56]

A week later a series of riots broke out across England organized by the far right and in which asylum seekers were one of the major targets, including attempts to fire-bomb hotels that had been used to house them. It was a terrifying experience for those who were already traumatized by their past experiences and journey to the UK. Dame Sara Khan, who had senior roles independently advising a variety of Conservative Prime Ministers about extremism and social cohesion, blamed the "inflammatory language used by politicians" in recent years, especially "dehumanising language about asylum seekers, refugees and people who are coming to our country." It was, Khan argued, giving a "green light to those who are holding racist views." She added from her research across the country "You see people saying, well, if politicians can use that language, why can't we?"[57]

55 Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge, 2004).

56 https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-07-22/debates/FBB2B906-592F-4047-A6E1-59D6DB97573A/BorderSecurityAndAsylum, accessed August 9, 2024.

57 Daniel Boffey, "Tory culture wars stoked far right, says ex-advisor," *Guardian*, August 5, 2024.

While the new Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, powerfully condemned the violence and had no problem linking it to the far right, he noticeably did not mention asylum-seekers as the principal target, instead focusing largely on Muslims, who were also particularly singled out in the violence.[58] On August 7, 2024, with the threat of scores more riots across the country, much larger groups of people, estimated at 25,000, turned out peacefully to support asylum seekers, refugees, and others in demonstrations of solidarity, in some cases shielding places housing asylum seekers or organizations that were supporting them.[59] Whether the new Labour government will follow this example of public empathy remains to be seen. As *The Guardian* editorialized: "Ministers should not allow themselves to be overawed by the racial politics of the Conservative era. That legacy was the Tories' doing. It remains the Tories' problem. Labour should speak for a better Britain."[60]

I was perhaps on the slightly optimistic side when I concluded this piece initially, especially with the hope of a new Labour government in 2024. As Enver Solomon, chief executive of the (British) Refugee Council noted in November 2025, "We thought Rwanda was the worst it has ever been." The mass gatherings and disturbances against asylum seekers since summer 2024, and the Labour party's plans announced by Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, to make it near impossible to gain permanent refugee status in the UK and to confiscate the wealth and belongings of asylum seekers, shows that the bottom of the abyss has not yet been reached.[61]

58 "PM statement: 4 August 2024," GOV.UK, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-4-august-2024, accessed August 9, 2024.

59 Emine Sinmaz, "'Protest turned to party': Stand against extremism sent out a powerful message," *The Guardian*, August 9, 2024.

60 "Racism and riots: A better Britain has stood up to be counted. Ministers must speak for its values," *The Guardian*, August 9, 2024.

61 Zoe Williams, "We thought Rwanda was the worst it had ever been," *The Guardian*, November 24, 2025.



Fig. 2: Graffiti St Denys railway station, Southampton in defense of Channel Boat migrants, Tony Kushner Private Collection. Southampton has several luxury marinas catering for the super rich, hence the reference to "yachts."

Authors Biographies

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Peter Gatrell is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Manchester. His most recent books are *The Unsettling of Europe: The Great Migration, 1945 to the Present* (Penguin, 2021) and, as co-author, *Refugee Voices in Modern Global History* (OUP, 2025), one outcome of his ongoing work in refugee history funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council and The Leverhulme Trust and drawing upon the confidential individual case files in UNHCR Records and Archives, Geneva. He is a Fellow of the British Academy.

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