



International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (Ed.)

## Bystanders, Rescuers or Perpetrators?

The Neutral Countries and the Shoah



METROPOL

## **Bystanders, Rescuers or Perpetrators?**

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**International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (Ed.)**

## **Bystanders, Rescuers or Perpetrators?**

### **The Neutral Countries and the Shoah**

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# Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust

The members of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance are committed to the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, which reads as follows:

1. **The Holocaust (Shoah) fundamentally** challenged the foundations of civilization. The unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning. After half a century, it remains an event close enough in time that survivors can still bear witness to the horrors that engulfed the Jewish people. The terrible suffering of the many millions of other victims of the Nazis has left an indelible scar across Europe as well.
2. **The magnitude of the Holocaust**, planned and carried out by the Nazis, must be forever seared in our collective memory. The selfless sacrifices of those who defied the Nazis, and sometimes gave their own lives to protect or rescue the Holocaust's victims, must also be inscribed in our hearts. The depths of that horror, and the heights of their heroism, can be touchstones in our understanding of the human capacity for evil and for good.
3. **With humanity still scarred** by genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia, the international community shares a solemn responsibility to fight those evils. Together we must uphold the terrible truth of the Holocaust against those who deny it. We must strengthen the moral commitment of our peoples, and the political commitment of our governments, to ensure that future generations can understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences.
4. **We pledge to strengthen** our efforts to promote education, remembrance and research about the Holocaust, both in those of our countries that have already done much and those that choose to join this effort.
5. **We share a commitment** to encourage the study of the Holocaust in all its dimensions. We will promote education about the Holocaust in our

schools and universities, in our communities and encourage it in other institutions.

6. **We share a commitment** to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and to honour those who stood against it. We will encourage appropriate forms of Holocaust remembrance, including an annual Day of Holocaust Remembrance, in our countries.
7. **We share a commitment** to throw light on the still obscured shadows of the Holocaust. We will take all necessary steps to facilitate the opening of archives in order to ensure that all documents bearing on the Holocaust are available to researchers.
8. **It is appropriate** that this, the first major international conference of the new millenium, declares its commitment to plant the seeds of a better future amidst the soil of a bitter past. We empathize with the victims' suffering and draw inspiration from their struggle. Our commitment must be to remember the victims who perished, respect the survivors still with us, and reaffirm humanity's common aspiration for mutual understanding and justice.

## About IHRA

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) is an inter-governmental body whose purpose is to place political and social leaders' support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance and research, both nationally and internationally.

The IHRA (formerly the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, or ITF) was initiated in 1998 by former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. Persson decided to establish an international organization that would expand Holocaust education worldwide, and asked President Bill Clinton and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair to join him in this effort. Persson also developed the idea of an international forum of governments interested in discussing Holocaust education, which took place in Stockholm between 27–29 January 2000. The Forum was attended by 23 Heads of State or Prime Ministers and 14 Deputy Prime Ministers or Ministers from 46 governments.

The Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust was the outcome of the Forum's deliberations and is the foundation of the IHRA. The IHRA currently has 31 member countries, ten observer countries and seven permanent international partner organizations. Membership is open to all countries, and members must be committed to the Stockholm Declaration and to the implementation of national policies and programs in support of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research.

Member countries are encouraged to develop multilateral partnerships and to share best practices. The national government of each member country appoints and sends a delegation to IHRA meetings that is composed of both government representatives and national experts. In addition to the Academic, Education, Memorials and Museums, and Communication Working Groups, specialized committees have been established to address antisemitism and Holocaust denial, the situation of the Roma and the genocide of the Roma, comparative genocide, and special challenges in Holocaust education. The IHRA is also in the process of implementing Multi-Year Work Plans that focus on killing sites, access to archives, educational research, and Holocaust Memorial Days.

The IHRA has an annually rotating Chairmanship, and the appointed Chair is responsible for the overall activities of the organization. The

Chairmanship is supported by the Executive Secretary, who is the head of the Permanent Office located in Berlin. The IHRA also has an Honorary Chairman, Professor Yehuda Bauer, and an Advisor to the IHRA, Professor Steven Katz.

One of IHRA's key roles is to contribute to the funding of relevant projects through its grant strategy. The purpose of the Grant Programme is to foster international dialogue and the exchange of expertise, increase government involvement in program creation, and target projects with strong multilateral elements in order to create sustainable structures for Holocaust education, remembrance, and research.

## Preface

It is not surprising that the main focus of Holocaust scholarship has been centered on those countries that perpetrated this crime or contained large Jewish populations that were targeted for extermination. Today, however, we understand the need to extend research to include the policies and historical experience of those countries that played a less central role in the destruction of European Jewry, or that remained officially neutral throughout World War II. Indeed, such research is essential in order to fill in the gaps in our current understanding of the historical circumstances of the time, not least because of the effect that these less central actors and neutral states had on Jewish survival. As Jews sought refuge from the Nazi onslaught, the neutral countries, in particular, were rightly seen as possible safe havens that could provide life-saving options for refugees in the midst of war-torn Europe.

During the war there were, unfortunately, only a small number of countries that remained neutral. In all of them the admission policy for refugees was stringent and only a relatively small number of individuals were able to secure safe entry, or to transit these states to other locations. Moreover, the situation relative to entry was almost always uncertain and depended on factors outside the control of those seeking refuge. As the available testimonial record indicates, whatever official policies existed, safe entry often depended on changing bureaucratic attitudes, shifts in sentiment and individual life and death decisions by local officials. Regarding these essential issues there remains much to uncover and reveal about national interests, local actors, the ways in which specific political decisions were made and the attitudes and influence of civil society more broadly.

The present volume, *Bystanders, Rescuers or Perpetrators? The Neutral Countries and the Shoah*, has been funded by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, a consortium of 31 countries. This grouping also includes a significant number of international organizations, and countries such as Portugal and Turkey that hold observer status. The volume makes available the valuable set of papers given at an international colloquium held in Madrid in November 2014 to a much wider audience, and begins the important task of filling the existing research gaps that exist vis-à-vis these neutral countries. The conference was supported by the IHRA Grant

Programme and was awarded the Yehuda Bauer Grant for outstanding projects. The distinguished contributors to the volume provide new and salient information on the history of these states and their behavior during the Holocaust towards Jews, and others, who sought to escape Nazi persecution.

Given the subject matter of this collection of essays, its publication at this time is especially significant. Today's massive refugee crisis in Europe has brought the topic of state actions and international cooperation regarding refugees to the very center of the contemporary social and political agenda. And it has placed new demands and challenges on the members of the IHRA individually and the organization collectively. As IHRA Honorary Chairman, Professor Yehuda Bauer and the IHRA Working Group and Committee Chairs reminded the members in statements issued in September 2015, while the circumstances surrounding the current refugee crisis are notably different from those that governed the extreme situation of the Jews and other victims before, during, and after the Holocaust, there are parallels between the treatment of refugees then and now that should not, must not, be ignored. Not least, the Holocaust experience reminds us that failing to adequately address the issues of mass migration and the protection of refugees can, as was the case in the not so distant past, create conditions that lead to suffering and disaster on a massive scale.

*Professor Steven T. Katz*  
*Advisor to the IHRA*

## Foreword

*Bystanders, Rescuers or Perpetrators? The Neutral Countries and the Shoah* was the title chosen for the international colloquium that took place in Madrid in November 2014, supported by the IHRA Grant Programme and awarded the Yehuda Bauer Grant for outstanding projects. The subtitle *Facts, Memories, Myths and Counter-Myths* clearly indicated that not only would historical facts be discussed, but also how the neutral countries dealt with their own history in the postwar era and how Holocaust remembrance has manifested itself in these countries, as well as an examination of the many historical myths created after the Holocaust. The conference was held in Madrid by the Centro Sefarad-Israel, and partially funded and co-organized by the Topography of Terror Foundation in Berlin. Additionally, the History Unit of Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris, the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, and the Living History Forum in Stockholm all supported and helped shape the colloquium's content. Two other cooperation partners were the Memoshoá in Lisbon and the Tarih Vakfi History Foundation in Istanbul.

More than a decade ago, two American government reports compared the attitude of neutral countries during the war and in the following decades as the Holocaust gained broad public attention. Although the Eizenstat Reports of 1997 and 1998 focused primarily on economic and financial questions, issues regarding refugee policies in neutral countries were equally central. In the subsequent decade, the importance of these questions grew considerably. Accordingly, among the recurring central questions within Holocaust research today are questions concerning the varied reactions of the neutral countries to Nazi persecution and the murder of the European Jews.

To date, however, these questions have been explored in volumes and conferences that have focused primarily on only one particular country. This international colloquium made central, for one of the first times, a comparative perspective of refugee policies in the neutral countries, while also examining how these states have handled the complicated processes of remembrance and education. In fact, while many academic studies on the role of the neutral countries during the Holocaust have been published,



only more recent volumes have challenged national myths.<sup>1</sup> These myths, encouraged by the then neutral countries' governments and in public opinion, emphasize that countries went to great lengths to rescue persecuted Jews. All of these newer academic publications concur that, in reality, no active assistance was either offered through government decisions favouring the persecuted Jews, nor was rescue on a larger scale ever considered.<sup>2</sup> Without having done any actual comparative research, some scholars have even gone so far as to claim that their country, in fact, offered less help than others did, thereby evoking a kind of negative myth. Hence, the colloquium in Madrid facilitated essential comparative and transnational debates and discussions. Thirty-one scholars with expertise in the countries being discussed were invited not only to exchange information about their latest research, but also to call the prevailing historical myths into question and explore how they have affected educational programs and Holocaust remembrance.

The lectures provided extensive insight into the impact of the strikingly similar behavior of the neutral countries regarding the fate of the Jews whose lives were threatened by Nazi Germany's murderous antisemitic policies both in National Socialist Germany itself, and subsequently, in those countries and regions under German occupation. The present publication allows us to share with a wider public the colloquium's key discussion points and research on topics that are reflected in the volume's table of contents.

The conference commenced, and this volume begins, with an essay by Susanne Heim, which provides a comprehensive overview of the situ-

- 1 An important exception to this, however, is Sweden and the historiography in question. For earlier treatment of and challenges to prevailing national myths in reaction to the Holocaust, see S. Koblik. *The Stones Cry Out: Sweden's Response to the Persecution of the Jews, 1933–1945*. New York: 1988; M.-P. Boëthius. *Heder och samvete; Sverige och andra världskriget*. Stockholm: 1991; and P. A. Levine. *From Indifference to Activism; Swedish Diplomacy and the Holocaust, 1938–1944*. 2nd revised ed. Uppsala: 1998.
- 2 Again, Sweden's response to the Holocaust differs in respect to government involvement and even activism on behalf of some Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. See P. A. Levine. *From Indifference to Activism*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1996; P. A. Levine. *Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest; Myth, History and Holocaust*. London: 2010; and M. Byström and P. Frohnert, eds. *Reaching a State of Hope; Refugees, Immigrants and the Swedish Welfare State, 1930–2000*. Lund: 2013. passim.

ation of Jewish refugees from an international point of view. She emphasizes how Nazi Germany, by excluding its Jews from the German “National Community” (*Volksgemeinschaft*) and defining them as an inferior group with fewer rights, forced other countries to accept the consequences of this Nazi-imposed concept, meaning they had to cope with tens of thousands of people who were no longer accepted as German citizens. The volume’s first section examines the policies towards Jewish refugees in Switzerland (Salomé Lienert), Turkey (Corry Guttstadt) and Sweden (Pontus Rudberg) between 1933 and 1939. The second section discusses the policies of Switzerland (Ruth Fivaz-Silbermann), Portugal (Avraham Milgram) and Spain (Josep Calvet) during the Second World War. These essays enable a comparison of the attitudes these countries displayed towards Jews trying to escape Nazi terror by entering or crossing their territories.

In order to evaluate the policy of each of these countries towards Jews, the question of what was known when is of fundamental importance. Although precisely this question has been treated in Holocaust historiography for decades, this research has, primarily, analyzed the Allies and not the neutral countries. Cláudia Ninhos’ contribution draws on new materials that provide, for the first time, a comparative survey of what was known about the Holocaust in Europe’s periphery, within which we may place the neutral nations, both geographically and metaphorically.

The question of what was known is crucial to any assessment of the reactions of the neutral countries to Germany’s 1943 ultimatum demanding repatriation of Jewish nationals. The German ultimatum offered neutral countries the opportunity to repatriate their Jewish nationals from Nazi-occupied territories, a fact and event in history that remains largely unknown within the countries being discussed at the colloquium and those in section three: Portugal (Irene Pimentel), Turkey (İzzet Bahar) and Spain (Bernd Rother). The ultimatum demanded not only a rapid reaction for a specific group of Jews; it also triggered many controversies about which Jews would be considered as nationals and, thus, should be repatriated, and to what extent. While refugee policies were quite similar in most countries, this section shows what is likely the most striking difference in how the various neutrals reacted to a genuine chance to save a specific group of European Jews. This exemption from the policies of extermination conducted by Nazi Germany was offered by the Germans during the final months of probably the most intensive phase of persecution and murder during the entire Holocaust.

The deportation and extermination of Hungary's Jews was closely followed by Nazi Germany's occupation of the country in March 1944. This tragic episode occurred at a stage in the war when Germany's impending defeat seemed certain, and when the dimensions of Nazi Germany's genocide of the Jews was known to both Allied and neutral governments. In her essay, Rebecca Erbelding describes the reactions of the neutral countries to the demands of the newly established War Refugee Board, which was trying to save Hungary's Jews from certain death.

The conference intended, as this volume seeks, to examine to what extent the wartime neutral countries facilitated, or hampered, critical assessments of their role during the Holocaust—an indicator that may serve as benchmark that reflects their contemporary commitment to promote accurate Holocaust education, remembrance and research. IHRA member countries must, in fact, commit to facilitating critical historical research when applying for membership. This can be done, for example, by establishing historical commissions that investigate controversial aspects of their own history or by promoting public debates concerning questions of the responsibility and complicity of countries in the persecution of Europe's Jews. In this sense, the second half of this volume focuses on the different ways these former neutral countries have dealt both with their actual Holocaust history and, in particular, with the processes behind the creation of positive myths in Spain (Alejandro Baer, Pedro Correa), Turkey (Pınar Dost-Niyego) and Argentina (Uki Goñi). In his essay, François Wisard analyzes the establishment and work of the Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland—Second World War as one example of how state-commissioned and state-sponsored historical research projects can fare.

The last section of the volume deals with commemoration and Holocaust education in Sweden (Karin Kvist-Geverts), Switzerland (Monique Eckmann), Turkey (Nora Şeni) and Spain (Marta Simó). It provides an overview of how Holocaust education and remembrance is conducted in these countries, and discusses the specificity and inherent challenging complexities of Holocaust education and remembrance in these locations.

This collection underlines once again the importance of trans-national research projects. Today it seems clear that it makes limited sense to conduct research on only one country when the process of seeking refuge generally consisted of a journey that passed through several European countries and even sometimes countries outside Europe. We can assume that

many Jews applied for entry first in one country, and then in others after receiving initial refusals, struggling with officials and bureaucracy. The realistic chances and options that existed for refuge in or emigration via one neutral country or another differed considerably, and also changed over time. Thus, the final question is to what extent rescue was intended, or to what extent European Jews were able to survive despite the neutral countries' refugee and transit policies. In other words, we must examine the difficult question of how many Jews were actually saved by the neutral countries, and how many were murdered as a result of such countries' attitudes and policies, which shifted between those of bystander, rescuer and perpetrator.

In this sense, it is important to mention, that the following hypothesis were defined for the conference and this volume to guide the transnational debate and comparison of the policies of the neutral states with regard to the persecution of the Jews:

- Geography: Countries that could serve for transit, such as Portugal, Spain and Turkey, had an easier job than the "islands" Switzerland and Sweden.
- Dominant religion: Catholic, Protestant or Muslim—does it make a difference?
- Dictatorship or democracy? The hypothesis would be that a number of reasons made democracies more likely to save refugees from Nazi-dominated Europe. Portugal and Spain were dictatorships without a doubt, Sweden and Switzerland were democracies; Turkey was a one-party state.
- Ideological closeness or distance to the Nazis. It coincides nearly perfectly with the schism between dictatorship and democracy. Although this was strongest in Portugal and Spain, no neutral government adopted the Nazi's radical racial antisemitism. Nevertheless, anti-Judaic prejudices were widespread in all five countries.
- Legal status of Jews and profession of the Jewish faith: Nations where Jews could live without legal discriminations should be more inclined to save their compatriots of a different religion. It also could be of importance whether the Jewish emancipation was already a long-established fact or had only recently occurred.
- Number of Jews to be repatriated: Presumably, the higher the number, the lower the readiness to help them.

- Importance of public opinion: Usually, the existence of a public opinion is part of a democratic system. But the Catholic Church in Portugal and Spain enjoyed relative autonomy vis-a-vis the state. Did the Church use this autonomy to facilitate repatriation or did its traditional anti-Judaism prevail? And we should not forget that public opinion in powerful third countries like the United States could influence government decisions in neutral countries.
- National sovereignty: For a nationalist dictatorship, national sovereignty was an important value that could include the defence of otherwise undesired citizens against attacks by foreign governments. On the other hand, it could mean scrutinizing all documents of people who claimed to be full-fledged citizens.
- Existence or absence of leverage against Nazi Germany, be these economic, strategic or other, in order to force Germany to allow foreign Jews to emigrate. Here, every country possessed some kind of leverage.
- Expectation of the most probable outcome of the war. This varied over the years, which might explain shifts in the behaviour of the respective governments. In general, after early 1943, with the German defeat in Stalingrad and the Allied landing in North Africa, the neutral states began preparing for an Allied victory and the respective postwar order. Step by step, they veered away from Nazi Germany.
- Degree of knowledge about the Shoah. Did the governments know what was happening? Did they know how important their decisions could be? In summer 1943 at the latest, all five neutral states were aware that the question of whether the Jews would be repatriated or deported “to the East” was one of life or death.

All in all, this volume is the first result to emerge from the Madrid colloquium. Follow-up projects are in the planning, and will provide continuity for the network of scholars established in Madrid. Future research projects may be defined by limited or very specific topics, e.g. the situation of refugees in the Iberian Peninsula after crossing the Pyrenees. Such an idea implies that scholars working on Spain, Portugal and France would cooperate. Another aspect, which may require specific research, would be to look comparatively at what happened at national borders, as a place where, and moment when, life or death was determined. Another project might focus on creating a deeper understanding of the impact of the often very inconsistent refugee policies.

Finally, the editors and organizers would like to thank the team of the IHRA Permanent Office for their continuous support not only for the conference, but also for this second IHRA publication. We would also like to express our gratitude to the IHRA Honorary Chairman Professor Yehuda Bauer, who participated actively in the conference and gave a “typically” remarkable lecture entitled “Was Rescue a Realistic Possibility?” His valuable and insightful comments unquestionably inspired everyone involved in the Madrid conference and this volume. Last but not least, we would like to thank Paul Levine for his support during the editorial process, Marie Frohling for her thoughtful proofreading and Nesa Fröhlich for her careful editing of the further reading list.

*Corry Guttstadt*

*Thomas Lutz*

*Bernd Rother*

*Yessica San Román*



## **Section I**

### **Jewish Refugees before the War (1933–1939)**





Susanne Heim

## The Question of Jewish Refugees<sup>1</sup>

In April 1933, Gerhart Riegner, then a young lawyer in Berlin, lost his job because he was a Jew. As a result, Riegner moved to France. In order to continue his profession there, he began to study French law. Shortly before taking his exams, the French parliament passed a new law which required jurists who wanted to work in France to have been a French citizen for at least ten years. As an immigrant, Riegner could only have applied for a French passport after having lived in France for another five years. Given this prospect—a fifteen-year waiting period—Riegner instead decided to immigrate to Switzerland.<sup>2</sup>

In 1933, approximately half a million Jews lived in Germany. This figure only included members of the Jewish community. If one added non-practicing Jews, and those living in so-called mixed marriages or ones who stemmed from a partly Jewish family—so-called *Mischlinge*—then some 867,000 people were affected by Nazi racial laws.<sup>3</sup> Unlike Riegner, most of them hesitated to leave the country; most believed the Nazi regime would not last long. In fact, many of those who fled the country during the first outbreaks of violence organized by Nazi storm-troopers returned shortly thereafter, as they believed the situation had calmed down. Still, about 37,000 Jews left Germany permanently in 1933. Jews of Polish origin were among the first to leave the country. At that time, about twenty percent of the Jews living in Germany were of foreign nationality, with thirty-seven

- 1 This article is based on my article, “International Refugee Policy and Jewish Immigration under the Shadow of National Socialism.” F. Caestecker and B. Moore, eds. *Refugees from Nazi Germany and the Liberal European States 1933–1939*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2010. 14–46.
- 2 G. Riegner. *Niemals verzweifeln: sechzig Jahre für das jüdische Volk und die Menschenrechte*. Gerlingen: Bleicher, 2000.
- 3 H. Strauss. “Jewish Emigration from Germany. Nazi Policies and Jewish Responses.” *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXV*. 1980. 318.

percent holding Polish citizenship.<sup>4</sup> According to a German law passed on 14 July, 1933, all naturalizations that had been approved after November 1918 were revoked—a measure that affected primarily Eastern European Jews, rendering most of them stateless. From 1933 to 1937, between 20,000 and 25,000 Jews left Germany annually, i.e., about eighty percent of all emigrants from Germany. Most of them went to neighboring countries, particularly France, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands and Switzerland, hoping that their time in exile would be a short.

Meanwhile, life in Germany became increasingly unbearable for Jews. Their exclusion from the public sphere and many private and professional associations caused an ever-growing gap between the Jewish and the non-Jewish population. While Nazi rule brought an economic recovery or at least stabilization for the majority of the Germans, for the Jews it meant a continuous downward spiral. Increasing social isolation was aggravated by the departure abroad of many friends and relatives—especially of younger Jews, who had better prospects to begin a new life abroad. Thus, the remaining Jewish community in Germany was continually decreasing in size, was aging and rapidly sinking into poverty. As many as thirty-three percent of the once comparatively wealthy German-Jewish population may already have been receiving some form of social assistance in 1935.<sup>5</sup>

The year 1938—with the annexation of Austria and the Reich-wide anti-Jewish November pogroms—definitively ended all illusions Jews may have had for a future in Germany. Immediately after the pogrom, Hermann Göring, as plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan, was in charge of preparing the German economy for war and pushed for the so-called de-Judaization of the German economy. Many Jews had already lost their jobs some years earlier or had to give up their businesses because of antisemitic policies in Germany. After the pogrom, German authorities systematically began to destroy the economic standing of German Jews. Emigration numbers skyrocketed from 24,000 in 1937 to 40,000 in 1938 and 80,000 in 1939. After World War II began, emigration became much more difficult, and, by October 1941, completely forbidden.

In the following, I will focus on the problem of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany and the German policy of forced emigration, which directly affected nearly 350,000 Jewish individuals. Nevertheless, this policy

4 H. Strauss. "Jewish Emigration from Germany..." 321.

5 H. Strauss. "Jewish Emigration from Germany..." 341.

prompted an international crisis in Europe in the 1930s, not only because German authorities dispossessed German Jews and then pushed them across the borders into neighboring states, but also because other countries, such as Romania, Hungary and, to a certain extent, Poland, followed the German example by applying similar anti-Jewish measures or threatening Jewish existence in order to get rid of the unwanted minority. This crisis led to a revision of refugee and immigration policies internationally and nationally both before the war and after it began. I will also address the question of how Jewish emigration and the fate of emigrants' assets gradually became entangled in Germany's preparations for war.

From the very beginning, Nazi policy regarding Jewish emigration was rife with contradictions. On the one hand, before 1941, pushing Jews out of the country was seen as the solution to the Jewish Question and was promoted through a range of measures. On the other hand, some of the bureaucratic measures aimed to force Jews out of Germany actually hindered their departure. These measures included, in particular, the policy of dispossessing Jews through special taxes, fees, professional restrictions and prohibitions. They even included restrictions on the transfer of assets from Germany to foreign countries, thereby turning the emigrants into 'unwanted' individuals, whom immigration officials abroad were more likely to view as a 'public burden.' Beyond its disastrous effects on the Jews, this policy of forced emigration brought about significant changes in the legal systems and public policies in the primary countries of refuge.

By excluding the Jews from the "National Community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*) and defining them as inferior beings with fewer rights, the German government instigated a radical change in the international order. The Germans reclaimed the right not just to exclude foreigners (e.g., Polish Jews), but to declare that part of their national population was 'not of German blood,' and thus not part of the ethnic community, i.e., not part of "the Volk." This policy set in motion a severe crisis by forcing other states to accept the consequences of the redefined German concept of citizenship, forcing them cope with those people who were no longer "tolerated" in Germany. This action, I wish to argue, tended to spread authoritarian practices into democratic countries. Of course, even before the Nazi era, most countries had more or less restrictive immigration policies, which limited the number of foreigners allowed to enter their country. But unlike ordinary foreigners, refugees could not easily be rejected or sent back (although this sometimes was the case). Once in the country of refuge, however, they had

very few rights—at least not enough to establish themselves and make a living. In most countries, refugees were not allowed to work and consequently were not granted permission to stay. Their precarious situation made them a police problem with legal ramifications. Hannah Arendt described the dynamic instigated by the creation of ever-growing groups of stateless people. Even in democratic countries, Arendt argued, this caused a situation of a “lawlessness organized by the police, which, in the most peaceful way, even brought the free countries in line with the totalitarian states.”<sup>6</sup>

The main tendency in immigration policy was the protection of a state’s national territory from the entry of unwanted newcomers. For many countries during the 1930s, their own national interests and a general attitude of appeasement toward Germany—even before the Munich Agreement of 1938—had also taken precedence over humanitarian considerations and good relations with less powerful neighbors.

This kind of national egoism was partly caused by the fact that the old instruments of international immigration management, which had been reasonably effective in dealing with earlier refugee movements, no longer worked. The world economic crisis had altered the entire framework for such management and it became increasingly difficult to welcome refugees as economic assets or as a desirable form of manpower.

During the first months of Adolf Hitler’s chancellorship, neighboring states took in many refugees and attempted to accommodate them, at least provisionally. France and the Netherlands initially took in a comparatively large number of Eastern European Jews.<sup>7</sup> After some time, however, Eastern European Jews—more so than their Western European counterparts—came to be seen as a problem, not only for their real or imagined drain on the social welfare system, but also for cultural reasons. For instance, the Dutch government decreed that Polish Jews, including those who had

6 H. Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966. 288.

7 B. Moore. *Refugees from Nazi Germany in the Netherlands*. Dordrecht, Boston and Lancaster: M. Nijhoff, 1986. 22. Eastern European Jews represented 19.8 percent of the Jewish population in Germany in 1933. Among the refugees, 32 percent were non-German Jews.

arrived before 1933, who had entered with legal visas and had lived in Holland for several years, were now to be expelled.<sup>8</sup>

As it became clear that the refugees, including those with German citizenship, would not return to their countries for the foreseeable future, public attitudes toward them became more hostile. In varying degrees, resentment against refugees was mixed with an underlying antisemitism. Due to the economic crisis and chronic high rates of unemployment, refugees were seen primarily as a threat to national labor markets. Consequently, among the first measures taken to limit the influx of refugees—both Jewish and non-Jewish—were restrictions on their access to employment.

### **International Immigration Policies**

In 1933, when pressures on Jews to leave Germany began, no international institution existed that was explicitly responsible for the refugees. The League of Nations' traditional refugee organization was the Nansen Office. Its mission, however, had been limited to Russian refugees fleeing in the aftermath of the Revolution. An extension of its mandate to new groups of refugees—as had been implemented in the early 1920s, for example, to cover 320,000 Armenian refugees—was politically not feasible in the early 1930s.<sup>9</sup> The alternative, however—the establishment of a completely new institution—was also problematic. Germany was still a member of the League of Nations when Hitler came to power. Among the League's members, a consensus existed that any initiative to establish a new institution to deal with the refugees coming from Germany had no chance unless the German government at least tacitly agreed. Finally, in autumn 1933, a new institution separate from the Nansen Office was founded. As indicated by its official title, the "High Commission of the League of Nations for Refugees—Jewish and Others—Coming from Germany," it was exclusively responsible for refugees from Nazi Germany. However, in order to

8 Bernhard Kahn to Max Warburg. 16 Oc., 1934; JDC New York/Jerusalem, AR 33/44 # 250. Memorandum from Wurfbaun to McDonald, December 31, 1934, in K.J. Greenberg, ed. *The James G. McDonald Papers*. New York: Garland, 1990. 144–145.

9 M. Marrus. *The Unwanted; European Refugees in the Twentieth Century*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. 75.

avoid a German veto, its establishment was based on a compromise, which, from the outset, debilitated the new High Commissioner; for instance, he was not even allowed to address the League's General Assembly. Thus, even within the League, the High Commission remained a somewhat marginalized institution. Its first commissioner, James G. McDonald was a U.S. citizen but lacked even the support of the U.S. government.

Because the member states were unwilling to finance the new institution, support for his office came almost exclusively from private funds, primarily Jewish organizations.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, many states still wanted to exert influence over the High Commission's activities. As historian Haim Genizi has written, "Only countries that had received considerable numbers of refugees showed any interest in the High Commission's activities, but this was merely to exploit it as an instrument to get rid of 'their' refugees. France, for example, was convinced that the High Commission's only task should be colonization: rapid evacuation of the refugees from the host countries."<sup>11</sup>

Another problem McDonald was expected to solve was the transfer of Jewish property from Germany, which could have helped Jewish emigrants start a new life abroad. However, the Germans refused even to receive McDonald. They claimed their anti-Jewish policy was an internal affair, not least because they were unwilling to make any compromises on the export of Jewish assets.

After two frustrating years in office, James McDonald resigned in 1935. He had been unable to negotiate with the German government and had had little success in facilitating the settlement of refugees in foreign countries.<sup>12</sup> Some distinguished Jewish leaders also expressed disappointment in his results. McDonald's successor, however, did not achieve much more. Thus, two major questions facing migration management remained unsolved: Where could the refugees go, and how would their economic and professional reestablishment abroad be financed? While the identification of settlement opportunities mainly depended on potential countries of refuge,

10 B. McDonald Stewart. *United States Government Policy on Refugees from Nazism 1933–1940*. New York and London: Garland, 1982. 125.

11 H. Genizi. "James G. McDonald: High Commissioner for Refugees, 1933–1935." *The Wiener Library Bulletin*, 1977 Vol. XXX, New Series 43/44. 40–52.

12 For the full text of McDonald's letter of resignation, see Greenberg, "The James G. McDonald Papers." 237–278.

the emigrants' lack of money to fund their resettlement was predominantly caused by Nazi Germany's policy of seizing their assets. This policy was directly linked not only to increasing measures against Jews but also to Germany's preparations for war.

### **The German War Economy and the Refugee Problem**

A lack of foreign currency was the key problem of the Nazi economy. Both the import of raw materials for the production of armaments and of grain, to make Germany "safe from a blockade", required huge amounts of foreign currency. In the early years of Nazi rule, these imports were financed by increasing the national debt. Later, the takeover of state assets and major enterprises in Austria and Czechoslovakia also helped achieve this goal. Historians have shown that the expropriation of Jewish-owned assets failed to solve Germany's foreign currency problem. Nonetheless, in the extremely critical situation regarding the state budget, German financial authorities were unwilling to miss any opportunity to seize what they could from a persecuted minority.<sup>13</sup>

When leaving Nazi Germany, all emigrants had to pay the authorities a tax of at least twenty-five percent of the value of their assets. The revenue the treasury received from this so-called Reich Flight Tax (*Reichsfluchtsteuer*) yielded one million Reichsmarks in 1932–1933. Just six years later, this amount had soared to 342 million Reichsmarks per year.<sup>14</sup> The amount of currency that an emigrant could legally take abroad was continually reduced.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the exchange rate of the Reichsmark was extremely unfavorable and the loss in value enormous. By 1938, this penalty reached ninety percent.

Emigrants' assets had to be deposited in a restricted account, which was then only released in small amounts in accordance with specific rules and regulations. Because of this, even relatively well-off individuals were

13 G. Aly. *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2005. 63; A. Tooze. *Ökonomie der Zerstörung. Die Geschichte der Wirtschaft im Nationalsozialismus*. Munich: Siedler, 2007. 328.

14 H. Strauss. "Jewish Emigration from Germany..." 343.

15 After 1934, emigrants were allowed to change no more than 2,000 RM into foreign currency in order to take assets abroad.



deprived of disposable cash and had to substantially reduce their living expenses. In July 1936, Himmler's deputy Reinhard Heydrich was given the task of setting up a Foreign Exchange Search Office (*Devisenfahndungsamt*), the purpose of which was to ensure that, with respect to the Jews, the regulations on foreign exchange were enforced "in a rigorous and excessive manner."<sup>16</sup> This office was under the direct and personal supervision of Göring, who was also in charge of coordinating Germany's economic preparations for war. After the war began, the Search Office became one of the most dangerous institutions for Jews living illegally in Western Europe, i.e., those who were forced to sell their savings in order to survive.

### **Economic Crisis and Refugee Policy in the Countries of Refuge**

Meanwhile, the countries most affected by the refugee movement did not hesitate to develop new and more restrictive policies of their own. In several countries, the state had to approve employment of foreigners and did not do so if native workers were available for a job. Antisemitism, a xenophobic atmosphere and a general view of refugees as "competitors" spread and intensified in several European countries. Professional organizations of lawyers, doctors and businessmen urged governments in France and the Netherlands to protect them against the competition of Jewish professionals arriving from Germany. The French law, which had forced Gerhart Riegner to leave the country for Switzerland, was just one example of this kind of protection. Ironically, sometimes even parts of the Jewish communities in the countries of refuge adopted an anti-refugee stance, fearing that their own social integration and acceptance would be endangered through the huge number of Jewish refugees arriving from Germany.

While emigration was already difficult, a dire international crisis broke out after Germany's annexation of Austria in March 1938. At the time, approximately 200,000 Jews lived there, though they were generally much poorer than German Jews. Many had immigrated from Galicia or other parts of the former Habsburg Empire and were still visible as a minority through their customs and clothing. This facilitated numerous pogroms, which persisted for about two weeks after the Annexation.

16 P. Longerich. *Politik der Vernichtung. Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung*. Munich: Piper, 1998. 119.



Jews at the U.S. consulate in Vienna trying to obtain visas for emigration to the United States (1938).

*Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin*

However, even the more well-integrated and established Viennese middle-class Jews did not escape prejudice. The violent outbursts of antisemitism in Austria far exceeded what Jews had experienced until then in Germany. Accordingly, after 1933, the numbers of Jews who began leaving Austria was much higher than in Germany. During the remaining nine months of 1938, about 60,000 Jews left Austria. Most neighboring countries reacted by closing their borders immediately or by issuing immigration prohibitions that were explicitly or indirectly intended to keep Jews out.

Switzerland was confronted with an onslaught of refugees on the very night the Annexation began. Two weeks later, the Swiss required former Austrians to present entry visas.<sup>17</sup> Norway, Sweden and Denmark now also made entry visas compulsory for Austrians.<sup>18</sup> In Norway, the relevant decree stated explicitly that applicants of the Mosaic faith could not

17 M. Marrus. *The Unwanted; European Refugees in the Twentieth Century*. 154.

18 H.-U. Petersen. "Viel Papier, aber wenig Erfolg", in *Exil. Forschung Erkenntnisse Ergebnisse*, Vol. 2. (1985): 76.



Delegates at the Evian Conference in July 1938.

*Ullstein Bild—Roger Viollet*

obtain Norwegian entry visas.<sup>19</sup> In May 1938, Danish border authorities were instructed to reject refugees who had no right to return to their former country of residence (Germany). Exceptions were made for political refugees—a term that explicitly did not include Jews.

Beginning in May 1938, visas became obligatory for Austrians and Germans arriving in England.<sup>20</sup> Passport control officials were advised to closely scrutinize the circumstances of applicants, “who appear[d] to be of Jewish or partly Jewish origin, or have non-Aryan affiliations,” because

19 E. Lorenz. *Exil in Norwegen. Lebensbedingungen und Arbeit deutschsprachiger Flüchtlinge 1933–1943*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1992. 51. Months earlier, the Norwegian police had already introduced new forms of border controls by taking photographs and fingerprints of refugees, and measuring their ears, thus introducing new forms of entry control. E. Lorenz. 55.

20 L. London. “British Immigration Control Procedures and Jewish Refugees 1933–1939.” W. Mosse, ed. *Second Chance; Two Centuries of German-speaking Jews in the United Kingdom*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1991. 504.

Jews were presumed to be potential immigrants.<sup>21</sup> The British Home and Foreign Offices held lengthy discussions about the possibilities of making their immigration controls more effective, “in order to prevent the accumulation of non-deportable, stateless aliens in Britain.”<sup>22</sup> Switzerland has often been criticized for its role in introducing a red “J”-stamp in Jewish passports, which became obligatory in January 1939. However, the Swiss government was by no means the only country that tried specifically to bar Jews from entering the country.

The annexation of Austria was just the beginning of the crisis. After the Munich Agreement in late September 1938, Jews, Social Democrats, and Communists had to leave the Sudetenland region before it was incorporated into the German Reich. Every step of German expansion produced more refugees. And in November, the pogroms which occurred all over Germany made it obvious to the remaining Jews that to staying Germany was potentially life-threatening.

### **The Evian Conference**

As a consequence of the growing number of refugees after the annexation of Austria, US president Franklin D. Roosevelt made a new effort to solve the refugee problem. He invited all states concerned to an international conference, which took place in July 1938 in Évian-les-Bains, France, near the Swiss border. As is well known, the representatives of 32 states failed to find the urgently needed solution to the issue that had motivated the meeting. Though most of the participants expressed regret over the refugees’ tragic situation, they also announced that their countries could not, in fact, receive more newcomers.

It became obvious that the US administration and several European states had expected that Latin America and Africa would be a suitable place for Jews fleeing the German domain to settle. Yet offers of help were not forthcoming from any of the Latin American participants, with the excep-

21 Passport Control Department, circular “Visas for Holders of German and Austrian Passports Entering the United Kingdom” quoted after London, “British Immigration Control Procedures”, 503. 27 April 1938: PRO L FO 372/3283/326ff., T 6705/3272/378, 503.

22 London. “British Immigration Control Procedures...”, 502.

tion of Rafael Trujillo's Dominican Republic.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, because of economic considerations, the conference's final declaration did not even criticize Germany's anti-Jewish policies that had created the crisis. For many countries represented at Evian, especially those from Latin America, Germany was an important commercial partner whom they did not want to offend—they thus voted accordingly.

The Evian Conference nevertheless represents a landmark in the history of international refugee policy. It can be viewed as an attempt to establish a new instrument of immigration management, one not guided by the League of Nations, but by US government policy.<sup>24</sup>

The only concrete result of the conference was the establishment of the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees (IGCR), which actually assumed the same tasks that the League's High Commission had already failed to accomplish: to arrange the transfer of Jewish-owned assets from Germany and finding new settlement opportunities for Jewish refugees.

German government officials refused to receive the representative of the Intergovernmental Committee. After the anti-Jewish 1938 November pogroms, however, secret negotiations took place in London between German and IGCR representatives. The main reason why Germany now agreed to negotiate was the problem of foreign currency, which came to a head in 1938. According to historian Henry Feingold, "the 1937 German trade surplus had, by 1938, been converted into a 413,000,000-Reichsmark deficit."<sup>25</sup> Throughout the year, several attempts were made to ease the problem at the expense of the Jews. In April 1938, Göring had decreed that Jewish assets over 5,000 Reichsmarks had to be registered; immediately thereafter, the Jews had to offer their securities to the Reichsbank for sale. This was understood by everybody as a first step to confiscation, which indeed fol-

23 H-U. Dillmann and S. Heim. *Fluchtpunkt Karibik. Jüdische Emigranten in der Dominikanischen Republik*. Berlin: Links, 2009.

24 This point is discussed extensively in T. Sjöberg. *The Powers and the Persecuted; The Refugee Problem and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR), 1938–1947*. Lund: University Press, 1991.

25 H. L. Feingold. *The Politics of Rescue; The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1939–1945*. New York: Holocaust Libr., 1970. 40. In an evaluation of Northern American press clippings composed by the German Foreign office on 3 March, 1939, the assessment was made that the negative results of the pogroms on German exports had made the Germans change their minds. Leo Baeck Institute New York, Max Kreutzberger Collection, AR 7/83, Box 17, Folder 7.

lowed, at least after the deportation of the Jews. After lengthy negotiations in spring 1939, a plan was agreed upon for the emigration of two-thirds of the approximately 600,000 Jews still living in Greater Germany. Two organizations were to be established to fund this plan.

- 1) The German government would create a trust fund from 25 percent of Jewish property in Germany to facilitate emigration;
- 2) a “private international corporation for financing of refugee settlement [was to] be set up concurrently outside Germany.”

The money in the German-controlled trust fund would be released only in exchange for additional German exports. The remaining Jewish assets would be retained and used in Germany, among other things, to support the 200,000 German Jews who were supposedly too old to leave. For German authorities, the advantage of the plan lay in the presumed increase in exports and the possibility of promoting the emigration of poor Jews, while the government would retain seventy-five percent of Jewish assets in Germany. Furthermore, the Intergovernmental Committee promised to compile a list of countries to which the Jews would be able to emigrate. Jewish organizations loudly criticized the plan, as the Germans had made it clear that they expected the allegedly wealthy and influential “world Jewry” to pay for future Jewish emigration from Germany, and the resulting “private international corporation” was shaped to foster these clichés. Indeed, in the end, it was not the countries that had participated in the Evian Conference that paid for the proposed fund, but, rather Jewish organizations and private contributions. Germany could also celebrate still another triumph: When the war began, the Intergovernmental Committee had been unable to present a list of countries willing to accept the Jews leaving Germany; this seemed to justify Joseph Goebbels’ propaganda that those states criticizing Germany for its antisemitism did not want the Jews either.

In January 1939, a representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) wrote in retrospect about the disastrous situation of the refugees from the Sudetenland who were stranded in camps along the German, Slovakian, Hungarian and Polish borders, “The year 1938 added a new term to European geography—‘No Man’s Land of the Jews.’”<sup>26</sup>

26 Translation of the memorandum “No Man’s Land of the Jews.” JDC New York Archives, AR 33/44. 541. The date 20 Jan. 1939 has been added in handwriting, while the date 22 Feb. 1939 is stamped on the bottom of the first page.

The boost in refugee numbers in 1938 and the chain reaction prompted by the closing of the borders had made emigration much more difficult and far more chaotic. German authorities, particularly the Gestapo and the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*), were well aware of the growing difficulties in getting Jews to leave, and even fostered the erosion of international relations by forcing Jews to illegally cross the borders into the neighboring countries. The introduction of the “J”-stamp, requested by Switzerland and welcomed by Sweden and other states, was only one response to this. The establishment of camps, not only in no man’s land, but also in France, Belgium, Switzerland and Great Britain, was another. These camps were often organized (and even financed) by Jewish organizations. In Germany and Austria, Jewish institutions, which until then had tried to maintain what they called “orderly emigration,” now started to send Jews abroad on ships—often unsuited for the huge number of passengers—without knowing if and where they would get landing permits.

After the beginning of the war, these camps and other recently developed instruments of migration control and special forces became elements of a huge trap that made it much easier for the Nazis to realize their plans of deporting all Jews from Western Europe.

## **Conclusion**

As long as the countries neighboring Germany did not want to openly confront the Nazi state, they could only try to deal with the consequences of Germany’s re-definition of citizenship and its policy of forced emigration. They saw the stateless people and Jews who fled Germany as the real problem, since the vast majority of these people could not be repatriated anywhere. Those countries most affected by the refugee influx reacted to the crisis by strengthening their border controls, by inventing a variety of restrictions for refugees living in the country and, finally, by establishing camps for the detention of the unwanted newcomers. These developments were also influenced, in turn, by the domestic and, especially, the economic situations in individual countries. Yet this development was not linear, as evident in the fact that 10,000 Jewish children from Germany and Austria found refuge in Great Britain and about 4,000 in Belgium, Holland, France and Sweden immediately after the anti-Jewish 1938 November pogroms,

when compassion for the persecuted Jews momentarily dominated public responses in these countries.

The governments involved in the refugee crisis were not forced by German pressure to react as they did. However, by retreating behind a defense of their national interests, they left the initiative to the Germans. Compared to other refugee movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jewish emigration from Nazi Germany was not extraordinarily large in terms of numbers. Nevertheless, the combination of forced emigration, expropriation and the Nazi policy of expansion turned the originally German-created problem of Jewish refugees into a European one.

In summary:

- In the 1930s, Germany played a central role in the reorganization and tightening of immigration and refugee policy across the world.
- Jews in Germany and growing antisemitic measures in Germany and Central Europe were at the center of these national and international shifts. This fact raises the question of how Jewish organizations and actors could influence policies.
- This all happened in a period when the lingering effects of the world economic crisis were still very real. This circumstance also had at least some effect on population, immigration and labor policy considerations.

Gerhart Riegner, who also experienced this twisted turn of fate, managed to emigrate early enough so that he did not end up in a camp. He was able to continue his professional career in Switzerland. As Geneva's representative to the World Jewish Congress, he became deeply involved in Jewish attempts to mobilize the international public to save Jewish refugees from Germany and later from Nazi-ruled Europe. The French title of his autobiography, *Ne jamais désespérer (Never Despair)*, hints at the fact that this was neither an easy job, nor very successful.





Salomé Lienert

## Swiss Immigration Policies 1933–1939

In the preceding essay, Susanne Heim described how German policies against Jews triggered a wave of emigration that led to new immigration laws across Europe. Switzerland was no exception to this. However, not all of its policies were immediate reactions to the situation in Germany. They also reflect the country's discourse on immigration and national identity of the previous decades.

During the 1930s, Switzerland controlled the influx of refugees, notably Jewish refugees. The country continuously decreed restrictive policies that increasingly limited Jewish refugees' possibilities of entering or remaining in the country. Asylum was granted only reluctantly and to very few.

How did these policies develop throughout the 1930s, and what was the impact on refugees trying to reach Switzerland? What were the responses from within Swiss society? In particular, the handling of refugee children will serve to illustrate the impact of Swiss policies on refugees during that period.

### “Überfremdungsdiskurs” and “Abwehr”

Since the end of World War I, the aim of Swiss immigration policies was the *Abwehr* (defensive measures) against foreigners. The justification for this was outlined in the *Überfremdungsdiskurs*, an anti-immigration discourse driven by fear of “excessive immigration,” which became manifest at the turn of the century, growing stronger after 1918, and picking up momentum during the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> With the creation of the National Immigration Police (*Eidgenössische Zentralstelle für Fremdenpolizei*) within the Depart-

1 P. Kury. *Über Fremde reden. Der Überfremdungsdiskurs in der Schweiz von 1900 bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Zurich: Chronos, 2003; Unabhängige Expertenkommission Schweiz—Zweiter Weltkrieg (hereafter UEK.). *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*. Vol. 17 (2001): 63ff.

ment of Justice and Police (*Eidgenössisches Justiz und Polizei Departement*) in 1919, the implementation of policies affecting foreigners was centralized and intensified. To keep the number of foreigners in Switzerland at a minimum, further economic and cultural measures were taken, such as closing the Swiss labor market and restricting permanent residency.<sup>2</sup>

The *Abwehr* against Jewish immigration, therefore, goes further back than the rise of the National Socialists in Germany or the surge of refugees created during their time in power. While the initial focus was on preventing the immigration of Communists, attention soon shifted towards the Jews, while maintaining an eye on the former. Antisemitism was the unspoken underlying cause that led to discrimination and marginalization of Jews already in Swiss society and arriving Jewish refugees. Research has firmly established the link between the *Überfremdungsdiskurs* and the subsequent policies driven by antisemitism and hatred towards Sinti and Roma.<sup>3</sup> Heinrich Rothmund, chief of the *Fremdenpolizei*, was in charge of implementing immigration and refugee policies. He fought not only against “an excess of immigration” (*Überfremdung*) but also against what was called the “jewification” (*Verjudung*) of Switzerland.<sup>4</sup> Permanent residency and naturalization had already been made more difficult in the wake of World War I. Yet, while there were parts of Swiss society that were sympathetic to Nazi Germany, the Swiss authorities also clung to the long cherished humanitarian tradition of the country and therefore did not strive to imitate the Nazis.<sup>5</sup>

The fear of *Überfremdung* also drove policies relating to immigration, and defending Swiss identity against the “Other” became the primary goal. Here, the “Other” was mainly defined through the small group of *Ostjuden* (Jews from Eastern and Central Europe) in Switzerland. They were portrayed as a threat to Swiss identity and were considered “impossible

- 2 C. Ludwig. *Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz seit 1933 bis zur Gegenwart* (1957). Bern: Lang, 1966. 56–64.
- 3 On antisemitism in Switzerland, see A. Mattioli. *Antisemitismus in der Schweiz 1848–1998*. Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1998.
- 4 G. Koller. “Entscheidungen über Leben und Tod. Die behördliche Praxis in der schweizerischen Flüchtlingspolitik während des Zweiten Weltkrieges.” in *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge: 1933–1945*, Studien und Quellen 22. Bern: Haupt, 1996. 25ff.
- 5 UEK. *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*. Vol. 17 (2001): 64ff.

to assimilate” (*nichtassimilierbar*). They were also described as “alien elements” (*wesensfremde Elemente*), thus distinct from Swiss Jews or “Western Jews” (*Westjuden*), who were perceived as being easier to assimilate.<sup>6</sup>

### 1934 Laws on Foreigners

Swiss refugee policies of the 1930s were marked by the federal law of March 1931, which regulated the temporary and permanent residency of foreigners in the country. The law on the temporary and permanent residency of foreigners, or ANAG (*Gesetz über Aufenthalt und Niederlassung der Ausländer*), became law in 1934, regulating foreigners and refugees alike.

As was the case in other neutral countries, asylum could only be granted to political refugees. As in other countries, the term “political” was defined restrictively as those persecuted because of political activity, and explicitly excluded racial persecution. This signified in practice that Jewish refugees could only claim protective asylum in Switzerland if they could prove political persecution that went beyond their being Jewish.<sup>7</sup> From 1933 to 1945, only 644 people received political asylum in Switzerland; 392 before the war and 252 during it.<sup>8</sup> Only a small number of those refugees were Jewish. In fact, there are no reliable figures for the total number of refugees in Switzerland from 1933 until the beginning of the war. It is impossible to say how many Jews crossed the border legally or illegally, or were turned away. Estimates suggest that through 1938, there were approximately 5,000 refugees in the country, with this number rising to about 10,000–12,000 by September 1939.<sup>9</sup>

Foreigners who were allowed to enter Switzerland had to pay a sum of money called “a bail.” They then received a “residence permit” (*Aufenthaltsbewilligung*) or, as was the case for most Jewish refugees, a “temporary per-

- 6 H. Roschewski, Heinz. “Heinrich Rothmund in seinen persönlichen Akten. Zur Frage des Antisemitismus in der schweizerischen Flüchtlingspolitik 1933–1945.” *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge* Vol. 22. 130.
- 7 UEK. *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge....* Vol. 17. 34–37,382. G. Koller. “Entscheidungen über Leben und Tod....” 22ff.
- 8 C. Ludwig. *Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz....* 72. G. Koller. “Entscheidungen über Leben und Tod....” 24.
- 9 UEK. *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge....* Vol. 17. 31, 111.

mit” (*Toleranzbewilligung*). This permit allowed them to stay in one specific canton, i.e., a state of the Swiss confederation, in order to prepare for their “onward migration” (*Weiterwanderung*). The permit was valid for only a few months, after which it had to be renewed. Until 1942, the granting of *Toleranzbewilligungen* was within the legal competence of the cantons. This gave them some flexibility and led to certain cantons being more liberal in their acceptance of refugees than others.<sup>10</sup>

As in the case of Sweden, Switzerland considered itself to be a “country of transit” (*Transitland*). Therefore, the underlying concept of Swiss asylum policies, and a requirement of law, was dubbed “onward migration” (*Weiterwanderung*). This concept required all foreigners to continue their migration to a further destination, an idea directly connected to the *Überfremdungsdiskurs*. *Weiterwanderung* and *Transmigration* became the legal basis for Swiss refugee policies.

The concept of “permanent asylum” (*Dauerasyll*) was not part of this legislation. Asylum was not considered a fundamental right, but rather something which was sometimes granted, albeit through rules that changed frequently. This practice remained in place until Switzerland joined the UN International Convention on Refugees in 1954.<sup>11</sup> The ANAG limited the number of foreigners, but also kept them, including the refugees already in Switzerland, under control. They were subject to restrictions in movement and places of residence.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, they were prohibited from doing paid work. The financial burden that resulted from the presence of refugees in the country was primarily placed on individuals and private organizations, and the Jewish communities were expected to raise much of the money needed to support the refugees. Refugees were actively dissuaded from integrating and permanently settling in the country, and were expected to leave as quickly as possible.

10 C. Ludwig. *Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz....* 22ff. UEK. *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge....* Vol. 17. 34–37, 172ff. See, e.g., for the canton of Basel, J.-C. Wacker, *Humaner als Bern! Schweizer und Basler Asylpolitik gegenüber jüdischen Flüchtlingen von 1933 bis 1943 im Vergleich*, Basel: Reinhardt, 1992.

11 C. Ludwig. *Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz....* 361–362. The law was ratified in 1955.

12 S. Erlanger. *Nur ein Durchgangsland; Arbeitslager und Interniertenheime für Flüchtlinge und Emigranten in der Schweiz 1940–1949*. Zurich: Chronos, 2006. 78–82.

## Reactions from Swiss Society

Historical research has found little evidence of any criticism of the policy of “onward migration” prior to the war.<sup>13</sup> However, some attempts on the national and international level were made by Swiss relief agencies to improve the situation of the refugees. One example is the petition made by the “Swiss Relief Agency for Emigrant Children” (*Schweizer Hilfswerk für Emigranten Kinder*—hereafter SHEK), addressed to the League of Nations in 1935, which demanded a more humane treatment of the refugees in Europe and the prevention of refugees’ becoming stateless. Although unsuccessful, a similar petition was addressed to the League in 1936.<sup>14</sup>

In July 1935, twelve Swiss relief agencies demanded that the Federal Council (*Bundesrat* = the Swiss government) stop the rejection (*refoulement*) of refugees at the Swiss border, a demand which found little support among federal politicians. These politicians argued that in the matter of refugees, humanitarian and national interests were in opposition to each other, and that the *Bundesrat* had to protect national interests.<sup>15</sup> At this higher level, relief agencies and ordinary citizens had little impact on relevant policies. However, on a lower level, when dealing with individual politicians and local authorities, exceptions to the restrictive rules could be gained, as illustrated below.

Jewish communities in Switzerland were diverse, and by no mean a homogenous group. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of Swiss Jews did not support the politics of *Abwehr*. The *Schweizerische Israelitische Gemeindebund* (SIG), which brought together the country’s Jewish communities, oscillated between activism and adaptation. In the years between 1933 and 1937, much of its politics and many of its activities were focused on defending its own position and status in Swiss society, mainly as a reaction to growing antisemitism and the rise of *Frontismus* (a Nazi-like movement). A key event of this period was the Berne Trial on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (1933–1937). The trial came about when the SIG pressed

13 B. Lüthi, P. Kury, S. Erlanger. *Grenzen Setzen. Vom Umgang mit Fremden in der Schweiz und den USA (1890–1950)*. Köln, Weimarn, Vienna: Böhlau, 2005. 134ff.

14 S. Lienert. “Wir wollen helfen, da wo Not ist.” *Das Schweizer Hilfswerk für Emigrantenkinder 1933–1947*. Zurich: Chronos, 2013. 93–95.

15 S. Lienert. “Wir wollen helfen, da wo Not ist.” 93ff.; A. Lasserre, *Frontières et camp: Le refuge en Suisse de 1933 à 1945*. Lausanne: Payot, 1995. 96ff.

charges against members of the *Frontist* movement calling for a criminal investigation, proving that the documents were forgeries, and obtaining a prohibition of their dissemination. Another was the trial of David Frankfurter, who shot the Swiss NSDAP leader in 1936. The assassination and subsequent reactions from Germany raised fears in Switzerland about the danger of a Nazi presence in the country. Such issues led to an intimidating climate for Swiss Jews.<sup>16</sup>

### Closing the Border and the “J”-stamp

A key moment for Jewish refugees in Europe was the Evian Conference in France, held in July 1938. The Swiss government had declined to host the conference out of fear of being pressured into changing its policies towards refugees, and it remained a reluctant participant at Evian. Switzerland became the only European country that declined to work with the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees formed at the conference. What happened after Evian is best understood in the light of the discourse concerning *Überfremdung* and *Verjudung*. Throughout 1938, Switzerland conducted various negotiations with Germany that aimed at keeping the numbers of refugees entering the country as low as possible. Heinrich Rothmund, who represented Switzerland at Evian, rejected discriminatory measures solely against Jews and, as a result, requested visa obligations for all German citizens. However, the *Bundesrat* considered a variety of measures intended at keeping Jewish refugees out of the country without damaging its relationship with the National Socialist regime in Germany. From 1933 until the Annexation in 1938, the number of refugees in Switzerland remained level at around 5,000 people, most of whom were German Jews. After the Annexation, between some 5,500–6,500 mostly Jewish refugees from Austria and Germany fled to Switzerland.<sup>17</sup>

16 J. Picard. *Die Schweiz und die Juden 1933–1945, Schweizerischer Antisemitismus, jüdische Abwehr und internationale Migrations- und Flüchtlingspolitik*. Zurich: Chronos, 1994. 85–144. On the SIG see S. Mächler. *Hilfe und Ohnmacht. Der Schweizerische Israelitische Gemeindebund und die nationalsozialistische Verfolgung 1933–1945*. Zurich: Chronos, 2005.

17 UEK. *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge*.... Vol. 17. 100. Picard. *Die Schweiz und die Juden 1933–1945*.... 294ff.



Four Jewish refugee boys who had received temporary permits to stay in Switzerland in 1939 preparing for their onward journey.

*Courtesy of private archive, D. Neustädter.*

On 1 April 1938, the *Bundesrat* introduced visa obligations for all Austrians. After Evian failed to find a solution to the refugee crises, Switzerland strengthened its border controls even more. Only refugees in possession of visas for onward migration were allowed to enter the country and systematic rejection was applied to all who tried to cross the border illegally. Border officials were instructed to turn away all refugees without a visa, in particular Jews or those who were thought to be Jews.<sup>18</sup> By a decree of 3 July, 1938, Austrians became citizens of the German Reich. This led Switzerland to cancel a 1926 agreement with Germany that allowed Germans to reside in Switzerland. Furthermore, it was announced that as of 1 October, 1938, the visa requirement would extend to all Germans.

Germany feared that other states would follow suit and started to negotiate with Switzerland, reaching an agreement on 29 September in which Germany suggested marking Jewish passports. Despite legal and ethical concerns within the Swiss political leadership and the foreign policy establishment, Swiss officials accepted the German proposal in order to keep Jewish immigration at bay. It then retracted the visa requirement for all

18 UEK. *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge...* Vol. 17. 101–102. 390.



Germans. Starting on 5 October, passports of German and Austrian “non-Aryans” were to be marked by German authorities with the so-called “J”-Stamp, a measure which made travelling anywhere much harder for Jewish refugees. In fact, the idea of *Abwehr* turned out to be stronger than actual concerns, with the price of a moral and political capitulation to the racist antisemitism of National Socialism. Though Switzerland did not propose the idea of the infamous passport stamp as is sometimes claimed, it clearly carries a significant moral responsibility for it.<sup>19</sup>

### Refugee Children

The laws of 1934 applied to both children and adults. Children could not obtain permanent asylum and were obliged to leave the country as soon as possible for onward migration (*Weiterwanderung*). However, children were generally considered less of a danger to Swiss national identity than adult refugees.<sup>20</sup> There was also a minimum age for rejection (*Wegweisung*), which made entering the country easier for children. During most of the 1930s, and throughout the war, this minimum age was 16 years. Once in Switzerland, most refugee children were allowed to enter public schools. If they were in the country without parents, they were placed in homes or foster families, in hospitals or with relatives. In the 1930s, relief organizations tried to help refugee children, mostly German and Russian Jews in France, by bringing children to Switzerland for three months to recover. The main organization dealing with refugee children until 1939 was the “Swiss Relief Agency for Emigrant Children” (SHEK), which was a non-sectarian, non-political organization run mainly by women. It brought about 5,000 children, primarily from France and most of them Jewish, into Switzerland on “relief-trains.” At the end of their stay, all but a handful of children returned home.<sup>21</sup>

19 UEK. *Die Schweiz und die Flüchtling...* Vol. 17. 97–113. 369; G. Kreis. *Die Rückkehr des J-Stempels: zur Geschichte einer schwierigen Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Zurich: Chronos, 2000.

20 On refugee children, see S. Lienert. “Wir wollen helfen, da wo Not ist.” or A. Schmidlin. *Eine andere Schweiz: Helferinnen, Kriegskinder und humanitäre Politik, 1933–1942*. Zurich: Chronos, 1999.

21 In order to be allowed into Switzerland, all children had to have passports and a return visa to France. In the 1940s, when the Swiss Red Cross Children’s Aid took

Before the war, few children found temporary refuge in Switzerland beyond such vacations, despite the relative laxity of the conditions necessary to enter the country in comparison to adults; children also enjoyed greater public sympathy. From 1934 to 1939, the SHEK helped around 1,600 children, most of them Jewish. About 400 of them were in the country with a parent, a handful of whom had obtained political asylum. Many of these children left the country again before the beginning of the war.<sup>22</sup>

With one exception, SHEK did not actively try to bring refugee children into Switzerland for permanent or long-term stays. This was the case of a collective admission prior to 1939, the so-called “300 Children Campaign” (*300 Kinder-Aktion*) in November 1938. In the wake of the *Reichspogromnacht* (anti-Jewish 1938 November pogroms), the organization asked for and was given permission by the Swiss government to bring in 300 children from Germany. Similar requests for collective admissions were made by other relief agencies for adults, but they were not granted. Many Swiss Jews tried to bring their families and friends from Germany to Switzerland, but the “bails,” which had to be paid for the *Toleranzbewilligung*, were prohibitively expensive for most Swiss Jews. Jewish relief agencies were reluctant to agree to sign the required “bails.”<sup>23</sup>

Though the SHEK paid the bail in this instance, there were other conditions for the inclusion of children in the *300 Kinder-Aktion*: They had to be orphans or have at least one parent in a concentration camp or a parent in Switzerland. The upper age limit was initially 17 years, but was then lowered to 14 years. Additionally, the children had to either come from the Jewish orphanage in Frankfurt am Main in Nazi Germany or from the Swiss border region—an area including everything up to about 50km from Basel. Two-hundred and fifty children, nearly all Jewish and many belonging to Frankfurt’s Orthodox community, were brought to Switzerland in early 1939. They only had a cantonal *Toleranzbewilligung* (some cantons refused to accept them) and were expected to emigrate to another country within six months of their arrival. However, most of them ended up staying in Switzerland for the duration of the war. There were a few things that made

over the “relief trains,” all Jewish children were excluded, not only refugee children, but also French nationals.

22 S. Lienert. “Wir wollen helfen, da wo Not ist.” 115ff.

23 Mächler. *Hilfe und Ohnmacht...* 191–200. In one case a maid was asked to pay a “bail” of 125 times her monthly salary.

it possible for this collective admission to be granted. The most important factor was the timing: the request came just days after the anti-Jewish 1938 November pogrom amid public outcry and shock within the political leadership. Furthermore, who requested the collective admission was significant; this time it was a women's organization that was considered apolitical and harmless. And lastly, the refugees who were to benefit from this exception were children. Thus, they did not play the same role in the *Überfremdungsdiskurs* as adults did, and were therefore considered less of a threat to national identity than adults by the political leadership, the administration and the public. For children, the latter was willing to donate money, goods and even housing. While this campaign was celebrated as a great victory by the organization, it concerned, in fact, only a small number of refugees. This is true in relation to the number of refugees that SHEK cared for, only 250 out of a total of 10,000 refugees from 1933 to 1947, including the "relief-train children." In comparison, between 1938 and 1940, the British took in 10,000 children with similar collective admissions.

## Conclusion

Swiss immigration policies in the pre-war years paralleled those of many other neutral countries. While they were largely driven by the fear of foreigners coming into the country, threatening the local culture and flooding the labor market, fears dating back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the underlying sentiments were undeniably and increasingly antisemitic. Switzerland kept the numbers of refugees in the country low by restrictive immigration laws, visa requirements and a definition of political refugees that excluded Jewish refugees who were seeking protective asylum. In order to be able to distinguish between ordinary Germans and Jewish refugees, Switzerland accepted the proposed solution by Germany to mark all Jewish passports. Research has clearly shown that the so-called "J"-stamp greatly affected Jewish refugees in Europe. Switzerland considered itself, like others, to be merely a country of transit, and did not allow for permanent residency. Rejection at the border was a daily occurrence. Finally, due to a lack of record keeping, for the years between 1933 and 1939, it is difficult to establish precise figures for how many Jewish refugees were rejected at the Swiss border and how many were allowed to enter. By September 1939, an estimated 10,000–12,000, mostly Jewish, refugees had entered Switzerland.



Children from the Israelite Orphanage in Frankfurt am Main who had come to Switzerland in January 1939 as part of the “300 Kinder-Aktion” in front of their home in the canton of Basel-Land.

*Courtesy of private archive, D. Neustädter*



Corry Guttstadt

## Turkey—Welcoming Jewish Refugees?<sup>1</sup>

In the early years of the Nazi period, a significant number of German academics, who lost their positions in Germany because they were Jews or political opponents, found jobs in Turkey. Many of these scholars contributed in numerous ways to the development of a wide variety of academic disciplines, and also to the building of cultural institutions and infrastructure in the young Republic of Turkey. The legacy of these émigrés still persists in Turkey today.

Thanks to numerous publications describing this “academic exile,” museum exhibitions devoted to exile in Turkey and the published memoirs of some of the prominent former exiles in Turkey, the impression has been created that Turkey was an important country of exile for persecuted Jews. Furthermore, this image is readily fostered by statements from Turkish politicians, and there are many people in both Turkey and Germany who believe it to be true. However, if one takes a closer look at Turkey’s actual policies towards Jewish refugees, it is clear that this picture is in need of revision.

From the very beginning of their rule, intellectuals were particular targets for the Nazis. The “Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service,” enacted on 7 April, 1933, required the dismissal of Jews and political opponents from public service. Thousands of scholars, among them a substantial number of outstanding and internationally renowned academics, lost their positions. At the same time, the Turkish government was reforming the country’s universities, and had decided to establish a modern university and to close the *Dârülfünun*, the university in Istanbul, which had been founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As part of ambitious plans for modernizing the country, Turkey was eager to employ specialists and experienced academics in many fields.

1 This essay is largely based on the research conducted for my book, *Die Türkei, die Juden und der Holocaust*. Berlin and Hamburg: 2008. See also the book’s English version, *Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust*. New York: 2013.

The coincidental timing of Turkey's reform plans and the Nazis' dismissal of scholars, who were then looking for new positions, led to about 130 scholars—classified as “Jewish” by the Nazis—becoming university professors, lecturers and assistants in Turkey, as well as advisers to Turkish states agencies. Another 100 Jews worked legally in private enterprises or made ends meet by working in various jobs. In total, including family members, there were about 600 persons persecuted in Greater Germany for being Jewish who officially found exile in Turkey between 1933 and 1939, although 100 stayed in Turkey for fewer than two years.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, there were an estimated 300 to 400 non-prominent refugees in Turkey who tried to get by in extremely difficult conditions. Their situation, however, is unfortunately rarely documented. This category includes a number of German Jews who had gone to Turkey as refugees before 1933, in some cases even at the government's request, as craftsmen, specialists, etc., and who could not return to Nazi Germany because they were Jewish.

### **Turkey was not a Country of Exile for Jews**

For the majority of German Jewish refugees, Turkey was not a destination of exile. The 1932 “Law on Activities and Professions in Turkey Reserved for Turkish Citizens,” followed by other, similar regulations, barred foreigners from obtaining work permits for most occupations. These measures did not specifically target Jews but affected all foreigners, and were an expression of a protectionist economic policy, as was the case in many countries at the time. Consequently, Turkey's politics towards Jewish refugees was anything but welcoming. Several attempts by Jewish groups and individuals to persuade Turkey to take in more Jewish refugees failed: Both David Marcus, head of the Jewish School in Istanbul, and Chaim Weizmann, later the president of the Jewish Agency, appealed in vain to the Turkish government to allow more German Jewish scientists and doctors to be employed. Albert Einstein, in his capacity as honorary president of the *Ceuvre de secours aux enfants* (OSE), an international Jewish charity orga-

2 This figure is based on an accurate analysis of the database of the *Verein Aktives Museum*, Berlin, which holds the most comprehensive archive on exile in Turkey, and other available sources.



Among the academic emigrés to Turkey were the pediatrician Albert Eckstein and his wife Erna, both pioneers of medical childcare in Turkey, and the Assyriologist Benno Landsberger, who was appointed to the Faculty for Languages, History and Geography (Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi) in Ankara.

*Ecksteins: Private photograph, courtesy of Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf, Mahn- und Gedenkstätte für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus;*

*Landsberger: Private photograph, Universitätsarchiv Leipzig*





nization, had even proposed that these Jewish scientists and doctors waive their salaries for one year if they were offered employment. His request was turned down by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü.<sup>3</sup>

### Turkey's Nationalist Population Policies

During this period, Turkey's nationalist policies reached their peak. Non-Muslims and other minorities were subjected to numerous restrictions, including that on their freedom of movement and their right to create associations and to practice their professions. These politics, complemented by a threatening nationalist climate, had already triggered a mass exodus of Jews from Turkey during the 1920s and 1930s. In late June—early July 1934, Jews living in Thrace were forced by threats and violent attacks to leave their homes; several thousand fled to Istanbul and hundreds of Turkish Jews left the country. One of the central aims of Kemalist policies was the “turkification” of the population, i.e., efforts to increase the Muslim and Turkish population by inviting Muslims and people regarded as close to Turkish culture to settle in Turkey, as well as the forcible assimilation of people regarded as non-Turks. An important instrument used to achieve this aim was the “settlement law” (*iskan kanunu*) of June 1934, which empowered the government to dislocate the population of whole regions in order to achieve turkification. This law would later affect the situation of Jewish refugees.

In the course of 1937, the Turkish authorities repeatedly denied entry permits to German Jews and had already begun expelling some, frequently giving them only a few days to leave the country.<sup>4</sup> At first, these measures did not target prominent scholars, but ordinary Jewish refugees from Germany or Austria, who had made their way to Turkey and were trying to get by. Because many of the expelled turned to the German consular offices, a number of such cases are documented in the files of the Ankara embassy.<sup>5</sup>

- 3 Prime Minister İnönü's letter of refusal to Albert Einstein, 14 October 1933. *TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi*, Ankara (Archive of the Turkish Prime Ministry, hereafter BCA), 030.10.116.810.3.
- 4 Letter by Kroll, 16 Sept. 1937. Political Archive of the German Foreign Office (hereafter: PAAA Berlin), German Embassy in Ankara, (hereafter: GEA) 676.
- 5 Various documents in PAAA Berlin, GEA, 676, 677, 679, 681.

When the German embassy requested clarification from the Turkish government, its Foreign Ministry emphasized that, according to Turkish law, the right to immigrate was reserved for members of the “Turkish race and culture.”<sup>6</sup>

Turkish policy in this matter was based on Article 4 of the above-mentioned *İskân Kanunu*. According to Kemal Aziz Payman, the deputy director general at the Turkish Foreign Ministry, the Ministry had issued a secret brief aimed at preventing the immigration of Jews, while “Germans in general,” i.e., non-Jewish Germans and other non-Jewish foreigners, were not considered immigrants, even if they settled in Turkey for an indefinite period of time.<sup>7</sup> In August 1937, three German Jews picked up by the secret police were told about plans to expel 300 to 400 Jews who had immigrated to Turkey after 1933.<sup>8</sup> Documents from Turkish archives confirm these plans.

### 1938—The Turning Point

In the course of 1938, the situation of the Jews worsened dramatically. Several European countries issued antisemitic regulations, expelled Jews or stripped them of citizenship. As a result of such developments, the number of Jewish refugees increased dramatically on an international level. Already prior to the anti-Jewish 1938 November pogrom, during the previous summer, one country after another issued laws and regulations that would prevent Jews from entering their respective countries. The Evian Conference of July 1938, convened to address the question of Jewish refugees, came to nothing. In this respect, the situation bore a striking similarity to current international discussions about the “refugee problem” in which Mediterranean and European politicians weep tears for drowned refugees at the same time as proposing new regulations to prevent refugees from coming to Europe.

6 PAAA Berlin, GEA, 681, letter from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 May 1937.

7 Note dated 26 May 1937, regarding a meeting with Payman the previous day. PAAA Berlin, GEA, 681.

8 Note dated 5 August 1937. The three people were G. Seeliger, H. Lewin, and K.J. Lewin; letter by Consul Toepke, 6 August 1937. PAAA Berlin, GEA, 681.

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Osak: Hudut harici ediler  
yahudi Edit Norden hakkın-  
da .

**T. C.**  
**DAHİLİYET VE KALETİ**  
Emniyet Umum Müdürlüğü

Şube: ..... 4.  
Husul:  
Umumi: 1154

**T. C.**  
**BAŞBAKANLIK**  
**CUMHURİYET ARŞİVİ**

Bağvekâlet Yüksek Makamına

*Thüring*

Almanya'da Nasyonal - Sosyalist rejiminin kurulmasından sonra haklarında tatbik edilmeğe başlanılan cezri muameleler dolayısıyla orada barınamayacaklarını anlayan yahudilerin bir kısmı memleketimize gelerek yerleşmek niyetinde buldukları görülmesi üzerine Türkiye'de bir yahudi kessafetini önlemek üzere bu vaziyette olan Alman yahudileri memleketimizden çıkarılmakta idi bu meyanda 935 senesinde İstanbul'a gelen ve 937 senesinde Türkiye'de yerleşmeğe karar vererek daimi ikamet tezkeresi almak üzere müracaat eden ve yapılan tahkikatta Almanya'da yahudi aleyhdarlığının inkişafı üzerine memleketimize geldiği anlaşılan Edit Norden adlı yahudi kadın: da Türkiye'yi terke davet edilmiş ve işlerini tasfiye edebilmesi içinde kendisine Yirmi günlük bir mühlet verilmiştir .

Edit Norden ,hakkında ittihaz edilip kendisine tebliğ olunan bu hudut harici kararından sonra Türkiye'de kalabilmesini temin için Türk tebasalı birisile evlenmek çarelerini araştırmış ve bulduğu ilişik telgraf ehlibi Hüsamettin'le nikâhlanarak bu maksadına muvaffak olmuştur .

Fakat 935 senesinden beri bekâr yaşıyan ve daktilloluk yapmak suretile hayatını kazanan bu kadının hudut harici kararının tebliğinden sonra alelacele ve bir kaç gün zarfında yaptığı bu evlenme içinin samimi bir hiese istinat etmediği şüphesini uyandırması üzerine tahkikat derinleştirilmiş ve evlenme muamelesinin ikmal edilmiş olmasına rağmen Edit Norden'in kocasına izafe suretile kendini nufus siciline kayıt ettirmediği ve elindeki Alman pasaportunu muhafaza ettiği anlaşılmıştır .

**Binaenaleyh :**

I - Otomatikman olarak Türk vatandaşlığını iktisap edebilmesi için icabeden formaliteyi takip ve ikmal etmemiş ,nufus kayıt edilmemiş ve Alman pasaportunu muhafaza etmiş bulunması dolayısıyla ,

2 - Vaziyetinin, 3529 sayılı kanununun 25.inci maddesine uygun

Kayıtlık pasaportluk kâğıdı ve diğer şahıs ve nesnelere giren ve çıkan kağıtları:

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Explanatory statement by the Minister of the Interior from 4 March 1939, that accompanied the expulsion order against Edith Norden, noting that German Jews who had fled Nazi Germany were being removed from Turkey in order to "prevent a concentration of Jews."

*The Turkish Republic Prime Ministry State Archive, 030.10/99.641.7*

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Ozet: .....

**T. C.**  
**DAHİLİYE VEKÂLETİ**  
Emniyet Umum Müdürlüğü

Şube: .....  
Husuf: .....  
Umumî: .....

**T. C.**  
**BAŞBAKANLIK**  
**CUMHURİYET ARŞİVİ**

- 2 -

olması itibarile hakkında ki hudut harici kararı tatbik mevkiine  
konulmuştur ve 21/2/1939 günlü hudut harici edilmiştir .  
Saygılarımla arz ederim .

Dahiliye Vekili  
N. Kemal

11-16-1939

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Kayıtlık pasaportlar listeye alınmış ve pasaportlar için ve vizesi için pasaportlar.

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Since it was known that Turkey did not welcome or accept Jewish refugees, the country was not invited to the Evian Conference. Already in June 1938, Turkey passed two laws prohibiting the entrance or the stay of any person without a valid passport or ID-card into or in Turkey. Those who had lost their citizenship while living in Turkey could be expelled. Although the wording of these laws targeted undesirable refugees in general, the timing indicates that these measures primarily targeted Jews. This becomes apparent from a Turkish inquiry at the German consulate general in Istanbul a few days after the passage of these laws. The Turks 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.<sup>9</sup>

Seven weeks later, after the Evian Conference, which—as noted—Turkey did not attend, the government went a step further. On 29 August, 1938, the government issued “Decree No. 2/9498,” which forbade the authorization of visas for Jews with German, Hungarian or Romanian citizenship. The decree stated that, in the face of antisemitism spreading from Germany to other countries, Jews had been trying to emigrate to countries without antisemitism, so that the measures taken by Turkey in the past had proved insufficient. As a consequence, the entry of Jews from Germany, Hungary and Romania was now prohibited. It is noteworthy that the decree explicitly mentions that, “in light of the danger of a Jewish mass immigration,” countries like Switzerland, Italy, France, England and others had taken measures to prevent Jewish immigration and suggests that Turkey simply follow these countries’ example. Although the decree was classified, and was not published either in *Resmi Gazete*, the government gazette or in the *Düstur*, the official collection of law texts and government decrees,<sup>10</sup> it was openly quoted in correspondence between state agencies. In a note of 20 November, 1939, from the Turkish minister of the interior to the rector’s office of the University of Istanbul, he wrote, “By decision No. 9,498 of the Council of Ministers of 29 August 1938, which aims to prevent Jews of foreign nationality from entering our country on transit visas and then settling here, the entry of German, Hungarian, Romanian and Italian Jews into our country has been prohibited. [...] Regarding persons who have been invited, or are

9 Letter from the German ambassador August F.W. von Keller to the Foreign Office in Berlin, dated 2 July 1938. According to Keller, the inquiry had been made by the deputy director of Section IV of the Istanbul police; PAAA Berlin, R 49005.

10 A facsimile of the decree can be found in Bilâl N. Şimşir. *Türkiye Yahudiler* Vol. II, Ankara (2010): 592. The publication—allegedly a “document edition”—is a very problematic source. Şimşir is not a historian but a former Turkish diplomat and the many blatant mistakes are striking (wrong dates, false transcription, etc.). Moreover, Şimşir is well-known as an ardent denier of the Armenian genocide. He published his two volume “document collection” *Türkiye Yahudiler*, with the political aim of proving, “Turkey’s Struggle against the European Racists” (subtitle). Since the Turkish archives are still not open to independent researchers, and this specific document is presented as a facsimile, the above-presented summary of the decree stems from the facsimile in Şimşir. I thank İzzet Bahar for bringing the publication of this document by Şimşir to my attention.

employed, by the government, visas can be granted on the basis of exceptional permission given by decision of the Council of Ministers.”<sup>11</sup>

As this note shows, the prohibition on entering Turkey and the refusal of visas were, within a very brief time period, extended first to Italian Jews and subsequently, over the following months, to Jews from other countries that either had antisemitic legislation or were under German control.<sup>12</sup>

Beginning around the time the secret decree was issued, Turkey began to reject Jewish refugees even if they had passports. Turkish consulates demanded proof of “Aryan descent” before granting an entry visa to Turkey.<sup>13</sup> Turkish diplomatic representations abroad also received instructions not to issue entry visas for Turkey to Jews from countries with anti-Jewish legislation, i.e., Germany, Italy, Romania and Hungary. However, the stringency with which these instructions were enforced varied, and it can be assumed that cash payments played a significant role in such enforcement. It appears that for the consuls in Vienna, issuing visas had become a lucrative business.<sup>14</sup> The Turkish authorities also applied this regulation to some of the exiles who had settled in Turkey prior to 1938; they had to prove retroactively that they were not Jewish.<sup>15</sup>

### Exemptions for Specialists

Under Article 3 of the secret decree, specialists, whose work was essential for Turkish departments, or whose stay was considered useful for eco-

11 Quoted in Arin Namal. *Vier emigrierte Österreicher am radiologischen Institut der Universität Istanbul 1938-1948*. Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts, online <http://www.stiftung-sozialgeschichte.de/joomla/index.php/de/component/content/article/95-zeitschrift-archiv/sozial-geschichte-extra/beitraege/173-vier-emigrierte-oesterreicher-am-radiologischen-institut-der-universitaet-istanbul-1938-1948>.

12 Already in January 1939, the Turkish minister of the interior asked the foreign minister to expand the application of decree 2/9498 to Jews from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Bulgaria. See, Şimşir, Vol. II. 594.

13 Letter by Kroll, dated 23 January, 1939; PAAA Berlin, GEA, 539.

14 Letter from the DÖW (Austrian Resistance Documentary Archive) to the author, dated 7 August, 2003.

15 Verein Aktives Museum, *Haymatloz—Exil in der Türkei 1933–1945* (exhibition catalogue). Berlin: Verein Aktives Museum, 2000. 33.

conomic reasons, could obtain special permission to remain in Turkey. They could also get permission to have their family members join them, but this was a very limited option, since it required the approval of the entire Turkish cabinet.

Such approvals were issued as exceptions to Decree No. 2/9498, a fact explicitly noted in most cases. Some of the permits or extensions were granted for only one or two weeks, but most of them were valid for six months or a year. In the prime ministry's Republican Archives, eighty-seven individual decisions regarding work, residence, and entry permits for Jews from Germany and Austria, as well as for Czech, Hungarian, and Romanian Jews, are listed under the keyword *Yahudi* (Jew) for the period from 1938 to 1944. They also include permissions for a number of émigré professors or skilled Jewish workers to be joined by their family members. Several negative decisions are also on file. In a few cases, Turkish politicians were even able to obtain the release of detained relatives of exiled professors from concentration camps in Germany.<sup>16</sup>

While most professors and specialists on whose services Turkey depended were allowed to stay, the Turkish authorities used the expiration of employment contracts of less prominent people as an opportunity to expel Jewish refugees. A letter written in November 1938 by the German Assyriologist Fritz Rudolf Kraus to a friend provides insight into this trend. Kraus' father had converted to Protestantism, but the Nazis classified Kraus as a 'half-Jew,' barring him from government and academic employment. It reads, "[...] Once again, we have been through a strange and crazy time. What makes the expansion of Germany more than a historical spectacle here is the fact that Turkey now applies German race laws to Reich Germans, in that Reich Germans are only granted residence permits or, respectively, extensions on existing residence permits if they provide a certificate of Aryan descent from the German consul.

16 For example, the children of the astronomer Hans Rosenberg, C. Dalaman. *Türkei in Modernisierungsphase als Fluchtland für deutsche Exilanten* [dissertation at Freie Universität Berlin]. Electronically published <http://www.diss.fu-berlin.de/2001/57/index.html>. 105, note 267. Bruno Hellmann, the brother of the ENT specialist Dr. Karl Hellmann, was released from Buchenwald concentration camp; communication from Hellmann's niece, Miriam Schmidt, to Arnold Reisman. See A. Reisman. *Turkey's Modernization: Refugees from Nazism and Atatürk's Vision*. Washington, D.C.: New Academia, 2006. 397.

Thus people, i.e., emigrants, Jews who have been residing here since 1933, have been expelled out of the blue, within 24 hours, having done no wrong whatsoever; only a few of them were able to obtain a 14-day grace period! Exempt from this so far are people employed by the government, [...] but their mother who wish to enter the country are no longer allowed in even as visitors, and the overly fearful among the non-Aryan professors are talking about how one day their families will be expelled [...].<sup>17</sup>

After the beginning of the war and the radicalisation of Nazi Germany's anti-Jewish policies—from persecution to murder—and Ankara's policy of refusing persecuted Jews entry into Turkey had fatal consequences for Jews from Eastern- and Southeastern Europe, for whom Turkey could have been an important escape route on the way to Palestine.

Following several pleas by the Jewish Agency, in January 1941, the secret decree of August 1938 was somewhat relaxed, and Turkey permitted passage to several thousand Jews who had received Palestine certificates before the war. Yet, the new version of the decree still began with the sentence, "Jews, who are subject to restrictions on their life and freedom of movement in their home countries, are prohibited from entering Turkey".<sup>18</sup> While the decree narrowly defined under which exceptional conditions Jews could transit Turkey, the wording "regardless of their present religious affiliation" explicitly adopts the definition of Jews used by Germany and its allies.

## Conclusion

During the years of Nazi persecution, Turkey was not a country of refuge for Jews. The approximately 600 Jewish refugees who were legally admitted to Turkey comprised only 0,15 percent of the approximately 400,000 Jews who left Germany and Austria until emigration was prohibited by the Nazis in October 1941. In none of the pertinent statistics on countries providing

17 Letter from Kraus, dated 15 October, 1938, to Leoni Zuntz, a friend from Germany, who had emigrated to England. Leiden University Library. 'Brieven', BPL 3273. I would like to thank Jan Schmidt for providing me with this document.

18 This version—Decree No. 2/15132 of January 1941—was also not officially made public in Turkey. The Central Zionist Archive in Jerusalem holds a transcription of the original document, S 25/6308.



refuge is Turkey even mentioned. Moreover, Turkish restrictions directed at Jewish refugees were not the result of German pressure. Until October 1941, when Jewish emigration was officially forbidden, the aim of the Nazis was to drive the Jews out of the Reich. Turkey's policy, at least for the years 1933–1939, the period explored in this essay, was based on its own nationalist policies, enacted to create a homogeneous Turkish population.

Turkey's restrictive policies were not unlike those of other neutral countries, although most other neutral states took in significantly more Jewish refugees than did Turkey. At the very least, they granted refugees permission to stay in the country for a certain period of time.

There are, however, two aspects by which Turkey differs from the other formerly neutral countries. The first is that Turkey was the only country among them which, during the Nazi period, enacted several comprehensive measures against its "own" resident Jewish population, including discrimination and attacks against the Jewish population of Thrace in 1934, committing them to forced labor battalions in 1941 and the expropriation of both Jews and Christians by using a special tax (*Varlık Vergisi*).<sup>19</sup> These anti-minority policies led to the continued emigration by Turkish Jews from Turkey during the 1930s and during the war. After 1947, the majority of the Jews still in Turkey left the country.

The second difference is more contemporary. During the last fifteen years or so, other former neutral countries have begun critical historical research that has led to the revision of the long-prevailing myths and self-representations as "rescuers of the Jews." As for Turkey, we are still waiting for a similar critical engagement with its wartime history. One practical and necessary step towards this would be the opening of its archives.

19 For details, see C. Guttstadt. *Turkey the Jews and the Holocaust*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 56–81.

Pontus Rudberg

## Sweden and Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany, 1933–1939

The humanitarian work and rescue efforts conducted by Sweden during the last two years of the war, such as Raoul Wallenberg's work in Budapest and the Swedish Red Cross' evacuation of prisoners from concentration camps with the White Buses rescue expedition in spring 1945, are well-known. But Swedish responses to the persecution of the Jews in Germany before 1939, and in particular before 1938, have largely been overlooked, and the reactions and actions of Sweden's Jews have been studied even less.<sup>1</sup>

As early as spring 1933, many German Jews approached Swedish authorities with queries about moving to Sweden. Government officials responded by declaring that the immigration of large number of Jews to Sweden was impossible, referring to the country's high rate of unemployment, Sweden's restrictive immigration laws and strong public opinion against the immigration of Jews. In fact, preservation of the racial homogeneity of the Swedish people was one of the purposes of the country's Alien's Act of 1927—a law that was renewed in 1932, supplemented in 1937 and that remained in effect until 1946. The perceived threat of Jewish immigration was explicitly mentioned in the legislation, as well as other categories of “less desirable” people. Swedish officials feared that the tightening of the US immigration policy through the Aliens Act of 1924 would compel some of the immigrants, who otherwise would have gone there, to be more inclined to try to reach Sweden instead. Similar fears were expressed in other European countries, with Swedish immigration authorities and the

1 K. Åmark. *Att bo granne med ondskan, Sveriges förhållande till Nazistyskland och Förintelsen*. Stockholm: Bonnier, 2011. This remains the only comprehensive monograph that explores Sweden's relationship to Nazi Germany. S. Hansson *Flykt och överlevnad—flyktingverksamhet i Mosaiska församlingen i Stockholm 1933–1950*. Stockholm: Hillelförlaget, 2004, analyzes the response of Sweden's Jewish communities to Nazi persecution.

justice ministry well informed about other countries' respective policies on immigration, and their handling of Jewish refugees in particular.

The guiding principle for Swedish authorities from 1933, and throughout the 1930s, was that German Jews should only be able to obtain residence permits if they already had relatives living in Sweden, or if they had other very close ties to the country. A guarantee that they would not become a financial burden to the public was also required. Work permits were extremely hard to obtain, as applications were reviewed by Swedish labor organizations, which generally did not welcome foreign competition. Throughout the 1930s, Swedish politicians and officials repeatedly emphasized that the solution to the refugee problem would have to be trans-oceanic emigration or a transplantation of the Jews to a non-European country.<sup>2</sup>

### Antisemitic Rhetoric and Discrimination

There is a lack of consensus in Swedish research about antisemitism during the 1930s. On the one hand, researchers have argued that antisemitism in Sweden was primarily a discursive phenomenon. For instance, historian Lars M. Andersson argued that antisemitic discourse was common in Sweden at least until 1930. On the other hand, historian Mattias Tydén has shown that a latent antisemitism flourished during the 1930s and that the Jews and Judaism were seen as abstract threats.<sup>3</sup>

A dominant component of Swedish antisemitism was the concept of 'Judeo-bolshevism' threatening the social order. However, there were also other forms of antisemitism, and the convergence of anti-bolshevism and anti-Jewish ideas was only one form of antisemitism in Sweden.

- 2 P. Rudberg. "Flyktingpolitik, främlingslagstiftning och tillämpning—Förutsättningar för judiskt flyktingmottagande i Sverige 1933–1945" in L. M. Andersson & C. H. Carlsson, eds. *Från sidensjalar till flyktingmottagning, Judarna i Sverige—en minoritets historia*. Uppsala: Swedish Science P., 2013. 114, 119–121, 127–131.
- 3 L. M. Andersson. *En jude är en jude är en jude...; representationer av "juden" i svensk skämtpress omkring 1900–1930*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2000. M. Tydén. "Anti-Semitism i Sverige 1880–1930" in G. Broberg, H. Runblom, M. Tydén, eds. *Judiskt liv i Norden*. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988. 259–283.

The same anti-capitalism, anti-cosmopolitanism, anti-establishment and antisemitism, which were common in many countries at the time, also existed in Sweden.<sup>4</sup>

It was widely believed that there was something about the Jews themselves that provoked antisemitism; that the so-called Jewish problem was a consequence of the behavior, conduct or racial qualities of the Jews themselves was widely accepted in Sweden and Europe in the 1930s. Historian Henrik Bachner has demonstrated that this idea was acknowledged by Social Democrats and Conservatives, as well by Christian intellectuals in Sweden. Yet another historian, Henrik Rosengren, has shown that antisemitic ideas influenced cultural life, as well as how Jews in Sweden were affected by antisemitism.<sup>5</sup>

While there is no question that an antisemitic discourse existed, researchers have also illustrated that popular support for organized antisemitism and Nazism in Sweden remained relatively low. At the height of its popularity in the mid-1930s, the Swedish Nazi movement never counted more than 30,000 organized members out of a population of around six million.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, Swedish antisemitism was far from unanimous. In fact, there were plenty of publicists, authors, scholars and others who spoke out publically against antisemitism, referring to it as a [social] psychosis or disease.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the 19th century in Sweden, Jews, especially those of Eastern European origin, were discriminated against in their applications for citizenship. However, such discrimination seems to have more or less

- 4 H. Blomqvist. *Myten om judebolsjevismen: antisemitism och kontrarevolution i svenska ögon*. Stockholm: Carlssons, 2013. L. Berggren. *Blodets renhet; en historisk studie av svensk antisemitism*. Malmö: Arx förlag, 2014. H. Bachner. "Judefrågan"; *debatt om anti-Semitism i 1930-talets Sverige*. Stockholm: Atlantis, 2009.
- 5 H. Bachner, "Judefrågan." H. Rosengren. "Judarnas Wagner". *Moses Pergament och den kulturella identifikationens dilemma omkring 1920–1950*. Lund: Sekel, 2007. H. Rosengren. *Från tysk höst till tysk vår : fem musikpersonligheter i svensk exil i skuggan av nazismen och kalla kriget*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2013.
- 6 H. Lööv. *Nazismen i Sverige 1924–1979; Pionjärerna, partierna, propaganda*. Stockholm: Ordfront, 2004. 244.
- 7 Some of the most prominent examples of Swedish intellectuals who spoke out against Nazism and antisemitism were Torgny Segerstedt, Per Lagerqvist, Vilhelm Moberg, Ture Nerman, Hugo Valentin, Mia Leche-Löfgren, Israel Holmgren and Karl Gerhard.

ended in the 1920s. In spite of this progress, historian Karin Kvist Geverts has shown that in the 1930s and 1940s, Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany were systematically discriminated against when applying for visas and residence permits.<sup>8</sup> The Swedish press continually reported Nazi Germany's anti-Jewish measures and the escalation of persecution against the Jews in Germany. The press generally described these anti-Jewish developments as "barbaric." However, there were also newspapers whose reports expressed indifference, with some reporters expressing their understanding for the atrocities committed during the anti-Jewish 1938 November pogroms.

### Swedish Refugee Policy and Jewish Aid

Until 1939, the care and support of refugees was seen entirely as the responsibility of the organization or individual who had provided authorities with the guarantees made on behalf of the refugees. Different organizations were deemed responsible for their respective category of refugees. For instance, Social Democrats and union activists were seen as the responsibility of the Labor Movement's refugee committee; communist refugees were attended to by the Swedish branch of the International Red Aid; and scholars, writers and other intellectual refugees were supported by the "Subscription for Exiled Intellectuals" (*Insamlingen för landsflyktiga intellektuella*). Jewish refugees were seen primarily as the responsibility of Sweden's small Jewish communities. In 1933, there were approximately 7,000 Jews in Sweden, 4,000 of whom lived in Stockholm. Because membership in a religious congregation was mandatory according to Swedish law, all Jews with Swedish citizenship belonged to one of the official Jewish communities. All of the major communities created their own relief committees to raise and distribute funds for Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.

Despite Sweden's restrictive immigration policy, local Jewish representatives managed to negotiate a few concessions. The first was a transmigration quota that allowed for temporary residence permits to be given to young Jews who did their agricultural re-training on Swedish farms. The

8 C. H. Carlsson. *Medborgarskap och diskriminering; Östjudar och andra invandrare i Sverige 1860–1920*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2004. 324–325. K. Kvist Geverts. *Ett främmande element i nationen; Svensk flyktingpolitik och de judiska flyktingarna 1938–1944*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2008. 287–289.

program was run by the Zionist Hechaluz movement and gave the youth the work experience required to obtain immigration certificates to Palestine. The second was a similar quota for German Jewish school children who attended the Landschulheim Kristinehov boarding school. Run by the German Jewish couple Ludwig and Charlotte Posener, the school was staffed by 13 Jews who thus had managed to escape Germany along with 170 pupils.

Beginning in 1933, the relief committee of Stockholm's Jewish community and the other Jewish organizations in Sweden received instructions from the Central Committee for Help and Reconstruction (*Zentralausschuss der deutschen Juden für Hilfe und Aufbau*) and other important Jewish organizations in Berlin about how Swedish Jews could help them. Aware of Sweden's restrictive immigration policy, Germany's Jewish organizations requested that Sweden's Jewish organizations primarily support the educational and re-training activities previously mentioned, as well as efforts that aimed at ultimately taking Jews from Germany to Palestine. Swedish Jews also coordinated their aid with the larger American and British relief organizations with which they were in constant contact. Like their counterparts abroad, Sweden's Jewish organizations initially had high expectations for the League of Nations and its "High Commission for Refugees from Germany"—believing they would be able to solve the refugee question on an international level. However, Sweden's government was less enthusiastic about its own role in the High Commission. K.I. Westman, Sweden's representative to the Governments' Council of the High Commission, was instructed by Rickard Sandler, Sweden's foreign minister, "to promise as little as possible" on Sweden's behalf. Thus, when chairman Lord Cecil, on 5 December, 1933, asked Westman to succeed him as chairman of the representation of Governments to the High Commission, Karl Ivan Westman declined. According to Westman, Lord Cecil found the burdens of the post unpleasant. Westman declined to succeed the latter because he had received Sandler's explicit instruction not to agree to serve on the Commission's Permanent Committee, which he assumed would follow with the position. According to Westman, his refusal to accept the position led to a discussion with Lord Cecil, who reluctantly agreed to continue as chairman.<sup>9</sup>

9 The Swedish National Archives. *Utrikesdepartementet* (Ministry for Foreign Affairs). 1920 års dossiersystem, HP Vol. 1046. K. I. Westman to Hans Beck-Friis, Geneva, 6 December 1933.

## Protests and Negotiations

When, in 1935, the High Commission failed to convince the respective governments to shoulder the responsibility of admitting refugees, the commissioner, James G. MacDonald, resigned in protest. As an act of protest against Sweden's passive role in the High Commission, Marcus Ehrenpreis, Stockholm's chief rabbi, translated MacDonald's letter of resignation—itsself a letter of protest—into Swedish. He then printed and distributed it to Swedish politicians and government officials.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly before the July 1938 Evian Conference, Stockholm's Jewish community, cooperating with a few other relief committees operating in the name of their joint umbrella organization, the Central Committee for Refugee Relief in Stockholm (*Stockholms Centralkommitté för flyktinghjälp*), sent a petition to the minister for social affairs. It suggested that at the conference Sweden should propose that all states admit a proportionate share of the refugees, and that Stockholm should set an example by declaring its willingness to admit its own share. Unfortunately, this did not happen. At the conference, Sweden declared that it could not permit any form of large-scale immigration. Its representative repeated the assertion that a solution to the Jewish emigration problem would have to be sought “in emigration to countries outside of Europe.”<sup>11</sup>

Also, in mid-1938, leaders of Stockholm's Jewish community began negotiations with Swedish authorities to increase the existing quotas and create new transmigration quotas that would enable other categories of Jewish refugees to obtain temporary residence visas while waiting for a visa to a third country. However, on 9 September, 1938, the government issued a decree stating that foreigners suspected of not being able to return to Germany would be immediately turned away at the border. Although not mentioned explicitly, the purpose of the decree was to stop Jewish refugees from entering the country. In combination with the red “J”-stamp in German Jewish passports, which was introduced shortly after the decree, the

10 J. G. MacDonald. *James G. MacDonalds avskedsbrev; Flyktingkommisarien anklagar nazismen—Särtryck ur Judisk Tidskrift januari 1936*. Stockholm: n.p., 1936.

11 *Proceedings of the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees, Evian, France, 6–15 July 1938 and Record of the Plenary Meetings of the Committee, Resolutions and Reports*. London: 1938. 35.



Jewish refugee children arriving at the Stockholm Central Railway Station.  
*Aftonbladet*, 16 February, 1939, courtesy of the Stockholm City Museum (*Stadsmuseet i Stockholm*)

provision became an effective instrument for border police and customs officials to stop Jewish refugees from entering Sweden.<sup>12</sup>

Before 1938, fewer than 1,000 Jews managed to obtain permits to remain in Sweden longer than three months, the maximum period of time one could remain in the country without a permit. However, this was about to change. In reaction to the Annexation of Austria and the increased pressure for Jews to emigrate from Germany, Stockholm's Jewish community finally succeeded in negotiating an increase to the existing quotas. And after the anti-Jewish 1938 November pogroms, two additional quotas were

12 The well-known decree of September 1938 was re-issued by the government in 1939, and again in 1940 with the supplement stating that German army deserters should also be turned back at the border.



created—one for 500 children and one for 140 adults. Most of the children selected by central Jewish organizations in Germany and Austria arrived in 1939, and were placed with both Jewish and Christian families, and in orphanages throughout Sweden.

Refugees were given temporary visas for up to two years if they were able to present financial guarantees. Like the previous Jewish quotas, these were intended as transmigration quotas. The authorities never intended to allow the refugees to permanently settle in Sweden. Regarding the children's quota, the children were only admitted on the condition that they came without their parents. The idea was that, by having the children stay in Sweden, it would be easier for the parents to emigrate to other countries, where the families would eventually be reunited. However, when these parents failed to find any other refuge, Sweden still denied them visas. Many of them perished in the Holocaust, while most of the children remained in Sweden throughout the war.

Because it became increasingly difficult to obtain visas for further emigration, the Swedish transmigration quotas did not actually function as proper quotas. The refugees remained stuck in Sweden, "filling" the quotas. And because the refugees were usually not allowed to work and make a living, Sweden's Jewish relief organizations were forced to use and more of their already-limited funds to support those refugees already in the country.

### **Lobbying the Swedish and United States Governments**

By early 1939, there were between 3,000 to 3,500 Jewish refugees in Sweden. Jewish community leaders in Stockholm realized that the government's policy depended largely on possibilities for further emigration. However, because of Britain's forthcoming White Paper on Palestine, such possibilities were primarily left to the United States. However, US consulates in Sweden were unwilling to issue visas and were reluctant even to give an estimate about the waiting time for a visa—information that Swedish authorities, in turn, required in order to issue their respective permits and visas.

Olof H. Lamm, Sweden's former consul general in New York, and Gunnar Josephson, chairman of Stockholm's Jewish community, tried to influence the Foreign Ministry to accept more refugees in Sweden. They also urged the ministry to pressure the American consulates in Sweden. They

argued that this was necessary and that, if action was not taken, Jews in the Third Reich would most likely be massacred in the event of a war or a financial crisis in Germany. During a secret meeting in March 1939, Lamm and Josephson presented a petition to Erik Boheman, then undersecretary for foreign affairs. Additionally, an English version of the petition was sent to George S. Messersmith, undersecretary of the US State Department. It was sent together with a cover letter written by Hans Schäffer, a former senior official in the Weimar Ministry of Finance, but who was then living in exile in Sweden. The petition argued that the US should issue more visas to transmigrants through Sweden, or at least state the expected waiting time for each applicant's visa. Schäffer repeated the argument that, if no measures were taken, Jews remaining in Germany would most likely be murdered. The US, he wrote, should be able to admit more refugees, at least temporarily.

Messersmith answered that the US did not want to encourage the transmigration system at all since this aimed at bringing the Jews to the US. He believed that suffering people would prefer to be helped in their home countries. Messersmith's reply arrived shortly before the British announced the White Paper on Palestine, which all but banned the immigration of Jews to Palestine. Fewer than six months later, the war broke out.

## Final Discussion

When the war broke out in September 1939, Sweden imposed a visa requirement for all foreign citizens in order to enter the country. Despite the government's restrictive policy, when Nazi Germany's total ban on emigration was decreed in October 1941, some 4,000 Jews had already escaped to Sweden. Approximately one-third had arrived through the Jewish quotas, while most of the remaining two-thirds had come with help from family, friends or other connections in Sweden. Shortly after the war ended, the government appointed a commission to investigate the country's handling of the refugee issue. The Sandler Commission came to the conclusion that, in the 1930s, Sweden had been overly restrictive and that more lives could have been saved if a more generous refugee policy had prevailed.<sup>13</sup>

13 SOU 1946:36 *Betänkande ang flyktingars behandling—Sandlerkommisionen I.*

KONFIDENTIELL AIDE MEMOIRE.

Från dag till dag förvärras läget för judarna och för andra av den nuvarande regimen i Tyskland förföljda. Om, eller rättare sagt, när den ekonomiska situationen blir ohållbar, om krig utbryter, eller i övrigt något inträffar som ytterligare anstränger de spända förhållandena, kunna dessa människor vänta att bli massakrerade.

De finnas, som allvarligt mena, att en snabb död vore det bästa för dem; måhända är en sådan tanke riktig, men det nedanstående skrives under antagande att det i civiliserade länder ännu finnes någon önskan att, där möjlighet föreligger, rädda oskyldiga, samhällsbevarande, fredliga och dagliga människor från outhärliga lidanden och död.

För att detta mål skall kunna nås är den hållning, som Förenta Staterna inta, av största betydelse. En liberalare amerikansk immigrationspolitik än den som nu tillämpas bleve till ovärderlig hjälp för flyktingarna. I själva verket förefaller det nästan som om det under kvotlagen tillämpade systemet vore ägnat att lämna minsta möjliga hjälp under nu rådande förhållanden. Att möjligheter förefinnas att inom ett eller annat år, och om alla rigorösa bestämmelser kunna iakttagas, kunna få komma till Förenta Staterna, må vara en tröst, men är ingen verklig hjälp för människor, som redan sitta inspärade, eller dagligen befara att bli det, eller att torteras eller dödas omedelbart eller ihjälsvältas. I detta sammanhang kan det väl för övrigt förtjäna erinras om att det uppekov, som på detta sätt åstadkommes, innebär att de förföljda, om de överhuvudtaget hålla ut så länge, bli så fysiskt och psykiskt nedsatta, att de utgöra ett långt sämre immigrantmaterial än vad som vore fallet om de mottogs omedelbart. Ävenså äro de under väntetiden i Tyskland beröfvade varje möjlighet till utbildning och

Petition by the former Swedish Consul General to New York, O. H. Lamm, and the Chairman of the Jewish Community of Stockholm, G. Josephson asking Swedish and American authorities to accept more Jewish refugees from Germany, arguing that the Jews of Germany would most likely be massacred unless action was taken.

*The Stockholm City Archives, Generalkonsul Olof Herman Lamms arkiv, B 85*

For a German Jew the prospect of being first taken to an American Reservation and then to be dumped on another foreign Continent may not look very enticing, to say the least. It must, however, be better than a German Concentration Camp, a Hell on Earth, better than being tortured or starved to death, better above all, because it may help to keep the family together, a thing which under present conditions is nearly impossible. For those who are not prepared to believe that it is the best thing for the persecuted in Germany to meet their death as quickly as possible the only alternative is to do all they can to get Refugees taken care of somewhere and somehow as quickly as possible. Delay means untold death.

Excerpt from the English version of the petition presented to the US state department.

What, then, explains Sweden's 1930 restrictive policy towards Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany? Partly, it was due to antisemitism. From the first anti-Jewish measures in Germany in 1933 and throughout the decade, the question of whether Sweden should provide a safe haven for refugee Jews was debated publicly, with rhetoric and arguments often laced with antisemitism. There was also an indirect antisemitism, a fear of an expected increase in antisemitism because of the immigration of any larger numbers of Jews. However, opposition to the restrictive policy dismissed such anti-Jewish arguments and called for a more generous policy. In 1939, Sigfrid Hansson, director of the National Board of Health and Welfare, wrote an article responding to fears that the board had been overly lenient regarding the refugee issue. In the article, Hansson calmed the critics, writing that the board had so far been very restrictive.<sup>14</sup> Also in 1939, Gösta Engzell, head of the Foreign Ministry's legal division, explained in a lecture how the question concerning Jewish refugees had been handled to that point. Engzell stressed that the policy was a result of trying to balance the conflicting standpoints, and that Sweden was neither too lenient

14 S. Hansson. "Vårt land har fört en restriktiv flyktingpolitik." *Tidskrift för handelstjänstemannaförbundet*. No. 2 (1939).

nor too restrictive.<sup>15</sup> However, judging by how the authorities handled the issue, it seems that, in practice, the restrictive camp was clearly dominant. In fact, the restrictive position was motivated not only by antisemitism, but also by a generally xenophobic atmosphere and a wish to protect the labor market. From this perspective, helping foreign Jews was not viewed as a priority. Furthermore, there was a fear among the Swedish politicians and officials that, if Sweden admitted too many German Jews, it would set an example for other governments. If other countries, such as Poland, tried to force their Jewish minorities to emigrate, some, if not many, would try to seek safety in the same way and in the same place. This was not a trend Sweden's government wished to encourage.

15 The Swedish National Archives, *JFA, Flyktingsektionen, F 4: a 1, Handlingar och redogörelser*, Engzell, Gösta, "Om flyktingfrågan ur internationell synpunkt. Föredrag vid Riksdagens interparlamentariska grupps årsmöte den 16 februari 1939 av utrikesrådet" G. Engzell. "Confidential". Transcript of Engzell's lecture.

Haim Avni

## Discussion of the First Panel

The focus of this chapter is the attitudes of Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey towards Jews in the first half of the Nazi era. These three countries have been grouped together not because they were a preferred destination for mass Jewish immigration at that time, but because they were among the European powers whose neutrality continued to be respected by Nazi Germany throughout the five years of World War II.

At first glance, there was not much common ground between them: Sweden, a democratic constitutional-monarchy; Switzerland, a democracy par excellence, complete with frequent referendums and all the trappings of direct democracy; and Turkey, pseudo-democratic, but in effect, authoritarian. On the one hand, there are Switzerland and Sweden, with their modern, materialistic cultures and Christian populations, composed primarily of Protestants of different denominations as well as Catholics; and on the other, predominantly Muslim Turkey, struggling with modernity. Whereas Sweden and Switzerland did not participate in World War I and used the time to build economic power and prestige, Turkey did fight, losing its entire empire in the process. In the decades following World War I, Turkey grappled with internal opposition that opposed its bid to become a unified secular nation-state.

This disparity, in addition to other important differences related to geographical distance from Germany, which was hardly the same for all three, would seem to rule out discussing them in the same chapter. However, the reader will find in these essays a number of common themes which, by dint of their appearance in such dissimilar contexts, can help to shed light on attitudes around the world towards the Jews forced to flee Nazi Germany in the wake of its comprehensive antisemitic persecution. Below we will consider some of these themes, which may also have relevance for the study of other countries.

One theme that runs very clearly through all three essays is a nation-building ideology that was translated into policy and legislation designed to foster local patriotism and safeguard the country from being tainted by

the presence and influence of foreigners. Sweden, seeking to preserve racial hegemony, passed the Aliens Act in 1927. Switzerland, home to three cultures and languages, sought to strengthen the nation by suppressing “over-alienation discourse”. Turkey simply persecuted anyone who did not fit in with its “turkification” scheme. Indeed, between the two world wars, most European countries, and especially those that had won their independence as a result of World War I, were preoccupied with cultivating nationalism and national solidarity.

The second theme is the role played by antisemitism in determining how Jewish refugees were treated. Here we must distinguish between two types of antisemitism, similar in content but fundamentally different in terms of the danger they posed to the refugees and the status of Jews in general—popular antisemitism and governmental antisemitism.

Popular antisemitism refers to the animosity towards Jews in the general population. Antisemites may offer a whole host of explanations for their animosity, but the end result is the same: objection to the presence of Jews anywhere in their vicinity, near or far. They will establish various organizations and parties to further this aim. Alongside the antisemites—and sometimes in outright opposition to them—there may be non-Jews in the same society who are opposed to antisemitism and even willing to fight it. In the essays on Sweden and Switzerland, such resistance to antisemitism comes up, and it is imperative that it not be ignored in studies of other countries. Governmental antisemitism is when animosity towards Jews is translated into government policy. This gives the antisemites full access to legislation and the means to enforce it. Antisemitism of this type might be the result of antisemites being numerically superior to those who oppose it, but it might also be due to their being more audible and influential, or to an antisemitic minority’s seizing power and using government clout to further its hostile aims against the Jews.

We find governmental antisemitism in all three essays in this chapter, albeit to different degrees. In the essay on Turkey—which does not mention popular antisemitism—we read of explicit official dispositions against Jewish refugees using racist terms, much like the Nazi legislation in Germany. We also learn of a proposal by Turkey to the Germans to secretly mark the passports of German Jews so they could be turned down if they sought entry into Turkey. In this, Turkey fell in line with other nations, thus attesting to the existence of wide spread governmental antisemitism at that time. In Switzerland, popular antisemitism existed, but there were also forces

acting against it. Governmental antisemitism surfaced in the handling of the Jewish refugee problem and government efforts to keep German Jews out. Switzerland demanded Germany's assistance in this matter, and was more than pleased when the Nazis stamped a "J" on the passports of German and Austrian Jews. This solution, which aligned with the Swiss government's desire to keep Jewish refugees away from its borders, had fateful consequences for all Jews of the "Greater German Reich."

Popular antisemitism was also present in Sweden, but there were influential figures in Swedish society who opposed it. Governmental antisemitism was expressed through indirect legislation: a law was passed to prevent the entry of Germans who were presumed unlikely to be able to return to their home country. This regulation was clearly directed at Jewish refugees and its implementation and effectiveness was soon facilitated by the "J" stamped in the passports of German Jews.

A third subject that crops up in this set of essays and which can be useful in the study of how Jewish refugees were treated in other countries, is the refugee relief activities of the local Jewish communities. In Turkey, the Jewish communities themselves were victims of governmental antisemitism. The policy of "Turkization", and the state-sanctioned discrimination against anyone who was not Muslim or Turkish, forced many Jews out of Turkey. Under these circumstances, one could not expect the Jewish communities to aid German-Jewish refugees.

In Switzerland, the Jewish community was multi-layered: It included Swiss-born Jews whose parents were granted citizenship and equal rights in the latter half of the 19th century. It also included immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe, who arrived in Switzerland from the beginning of the 20th century. The immigrants were the preferred target of the antisemites, who portrayed them as communist sympathizers—allegations that nourished governmental antisemitism. The Jews watched as the influence of Switzerland's pro-Nazi movement mounted. Under the auspices of an umbrella organization whose leaders were in close contact with the central organization of German Jewry, the Swiss Jewish communities provided material aid to the refugees and encouraged them to leave Germany. However, this organization avoided protesting governmental policy.

In Sweden, Jewish citizens were legally required to be members of a Jewish community. Thus the council of Jewish communities in Sweden was recognized as the official representative of all 6,000 Swedish Jews. This enabled its leaders not only to organize aid for the refugees arriving in Sweden,



but also to prod the Swedish government into admitting more. The Jewish community leadership did persuade the government to ease its restrictions somewhat, but its accomplishments were minimal and limited in scale.

A fourth theme is the action taken by non-Jewish individuals and organizations to aid German refugees in general, although persecuted Jews were the majority. In Switzerland, an organization called the Swiss Emigrant Children's Aid Organization (*Schweizer Hilfswerk fuer Emigrantenkinder* or *SHEK*) provided modest assistance by bringing over children for short holiday stays. In Sweden, organizations from various sectors collaborated with the Jewish umbrella organization in Stockholm on the eve of the Evian Conference, convened to find an overall international solution for the German refugee problem. The background for this activity was the shock of the world at large, not only Jews, at the Nazis' brutality towards Jews and political opponents immediately after their rise to power. Over the next five years, the shock abated as people grew accustomed to this brutality. After the 1938 November pogrom, the night of 9–10 November 1938, as synagogues throughout Germany and Austria went up in flames and Jewish businesses were left in ruins, the shock returned. To some extent, however, the brutalization of German society and the reality of living alongside it became almost commonplace for those looking in from the outside. What seemed impossible and shocking in 1933, had become, by November 1938, ordinary and routine. When the trauma of the 1938 November pogrom subsided, the explosion of violence at its core was recognized as a possible norm, contributing to the rising level of brutality in German society and in those around it. Hence the importance of including among the topics addressed by Holocaust scholars the phenomenon of growing brutalization in each of the countries under study, as a background to understanding the Nazi era as a whole.

## **Section II**

### **Jewish Refugees during the War (1939–1945)**



Corry Guttstadt

## Introduction

As the first panel demonstrated, even during the initial years of Nazi rule, there were numerous obstacles that severely hampered Jews from escaping Nazi Germany. As is well known, between 1938 and 1939, the number of Jewish refugees increased sharply because of the growing persecution of Jews in Germany, the annexation of Austria and the “Sudetenland” and the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Several other countries, including Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Italy, also passed anti-Jewish laws. And yet, the more urgently the Jews needed to flee, the greater the obstacles became.

Under the pressure of this increasing persecution, Jews tried to escape from Greater Germany at any cost, even if this meant not knowing where and under what conditions they would be admitted to another country. The odyssey of the *St. Louis* epitomizes these desperate attempts to escape. In May 1939, the ship sailed from Hamburg to Cuba with more than 937 Jewish passengers on board. Upon arrival, Cuban authorities did not accept the visas issued by a corrupt officer in the Cuban embassy in Berlin, denying entry to almost all of the passengers.

The United States also refused to grant them entry, and finally, the ship was forced to return to Europe. Eventually, the passengers were granted entry by four western European countries, although 254 of them were later captured and deported by the Nazis. In the same month that the *St. Louis* began its voyage, the British government further restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine. The immigration of more than 170,000 Jews between 1933 and 1937 had triggered protests and armed uprisings by Palestine’s Arab population. In response, the British government issued the “White Paper,” limiting the number of Jewish immigrants to 75,000 for the next five years.

### **1939: The Beginning of the War**

With Germany's attack on Poland, and, thus, the beginning of World War II, the question of refugees took on a completely new dimension. In German-occupied Poland alone, two million Jews came under Nazi control, with another 1.5 million living in the part of Poland occupied by the Soviets. Tens of thousands of Polish Jews hurriedly fled from the advancing German army into Eastern Poland, with many later continuing on to Hungary, Romania or Lithuania. Even those who held Palestine certificates issued before the war often could not make use of them because of closed borders, a lack of transportation, the inaccessibility of British consular representation (to get a visa extension), transit restrictions imposed by Turkey and a host of other obstacles. In other words, the possibilities of and conditions for escape were now entirely different from how they had been before the war. Between 1933 and 1938, German Jews had, for the most part, tried to emigrate from Nazi Germany as individuals or as families in a more or less organized manner. Now escape frequently meant fleeing illegally across an unprotected strip of border, or leaving the country as part of a group organized by a Jewish or humanitarian aid organization.

In September 1939, the British government cancelled all visas already issued to German Jews. In several countries at war with Germany, among them France and Great Britain, Jewish refugees from Greater Germany were interned as "enemy aliens." Barriers were raised against the immigration of Jewish refugees for fear that enemy spies might enter the country in the guise of refugees. With Germany's 1940 occupation of Northern and Western Europe, Yugoslavia and Greece, the number of Jews caught in the Nazi's grip multiplied to about four million. Additionally, several non-occupied countries allied with the Axis also enacted severe antisemitic measures.

In Romania, the fascist Iron Guard, which was part of the government, launched murderous attacks against Jews. In 1940, Bulgaria deported all its foreign Jews. As the number of persecuted Jews trying to find an escape route continued to rise, the circumstances of the war made escape almost impossible. Borders were closed and consulates, where visas had to be applied for, were beyond reach. With Italy's 1940 entry into the war, the Mediterranean became a theatre of war. Now the most important sea routes to Palestine, from French and Italian ports through the Mediterranean, were blocked.

More than a year before the Nazis imposed a general ban on emigration from their sphere of power; large numbers of Jews were already imprisoned in camps and ghettos from which escape was almost impossible. Throughout the summer of 1940, the Jews in German-occupied Poland were forced into ghettos and locked up. In October 1940, 6,500 Jews from Saarland and Baden in Germany were deported to Southern France and imprisoned in camps. Then, in February 1941, 5,000 Jews from Vienna were deported to Poland and put into ghettos and camps.

### **1941: The “Final Solution”**

The attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 marked the beginning of the systematic genocide of Europe’s Jews. From the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, Jews were rounded up, shot and killed by either *SS Einsatzgruppen*, German police battalions, or regular *Wehrmacht* units throughout occupied Soviet territories, as well as in Romania, Serbia and elsewhere. In October 1941, the deportation of Jews from Berlin, Vienna, Prague and Frankfurt “to the East” began, where the deportees were locked in ghettos or murdered upon arrival. On 23 October, 1941, the emigration of Jews was banned altogether, a ban already in effect in every country under German occupation. Furthermore, the Germans exerted pressure both on countries allied with Germany and others that were officially neutral, such as Spain, to obstruct the emigration or transit of Jews.

In June 1941, a new US law raised the barriers against the immigration of Jewish refugees. Then, when the US entered the war in December 1941, visas already issued to German Jews were cancelled. Simultaneously, the war’s expansion to the oceans meant that many potential transit routes for refugees, already limited, now decreased even more. With the beginning of the genocide, flight no longer meant emigration, but escape from an almost certain death. During this phase, the policies of the neutral countries took on particular significance. Now the main objective of individual attempts to escape, as well as of organized rescue operations, was to reach one of those countries – either as an actual destination of refuge or as a transit country from which the refugees could hope to reach Palestine or overseas destinations.

Based on the examples of Switzerland, Spain and Portugal, the following articles analyze these countries often ambivalent policies during this

time. Nonetheless, any analysis, however critical, must bear in mind that none of these countries could have stopped the Nazi's machinery of murder. With the beginning of the mass deportations from France in spring 1942, and Germany's occupation of Italy in September 1943, Switzerland, because of its geographical position, now became the preferred destination for Jews from both those countries. Although the Swiss government decided in August 1942 to keep its borders closed and to turn away illegal refugees, during the war about 28,000 Jewish refugees found shelter or were tolerated in Switzerland—this at the same time that many others were turned away. One decisive factor in this unofficial easing of restrictive official policies was public pressure from Christian and humanitarian quarters.

In the dictatorships of Portugal and Spain, a democratic public of this kind did not exist. Nonetheless, the committed efforts of a few courageous consuls across Europe contributed to a certain easing of restrictive refugee policies. Spain served mainly as a transit zone between France and Portugal with some 15,000 Jews transiting the country between 1939 and 1944. However, thousands of Jewish refugees, who were regarded as illegal, were interned in camps inside Spain, and Portugal only issued Jews transit visas. Nonetheless, many Jewish refugees, who found themselves barred from continuing overseas, ended up staying in the country much longer. Between 15,000 and 17,000 Jews were able to transit through Portugal, mainly in 1940 and 1941. But after late 1941, the French border to Spain was kept virtually closed by the Germans and the Vichy authorities.

The escape of Jews from the Nazis during the Holocaust depended primarily on Jewish and non-Jewish relief organizations, including networks of helpers. Here, too, the neutral countries played a significant role, this time in the organization of rescue work, with Switzerland and Portugal becoming operational hubs for rescue organizations.

Ruth Fivaz-Silbermann

## **Ignorance, Realpolitik and Human Rights: Switzerland between Active Refusal and Passive Help**

Soon after the war ended, Saly Mayer, a Swiss Jewish merchant in charge of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) for occupied Europe, addressed the International Red Cross Committee. His words were also appropriate for the Swiss political authorities, “If you had done a little more, nobody would have noticed. A little less would have added to the scandal. Thank you for what you did.”<sup>1</sup>

The negative factors constituting neutral Switzerland’s refugee policy during the war are now well known, and may be listed as follows: First, the tendency to adapt to the prevailing political circumstances, including—despite the country’s democratic traditions—the “New Europe” shaped by Italian fascist and Nazi German patterns. Second, the general ignorance concerning political ideologies and the biases of the surrounding regimes, which made everyone a suitable neighbour, and this even though the army and intelligence services collaborated throughout the war with France against Germany.<sup>2</sup> Third, a failure to acknowledge the on-going genocide, despite available information. As elsewhere, the fate of the Jews was understood by the Swiss as part of the horrors of war, from which Switzerland was spared. These horrors included forced relocation to inhospitable regions, forced labor, and starvation. The fate of the Jews was globally seen by the Swiss as massive death, but not as mass murder. Fourth, a general societal

- 1 “S[aly] M[ayer] se leva et dit dans son plus beau patois d’Appenzell: ‘Monsieur le Président, vous eussiez fait un peu plus, on ne l’eût pas remarqué. Un peu moins eût ajouté au scandale. Merci de ce que vous avez fait.’” J. Weill, doctor and member of the board of OSE, *Le combat d’un juste*. France: Le Coudray-Macouard, 2002. 265.
- 2 Ch. Rossé. *Le Service de renseignements suisse face à la menace allemande, 1939–1945*. Panazol: Lavauzelle, 2006. H.U. Jost. “Menace et repliement.” in *Nouvelle histoire de la Suisse et des Suisses* Lausanne: Payot, 1986 [1998]. 748–749.



xenophobia, which, since the end of WW I, included the belief that the proportion of foreigners was excessive. There was also a latent, “soft” and widely-held antisemitism, a prejudice which could be found in all social milieus, including government circles. Because of these factors and the economic situation created by the 1929 global economic crisis, Switzerland clearly adopted the stance of a bystander. That is, when faced with Nazi persecution and annihilation of the Jews, it practised a very restrictive refugee policy. Nevertheless, this policy eased somewhat during the war, so there was a silver lining inside this dark cloud. Recent research has helped to examine these matters in a more balanced way.<sup>3</sup>

## Two Refugee Policies

Chronologically and politically, Switzerland practised two refugee policies during the war: a pre-war policy of limited admission (no immigration, only transit), which was officially maintained during and even after the war, and an emergency policy triggered by the massive arrival of refugees through France in summer 1942. This confrontation with the reality of the need for shelter moderated the severity of the pre-war policy and saved some lives. The Swiss federal administration observed a difference between people legally admitted on a temporary visa (*Emigranten*), and refugees (*Flüchtlinge*), i.e., people who were temporarily sheltered through emergency procedures. August 1, 1942, (hereafter August 1942) represents a watershed date. Before it, applicants had to request not only authorization to enter Switzerland, but also acceptance (tolerance) by one or another Swiss canton, and to pay a financial guarantee. After this, the Confederation organized their stay, putting the refugees into camps (and even paying some expenses). Importantly, both categories of sheltered refugees had to organize their own eventual departure from Switzerland, as soon as the borders were reopened.

3 This essay is based on research conducted with the help of the Fonds national suisse de la recherche scientifique (Bern) and the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah (Paris). R. Fivaz-Silbermann. *La fuite en Suisse. Migrations, stratégies, fuite, accueil, refoulement et destin des réfugiés juifs venus de France durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Geneva, forthcoming 2016).

## A Restrictive Immigration Policy

Switzerland's immigration policy, developed after the First World War and legally consolidated during the 1930s, was extremely restrictive. Few authorizations for immigration were issued, and those that were, were only for a limited period. Moreover, Switzerland considered itself exclusively as a country of transit. Yet, its policy regarding the Jews did not differ much from that of other countries, neutral or not, as evident in the meagre results of the 1938 Evian Conference: no admission granted to Jewish refugees. Additionally it negotiated with Germany to introduce the so-called "J"-stamp into the passports of German Jews and Austrian Jews (following the Annexation) to make it easier to discriminate against them. Before the war, it constantly tried to get rid of the *Emigranten*, i.e., those Jews who, between 1933 and 1939, had been granted permission for a limited stay. Nevertheless, over 7,000 were still in the country when the war broke out, and stayed until it ended.

When the war began, visas became compulsory for all foreigners. One decree, dated 17 October, 1939, required all foreigners without a visa to be turned back. Exceptions to this were those who fell under the Hague conventions of 1907, i.e., disarmed troops, deserters and escaped prisoners of war. All help in clandestine border crossings was criminalized. Thus, from a legal perspective, the country was completely closed. This restrictive policy allowed the authorities, before and during the war, to deny visas to many thousands of Jews seeking help. Some 16,000 requests for legal entry to Switzerland, submitted directly either to the National Immigration Police (*Eidgenössische Fremdenpolizei*) or to Swiss consulates abroad, seem to have been turned down. No conclusive figure is possible because the relevant archives have been lost. As judged by recent historiography, this point is the first, and perhaps the worst, flaw in Switzerland's refugee policy.

When a Jew legally applied for a visa, he was usually turned down and left to his fate. When he tried to flee and enter the country without a visa, he had at least a chance of succeeding. In the flight for life, once the "Final Solution" was implemented, illegality was a better bet than legality.

**Verweigerung der Einreise- und Aufenthaltsbewilligung**  
**n.l. Refus d'autorisation d'entrée et de séjour**  
**Rifiuto del permesso d'entrata e di dimora**

Eidg. F. P. / Pol. féd. étr. Pol. féd. str. N° 856193 III	Kanton / Canton Cantone N° 201.498 BS/W	Konsulat / Consolato Consolato N° ...	Bern / Berne Bern 5. Oktober 1942.
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Das Einreisegesuch von / für \_\_\_\_\_  
 La demande d'entrée en Suisse présentée par / en faveur de \_\_\_\_\_  
 La domanda d'entrata in Svizzera presentata da / per \_\_\_\_\_

**S i l b e r m a n n** **Georg**, geboren 5. Oktober 1903, ledig, Musiker,  
 ausgebürgerter deutscher Reichsangehöriger,

**ist abgewiesen / est écartée / è respinta.**

Begründung: Die Zureise ist zurzeit nicht erwünscht.  
 Motif: La venue en Suisse n'est actuellement pas désirable.  
 Motivo: La venuta in Svizzera non è opportuna per il momento.

**EIDGENÖSSISCHE FREMDENPOLIZEI**  
**POLICE FEDERALE DES ÉTRANGERS**  
**POLIZIA FEDERALE DEGLI STRANIERI**

Geht an / Communiqué à / Comunicato a:

**Gesuchsteller / Requérant / Richiedente** **Dr. Viktor Silbermann,**  
 Kornhausstrasse 34, Zürich,  
 Schweiz. Konsulat / Consulat Suisse / Consolato di Svizzera **Marseille s.M.**  
 Kanton / Canton / Cantone **Zürich**  
 Gemeinde / Commune / Comune **Zürich**

37a

-900

Official Swiss form denying a visa application. The Jewish musician from Vienna, whose brother in Zurich had applied for the visa, was subsequently deported from the Les Milles camp near Marseilles to Auschwitz.

*Personal archives Ruth Fivaz-Silbermann*

### A Slightly Less Restrictive Emergency Policy

Beginning in August 1942, Switzerland, under the pressure of prevailing circumstances, also put into practice another, semi-official, emergency policy at its borders. Though Jews were still not considered political refugees (in fact, Switzerland accepted only a few hundred “real” political refugees), some were let in. The country’s actual refugee policy during the war has been subjected to comprehensive research for only the French and Italian borders, which were the main paths of entry: sixty-two percent of the Jews registered in the Swiss refugee files came from or through France, twenty-eight percent from or through Italy. Furthermore, a significant portion of the remaining ten percent did not come on their own and, thus, did not face possible rejection. They arrived in organized convoys from the Theresienstadt and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps. As the war was ending, these Jews were released by the Nazis in return for a promise of material compensation.<sup>4</sup>

Paradoxically, the emergency policy began in summer 1942 at the same time that Switzerland fatefully decreed, on 4 August, its policy of strictly maintaining closed borders and turning away any illegal refugees. Prior to this, it had slightly eased its wartime policy of no-access, though many refugees had been turned away. Now, everybody would be turned back, “even if the foreigners affected by this decision will undergo serious prejudice, i.e., be endangered in their physical welfare or their life.”<sup>5</sup> The indirect reason for the closure was the start of the methodical deportation of Jews, including women and children, from the Netherlands on 6 July and from Belgium on 22 July. As a result, ever more Dutch and Belgian Jewish refugees flocked to the northern French-Swiss border. Border closing was officially enforced beginning 13 August. By this date, events in France were not yet decisive, though both foreign and French Jewish men were arrested in May, August and December 1941, and deported after March 1942 from the occupied northern part of the country. Before 15–16 July, the

4 See Y. Bauer. *Jews for Sale? Nazi-Jewish negotiations*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1994. chps. 11–12.

5 “Auch wenn den davon betroffenen Ausländern daraus ernsthafte Nachteile (Gefahren für Leib und Leben) erwachsen können.” *Bundesratsbeschluss* (governmental decree), 4 Aug. 1942, Swiss Federal Archives Berne, E1004.1 1/424, reproduced in *Documents diplomatiques suisses* Vol. 14. 720.

infamous “Vélodrome d’Hiver” round-up of foreign Jews, entire families were not arrested. Yet, even after this, as the archives show, some survivors remained hidden, or fled in masses to the un-occupied zone of France and not to Switzerland.

This brutal decision to shut the border created intense protests within Switzerland. The Jewish community protested, while nonetheless clinging to its usual “low profile.” Liberal politicians and the social wings of the Churches also made their views known. Broad segments of public opinion expressed shock, resenting their country’s betrayal of its humanitarian and Christian values. They claimed it was its duty—as a neutral country spared the horrors of war—to take in these miserable victims.<sup>6</sup> Gerhart Riegner, a sound observer, judged these reactions “magnificent.” A much acrimonious parliamentary debate was held in September, but this body had only advisory power. The actual decisions during wartime remained in the hands of the Federal Executive.

Even before this debate, but after the closure of the border, large-scale deportations of foreign Jews had begun in August in the half of France “freely” governed by Marshall Pétain. First, those in the internment camps were deported, then, on 26 August, all resident Jews. This triggered a second, proportionally much larger wave of fleeing Jews to Switzerland, with thousands trying to reach the French-Swiss western border. Under pressure from public opinion, Eduard von Steiger, head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police, officially claimed that “the (Swiss) lifeboat was full.” But confidentially, he ordered a halt to the turning away of everyone at the border, at least until the protests died down. He also ordered officials to act kindly at other borders, sparing the weakest among the refugees, i.e., the elderly, the sick and children. However, the actual decision was left to the military police or the border guards.

To the satisfaction of a majority of the Swiss government, especially the foreign ministry and the army, the border officially remained closed. Nonetheless, von Steiger and Heinrich Rothmund, chief of the Federal Police and von Steiger’s leading civil servant, both understood that they could not simply turn away all civilians in such dire need of protection. Archival

6 See, for example, the local newspaper *Feuille d’avis du District d’Aigle*, which in its 9 September, 1942 lead article on the Swiss refugee policy, wrote, “La Suisse sera humaine, fraternelle, ou perdra sa raison d’être.” (“Switzerland has to be humane and brotherly, or it will lose its very essence”).

**Switzerland and the right to asylum  
A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE**

It is a fortnight ago - time flies but it is never too late to get back to such a subject – when news announced about an increasing number of foreign refugees trying to enter Switzerland by the Jura borders.

The public was informed at the same time as the supervisory bodies at the border were ordered to strictly implement the regulations on the discharge of foreigners seeking to enter illegally in our territory.

For how could it be otherwise, these unfortunates trying to escape from deportation to the East or from other serious threatening measures, arriving by foot and presented themselves deprived of any document authorizing them to enter Switzerland in the obvious impossibility of obtaining a visa or even a railway ticket to our country.

Heartbreaking scenes broke out the moment when saddened agents were obliged to obey the orders given, to obey the established rules.

These facts produced a strong impression on public opinion. That human beings in suffering, seeing to escape a tragic fate even going up to the death, only that last glimmer of hope: Switzerland, and that light goes off to plunge them into a nameless darkness, this is what could not fail to move our people, behaving in its ensemble only with good intentions.

The consciences have been revolted. A groundswell has raised them. Claims have been presented to our authorities, asking them to consider the problem not in the restrictive sense of "current instructions", but using their sense of humanity, following the tradition of asylum that made any time the honor of Switzerland. [...]

Switzerland will be human, fraternal or will lose its purpose. It is above all by heart, by feelings of humanity that it will solve the refugee crisis not by purely material "realistic" (another word that was written in this case) considerations or the invocation of some sacrosanct "reason of state".

The article *La Suisse et le droit d'asile—Cas de conscience*, (Switzerland and the right to asylum—a matter of conscience), published on 9 September, 1942, in the Christian newspaper *Feuille d'Avis du District d'Aigle*, appealing to Switzerland to follow its humanitarian tradition.

*Feuille d'avis du District d'Aigle 9 September, 1942*

documents demonstrate that Rothmund had, in fact, qualms of conscience about this. Instead, they prepared an emergency policy, ordering military and civilian camps to be opened to accommodate the refugees.

Consequently, from August 1942 to July 1944, i.e., during most of the period when the Nazi's "Final Solution" was implemented throughout Western Europe, two parallel Swiss refugee policies existed, until finally—and too late—anyone in mortal danger was let in.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, Switzerland maintained its restrictive official immigration policy, with few or no visas granted, and with completely closed borders. It was announced abroad that anyone who arrived at the borders illegally would not be let in. On the other hand, the government also practised a semi-official system of tolerance, admitting some, if not all who managed to make it to the border or, better, deeper into the country. Yet those who helped refugees were still subject to prosecution.

Terrible insecurity was experienced by those who, nevertheless, dared to flee to Switzerland. They encountered a situation where decisions were made by incompetent and often antisemitic border guards or non-commissioned military officers who were eager to defend their country against the "invaders" they believed the Jewish refugees to be. As a consequence, for the rest of the war, admission became a lottery. Some were accepted despite their non-admissible profile, while others were rejected for unclear reasons. This lack of control by the federal government, whether voluntary or not, can be seen as the second great flaw in Switzerland's wartime refugee policy.

At this point, it must be emphasized that Switzerland was never subjected to any pressure from Nazi Germany regarding the way it dealt with Jewish refugees. It dreaded any pressure, *pro* or *contra*, even rejecting pro-refugee pressures from the Allies and the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees. Switzerland tried to maintain absolute sovereignty over its foreign policy for as long as it could.

7 The federal instructions of 12 July, 1944, superseded those of 1942, ordering that, all "foreigners really endangered in their physical welfare or their life, who do not have any other way of escape from that danger than the flight to Switzerland," were allowed in. The word "Jews" does not appear. Original text reproduced in C. Ludwig. *Die Flüchtlingspolizei der Schweiz von 1933 bis zur Gegenwart*. Bern: Lang, 1957. 293.

## The Emergency Policy and Its Results

After about a month of almost unlimited entry at the (most crowded) western border, on 26 September, 1942, Rothmund's office issued precise regulations. Those allowed in were people over 65, pregnant women, the sick, and families with at least one child under 16 years (later restricted to under 6). Additionally, children under 16 arriving alone (which was later extended for girls up to 18) and people with close relatives in Switzerland or deep ties with the country. Though these changes were totally inadequate in response to the on-going Holocaust, these instructions did act as a signal to the threatened Jews, leaving the Swiss door open at least for some groups. And those seeking help also adapted. Quickly only those refugees who believed they would be accepted presented themselves at the border. Every change in the regulations was followed by such adaptations, demonstrating a high level of compliance in the behaviour of the gravely threatened Jews, and the good amount of information available.

At the northern border with occupied France, the government did not issue similar regulations. There it merely recommended allowing in elderly people, women, children and those who already had their families inside the country; nonetheless, this recommendation was often not followed. A result of these unofficial and somehow unclear regulations and recommendations, many people were turned away at both the northern and western French-Swiss borders. Only those who could pass unseen and make their way deep into Switzerland, which some managed to do, found safety. By the end, this policy of selective tolerance nevertheless allowed at least 12,670 Jews (including non-Jewish spouses and family members of Jewish refugees) to find their way from or through France into Switzerland.<sup>8</sup>

On 8 September, 1943, news arrived that Italy had broken its alliance with Hitler's Germany and had switched to the Allied side. Jews, under pressure from the rapidly arriving German troops, began flocking to the Italian-Swiss border, and Rothmund soon ordered them to be let in. According to recent research, 5,890 Jews from Italy were allowed in, although about 300 were sent back.<sup>9</sup>

8 All numbers for the French-Swiss border given here are based on my research.

9 See the research conducted at the State Archive of the Canton of Ticino, Bellinzona by F. Panzera, A. Bazzocco et al., soon to be published.



According to official publications, the complete number of Jewish refugees granted shelter by Switzerland during the war was 21,304. In reality, the number is slightly higher, because official files for some visa holders were never opened, and thus not counted. To this total must be added the approximately 7,000 Jewish *Emigranten* of 1933–1939 who were allowed to stay in the country. In total, Switzerland can take responsibility for having saved between 28,000 and 29,000 Jewish lives.

### **Those Who Were Sent Back**

But how many were sent back? According to the Swiss archives, which though partly destroyed, can be compared with and complemented by French and Italian documents, at least 1,820 (according to recent research the figure is more likely 2,600–3,000), were turned away at the French border, and approximately 300 at the Italian border. “Turning back” (*refoulement*) was sometimes carried out under terrible circumstances; usually into the grasp of the Vichy police, and sometimes even into German captivity. The Swiss noticed too late that this practice meant deportation for the victims. Rothmund stopped it in October 1942, and ordered that those not granted admission be returned to where they had crossed the border. Yet Vichy police, and after September 1943 the Germans, were never far away, sometimes patrolling right up to the border. Many refugees who were turned back survived and some managed later to re-enter Switzerland. But soon thereafter at least one in six was arrested. Swiss military police and border guards sent back families with children of six years and a few months, or even younger, if no birth date could be proved. We know by name 245 Jewish men, women and children who were denied admission at a French-Swiss border crossing and who were consequently deported to Auschwitz (mainly) or Sobibor or Maidanek, and, in most cases, murdered there.

The third, terrible flaw of Swiss refugee policy consisted of the totally unjustifiable manner of proceeding. Any threatened civilian who had made it to the border should have been let in, whatever the regulations were. Alas, German and French police around the territory were enough of a filter against any “invasion” of Switzerland by Jewish refugees, with Swiss military and border guards happy with any help they received from foreign patrols.

## Special Regulations

In addition to these general policies, Switzerland also granted limited access to safety for certain chosen Jewish populations. In October 1942, under pressure from Swiss Protestant circles, which were backed by the World Council of Churches, the YMCA and other international humanitarian organizations who had their offices in the Geneva “hub” around the League of Nations, the government established a nominal list of persons not to be turned away (*non-refoulables*). It was first meant for “non-Aryan” Protestants or Catholics, but was immediately extended to include “pure” Jews known personally to these organizations. The list was later expanded to include people recommended by Jewish organizations and, finally, to anyone backed by a Swiss citizen. Though this list, at the war’s end, contained over 1,500 names only about 200–250, had managed to get into Switzerland, not least because of the dangers and difficulties of flight.

Intense lobbying by Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, backed by Allied pressure, also took place for abandoned Jewish children in Vichy France; an estimated 5,000, most of whom remained after their parents’ deportation, were cared for (and later hidden) by *Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants* (OSE), a Jewish relief organization for children, or the Jewish scouts (*Eclaireurs israélites de France*). Some were also cared for by the American Quakers or the Swiss Red Cross. Heinrich Rothmund, battling against the Swiss foreign ministry, had a decree passed on 3 December, 1943 that allowed 1,500 Jewish orphans to enter the country. It also welcomed German children, but none ever came. Yet, facts preceded law, and, helped by Jewish underground organizations, many of these children had already crossed the Swiss border, and others would continue arriving. Between December 1942 and June 1944, about one hundred organized children’s convoys and many smaller initiatives would bring more than 1,250 unaccompanied Jewish children from France to safety in Switzerland.<sup>10</sup>

## Switzerland Turned into a Tool by the Underground

One of the most interesting features of the escapes to Switzerland during the war was the use of the refugee regulations issued by Jewish and non-

10 R. Fivaz-Silbermann. *La fuite en Suisse*. Part V.5.

Jewish relief organizations that had transformed themselves into underground organizations. While regular organizations inside Switzerland battled unsuccessfully to extend favorable immigration policies, French Jewish organizations such as the OSE, the *Eclaireurs israélites* (i.e., its underground branch *La Sixième*) and the young Zionists (*Mouvement de la jeunesse sioniste*) exploited the holes in the Swiss security fence. They were aided by mixed rescue organizations, including the “Christian Friendship” (*l’Amitié chrétienne*) and the Protestant youth organization *Cimade*. French priests hid Jews and led them to the border, and Catholics and Protestants worked together and with the Jewish relief organizations. Increasingly, helpers falsified documents to fit Swiss regulations. To lead refugees into Switzerland, the OSE first picked out those who matched government guidelines. They then greatly falsified identities, turning young adults into teens under 16, borrowing small children from couples in order to also save other couples who had none and even “marrying” singles and giving them orphaned children to declare as their own, thereby saving both the adults and children. Other organizations in France and Belgium did likewise. All underground organizations hired smugglers (*passeurs*) to guide the groups safely over the last miles and through the barbed wire. Expenses of the Jewish underground were covered by the JDC. The money reached the helpers via complicated paths, borrowing on the spot or hidden in the luggage of “normal” travellers. Not only were 1,250 Jewish children smuggled into Switzerland, but an unverifiable number of adults also gained safety through these often illegal methods. So many (alas, so few) Jews trapped in France or Italy would not have found their way to the Swiss border without the help of underground organizations. One can, therefore, say that Switzerland provided passive help through its mere presence as a neutral, non-belligerent and partially-open country in the heart of Europe.

### **What Can Be Concluded?**

Switzerland’s refugee policy was not as bad as is sometimes argued. It kept its doors closed to what it felt could be an uncontrolled rush for entry, yet it expressed a certain tolerance for vulnerable Jewish populations through its emergency regulations. Nonetheless, the government arbitrarily turned away many refugees without any political necessity or economic profit. One part of the government showed itself more humane and pragmatic than

other parts, especially when children were concerned. But the impulse for rescue came not from governmental circles, but, rather, from civil society; from Swiss Jews—however reluctantly sometimes—as well as from international organizations, such as the YMCA or the Quakers, assisted by the Swiss Churches and later by the American War Refugee Board, which was led in Switzerland by a Quaker, and by Swiss relief organizations, such as the socialist relief organization *Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk* and foremost by the *Schweizer Hilfswerk für Emigrantenkinder*, an organization dedicated to refugee children. In 1942, this organization was officially put in charge of all children who arrived and it worked more or less legally with OSE and its underground rescue branch. Nevertheless, Switzerland's response was inadequate considering the circumstances. Had its government better understood what was happening to the Jews and let in everyone who had reached its borders, its name would shine more brightly.



Avraham Milgram

## Portugal and the Jews 1938–1945

On the eve of World War II, when the situation of European Jewry took an abysmal turn, Portugal was one of the last European countries to face the problem of Jewish refugees from the Greater Reich. In view of its marginal role in taking in migrants, Portugal was not even invited to the Evian Conference and was not considered a country of immigration that might be useful for Western powers for refugees from Nazism.<sup>1</sup>

### 1938—The Turning Point in the Refugee Problem

Portugal only became aware of the refugees' plight after the annexation of Austria and the violent campaign launched by the SS against the Jews aimed at dispossessing and deporting them from the Greater Reich. From mid-1938 through 1939, the Portuguese government and police established the policy on the entry and transit of refugees.

António Oliveira Salazar, Portugal's dictator, feared the influence of foreigners and the possible liberal, democratic and leftist spirit that the refugees—victims of anti-liberal, anticommunist and antisemitic regimes—might introduce into Portugal, which was then in the throes of a right-wing autocratic dictatorship. In keeping with his fear of foreigners, who, according to his worldview, might undermine his regime, Salazar severely limited their entry.

Toward this end, he expanded the apparatus of the PVDE—the State Defense and Surveillance Police (*Polícia de Vigilância e Defesa do Estado*), increasing that organization's influence on state mechanisms, on the PVDE's International Department in particular. It was given greater control over matters relating to border patrol and entry of foreigners in gen-

1 *Informação-Resumo-Parecer*. "A Conferência de Evian." (Information-Summary-Opinion, "The Evian Conference.") Historic-Diplomatic Archives, Lisbon, Foreign Ministry (henceforth AHD), 2o. A-47, M. 58.

eral and Jews in particular.<sup>2</sup> The official policy of limiting the entry of foreigners and Jews led to the establishment of “Circular No. 10,” issued on 28 October, 1938. This measure prohibited Jews from settling in Portugal, but allowed them to enter as tourists and stay in the country for up to thirty days.<sup>3</sup>

This order, after being received by the government bureaucracy, became the basic directive concerning Jews crossing into Portugal and Spain, and it remained in effect until the end of World War II. Notably, Portugal and Spain adopted very similar policies with regard to the entry of foreigners. However, the refugees were treated differently by the two countries. From the outset, Portugal was more liberal and less violent in its treatment of Jewish refugees than Spain was.<sup>4</sup>

Since the October 1938 order did not reflect the European crisis and conflict—especially after World War Two began on 1 September, 1939—the authorities in Lisbon decided to crack down on the consuls and limit their prerogative to issue entry visas to Portugal and its colonies. Thus, on 11 November, 1939, the Foreign Ministry issued “Circular No. 14,” which contained new directives intended to prevent the entry of “undesirables” and Jews into Portugal.

A high proportion of those applying to enter Portugal were German, Austrian and Czech Jews, who would not be allowed to return to the Reich, and Eastern European Jews who held Nansen passports. Thus, they had no chance of obtaining entry permits to Portugal. Since most Jewish refugees fell into these two categories, only a few were allowed to pass through Portugal. The great majority found themselves pounding on locked gates.

- 2 T. Galagher. “Controlled Repression in Salazar’s Portugal.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 14 (1979): 385–402. D. L. Wheeler. “In the Service of Order: The Portuguese Political Police and the British, German and Spanish Intelligence, 1932–1945.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (1983): 2.
- 3 A. Schäfer. “Obstáculos no caminho para a Liberdade.” (Obstacles on the Road to Freedom), in *Aspectos e Tendências de Estudos Germanísticos em Portugal*. Lisbon: instituto alemão lisboa (Goethe-Institut Portugal), 1992. 85–94. I. F. Pimentel and C. Ninhos. *Salazar, Portugal e o Holocausto*. Lisbon: Temas e Debates, 2013. 413–510.
- 4 H. Avni. *Spain, the Jews and Franco*. Philadelphia: Jewish Pub. Soc. of America, 1982. 72–79.

### In the Shadow of Ambivalence

Although Salazar's attitude cannot be traced to antisemitic motives, these did exist in his governing apparatus. They were evident mainly in police bureaucracies, particularly in their *modus operandi* toward Jews. The police, who gained status under Salazar's authoritarian dictatorship, transformed their hostility toward foreigners and Jews into a significant aspect of the governing system. The police had a perceptible influence on procedures designed to thwart immigration of Jews to Portugal and attempts to rescue them during the Holocaust. In 1938–1939, Portugal adopted the principle of being merely a place for the transmigration of Jews. Jews were allowed to enter the country only if they had an arrangement in place for leaving the country for other destinations as soon as possible. To be allowed entry, they had to have visas for another destination country and enough money to cover their expenses. This policy was strictly enforced throughout the war, with one exception after Germany occupied Western Europe in summer 1940.

After the occupation of Western Europe, Salazar and his policy of neutrality faced a dilemma concerning mass entry of foreign refugees fleeing the Germans. Most refugees transmigrating via Portugal during the Holocaust, the majority of whom were Jews, entered the country after the collapse of France. Salazar admitted tens of thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish refugees for pragmatic and strategic motives, taking the Allies' attitudes into account. As he correctly assumed, most refugees from the Allied countries would not remain in Portugal. Fearing that all Jews who had come without entry visas to North or South America would remain in Portugal for lack of choice, the regime began to crack down on the entry of more Jews. In summer 1940, after the establishment of the German–French border agreements and the closing down of the frontiers, the policy on transmigration of Jews via Spain to Portugal reverted to what it had been before France's surrender: for the privileged few who managed to obtain immigration visas for other countries.

Salazar's autocratic dictatorship found it difficult to set out standard and monolithic patterns when it came to the entry of Jews. While the Colonial, Foreign and Interior Ministries, not to mention the police, were pervasively opposed to the entry of foreigners and Jews, senior officials in the colonies were willing and prepared to admit Jews from the Reich. The colonial administrators, unlike their counterparts in the governing bureaucra-





Jewish refugees in front of the Jewish community soup kitchen, Lisbon (1940 or 1941).  
*Photo by Roger Cahan, private collection of Prof. Moisés Fernandes, Lisbon*

cies in Lisbon, were interested in the possible economic development and progress instigated by the motivated and economically and intellectually capable immigrants. They were less interested in the identity and origin of those who might allow their backward provinces to develop—including Jewish refugees leaving the German Reich. Portuguese diplomats serving abroad also took a different attitude toward the victims of Nazi persecution than the dominant approach of the Foreign and Interior Ministries in Lisbon.

Since the consuls usually sympathized with the suffering Jews, the police employed various ruses to circumvent them. To accomplish this, they pressured shipping companies to obey their instructions before allowing passengers to board the vessels en route to Portugal. Consular arrangements, such as visas, issued as standard practice in maritime transit, were invalidated if the police, who determined who could enter the country, took exception to the identity of their holders.

In the first few years of the war, as Germany rolled from one victory to another and the Iberian Peninsula cringed under the threat of invasion, Salazar and the Foreign Ministry mounted a severe crackdown on the unruly consuls.

The most conspicuous of them was Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese consul in Bordeaux, who issued thousands of visas to Jews in a few days during June 1940, in defiance of Portuguese policy. As the war wound down with Germany suffering defeat after defeat on the battlefield, there was a reverse in policy, with the consuls' receiving Salazar's backing for rescue action.

Another facet of the Portuguese reality was the attitude of the press toward the arrival of Jews in Portugal and the colonies. In the late 1930s, most of the press, including bodies sympathizing with the victims of Nazi persecution, opposed the immigration of Jews. After September 1939, the press was largely supportive of the Allies, reflecting the people's preferences rather than Portugal's policy of neutrality.

### **The Unbearable Lightness of Legalism**

Portugal's selective immigration policy toward Jewish refugees did not affect the situation or status of the tiny Jewish community (around one thousand Jews) of veteran Sephardic Jews and Ashkenazic immigrants

from Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup> This was because Jewish community leaders, above all the community's president, Moisés Amzalak, identified with the regime and because they were citizens. The regime's attitude toward Jews depended not on their religious or national affiliation, but on their legal and civil status in Portugal. Thus, Jews holding Portuguese citizenship were treated as equals to all other citizens. The same cannot be said for the Jewish refugees. Some of them were allowed to enter for transit purposes because they had the necessary visas and resources to continue their journey; others, by contrast, were placed in "assigned" (forced) residence because they were not able to leave the country in time or their presence there was considered illegal. The majority of the Jews were turned away while they were still in occupied Europe.

While the status of Jews in Portugal during the war was unchanged, the regime balked at recognizing Jews of Portuguese extraction living in Greece and Turkey who had been granted Portuguese citizenship by the liberal Republic (1910–1926). Even when these Jews faced deportation from Greece and France to extermination camps, Salazar's regime opposed procedures to repatriate them. There were three underlying reasons for Salazar's unfavorable response toward Jews of Portuguese origin who wished to return to their historical homeland to escape the Nazi clutches: that they had obtained their Portuguese citizenship from the liberal Republic, the *bête noire* of Salazar and his regime; regular reports from the Foreign Ministry about suspected irregularities in Portuguese passports throughout Europe issued by consular officials, which aggravated the authorities and the police's distrust toward Jews of Portuguese origin; and the assumption that Jews of Portuguese origin, unlike refugees who entered the country in transit, would want to stay. In the course of attempts to repatriate Portuguese Jews from France and Greece, the large number of formal requirements for verifying Portuguese identity greatly reduced the prospects of protection and survival for many Portuguese-Jewish subjects in occupied lands. From this standpoint, for instance, Dutch Jews of Portuguese origin had no chance whatsoever of obtaining Portuguese protection. Further-

5 The Sephardic Jews from Morocco and Gibraltar began to emigrate to Portugal as British citizens a few years before the abolishment of the Inquisition in 1821. The presence of Ashkenazi Jews in Portugal is a recent phenomenon. They emigrated from Romania and Poland during the 1920s and 1930s. Therefore, the core of Portugal's modern Jewish community was and still is made up of Sephardic Jews.



A group of Jewish children and adults commemorating Pesach in the assigned residence of Caldas da Rainha, 1943.

*Yad Vashem Archives*

more, Portugal was more determined to protect Jews' property from "ary-ization" than to save the owners because, as state property, they considered safeguarding it as defending a national interest. The Jewish owners of such property were not entitled to receive the same degree of state protection. With respect to these owners, Portugal dragged its feet while the Nazis subjected them to decrees and threatened them with deportation to "the East." Several hundred Jews from France reached Portugal in 1943, but they continued to bear stigmas from the past. Some were placed in assigned residence in the town of Curia although they held Portuguese documents. During their stay in Portugal, the authorities continued to distrust them and were reluctant to recognize their Portuguese nationality.

### **Between Pragmatism and Indifference**

Lisbon's Jewish policy during the Holocaust was strongly influenced by Germany's dependence on Portugal as a supplier of war-crucial raw mate-

rials, Portuguese strategic considerations ahead of the postwar era and profit-and-loss calculations. From this standpoint, Spain and Portugal were indistinguishable, as were their dictators' attitudes. The more successful Nazi Germany and the Axis countries were on the battlefield, the less important were the Jews in the neutral countries' and Salazar's eyes. The opposite was also true: The more defeats Germany and the Axis countries sustained, the more important Portugal became in Germany's eyes and, as a result, the more Portugal could do to rescue Jews. In other words, as the end of the war approached, the more determined Portugal became to prepare for the expected "peace crisis" with the triumphant democratic bloc, and the more Salazar realized how sensitive the Allies were to the Jewish issue. Thus, from mid-1943 onward, as the Allies recorded victory after victory on the various fronts (northern Africa, Stalingrad, Italy), Salazar rethought his attitude toward Jews who were seeking Portugal's assistance. The outcome of this change found expression in his attitude to Hungary after Nazi Germany occupied it in March 1944.

After briefly wavering about whether to support the efforts of the neutral countries' diplomatic legations, the Vatican, and the International Red Cross to rescue Budapest's Jews, Salazar lent his support to these endeavors. He did so for reasons of *realpolitik*, realizing that he and his regime would not have an easy time in a liberated Europe under American hegemony. At this stage, shortly before the accession of Ferenc Szálasi, leader of Hungary's Fascist party, to the Hungarian premiership, Portugal aligned its policy with that of other neutral countries. However, protection was granted to persecuted Jews on the condition that as few as possible were taken in. From the outset of the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Hungary, particularly in summer 1944, Portugal tilted its policy not toward the rescue of Jews, as did the Swiss and Swedish envoys, Carl Lutz and Raoul Wallenberg, but towards the winning political points for the future. At this time, it was very much the political *bon ton* to rescue Jews, or at least take a favorable view toward this. Thus, the myth surrounding the rescue of Jews by Portugal during the Holocaust does not seem to reflect historical reality, both with respect to the approach and extent of the rescue activities.

## Lisbon—A Hub of Jewish Activity

Unlike Spain, Portugal allowed Jewish organizations to operate on its soil in order to aid refugees in transit and Jews trapped in German-occupied countries. For this reason, Portugal became an important hub of Jewish activity among the neutral countries, second only to Geneva. However, unlike activities in Geneva, Jewish organizational activity in Portugal developed gradually. In summer 1940, after the occupation of Western Europe, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and HICEM moved their offices from France to Lisbon.<sup>6</sup> However, the World Jewish Congress, known for its political struggle for Jewish rights and its overtly anti-Nazi and pro-Allied stance, could not operate officially in Portugal, at least initially. Isaac Weissman, who began operating as the representative of the “Committee for Relief of the War-stricken Jewish Populations” (RELICO),<sup>7</sup> later became WJC’s unofficial agent in Portugal and was officially appointed such in May 1944. In 1943, the Jewish Agency for Palestine posted an emissary to Lisbon in order to establish a base for relief and *aliya* (Hebrew for making immigration to the Land of Israel) activity, as an addition to such endeavors in Istanbul.

The JDC and HICEM bore the brunt of the burden on behalf of the refugees, largely because Portugal discharged most of its historical role in transmigration of refugees to North and South America in 1940–1942, when most of the Jewish refugees entered the country. The two organizations operated legally, initially via the Portuguese Relief Committee for Jewish Refugees (*Comissão Portuguesa de Assistência aos Judeus Refugiados em Portugal*—COMASSIS) under Dr. Augusto d’Esaguy. From the winter of 1941–1942 onward, it operated under the auspices of the Lisbon Jewish Community’s Refugee Relief Department.<sup>8</sup>

- 6 Organizations that gave financial support for Jewish migration—HICEM was established in 1927 as a partnership among the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Support (HIAS), the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) and European Emigdirect. Its name consists of the initials of these three organizations.
- 7 RELICO was founded at the beginning of the war by Dr. Alfred Silberschein, one of the leading figures of the WJC in Geneva. It sought to relieve the suffering of the Jewish population under German occupation.
- 8 The JDC and HICEM had to resume their activities from newly occupied Paris in June 1940 and relocated initially to the south of France and then to Lisbon because of the geo-political advantages the latter offered to help Jewish refugees.

When the United States entered the war and executives of the Jewish organizations left Lisbon, COMASSIS' role was taken over by the Refugee Relief Department. Since the flow of refugees via Portugal had almost ceased by this time, early 1942, the department's main task was to maintain welfare services for several hundred refugees living in assigned residences. As a branch of Lisbon's Jewish community organization, the department adopted a legal approach coordinated with the police, taking care not to place specifically Jewish goals above the Portuguese government's interests.

The Jewish Agency, established in 1929 and centered in Jerusalem to implement Zionist policy, was the last Jewish organization to begin operating in Portugal. Its first representative reached Lisbon about three years after JDC, HICEM, WJC and American philanthropic organizations began their activities there. Precious time passed until the Zionist movement realized Portugal's potential in the fields of aid, rescue and *aliya*. In the early years of the war, the movement regarded Portugal as a conduit for passage of Jews from occupied Western Europe to North and South America. However, in the latter part of the war, after the occupation of France's un-occupied zone, *aliya* from Portugal became possible. This became a major Zionist priority, while the idea of helping and rescuing Jews under occupation, with Portugal as the base, remained wishful thinking.

The course followed by Jewish functionaries and activists in Lisbon was marked by a blatant lack of coordination and cooperation, and philosophical differences. This ruined the atmosphere within the Jewish sphere, as well as projecting a negative image about rescuers' motivations onto various external circles, such as government ministries, the police, the Red Cross and foreign diplomatic missions.

Public opinion in Portugal sided with the Jewish refugees because it was not tainted by antisemitism. It also sided with the Allies against Nazi Germany, enhancing sympathy for victims of the Nazis. Another reason for this positive sentiment was that the arrival of tens of thousands of refugees improved the standard of living of many citizens, specifically those who provided tourist services and other necessities. Furthermore, thanks to the JDC's financial support, the refugees did not become a burden on the state and society, nor did they compete with the Portuguese population in seeking a livelihood. After most refugees left Portugal for the United States or Latin American countries in 1940–1941, the few hundred who remained were concentrated in several assigned residences on the coast. This policy

distanced them from the general population, thereby preventing friction based on ethnic, cultural or religious differences.

### **The Bottom Line**

Finally, my research has revealed some data about Portugal's role in Jewish history during the Holocaust.<sup>9</sup> (1) According to Jewish sources, between 13,000–15,000 Jews, fewer than twenty percent of them a result of Consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes' activities, passed through Portugal during the Holocaust. (2) With one or two exceptions, the regime did not turn over Jews to the Nazis. However, Salazar could have saved more than 4,000 Jews of Portuguese origin in the Netherlands from deportation to the extermination camps, but he abandoned them to their fate. (3) Among the Jews of Portuguese extraction living in Greece and Turkey who came under German occupation, Portugal admitted 184 Portuguese Jews from France as part of a repatriation operation, but did not allow any to come from Greece. (4) Approximately 1,000 Hungarian Jews survived the Holocaust due to the Portuguese diplomatic protection they had received in Budapest. (5) Considerable quantities of food and other necessities were sent from Portugal to Jews interned in ghettos and camps in occupied Poland and to concentration camp prisoners in the south of France and the Theresienstadt ghetto near Prague. (6) Approximately 190 non-Portuguese Jews, including forty interned in the Vittel camp and around 150 Libyan Jews holding British citizenship, reached Lisbon in 1944, where they were exchanged for Germans in British custody. (7) Between 1942 and 1945, several hundred Jews emigrated from Portugal to Palestine.

9 Avraham Milgram. *Portugal, Salazar and the Jews*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2011.





Josep Calvet

## Spain and Jewish Refugees during World War II

### A Difficult Balance: Free Entrance, Expulsions and Detentions

Spain, as other countries that remained neutral during the conflict, turned into a shelter for thousands of Jews fleeing Nazi persecution during World War II. Its location in Southern Europe and its sea connections with the American and the African continents made it an appealing haven, even more than its government political position, which alternated non-belligerency with neutrality.

Despite this position, the Spanish government was conditioned by certain elements linked to its close relationship with Nazi Germany. Germany had contributed decisively to the insurgent victory in the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939. The Condor Legion, a German air force unit, was responsible for some of the bloodiest bombings of the conflict. Broad sectors of the Francoist administration admired Germany and Adolf Hitler, as demonstrated by the meeting between Francisco Franco<sup>1</sup> and Adolf Hitler at the railway station of Hendaye, France, on 23 October, 1940. That same month Heinrich Himmler, commander of the SS, also visited Spain.

Most Francoist leaders, especially those from the sole party, *FET y de las JONS*,<sup>2</sup> were known for their antisemitism. They were in favor of collaborating with Germany and even tried to justify the persecution of Jews. A common expression at the time in Spain was, “Jew-masonic-communist conspiracy,” which referred to a coalition of Jews, Freemasons and Marxists as enemies of the Spain Francoists supposedly represented and defended.

- 1 Francisco Franco Bahamonde (1892–1975). Soldier. He staged a coup d'état against the democratic government of the Second Spanish Republic together with other members of the Spanish army on 18 July, 1936. This uprising led to a bloody civil war that ended in April 1939. Subsequently, he became prime minister of Spain, commanding a harsh military dictatorship until his death.
- 2 *FET y de las JONS* (Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista) was the only party of the Franco regime. Fascist in ideology, it was the sole party permitted after the Spanish Civil War.

Franco himself supported this idea in many public appearances. “Judaism, Freemasonry and Marxism are Popular Front leaders’ claws nailed into the national forces following the plans of the Russian Comintern,” he claimed during a speech he gave on the occasion of the Victory Parade on 19 May, 1939. Furthermore, some of the outstanding men in the party, who were very close to the dictator, maintained a similar position. One of the most renowned Germanophiles at the time, Ramón Serrano Suñer, minister of the interior, stated in June 1939 that “Judaism is an enemy of the new Spain.”<sup>3</sup>

This position was also reflected in various measures that affected Jews living in the country. In March 1940, Jewish rituals such as circumcisions, marriages and funerals were forbidden. In October of the same year every Jewish institution was dissolved. Catholicism was imposed on Jewish children studying in public schools and Jews were prevented from praying in synagogues. In May 1941, the Spanish government conducted a census, registering all Sephardic Jews living in the country. Some authors argue that German authorities were probably provided with the personal data of some 6,000 Jews.<sup>4</sup>

While Jews living in Spain suffered from this situation, after World War II began, people fleeing Nazi persecution and a Europe immersed in a war reached the country. Approximately 15,000 Jews entered between 1939 and 1944, together with more than 60,000 refugees. These were mainly young French resistance fighters and soldiers demobilized from countries occupied by Nazi Germany and Allied pilots (British, Americans and Canadians).<sup>5</sup> The Jews were mostly Ashkenazis who came from Poland, Germany, Austria, Hungary and territories that once had been part of the Russian Empire. Most had been living in the Netherlands, Belgium or France after years of escaping persecution in the countries of their birth, especially after World War I. Until 1943, this group consisted primarily of families, but from 1944 onward, primarily of young Zionists and children who had been hiding in France and whose parents, in most cases, had been deported to extermination camps in Eastern Europe.<sup>6</sup>

3 D. Rozenberg. *La España contemporánea y la cuestión judía*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2010. 175.

4 J. Martínez Reverte. “La lista de Franco para el Holocausto.” *El País*, 20 June 2010. F. Santos. “España, el Holocausto y la memoria perdida.” *El País*, 17 Nov. 2012.

5 J. Calvet. *Las montañas de la libertad*. Madrid: Alianza editorial, 2010.

6 J. Calvet. *Huyendo del Holocausto*. Lleida: Editorial Milenio, 2014.

In general, large waves of Jews fleeing were a consequence of events related to their persecution in Europe and the progression of World War II. This included the occupation of Belgium and the Netherlands by German troops in May 1940; the arrival of the German army in Paris and the establishment of the demarcation line dividing France into two zones in June 1940; the pressure on Jews hiding in France between July and December 1942; the occupation of the Southern territory of the country, until then the non-occupied part of France (November 1942); and the closure of the Swiss border, as well as the organization of evasion networks heading into Spain in 1944. After September 1944, when Southern France was liberated, no more Jews entered Spain illegally.

With regard to police and diplomatic matters, Spain's position regarding the influx of refugees in general and particularly of Jews, was not uniform and fluctuated throughout the war. Overall, we can see three chronological phases: between 1939 and 1940, when people who reached border checkpoints with the necessary documents could cross the country freely; between 1940 and the beginning of 1943, when refugees were alternately allowed to stay in Spain and were expelled from the country; and between 1943 and 1944, when most Jews were permitted to stay in Spain until they emigrated, generally to America or to Palestine, then still a British protectorate.

### **1939–1940. Free Transit through Customs**

The initial influx of the first Jewish refugees came through official channels. They had the documentation required by Spanish authorities—visas and passports to leave France, to pass through Spain and to enter the country of destination, and the paid ship passage that would take them from Spanish and Portuguese harbors to a new destination, preferably America.

It was during this period that the first contradictions of Spanish authorities were brought to light. Whereas foreign Jews, who arrived with the necessary documentation, could easily pass through the country, Spanish consulates and embassies abroad often refused to issue visas for them.<sup>7</sup>

7 On 11 May, 1939, the National Service of Policies and Treaties (Servicio Nacional de Política y Tratados) imposed "Spanish Border Crossing Regulations," in which Rule 2, Section 2, decreed, "Jews [...]" among others, would be deprived of an

## 1940–1942. Under Threat of Expulsion

In the mid-1940s, Spain decided to require more documentation from those who wanted to pass through its territory. As a result, officials denied entry visas to almost everyone. Embassies and consulates refused to handle an undetermined number of demands. At the very moment when the escape of Jews to the Iberian Peninsula was intensifying, many families waited for these permits unsuccessfully and, as the months passed, they ended up being deported to extermination camps.<sup>8</sup>

Analysis of the documents of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs demonstrates that Germany put great pressure on Franco's government, managing to make him submit to their demands. German ambassadors Eberhard von Stohrer and Hans von Moltke and Minister Ramón Serrano Suñer developed a deep mutual understanding. During this period, the Nazi secret police, the Gestapo, gained a presence in Spain. These agents controlled every border checkpoint, in order to inform the embassy in Madrid or Berlin directly. The German embassy was soon receiving lists of foreigners arrested by Spanish police. Some evaders declared that they had been interrogated by people speaking English with a German accent. On the other hand, it has also been documented that German troops penetrated into Spain in order to hunt down escapees. After the German occupation of Southern France in November 1942, customs agents, soldiers and police agents frequently visited Spanish border checkpoints in Canfranc, Les, Puigcerdà and Figueres. The Nazi swastika flew over the international railway station in Canfranc. Meanwhile, Spain continued exporting raw materials necessary for Germany's war industry.<sup>9</sup>

During a period marked by a growing influx of Jews, a turning point occurred. In mid-1940, Spain agreed with the Vichy government to expel the detainees arrested within a five-kilometer radius along the border. Although the agreement was supposed to be valid only within that area, expulsions were actually carried out far from the border. People arrested

entry visa or passport, "with the exception of those who can prove special bonds of friendship with Spain and their membership in the National Movement (Movimiento Nacional) [...]."

- 8 Because of the lack of systematic studies on the subject, the number of families affected by this resolution remains unknown.
- 9 R.J. Campo. *El oro de Canfranc*. Ibercaja: Zaragoza, 2002.

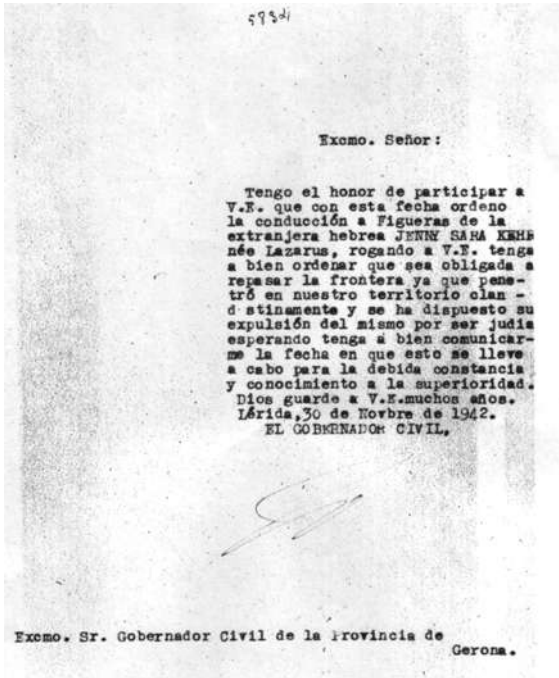
in regions such as Cáceres or Salamanca, more than a thousand kilometers from the Pyrenees, who were about to cross into Portugal, were sometimes captured and turned over to the French police.

As a result, Jewish refugees who realized they would be expelled became desperate. Some of them, knowing that they would be killed if they were turned over to French or German authorities, decided to commit suicide or self-harm in Spain.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, Spanish authorities claimed openly that they would expel Jewish families. The order given by Lleida's civil governor to a police officer at the border checkpoint in Les substantiates this: "By an express order from superior authorities stipulating that Jews will not be admitted in the country and that those found in Spain will be immediately sent back to the other side of the border, you will arrange the expulsion of the detainee in the prison of Viella, Jankiel Rozenwald [...]."<sup>11</sup> This order sanctioned the expulsions of Jewish refugees carried out by the Spanish government. In the meantime, Jews entering the country through different borders were fortunately not forced to return to France.

Expulsions were recorded in prison records, but, at some point, Jewish refugees could be deported by the police directly without their names' being registered or their being sent to a penitentiary. It has been documented how some of those expelled by Spanish authorities were transferred to extermination camps in Eastern Europe.<sup>12</sup> All of this demonstrates a Spanish involvement in the Holocaust.<sup>13</sup>

Spanish government behavior during this period was, essentially, unpredictable and without strict guidelines. It has been confirmed that

- 10 That is the case of the German philosopher Walter Benjamin, who died in Port-Bou on 26 September, and Jenny Kehr, who was arrested crossing the Pyrenees near Lleida in October 1942. The civil governor of Lleida ordered her to be sent back since "it has been decreed that she will be expelled due to her Jewish condition."
- 11 Lleida Historical Archive (*Archivo Histórico de Lleida*, AHLL, in its Spanish acronym). Information Archive of the Civil Government (Fondo Gobierno Civil). Law Enforcement. Box 762. File 83.
- 12 An Austrian citizen, Arthur Epstein, was arrested when he reached Spain on 1 September, 1942. He was handed over to the French police on 19 September and deported to Auschwitz on 14 November.
- 13 Difficulties in accessing Spanish government documentary sources, the disappearance of some of these Jews and the fact that most of them were not even registered hinder the computation of evaders who were forced to return to France between 1939 and 1944.



Expulsion order from Spain for the German citizen Jenny Kehr. The decision was made by the Civil Governor of the province of Lleida on the grounds of her Jewish status. Jenny Kehr committed suicide in the women's prison in Barcelona. *Arxiu Històric de Lleida (AHLI)*

there were three options: expulsion, detention or imprisonment. Occasionally, some Jewish families were allowed to travel through Spain, so their fate depended on the day and the place they entered the country.

Allied embassies in Spain protested strongly against expulsions. They argued that handing over prisoners to German authorities in occupied France contravened Article 13 of The Hague Convention of 1907, which established that a neutral country receiving escaped prisoners of war should release them. Jewish men between the ages of 18 and 40, especially those who came from France, would be considered escaped prisoners of war. These complaints were not resolved, resulting in a legal-diplomatic conflict between Allied embassies and Spain that was never solved.<sup>14</sup>

Deportation policies ended in late 1942 after customs authorities closed the borders. Nevertheless, in February 1943, German police still

14 Correspondence between the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Spanish Army, 1942. Avila General Military Archive (AGMA, in its Spanish acronym, *Archivo General Militar de Ávila*). Ministry of the Army. Box 21020.

requested that the Spanish government hand over Jews in the country.<sup>15</sup> It is not known how Spanish authorities replied to this demand but, in March 1943, due to the massive influx of refugees, they decided to expel Jews to France. This order was only briefly in force and it was revoked just two days after diplomatic representatives protested the measure. Eventually, in June 1944, a group of people under arrest was handed over to German officers and then deported to the Dachau concentration camp.<sup>16</sup>

### 1942–1944. Spain, a Shelter

German defeat in the battle of Stalingrad at the beginning of 1943 changed the course of the war. Regarding diplomatic relationships, after that moment the Spanish government began to pay more attention to the demands of Allied ambassadors—British and American—related to refugees. All of this coincided with the replacement of Serrano Suñer as Minister of Foreign Affairs; the new Minister was the soldier Francisco Gómez-Jordana Sousa appointed in September 1942.

The decision to cease expulsions coincided with the German occupation of Southern France, which, at the same time, made it almost impossible to cross through the Pyrenees. Jews hoping to reach the Iberian Peninsula had to do it clandestinely after long treks through Pyrenean mountain passes often covered with snow, slipping past surveillance units the Germans had stationed on French territory. At that moment, escape networks, created first by Allied intelligence services to take soldiers and politicians from occupied countries to Spain, were also used by Jewish families. As time passed, French Jewish resistance organizations, such as Armé Juive, established their own escape networks.<sup>17</sup>

15 Note verbale from the German Embassy in Spain to the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, 14 Feb. 1943, General Archive of the Administration, Alcalá de Henares (AGA, in its Spanish acronym, *Archivo General de la Administración*). Ministry Foreign Office, Document Group 2181, File 1.

16 Note verbale from the British Embassy in Spain to the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, 26 August 1944. AGA, Alcalá de Henares. Ministry Foreign Office, Document Group 2183, File 9.

17 J. Calvet, A. Rieu and N. Riudor. *La bataille des Pyrénées: Réseaux d'information et d'évasion alliés transpyrénéens 1942–1944*. Toulouse: le Pas de l'oiseau, 2014.



Most of those accused of crossing the border clandestinely were arrested when they entered Spain. In order to cope with the flood of refugees, Spain legislated their reception in mid-1943 for the first time. It stipulated that males from belligerent countries between the ages of 18 and 40, i.e. military-aged, and who were neither leaders nor officers, would be sent to concentration camps in Spain. Men under or above this age, and women and children who had financial means or a guarantor residing in Spain would be authorized to live in the country temporarily until they obtained the necessary documents to move on to other countries. The remaining refugees, if lacking financial means, would be sent to a concentration camp, in the case of non-military-aged men, or to a prison in Madrid, in the case of women. The Junta Provincial de Menores, a regional institution in charge of under-aged people, would be responsible for captured children. It also determined how to deal with stateless refugees, i.e., those from occupied territories who had no diplomatic or consular representation in Spain; those who refused to be represented in Spain by authorities whose legitimacy they did not recognize—e.g. Austrians who did not acknowledge the annexation by Germany;<sup>18</sup> Czechs and Slovaks refusing to recognize the Reich Protectorate; those deprived of their nationality of origin for racial reasons; and those travelling without documentation. In these cases, their care was entrusted to the Spanish Red Cross, as a delegate of the International Red Cross.<sup>19</sup>

Most of the refugees entering Spain after 1942 lacked documentation and were registered using a false nationality, usually Canadian, and generally using an incorrect age. The reason for giving a false age was to avoid being considered military-aged. For all such individuals, entry to Spain was just the beginning of a long journey through prisons, concentration camps, philanthropic establishments and hotels. Military-aged men were sent to and imprisoned in a concentration camp located in Miranda de Ebro. Most women remained free, although some were also imprisoned. Children normally stayed with their mothers but, in some instances, were separated and confined to orphanages. In spite of the norm at that time, all sorts of situations occurred and refugees were treated differently depending on the border province in which they were caught. This situation soon

18 After the annexation of Austria by Germany, former Austrian citizens were considered German and had to apply for German papers.

19 J. Calvet. *Las montañas de la libertad, La batalla des Pyrénées*. 103.



Former prison of Sort (today a museum) in the Spanish Pyrenees where Jewish refugees were imprisoned after crossing the border until their documentation and legal status were clarified.

*Arxiu Comarcal del Pallars Sobirà (ACPS)*

became unsustainable. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), a charitable organization, aware of the importance of the refugees' rescue through the Iberian Peninsula, succeeded in establishing a delegation in Barcelona. Thanks to its work, confinements to concentration camps or prisons were often avoided and procedures for later emigration of Jewish refugees to Spain were expedited.

Spanish authorities always tried to prevent Jews from settling in the country. They were given instructions to leave the Iberian Peninsula as soon as possible. This decision clashed with the actual difficulties of obtaining entry visas for other countries because of restrictions prevailing in many states.

All of this meant that most refugees remained in Spain between a few months and two years. However, Spain also restricted the refugees' departure as well. A German diplomatic request stipulated that regular-transit ships setting sail from Spanish harbors were forbidden to take on board

passengers from belligerent countries, some of whom were Jews.<sup>20</sup> In 1944, the hiring of Spanish ships departing from Barcelona and heading for Palestine was not allowed either, since thousands of fugitives were gathered in that city. Therefore, ships were eventually hired in Portugal, where they departed from Lisbon in order to stop in Cadiz, and from there they would sail to Haifa.

To summarize, Spain's position regarding refugees entering the country during World War II was determined by the complex diplomatic balance that Francoist authorities maintained with Nazi Germany and with the Allied Powers. In general, Spain allowed Jews who succeeded in crossing the Pyrenees to enter the country, although, for more than two years, Nazi pressure caused the expulsion of hundreds of refugees or their confinement in grisly concentration camps.

Most of the refugees, except for a short period of time between 1939 and 1940, who possessed a passport or a visa were allowed to pass through the country, or were sent to prison or to concentration camps. Although the reception procedure was eventually regulated, differences in treatment at border checkpoints set up along the Pyrenean frontier are more than evident.

20 Note verbale from the German Embassy in Spain to the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, 10 Nov. 1943. AGA, Alcalá de Henares. Ministry Foreign Office, Document Group 2182, File 1.

## **Section III**

### **Reactions by the Neutral Countries to the Holocaust**



## What was Known in the Neutral Countries about the On-Going Genocide of European Jews?

This essay seeks to understand, from a comparative perspective, when and through what channels countries such as Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Portugal and Turkey learned that the Third Reich was implementing its policy of annihilating the Jews of Europe. The neutral and allied countries were well informed about antisemitic persecution conducted by the Nazi regime from its very beginning. Even in countries where censorship existed, newspapers published reports about the growing antisemitism in Germany. From late autumn 1941, Germany's goal was to exterminate all the Jews on the continent. Yet it was a long time before this was understood by the Allies and the neutral states. It is important to keep in mind that no historical precedent existed. A genocide of such magnitude in the heart of Europe was simply inconceivable and, as Deborah Lipstadt puts it, "beyond belief."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, as Yehuda Bauer and Walter Laqueur maintain, there is a distinction between "information" and "knowledge,"<sup>2</sup> between "knowing" and "believing."<sup>3</sup> More than a year and a half passed after the mass murder had begun, with the invasion of the Soviet Union, until the release of the Allied Joint Declaration of December, 1942.

Only after May—June 1942, in the face of a flood of reports that served to confirm the crimes committed by the Germans against the Jews, did a campaign start that was to "attract public attention to the crimes in Poland."<sup>4</sup>

- 1 D. Lipstadt. *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933–1945*. New York: Free Press, 1986.
- 2 Y. Bauer. *Rethinking the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. 218.
- 3 W. Laqueur. *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's 'Final Solution'*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1980. 3.
- 4 D. Stola. "Early News of the Holocaust from Poland," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 11, No. 1 (1997): 5–7.

In June 1942, the arrival of information intensified. That month, the report of the *Bund*—originally the “General Jewish Labor Bund of Lithuania, Poland and Russia”, (an important Jewish organization in Poland that continued to operate clandestinely in the occupied territories during the war), found its way to London and Washington. On 9 June, Wladislaw Sikorski, the prime minister of the Polish government-in-exile in London, gave a speech in which he referred to the shootings, the forced transportation of Polish men and women and the Nazis’ objective of exterminating all the Jews. On 29 June, the British section of the World Jewish Congress organized a press conference at which Ignacy Schwarzbart, a Jewish representative on the National Council of the Polish government-in-exile, stated that a million Jews had already been murdered. On 8 July, 1942, the Polish National Council issued a resolution that spoke of plans to eliminate all the Jews.

However, these first alarms about mass extermination were not generally believed. There was a widespread belief that both the Poles and the Jewish organizations were exaggerating, because, among other reasons, during World War I, British propaganda had spread extensive rumors about the Germans, most of which were later discredited. The “campaign” continued and, in November 1942, the Jewish Agency executive issued an official statement confirming the extermination of Jews in Europe. That same month, Jan Karski, who worked as a courier for the Polish government-in-exile, arrived in London and delivered a report. On 10 December, the Poles sent a diplomatic memo to the governments of the United Nations. This document dealt exclusively with the extermination of the Jews, making it “a visible exception” to the tendency of seeing this practice as ‘just another’ Nazi atrocity committed in Poland. Then, on 17 December, 1942, the Allied Powers issued a public statement that denounced and condemned “the bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination” of the Jews.

The Joint Declaration on the Persecution of the Jews from 17 December, 1942, in which the eleven Allied governments presented their common position, stated explicitly that the German authorities were engaging in the mass murder of European Jews and that those responsible for this “bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination” would “not escape retribution.”

However, the existence of an extermination camp with details about the gas chambers was revealed only in the spring of 1944, following the escape of prisoners from Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Polish government-in-exile also played a leading role in informing the neutral countries. Its

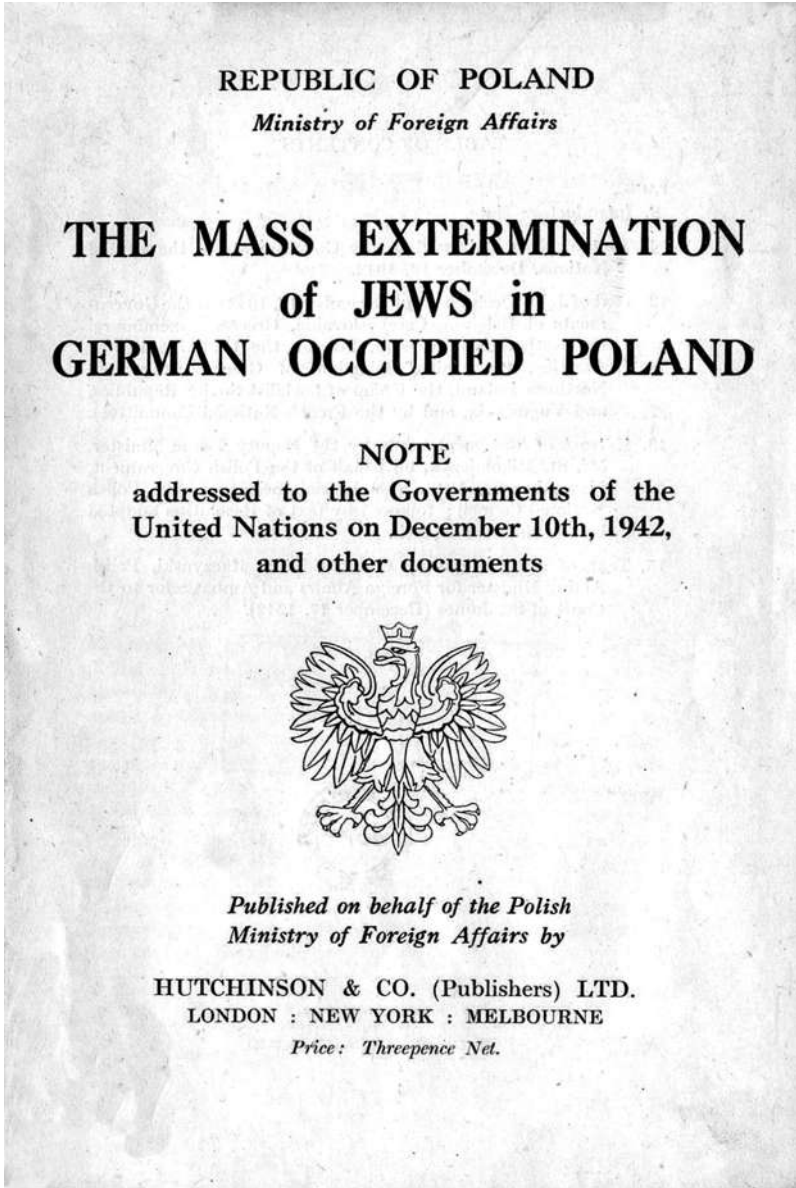
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**Joint Declaration**  
**Announced Simultaneously on December 17th, 1942, in**  
**London, Moscow and Washington**

“The attention of the Governments of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, and Yugoslavia, and of the French National Committee, has been drawn to numerous reports from Europe that the German authorities, not content with denying to persons of Jewish race in all the territories over which their barbarous rule has been extended the most elementary human rights, are now carrying into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe. From all the occupied countries Jews are being transported, in conditions of appalling horror and brutality, to Eastern Europe. In Poland, which has been made the principal Nazi slaughter-house, the Ghettos established by the German invaders are being systematically emptied of all Jews, except a few highly skilled workers required for war industries. None of those taken away are ever heard of again. The able-bodied are slowly worked to death in labour camps. The infirm are left to die of exposure and starvation, or are deliberately massacred in mass executions. The number of victims of these bloody cruelties is reckoned in many hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent men, women, and children.

“The above-mentioned Governments and the French National Committee condemn in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination. They declare that such events can only strengthen the resolve of all freedom-loving peoples to overthrow the barbarous Hitlerite tyranny. They reaffirm their solemn resolution to ensure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution, and to press on with the necessary practical measures to this end.”





Information pamphlet by the Polish government-in-exile containing several documents that provide evidence of the ongoing extermination of Jews by the Germans, published and disseminated in January 1943.

representatives were in contact with neutral diplomats in London.<sup>5</sup> On 11 September, 1942, Polish Foreign Minister Edward Raczynski informed the neutral countries that a large number of Polish Jews, who had been living in unoccupied France, had been deported to the Reich.<sup>6</sup> Later, between December 1942 and January 1943, a pamphlet entitled “*The Mass Extermination of Jews in German Occupied Poland*,” published on behalf of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reached the neutral capitals.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the information provided by the government-in-exile and Jewish organizations, each neutral country had its own sources of information. Countries such as Sweden, Switzerland, Spain and Portugal were in a better situation than the Allies to receive information because they kept their diplomatic representations open in the Reich and other Axis countries during the war. Thus, their citizens, journalists, military personnel, businessmen, etc., could travel to Germany and the occupied territories. They even sent military and medical missions to the Eastern Front. Spain, for example, sent a division of (alleged) volunteers (the Blue Division). Furthermore, it was through these countries that many Jews, fleeing Hitler and the Holocaust, could escape, bringing with them descriptions of the persecution they had endured. The governments and diplomats of the neutral countries, however, were also unable to fully comprehend the dimensions of the Nazi extermination plans.

### Switzerland<sup>8</sup>

Of all the neutral countries, Switzerland was best positioned to receive news. Its territory was an important link in the Polish intelligence network, whose couriers managed to deliver messages there that were then sent on

5 AHDMNE (Historical and Diplomatic Archives of the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lisbon, hereafter AHDMNE), 2.º P., A.49, M. 96, Note Verbale. 18.6.1942.

6 D. Engel. “The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Deportation of Polish Jews from France in 1942.” *Yad Vashem Studies* 15 (1983): 15–16.

7 AHDMNE, Lisbon, 2.º P., A.49, M. 96, Official letter from the Polish Minister to António de Oliveira Salazar. 15.1.1943.

8 The author thanks R. Fivaz-Silbermann for help regarding the case of Switzerland.

to London.<sup>9</sup> One such message was a report sent by the Swiss minister in Rome, after a conversation with Cardinal Maglione, to Marcel Pilet-Golaz, head of the Swiss Foreign Ministry. In it he spoke of the “biological extermination of a large part of the population in the occupied regions.”

Swiss consuls sent back reports about the deportation of Jews, especially Franz von Weiss, the Swiss consul in Cologne. In November 1941, von Weiss wrote to the Swiss minister in Berlin, informing him that, according to information provided by an important German industrialist, Jews were starving to death in the ghettos of Warsaw and Lodz. The legation forwarded the document to Berne, but Pilet-Golaz considered it confidential, meaning it should not circulate within the Foreign Ministry.<sup>10</sup>

Eye-witness accounts from several Swiss citizens who had travelled to the East, including some on medical missions, and who had been present at executions of Jews carried out by the *Einsatzgruppen* (Mobile Killing Units) also came to the attention of Swiss diplomats.

One such account was by Rudolf Bucher, a doctor, who was in the region of Smolensk and Minsk in October 1941 and who, on his return to Switzerland in January 1942, tried to make this information public. The army’s intelligence service also interrogated deserters and some former combatants in Russia, who spoke about the massacres of Jews committed by the *Einsatzgruppen*. Thanks to the accumulation of information, especially that provided by the Polish legation in Berne, in September 1943, Heinrich Rothmund, the Swiss police chief, for the first time was able to distinguish the differences between concentration camps and extermination camps.<sup>11</sup>

Did Swiss authorities understand that the Third Reich had implemented a policy of annihilation of European Jewry? Most likely they had information about such an objective, but not the knowledge to understand it. In July 1942, in a report requested by Heinrich Rothmund, his deputy Robert Jezler noted that, “the consistent and reliable reports about how the deportations are being carried out and the conditions in the Jewish quar-

9 W. Laqueur. *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler’s ‘Final Solution’*. Boston: 1980. 41–42; C. Ludwig. *Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz seit 1933 bis zur Gegenwart*. Bern: Lang, 1957.

10 M. Cerutti. “La Suisse, terre d’asile?” *Revue d’Histoire de la SHOAH – Le monde juif*, No. 163 (1998): 33.

11 M. Cerutti. “La Suisse, terre d’asile?” 36.

ters in the east are so awful that one cannot help but understand the desperate attempts made by the refugees to escape from such a fate.”<sup>12</sup> The reports only mentioned the deportations from the Reich that were not understood as part of a wider policy of annihilation. Moreover, important information that circulated within Swiss territory was transmitted abroad through private channels, and did not reach the government. This happened with Gerhart Riegner, the World Jewish Congress representative in Geneva. He forwarded important details obtained from German industrialist Edward Schulze to London and Washington.<sup>13</sup>

The Swiss press was also well informed about the segregation and persecution of Jews. However, after the war began, censorship was imposed that also functioned *a posteriori*. This mechanism worked to avoid publication of news that could lead to protests from the belligerent countries.

## Sweden

In August 1942, Karl Vendel, the Swedish consul in Stettin, wrote a report recounting conversations he had had on a visit to occupied Poland in which he said that the Nazis’ objective was to annihilate all Jews, and that even those who were kept alive to fill labor shortages would be exterminated as soon as they were deemed no longer useful. At the end of the report, Vendel made a point of emphasizing that his source, of German origin, was reliable so that no doubts could be raised about the credibility of the information. This was one of the first revelations about the extermination of the Jews to become known in the West, and preceded both Karski’s report and the Riegner Cable.<sup>14</sup>

Another Swedish diplomat, Göran von Otter, revealed important information received from SS officer Kurt Gerstein, which was then trans-

12 Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland—Second World War. Switzerland. *National Socialism and the Second World War. Final Report*. Zurich: Pendo, 2002. 113.

13 W. Laqueur. “The Terrible Secret: Some Afterthoughts.” In C. Y. Freeze, S.F. Fried, E.R. Sheppard (eds.). *The Individual in History: Essays in Honor of Jehuda Reinharz*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2015. 409–413.

14 J. Lewandowski. “Early Swedish Information about the Nazis’ Mass Murder of the Jews.” *Polin* 13 (2000): 113–127.

mitted to the head of the Swedish Foreign Ministry's political department. Gerstein was returning from an inspection of the Belzec extermination camp where he had witnessed the killing of Jews in the gas chambers. Soon after, he met von Otter by chance on a train from Warsaw to Berlin. This was the moment he passed on information to send back to Swedish authorities in Stockholm, asking that it be forwarded to the Allies. However, as Paul Levine has argued, we still do not know when and how von Otter passed the information to the Foreign Ministry. Furthermore, as Levine demonstrated, the Swedish government did not forward the information to the Allies.

The Swedish press also published news based on reports, but did so sporadically since the government's "Board of Information" advised newspaper editors not to publish anything on inopportune topics—such as atrocities committed by the belligerent parties—because this could be seen as a provocation with dangerous consequences for Sweden. Thus, it was only when the deportation of Jews ordered by Quisling's collaborationist government in Norway caused a "great commotion," leading the press and Lutheran bishops to react indignantly. For Levine, "this first shift" was "a response to the tragedy of the tiny population of the fellow Nordic nation Norway," when the Germans were already surrounded at Stalingrad, and Rommel had been defeated in North Africa.<sup>15</sup>

## Spain

Unlike Sweden or Switzerland, Spain had combatants fighting on the Eastern Front. The regime was informed by soldiers from the Blue Division about the bloody repression to which Poles and Russians were subjected. These soldiers saw first-hand how the local population was discriminated against. However, they did not actually witness any massacres since *Einsatzgruppe A* had already carried out the "cleansing" of areas where the Spanish were fighting.

15 P.A. Levine. "Attitudes and Action: Comparing the Responses of Mid-Level Bureaucrats to the Holocaust." in D. Cesarani and P.A. Levine (eds.), *Bystanders to the Holocaust: A Re-Evaluation*. London: Frank Cass, 2002. 226; W. Laqueur. "The Terrible Secret: Some Afterthoughts." 52.

Furthermore, Spaniards could travel to the occupied territories, as a delegation of doctors did when they visited Austria and Poland in late 1941. As a result of this trip, a secret document was sent to Spain's Interior Ministry that described the incarceration and killing of Jews in ghettos. This report probably ended up in the hands of Francisco Franco. In August 1942, the dictator was also informed by the general-directorate of security of the deportations from France to Eastern Europe. In July 1943, a Spanish lawyer in Madrid made public the rumors he had heard in Berlin about how Jews were being deported and later gassed. This information came to the knowledge of the British Embassy in Madrid, which passed it on to the Foreign Office in London.<sup>16</sup>

Spain was also informed by its diplomatic representatives of the on-going antisemitic persecutions. In the case of Spain, the German ultimatum of January 1943 allows us to assess how much Spain actually knew about the Nazi genocide policy.<sup>17</sup> In July 1943, the first secretary of the Spanish Embassy in Berlin spoke with German diplomat Eberhard von Thadden about the Spanish Jews in Salonika. The diplomat told von Thadden, who was responsible for implementing antisemitic policy at Germany's Foreign Ministry (*Auswärtiges Amt*), that Spain could in no way agree to having its subjects murdered in Polish camps. The German denied the accusation, saying the information about the atrocities was defamatory propaganda generated by Germany's enemies. Also in July, the Spanish ambassador informed the Foreign Ministry of the "tragic consequences" of any eventual deportation of Spanish Jews. With his consent, a member of the embassy staff wrote a letter to a friend, the director-general of foreign policy at the Foreign Ministry, saying that should Spain refuse to receive the Jews, it would be condemning them "automatically to death."<sup>18</sup>

As for the press, unlike proceedings in Sweden or Switzerland, it was only at the end of 1945 that *ABC*, a Spanish newspaper, was able to publish news about the Nazi camps.<sup>19</sup>

16 B. Rother. *Franco y el Holocausto*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2005. 125–126.

17 See the essay of Bernd Rother in this volume for discussions of this issue.

18 B. Rother. *Franco y el Holocausto*. 127.

19 X.M. Núñez Seixas. "Testigos o Encubridores? La División Azul y el Holocausto de los Judíos Europeos: Entre Historia y Memoria." in *Historia y Política* No. 26 (2011): 265.

## Portugal

In Portugal, which had been under a dictatorial regime since 1926, the press was subject to censorship. With the outbreak of war this control increased significantly. News reports about the barbarities committed by the Germans were eliminated on the pretext that they would compromise the country's official position. The censors even questioned whether the information on the existence of concentration camps and the execution of Jews, Poles and Catholics by firing squads was not just propaganda and rumors.<sup>20</sup> These initial doubts were soon dispelled, but later the cuts were justified not because the information was considered imaginary, but because the news contained "inconvenient" details, so that information about German concentration and extermination camps continued to be censored.<sup>21</sup> From Bucharest, the Portuguese minister, Fernando Quartin de Oliveira Bastos, who had held on-going talks with the papal nuncio, kept Salazar up to date about the persecution set in motion by the Ion Antonescu regime. He even refers to "the murders that are being systematically committed in this country of the Jews," and to "the pillaging and extermination of the Jews in occupied Russian territory."<sup>22</sup> However, the Polish government-in-exile, especially through its legation in Lisbon, was the most important source of information for the Portuguese government. It sent the Portuguese government Sikorski's speech from 9 June, 1942.<sup>23</sup> On 22 September, the Polish legation in Lisbon handed a verbal note to the Portuguese government about the deportation of Polish Jews living in unoccupied France to the Reich.

- 20 See, for example, the article "...Piores entradas" [Bad Start to the Year]- based on Polish reports, which the newspaper *A Voz* sought to publish (Oliveira Salazar Archive, Lisbon (Arquivo de Oliveira Salazar, DGARQ/AOS), CO/NE2, pt.47, "Informações—Alemanha." *A Voz* de 1-1<sup>a</sup>).
- 21 Oliveira Salazar Archive, Lisbon, DGARQ, AOS/CO/PC-3E, pasta 28. Letter from M. Figueiredo to António de Oliveira Salazar about the censorship of news regarding the concentration camps in Germany. 21 April 1945.
- 22 Telegrama No. 86. Do Ministro de Portugal em Bucareste ao Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiro, 6 Nov. 1941. Doc.2520, *Dez Anos de Política Externa (1936–1947). A Nação Portuguesa e a Segunda Guerra Mundial* Vol. X (1974): 21–22.
- 23 All the Polish documents mentioned hereafter can be found in the Historical and Diplomatic Archives of the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lisbon (AHDMNE), Lisbon, 2.º P. Armário 49, Maço 96.

At the end of 1942, the Palestine-based “Representation of Polish Jewry” sent a telegram about the situation of the Polish Jews to the president of the Portuguese Republic. According to this document, thousands of Jews had already been killed by the Germans, who did not even spare women or children. They appealed to the president to “employ all [his] authority and influence to put an end to those unprecedented crimes and to open the gates of free countries to those who seek refuge from that inferno on earth.” In January 1943, the pamphlet “*The Mass Extermination of Jews in German Occupied Poland*” finally reached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Portuguese regime did not allow the information it received to be made public, nor did it react to the countless official letters and appeals from the Polish government-in-exile. The verbal note of September 1942 was, in fact, the only occasion on which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took a position—not in an attempt to save the Jews, but as a way of showing their goodwill regarding the appeal. However, Portugal’s reaction was no different from the standard reaction demonstrated by both the other neutral countries and the Allies.

## **Turkey**<sup>24</sup>

The Polish underground resistance, as well as representatives of the Polish government-in-exile, also operated in Turkey. The Polish consulate in Istanbul, which was subordinate to the government-in-exile, published two papers in which the murder of Jews was reported several times. We can also assume that it sent the Turkish government Sikorski’s speech and the pamphlet “The Mass Extermination of Jews” as it did to the other neutral governments. However, neutral Turkey was an important escape route for Jews fleeing Nazi oppression in Eastern and Southeastern Europe and, as a consequence, the country became a base for rescue activities carried out by Jewish organizations. In winter 1942–1943, at the initiative of the Jewish Agency, a rescue committee was established in Istanbul. Several other international relief organizations sent their representatives to Turkey, where refugees who managed to reach the country informed them about the conditions in the concentration camps and about Nazi Germa-

24 This section is based on the research of C. Guttstadt. The author thanks her for her generous assistance, including her comments on draft versions of this essay.



ny's murder of the Jews.<sup>25</sup> According to Corry Guttstadt, because all such organizations and representatives were monitored by the police and intelligence services, the information on the extermination camps also reached Turkish intelligence, though we do not know to what degree they passed the information on to the Turkish government itself. Representatives of the Jewish Agency even tried to pressure the authorities to change their refugee policy by drawing attention to the persecution of Jews.

Additionally, some reports, particularly from American journalists accredited in Turkey, were dispatched. For example, in 1941, journalists reported from Turkey about the murder of Jews by the *Einsatzgruppen* in Romania. However, this does not mean that the Turkish population knew about such information. At that time, Turkey was a totalitarian state and information was frequently silenced by restrictive laws, and censored first by the government's press office, and, from 1941, also by the military commander of the state of emergency. The German-Turkish Treaty of Friendship and Non-Aggression of 18 June, 1941, prohibited the publication of any news hostile to Nazi Germany. During the early years of Nazi rule, the Turkish press expressed understanding for anti-Jewish laws, stating that this was a reaction to Jewish hegemony over Germany's society and economy. This silence by the Turkish press was a consequence of German pressure, but also of indifference to the fate of the Jews. As a result, information about German atrocities was eliminated on the pretext that it would compromise Turkey's neutrality. The December 1942 issue of the government journal *Ayin Tarihi*, ("The History of the Month"), reported in January 1943 on the inter-Allied declaration, publishing verbatim the speech by British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden on the destruction of European Jews by Nazi Germany. This is the most important evidence showing that, in the spring of 1943, Turkey's government knew about "the destruction of the Jews in Poland."<sup>26</sup> From Bucharest, the Turkish ambassador, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, reported on the dangers faced by the Jews in Romania. In other European countries, diplomats received requests for help from Turkish Jews who were targets of Nazi antisemitic persecution. Some of these were sent directly to the president or to Turkey's Parliament.<sup>27</sup> How-

25 T. Kollek. *For Jerusalem: A Life*. New York: Random House, 1978. 45–47.

26 *Ayin Tarihi* No. 109, December 1942: 309.

27 C. Guttstadt. *Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2013. 200ff, 268.

ever, until the declassification and public disclosure of official Turkish documents, it is impossible to know exactly when and how information on Germany's genocidal policy reached the Turkish government.

In fact, this comparative analysis allows us to draw some important conclusions about the behavior of the neutral countries in light of what they knew about the Holocaust at the time. The amount of information initially available was limited and was viewed with great skepticism. Sufficient information from different sources had to be accumulated in order for the doubts to turn into certainties. Yet even then, owing to the official neutrality declared by these countries, "inconvenient" and "sensitive" matters were avoided. Moreover, the mere fact that some diplomats and citizens from the neutral countries realized the dimension of German crimes does not mean that their governments believed their reports. Again, available information was not always fully comprehended or transformed into knowledge, regardless of whether the country was a democracy or dictatorship. In the case of Switzerland and Sweden, there were fears of triggering a negative German reaction. When they began receiving information about the murders, there was no guarantee that Germany would lose the war, and there remained the real possibility of invasion. Priority was given to maintaining cordial relations with all the countries at war, thereby guaranteeing their neutrality. They were also not interested in transforming their countries into lands of refuge by opening their borders and allowing thousands of refugees to enter, people who could not return to their countries of origin. Feelings of sympathy for the persecuted minority rarely emerged among the non-belligerent governments, not even a feeling of solidarity. On the contrary, immigration policies became tougher with major obstacles being put in place to prevent people from obtaining visas in order to stop refugees from entering their territories. In reality, political leaders felt no empathy with the Jews and, in some cases, antisemitic prejudice among some mid-level bureaucrats was evident even when antisemitism was not a key element in the regimes' political ideologies. For dictatorial governments like those of Franco or Salazar, it was unthinkable to embrace a humanitarian mission for individuals who were not national citizens but foreigners, and for whom they had no legal responsibility whatsoever. The indifference towards the murderous drama taking place beyond their borders was generalized, something which only changed at the end of the war, when the outcome was definitively decided.



Corry Guttstadt

## **Origins of the 1942–1943 German Ultimatum on the Repatriation of Jews with Citizenship of Neutral and German-allied Countries**

Beginning in autumn 1942, the German Foreign Ministry issued an ultimatum to the governments of neutral countries and those countries allied with Germany. The demand was to repatriate their Jewish citizens from countries and territories under German control. The following articles discuss the different reactions to this ultimatum by the governments of three neutral countries: Spain, Portugal and Turkey. This introduction will outline the origins and circumstances framing the ultimatum as a result of the very specific role played by the German Foreign Ministry within Nazi Germany's "bureaucracy of genocide."

In principle, Nazi ideology did not differentiate between Jews from different countries.

In practice, however, the Nazi regime was forced on numerous occasions to take specific foreign policy considerations into account when deciding what to do with foreign Jews. As early as between 1933 and 1939, the legal restrictions and violent attacks against foreign Jews living in Germany triggered a number of interventions by the diplomatic representations of numerous countries. The fear of diplomatic and economic repercussions for Germany repeatedly caused discussions between various ministries and different Party organizations. Such internal German discussions often led, however reluctantly, to exemptions granted to foreign Jews from some anti-Jewish measures.

### **The Cooperation between the RSHA and the Foreign Office and the "Bureaucracy of Genocide"**

Since protest notes from the diplomatic representations of other countries were received by the Foreign Ministry, this agency became directly involved in these issues, eventually allowing it to play a central role in shaping Nazi

policy regarding foreign Jews. After the war began, and particularly after 1940, questions regarding the treatment of foreign Jews became ever more important because the occupation of Western Europe brought tens of thousands of foreign Jews, citizens of a multitude of countries, under Nazi control. For instance, in France, about half the Jews were immigrants, while in Belgium the proportion was considerably higher.

After the introduction of antisemitic measures in France, diplomats from several countries intervened against restrictions imposed on their Jewish nationals. Once again, this compelled the Nazi bureaucracy to reconsider the question of how to treat foreign Jews: International law guaranteed the life and property of citizens of neutral countries living in militarily-occupied territories. If these people were mistreated by the Germans, it was feared in Berlin that this could lead to reprisals against German property and nationals living in the countries affected. Commercial and strategic interests related to the war also played an important role, as several of the neutral countries supplied the German armaments industry with resources critical to the war effort. Berlin was careful to avoid anything that might upset these sensitive diplomatic and economic relations. As a consequence, some groups of foreign Jews were exempted from having their enterprises and property confiscated.

The mass arrests of foreign Jews in France in summer 1941, triggered renewed protests by numerous diplomats, since Jews from literally dozens of countries were arrested. Eventually, those Jews who held citizenship from one of the neutral countries were released from the Drancy and Compiègne camps once the competent consulate confirmed their citizenship. During 1942, certain groups of Jews—mainly citizens of neutral or German allied countries—were exempt from various anti-Jewish measures, for instance, the requirement to wear the yellow badge. These were categorized by the Germans as “non-wearers of the yellow badge” (*Nicht-Sternträger*), meaning “not yet” to be arrested and deported.

### **Precarious Protection for Jews of Neutral Countries**

However, even those exemptions temporarily granted to Jews of certain nationalities were by no means guaranteed, and numerous antisemitic regulations still applied to all Jews, regardless of their nationality. German authorities were very careful not to put these exemptions in writing.

Moreover, application of the measures was inconsistent and contradictory because of the prevailing chaotic areas of responsibility spread throughout competing German agencies. Depending on the situation, Nazi agencies would disregard their own rules of exemption, for example, in order to fill up the next transport because a particularly ambitious commander was eager to make the territory under his jurisdiction free of Jews as quickly as possible. Time and again, Jews with neutral citizenship were arrested at a time when they should still have been exempt under the terms of German inter-agency agreements.

It is important to note that any description of this complex system of exemptions and deferments runs the risk of becoming entangled in its own logic and of trivializing the perfidy of Nazi bureaucrats. The reason behind the granting of exemptions was certainly not respect for international law or humanitarian considerations; rather, it was the rationale of carrying out the extermination of the Jews as smoothly as possible. To this end, the Foreign Ministry sought to proceed with each step of the persecution of the Jews, all the way to their deportation, with the consent of the respective governments, thus making them accomplices to the German crimes.

### **The Ultimatum on Repatriation**

The exemptions granted to certain groups of foreign Jews protecting them from deportation only constituted a temporary deferment, just as it did for certain other groups, such as German-Jewish war veterans or Jews married to non-Jewish women.

At the very least, foreign Jews were to be permanently driven out of German-controlled territory. Starting in autumn 1942, neutral countries or those allied with Germany were given an ultimatum to repatriate their Jewish nationals from German-controlled areas—in Nazi parlance, to “return them home” (*Heimschaffung*). Otherwise they would be “included in the general measures regarding Jews,” which meant arrest, deportation and murder, measures which were not articulated.

The Germans implicitly took the consent of the fascist puppet states Croatia and Slovakia to the deportation of their Jewish citizens for granted: After all, the previous year, both countries’ governments had agreed to the deportation of their Jewish nationals from their own territory and from Greater Germany. Likewise, in September 1942, Nazi German-allied Bul-

garia and Romania answered, noting their acceptance of the application of “the general measures regarding Jews,” on their Jewish citizens in France. The Germans interpreted this as approval for the deportation and murder of these Jews. Next, at the end of the month, Germany issued this ultimatum to Italy, its Axis partner, and in October to Hungary, Switzerland and Turkey. Finally, in early 1943, the ultimatum was sent to Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and several South American countries.

The first ultimatums sent concerned foreign Jews in France. In May 1943, it was extended to all countries under German occupation in Western and Central Europe, and later, in 1943, to Greece.

But before continuing to read of the detailed reactions of some of the neutrals to the ultimatum, it should be stressed that this political manoeuvre was a form of scarcely disguised diplomatic extortion by Nazi Germany. It forced the respective governments to choose to either deliver their Jewish citizens to the Germans, making themselves accomplices to German war crimes, or to “take their Jews back,” meaning essentially to agree to their forced removal.

For the Jews in question, this measure meant their forced departure from the countries they lived in, and where they had built a new life, with all that this entailed. In retrospect, it is easy to misinterpret these governments’ failure to react. Today, we understand that the offer to “return home” would have saved the Jews of these countries from deportation and an almost certain death. But in most cases, in the winter of 1942–1943, neither the governments concerned nor the Jews themselves could have known this. Despite information about the German genocide of the Jews, which had been made public internationally during the last months of 1942, most politicians still did not believe that the Germans had built death factories. Also, many of the Jews themselves at first did not want to be forced to leave; they were not aware of the real dangers in store for them. This situation changed over the following months, when news and information about the German mass killings of Jews spread more and more, until it was finally taken seriously.<sup>1</sup>

When several of the countries failed to, or repatriated only a small number of their Jewish citizens, the Germans insisted on a written declaration that the government in question was “not interested in the fate of the other Jews considered by the Germans as their citizens.” This was, in

1 See C. Ninhos’ essay in this volume.

effect, a German demand for a “declaration of consent” for the deportation of these Jews. In several cases, German agencies delayed and obstructed repatriations.<sup>2</sup> We do not know how Germany would have reacted, if Turkey, for example, had agreed to repatriate some of the 5,000 Jews “offered” by the Germans.

2 For details, see C. Guttstadt. *Die Türkei, die Juden und der Holocaust*. Hamburg and Berlin: Assoziation A, 2008. 293f. regarding Italian Jews in France, and 434ff. regarding Turkish Jews in the Netherlands.





Irene Flunser Pimentel

## Neutral Portugal and the Holocaust

### Salazar and the German Ultimatum of 1943

In 1943, the Portuguese government found itself directly involved in the Holocaust when it was given the opportunity to decide the fate of Jews with Portuguese citizenship living in the occupied territories of France, the Netherlands and Greece, as well as those of Portuguese descent in Amsterdam.

#### The German Ultimatum

On 4 February, 1943, the German legation in Lisbon warned the Portuguese government that, “in the interest of [German] military security”, from 1 April, all foreign Jews, including those of Portuguese citizenship living in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, as well as in the Reich and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, would now be subject to, “the provisions in force concerning Jews, including their marks of public identification, internment and later expulsion.” For “reasons of courtesy,” Salazar’s government was being informed so that it would have, “the opportunity to withdraw Jews of Portuguese citizenship from those territories under German rule.” Germany committed itself to authorizing exit visas to those who claimed Portuguese citizenship, if the Salazar government would grant them entry visas.<sup>1</sup> On 8 March, Salazar informed Count Tovar de Lemos,

1 AHDME Lisbon, *Arquivo Diplomático do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros*, 2.º P. A50, M40, Repartição dos Negócios Políticos, “Repatriação de judeus portugueses residentes no Reich e territórios ocupados, incluindo a França- 1943. Judeus provenientes dos seguintes países: Alemanha, Bélgica, Holanda, Grécia, Itália e França” collection of telegrams received and sent from and to the Portuguese legation in Berlin Telegrams received 2 February 1943; Public Record Office, London (hereafter: PRO London) HW 12–296, 3 March 1943.

Portugal's representative in Berlin, that the situation was being "carefully studied because it involved delicate issues," because of the, "corrupt or false origins of Portuguese citizenship which Jews claim or think they have."<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary to remember that beginning in the 16th century, many Sephardic Jews fled to Holland, France and Hamburg, where they were commonly referred to as "Portuguese Jews." Their synagogues and communities were also called "Portuguese". But because they left Portugal some 400 years before, they held no Portuguese citizenship. Another group were the Jews in the Ottoman Empire, and afterwards in Greece, especially in Salonika. Many of these Levantine Jews had emigrated after World War I to France. In the beginning of the 20th century they had acquired Portuguese citizenship. Until 1936, their registration in Portuguese consulates was usually renewed. However, Salazar's dictatorship suspended them, accusing Portuguese consulates in Turkey, Greece and Italy of granting citizenship illegally to "individuals of Semitic race."<sup>3</sup>

### **The Case of the Netherlands**

When Germany conquered and occupied the Netherlands in 1940, 4,304 Jews of Portuguese descent lived in the country<sup>4</sup>. In a telegram dated 16 March, 1943, Salazar informed his Berlin legation that a Portuguese Jew of high standing had presented, "requests from Dutch Jews of Portuguese descent asking that he intervene in allowing them to leave the Netherlands."<sup>5</sup>

- 2 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P. A50, M40. Collection of telegrams received and sent from and to the Portuguese legation in Berlin, Telegram sent by Salazar to Tovar de Lemos, Portuguese minister in Berlin, 8 March 1943, and 2 April 1943, from Tovar de Lemos to Salazar.
- 3 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P., A.49, M.121-A, "A Questão dos Judeus Levantinos Portugueses em França. Relatório do Cônsul Geral em Paris António Alves. Janeiro 1943."
- 4 The number 4, 304 is cited by Yad Vashem, in "The Righteous Among the Nations," Yad Vashem, <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/stories/calmeyer.asp>.
- 5 AHDMNE Lisbon. 2.º P. A50, M40, Repartição dos Negócios Políticos, "Repatriação de judeus portugueses residentes no Reich e territórios ocupados, incluindo a França 1943" collection of telegrams received and sent from and to the Portuguese legation in Berlin. Telegram sent to the Portuguese legation in Berlin, 3 March 1943, from Salazar.

The Portuguese Jew of “high standing” was Moisés Amzalak, president of the Lisbon Jewish Community.<sup>6</sup> He presented, on 12 March, a cable to Salazar that he had received from Rabbi David Jessurun Cardoso of New York.<sup>7</sup> The Portuguese leader informed Amzalak that he had intervened with the German minister in Lisbon, Hoyningen-Huene, who had promised that the Jews in question had nothing to fear, if they were Portuguese citizens. However, if they were considered Dutch Jews, they would be seen as enemies. With regard to the “individuals reclaiming ancient Portuguese origin,” as was the case with the Dutch Jews, the issue was different from that of Jews of Portuguese of recognized citizenship, as was noted in Germany’s February ultimatum. So Salazar asked Tovar de Lemos to clarify the situation of those Jews and, “to learn if the German government” would be willing to authorize the departure of Dutch Jewish families for whom Portugal could, “eventually recognize the ancestry they claim.”<sup>8</sup> In another cable to Tovar de Lemos dated 28 March Salazar wrote that he had no additional information from the German legation. As we have seen, contrary to that statement, Salazar knew from Amzalak what was happening with the Dutch Jews and spoke with the German minister in Lisbon about the subject.<sup>9</sup> Later, Tovar de Lemos sent Salazar a cable (n.º 110), informing him that Ernst Woermann, director of the political department of the German Foreign Office, told him on 2 April that only “Jews of Portuguese citizenship” were authorized to leave German occupied territories, and that the authorization could not be extended to “Jews of other citizenship, even if of Portuguese descent.”<sup>10</sup> That same day, Salazar considered the matter

- 6 Relatório do Dr. R. Migdal, cônsul geral de Israel em Portugal, de Outubro de 1973, H. Avni, “L’Espagne, le Portugal et les Juifs sépharades au xx siècle. Propositions pour une étude comparée.” in Esther Benbassa, ed. *Mémoires Juives d’Espagne et du Portugal*, Paris: Publisud, 1996. 323.
- 7 A. Melo. “Morreram porque acreditaram que eram portuguesas.” in E. Mucznik, ed. *Estrelas da Memória*. Lisbon: Reborn, 2005. 210–211.
- 8 AHDMNE Lisbon. 2.º P. A50, M40, Repartição dos Negócios Políticos, «Repatriação de judeus portugueses residentes no Reich e territórios ocupados, incluindo a França- 1943. Judeus provenientes dos seguintes países: Alemanha, Bélgica, Holanda, Grécia, Itália e França.» Telegram sent to the Portuguese legation in Berlin, 16 March, 1943, from Salazar.
- 9 A. Melo. “Morreram porque acreditaram que eram portuguesas.” 192–193, 212.
- 10 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P. A50, M40, Repartição dos Negócios Políticos, «Repatriação de judeus portugueses residentes no Reich e territórios ocupados, incluindo

closed, which meant that the Jews of Portuguese descent in the Netherlands were left to their fate.<sup>11</sup>

After the war, the then new head of the Portuguese legation in The Hague, António Leite de Faria, calculated that only 500 members of the “Jews of Portuguese descent” in Holland had survived and that they were profoundly disillusioned by the fact “that our government could not assist their flight to Portugal,” and save them, “from the terrible destiny that awaited them.”<sup>12</sup>

### Portuguese Jews in France

In 1939, only a few “Jews from the Levante” living in Paris were of Portuguese citizenship.<sup>13</sup> They had been trying to renew their registration in Portuguese consulates, since 1936, when their registration was suspended. In a report from 1943, António Alves, the Portuguese consul in Paris, assured Salazar that, like his predecessors, he had continued to protect the 250 to 300 Jews in France registered in the Portuguese consulates.<sup>14</sup>

Following the German ultimatum, on 27 March, 1943, Salazar informed the legation in Berlin that the Portuguese consul in Marseilles asked the Portuguese legation for assistance with the repatriation of 31 “Portuguese Jews”.<sup>15</sup> Because the number was so small, Salazar learned that the French

a França- 1943. Judeus provenientes dos seguintes países: Alemanha, Bélgica, Holanda, Grécia, Itália e França.», Telegram received from the Portuguese Legation in Berlin, 2 April, 1943, from Tovar de Lemos.

- 11 A. Milgram. *Portugal, Salazar e os Judeus*. Lisbon: Gradiva, 2010. 324–325; A. Melo. “Morreram porque acreditaram que eram portugueses.” 206–220.
- 12 H. Avni. “L’Espagne, le Portugal et les Juifs sépharades au xx siècle.” 212; A. Louçã. *Conspiradores e traficantes. Portugal no tráfico de armas e de divisas nos anos do nazismo (1933–1945)*, Lisbon: Oficina do Livro, 2005. 203–206.
- 13 A. Melo. “Monique Benveniste—Uma história com fim feliz.” in E. Mucznik, ed. *Estrelas da Memória*. 169–173, 193.
- 14 A. Milgram. *Portugal, Salazar e os Judeus*. 290; AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P., A.49, M.121-A; A Questão, “dos Judeus Levantinos Portugueses em França. Relatório do Cônsul Geral em Paris António Alves. Janeiro 1943.”
- 15 PRO London, HW 12–296 21 March 1943, nr. 115886 and 27 March 1943; M. Matos e Lemos, “Caeiro da Mata em Vichy,” in *CLIO, Revista do Centro de História da Universidade de Lisbon*, Nova Série, vol., 18/19, 2008/2009. 342.



A group of Jewish refugee children recently smuggled out of France arrive by train in Lisbon in September 1941.

*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives, courtesy of Isaac (Ike) Bitton*

authorities were willing, “to look favorably upon the return of Israelites to their country of origin.” He had taken the “political and humanitarian stance” of “granting” them passports for Portugal. The consul in Paris stated that there were around one hundred Portuguese Jews seeking repatriation, while from Brussels the names of seven individuals had been communicated to Lisbon. Salazar authorized their travel to Portugal, but warned that the “high number of Jews indicated by the Paris Consul,” required an examination of whether those “Jewish families” had their “citizenship recognized in Portuguese documents,” so that the number would not be “so inflated” that it would lead one to “believe in abuse.”<sup>16</sup>

On 21 April and 26 May, 1943, the Portuguese government gave to the Germans two lists with 109 Jews, 99 in France and 10 in Belgium, sent by

16 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P., A.49, M.121-A; “A Questão, dos Judeus Levantinos Portugueses em França. Relatório do Cônsul Geral em Paris António Alves. Janeiro 1943.”

the consuls in Paris and Brussels. Upon transmission to Adolf Eichmann, the lists unleashed a controversy between the German Foreign Office and Portuguese officials over assets Jews were authorized to take to Portugal.<sup>17</sup> In the end, they were able to transfer capital to provide for their upkeep. In July 1943, the Portuguese ambassador in Vichy asked the Germans to authorize the departure of 57 Jewish Portuguese citizens. The consul in Marseilles sent a list of 38 persons with legal documentation, wishing to leave for Portugal.<sup>18</sup>

In early September 1943, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) office in Lisbon informed its central office in New York about the arrival in Portugal, on 2 September, of a first group of 40 Jews, who would be followed by 70 more.<sup>19</sup> These individuals, who were now living in *residence forcée* (fixed residence) in Curia, a spa north of Coimbra, had been permitted to bring their personal belongings. They left France with 15 British pounds in bank notes, and a check worth 20,000 francs, which no Portuguese bank would honor. The JDC determined that all of them had lived and worked in France for many years, and asked the Allies to facilitate their “entry into liberated French (Algiers) or Allied territories” until liberation and their return to France after the war ended.<sup>20</sup>

Jews with Portuguese passports residing in France thus ended up arriving in Portugal in three groups. After the first group of 40 persons, the second one, with 43 to 45 Jews, arrived on 16 October.<sup>21</sup> The third, with 52 to 54 individuals, arrived on 1 November, 1943; the sources differ on whether

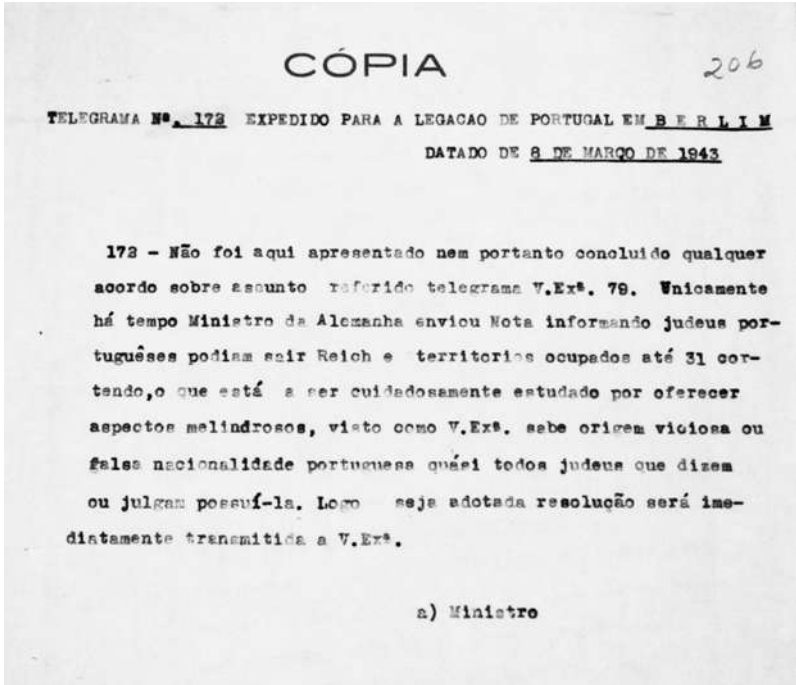
17 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P., A49 e 50, M40, Repartição dos Negócios Políticos, “Repatriação de judeus portugueses residentes no Reich e territórios ocupados, incluindo a França- 1943...”; collection of telegrams received and sent from and to the Portuguese legation in Berlin. Telegrams sent to the Portuguese legation in Berlin, 27 March, 1943 and 25 May, 1943, from Salazar to Tovar de Lemos.

18 M. Matos e Lemos. “Caeiro da Mata em Vichy.” 342–344.

19 “*Liste des juifs portugais actuellement à Curia.*” 40 persons, JDC Archives, Portugal, 897.

20 American Joint Distribution Committee, Lisbon, to JDC, New York, 21 Sept. 1943, JDC Archives, Portugal, 896.

21 Letter from Herbert Katzky to JDC, New York, 16 November 1943; “*Liste des ressortissants Portugais autorizes a franchir la frontiere franco-espagnole par Hendaye à destination du Portugal, autorisation collective,*” n.º 19372, *délivrée par l’Ambassade d’Allemagne en date du 14/10/43—52 individuals,*” JDC Archives, Portugal, 897.



Copy of a telegram from the Portuguese Foreign Ministry to the Portuguese Embassy in Berlin, 8 March, 1943, saying that the Foreign Ministry had not yet decided how to respond to the German repatriation ultimatum. The telegram explains that the embassy would be notified as soon as a decision was made and that the issue was sensitive because nearly all claims of Portuguese citizenship by Jews were suspicious or forgeries. *Portugal. AHDMNE Lisbon. 2.º P. A50, M40.*

the total is 135 or 139 Jews. Even so, the director of the “Police of Vigilance and Defense of the State” (*PVDE—Polícia de Vigilância e Defesa do Estado*) stated that it was necessary to conduct a thorough review of their identity, and proposed allowing entry into Portugal only to those who brought money and could, in fact, prove that they were Portuguese. This time, however, on 11 March, 1944, the Portuguese Foreign Ministry stated that when it was “impossible to immediately determine” who had Portuguese citizenship, their entry into Portugal should be authorized on the condition that they leave should it be proved that they were not in fact Portuguese. Finally, on 27 June, 1944, a last group of 47 Jews left France and arrived in Portu-



gal.<sup>22</sup> Initially housed in “fixed residence” in Curia, those considered Portuguese citizens could later freely stay wherever they wished in Portugal.<sup>23</sup>

### The Case of the Portuguese Jews in Greece

When the Axis occupied Greece in 1941, about 77,000 Jews were living in Greece, but their fate differed depending on whether their area of residence was occupied by Bulgarians, Italians or Germans. Because Athens was occupied by the Italians until September 1943, thousands of Jews fled from the German-occupied areas to the city, and the pre-war Jewish population of the city rose from 3,500 Jews to between 8,000 and 10,000.<sup>24</sup>

The largest Jewish community in Greece was in Salonika, where the Portuguese consulate was closed on the 15 December, 1942 by Germany.<sup>25</sup> Then, in February 1943, the Germans concentrated Salonika’s Jewish population into two ghettos. Between March and August of that year, between 43,850 and 48,533 Jews were deported to either Auschwitz-Birkenau or Treblinka, where most of them were killed upon arrival.<sup>26</sup>

On 27 March, 1943, Salazar was informed by Germany’s Lisbon legation that foreign Jews from neutral countries could leave Greece until 15 June. Soon after, Portugal’s Berlin minister wrote to Salazar saying that only six Jews there sought repatriation, but he required further instructions. This was because their Portuguese citizenship was in doubt, because the registration of four of them had been done in 1939 at Portugal’s consulate in Port Said in Egypt. The other two had done this at the consulate in Athens in 1933, possibly illegally.<sup>27</sup> In response, the Portuguese dictator

22 A. Milgram. *Portugal, Salazar e os Judeus*. 292.

23 Letters from American Joint Distribution Committee, Lisbon, nr. 445, 21 Sept. 1943, and nr. 593, 16 Nov. 1943, JDC Archives, New York/Jerusalem, Portugal.

24 [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/stories/historical\\_background/greece.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/stories/historical_background/greece.asp).

25 PRO London, HW 12–282. 111567, Portuguese Consulate, Salonika, to be closed by Germans 25 Dec. 1942 “Most secret telegram” from the Portuguese minister in Berlin to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lisbon, nr. 373, 26 Nov. 1942.

26 [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/learning\\_environments/salonika/salonika.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/learning_environments/salonika/salonika.asp).

27 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P., A49 e 50, M40, Repartição dos Negócios Políticos, «Repatriação de judeus portugueses residentes no Reich e territórios ocupados,

telegraphed instructions authorizing the repatriation of those six, if they met the “specified conditions.”<sup>28</sup>

Germany’s Lisbon legation later informed the Portuguese government that, “due to reasons of a police nature,” it became, “necessary to immediately deport all Jews in Italy and Greece”. As a precaution, i.e., in the event that some Jews were of Portuguese citizenship, the German government presented two solutions—their repatriation to Portugal, “or being placed in a concentration camp in Germany for the purposes of examining their documentation and the right of those involved to return to their countries.”<sup>29</sup> The Portuguese government communicated to its Berlin legation that it had replied positively to the repatriation option, but that, “due to the known doubts” concerning the “basis of the alleged citizenship of many Israelites,” had asked German authorities for the “Jewish documents to be examined.”<sup>30</sup>

In the meantime, after Italy’s surrender to the Western Allies, Germany occupied the previously Italian part of Greece on 8 September, 1943. Later, on 5 May, 1944, the German Foreign Ministry sent the Portuguese legation in Berlin a list with the names of 16 Jews in Athens, and then another with three names, asking if Portugal was willing to repatriate them.<sup>31</sup> On 9 May, the US embassy in Lisbon sent a memorandum to the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asking that, on “humanitarian grounds, all rights, privileges and immunities granted” to its citizens should be extended to Jews in Greece reclaiming Portuguese nationality.<sup>32</sup>

incluindo a França- 1943....» a collection of telegrams received and sent from and to the Portuguese legation in Berlin. Telegram received from the Portuguese legation in Berlin, 30 April, 1943.

- 28 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P. A49 e 50, M40, *Repartição dos Negócios Políticos*, telegrams sent to the Portuguese legation in Berlin, 6 April, 1943.
- 29 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P. A49 e 50, M40, *Repartição dos Negócios Políticos*, German legation in Lisbon, *Aide-mémoire*, Dec. 1943.
- 30 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P., A. 49, M.121-A; A Questão, “dos Judeus Levantinos Portugueses em França. Relatório do Cônsul Geral em Paris António Alves. Janeiro 1943.”
- 31 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P. A49 e 50, M40, *Repartição dos Negócios Políticos*, Telegrams sent from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lisbon, to the Portuguese Legation in Berlin, 1943.
- 32 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P. A50, M40, *Repartição dos Negócios Políticos*, telegram from Salazar to the Portuguese Legation in Berlin, 23 June, 1944.

According to Avraham Milgram, the US memorandum on Portuguese Jews living in the former Italian area of Greece who faced deportations changed the Portuguese attitude.<sup>33</sup> In fact, on 16 June, 1944, the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs urgently requested that its Berlin legation assist in the repatriation of Jews with Portuguese nationality from Greece.<sup>34</sup> Milgram writes that the 19 Jews from Greece never arrived in Portugal. In fact, after being deported from Greece along with hundreds of other Greek, Italian and Spanish Jews, on 2 April, 1944, they arrived in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Afterwards they were transferred from there to other destinations, and were finally liberated by the US troops.<sup>35</sup>

However, Nair Alexandra writes that 16 of these individuals, born in Greece and living in Athens, were sent by the Germans to Bergen-Belsen, and from there were directly repatriated to Portugal, in July 1944. This group, and three other Jews, crossed into Portugal on a collective passport.<sup>36</sup> On 11 July Portugal's Berlin legation informed Lisbon that 19 Jews would be sent to the French-Spanish border, in a train transporting British citizens, to be exchanged for German citizens in Lisbon.<sup>37</sup> Three days later, those 19 Jews left German camps, but Almeida Pile of the Portuguese Legation in Berlin told Lisbon that they had arrived in Vittel, France, too late to travel on the train with British citizens.<sup>38</sup> However, António Melo writes that when the repatriation order was received, they had already been deported to other camps, but they survived. On 4 March, 1945 they were in Bergen-Belsen, which had not yet been liberated. Later, the Portuguese consul in Antwerp informed Lisbon that the first five had arrived, and would be followed by the other 14.<sup>39</sup>

33 A. Milgram. *Portugal, Salazar e os Judeus*. 324–325.

34 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P, A50, M40, Telegram from Salazar to the Portuguese Legation in Berlin, 16 June, 1944.

35 A. Milgram. *Portugal, Salazar e os Judeus*. 325–326.

36 N. Alexandra. "Judeus ibéricos no Levante: Salónica." in E. Mucznik, ed. *Estrelas da Memória*. 225.

37 PRO London, HW 12–296: 132763, 20 June 1944; 133005, 27 June 1944; 133217, 2 July 1944; 133781 and 133785, 18 July, 1944.

38 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P. A50, M40, Repartição dos Negócios Políticos, telegrams sent from Berlin to Lisbon, 11, 14 and 29 July, 1944.

39 AHDMNE Lisbon, 2.º P. A50, M40, information from the *Swedish American Life*, 4/3/1945, and the cônsul Coelho de Sousa, Antwerp; A. Melo. "Os sobreviventes de Bergen-Belsen." in E. Mucznik, ed. *Estrelas da Memória*. 199.

Meanwhile, on 28 July the Portuguese Legation in Berlin sent Salazar another list of 13 Jews from Greece whose repatriation had also been requested the previous month.<sup>40</sup> This second group had been confused with the group of 19, but, in fact, with the exception of the Salmona family, listed in both groups, the other members of the first group had different names. The fate of this second group is unknown, but there is a handwritten note, probably from the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a letter from Tovar de Lemos in Berlin, urging Lisbon to do everything possible in order that those Jews could follow the same path as those of the first group.

### **Some Concluding Words**

It can be argued that Portugal demonstrated different attitudes towards Jews depending on whether they were considered of Portuguese descent or Portuguese citizens. Regarding the Jews in Holland who tried to claim their Portuguese descent, Lisbon did not recognize them as citizens and did nothing to save them. Regarding the so-called Levantine Jews with Portuguese documentation in France, Lisbon accepted the repatriation of the majority of them, especially in Paris where the consuls could confirm their citizenship after time-consuming negotiations, even though not all could prove they had correct papers.

However, regarding the Levantine Jews in Greece, Salazar was suspicious of his consuls in that country (Lencastre de Menezes, removed in 1938), and in Italy (Alfredo Casanova, in Rome, and Agenore Magno, in Milan). He accused them of having illegally granted Portuguese passports to Jews, and therefore only permitted the repatriation of a tiny group of 19 Jews. This happened thanks to pressure applied by the US Embassy and the Apostolic Nunciature, after it was certain that the Germans would lose the war. As always, the negotiations took a long time, and they had already been deported when the repatriation order finally arrived. They were saved by the Allies.

We may then ask if Portugal, as a neutral country, was a “bystander,” a “rescuer” or a “perpetrator” nation. I prefer to use the concept of “the

40 Their names were Sotir Canetti, Saltiel Salomão, Maria Saltiel Sarrano, Salomão Benrubi, Salomão Flora, Moisés e Lúcia Benveniste, as well as Elie, Lea, José and Flora Salmona.

grey zone,” as conceived by Primo Levi. As is well known, Levi used that concept to include the various attitudes regarding the Holocaust, which revealed a lack of empathy with human suffering in extreme situations, but which cannot be considered positions involving complicity with the crime, nor active resistance to it. Included in this grey zone, for example, were the neutral European countries, including Portugal. Clearly various “shades” of behavior were at the heart of Salazar’s regime itself.

If we consider the Portuguese in general, we see, with the exception of a few far-right intellectuals, military and police officials, a “black” complicity with the Third Reich, but general antisemitic attitude did not prevail. We also see a few who were in the “white zone” of resistance to the Nazi regime and who sought to help its victims. One of these was Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese consul in Bordeaux. He was responsible for saving most of the Jews who crossed the Portuguese border in June 1940. But he was punished for disobeying the Portuguese dictator, whose regime after the war would cynically state that Portugal had been a safe harbor for Jews fleeing Nazi persecution.

When analyzing Portugal’s economic, financial, commercial and political relationships with Nazi Germany, we can conclude that its actions fall mostly within the grey zone. Salazar and his government did little to save the lives of those persecuted, and no direct assistance was offered to the refugees, although he allowed aid organizations to operate in Portugal. Nor did he denounce the persecution and massacres carried out by the Nazis. The fact that most of those in power navigated in this grey zone made Portugal a transit country for some refugees, but even this number is lower than could have been expected, given the dangers the Jews faced. Regarding the matter of the “repatriation” of Jews of Portuguese descent in 1943 and 1944, Portugal fell very short of what it could have done, saving only a small number who could prove their citizenship. In light of the magnitude of the crimes perpetrated by German Nazis and by their accomplices, the Portuguese government’s position—during a war in which it remained neutral—fell tremendously short.

## Turkey's Stance toward Turkish Jews in Occupied France and the German Ultimatum on their Repatriation in WWII

Turkey's stance in the face of anti-Jewish German policies and implementations during WWII has not been examined as critically and rigorously as required until recently.<sup>1</sup> Existing restrictions on viewing the Turkish documents from the war years, particularly those collected in the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Archives, could be considered the main reason for this lack of thorough analysis. On the other hand, in popular literature, in the media and in two documentary films,<sup>2</sup> both made after 2000, we commonly observe an overly protective and humanistic depiction of Turkey vis-à-vis the Jews persecuted during the war. Accordingly, the notion that Turkey saved numerous, mostly Turkish, Jews during the Second World War became broadly accepted as an indisputable historical fact and took its part as such in the collective memories of even the Jewish world. However, close examination of Turkish documents from the time shows that this discourse is misleading and does not match the realities of the period.

- 1 Corry Gutstadt is the pioneering historian who first examined the related Turkish policies critically. Her book, *Die Türkei, die Juden und der Holocaust*. Berlin: Assoziation A, 2008, brought decisive progress in the understanding of the Turkish government stance during the war years. The other academic book on the subject is by the writer of this article. İ. İzzet Bahar. *Turkey and the Rescue of European Jews*. New York: Routledge, 2015. On the specific topic of this article, see also Bahar, "What happened to Turkish Jews in France during WWII." (in Turkish) *Toplumsal Tarih*. May 2015. 42–48.
- 2 The first one of these films, *Desperate Hours*, was produced in 2001 and the second, *The Turkish Passport*, made its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in spring 2011. With colorful cinematography, these films give the message that during WWII, Turkish diplomats put their careers and lives at risk in order to save Jewish people, even those who were not of Turkish origin.

An instructive approach for gaining an understanding of the nature of Turkish policies is to see whether Turkey protected its own Jewish subjects living in German-controlled Europe. In this study, we focus specifically on the Jews of Turkish origin living in France in the years of German occupation and the Turkish government policy regarding them. At the time, France had by far the highest number of Turkish Jews in Europe. Moreover, due to the closure of the Turkish Embassy in Belgium after the German occupation, the Turkish Jews in Belgium were under the jurisdiction of the Embassy in Vichy France.<sup>3</sup> But, most importantly, thanks to the now-available documents—correspondence of the Turkish diplomatic delegations in France between each other and with Ankara—<sup>4</sup> we have a critical mass, which enables a clearer assessment of the Turkish policies of the time. In fact, the analysis of the situation in France gives us an exact picture of whether the Turkish government was earnestly determined to protect or save her Jewish nationals trapped in Germany and in German-invaded territories or whether it would leave them to their own fate.

### **Turkish Jewish Citizens in Occupied France**

When Germany defeated France and entered Paris in June 1940, there were more than 13,000 Turkish Jews living in France. These were Jews of Turkish origin who did not have French citizenship. A report written by the Turkish foreign minister, Numan Menemencioglu, to the Prime Minister provides important information on the composition of those Turkish Jews: “The number of our subjects of Jewish race residing in occupied France is

- 3 According to Guttstadt, more than 90 percent of Jews of Turkish origin living in German-controlled West Europe actually lived in France and Belgium. Guttstadt, *Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 159–273.
- 4 There are mainly two sources of documents of Turkish origin. The first is the Stanford Shaw Collection (SSC) in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which contains about 400 copies of original correspondences that were submitted by Shaw to the Museum in 1995. These documents were given to him by the Turkish Foreign Ministry as a special gesture to provide him with material for his research. The second source is a two-volume book containing 399 documents published in 2010 by Bilal Şimşir, a veteran Turkish diplomat.

about 3,500 of regular status and 10,000 of irregular status.”<sup>5</sup> What was meant by the regular and irregular status could be traced back to the Turkish Citizenship Law of May 1928. According to the tenth article of this law, “if the government desires, she may deprive citizenship of Turks residing abroad, who fail to register at the Turkish consulates for a period exceeding five years.” In the Turkish diplomatic correspondence of the time, those Jewish nationals who failed to renew their registration were designated as irregular citizens. Here it may be noted that, as the term “irregular citizens” indicates, they were still Turkish citizens in a legal sense until they were deprived of their citizenship. Moreover, as the expression “if the government desires” implies, the law did not have an imperative, absolutely obligatory implication. It was up to the government to take action: they could choose to deprive such individuals of their citizenship or not.

### **Were Irregular Turkish Citizens Protected?**

What we see from a vast number of documents is that the Turkish government, and thus its diplomats in France, chose to implement this law in its most negative way. They declined to take the Turkish Jews who were designated as irregular citizens under governmental protection starting from the first days of the German occupation. A vast number of documents attest to this implementation. Here we present two of them:

The first is a French document, which shows that the Turkish general consulate in Paris declined to offer protection to 29 Turkish Jewish detainees at the concentration camp “Compiègne” because they were irregular citizens.<sup>6</sup> The date of this document, 24 March, 1942, deserves special attention. This date was just three days before the deportation of the first convoy from France to Auschwitz. A separate document lists the names of these 29 Turkish Jews.<sup>7</sup> A search in the Holocaust database shows that at

5 Communication written by the Turkish Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu to the prime minister, 21 October, 1942. TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, hereafter BCA, Ankara, no.: 030.10.232.564.20.

6 SSC, Folder 2.

7 SSC, Folder 2.



Les 29 personnes de religion israélite, natives de Turquie, dont les noms figurent sur la liste annexée, dressée par les Autorités du Camp de Compiègne, n'ayant pas rempli les conditions requises par les lois turques, le Consulat Général de Turquie à Paris ne peut les considérer comme citoyens turcs en règle et ne peut leur délivrer ni passeport ni autre document.

Paris, le 24 Mars 1942.

Communication sent by the Turkish Consulate General in Paris evidencing the refusal to protect Turkish Jewish internees in the Compiègne camp on the grounds that they were not considered to be regular citizens.

*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1995.A.1202 (Stanford J. Shaw Collection), Folder 2*

least 24 of them were deported with this first convoy of 27 March, and that they all died within a few months of their arrival in Auschwitz.<sup>8</sup>

The second example concerns the fate of two brothers. In this document, the Turkish ambassador, Behiç Erkin, reports that the elder of two brothers, Aleksandr Bali, 22 years old and interned at Drancy, was not registered at the consulate as a regular citizen, and therefore nothing could be done for him; the younger was to be sent to Turkey to do his military service.<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, another document, a letter sent by the boys' uncle Aleksandr, reveals that Aleksandr's father was a veteran who had fought in the Ottoman army in WWI and afterwards during the Turkish War of Independence as first sergeant.<sup>10</sup> Bali was deported to Auschwitz and died there.

8 *The Central Data base of Shoah Victims' Names*. Yad Vashem. <http://db.yadvashem.org/names/search.html?language=en> (accessed June 2015).

9 Letter from Ambassador Erkin to the mother of Bali brothers, Istrula Bali Lago, 6 Jan. 1943. SSC, Folder 1, Bali File.

10 Letter written by Victor Benadava to the Turkish Embassy at Vichy, 25 Jan. 1943. SSC, Folder 1, Bali File.

These cases are just two examples among many others presented in detail in our recent work.<sup>11</sup> The bottom line is that a large majority of Turkish Jews residing in France were designated by the Turkish government as irregular citizens and therefore did not receive protection from the diplomatic delegation in France because of the five-year rule, which was deliberately implemented in the most harmful way. Notably, a report written in 1988 by the Turkish ambassador in France, İlder Türkmen, corroborated the exclusion of irregulars from diplomatic protection: “The study of dossiers in diplomatic delegations in France have not been able to confirm protection after 1939 for Jewish Turks whose citizenship status was not regular and who had not maintained contact with the consulates.”<sup>12</sup>

### **Regular Turkish Citizens and the German Ultimatum**

Our focus now shifts to the regular citizens. The first deportation from France was in March 1942 but deportations then took place on a regular basis as of early June 1942.<sup>13</sup> In the beginning, it was psychologically easier for the French authorities to start the deportations with non-French Jews. Due to the tolerant and cosmopolitan policies of the Third Republic, France had been a refuge for a vast number of refugees, mostly Jewish, from the Eastern world. As the results of the German-decreed census of 1940 showed, about half of the approximately 330,000 Jews in France were foreign-born.<sup>14</sup> Germans had no problem with deporting the majority of these non-French Jews, who were known as “stateless Jews.” These people were refugees from Germany, and countries like Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Lithuania, who had lost their legal status after their countries became part of the Nazi Empire. However, Germans did not have such a

11 İ. İzzet Bahar. *Turkey and the Rescue of European Jews*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

12 Stanford Shaw. *Turkey and the Holocaust*. New York: New York University Press, 1993. 334–335.

13 Between March 1942 and liberation of France in summer of 1944, about 76,000 Jews were deported to death camps in Poland. Only about 3,500 of them survived.

14 Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France and the Jews*. New York: Basic Books, 1981. xiv.

free hand in deporting the second group, “foreign Jews,” that is, Jewish citizens of their allies and of neutral countries. International laws, critical relationships with these countries and the risk of retaliation prevented Germans from treating these Jews in the same arbitrary manner that they treated other, non—French Jews. For Germans, the inclusion of foreign Jews in the deportation convoys necessitated a kind of agreement or at least the tacit approval of these countries.

An internal communication from the German Foreign Office dated 19 September, 1942 shows how Germans planned to handle this issue with Turkey, together with Hungary and Italy. The communication suggested notifying Turkey to remove Jews of Turkish nationality from France before January 1943, and to let Turkey know that those who remained would face the same treatment as other Jews, i.e., deportation.<sup>15</sup> It appears that this recommendation received approval from German authorities, and in the second week of October, the German Embassy in Ankara gave an ultimatum with these terms to the Turkish government. With the Italians’ explicit rejection and Turkey’s non-answer, the deadline was postponed to the end of March. This was in fact the same deadline given to other neutral countries, including Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark and Finland.<sup>16</sup>

### **Turkish Stance against the Ultimatum**

An event at the end of January 1943, the forced evacuation of the old port region of Marseilles by the Germans, gives us a hint about the intention of Turkey vis-à-vis the German ultimatum. Turkey’s attitude is described in Ambassador Erkin’s memoir: “I had informed Ankara about our subjects, the majority of whom were Jewish and who had lost their homes during the evacuation of the old port of Marseilles. In answer, they told me, ‘not to send Jews [to Turkey] by train convoys.’ I informed them that I interpreted this instruction not only as an answer to my cable but as a definite order.”<sup>17</sup>

15 Christopher Browning. *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office*. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1978. 106.

16 Browning. *The Final Solution*. 155.

17 Behiç Erkin. *Hâtırat [Memoir] 1876–1958*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2010. 567.

The information that Ambassador Erkin gave in his memoir is quite meaningful because, according to a communication by Turkey's general consulate in Paris, travelling to Turkey in convoys was actually a German requirement.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, as another document reflects, because transit visas from the countries that would be crossed were difficult to obtain, travelling in organized groups was the most feasible way for Jewish citizens who wished to return to Turkey.<sup>19</sup>

Around March 1943, the Turkish government took a drastic decision that clearly shows its position in response to the ultimatum. Ankara abolished the power of the consulates to process and finalize visa applications made by Turkish Jewish citizens. According to the new procedure, every single visa or passport renewal application was to be dispatched to Ankara for investigation and approval. A communication of January 1944 sent from the Paris general consulate acknowledges this new implementation and shows how the process of forwarding the applications to Ankara created a deadlock and practically blocked the return of Jewish citizens to Turkey:

“For one year now, there have been continuous requests by the German authorities to neutral countries including Turkey to recall their Jews from occupied France. When we communicated this to our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we were instructed that “The influx of Jews as masses to the country was not desirable, and visas should not be issued before asking the approval of Ankara.” Because of this instruction, while the Jews of all other neutral countries and of Germany's allies have left France, our citizens could not be sent to Turkey.”<sup>20</sup>

A letter sent by the Turkish vice consul in Grenoble to Bohor Haim is an instructive example that illustrates how the visa or passport renewal applications of many regular Turkish Jewish citizens for returning to Turkey were declined because of the instructions (or the lack of action) from Ankara: “Since we have not received an order from the relevant authority [in Ankara] for permission for you to enter the country [Turkey], there is

18 From the consulate general in Paris to the embassy at Vichy, 16 Oct. 1942. SSC, Folder 2.

19 From the consulate general in Marseilles to the embassy at Vichy, 30 Dec. 1942. Bilal Şimşir. *Türk Yahudiler*. Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2011. 225.

20 From the Consulate-General in Paris to the Consulate-General in Marseilles, 20 Jan. 1944. SSC, Folder 2.

no possibility for renewal of your passport.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, a communication from late November 1943 shows that none of the applications regarding visa or passport applications sent to Ankara were processed in the nine months following Ankara’s instruction.<sup>22</sup>

The Turkish policy was contrary to the German ultimatum. Throughout 1943, the deadline given to the Turkish government had been postponed several times, each time with increased annoyance. A report sent from France to the headquarters in Germany contained complaints and accusations that the Turks were doing nothing but buying time.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the treatment of Turkish Jews by the German authorities became increasingly harsh, similar to their treatment of other Jews. A communication written by the consulate in Paris in July 1943 describes this change in the German attitude:

“Starting in August 1941, within the scope of operations to arrest and intern Jews, the Jewish Turkish citizens, who have been collectively arrested and sent to various camps, like the citizens of the other neutral countries, were released from the camps in the spring of 1942. After that, our fellow citizens who were arrested by mistake or for petty reasons continued to be released upon the application of our Consulate to the French and German authorities. However, in the last few months, the German authorities have begun to inform us that Turkish Jews could be released only under the condition that they return to Turkey.”<sup>24</sup>

Of course, it goes without saying that each extra day spent in the camp meant an increased risk of being deported. The situation even became more treacherous after Germany took direct control of the Drancy internment camp in July 1943 and Alois Brunner was appointed camp commander; Brunner was notorious as Eichmann’s second-in-command and was chief

21 From the vice consul in Grenoble Necdet Kent to Bohor Haim, 8 Oct. 1943. SSC, Folder 1.

22 From the Consulate-General in Paris to the Embassy at Vichy, 22 Nov. 1943. Şimşir. *Türk Yahudiler II*. 496.

23 Cemil Koçak. “The Fate of Turkish Jews Living in German Occupied Territories during WWII—From Ahmad Mahrad’s Research,” (Turkish) *Tarih ve Toplum*, No. 108, December 1992. 25–26.

24 From the consulate general in Paris to the embassy in Berlin, 23 July 1943. Şimşir. *Türk Yahudiler*. 287.

coordinator of the deportations of 43,000 Jews from Vienna and 46,000 from Salonika.

### **Lift of the Turkish Ban for the Return of Regular Citizens to Country**

After several postponements, the deadline for the removal of Turkish Jews was discussed once more in November 1943 in Berlin upon the insistence of the German government. Turkish diplomats finally agreed to deliver the list of Jewish Turkish citizens and to withdraw them in convoys by January 31, 1944.<sup>25</sup> The German ambassador in Ankara, von Papen, warned that this postponement would be the final one. On 27 December Ankara informed her diplomatic delegation in France that the ban on the issuance of visa to regular Turkish Jewish citizens for their return to Turkey had been lifted.<sup>26</sup> However, a group of regular citizens who appeared to be under investigation by the Ministry of Internal Affairs remained exempt from this decision<sup>27</sup> and, as the documents reflect, the intention of the government was to limit those who would return to a small number.<sup>28</sup> Of course, the irregular Turkish citizens and their children were not part of this new implementation.<sup>29</sup> Finally, about one year after the German ultimatum, on 9 February, the first train convoy left France for Turkey via Germany. Until 23 May, in seven additional convoys, a total of 414 Turkish Jews were transported to Turkey.<sup>30</sup> When the last train left for Turkey, it was just two weeks before the invasion of Normandy and three months before the liberation of Paris.

25 Koçak. *The Fate*. 26. Also, from the German embassy in Paris to the Turkish consulate general in Paris, 11 May 1944. Şimşir. *Türk Yahudiler*. 396.

26 From the embassy in Vichy to the consulate general in Paris, 27 Dec. 1943. Şimşir. *Türk Yahudiler*. 347.










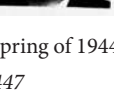
27 "The Report of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Turkish Citizen Jews in German Occupied Countries," Ankara, 16 Dec. 1943. Şimşir. *Türk Yahudiler II*. 499.

28 From the consulate general in Paris to the consulate general in Marseilles, 26 January 1944. SCC, Folder 2.

29 From the Embassy in Vichy to the consulate general in Paris, 3 Feb. 1944. SSC, Folder 2.

30 From the consulate general in Paris to the embassy in Vichy, 30 May, 1944, SSC, Folder 2. Documents show that there were two more train convoys, one in autumn 1941 and another in early 1942. With these convoys, the number of Turkish Jews returned to Turkey totaled 572.

CONSULAT GÉNÉRAL DE TURQUIE  
PARIS

Passport n° et date	Nom et Prénoms	Date et lieu de naissance	Photo
H2 26-1-44 F	Salomon	Izmir 1876	
" " F	Reşel	Izmir 1926	
H4 26-1-44 A	David	Istanbul 1899	
" " A	Zunbal	Istanbul 1897	
" " A	Eliya	Istanbul 1908	
" " A	Henri	Engelen 1908	
" " A	Gi Gabziyel	Engelen 1904	
H3 26-1-44 F	Ana	Izmir 1922	
H8 27-1-44 F	Yako	Izmir 1909	
f 15-1-44 G	Rafael	Istanbul 1902	

Collective visa for Turkish Jews repatriated to Turkey from France in the spring of 1944.  
Political Archive of the German Foreign Office (PAAA), Berlin, Folder R 99447

## Conclusion

The examination of Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents reveals that during WW II, the Turkish government did not have any intention or make any attempts to protect the Jews of Turkish origin living in German-occupied Western Europe. The majority of those Turkish subjects were considered irregular citizens using a negative interpretation of the Citizenship Law of 1928 and were completely deprived of any kind of diplomatic protection. In relation to the rest of the Turkish Jews of regular status, the government did not want their return and blocked their travel to Turkey by suspending the process of visa and passport applications during the most critical year (1943). The reports on the inhuman and cruel conditions of deportations in the train convoys headed to Poland sent to the Ministry in three communications—two from Ambassador Erkin on 17 August and 2 September, 1942,<sup>31</sup> and one from the Marseilles general consul, Bedii Arbel, on 19 September, 1942<sup>32</sup>—suggest that Ankara was aware of the lethal conditions of the ongoing deportations to Eastern Europe.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it would be plausible to assume that, as of the last months of 1942, the government in Ankara was aware of the possible consequence of its decisions. Still no action was taken until the final days of 1943, when, under the repeated pressure of the Germans, the ban on the return of Turkish Jews was finally lifted and 414 citizens of regular status had the opportunity to travel to Turkey in organized train convoys.

- 31 From the embassy in Vichy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 July, 1942. Şimşir. *Türk Yahudiler II*. 477, and 479. In his second communication, the ambassador describes how three people were found dead when the door of a train car travelling from Vichy to the North opened while in motion. In the same communication, there is also a description of a mother who suffocated her seven-month-old baby in her breast instead of giving it to the French police who came to deport her.
- 32 From the consulate general in Marseilles to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19 September, 1942. Şimşir. *Türk Yahudiler II*. 481.
- 33 These documents from early autumn 1942 show that, like the French, the Turkish delegation in France did not know that the final destination of trains was the death camps in Poland. Nevertheless, like the rest of the world, Turkey also became aware about the wide-spread German atrocities aiming at the systematic extermination of European Jewry upon the mutual declaration of eleven Allied governments and Free France on 17 December, 1942.





Bernd Rother

## Spain and the German Repatriation Ultimatum 1943/44<sup>1</sup>

### How Many Spanish Jews Were Affected?

In 1941–1942, some 3,500 Jews of Spanish nationality lived in Nazi-occupied Europe, the majority in France (2,500) and Greece (about 670).<sup>2</sup> Most had received Spanish citizenship in the wake of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, which also brought an end to the so-called Capitulation Treaties with European states.<sup>3</sup> Among other more important issues, these treaties established the legal status of so-called protected citizens—people who lived permanently in the Ottoman Empire, but who fell not under Ottoman jurisdiction, but rather under that of their protecting state’s consular jurisdiction. In the Spanish case, nearly all such “protected” citizens were Sephardic Jews who, in the late 19th and early 20th century, had chosen their protector because of cultural ties that still linked them to “Sepharad.” After World War I, the newly created nation states gave their protected citizens a choice to become regular Turks, Egyptians, Frenchmen, Spaniards, etc. In 1924, the Spanish government offered its protected residents the chance to apply for Spanish citizenship within six years. However, contrary to widespread and persistent rumors and misinformation, this offer did not include all Jews of Sephardic origin. In Salonika, for example, not all the

1 This article is based on my research published primarily in *Spanien und der Holocaust*. Tübingen: 2001. The Spanish translation is *Franco y el Holocausto*. Madrid: 2005. Detailed archival references can be found in these publications. Central to the subject are the *Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores Exteriores* (AMAE Alcalá de Henares), R/1716 1–6; and the *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes* (PA AA), Berlin, R 99444. See also H. Avni. *Spain, the Jews, and Franco*. Philadelphia: 1982.

2 Particularly for France, estimates of the number of its Spanish Jews differ greatly. In 1942, the Spanish consulate in Paris declared that it had 2,000 Jews registered in the occupied zone of France. My estimate for Vichy France is 500 Jews.

3 In this context, capitulation does not mean surrender, but instead chapter.

70,000 Sephardic Jews living there could then ask for full-fledged citizenship, but, rather, only 2,000 protected Jews of Spanish descent. Precisely how many of those were entitled to eventually receive Spanish documents is difficult to know for certain, but it is estimated that the number was less than 10,000. Additionally, during the 1920s and 1930s, many of these Jews migrated to Western Europe for economic reasons, a circumstance that explains the relatively high number of Spanish Jews in France.

### **The German Ultimatum and Madrid's Reaction**

On 26 January, 1943, Spain received Nazi Germany's ultimatum demanding that Spain (and other European neutrals) repatriate those Spanish Jews living in Nazi-occupied Europe. Otherwise, they would be deported to the East.<sup>4</sup> At the time, Madrid possessed information that the German government had already ordered the murder of thousands of Jews and would continue to do so. By summer 1943, the Spanish government's knowledge became ever more extensive. Spanish diplomats stationed in Berlin now understood that for Jews, deportation meant certain death. They reported this to their superiors in Madrid, and even discussed this with their German counterparts. However, many details remained unclear, as did the Shoah's magnitude. Nonetheless, we can conclude that the Spanish government understood that its reaction to the German ultimatum was, for the Jews concerned, a matter of life or death.

### **What Did Madrid Do?**

On 23 February, a month after receiving the ultimatum, Spain asked the German government whether it would allow its Jews to re-emigrate to the countries where they had lived before moving to Central Europe, which meant going back to Turkey, Greece or the Balkans. If this was not possible, the Spanish government would leave its Jews to their fate. On 27 February, the German Foreign Office rejected the Spanish proposal. It now seemed clear that Spain had declared its disinterest in the fate of its Jews.

4 It should be noted that repatriation is not quite the appropriate term here, as these Jews had never lived in Spain.

Considering the antijudaic components of Franco's "national Catholicism," this is hardly surprising. Yet two weeks later, on 15 March, the situation fundamentally changed. Franco's government informed the German embassy in Madrid that it was now ready to accept a limited number of Spanish Jews—no more than 100 individuals—for whom, allegedly, prominent Spaniards had intervened. In reality, it was not appeals by influential citizens that now made Spain willing to accept at least some of its Jewish citizens. In fact, the decision was made by Franco personally. But he put in place an important caveat; his ministers were ordered to obtain guarantees that the Jews would leave Spain soon after entering the country. Spain, however, did not tell the Germans that it intended to force the Spanish Jews—full-fledged citizens after all—to leave the country immediately after their repatriation. Nonetheless, by doing this, it enabled the rescue of a small group of Jews from certain death.

Why did Madrid change its mind? Fear of negative reactions in the United States and Great Britain was a factor, particularly from 1943 on, when Allied forces slowly gained the military initiative in Europe. Another important argument was Spain's conception of national sovereignty, which included "the obligation of protection we have with regard to those who are Spanish citizens," as Foreign Minister Jordana expressed it, even if they were Jews. The same argument had already been used against German attempts to aryanize the property of Spanish Jews.<sup>5</sup>

### **Practical Implementation**

The Spanish government felt responsible only for granting entry permits. Organizing the time in Spain for the repatriated Jews' stay was given to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (hereafter, JDC). The JDC was made responsible for obtaining entry visas for third countries because Spain, as already noted, did not allow the repatriated Jews to stay in the country. But, before the first Jews could benefit from the new situation, they had to demonstrate to the Spanish, not German, authorities that they were Spanish citizens. Spain's position regarding Jews claiming Spanish citizenship was clear; they would only be recognized if they fulfilled

5 AMAE Alcalá de Henares, R 1372/2: letter from the foreign minister Jordana to the minister of the interior Blas Pérez González, Madrid, 23 March, 1943.

all requirements stipulated in the 1924 decree, and possessed the requisite documents. Only Jews who received citizenship before 31 December, 1930, and who were registered as citizens with the competent Spanish consulate, were now recognized as Spaniards. Spouses and children also had to be registered; if not, they would not be entitled to repatriation.<sup>6</sup> Some Sephardic Jews had received citizenship based on the 1924 decree, but were not properly registered with the consulate. In other cases, applications for citizenship after 1924 had been rejected, but the applicants continued to receive personal Spanish documents from their consulate, and they, therefore, believed they were genuinely Spaniards. Nonetheless, Spanish authorities rigorously denied entry to anyone who was unable to present each and every required document.

In fact, Nazi Germany would have allowed—as demonstrated by the documentation—the emigration of all Jews holding Spanish papers, regardless of whether they fulfilled the obligations of the 1924 Spanish decree. In June 1943, Germany's Foreign Ministry even turned down a proposal from the Gestapo in Paris demanding Spain inform Germany about the issuance date of the Spanish Jews' passports. Eberhard von Thadden, the German diplomat in Berlin who handled Jewish affairs in Germany's Foreign Ministry, suspected that many of the passports had only recently been issued. As is well known, von Thadden was a hardline Nazi ideologue. He wrote that the basic German position was to release all Jews who held foreign personal documents when the repatriation ultimatum was issued. Spain, Thadden continued, could not be treated differently from the other neutral countries.<sup>7</sup> Spain was unaware of this stance, yet did not even test the limits of Germany's willingness to release Spanish Jews. This substantially reduced the number of candidates eligible for repatriation.

In fact, Germany prolonged the ultimatum's deadline several times, but eventually set it at 26 August, 1943. Yet, Berlin's fear of negative reactions to deportation led the Foreign Ministry to issue a confidential note

6 Archivo General de la Administración, Alcalá de Henares, AAEE, 11329: Apunte sobre Situación Jurídica Sefarditas y Normas Seguidas por Consulado General Paris: supplement to a letter from the Spanish consulate general in Paris to the Spanish embassy in Vichy, 22 April, 1943.

7 PAAA Berlin, R 99444: German embassy, Paris. Rudolf Schleier's letter to the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin, 18 June, 1943, and von Thadden's response, 19 June, 1943.

to the commander of the security police and the SD, saying that, even after this date, they should wait before beginning the deportations of Spanish (or other foreign) Jews. Only in late July-early August did Madrid begin to implement in practice what it had promised in March: repatriation of its Jews. However, it is unclear why Franco's government hesitated for so long.

Problems with implementation continued. The JDC promise to provide the repatriated Spanish Jews with visas for a third country was based on the organization's being able to acquire these. However, for a non-governmental organization to obtain such visas was very difficult. Yet the Spanish government insisted that this was the exclusive responsibility of the relief organizations. If they proved unable to get visas for those who already had entered Spain, Madrid would immediately halt the entry of any more Jews. An official in the Spanish Foreign Ministry, Germán Baraibar, worked on this task, and was ordered to create a card-index to record the entry and departure of repatriated Spanish Jews. The conflict between the foreign Ministry and the JDC came to a head when, on 7 August, the foreign minister Jordana ordered a halt to the repatriations, which had only just begun, until the JDC could provide a satisfactory solution. Another problem was that Spain did not want groups of more than 25 people repatriated, while the Germans requested that groups of 150 be formed in order to accelerate the repatriations. Despite all these problems, by the beginning of July, 112 Spanish Jews managed individually to escape from France to Spain—whether legally or illegally is unclear. Group repatriation did not begin before August. From occupied France, 79 Spanish Jews reached the border town Irún on 11 August, with six others following some days later. However, 120 Spanish Jews were not recognized as citizens and therefore not repatriated.

After France, the second largest population of Spanish Jews lived in Greece. They were concentrated in Salonika, where, in 1940, some 50,000 Sephardic Jews resided, among them 511 Jews who possessed Spanish citizenship. After the German occupation of April 1941, these Jews were exempted from ghettoization. Their repatriation to Spain in the wake of the ultimatum was delayed because of the Spanish hesitations described above. However, German authorities were not prepared to wait any longer, and, on 2 August, 367 Spanish Jews were deported from Salonika. The others managed to either hide or flee. Because Germany's Foreign Ministry feared another change of heart by the Spanish government (as had happened in

March), this transport went not to Auschwitz, where the other Salonikan Jews were deported between March and May 1943, but to Bergen-Belsen, the concentration and transit camp in northwest Germany.

In the following weeks, practices regarding Jews began changing in Madrid. Although, by the end of 1943, the JDC had not yet succeeded in arranging the departure of the Spanish Jews who had been repatriated from France in August of that year, the Spanish government tacitly lifted its ban, issued in mid-August, on further Jewish entry. On 15 October, 50 Spanish Jews were repatriated from Vichy France via Perpignan. Two more groups arrived that month, though we do not know from where in France they came. The first group of 39 Spanish Jews entered Spain through Irún, also on 5 October. On 20 October, 33 more Sephardim with Spanish nationality followed. The first wave of repatriations from France was now concluded. At least 319 Jews from both parts of France had been saved.

In October, following the expiration of the ultimatum, German authorities began arresting the remaining Spanish Jews in France, which they had previously announced would happen. According to an anonymous source, the number of Spanish Jews remaining in France was 300. By early December, about 50 Jews were arrested; Madrid protested this action, but in most cases failed to free the Jews. The Germans continued to insist that the ultimatum had expired, and that Spain had understood what the consequences would be. Yet some concessions were obtained, and Berlin promised to check if the remaining Spanish Jews could also be repatriated. However, von Thadden wrote to his colleague Adolf Eichmann that, “Insofar [as] the transfer of the Spanish Jews from France to the Eastern Territories already has been realized, their release would not be possible before the end of the war.”<sup>8</sup>

And in mid-January 1944, the German promise was kept. Germany’s embassy in Paris informed Spain’s general consulate that the commander of the security police and the SD had agreed to give Spanish Jews living in Southern France a last chance to leave the country—and those interned at the Drancy transit camp near Paris would be freed. Soon afterwards, Germany also allowed the departure of the remaining Spanish Jews from throughout France, and from Germany, by 15 February. This decision came too late for the Spanish Sephardim in northern France, as their deporta-

8 PAAA Berlin, R 99444: Foreign Ministry in Berlin. Letter from von Thadden to Reichssicherheitshauptamt, Eichmann, 22 Dec. 1943.

tion was near. However, we do not know exactly how many Spanish Jews were able to take advantage of this new opportunity. In August, 117 Spanish Jews, called the “second group,” were repatriated through Perpignan. However, we do not know about the entry to Spain of a first group. Perhaps those in the “first group” were the 69 Spanish Jews whose repatriation was authorized by German authorities on 15 July of that year. Unfortunately, we have no more information about their fate, and have no confirmation that they were repatriated.

With the *de facto* repeal of the entry ban for Spanish Jews, those Jews from Salonika who were interned in Bergen-Belsen could feel some renewed hope. By mid-December 1943, more than four months after their arrest, Spain prepared for their arrival. One measure of preparation was a request from the Foreign Ministry to Spain’s central police authority, the General Direction for Security, stating that the repatriated Jews being shipped from Malaga to North Africa (because they were forbidden to remain in Spain) were to be told by the police before their departure that their behavior abroad would determine if Spain would continue repatriating more interned Sephardim. They were to be informed that any criticism of the Spanish government would automatically lead to a halt in Spain’s negotiations with Germany regarding future repatriations. Thus, Spain exploited the plight of the Jews, seeking to use them as propaganda tools.

Additionally, Spain was now ready to accept the Spanish Sephardim from Salonika (still in Bergen-Belsen at the time), because the Allies had promised to establish a refugee camp in North Africa—in fact the only practical result of the Allies’ Bermuda Conference of April 1943. But it was not until early February 1944 that the Spanish Jews in Bergen-Belsen reached Spain. Upon reaching the border they were overwhelmed by the warm food and medical care they received from Spanish relief organizations and the JDC. However, it was not long before they were bitterly disappointed when told that they could not remain in Spain.

At this time, early 1944, some 200 Spanish Jews were still living in Athens. Most had fled from Salonika, with Italian help during summer 1943. Their repatriation was also delayed by Spain, and, by March 1944, no Spanish Jews had left Athens. On 25 March the Jews still in Athens were arrested, among them 155 Spanish Jews—the others managed to either flee or hide. On 2 April, the 155 arrested Jews were sent to Bergen-Belsen. Three died while at the camp, as conditions there had drastically worsened since 1943, although two Spanish Jews from Salonika had also perished in the camp



then. Even by the end of the war, the Spanish Jews from Athens had failed to reach Spain; all were liberated by American troops near Magdeburg in April 1945. But, due to the inhuman treatment meted out by their German guards, several of these Spanish Jews were in such poor health that they died just days after their liberation.

Many of the liberated Spanish Jews tried to return to Greece via Belgium and France, which most succeeded in doing. But when, in Brussels in May 1945, some of the liberated Spanish Jews asked Spain's general consulate for help to travel to Spain and settle there, Madrid answered that the Jews should receive as much help as possible, but under no circumstances were they to be allowed to enter Spain.

What, then, was the fate of the Sephardim whom Spain had admitted? The construction of the refugee camp promised at the Bermuda Conference took until spring 1944. For this reason, it was not until May and June that nearly all the Spanish Jews from Salonika, who had come to Spain in February 1944 via Bergen-Belsen, left the country. Then, from the Fedala camp near Casablanca, they travelled to Algiers, Italy, Libya, and Egypt, and from there to Palestine. Ultimately, most returned to Greece from Palestine, where a smaller part of the group remained.

It is more difficult to reconstruct the fate of those Spanish Jews who were repatriated from France. From the first group of 73 from the Paris region who had entered Spain in August 1943, 37 left Spain on 22 December, travelling by ship from Malaga to French North Africa, where all traces of them were lost. Of the remaining 36, 15 refused to leave the country because of illness; eight waited for embarkation a few days later and the rest could not be found by the Spanish police. On 24 January, 1944, 50 more Spanish Jews left Cadiz on board the Portuguese steamer, "Nyassa," headed for Palestine. It is unclear, however, if these Jews had been repatriated or had lived in Spain for a long time. This is all we know about the final destination of the repatriated Spanish Jews. Finally, it seems that the other Jews who had come from France returned to the now liberated country after a relatively short stay in Spain.

## Conclusion

At least 801 Spanish Jews, and probably another 69, were repatriated to Spain from France and Greece. Of these, 155 were interned in Bergen-Belsen, where they were spared from deportation until the war ended. But Spain could have saved more Jews. The reasons for not doing more for persecuted Jews was neither the economic crisis after the Civil War nor German obstruction. Rather, it was the Spanish government's fear of a larger and potentially expanding Jewish community; yet Madrid never really explained this fear. Most likely, the motivation for this ungenerous response to the Shoah was the result of general anti-Jewish reservations. In asserting this, there is no intention to minimize German responsibility for the persecution of the Jews. Nonetheless, Spain's postwar claims that it gave all possible help to all Sephardic Jews who asked for it is not true. This analysis of Spanish policy demonstrates that Franco's government in Spain did not make full use of its possibilities to rescue Jews.

How can the Spanish reaction, one which can be called that of a reluctant rescuer, be explained? We can begin by considering factors such as national sovereignty, Spanish perception of public opinion in the Allied nations and the geographical situation with Portugal and Morocco as available hinterland. And, for the period after the second half of 1943, we may add the expectation that the Allies would win the war, combined to a lesser degree with increasing information about the Shoah. These were some of the factors that prompted the Spanish government to help at least some of the Spanish Jews living in Nazi-occupied Europe. On the other hand, the dominant Catholic religion with its antijudaic traditions, combined with the regime's ideological affinity with the Nazis, were factors that hindered any wish to help Jews. Because it was a dictatorship, the government could overcome resistance from fascist hard-liners. At the same time, however, this made it impossible to ignore Franco's decision to allow Jews only to transit through Spain, and not settle there. Finally, we may conclude that important decisions made in Madrid were not made for humanitarian reasons, but rather with an eye for what could best guarantee the continuance of the regime. Repatriating Jews could help to white wash the dictatorship after the war, helping the regime consign its alliance, begun in 1936, with Adolf Hitler. Ironically, for several hundred Jews with Spanish documents, this political selfishness also meant some Jews had a chance of survival.



Bernd Rother

## Discussion of the Third Panel

The essays presented to the panel on the German repatriation ultimatum coincided in their portrayal of Portugal, Spain and Turkey as having been very reluctant when confronted by the German ultimatum. They tried to diminish the number of candidates through the strict control —stricter than Germany required —of the documentation sent from the consulates to the central offices in the capitals, and also tried to delay the actual repatriation by requesting multiple times that the ultimatum be extended. All three governments were frightened by the “high” number of Jews to be repatriated, which in no case was more than a maximum of 5,000 individuals. These numbers might have come to countries with populations of: Portugal, eight million; Turkey, eighteen million; and Spain, twenty-six million. The common feeling in Lisbon, Ankara and Madrid was, “every Jew is one too many.” Spain even went so far as to suggest first that its Jews, then living in Central Europe, would be sent to other countries (where they had lived previously) and then, when Germany categorically excluded this option, they made plans to send the Jews, once repatriated, immediately on to third countries. Contrary to some postwar claims, neither Portugal nor Spain tried to protect Sephardic Jews (in the Netherlands and in Northern Germany they were called “Portuguese Jews”) who did not possess personal documents from one of the Iberian countries.

Compared to this very reluctant reaction, Sweden and Switzerland were generally willing to repatriate their Jewish citizens.<sup>1</sup> In the Swiss case, however, it is noteworthy that the consuls on site, and the embassy in Berlin, were much more inclined to repatriate their Jewish fellow citizens as soon as possible, whereas the Foreign Ministry in Berne, as late as April 1943, asked if repatriation could be avoided. But in September 1943, the repatriation of all Swiss Jews from France was concluded, with the excep-

1 I am indebted to Ruth Fivaz-Silbermann and Paul A. Levine, who provided me with information on Switzerland and Sweden, which is based on their own respective research.

tion of those who decided to stay at their own risk. Sweden even went so far as to offer repatriation of Jews with incomplete documentation or who had earlier either relinquished or lost their Swedish citizenship, or obtained it after the ultimatum was issued. Stockholm decided to act this way without knowing how many Jews were in question. And it was the only one of five neutral states that exerted some pressure on Germany by alluding to possible strains German-Swedish relations might suffer.

What, then, explains the differences in reactions to the German ultimatum? Returning to the list of factors enumerated in the introduction (which was formulated to understand the reaction to Jewish refugees in general) we see mixed results, particularly regarding the ultimatum. Some hypotheses were confirmed, while others were shown to be false.

Regarding the two factors, “Dictatorship or democracy?” and “Ideological closeness or distance to the Nazis,” we found correlations, with Spain and Sweden as the extremes on the scale. Democracies were more inclined to save their compatriots than dictatorships were. The same can be said for those countries where Jews lived without legal restrictions. On the other hand, the picture drawn by the essays contradicts expectations about the importance of geography: the “islands” of Switzerland and Sweden actively helped their Jewish compatriots, while the potential transit lands Portugal, Spain and Turkey were reluctant. However, in question were only hundreds or a few thousand repatriates, not tens of thousands of refugees, so this factor proved to be of minor importance. As for the refugees, Spain and Portugal were generous as long as the refugees held the necessary visas to continue their journey. This cannot be said of Turkey. Switzerland and Sweden were also much more restrictive about letting Jewish refugees cross their borders than the Iberian countries were.

No general correlation could be found for:

- Dominant religion —Catholic, Protestant or Muslim. In Portugal and Spain, traditional religious antijudaism was the most important factor in determining negative feelings against Jews. In the other countries, no direct influence of religion on decision-taking was noticeable.
- Importance of public opinion: only for Sweden and Switzerland was there some measure of public pressure to help Jews detectable. The other three countries did not really have a public opinion.
- The existence or absence of political or economic leverage against Nazi Germany: only Sweden discreetly used its possibilities.

No difference at all was shown regarding:

- The number of Jews to be repatriated: Sweden did not ask about numbers before deciding to repatriate, while Spain was frightened when it learned that more than 100 Jews might be repatriated.
- National sovereignty: for all five countries, it remained important to reserve their right to decide the fate of their own citizens.
- Expectations about the most probable outcome of the war, and the level of information about the Shoah: with the change in the tides of war in 1943, all the neutrals became more and more open to rescue activities. Yet it remains difficult to say whether this, or the increased information about the Shoah, was more important.

All in all, it can be said that both democracy and Jewish emancipation mattered. But was this a causal correlation or only an accidental parallelism? It is difficult to say with absolute certainty, but it seems that these factors made the difference between active and reluctant rescue, at least regarding the repatriation of fellow citizens. Sources cited in the essays and during the discussion gave the impression that in Portugal, Spain and Turkey, even Jews with full-fledged citizenship (and all the more, Jewish refugees who wanted more than rapid transit through the country) were seen as a threat not only to their society's ethnic and religious homogeneity, but also to the political and cultural situation. In Sweden and Switzerland this feeling was mostly limited to Jewish refugees who were seen as even more alien to prevailing notions of national identity than other foreign refugees were.

What also mattered were first-hand impressions. Diplomats in situ were noticeably more inclined to help their persecuted Jews than their colleagues and superiors in the different foreign ministries were. Many of the former developed empathy towards the Jews and their fate, even if during their earlier professional career some of them seem to have expressed antisemitic views.

Finally, these conclusions should be understood as only the first steps towards a comparative interpretation of the different national policies towards Jewish refugees, foreign or otherwise, during World War II. Additionally, the Italian example shows how complicated it is to draw general conclusions. The country, whose fascist movement had been a source of inspiration for Adolf Hitler, reacted similarly to Sweden and Switzerland to the German repatriation ultimatum, which had also been sent to Rome. Italian

Jews living in France were repatriated to Italy, those living in German-controlled Salonika were transferred to then Italian-occupied Athens, always without hesitation and without strict control of the documentation in the Jews' possession.<sup>2</sup>

2 See Michele Sarfatti. "L'evacuazione nel 1943 da Salonicco degli ultimi ebrei italiani e degli ebrei italiani 'provvisori': contesto, questioni e numeri." Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini, Michele Luzzati, Michele Sarfatti, eds. *Studi sul mondo sefardita: in memoria di Aron Leoni*. Florence: Olschki, 2012. 251–276.

Rebecca Erbelding

## **The United States War Refugee Board, the Neutral Nations and the Holocaust in Hungary**

To understand the negotiations between the American “War Refugee Board” (hereafter WRB) and the governments of the neutral and non-belligerent nations of Europe—Portugal, Spain, Turkey, Switzerland and Sweden—it is important to understand the situation in Hungary in 1944. Hungary—while officially allied with Germany—was home to 825,000 Jews, the largest Jewish community still alive in Europe. Wartime Hungary had anti-Jewish racial laws and many Jewish males were forced into labor battalions, but the country was also considered a refuge for Jews escaping mass murder elsewhere. The idea of Hungary as a place of relative safety ended on 19 March, 1944, when the country was quickly occupied by Nazi Germany.

Nazi persecutions—including identification, confinement, deportation and mass murder—that had taken place over a period of years in other countries, happened in a matter of weeks in Hungary. Between 15 May, 1944, and 7 July, 1944, more than 437,000 Jews were deported, mainly from the countryside, and mainly to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and death camp, where most were murdered. Reacting to international pressure, threats and Allied bombings, the Hungarian regent and head of government, Miklos Horthy, ordered an end to the deportations. The Jews of Budapest remained, and became the focus of international efforts to keep them alive.

At the end of July, Horthy made an offer to the Allies, which became known as the “Horthy offer.” In it, he announced the end to deportations and said he would authorize the release of various categories of Jews, who could then escape to the neutral or Allied nations. Children under the age of ten, people holding Palestine certificates or so-called protective papers (including entry visas or passports for Allied or neutral countries) and those who had some sort of connection to Sweden, could all leave Hungary. The United States and Great Britain debated the offer: The United States wanted to accept immediately, but this acceptance was delayed sev-



eral weeks while waiting for the British to agree that transportation details could wait until later. In reality, however, Hungary was under Nazi German control, and the Germans would not allow Jews to leave the country without some sort of ransom payment. The Horthy offer did not ultimately result in the release of any Jews to the Allies.

On 15 October, 1944, Horthy was overthrown, and the Nazi-aligned Arrow Cross party took control of Hungary. For more than three months, the Jews of Budapest were terrorized. Many were sent to a ghetto, others on forced marches to Germany and others killed in mass shootings. Diplomats representing the neutral nations and the International Red Cross tried to save Budapest's Jews by issuing special papers designating individuals as under their protection, and intervened to save people from deportation. After a lengthy siege of the city, Budapest was slowly liberated by the Red Army beginning on 17 January, 1945.

This background is crucial to understanding this article, but the negotiations I will discuss in detail took place outside Hungary. In Washington, the War Refugee Board staff was horrified by the March 1944 occupation of Hungary. Since the US government could not negotiate directly with Horthy or the Nazis, the WRB began a complicated series of discussions with the neutral governments, hoping to save the lives of as many Hungarian Jews as possible. These negotiations—the requests WRB staff made of the neutral nations and how these countries responded—form the basis of this essay.

The WRB was an independent government agency established by a presidential executive order on 22 January, 1944. Its formation was meant to solve both the problem of popular demand that the United States do something about Nazi atrocities, and to address both public and internal government criticism directed at the State Department for not doing enough to aid the victims. Roosevelt's order read, "It is the policy of this Government to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war."<sup>1</sup> The WRB was in charge of implementing this new policy to aid refugees. It should be noted that "refugees" was

1 Franklin Roosevelt, Executive Order 9416, 22 Jan. 1944; "Papers of the War Refugee Board" (Microfilm Publication, Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, c2002). (PWRB) LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 1, 2–3; USHMM Washington DC.



Meeting of the nominal heads of the War Refugee Board on 21 March, 1944. From left to right: Secretary of State Cordell Hull; Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr.; Secretary of War Henry Stimson; and Director of the War Refugee Board John Pehle.

*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives*

an inclusive term used at the time to refer to people being persecuted in territories occupied by the Nazis and their collaborators, as well as those escaping occupied territory.

The WRB was an emergency agency, authorized only to work in Axis-occupied territory. Rescue and relief projects in liberated territory were the domain of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees and of UNRRA (the newly established United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency). It was also an independent agency, separate from the State Department. Their humanitarian work was sometimes at odds with official American diplomacy, and the WRB staff was largely ignorant of ongoing conversations. Though some of the neutral countries had been unwilling to aid Jewish refugees in the early years of the war, the WRB did not have this background information. Each country could give a new impression of being helpful to refugees as a way to curry favor with the War Refugee Board—and, therefore, the United States government.

By the time the WRB was created, the Nazi extermination plan was known—at least in general terms—though whether anything could be done to halt the murders was unclear. When the German forces occupied Hungary on 19 March, 1944, the WRB had been in existence for just under two months. In that time, the Board staff had surveyed all the relief organizations in the United States for ideas about fulfilling their mission to provide assistance to Jews and other persecuted minorities trapped in Europe. The Board had placed representatives in most of the neutral nations, but it was still a young organization, and Hungary was the first immediate crisis the Board encountered. At first, much of the information the WRB received about Hungary came from newspaper reports; journalists correctly anticipated that Jewish persecution in Hungary would follow the same steps as it had in other countries. In a memo written soon after the occupation, the Board staff wrote, “There is general agreement among those who know the situation in Hungary that it is impossible to help out of Hungary its 800,000 Hungarian Jews and 100,000 foreign Jews who, until 20 March, found tolerable and secure refuge there, or any substantial number of them. There will only be a few, certainly not many thousands, who may brave the dangers and risks of flight...action for the rescue of the Hungarian Jews must be directed to their support within Hungary and to the improvement of their chance for survival there.”<sup>2</sup>

Unable to place American personnel in Hungary, the Board made five official requests over the spring and summer to the neutral and non-belligerent nations of Portugal, Spain, Turkey, Switzerland and Sweden. The Board wanted these countries to 1) send any information they had about the situation in Hungary; 2) warn Hungary against collaborating in German persecution; 3) add personnel to their diplomatic legations and spread them throughout the country to act as deterrents or witnesses; 4) agree to take any Hungarian Jews who were released due to the Horthy offer; and 5) advise enemy governments that American entry visas were available as a protective measure to anyone with close relatives in the United States. Each country—particularly Switzerland, which was the protecting power of the United States—was asked to take additional measures, but these five requests were consistent.

2 WRB staff, Memo regarding Hungary, 20 Mar 1944; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 1, 7–12; USHMM.

## Portugal

Portugal was the first country the WRB approached regarding Hungary. On 12 April, Portugal was asked to warn Hungary that any participation in persecutions or deportations would be taken into account at the end of the war. Six days later, US ambassador R. Henry Norweb reported this had been done. On 23 May, the WRB informed Norweb that they were, “gravely concerned by reports of measures looking to mass-extermination of Jews in Hungary,” and asked the Portuguese Foreign Office to “obtain as speedily as possible detailed information from the Portuguese mission in Budapest concerning treatment of Jews in Hungary.”<sup>3</sup> Just two days later, after the United States learned that mass deportations in Hungary had begun, they sent another cable asking Portugal to increase diplomatic representation: “The lives of 800,000 human beings in Hungary may well depend on the restraint that may result from the presence in that country of the largest possible number of foreign observers.”<sup>4</sup> Norweb reported back that he had asked the Portuguese to pass along intelligence reports, but did not feel it wise to transmit the request for more personnel. Asking for a staff increase would be “impolitic...As a result of having made fairly strong representations following the invasion of Hungary seeking to persuade the Government of Portugal not to recognize the puppet regime in Budapest, we found ourselves in an awkward position of which the WRB may not have been aware.”<sup>5</sup>

On 19 July, the Board staff read about the “Horthy offer” in a brief report in the *New York Times*.<sup>6</sup> The Portuguese Foreign Office passed intelligence to the Americans (in keeping with the WRB’s earlier request for information), and Norweb cabled details about the offer a week before the WRB received the official offer through the International Red Cross.

- 3 Cordell Hull, Cable 1459, 1944 May 23; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 3, 447–448; USHMM.
- 4 Cordell Hull, Cable 1479, 1944 May 25; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 27, 822; USHMM.
- 5 R. Henry Norweb, Cable 1671, 1944 June 1; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 3, 441–442; USHMM.
- 6 “Horthy Promises Not to Oust Jews,” *New York Times*, 19 July 1944.

## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FOR THE PRESS

AUGUST 17, 1944  
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CONFIDENTIAL RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION IN THE MORNING NEWSPAPERS OF FRIDAY, AUGUST 18, 1944, WHICH DO NOT APPEAR ON THE STREETS BEFORE 7:00 P.M., E.W.T., THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 1944. NOT TO BE PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED, QUOTED FROM OR USED IN ANY WAY.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has communicated to the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States an offer of the Hungarian Government regarding the emigration and treatment of Jews. Because of the desperate plight of the Jews in Hungary and the overwhelming humanitarian considerations involved the two governments are informing the Government of Hungary through the International Committee of the Red Cross that, despite the heavy difficulties and responsibilities involved, they have accepted the offer of the Hungarian Government for the release of Jews and will make arrangements for the care of such Jews leaving Hungary who reach neutral or United Nations territory, and also that they will find temporary havens of refuge where such people may live in safety. Notification of these assurances is being given to the governments of neutral countries who are being requested to permit the entry of Jews who reach their frontiers from Hungary. The Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States emphasize that, in accepting the offer which has been made, they do not in any way condone the action of the Hungarian Government in forcing the emigration of Jews as an alternative to persecution and death.

\* \* \*

Although the War Refugee Board—joined by a hesitant Great Britain—accepted the Horthy offer, this did not result in the promised release of Hungarian Jews.

*Department of State, 17 August, 1944; PWRB, Microfilm LM0305, Reel 26, Folder 8, Document 843; USHMM*

At the same time the “Horthy offer” became known, the WRB sent cables to all the American legations in the neutral nations with two additional requests. First, the neutral nations were asked to extend aid to all people in occupied territory who had received American visas after 1 July, 1941, but were unable to use them prior to the United States’ entry into the war. The second request was much more significant: should any Hungarian Jews be released, regardless whether they fell into the designated

categories of the “Horthy offer,” the embassies should ask the neutrals to receive, house and feed them until they could be evacuated further, with the United States guaranteeing maintenance. A few days after receiving the requests, the Portuguese minister to Hungary, Carlos de Sampaio Garrido, responded that his country was sympathetic to the plight of the Hungarian Jews and would accept any who were released, but would prefer that the refugees arrived in groups no larger than 300–400 at a time. Sampaio had already informed Hungary that Portugal had issued exit visas to groups of Hungarian Jews, but the Germans were not permitting the Jews to leave. In addition, some Hungarian Jews had found refuge at the Portuguese embassy in Budapest.<sup>7</sup>

In late August, the WRB expanded their program to aid people who had received American visas after July 1941, and began issuing entry visas to close relatives of American citizens and resident aliens in the United States. Lisbon expressed concerns, stating that it was, “impossible to admit refugees falling into classifications without more effective guarantees” that these people would be quickly removed from Portugal. The United States reiterated a promise of providing maintenance, but evacuation would depend on the demands of wartime transportation.

Ultimately, Portugal was cautious, yet generally willing to consider War Refugee Board requests.<sup>8</sup> Nazi unwillingness to release Jews, however, meant that the Portuguese government was never pressed any further.

## Spain

Spain was unique among the neutral nations, as there was no official Board representative in the country. In early 1943, Ambassador Carlton Hayes became fed up with representatives from numerous relief organizations’ making repeated requests to his office and to the Spanish Foreign Office. He established the “Representation in Spain of American Relief Organi-

7 R. Henry Norweb, Cable 2594, 22 Aug. 1944; “The Morgenthau Diaries” (Microfilm Publication Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, c1995–1997). 23, 392–73P, Vol. 764, 14; Library of Congress, Washington, DC (LOC).

8 Portugal did not want refugees to physically arrive, but they did not admit this to the WRB. See Avraham Milgram. *Salazar, Portugal, and the Jews*. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2011.

zations,” through which all refugee aid requests would be funneled. The director was 27-year-old David Blickenstaff, formerly of the Brethren Service Committee and of the American Friends Service Committee. A year later, when the Board was created, Hayes was not willing to welcome a WRB representative, or to allow Blickenstaff to be so designated, since he felt things were already working well. The Board perceived Hayes as a major impediment to any work through Spain. He was unwilling to inform the Spanish Foreign Office of the creation of the WRB or of American policy. He also frequently cabled Washington to express his disapproval of the proposed rescue programs.

After the invasion of Hungary on 17 April, the WRB asked Hayes to approach the Spanish Foreign Office to ask for information and to have them warn the Hungarian government against atrocities. On 20 May, having not heard from Madrid, the Board made the request to increase diplomatic personnel. At the end of May, Hayes finally met with diplomats at Spain’s Foreign Ministry concerning the situation in Hungary. The ministry promised to ensure that Spanish representatives were active and alert to the possibilities of deportations. Yet Hayes did not pass along the request for an increased diplomatic presence, feeling that Spain was trying to distance herself from the new Hungarian government. So, as with Portugal, the American ambassador never asked.

During the summer, the Board’s contact with Spain improved dramatically for two reasons. First, Ambassador Hayes returned temporarily to the US, and first consul W. Walton Butterworth began acting in his absence. Secondly, an influential businessman, Dannie Heineman, used his connections to inform the Spanish Foreign Ministry of the WRB’s requests and ask them to approach Hayes, offering to participate in these projects. As a result, the ministry knew of the Board’s programs and was prepared when Butterworth passed along almost all its requests from the spring.<sup>9</sup> During Hayes’ first month back in America, Butterworth sent the WRB nineteen cables about his negotiations. In the previous six months, Hayes had sent a total of only thirty-five cables to the Board, almost all of which concerned his own complaints. Further demonstrating their willingness to aid Hungarian Jews, the Spanish government announced plans to provide visas to Tangier for 500 children, and also proclaimed they had provided

9 James Mann. “Report of James H. Mann on Trip to Portugal and Spain.” 30 Aug. 1944; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 6, 208–297; USHMM.

1,500 visas for Jews in Budapest, who would depart for Spain as soon as the Germans would permit exit visas.<sup>10</sup>

After Hayes returned, cooperation with Spain continued. The embassy reported that the Spanish were issuing even more letters of protection in Budapest, were warning the Hungarians against atrocities, and were willing to issue Spanish entry visas to all people who had received American visas or were relatives of Americans, in case this would add any measure of protection. After the “Horthy offer” was publicized, and even before the WRB asked him to do so, Butterworth approached the ministry to request that they receive any Hungarian Jews released.<sup>11</sup> Spain reported that they granted entry visas to any Jews released and in doing so, „the Spanish Government exhausts all possible steps which it can take in order to arrive at a favorable solution of the mentioned problem in which it has demonstrated it is placing its greatest interest and will.”<sup>12</sup> The Board saw Spain as a very willing partner regarding refugee and relief projects. From the Board’s perspective, Hayes was the problem, not Franco’s government, and once it was able to explain American requests to Madrid through Heineman and Butterworth, the Spanish were willing to cooperate.

## Turkey

In early May 1944, before the Board made any request to Turkey regarding Hungarian Jews, Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt sent a cable to Washington. Observing that very few Hungarian Jews had arrived in Turkey in the spring, Steinhardt had asked the Turkish Foreign Office if their embassy in Budapest had perhaps ceased issuing exit visas. He reported to Washington that, “... every Jew entering the Turk consulate in Budapest was arrested as soon as he left and transported to an unknown place.”<sup>13</sup>

- 10 As was the case in Portugal, the Spanish Foreign Office did not want Jews with Spanish papers to actually arrive in Spain.
- 11 W. Walton Butterworth, Cable 2567, 24 July 1944; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 3, 519–520; USHMM.
- 12 Carlton Hayes, Cable 3139, 26Sept. 1944; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 16, 558–559; USHMM.
- 13 Laurence Steinhardt, Cable 794, 2 May 1944; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 27, 854; USHMM.



From the start, then, it was clear that Turkey would not be able to do much to assist Hungarian Jews. After the Board made its formal requests, the Turkish government was apologetic. „Hungarian-Turkish relations are virtually nonexistent due to the strain resulting from A) the position which the Turkish government has taken in materially reducing the shipment of strategic materials to Hungary at the request of the British and American governments, and B) the Hungarian government’s refusal to allow former Prime Minister Kállay, who has taken refuge in the Turkish legation in Budapest, to leave for Turkey as the government of Turkey has requested.”<sup>14</sup> So, like Portugal and Spain, Turkey had distanced herself from the Hungarian government at the request of the American State Department, and could not turn around and increase diplomatic representation at the request of the WRB. Moreover, Miklós Kállay, the Hungarian prime minister deposed after the occupation, was being protected with his family within the walls of the Turkish embassy.

The “Horthy offer” came just before Turkey officially gave up its neutrality in early August 1944. Although Nazi Germany’s diplomats left Turkey, Hungarian diplomats stayed in Ankara. WRB representative Ira Hirschmann was able to meet directly with a Hungarian counselor, who claimed that no Jews in Hungary had been mistreated, and that his government would allow the categories of Jews specified in the “Horthy offer” to leave. The Board requested that Turkey issue entry visas to all Jews holding Palestine certificates or who had previously been granted American visas. The Turkish Foreign Ministry’s secretary general assured Steinhardt that, “his government would be glad to take the action requested at once,” and sent instructions to Budapest for the Turkish embassy to grant entry visas for any Hungarian Jew who could provide any kind of Palestine or American papers—even just a letter from the Jewish Agency would suffice.<sup>15</sup>

It was difficult for Turkey to provide aid to Hungarian Jews. Between providing sanctuary to Kállay and the arrest of Jews visiting the Turkish embassy, the Turkish government did not have enough leverage to warn the Hungarian government against atrocities or to increase their diplomatic representation in Budapest. Turkish willingness to issue entry visas

14 Laurence Steinhardt, Cable 977, 29 May 1944; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 6, 980; USHMM.

15 Robert Kelley, Cable 1514, 18 Aug. 1944; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 6, 914–915; USHMM.

to Hungarian Jews was undermined—as were all such Board requests—by the unwillingness of the Germans to let any Jews actually leave.

## Switzerland

The Board was in almost daily contact with the Swiss Foreign Office. As the protecting power of the United States, Switzerland was the official representative of American interests in Nazi Germany and in Hungary, and, as such, it transmitted numerous formal protests to the German government. After Hungary was occupied, these protests increased significantly.

Among many other messages, the American legation in Berne transmitted some of the same requests that the WRB sent to the other neutral nations. On 23 May, it asked Switzerland to pass on any information received from their Budapest legation. This was done, and though WRB representative Roswell McClelland received far more information from his underground channels, the Swiss Foreign Office specifically provided confirmation of the importance of papers placing Hungarian Jews under the protection of neutral embassies. After the Swiss reminded the Board that many South American nations had not designated a protecting power for Hungary—and, therefore, anyone there relying on *ad hoc* South American visas or passports could not be protected—the WRB urged these nations to designate Switzerland, and most countries did this successfully. This brought more Hungarian Jews on false or unverified papers under the protection of Switzerland. In fact, unbeknownst to the WRB, Swiss diplomat Carl Lutz, who was in charge of the representation of foreign interests at the Swiss legation in Budapest, was issuing thousands of protective papers and was an active participant in rescue operations. Also in keeping with the role of protecting power, the Swiss transmitted formal messages on behalf of the Board, warning against deportations and atrocities and threatening postwar punishment. The Board also requested that the Hungarian government officially state its intentions regarding the fate of the Jewish community.

In early June 1944, the Berne legation asked Switzerland to increase diplomatic representation in Hungary. In a meeting with legation staff, Emile Bisang, a representative of the Foreign Interests Section of the Swiss Foreign Office, offered to explore the suggestion, but gave three reasons why it was not likely to happen: 1) it would jeopardize Swiss representation

of American interests in Hungary; 2) as protecting power, the Swiss were unwilling to do anything that might be construed by the Hungarians or Germans as espionage; and 3) once people were arrested in Hungary, they were under the jurisdiction of the Gestapo, so any approaches to the German or Hungarian Foreign Office would be useless.<sup>16</sup>

American ambassador Leland Harrison was satisfied, telling the Board that, "I am convinced that the Swiss have done and will conscientiously continue to do all they feel they can do without compromising their position and endangering their usefulness...they have always accorded sympathetic consideration to all proposals, whether or not they felt able to undertake action."<sup>17</sup> Even without increasing representation, the Swiss received almost daily requests from the United States, including that the International Committee of the Red Cross be allowed to inspect concentration camps and ghettos in Hungary, and for the release of all Jewish children under ten so they could go to Palestine. The Swiss passed these requests to Hungary, and Horthy made them part of his offer in July 1944.

The Swiss Foreign Office was particularly involved in the protective paper scheme, as it was Switzerland's responsibility to actually protect anyone granted American papers—including those with expired American visas, relatives of American citizens and resident aliens, as well as all the other names the WRB transmitted via numerous cables of lengthy lists. The Swiss also agreed to receive Hungarian Jews in Switzerland, provided the United States arrange for their maintenance and removal as soon as possible for havens elsewhere. For example, in October, a rumor spread in Berne that 8,000 Hungarian Jews were about to show up on the Swiss border. Within a matter of days, the Swiss decided how to deal with the entry of the refugees and the United States had already figured out the logistics of removing them. The rumored 8,000 never arrived. By mid-October and the Arrow Cross takeover of Hungary, the WRB was out of suggestions. They continued to send lists of names for the Swiss to transmit to Hungary, but it was clear no one was going to be allowed to leave—Budapest would have to be liberated.

16 George Tait, Memorandum on discussion with Bisang, 12 June 1944; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 3; Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY (FDRL).

17 Leland Harrison, Cable 4324, 7 July, 1944; "The Morgenthau Diaries" Vol. 751, 38; LOC.

In a memo to Ambassador Harrison, WRB representative Roswell McClelland wrote, “I do not...see just what steps could be taken either by ourselves (other than continued propaganda pressure via the radio and leaflets) or by the Swiss to avert or mitigate this final and radical ‘solving’ of the so-called Jewish problem. From conversations I had this morning I have the feeling that the Swiss would be willing to do all they could through their legation in Budapest if they knew exactly how to proceed.”<sup>18</sup>

For the Board, Switzerland was undoubtedly the most important neutral nation. Though the Foreign Office’s insistence on strict neutrality was frustrating—particularly in December 1944, when the Swiss actually refused to transmit several War Refugee Board messages due to their harsh language<sup>19</sup>—the Board knew that this neutrality was what guaranteed protection and allowed for continued negotiations with the Germans and Hungarians to ease the plight of those persecuted.

## Sweden

Of all the neutral countries, Sweden was the most receptive to War Refugee Board requests. Unhampered by protecting power concerns, the Swedish Foreign Office seemed to take the position, summarized in the *Svenska Dagbladet* newspaper in July 1944, that, “all neutrality ceases to exist in face of these deliberate and cold blooded crimes against defenseless and innocent people.”<sup>20</sup> In late May 1944, when the Board asked Sweden to pass along any information about the situation in Budapest, to warn Hungary and to increase diplomatic representation, all three suggestions were immediately accepted. Sweden became one of the most valuable sources of information about Hungary.

In June, the Swedish Foreign Office provided the War Refugee Board with a detailed report from their embassy of what they were witnessing on the ground in Budapest. This included demographic data, information about new legal restrictions and the kinds of relief supplies needed most.

18 Roswell McClelland, Memorandum to Harrison, 20 Oct. 1944; WRB Papers, Box 65, Folder 8; FDRL.

19 Berne legation, Cable 10231, 13 Dec. 1944; PWRB, LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 24, 753–758; USHMM.

20 Herschel Johnson, Cable 2503, 6 July 1944; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 7, Folder 2, 181; USHMM.

Later that summer, WRB representative Iver Olsen met with a newly-returned embassy official who revealed he had witnessed Hungarian police assisting in the deportations from the brickyards. The Board used this information as the basis of a formal protest through Switzerland. In addition to just passing on information, the Swedes gave the Board suggestions about how to better implement their programs—from offering to take all Hungarian Jewish women and children and care for them in Sweden for up to three years, to reminding the Board that Sweden was the protecting power for Iran. If the US could convince Iran to make a formal request, they would issue Iranian protective papers in Budapest.<sup>21</sup>

After the Board asked Sweden to increase its diplomatic representation, they soon learned that a Swedish businessman, already planning a trip to Hungary, might be willing to act in this capacity. A week later, the WRB officially authorized Raoul Wallenberg, who then shed his supposed business obligations. He arrived in Budapest in early July 1944, formally attached to the Swedish embassy but tasked with working on Board programs. US ambassador in Stockholm Herschel Johnson wrote Washington requesting that they send Wallenberg instructions. This was because, the Swedish Foreign Office asserted, that, “in making this assignment it feels it has cooperated fully in lending all possible facilities for the furtherance of an American program...The newly designated attaché, Raoul Wallenberg, feels...that he, in effect, is carrying out a humanitarian mission in behalf of the War Refugee Board.”<sup>22</sup>

After the cessation of deportations from Hungary and the “Horthy offer”—which undoubtedly happened partly because of appeals made by the King of Sweden and other prominent figures—Sweden expressed its willingness to accept various categories of Hungarian Jews, particularly those with some sort of tie to Sweden. The Swedish Foreign Office also received copies of the Board’s lists of people with expired visas and relatives of Americans, but it did not pass these lists on to the Hungarian or German authorities. There had not been a courier between Sweden and Hungary for over two months, so the names would have to be cabled. The Foreign Office feared this would only confuse the situation in Budapest,

21 US Embassy Ankara, Memo to the file on intelligence from Hungary, 12 June, 1944; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 8, Folder 3, 432; USHMM.

22 Herschel Johnson, Cable 2360, 29 June, 1944; PWRB, LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, 257–258; USHMM.

where the Swedish legation already had more than 15,000 people under its protection. Additionally, as Ambassador Johnson explained to the Board, “Swedish officials further feel that no practical value is to be derived by presenting lists inasmuch as the Swedish Legation in Budapest stands ready to aid all Jews who apply.”<sup>23</sup> After the Arrow Cross takeover in October, the situation grew more difficult for the Swedish legation and for all neutral legations. Spain’s representative fled in December, placing Jews under Spanish protection in the care of Sweden. Stockholm reported that Swedish diplomats were being harassed on the streets, their property stolen and their lives threatened. At the end of December, Johnson reported that the Swedish Foreign Office had lost touch with its embassy in Budapest.<sup>24</sup> The next message the Board received through the Swedish legation was on 20 January, 1945. Terrible in retrospect, the cable was reassuring at the time. It read, “Swedish representative in Hungary Wallenberg is safe and sound in that part of Budapest occupied by Russians.”<sup>25</sup>

It is instructive to compare the ways in which the neutral nations responded to WRB requests. Whether they could act out of humanitarian concern or were unable to because of pragmatic considerations, it is clear that they all seriously considered the Board’s proposals related to Hungary. It is equally clear that the United States did not and could not act unilaterally to save Hungarian Jews, or any persecuted people of any nationality—Jewish or not. The Board’s partnership with neutral nations—sometimes acting with and sometimes acting through these nations—was crucial to the success of any rescue or relief activities.

23 Herschel Johnson, Cable 5043, 9 Dec. 1944; PWRB, LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 7, 790–791; USHMM.

24 Herschel Johnson, Cable 5293, 29 Dec. 1944; PWRB, LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 4, 533; USHMM.

25 Herschel Johnson, Cable 246, 20 Jan. 1945; PWRB, LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, 307; USHMM.



**Section IV**  
**Rescue Myths, Public Debates,**  
**Historical Investigations**





Thomas Lutz

## Introduction

Section Four consists of four essays that examine how policies concerning Jews during the Nazi era developed after the Nazi Party took power in Germany, and how this affected persecuted Jews in the four countries where the impact of these policies was felt.

The historical point of departure for the authors is quite similar; how Argentina, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey dealt with their own involvement in Holocaust. We see that not only was the historical involvement of the four nations during the Holocaust different, but that the political developments in these countries until now have also been different. Thus, an exploration of the treatment of Jews during the Nazi period depends on two things: historical development and how it was interpreted in the post-war governments and societies.

The historical situation for the authors has one similarity. Many European Jews forced to emigrate sought refuge in those neutral states that were in geographic proximity to Nazi Germany. The reception of Jews by these neutral countries was rather limited. All of them put barriers in place that hindered threatened Jews from finding a safe haven in their countries. For example, Argentinian diplomats in Europe engaged in secret efforts to keep “undesirable” Jews out. Nonetheless, the manner in which this “walling-off” developed differed from one neutral country to the other.

Additionally, the authors all have different approaches to this topic. François Wisard focuses on the different Swiss state commissions that dealt with Jewish refugees and property and insurance issues. The other three essays, by Alejandro Baer and Pedro Correa for Spain, Pınar Dost-Niego for Turkey and Uki Goñi for Argentina, describe the development of the narratives in each country that illustrate the help given to Jews during the Holocaust, after liberation at the end of the war and continuing until the present today.

The wrestling with wartime indifference or disregard towards the persecuted Jews was relatively similar, with the mainstream postwar narrative

providing a much brighter and more affirmative picture for the existing political powers.

Because no one in government or civil society was really interested in dealing with their country's omissions, until recently only a superficial body of historical scholarship has existed. And with the survivors seeking to make new lives, it seemed better for them not to remember the treatment they had received from the neutral countries or during the Holocaust in general. Any fuss they would only have made it more difficult for them to become normal members of the societies they were now settled in. It is mostly during the last two decades that a critical, scholarly approach to investigating the neutral countries' policies towards the Jews has become evident.

But often new disclosures lead to new political and social scandals. Then the persistent interest wanes and only a few politicians, scholars and culturally engaged individuals remain interested in a sustained examination of this issue. Questions concerning monetary restitution or assistance for the remaining survivors or their descendents also arise. The two reasons for this development were the global acknowledgement of the persecution of European Jews during the Holocaust, and the end of the Cold War, the conflict between two systems, which also led to the opening of many archives in Central and Eastern Europe, thereby increasing the presence of this topic in many nations' public discourse.

Despite these general similarities, it is clear that these events in each nation's history were interpreted differently, according to each country's postwar development. Here we see important differences. Argentina had the reputation as a safe haven for Nazi criminals. Efforts to change this image depended on two things: On the one hand, it was necessary to deny the existence of the Directive 11 as an official Foreign Ministry order intended to keep Jewish refugees out of the country. On the other hand, the actual instances of rescue were exaggerated in the official picture of history.

Until 1975, Spain was a fascist state led by the dictator Francisco Franco, and during the war it had close ties to Nazi Germany until 1943. Spain tried to participate in wartime international developments, for example, in the establishment of the United Nations. Therefore, it was in its interest to portray its immigration policy in a positive light. These efforts were, importantly, supported by Spain's Jewish community, and those few diplomats who did act to rescue Jews were greatly publicized, even though these were

isolated cases. But genuine academic research could begin only after the end of the Franco regime. Unfortunately, because the Franco regime is not really openly discussed even today, attempts to explain Spain's collaboration with Nazi Germany in a more critical fashion, an approach that developed during the 1990s, have declined in recent years.

Switzerland's commission can be understood in two ways: On the one hand, it was only established after pressure following the intense international discussion about "Nazi gold" and stolen Jewish property and assets. This came about particularly with thanks to Jewish organizations in the United States. On the other hand, the Swiss commission was followed by the establishment of many other state commissions for similar reasons and purposes. In fact, efforts to deal with, in Switzerland, the outlawing of the Yenische language and apartheid in South Africa, both then contemporary conflicts, were supported by the efforts made to understand the treatment of Jewish refugees during the Nazi period.

Turkey's assessment of itself asserts that it is an open and liberal society that supports Jews. In this self-image, the acceptance of the Sephardic Jews from Spain by the Ottoman Empire after 1492, and the alleged rescue of Jews during the Holocaust, are expressions of an ever-present "Turkish tolerance." As in the Spanish case, Turkey's Jewish Community was used by the state to draw a picture of support of Jewish communities in Israel and the Diaspora. This picture is and has been used to support the denial of Armenian genocide.

This section, which deals with rescue myths, public debates and historical investigations, demonstrates that the development of the picture drawn even by academic history in a particular state or society is forever dependent on the prevailing political and social situation.

Generally, we see that the pictures painted by these countries all promote a self-perception that endangered Jews were helped and that this image persisted during the first decades after World War II. This attitude would only change more than four decades after the Second World War and the Holocaust. By then, those who had been in power during the Nazi period had left the scene either through retirement or death. Moreover, the end of the confrontation between the two political power blocs made in-depth research and an international acknowledgement of the Holocaust possible. It became possible to scrutinize the support allegedly given to the Jews in a more critical manner, not only among survivors and some interested historians, but among a wider segment of political and social stakeholders.

Dealing with questions of historical responsibility has also an effect on recent and current discussions and developments in states and societies. Especially the open acceptance of public responsibility for behavior in history can help governments and societies to critically reflect on their nation's past.

Alejandro Baer · Pedro Correa Martín-Arroyo

## **The Politics of Holocaust Rescue Myths in Spain**

### **From Francoist Humanitarianism to the Righteous Diplomats**

The legend by which the Francoist government claimed to have saved the lives of thousands of European Jews from the Holocaust has been debunked by historiography. Still, rescue myths persisted long after the Franco dictatorship ended and have even flourished in the last decade in journalistic publications, films and television series and even governmental initiatives. This essay addresses the origins and diffusion of rescue myths, as well as their evolution and continuing significance in Spanish history and memory politics. The first part of the essay will track the historiography of the legend both throughout the Francoist period and during Spain's transition to democracy. The second part will address present-day accounts of rescue, particularly those centered on the figure of the diplomat-savior. In our conclusion we will raise questions about the suitability of diplomat rescue narratives in contemporary Holocaust education and memorialization in countries that were neutral during World War II.

### **Historiography of the Myth: From Franco's Regime to Democratic Spain**

The fabrication of the myth of Franco's Spain as a Jewish haven began during World War II as part of the government's broader attempt to improve its rapport with the Allies, which was severely weakened by Franco's continuous support of Nazi Germany. Without compromising Spain's favorable relations with the Axis powers, this propaganda mainly targeted the United States (US) and had a double aim. First, it intended to portray Francoist Spain as independent and distinct from Nazi Germany, as exemplified by their different stances on racial laws and antisemitism. Second, it delineated a neutral government driven by humanitarianism with regard to the Jewish refugee crisis. The ultimate goal was to secure Franco's participation in the postwar international community in the event of an Allied

victory by counter-balancing its fascist nature and its former affinity with the defeated Axis powers.

Ironically, the myth of Franco as benefactor of the Jews was initially promoted by several Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and, more specifically, the World Jewish Congress (WJC), which did this in a desperate attempt to convince Spanish officials to ease Spain's immigration policy to accelerate the transit of thousands of Jewish refugees stranded in Europe. In exchange, the WJC offered praise for Franco's hospitality, which improved his regime's reputation with the Allies, particularly with the US. This symbiotic relationship was best seen in the personal exchange between Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig, head of the British wing of the WJC, and Juan de Cárdenas, the Spanish ambassador to the US. Whereas the rabbi impressed upon the Spanish diplomat the desperate situation of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe in the hopes of prompting a policy change from Madrid, the Spanish ambassador was instrumental in convincing his superiors that such cooperation represented a great propaganda opportunity for Franco's international diplomacy. Rabbi Perlzweig soon gave tangible proof of this potential, by broadcasting words of thanks for Spain's humanitarianism even before any concession from Madrid had been made.<sup>1</sup>

Franco's ministers soon profited from these circumstances. Following a formal invitation, in November 1944, Spain sent a Jewish spokesman to the WJC annual convention in Atlantic City. The Jewish emissary, who had been carefully chosen because of his sympathy for Franco's regime, was given specific instructions to spread among the American-Jewish community a positive image of the regime regarding the admission and treatment of Jewish émigrés. However, the case for Spain's humanitarian drive was often unsubstantiated and exaggerated, as exemplified through its restrictive policy towards its own Jewish nationals abroad. Nonetheless, the regime's early propaganda started to bear fruit, particularly in the US. In July 1944, the US State Department circulated complimentary words about Spain's role in aiding the European Jews. According to a state-owned Spanish newspaper, this recognition disproved the "left-wing defamation campaign," which asserted that the Spanish government had hindered these

1 On the origins of the myth, see B. Rother. *Franco y el Holocausto*. Madrid: Marcial Pons Ediciones, 2005. 383–403; and H. Avni. *Spain, the Jews, and Franco*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982. 179–199.

evacuations.<sup>2</sup> This trend was even amplified once the war ended. On 14 June 1946, New York's *Daily News* published an article applauding Franco's humanitarian conduct, claiming that Spain, "despite not being a rich country," had saved sixty thousand Jews from the Holocaust in close cooperation with the US embassy in Madrid and the Jewish relief organizations. This arbitrary and inflated number of sixty thousand saved Jews became the standard figure for decades after the events took place.<sup>3</sup>

It is no coincidence that the US played such a prominent role in endorsing the myth. On the one hand, the personal accounts of the many refugees who had managed to reach the US by transiting through Spain, as well as the WJC's words of praise, promoted a favorable image of Franco's regime within the US. On the other hand, Washington's incipient Cold War geo-strategic interests in the Iberian Peninsula soon eased Spanish-American relations, favoring a mutually beneficial relationship that would culminate in the 1953 Pact of Madrid, which ended a period of international isolation for Franco's Spain. On 12 December 1946, the United Nations' General Assembly condemned Franco's regime for its fascist nature and earlier collaboration with the Axis powers, urging that a new, democratic government take power in Spain. These were the dictatorship's most difficult years, when its survival was at stake. In order to distinguish itself from the defeated dictatorships, Franco's government sought to further develop the rescue myth by portraying an image of a tolerant and diverse state that ultimately gave birth to Francoist Spain's façade of philosemitism. This remained one of Madrid's main propaganda assets when pleading for the United Nations to revoke its ban on Spain. In July 1948, the Spanish Foreign Ministry sent a report to Washington and London describing "the very ample protective efforts executed by Spain in favor of the Sephardim."<sup>4</sup> This was possibly a reaction to the founding of Israel, whose UN representative, Abba Eban, had argued strongly against Spain because of its previous support of Hitler's Germany, even before Israel voted for the veto against Spain in 1949. To counter such claims, in 1948, the Spanish embassy in Washington published a

- 2 EFE. "España ha ayudado a la Evacuación de Refugiados Europeos." *ABC Andalucía* 23 July 1944: 9. Our translation.
- 3 EFE. "España Protegió a Sesenta Mil Judíos." *ABC Madrid* 15 June 1946: 7–8. Our translation.
- 4 Cited in B. Rother. *Franco y el Holocausto*. Madrid: Marcial Pons Ediciones, 2005. 397–398.



second propaganda brochure entitled “Spain and the Sephardi Jews,” which was also translated into Spanish and French. Albeit often contradictory and unsubstantiated, these publications aimed to present evidence supporting Spain’s rescue efforts and humanitarian conduct. Ultimately, the goal was to free Franco’s Spain from the “Axis stigma,” which severely threatened the regime’s international image and very survival.

Following the Spanish government’s continuous efforts, the myth of rescue soon spread beyond diplomatic circles and was disseminated internationally by foreign journalists, politicians, and other public figures. British, Turkish and even some Israeli newspapers echoed the theses put forward by Madrid, frequently exaggerating the information contained in the governmental publications, contributing to a spread of the regime’s professed philosemitism. A leading Norwegian newspaper, for instance, claimed Franco had saved more than 300,000 Jews from the gas chambers. The Francoist campaign to shift international public opinion was so successful that some articles soon began to criticize Israel’s hostility towards Spain at the UN after the dictator had saved so many Jewish lives.<sup>5</sup>

To a great extent, the successful establishment of the legend would not have been possible without the endorsement of the Spanish Jewish community itself. Following the exceptional opening of the two synagogues of Madrid and Barcelona in 1949, the then president of the unauthorized Jewish community, Ignacio Bauer Landauer, started, in return, to support Franco in the international forums. From 1952, his successor Daniel Barukh continued to serve the Franco Government in that same manner.<sup>6</sup> In 1965, General Franco had a meeting with Max Mazin and Alberto Levy, then presidents of Madrid’s and Barcelona’s respective Jewish communities, with the aim of fully legalizing the status of the Spanish Jewish communities.<sup>7</sup>

5 Synnøve Stray Fischer. “[Los “Judíos Españoles” han Escapado de las Cámaras de Gas de Hitler.]” *Aftenposten* 15 Jan. 1953; and “Spanish-Israeli Relations.” *The Jewish Chronicle* 16 Jan. 1953; both cited in S. Camallong, *The Spanish Perception of the Jewish Extermination, 1945–2005*; Diss. Cambridge, 2013. 82–84.

6 G. Álvarez Chillida. *El Antisemitismo en España: la Imagen del Judío, 1812–2002*. Madrid: Marcial Pons Ediciones, 2002. 423–424.

7 This meeting was celebrated in the American press; see, for instance, P. Hoffmann. “Franco Receives Jew’s Spokesmen: Last Such Talk by Spanish Head of State Was in 1492.” *New York Times* 25 Jan. 1965. 1–4.

Years after the meeting, Max Mazin continued to praise the Franco government's "determination and spirit of human solidarity" during the Holocaust, which, as he pointed out in 1973, rendered Spain, "one of the few lights that shone in the lengthy and dark night that the Jews endured during the tragic years of German Nazism."<sup>8</sup> Such testimonies from Spanish Jews were essential in consolidating the myth of Spain as a rescuer nation as well as Franco's philosemitism, all the more so when Max Mazin acted as Spain's de facto ambassador to Israel until the official start of Spanish-Israeli diplomatic relations in 1986.

In addition to the Spanish Jewish community's endorsement, the single most important element that was needed to validate the myth was the sanctioning of the scholarly community. This was achieved during the 1970's by two deeply flawed monographs dedicated to the subject of Franco and the Jews during World War II, authored by Federico Ysart and the American rabbi Chaim Lipschitz respectively.<sup>9</sup> The Foreign Ministry intervened in the writing process, providing both authors with a selection of archival sources, and even made several "suggestions" to Ysart's original draft, with the aim of adjusting the tone of these publications to the regime's interests. In spite of this, both Ysart and Lipschitz have been widely quoted by apologists of the regime, as well as by non-partisan scholars around the world, unintentionally contributing to the spread of the regime's interpretation even recently.

Over the last three decades, several historians have repeatedly debunked the regime's long-standing fabrications with more rigorous research, leading to a new historical consensus on Spain's stance during the Holocaust.

This scholarly analysis was inaugurated by Haim Avni's pioneering monograph,<sup>10</sup> and includes the book by Antonio Marquina and Gloria Inés

- 8 Cited in J. A. Cabezas. *Madrid y sus Judíos*. Madrid: Avapiés, 1987. 175. Our translation.
- 9 F. Ysart. *España y los Judíos en la Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Barcelona: DOPESA, 1973; and Chaim U. Lipschitz. *Franco, Spain, the Jews, and the Holocaust*. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1984.
- 10 H. Avni. *Spain, the Jews, and Franco*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982; originally published in Hebrew. Tel Aviv: n.p., 1974.

Ospina,<sup>11</sup> as well as more recent publications by Bernd Rother,<sup>12</sup> and Josep Calvet<sup>13</sup> and others.

However, despite the established historical consensus and the consolidation of Spanish democracy, there are still many ways in which the legend persists in contemporary Spain, with frequent assistance by Spanish governmental institutions. As late as 1997, the Spanish Foreign Ministry co-produced an academic publication that ignored previous scholarly research and was based on “hand-picked” archival material.<sup>14</sup> The aim of this publication was to give a new face to the long-established myth, by replacing the state with the figure of the diplomat-rescuer as the main focus of veneration. Paradoxically, even though this could be seen as a way to diminish the role of the state, it indirectly allows for the perpetuation of the myth through the creation of a “hall of fame” of national heroes. Below, we will further explore the political implications of this phenomenon, and call into question the usefulness of the diplomat-rescuer for contemporary Holocaust memorialization.

### Rescue Myths and Memory Debates in Modern Spain

It was not until the early 2000’s that the Spanish government finally acknowledged the evidence. Commissioned by the Foreign Ministry, the exhibition “Spanish Diplomats and the Holocaust: Visas for Freedom” (*Diplomáticos Españoles ante el Holocausto: Visados para la Libertad*), reflects a Spanish position less favorable to the Jews than previously asserted. The exhibit presented a more nuanced picture where the diplomats’ actions are seen against the backdrop of a hesitant and restrictive Spanish government policy. In line with this, Israeli president Yitzhak Navon wrote a “word of

- 11 A. Marquina Barrio and G. I. Ospina. *España y los Judíos en el siglo XX: La Acción Exterior*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1987.
- 12 B. Rother. *Franco y el Holocausto*. Madrid: Marcial Pons Ediciones, 2005; originally published in German Tubingen: Niemeyer, 2001.
- 13 Josep Calvet. *Huyendo del Holocausto: Judíos Evadidos del Nazismo a través del Pirineo de Lleida*. Lleida: Editorial Milenio, 2015.
- 14 D. Salinas. *España, Los Sefarditas y el Tercer Reich (1939–1945): La Labor de Diplomáticos Españoles contra el Genocidio Nazi*. Valladolid: Secretariado de Publicaciones e Intercambio Científico, Universidad de Valladolid, 1997.

thanks” to the exhibition, praising the attitude of the Spanish diplomats featured in the exhibition, “in view of the refusal and vacillation of Franco’s government,” and lamented the fact that, “had it been more humane,” the Spanish government could have saved many thousands of Jews from perishing in Auschwitz’s gas chambers and other extermination camps.<sup>15</sup>

Over the last decade, Spain’s relationship to Nazi Germany, as well as its responsibility and actions regarding the persecuted Jews, have become a function of memory politics. Rescue narratives allow for a partisan reading of that period in Spanish history, particularly at a time in which the Holocaust has gained a more significant presence in Spanish public life.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, they indirectly intersect with the debates regarding Spain’s “historical memory” (*memoria histórica*), which critically revisits Francoism in Spanish history more broadly.

In contemporary stories about Spanish diplomats, we can identify the simultaneity of two grossly distorted accounts. The first one builds on the old legend concerning Franco’s government campaign to save the Jews, now focused on the role played by Spain’s diplomats. A more recent interpretation consists of the exorbitant and inflated heroization of the diplomats. In it they are seen as epic figures, resisters, heroes, saints and angels, who imperiled their careers and even their lives to save Jews from the Nazis.<sup>17</sup> According to the former interpretation, Franco’s government

15 Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación (henceforth MAEC), and Casa Sefarad-Israel, *Diplomáticos Españoles ante el Holocausto: Visados para la Libertad*. Exhibition catalogue with texts by A. Baer. Madrid: Publicación gubernamental, 2000. 4.

16 See A. Baer. “The Voids of Sepharad: The Memory of the Holocaust in Spain.” *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* Vol. 12, No. 1 (2011). 95–120; and A. Baer, and N. Sznajder. “Ghosts of the Holocaust in Franco’s Mass Graves. Cosmopolitan Memories and the Politics of Never Again.” *Memory Studies* Vol. 5 No. 2 (2015). 328–344.

17 For instance, the monolith erected upon citizens’ initiative in Cádiz in October 2013 to commemorate the hundreds of Jewish refugees who embarked from that seaport during the war, is dedicated to the memory of Ángel Sanz Briz, ‘*el Ángel de Budapest*’ (‘Budapest’s Angel’), who is here presented as metonym for the diplomat-rescuer. Similar examples of heroization can be found in the TV documentary by Televisión Española (TVE), *El Ángel de Budapest*. Valladolid: 2012; and D. Carcedo. *Un Español Frente al Holocausto: Así Salvó Ángel Sanz Briz a 5.000 Judíos*. Madrid: 2000. Tabea Linhard argues that, in Carcedo’s book, Sanz Briz becomes responsible for the deliverance of thousands of Jews, in spite of what most

saved thousands of Jews from the Holocaust and the diplomats were carrying out his instructions. In the later version, the diplomats were driven by noble humanitarian feelings and acted on their own initiative, refusing to comply with their government's policy, and, therefore, taking great risks to protect and rescue Jews. The force of the rescue stories persists in both cases even if with altered shape and meaning. The first version, the conservative reading, seeks to distance Francoism from Nazism. The other, liberal reading exaggerates the diplomats' deeds in order to highlight Franco's role as a collaborator. We may say that rescue narratives serve today both to confirm the old myth in a new guise, and also to refute it by articulating a new counter-myth.<sup>18</sup> In order to favor a given political agenda, each political reading "cherry-picks" certain facts which are highlighted, while others are downplayed or ignored.

There are many recent examples of inaccurate but politically meaningful interpretations at an official, governmental level that are nonetheless more appealing to the media and to the greater public, and therefore have a wider impact than does scholarly research. In June 2014, Sebastián de Romero Radigales, Spain's consul general in Athens between 1943 and 1945, was posthumously awarded the title of "Righteous Among the Nations." The government of Spain welcomed this news by issuing a statement from the Foreign Ministry, according to which "the work of Spanish diplomats in defending the Jewish population, especially Sephardic Jews, during World War II should inspire a great sense of pride among all Spaniards."<sup>19</sup> The note from the ministry, however, omits the important fact that these Greek Jews from Athens and Salonika were Spanish nationals. This, of course, was the reason why Romero granted them consular protection, ultimately leading to their evacuation and survival. The

historiographies reveal, namely, that the responsibility for the protection of the Budapest Jews was shared, and not only by Sanz Briz and Giorgio Perlasca. See T. Linhardt. *Jewish Spain. A Mediterranean Memory*. Stanford: 2014.

- 18 Emulating Franco's apologists, their progressive counterparts have attempted to define General Franco as an indisputable collaborator through similar reductionist and speculative claims. See, for example, E. Martín de Pozuelo. *El Franquismo, Cómplice del Holocausto: y otros Episodios Desconocidos de la Dictadura*. Barcelona: La Vanguardia, 2012.
- 19 MAEC. "Reconocimiento de Sebastián de Romero Radigales, cónsul general de España en Atenas durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, como Justo entre las Naciones." 3 June 2014. <http://www.exteriores.gob.es/>.

statement hinges on, just as the myth does, the ambiguous conflation of the broad term ‘Sephardic Jews’ with Sephardic Jews of Spanish nationality. Spain did reluctantly protect a limited number of its nationals in Nazi-occupied Europe, and diplomats like Romero were integral in such efforts. However, this did not mean that protection was extended to all Sephardic Jews, and in fact not even all Jews of Spanish nationality were protected.

A similar example can be seen in the recent exhibition, “Beyond Duty: The Foreign Service’s Humanitarian Response to the Holocaust” (*Más allá del deber: la respuesta humanitaria del Servicio Exterior frente al Holocausto*), held at Spain’s Foreign Ministry in November–December 2014. The exhibition deliberately employed the ambiguous term, “Spain’s Foreign Service” (*Servicio Exterior de España*), to refer to the several diplomats who saved Jews from the Holocaust, although the term’s imprecision implies that these actions were part of a wider national rescue campaign. Tellingly, the commemorative plaque unveiled by the foreign affairs minister José Manuel García-Margallo during the ceremony celebrates “those members of the Foreign Service who, with exemplary courage and from their European destinations, saved thousands of Jews from certain death under the sole protection of the Spanish flag.” The Franco government’s reluctance to take care of its own nationals is only briefly mentioned in the catalogue.<sup>20</sup>

Another political means of perpetuating the myth at the governmental level is through the omission of crucial elements of the story. In June 2015, for instance, the Spanish government passed the long-anticipated law which would grant Spanish nationality to those Sephardic Jews living elsewhere who could prove their Spanish descent. The legal text discusses at length its precedent, the Primo de Rivera Decree of 1924, and describes how this decree allowed many Spanish diplomats to protect Jews from the Nazi genocide. However, it fails to address the Spanish government’s stance towards its own nationals, only vaguely mentioning that, “the brutal sacrifice of thousands of Sephardim is the everlasting link that binds Spain to the memory of the Holocaust.” This evasive style and imprecise terminol-

20 MAEC. *Más Allá del Deber: La Respuesta Humanitaria del Servicio Exterior frente al Holocausto*. Exhibition catalogue with texts by A. Lisbona. Madrid: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 2014. 7–9.

ogy is common to most discourses and references from government officials about the subject.<sup>21</sup>

In the wake of a growing awareness about the Holocaust and the stories of the Spanish diplomats, there has also been a series of publications by independent authors and journalists that currently challenge the historical consensus achieved after decades of misinformation. With the aim of undermining an increasingly dominant narrative that associates Spain's fascist past to Nazism, conservatives and neo-fascists have attempted to promote simple but politically useful interpretations of a very complex history. These counter-revisionist accounts actively try to prove the legend to be true in ways that lack any grounding in historical scholarship, but that are able to reach a larger audience than do professional history books. Led by the maxim that “not everything about Franco was bad”, these hagiographical accounts are key to understanding why the legend persists today.<sup>22</sup>

One case of unprecedented political instrumentalization of the Holocaust is the following example. In the fall of 2010, the extreme right-wing organizations Spanish Alternative (*Alternativa Española*) and Spain and Freedom (*España y Libertad*) held a political rally in Madrid in the form of a tribute to Ángel Sanz Briz, the Spanish diplomat who protected approximately 3,500 Jews in Budapest during World War II by saving them from deportation to Nazi death camps. The banner said ‘Homage to Ángel Sanz Briz and to all Spanish Diplomats who saved more than 50,000 Jews during World War II.’ The number was grossly exaggerated and the diplomats’ actions were purposely mistaken for a wider national rescue campaign orchestrated from above. We see here a rather paradoxical development also identified by Italian scholars; fascism retroactively legitimized by Holocaust rescue and survival narratives, with the figure of the “righteous gentile,” as popularized through film and television, framing a Manichaean

21 Boletín Oficial del Estado. *Ley 12/2015, de 24 de junio, en materia de concesión de la nacionalidad española a los sefardíes originarios de España*. Madrid: 25 June 2015. 52, 557–572, 564 (The citation is from p. 52, 558, §2). Our translation.

22 Examples of this trend are the publications, A. Espada. *En Nombre de Franco: los Héroes de la Embajada de España en el Budapest Nazi*. Barcelona: Espasa Calpe, 2013; and A. Parra Galindo. *Franco y Sefarad: ¿Un Amor Secreto?* Madrid: Ediciones Morata, 2010. Both argue for a large-scale rescue campaign orchestrated by General Franco himself.

narrative of the good Spaniards vs. the evil Nazis.<sup>23</sup> In addition to eulogizing Francoism, the ceremony's central speech, entitled "Islam, the Door to a New Holocaust," further exemplifies how these groups use the Holocaust to disseminate neo-fascist xenophobic hate speech by metaphorically bridging it to a Holocaust "to come."

## Conclusion

As with other issues in heated Spanish political debates, history (or rather the politics of history) is also a zero-sum game. The Holocaust is no exception as it is integrated into the debates about Spain's past and the unremitting evaluation and re-evaluation of Francoism by both conservatives and liberals. In this respect, myth making is the natural outcome of such binaries and thus is immune to comprehensiveness, accuracy, and complexity—the very fabric of historical understanding.

Mythmaking around Spain's role during the Holocaust persists. Now its vehicle is primarily the heroic figure of the rescuers or "the Righteous Gentile" (*los justos*), who have become a most popular component in Holocaust remembrance as seen in TV, films, newspaper articles, as well as in public ceremonies. Since 2005, during the official Holocaust remembrance ceremony held in Madrid every 27 January, a candle is lit either by a relative of one of the Spanish diplomats being honored, or by a Holocaust survivor saved by his action, and often by both. How adequate is the figure of the diplomat rescuer in Holocaust memorialization and education, particularly in the neutral countries? To what extent is this an entry point into Holocaust history? Rather than serving the memory of the Holocaust in its full complexity, to capitalize on rescue myths within an open memory conflict, such as the discussion about Francoism in contemporary Spain, serves to redefine and legitimate images of the country's past while investing them with new meaning.

In this respect, as seen through the media as well as through memorial and educational initiatives, the impact of a globalized Holocaust memory culture on Spain has not led to a critical illumination of that period. Rather, it has led to a new legend, expressed by the heroic rescue stories of

23 E. Perra. *Conflicts of Memory: The Reception of Holocaust Films and TV Programmes in Italy, 1945 to the Present*. Oxford: Peter Lang AG, 2010.



individual diplomats, who are held as national heroes in popular culture, i.e., the “Spanish Schindler.” The sources indicate that some Spanish diplomats certainly acted on humanitarian grounds and took advantage of the loopholes and areas of influence derived from their position, often while facing obstacles from the Spanish government itself. However, with the exception of those shielded by Sanz Briz in Budapest, the Jews protected by these diplomats were Spanish nationals, and it was within their mandate to extend to them diplomatic protection. These individuals and their actions are no less deserving of remembrance and tribute, but their usefulness should be carefully questioned as they influence public understanding of the Holocaust negatively, by promoting self-congratulatory narratives that ultimately underwrite old, long-standing myths. Gravitating around an euphemistic history of rescuers and the saved, the excessive weight of the righteous gentile limits Holocaust memory and historiography. Such an interpretation fails to address the more unpleasant debate around collaborators and the murdered, and, even if unintentionally, perpetuates the old legend.

## Myths of Rescue and their Use and Abuse in Turkey

“Turkish society has always been far from feelings of xenophobia and antisemitism. Our nation has always welcomed our Jewish brothers and sisters. Our Jewish citizens saw themselves as part of this country. There is no genocide in our history. Seeds of hatred can never flourish in our lands. According to our faith, one murder is equal to the killing of all humanity [...]”<sup>1</sup>

“In addition to welcoming the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 during the Ottoman era, Turkey also prevented its Jewish citizens from being sent to the concentration camps during the Second World War, and it has been a safe haven for Jews from all segments of society, especially for scientists. [...] There is no genocide in our history. There is no hostility against the “different” or the “weak.” In our belief, one murder is equal to the killing of all humanity. [...]”<sup>2</sup>

As these two excerpts from messages by Turkish ministers for EU Affairs made in 2012 and 2014 show, the Holocaust Remembrance Days observed in Turkey for the last five years have been used to publicly assert that antisemitism in Turkey does not exist, that Turkey has always helped save Jews from extermination and that there is no genocide in Turkish history. The emphasis on the non-existence of genocide in Turkish history is not coincidental. The Holocaust and, consequently, Turkish myths of rescue, i.e., rescue during the Holocaust both of Turkish Jews living in Europe and of other persecuted Jews from Nazi-occupied European countries to Turkey by the Turkish government and its diplomatic representatives, have been used for the last two decades by successive Turkish governments to belittle or deny the Armenian genocide.

- 1 Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Egemen Bağış’s message in 2012, available at <http://egemenbagis.com/tr/3855>.
- 2 Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu’s message in 2014, available at <http://www.ab.gov.tr/index.php?p=49393&l=1>.

Based on the importance of Holocaust memory for the Jewish diaspora, and on the extensive debate regarding the uniqueness of the Holocaust since the mid-1980s, Ankara tried to gain the support of western Jewish communities in order to counter Armenian claims for recognition of the Armenian genocide.<sup>3</sup> In certain ways, Turkey's objective of denying the genocide agreed with the position of Israel and Jewish groups in the US who employ arguments concerning the uniqueness of the Holocaust. Beginning in the mid-1980s, close relations developed between high-level Turkish officials, such as Prime Minister and then President Turgut Özal, Prime Minister and later President Süleyman Demirel, and Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, and American Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

The organization of the "First International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide" is the first example of the Turkish state seeking the support of the Israeli government and US Jewish organizations. Ankara protested the organization of this first large-scale conference devoted to genocide studies held in 1982 in Tel Aviv. Turkey asked the Israeli government to ensure that the Armenian genocide not be recognized at the conference. According to the "Encyclopedia of Genocide," of three hundred papers, only six were on the Armenian genocide. Conference organizer Israel Charny said that, "There was serious pressure to cancel the conference because of Turkish insistence that the Armenian genocide of 70 years ago not be discussed."<sup>4</sup> When asked what the Turkish threats were, Mr. Charny referred to a statement made in Paris by conference chairman Elie Wiesel that Turkey had warned of, "reprisals against its 18,000 Jews and a diplomatic rupture with Israel."<sup>5</sup> Wiesel, under pressure from Israeli government officials, tried to convince Professor Charny and other conference organizers to either postpone the conference or to hold it in another coun-

3 See L. Mallet. *La Turquie, les Turcs et les Juifs. Histoire, représentations, discours et stratégies*. Istanbul: Isis, 2008. 396.

4 "Genocide Parley with Armenians to Proceed." *New York Times*, 4 June 1982.

5 "Genocide Parley with Armenians to Proceed." See also, "The Conference Program and Crisis." I. Charny and S. Davidson. *The Book of the International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide*. Tel Aviv: Institute of the International Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide, 1983. 16–31.

try.<sup>6</sup> Parallel to these efforts was the visit to Israel by a delegation of Turkish Jews seeking to convince Wiesel to change the program of the conference.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, Wiesel and prominent American Jewish representatives Alan Dershowitz and Arthur Hertzberg withdrew from the conference.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, despite all these pressures, neither the papers on the Armenian genocide nor their presenters were excluded from the conference.<sup>9</sup>

A similar example of Turkey's pressure is its multi-year efforts to prevent the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C from making any mention of the victims of the Armenian genocide, and to prevent any presentation about the Armenian genocide from becoming part of the Museum's permanent exhibition.<sup>10</sup> Turkish representatives also sought support for their position at the highest levels of America's executive branch. In his meeting with White House political adviser Stuart Eizenstat, Turkey's ambassador to the US warned that including exhibitions about the Armenian genocide in the museum's permanent exhibition would affect not only Turkey's relations with Israel, but would also mean that Turkey would no longer be able to guarantee the safety of the Jews in the country.<sup>11</sup> Both Israel and Turkey's Jewish community supported Ankara's goals. Years of effort paid off, and when the museum opened in 1993, the only reference to the Armenian genocide was Adolf Hitler's famous statement—"Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

Parallel to these efforts, leading figures from Turkey's Jewish community, called "model citizens of Turkey,"<sup>12</sup> were tasked by the Turkish state to help improve relations between Turkey, on the one hand, and Israel and the Jewish diaspora in Europe and the US, on the other hand.<sup>13</sup>

6 R.N. Bali. *Model Citizens of the State. The Jews of Turkey during the Multi-Party Period*. Madison-Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012. 247. This is the English translation of *Devlet'in Örnek Yurttaşları, Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye Yahudileri, 1950-2003*. Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2009. Hereafter cited as *Model Citizens of the State*.

7 L. Mallet. *La Turquie, les Turcs et les Juifs*. 416.

8 L. Mallet. *La Turquie, les Turcs et les Juifs*. 416.

9 R.N. Bali. *Model Citizens of the State*. 247.

10 R.N. Bali. *Model Citizens of the State*. 203-306.

11 R.N. Bali. *Model Citizens of the State*. 205.

12 With reference to R.N. Bali. *Model Citizens of the State*.

13 With reference to R.N. Bali. *Model Citizens of the State*.

The first major victory for this strategy seemed to come in 1990, when the Israeli Embassy in Washington succeeded in convincing the AIPAC to oppose the Armenian and Greek lobbies, thereby preventing a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide from passing in the US Congress.<sup>14</sup> This effort was assisted by a Turkish-Jewish delegation, which was also tasked with the same duty. The rejection of the resolution convinced Ankara that Israeli diplomacy was very effective in the United States.<sup>15</sup> As a result, Turkey's decision to pursue a rapprochement with Israel was also a way to gain support from Jewish lobbies in the US. Turkish state officials were convinced that the desired influence over the US Congress was only possible with the support of the Jewish lobbies in the US, which, in return, were dependent on good relations with Israel. The official position of Israel regarding the Armenian genocide was defined in 1995 during Turkish-Israeli military negotiations: politics should not intervene in the business of historians.<sup>16</sup> However, even this position was not respected by Israeli officials. The most prominent incident was when Simon Peres, foreign minister at the time, on the eve of his 2001 visit to Turkey, said in an interview that Armenian allegations of genocide were 'meaningless', "We reject attempts to create a similarity between the Holocaust and the Armenian allegations. Nothing similar to the Holocaust occurred. What the Armenians went through is a tragedy, but it was not a genocide."<sup>17</sup>

In fact, doubts about the Armenian genocide expressed by Israeli authorities and media and by American Jews, on the one hand, as well as, on the other, the debate about the uniqueness of the Holocaust, which pre-occupied the field of genocide studies until the late 1990s were both very important factors for Turkish state officials in their decision to use Holocaust history to promote an image of a tolerant Turkey, one which would counter the negative discourse created especially by an Armenian diaspora seeking recognition of the genocide.

14 L. Mallet. *La Turquie, les Turcs et les Juifs*. 411; R.N. Bali. *Model Citizens of the State*. 276–283.

15 L. Mallet. *La Turquie, les Turcs et les Juifs*. 411. However, Mallet points out that the decision of the US Congress was due more to the debate on the uniqueness of the Holocaust within the US Jewish community than to the efforts of the Israeli embassy.

16 L. Mallet. *La Turquie, les Turcs et les Juifs*. 419.

17 *Turkish Daily News*, 10 April 2001.

### **History of Ottoman-Turkish Jews Revisited: Creation of Myths of Rescue**

The creation of the Turkish rescue myth is part of a century-long history of asserting Ottoman-Turkish tolerance in order to influence international public opinion. In as early as 1892, Ottoman Jews, “in search for respectable and patriotic ways of acting in public,” celebrated the 400th anniversary of their arrival in the empire.<sup>18</sup> This is also how the Ottoman Jews discovered that, “the centenary offered them a means through which they could seek to reinforce their relationship to their state.”<sup>19</sup>

Taking into account the importance of Holocaust memory in the Jewish diaspora, as well as the Western world in general, a distorted history of Turkish-Jewish friendship from 1492 through today has been used in order to promote the ostensibly positive role that Turkey has played in this history. It claims a continuity of Turkish tolerance beginning with the reception of the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 to World War II, when Turks were said to have helped and protected Jews fleeing Nazism. To promote this narrative, the Quincentennial Foundation (QF) was established in Istanbul in 1989, which was designed as a common instrument of the Jewish community in Turkey and the Turkish state for lobbying activities. The foundation focused on the organization of the celebration activities in Turkey and internationally, particularly in the United States. According to the foundation’s statement of purpose, “the commemoration not only celebrates the 500th anniversary of the arrival of the Sephardic Jews on Turkish soil [...] but also the remarkable spirit of tolerance and acceptance that has characterized the entire Jewish experience in Turkey”.<sup>20</sup> As M. Brink-Danan has written, “The QF began its activities by hiring a public relations firm, the GCI Group, to help them network with international academic institutions, Jewish organizational leaders and fundraisers, and tourism offices and museums. [...] The QF’s public relations projects speak to the

18 J.P. Cohen. *Becoming Ottomans, Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 46.

19 J.P. Cohen. *Becoming Ottomans, Sephardi Jews...* 47.

20 M. Brink-Danan. *Jewish Life in Twenty-First-Century Turkey: The Other Side of Tolerance*. Bloomington: 2012.

goal of creating a representation of Turkey and the Ottoman Empire as a place where minorities (specifically Jews) were tolerated.”<sup>21</sup>

However, we should remind ourselves that, after the “First Palestinian Intifada” in 1987, a harsh reaction against Israel, especially among Islamist rightists in Turkey, was transformed into demonstrations full of anti-Jewish slogans and calls for an Islamic regime in Turkey.<sup>22</sup> Leaders of the Turkish Jewish Community who were concerned about these developments felt pressured. But in order to maintain their government’s support and to help Turkey’s reconciliation with the West, they felt they had no other choice but to accept the task. Furthermore, developing such a narrative was only possible because there was no alternative historical study of the subject.<sup>23</sup>

The discourse of the history of Turkish-Jewish friendship is anchored in three essential components: the refuge provided by the Sultan Beyazıt II for Jews expelled from Spain; the invitation extended to German Jewish professors in 1933 to come to Turkey; and the rescue in Europe of Turkish Jews from the Holocaust by Turkish consuls.

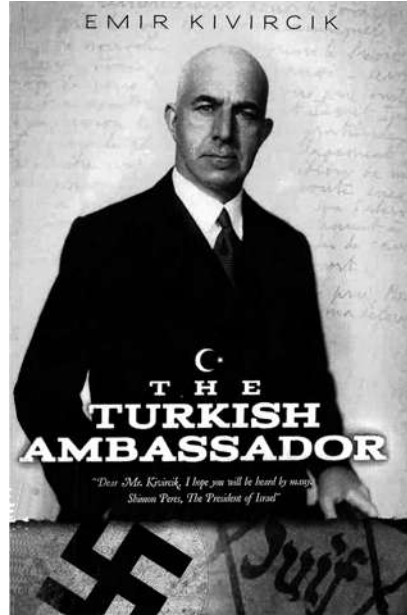
Recent decades have seen a number of publications that attempt to promote this narrative of Turkey’s heroic support for Jews in times of crisis. According to Stanford Shaw’s book, Turkish diplomats did everything possible to save Turkish and foreign Jews living in Europe from deportation and, furthermore, that these actions were part of official Turkish policy. In particular, Shaw stresses Turkey’s diplomatic efforts in Vichy France to save the lives of “thousands” of Jews, despite the risk to their own lives.<sup>24</sup> A second book is Bilal Şimşir’s two-volume compilation of documents from Turkey’s foreign ministry entitled, *Turkish Jews. The Fight of Turkey against the Racists of Europe (Türk Yahudiler. Avrupa Irkçılarına Karşı Türkiye’nin Mücadelesi)*, which was published in 2010, and focuses on the alleged rescue of Turkish Jews from France and of Jewish refugees from Europe. A third book is *The Ambassador (Büyükelçi)*, which deals with Turkey’s ambassa-

21 M. Brink-Danan. *Jewish Life in Twenty-First-Century Turkey...* 36–37.

22 R.N. Bali. *Model Citizens of the State*. 305.

23 This void was finally filled in 1999 by R.N. Bali’s masterpiece, *An Odyssey of Turkification (Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni. Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri, 1923–1945)*. İstanbul: İletişim, 1999.

24 S. J. Shaw. *Turkey and the Holocaust: Turkey’s Role in Rescuing Turkish and European Jewry from Nazi Persecution during the Holocaust*. New York: New York University Press, 1993.



Cover of the book *The Turkish Ambassador* by Emir Kıvırcık, 2011.

dor to Paris, Behiç Erkin, who served between 1939 and 1943. According to the author, who happens to be the ambassador's grandson, Erkin saved the lives of 18,000 Jews in Europe.<sup>25</sup> This fictional account, which was presented to the public as a scholarly book, magnifies the number of Jews saved by Turkish diplomats.<sup>26</sup>

The common denominator between these authors is that their first priority is the negation of the Armenian genocide. In their earlier two-volume work, *The History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw argued that, "about 200,000 [Armenians] perished as a result not only of the transportation but also of the same condi-

25 E. Kıvırcık. *Büyükelçi*. İstanbul: Goa Publications, 2007. The book was translated into English in 2011.

26 Even Şimşir criticized Kıvırcık, emphasizing that this number was higher than the number of Turkish Jews living in France. B. N. Şimşir. *Türkiye Yahudiler*. Vol. I. Ankara: 2010. 19, footnote n. 4.



tions of famine, disease and war action that carried away some two million Muslims at the same time.<sup>27</sup>

The authors also argued that the Armenian losses occurred despite the orders and wishes of the “Young Turks,” who worked to safeguard them during deportations from the war zones.<sup>28</sup>

Interestingly, each of these works on the Holocaust is “one-of-a-kind.” None of these authors had published anything on the subject of the Holocaust before the appearance of the titles mentioned above. For example, two years before publishing *Turkey and the Holocaust*, Shaw published *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*, in which he does not mention any Turkish policy of rescue during the Holocaust. In the preface to his book on the Holocaust, Shaw describes how he was invited to the Quincentennial Foundation’s office in Mecidiyeköy, where he was shown some documents, including copies of letters between Turkish Jews living in France and the Turkish consulate in Paris, and from German diplomats. All the documents used in his book are Turkish Foreign Ministry documents that are still not accessible for other researchers.<sup>29</sup>

For his part, Bilal Şimşir is a former ambassador who has devoted his life to writing about the “Armenian problem” as he calls it. His sixteen books are mostly compilations of documents published between 1968 and 2005. Only in 2010 did he decide to publish a work on the Holocaust and Turkey. In his books on the Holocaust, Şimşir uses a selection of Turkish diplomatic documents that only illustrate positive initiatives on the part of Turkish diplomatic representatives. However, since the archives are not accessible to other scholars, there is no possibility of confirming the authenticity of these documents. Moreover, even if all are authentic, this is a biased selection, as his stated aim is to prove that, “While Turkey fought a

27 S. J. Shaw and E. Kural Shaw. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*. Vol. II (1977). 316.

28 S. J. Shaw and E. Kural Shaw. *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*. Vol. II. (1977). 315.

29 Interestingly, the documents used by Shaw contain a wealth of important information that refutes his own thesis. Using these documents among many others, Guttstadt dismantles Shaw’s thesis. His book was first published in English in 1993 and, therefore, in the context of the celebration activities of 1992, showing clearly that this book was written for foreign audiences. It first appeared in Turkish in 2013, more than ten years later.

legal war through diplomacy, [the country] also conducted an arduous and honorable struggle against Europe's racists."<sup>30</sup>

In August 2007, the American Anti-Defamation League (ADL), faced with criticism from the Armenian communities, changed its position on the genocide. It had previously limited its description of the events of 1915 as a "massacre" and an "atrocious." It now acknowledged the genocide. In a 2007 press release immediately condemned by the Turkish government, ADL director Abraham Foxman now stated that, "The consequences of those actions," by the Ottoman Empire against Armenians, "were indeed tantamount to genocide."<sup>31</sup> Nine days later, in an interview with a Turkish newspaper, the author of the "Ambassador" said that the story of his grandfather was the best answer to the ADL's and Armenian claims about the genocide. He said, "Even in our country most of the people don't know about Behiç Erkin. His introduction to the world is extremely important in terms of Turkey's image. At this point, considering the efforts of the Armenian diaspora in the world against us, maybe our last trump card is to make a movie of Behiç Bey's life story."<sup>32</sup>

Claims common to the disseminators of the myths of rescue can be summarized as follows: Turkey had an open door policy for Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe and Turkish consuls provided identity papers for former Turkish Jews who no longer had Turkish citizenship in order to place them under consular protection, and that Turkey rescued Turkish Jews from France.

All these claims are refuted by two recent studies that are based on historical documents located in the archives of different countries.<sup>33</sup> Yet concerning Jewish refugees, even some public announcements by Turkey's government from that period make clear that Turkey had no intention or policy of accepting Jewish refugees.<sup>34</sup>

Regarding Jewish refugees willing to transit Turkey en route to Palestine, as the famous example of the Struma demonstrates, conditions for

30 B. N. Şimşir. *Türkiye Yahudiler*. Vol. I. 9.

31 Available at [http://archive.adl.org/presrele/mise\\_00/5114\\_00.html#Vjbyyos5nmQ](http://archive.adl.org/presrele/mise_00/5114_00.html#Vjbyyos5nmQ).

32 Zeynep Ciftçi. "Interview with Emir Kıvırcık." *Yeni Şafak* 20 August 2007.

33 C. Guttstadt's *Turkey, the Jews and the Holocaust* was first published in German in 2008. This paper has used the Turkish version as reference. See also İ. Bahar. *Turkey and the Rescue of European Jews*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

34 For an example, see R. N. Bali. *Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni*. 341.

transit were extremely hard. Between 1940 and 1944, 13,240 Jews were able to transit through Turkey while fleeing to Palestine. With regard to the rescue of Turkish Jews living in France, apart from the genuine rescue stories of a few consuls, Turkey's policy was to prevent, as far as possible, the return of Turkish Jews to Turkey. If things had been otherwise, thousands of Turkish Jews who lost their lives in the death camps might have been saved.

The rescue myth has been driven not only by the books cited above, but also by pseudo-academic conferences and "documentaries." The pseudo-documentary "Desperate Hours" focuses on German Jewish émigrés who found refuge in Turkey, and on the rescue activities of Jews by two Turkish diplomats. One was Necdet Kent, wartime vice consul at the Turkish consulate general in Marseilles, and Selahattin Ülkümen, wartime Turkish consul in Rhodes. Concerning Jewish émigrés from Nazi Germany, it is important to note that their situation was an exception to the general policy of rejecting refugees.<sup>35</sup> Regarding Kent and Ülkümen, it is important to remember that the latter is the only Turkish consul recognized by Yad Vashem as a "Righteous among the Nations" for saving the lives of approximately fifty Jews, thirteen of whom were Turkish citizens. The situation regarding Necdet Kent's rescue story is completely different. According to his own testimony, one night he ran to the Saint Charles train station in Marseilles to try to prevent the deportation of eighty Turkish Jews. There he argued with the Gestapo officer present, and even boarded the train. It left the station but after a while it stopped, and German officials allowed Kent to bring back the Turkish Jewish detainees. Yet, until the present, Holocaust researchers and Yad Vashem's "Commission for the Designation of the Righteous among the Nations" have not found any document or witness testimony that proves or supports Kent's testimony.

Another pseudo-documentary is "The Turkish Passport," a compilation of distorted versions of historical events that focuses on the alleged rescue activities of Necdet Kent, Behiç Erkin and Namık Kemal Yolga, vice consul in Paris.<sup>36</sup> The film presents the repatriation of some 400 Turkish

35 See also C. Guttstadt's essay in this volume.

36 For an impressive review of *The Turkish Passport*, see C. Guttstadt's review at <http://sephardichorizons.org>, and U. Ümit Üngör. "Manipulation, Mystification, and Misrepresentation: Review of the Documentary *The Turkish Passport*." <https://networks.h-net.org>.



Postage stamp issued by Turkish Mail in 2008 with the portrait of Necdet Kent. A stamp bearing Selahattin Ülkümen's portrait was issued as well.



Poster for the documentary “Turkish Passport” (2011) directed by Burak Arliel.

Jews from France in the spring of 1944 as if it were an action of rescue by the Turkish government, thereby distorting the fact that, in reality, the return of several thousand Turkish Jews from France was offered by Germany after October 1942 and that the Turkish government tried to prevent their return.<sup>37</sup>

This movie's content and form were severely criticized by the two reviews previously mentioned. We may add to this the fact that, because it is a film substantiated by witness testimonies, which are its only source of information, the film's creator has the obligation to provide the audience with accurate renditions of the testimonies. Unfortunately, the interviews are constantly interrupted, making it impossible for the audience to fully understand any of the survivors' experiences. Moreover, the English subtitles of the interviews do not reflect what the witnesses are actually saying in French. This is particularly important when the witness is speaking about a judgment or expressing an opinion about Turkish rescue policy during the war. Taking the example of Albert Carel, the viewer hears him say that, "...many occupied countries in Europe didn't have the possibility of protecting their citizens. This was unfortunately also true for France. In the

37 See also İ. Bahar's article in this volume.

middle of all these countries, which saw their Jewish citizens die in death camps [...], we can say that each time when it was able to do it, Turkey tried courageously to protect [...] its citizens.” Yet this statement was translated in the subtitle to, “Turkey was the only country that stood up while Jews were taken to camps to be killed.”

Yet, despite all the efforts of successive Turkish governments to instrumentalize the Holocaust in order to deny the Armenian genocide, times have changed. No longer do discussions of the Holocaust conceal other genocides. By now there are people in Israel, such as Holocaust scholars and other academics, members of the media and even some politicians, who urge the state of Israel to recognize the Armenian genocide. American Jewish lobbies and organizations that discuss the Holocaust have also changed their approach, while academic publications that examine Turkish policy during the Holocaust are now available. No longer does the prevailing discourse help Ankara.<sup>38</sup> On the contrary, Turkish academics and intellectuals have realized that there may be things they can learn from studying the Holocaust in order to better study and understand the Armenian genocide. A series of academic conferences have been organized in Istanbul to learn how France dealt with its responsibility during the Holocaust, how Holocaust memory internationally has been transformed and made public. All of these efforts have functioned in Turkey to help the remembrance and recognition processes concerning the Armenian genocide.<sup>39</sup> In the last three years in various Turkish cities, Holocaust teacher-training seminars have been organized, giving the participants an opportunity to discuss epi-

38 At the centenary of the Armenian genocide, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum added new materials to their online “Holocaust Encyclopedia on the Armenian Genocide,” including a special statement recognizing the Armenian genocide, emphasizing that “the Ottoman government systematically eliminated the Armenian ethnic presence in the Anatolia region” and reminding the origin of the term “genocide”: “The origins of the term ‘genocide’ rest, in part, in the events of 1915–16 in Anatolia, then part of the Ottoman Turkish empire. Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin highlighted early exposure to the history of Ottoman attacks against Armenians, antisemitic pogroms, and other cases of targeted violence as key to his beliefs about the need for the protection of groups under international law.”

39 These conferences were organized by Professor Nora Şeni with the support of Anadolu Kültür and the Mémorial de la Shoah.

sodes of discrimination and mass atrocities in Turkish history.<sup>40</sup> If it should be used for anything, the Holocaust should be remembered and taught in Turkey with the aim of revealing and understanding past genocides, and helping to prevent future ones.

Finally, we can note that the 2015 centennial of the Armenian genocide showed us that the Holocaust is not the only historical event used and abused to belittle the Armenian genocide. That year, in order to deflect diplomatic and political pressure, the Turkish government celebrated the 1915 Battle of Gallipoli on 24–25 April instead of 18 March, the date on which it is traditionally commemorated. In other words, although traditionally celebrated on 18 March, in 2015 the Battle of Gallipoli was commemorated on 24–25 April, with 24 April being the commemoration day for the Armenian genocide.<sup>41</sup> The government's aim was to show that 1915 was not only the year in which the *Medz Yeghern* (Great Calamity) occurred, and that it was not only Armenians who perished during the World War I. Turks also did, the government emphasized. Problematically, using competitive victimhood ensures that history will continue to be distorted.

40 These teacher training seminars were organized by the Anne Frank House, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Association for Social Change.

41 S. Benhabib. "Of Jews, Turks and Armenians : entangled memories-a personal recollection", *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 17, nr. 3. 369.



## Argentina's Rescue Myth

The prevalence of the rescue myth among the neutral countries during World War II has been an effective political instrument used to distract attention from the disturbing secret links some of these same states had with Nazi Germany.

In the case of Argentina, a combination of historical fallacy and shallow scholarship allowed the country to hide its secret anti-Jewish immigration policy for many decades, promoting instead the false thesis that Argentina's diplomats saved Jews. It was a thesis encouraged by officialdom as a counterweight to the country's Nazi-tainted image.<sup>1</sup>

Geographically removed from the centre of events, Argentina's relationship to the Holocaust remains a footnote to the broader history of the Nazi era. Thus, the few academics who have studied it preside over the subject in almost solitary dominion. This lack of comparative appraisal allowed Argentina's rescue myth to flourish uncontested by the wealth of historical evidence left unturned.

With the exception of Haim Avni and his monumental book, *Argentina & the Jews*, academics have largely disregarded the ample documentation regarding how Argentina's diplomats, far from aiding European victims of the Holocaust, refused even to rescue some 100 Argentine Jews, whom the Nazis wanted Argentina to repatriate.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 For an example of a half-hearted government-funded enquiry into Argentina's links with the Nazi period, see "CEANA Final Report." Argentine Foreign Ministry, 1998. I was approached by Argentina's Foreign Ministry in 1998 with the suggestion I write a book about Argentina's "Raoul Wallenberg" when the government began seeking cases of Argentine diplomats who might have aided Jews.
- 2 H. Avni. *Argentina & the Jews*. Tuscaloosa: University Alabama Press, 1991.



## From Vienna to Buenos Aires

Before dealing with the core subject of Argentina's rescue myth, it is necessary to briefly address Argentina's very real part in actively providing a safe haven for many of the surviving perpetrators of the Holocaust after the war. Adolf Eichmann and his postwar escape to Argentina need no introduction. What is less well known is that Eichmann arrived on the back of an officially-sanctioned flood of refugees that brought a large number of Holocaust perpetrators, not just from Germany, to Argentina.<sup>3</sup> When Eichmann was kidnapped by Israeli agents and taken for trial to Jerusalem in 1960, Argentine Cardinal Antonio Caggiano declared, "He came to our fatherland seeking forgiveness and oblivion. It doesn't matter what his name is, Ricardo Klement or Adolf Eichmann, our obligation as Christians is to forgive him for what he's done."<sup>4</sup>

### "Too Many Jews"

The intertwining routes taken by both Nazi fugitives and Jewish refugees to Argentina are best described in one of the most ignored and yet most important surviving documents on the subject. In 1949, Argentina's government opened an inquiry into why so many Jews were arriving in the country. The inquiry was inspired by virulently antisemitic reports from Argentina's diplomats in Europe. Visas were being given to "human scum," the diplomats complained: "They are being granted to thieves, murderers, Communists, bums and Jews." The inquest, conducted by Argentina's racially-minded Ethnic Institute, assembled 529 pages of detailed interrogations of immigration officials, with astonishing results.<sup>5</sup>

- 3 The exact number of "Nazis" who arrived in Argentina remains an open question. The Argentine government has put the number at 180, see "CEANA Final Report," based solely on persons with legal charges in Europe. A wider definition, including all former members of the SS and the NSDAP, would probably be in the thousands.
- 4 "La Razón." 23 Dec. 1960. In 1946, Caggiano actively helped French criminals escape to Argentina, see *The Real Odessa*. London: Granta Books, 2002. For the relevant documents, AFM Buenos Aires (AHCA), Argentine Embassy in Rome, "1946, Consulados Argentinos, Salida, N° 1 al N° 211."
- 5 See File 295342, also known as "Sumario Diana." (S.D.) Argentine National Archives Buenos Aires (AGNA), STP, Box 547. For the "scum" quotes, S.D. 12.

The Ethnic Institute quickly stumbled upon a former SS captain who headed a group of French, Belgian, and Croatian war criminals at the Office of Immigration. These men were not helping Jews. On the contrary, their purpose was to aid “German subjects, especially devotees of the last regular government,” i.e. former Nazis, in entering Argentina.<sup>6</sup>

This efficient fascist crew even developed coded abbreviations that they scrawled on the entry files of cases under their orbit. When the puzzled Ethnic Institute demanded to know the meaning of “Doc. Def.,” for example, the Nazi-smugglers explained that it meant applicants should be granted entry despite their “deficient documentation,” since the Nazis in question often did not possess valid identity papers. Another inscription, “J. No B.,” meant the applicants were Jews and that Croatia’s former ambassador to Berlin, Branko Benzon, had denied them entry to Argentina.<sup>7</sup>

Once the Ethnic Institute realized, however, that the Nazi smugglers were acting under secret orders from the Argentinian government, it decided to ignore them and turn its full attention to the original purpose of the inquest, the arrival of Jews. The immigration officials concerned defended themselves as best they could from the charge of being soft on the Jews, but file after file showed too many exceptions had been made. Some exceptions had been ordered by the government itself, for rather curious motives.

One official was confronted with immigration file 205612/48 granting entry to Neuch Rubinstein and his wife, “despite the fact that the beneficiaries are of advanced age and profess the Israelite religion and can consequently be considered defective and useless immigrants.” But the official who authorised their entry explained that President Juan Perón favoured the admission of elderly Jews, “firstly, to soften the widely held perception of racial persecution, and secondly and fundamentally, because being elderly, they can leave no descendants and the (Jewish) community would not increase.”<sup>8</sup>

6 S.D. interrogation of former immigration director Diana, 6 June 1949. 95–99. For list of former criminals at Immigration, “S.D.” 29.

7 For “Doc. Def.” see S.D. Diana interrogation, 6 June 1949, page 96. For “J. NO B.” interrogation Diana, 13 May, 1949. 45, question 15. In this case, Benzon denied entry to the Zunana family, who he felt were Jewish although listed as Catholics.

8 S.D. interrogation Magistrali, 23 June, 1949. 129.

Most bizarrely of all, the inquest discovered that a Belgian war criminal who smuggled Nazis into Argentina was also profiting by selling entry permits to Jews.<sup>9</sup> With the inquest completed, the immigration officials found guilty of admitting Jews were dismissed from service by President Perón.<sup>10</sup>

### Three Issues

There are three main issues regarding Argentina's rescue myth. The first is a secret order from 1938, by which Argentina prohibited granting visas to Jews fleeing the Holocaust.

The second is the matter of the Argentine victims of the Holocaust. On repeated occasions, the German Foreign Ministry (*Auswärtiges Amt*) asked Argentina's diplomats in Berlin to repatriate some 100 Argentine Jews held by the Nazis.

The third issue is Argentina's "saviour myth." As we have seen at this colloquium, this myth is also strong in the other former neutral countries.

Lastly, I will attempt to explain how to approach this thorny issue when this complacent myth is so prevalent, in such a way that a mostly unreceptive audience will not dismiss these uncomfortable facts out of hand.

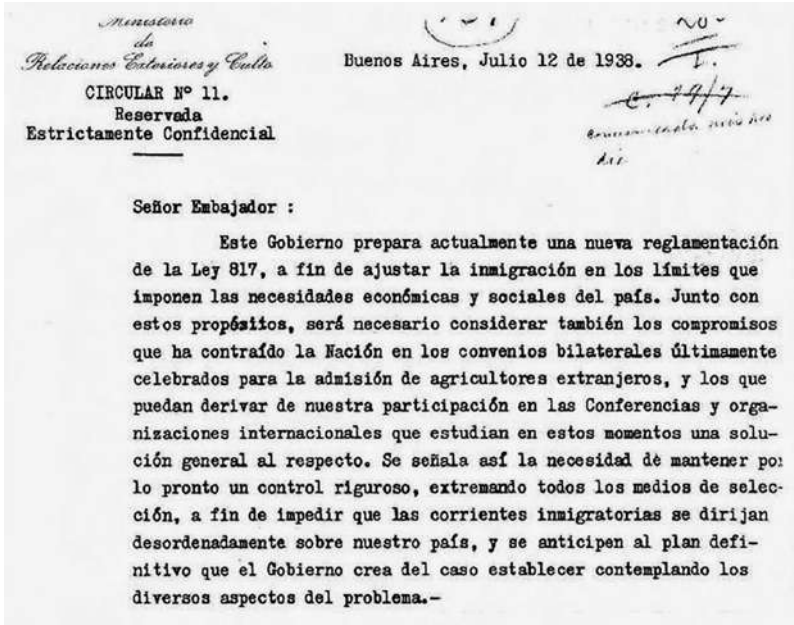
#### 1) Directive 11

In the long research for my book, *The Real Odessa*, I found nothing in the history of Jewish immigration to Argentina about Directive 11. This secret order prohibited issuing visas to Jews fleeing the Holocaust. Yet, I knew that the prohibition had existed. My grandfather Santos Goñi, an Argentine diplomat from 1920 to 1946, applied it strictly. It was a state secret that had become a family secret to which I had become an unwilling accessory.

As Argentina's consul in Vienna from 1927–31, Goñi witnessed the rising popularity of the early Nazi creed. Shortly thereafter, from 1934–38, as

9 For Belgian war criminal Leonard de Roover selling papers to Jews, see S.D. 95–99. Belgian criminal Pierre Daye mentions the case in a letter to Dubois, 26 June, 1948. Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society, Brussels (CEGES), Fonds Pierre Daye, Dossier 525.

10 Dismissal order signed by Perón, 29 May, 1950, S.D. 481–483. For detailed description of these proceedings, see *The Real Odessa*. Ch. 13.



Circular 11 (Directive 11) was a secret order issued by Argentina in 1938 to all its diplomats prohibiting them from granting visas to Jews escaping Nazi persecution. Argentina admitted the order's existence and formally apologized for it at a ceremony headed by Argentina's then president Néstor Kirchner in 2005.

*Argentine Foreign Ministry, records of Argentina's embassy in Stockholm, signed by Foreign Minister José María Cantilo, 12 July, 1938*

consul in Genoa, he had a front row seat for the spectacle of Jews fleeing through that Italian port to the Americas. Lastly, in Bolivia from 1939–44, he tried his best to stop the thousands of German Jews who had arrived there from crossing the border into Argentina.<sup>11</sup>

I was born in the United States and did not arrive in Argentina until after my grandfather's death, so I cannot judge his belief system from personal experience. But, from family accounts, he was a democrat who had dallied with anarchism in his youth and had no sympathy for fascism. His democratic principles, however, did not prevent him from considering it a part of his diplomatic duty to deny visas to Jews.

11 Santos Goñi's personal file at AFM, División de Personal, G 16, Box 3.

Directive 11 caused a rancorous division within Argentina's diplomatic service between "honest" diplomats who applied it and "corrupt" ones who took bribes from Jews to ignore it. My grandfather was said to have belonged to the former group of "honest" visa-deniers. Even as a teenager I realized that it was the "corrupt" diplomats who had saved lives.

The order was signed on 12 July, 1938 by the foreign minister, José María Cantilo. Although it does not specifically mention the word "Jews", it does refer to "all persons that could be considered to be abandoning or to have abandoned their country of origin as undesirables or having been expelled, whatever the motive for their expulsion."<sup>12</sup> The term "undesirables" was interchangeable for Jews in Argentine officialdom of the period. Its use was maintained until 1949 in official government documentation.<sup>13</sup>

Directive 11 also stated that it was being issued in order to secretly counteract any public concessions Argentina might make at a conference then under way regarding refugees. This was a clear reference to the Evian Conference held in France during July 1938. The existence of the order was under no circumstance to be revealed to foreign governments or to seekers of Argentine visas.

The order was born from a particularly Argentine form of Catholic antisemitism. While this Argentine variation considered Jews a "cyst" on the nation's body, it did not necessarily share the Nazi desire to exterminate the Jews entirely.<sup>14</sup>

The order remained largely unknown until I revealed its existence in 2002 in my book *The Real Odessa*. Unable to find it in Argentina's archives, I had asked Argentine academic Beatriz Gurevich, who had been hired by the government to research the old archives of Argentina's embassies in Europe, to see if any copy had survived there. She finally found a copy in the files of Argentina's embassy in Stockholm.

12 "Circular 11" (Directive 11). AFM, Records of Embassy in Stockholm, signed by Cantilo, 12 July, 1938.

13 For an example of the co persistent use of term "undesirables" in 1949, see S.D. Memorandum by Senator Mathus Hoyos. 18 Feb. 1949. 12–18.

14 For "cyst" comparison, see S. Peralta, *Influencia del Pueblo Arabe en la Argentina, Sociedad Impresora Argentina*. Buenos Aires: 1946. 69, 296, 307. Published while Peralta was director of immigration. Peralta had published an even more venomous book against the Jews three years earlier, *La Acción del Pueblo Judío en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: n.p., 1943.

The desire to keep Jews out of Argentina was shared by many of the country's diplomats in Europe. One spine-chilling British document from August 1941 exemplifies their thinking. Argentina's ambassador to London received an appeal from Britain to permit the transport of 20 Jewish children to join their relatives in Argentina. But Jewish children "were exactly the people whom the Argentine government did not want to have in the country as they would eventually grow up and would help to increase the Jewish population by propagation," Argentina's ambassador said. He could only permit their transport if the children were first sterilized.<sup>15</sup>

Fortunately for those who could afford the bribes, Argentina's diplomats were extremely corrupt. This opened a wide door for thousands of Holocaust refugees to reach Argentina. US and British archives contain documentation on the subject. "Among the consular officers in Europe such graft was the rule rather than the exception," the US embassy in Buenos Aires reported in 1943. Consuls in Europe could be bought for less than 1,000 Argentine pesos per visa, while Argentine Foreign Ministry officials in Buenos Aires received up to 30,000 or 40,000 pesos for a group of Jewish refugees. "The immigration of the majority of refugees appears to be in violation of the strict Argentine immigration laws and regulations," the embassy stated.<sup>16</sup>

This extraordinary corruption explains a contradiction that apologists for Argentina have exploited ably. Despite its secret attempt to keep out the Jews, Argentina probably received more refugees than any other nation of the Americas. There are no completely reliable figures, but it is calculated that some 50,000 Jews arrived in Argentina between 1933 and 1950. Apologists claim that this is proof there was no real antisemitic slant to Argentina's immigration policy. The reality is different, however. To get in, many Jews had to bribe Argentine diplomats, who passed them off as Catholics in official documents. This is something I was able to confirm by checking the passenger lists at Argentina's Office of Immigration. A large number of passengers with Jewish surnames declared themselves as "Catholics" in the

15 The National Archives London, FO 371/29210 – W9798. Report by Lord Winterton of his meeting with Ambassador Le Breton, 5 Aug. 1941.

16 "Extortion Practices of the Axis Authorities." 6 Feb. 1943. NARA Washington DC, RG 59/250/34/9/3, Confidential Box 5609.

obligatory “religion” box, especially after the war, between 1945 and 1950, when the secret directive was still being applied.<sup>17</sup>

Thousands of other Jews worked their way around Directive 11 by obtaining visas to Argentina’s neighbouring countries and entering Argentina illegally from there. Between 10,000 and 20,000 German-speaking Jews are estimated to have arrived in neighbouring land-locked Bolivia between 1938 and 1941. They crossed from the Atlantic to the Pacific via the Panama Canal, disembarked at the Chilean port of Arica where they boarded a train to Bolivia. That train became known as the “Jewish Express.” Their principal objective was to cross the border to Argentina however they could.<sup>18</sup>

My grandfather, as Argentina’s consul in Bolivia from 1939–44, did his best to stop them. He denied visas in application of Directive 11 and wired fiery cables to Buenos Aires warning of the illegal traffic of Jews from Bolivia to Argentina.<sup>19</sup>

On the surface, the secret restrictions imposed by Argentina seemed to work. According to figures published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, legal Jewish immigration to Argentina fell from a yearly average of 5,267 persons between 1918–33, to a yearly 2,400 between 1933 and 1943. But Argentina’s porous borders meant that, below the official radar, an additional 20,000 Jews entered the country illegally between 1933–43.<sup>20</sup>

17 In 2005, after the Argentine government made a public apology for Directive 11, it passed a special order allowing Jews to correct their religion on the original passenger lists. The decision resulted from an appeal by Diana Wang, who arrived with her parents from Poland in 1947, all listed as “Catholics;” see Argentina’s Immigration Office, Passenger Lists, ship Bialystok, 4 July, 1947.

18 Avni, Haim puts the number at about 10,000, “Perú y Bolivia, dos naciones andinas, y los refugiados judíos durante la era nazi.” *El genocidio ante la historia y la naturaleza humana*. Universidad Torcuato Di Tella: Buenos Aires, 1994. The USHMM estimates about 20,000; see *Refuge in Latin America*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <http://ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007824>.

19 For cables wired by my grandfather regarding the illegal crossing of Jews, see AFM, Autoridades Nacionales. File 21, 1940, Sigfrido Israel Levi; and AHCA, Buenos Aires, DCA, 1939, File 203. Telegram 1609, 14/15 Sept. 1939.

20 USHMM, *Refuge in Latin America*.

## 2) *The Abandonment of Argentina's Jews*

The culmination of Argentina's rescue myth came when a plaque was put up at Argentina's Foreign Ministry honouring twelve Argentine diplomats for "defending the victims of the Holocaust." Among them was Luis Irigoyen, a diplomat at Argentina's embassy in wartime Berlin. The unrecognized son of a former Argentine president and his Austrian mother, Irigoyen spoke perfect German and enjoyed strong connections with Germany's upper class. He had been living in Germany and Switzerland as a diplomat for Argentina since 1927.<sup>21</sup>

Irigoyen was called repeatedly to the office of Eberhard von Thadden at Germany's Foreign Ministry during the war. He was asked to repatriate some 100 Argentine Jews who had fallen into Eichmann's murderous clutches. To Thadden's surprise, Irigoyen demurred, applied delay tactics and stalled for time. German documentation explains the reasoning behind the Nazi attempt for Argentina to repatriate its Jews. Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop feared reprisals against German business interests and against the German community of 80,000 people in Argentina if Argentina's Jews were killed.<sup>22</sup> As Eichmann's liaison at the Foreign Ministry, Thadden had to prevent Eichmann from sending Argentina's Jews to the camps while he tried to convince Irigoyen to repatriate them. But Irigoyen showed a complete lack of interest despite being presented lists of Argentine Jews in Holland, Greece and other countries. Bringing these Jews to Germany for their repatriation to Argentina "would require the consent of his government and this would stir up more dust in his country than the thing was worth," Irigoyen told Thadden in April 1943.<sup>23</sup> In the end, Irigoyen's stalling for time worked. After Argentina broke off diplomatic relations with the Reich in 1944, Eichmann sent all the Argentine Jews to concentration camps. Not one of them was saved by Argentina's diplomats in Berlin.<sup>24</sup>

- 21 *The Real Odessa*. Ch. 4. *The Abandonment of Argentina's Jews*. Regarding Irigoyen, see also, H. Avni, *Argentina & the Jews*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991.
- 22 German Foreign Ministry cable regarding a possible backlash against the "80,000 Reichsdeutschen in Argentinien," 4 February 1944. NARA Washington DC, RG 242, T-120, Roll 2679, E411975.
- 23 Thadden Aktennotiz. 29 April, 1943, NARA Washington DC, RG 242, T-120, Roll 4352, K211032-3.
- 24 For more details of the Irigoyen-Thadden meetings, see Avni, *Argentina & the Jews* and Goñi, *The Real Odessa*.



### 3) *Argentina's Rescue Myth*

It was after the publication of *The Real Odessa* in 2002 that my long-term research turned into public action against Argentina's rescue myth. The revelation in my book of the long-denied existence of Directive 11 was met by official silence. Not only that: the government had put up a plaque at its Foreign Ministry honouring twelve diplomats, who, it claimed, had "saved" Jews. My request for information on who specifically had been saved was not answered. The only document released was a brief statement with vague suggestions of unspecified heroic actions.

When I began digging for names, I discovered that Argentine academics had bent over backwards to accommodate the government's need for heroic diplomats. The plaque had been validated by a history paper sponsored by DAIA, a leading Argentine Jewish institution. I will take one representative case from this paper to demonstrate how the evidence was made to fit Argentina's rescue myth.<sup>25</sup>

The paper states that, in 1942, Argentina's embassy in Berlin had aided a "Jewish woman" named Matilde Rosa Aiolfi de Goldberg. The 30-year-old woman was "at the mercy of the Nazi authorities," said the paper. Foreign Ministry documents show that Mrs Goldberg turned up at the Argentine embassy in Berlin with her Argentine passport, from which she had scratched out her husband's surname Goldberg, and asked the embassy to issue her a new one. She explained that she had scratched out the obviously Jewish surname Goldberg from her document out of fear of the Nazis. But instead of renewing her passport, the embassy confiscated it. It justified its behaviour on the basis that Mrs Goldberg had "adulterated" her old passport and because she could not produce her Argentine birth certificate to request a new one. But Argentina's chargé d'affaires in Berlin, Luis Luti, did ask the Foreign Ministry in Buenos Aires to contact Mrs Goldberg's parents so that they could obtain a copy of her birth certificate there. This request to Buenos Aires was described by the academics as "positive action by the consuls" in favour of "Argentine Jews" in the context of "a genocidal process in full systematic application."<sup>26</sup>

25 D. Feierstein & M. Galante, *La Cancillería argentina ante la Shoá*. Índice 21, Buenos Aires, 2001.

26 For the original document regarding Aiolfi de Goldberg's case, see AHCA Buenos Aires, DCA. 1942, Argentinos en el exterior. File 104.



The unveiling of the plaque honouring Argentine diplomats who “defended victims of Nazism” on 3 July, 2001. Second on the right is Foreign Minister Adalberto Rodríguez Giavarini (wearing glasses). In May 2005, the plaque was taken down.

*Photograph released to the press by the Argentine Foreign Ministry*

Clearly there were glaring faults in the logic behind the plaque. First of all, Mrs Goldberg and the other cases mentioned in the paper were Argentines. This meant that the honoured diplomats had not saved any European Jews. They were merely fulfilling their basic duty as public servants by aiding their country’s own citizens.

The second fault was the quality of the aid being honoured. After all, had the *chargé d’affaires* truly sympathised with her situation, he could simply have issued Mrs Goldberg a new passport on the strength of her old one.

But the gravest fault was blatantly evident in Mrs Goldberg’s maiden surname: Aiolfi. It did not take me long to locate her family. A niece remembered her affectionately. “My aunt married a Polish Jew named Goldberg, but the marriage didn’t work out, she divorced him shortly after she arrived in Poland.” Matilde survived the war and eventually returned to Argentina. I had only one last question: Was Matilde Jewish? The niece laughed loudly: “Of course not! None of us Aiolfis is Jewish.”

The plaque was honouring, on the one hand, *chargé d’affaires* Luis Luti, who had refused to renew the passport of a non-Jewish Argentine in war-

time Berlin. On the other, it honoured Luis Irigoyen, a diplomat who had steadfastly refused to save the 100 Argentine Jews that the Nazis wanted him to repatriate.<sup>27</sup>

### **Making Difficult Truths Acceptable**

Evidence of a shameful past was unfortunately not enough on its own to break the spell. The hold of the rescue myth was too strong. Something more was needed to make the government officially recognize the existence of Directive 11 and take the plaque down.<sup>28</sup> The answer turned up in an unexpected place. There was no evidence Directive 11 had ever been revoked. Although not applied for decades, it remained on the books. Here was an opening for Argentina to take “positive” action by revoking the old order. After a long media campaign, I published an open letter to the foreign minister. As the grandson of a diplomat who had applied it rigorously, I requested that Directive 11 be revoked. Leading Argentine intellectuals joined the appeal. So did Holocaust survivors who had had to pass themselves off as Catholics or cross the border illegally from neighbouring countries to get into Argentina. In the end, it was the cumulative effect of an opportunity for “positive” action and the appeal from intellectuals and Holocaust survivors that turned the key.

In May 2005, the plaque was taken down. One month later, at a ceremony at the Casa Rosada presidential palace in Buenos Aires, headed by Argentina’s president, Directive 11 was finally revoked and a public apology formally issued by Argentina for its behaviour during the Holocaust.<sup>29</sup>

27 Prior to the plaque, Irigoyen and other Argentine diplomats were also cast in a favourable light by German historians Holger Meding and Jürgen Müller, see *Ayuda prestada por diplomáticos argentinos en el Tercer Reich (Aid Provided by Argentine Diplomats in the Third Reich)*. 1998.

28 The number of media articles in Argentina regarding the controversial plaque are too numerous to mention here. I published two articles, in the daily *La Nación* 15 Jan. 2004, and in the magazine *TXT* 8 Aug. 2003.

29 See Foreign Ministry Resolution 999, 16 May, 2005, ordering the removal of the plaque. Directive 11 was revoked and a public apology issued at a ceremony led by then President Néstor Kirchner and his Foreign Minister Rafael Bielsa on 8 June, 2005.

François Wisard

## **The Swiss Experience with State-Commissioned Historical Investigations**

### **A Short Overview with a Focus on the Bergier-Commission (1996–2002)**

Since the mid-1990s, more than 20 state-commissioned historical investigations have been carried out in European and other countries on Holocaust-related issues.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, such studies can differ greatly from one another with regard, for example, to their research mandate, access to archives, the extent of findings and experts' recommendations. A comparative study of this work remains a research *desideratum*.

After Norway in May 1996, Switzerland was the second country to establish such a historical commission—the “Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland—Second World War” (hereafter ICE).<sup>2</sup> Chaired by the Swiss historian Jean-François Bergier, the ICE, which published more than 10,000 pages of complete findings, was, however, by no means the only historical study commissioned by Swiss authorities. Nor was it the only one in the 1990s tasked to deal with Switzerland's role during World War II.

This article will focus on two basic questions. First, a comparative one: What other historical studies have been commissioned by Swiss authorities since 1945? Secondly, a methodological one; How were the questions concerning the ICE's research mandate, access to archives and publication of results solved?

1 For an overview in 2003: Forum Politische Bildung, ed. *Gedächtnis und Gegenwart*. Innsbruck: Studien-Verlag, 2003. 22.

2 On the ICE, see [www.uek.ch](http://www.uek.ch) containing an overview and basic information. Among an abundant literature: H. Junz. *Confronting Holocaust History. Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism* No. 8 May 2003. 1–6.

## State-Commissioned Historical Studies in Switzerland: A Short Overview<sup>3</sup>

In the mid-1950s, as a consequence of the publication of German diplomatic documents revealing the Swiss role in the 1938 introduction of the “J”-stamp in passports of Jews from the Third Reich, the lawyer Carl Ludwig was given the task of studying Swiss refugee policy from 1933 onward. His report, published in 1957, detailed among other issues, the decisions taken by the authorities, even those hardly known to the public at large.<sup>4</sup> In the early 1960s, the historian Edgar Bonjour was tasked with conducting research on Swiss foreign policy during the Second World War, which resulted in the publication of a three-volume study.<sup>5</sup> Both Ludwig and Bonjour were granted privileged access to archives, and as a result of their research, both were critical of that period’s refugee policy. Ludwig stated that a more liberal refugee policy would undoubtedly have saved countless persecuted persons from extermination, whereas Bonjour wrote that an entire generation had failed with regard to the 1942 decision to close the Swiss border.<sup>6</sup> Until 1989, only the World War II era was the object of historical studies commissioned by the state.

However, during the 1990s and 2000s, the scope was noticeably enlarged. Now under scrutiny were Swiss relations with Rwanda, South Africa, Argentina, former East Germany’s *Stasi*, as well as state security and children of the Yenish community. The international context, in particular the end of the Cold War, is one likely reason for the increase of this type of historical investigation. The national context, however, also played a role.

- 3 This overview does not deal with a second ICE, which was very recently appointed by the government but has not started its research yet: the Independent Expert Commission Tasked with Conducting a Scientific Review of Administrative Detention. See: [www.uek-administrative-versorgungen.ch](http://www.uek-administrative-versorgungen.ch).
- 4 Carl Ludwig. *La politique pratiquée par la Suisse à l’égard des réfugiés au cours des années 1933 à 1955*. Berne: n.p., 1957.
- 5 Edgar Bonjour. *Histoire de la neutralité suisse* Vol. 4–6. (1970).
- 6 “Il est hors de doute qu’une politique plus libérale en matière d’admission aurait eu pour effet de mettre d’innombrables personnes à l’abri des persécutions.” (C. Ludwig. *La politique pratiquée par la Suisse*. 355. “C’est toute une génération qui a failli, qui porte une part de responsabilité.” (E. Bonjour. *Histoire de la neutralité suisse*, Vol. 6. 36).

Between 1989–1990, two Parliamentary Investigation Committees (*Parlamentarische Untersuchungskommissionen*) were established to analyze activities of governmental bodies mainly related to intelligence work, state security and the fight against white-collar crime.<sup>7</sup> The system of mass surveillance of the population was gradually revealed. These were quite extraordinary measures, reflecting a broad mistrust against the state, given that “only” four committees of this kind to the present have been established. In the context of these investigations, the first historical study since Bonjour’s was commissioned by the state. A team was tasked to study the history of state security after 1935, and was granted privileged access to the relevant files.<sup>8</sup> The conduct of state-commissioned historical investigation by a team, and no longer by a single person, combined with broad mistrust against what was deemed untold or secret state activities, were both new for Switzerland. These were likely some of the factors which explain the significant increase of state-commissioned historical investigations in the 1990s and early 2000s, as well as the breadth of the ICE’s research mandate.<sup>9</sup>

Three of these investigations, all linked with privileged access to archives, were commissioned by one of the seven federal departments, or ministries.<sup>10</sup> The role of the Swiss aid agency in Rwanda in the context of the 1994 genocide, and the 1977 kidnapping of a Swiss citizen in Argentina, were identified as research topics by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.<sup>11</sup> As for the investigation commissioned by the Federal Department for Home Affairs concerning the removal of hundreds of children of the Yenish community<sup>12</sup> from their parents between the 1920s and the 1970s, this is part of a broader story. Such research had been requested pre-

7 Their reports are available at [www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch), Documentation <Reports> Reports CEP. See also Dorothee Liehr. *Skandal und Nation*. Marburg: Tectum, 2014.

8 Georg Kreis, ed. *La protection politique de l’Etat en Suisse*. Berne: P. Haupt, 1993.

9 For an overview: Stefan Schürer. *Die Verfassung im Zeichen historischer Gerechtigkeit*. Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2009.

10 Two additional investigations commissioned by a ministry dealt with Holocaust related issues (see ch. 3).

11 “La coopération suisse au Rwanda. [...] Rapport du Groupe d’Etude institué par le DFAE.” 20 Jan. 1996. The report was mainly based on interviews. Antoine Fleury and Dietrich Schindler. “Rapport relatif aux activités de l’administration fédérale [...] lors de la disparition d’Alexei Jaccard.” Berne. (2000).

12 The Yenish community is an autonomous ethnic group of the Travellers.

viously as a supplement to compensation measures.<sup>13</sup> In their 1998 report, the research team stated that it had agreed to the task under the condition that it was free to choose content and methods, as well as being given full access to files kept at the Swiss Federal Archives. Personal information on the victims and the locations where the events took place was altered so that the victims could not be identified. The authors made several recommendations and called for scientific research to be carried out.<sup>14</sup> Such an examination was eventually conducted within the framework of the Swiss National Science Foundation (hereafter SNF), a central instrument for state-funded research based on the principle of scientific self-governance.

In the Federal Parliament, the possibility of commissioning two historical investigations besides the one on Holocaust-related issues (the area designated for the ICE) was discussed at length. The first discussion concerned all kinds of connections with former East Germany's *Stasi* and started as early as 1991. A draft of a federal decree was made in 1997.<sup>15</sup> It was similar to the decree that had established the ICE, and it also planned to grant access to private archives. This draft did not establish a commission, but appointed one expert who nevertheless would have been allowed to hire a research team, as the ICE was. The draft of a federal decree eventually did not pass because the two houses of Parliament did not manage to come to an agreement. One of the main difficulties concerning the implementation of this project was linked to a distinction made between transparency and justice, and between historical research and criminal investigations. For the member of Parliament who made this proposal, both aspects were related. It was thought that historical research should lead to criminal investigations or punishment, or at least provide the basis for them. But the largest part of relevant files was kept in Germany, not in Switzerland, and according to German law, access to files of the former *Stasi* could be granted to foreigners only if the purpose of the consultation was purely academic or related to historical research. Therefore, a decree adopted by the

13 The parliament allocated a budget of 11 million Swiss francs. About 2000 victims received compensation.

14 Walter Leimgruber, e.a. *Das Hilfswerk für die Kinder der Landstrasse*. Bern: Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, 1998.

15 See Walter Frey. "Activités de la Stasi en Suisse. Préposé spécial." (Related documents and reports under: [www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch), Database of parliamentary proceedings, item 95.410).



The 25 volumes of historical and legal research compiled by the Bergier commission.

*Chronos Verlag, Zurich*

Swiss parliament was not considered essential to purely historical research in German archives without any privileged access to them.

The parliamentary debate about whether, and how, to investigate the history of relations between Switzerland and South Africa during the apartheid era reached its climax while the ICE was in the middle of its research work. Therefore, it is not surprising that the setup of another “Bergier Commission” was requested by some members of the parliament. However, a majority to support this proposition was never achieved.<sup>16</sup> Eventually, in 2000, the government agreed to support several studies in the framework of the SNF with two million Swiss francs, and to open public archives. The SNF launched a call for projects and adopted ten project proposals, while rejecting some others. The publication of the results was subject to specific SNF rules. First, it was up to the project manager to decide whether or not to publish the full report, or a part of it, and to find a publisher. There-

16 See Pia Holenstein. “Relations entre la Suisse et l’Afrique du Sud dans les années 1948 à 1994.” (Related documents and reports under [www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch), Database of parliamentary proceedings, item 98.412). See also Stefan Schürer. *Die Verfassung im Zeichen historischer Gerechtigkeit*. Zurich: Chronos Verlag, 2009. 246–256.



fore, some reports on relations with South Africa are available as books,<sup>17</sup> whereas others exist only as unpublished manuscripts. Secondly, the government never commented on the findings of the reports written within the framework of the SNF and declined to make an exception for the report on South Africa even after several requests by members of parliament.

### **The ICE, also known as the Bergier Commission**

In December 1996, the Parliament set up the ICE, with the government appointing four Swiss historians, four foreign historians and one Swiss legal expert.<sup>18</sup> In terms of methodology, the creation of the ICE implied a very broad field of research, privileged access to public archives, as well as to relevant private archives in Switzerland, and the requirement that the government publish the ICE's findings in their entirety. The Federal Council (the government) commented on the ICE's findings. Several differences with regard to methodology between both historical investigations (South Africa and ICE) can be pointed out.

The ICE's field of research as defined by the parliament was, "to investigate the volume and fate of assets moved to Switzerland before, during and immediately after the Second World War from a historical and legal point of view."<sup>19</sup> It covered assets of victims of the Nazi regime, as well as assets of perpetrators and collaborators. The government and the Commission were allowed to add new research topics, as well as to focus primarily on only some of them. Regarding assets and their fate, the field of research was defined rather narrowly. One week after the parliament's decision, the government proceeded to implement it, appointing the Commission's members and defining the mandate in more detail. More than twenty research topics were including in the governmental list, ranging from gold trans-

17 Final report: Georg Kreis. *Switzerland and South Africa 1948–1994*. Berne and New York: P. Lang, 2007.

18 Jean-François Bergier, Georg Kreis, Jacques Picard and Jakob Tanner (Switzerland), Władysław Bartoszewski (Poland), Saul Friedländer (Israel), Harold James (UK), Sybil Milton (USA), Joseph Voyame (Swiss legal expert).

19 "Bundesbeschluss betreffend die historische und rechtliche Untersuchung des Schicksals der infolge der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft in die Schweiz gelangten Vermögenswerte." 13 Dec. 1996. ([www.uek.ch](http://www.uek.ch) > Auftrag).

actions to refugee policy and the arms industry; the time period covered not only the Holocaust era but also its aftermath.<sup>20</sup> All in all, this mandate became broader in scope and addressed general issues rather than specific questions. The government gave the framework and enabled the Commission to establish its own work plan, timetable and research program.

Such a broad research scope raises the question of the financial resources allocated to the Commission. Initially, 5 million Swiss francs were provided for the investigation, with an additional 17 million Swiss francs approved some months later. Over one hundred historians worked for the Bergier Commission. They conducted research in archives located in Switzerland and also in several other countries, such as Germany, France, Russia and the USA.

With such a broad research mandate it is easy to imagine what difficulties or even contradictions could arise; is this particular topic included in the mandate or not? Who, at the end of the day, is entitled to assess whether the mandate is fulfilled or not? Problems quickly arose in Parliament. On the very day of the decision by the parliament, for example, one member asked whether the question of the Jewish refugees turned back at the Swiss border would also be part of the mandate. Another member wondered why the ICE had published a report in 2000 on the fate of the Sinti and Roma, a topic not explicitly mentioned in the governmental list. The government replied that both subjects—the turning back of refugees and the fate of Sinti and Roma—were, in fact, covered by the ICE's research mandate.<sup>21</sup>

The question of the mandate's scope was of importance, especially because the mandate was linked to privileged access to archives. When Parliament established the Commission and defined its research mandate, it also made relevant private archives accessible to the Commission. Special legal provisions were applied in Switzerland for the commission's work.

20 "Bundesratsbeschluss betreffend Einsetzung der unabhängigen Expertenkommission." 19 Dec. 1996. ([www.uek.ch](http://www.uek.ch) > Auftrag).

21 On the refugees: Jean Ziegler. "Commission d'enquête sur les fortunes tombées en déshérence, extension du mandat." ([www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch), Database of parliamentary proceedings, item 96.3680). On the Roma: Luzi Stamm. "Travaux de la Commission Bergier ([www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch), Database of parliamentary proceedings, item 00.3753). The final version of both reports was published in 2001 in Zurich: ICE. "Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus." Thomas Huonker and Regula Ludi. "Roma, Sinti, Jenische."

A general obligation to preserve documents and provide access to records and documents was imposed on legal entities such as banks and insurance companies. The federal decree contained criminal law provisions that applied to those entities that might not comply with this legal obligation.

For the first time in the country's history, private archives had to be opened to historians for five years, the federal decree's legal duration. If we are not mistaken, of the 20 or more international historians' commissions that dealt with Holocaust issues, only two were given access to private archives based on such a legal decision: The Swiss Commission and the Commission of the Principality of Liechtenstein. The opportunity of privileged access to archives had an impact on the research conducted. As the ICE itself noted, "In terms of organizing the work and making strategic decisions it was crucial for the Commission to work primarily in those areas that had been newly opened up through the privileged access to archives. The focus here was on the corporate archives of the private sector."<sup>22</sup>

By Parliament's decision, the government was obliged to publish the ICE's findings in their entirety. Only one exception was granted: personal data had to be published anonymously if requested by a living person's interests. For example, in the report on refugee policy, the names of some victims were not revealed. Between August 2001 and March 2002, the final report was gradually published in one synthesis<sup>23</sup> and 25 volumes of studies. Two of these gathered legal analyses of particular topics since the mandate stressed the need to conduct the investigation from a historical and from a legal point of view.

Recently, a former ICE researcher stated that the Commission did not provide fundamentally new knowledge, although it did add some new findings in specific areas.<sup>24</sup> In its final report, the Commission made several critical observations, in particular on refugee policy, and activities of Swiss companies: "The 'J'-stamp in 1938; the rejection of refugees in mortal

22 ICE. "Switzerland, the National-Socialism and the Second World War." Zurich. (2002). 36. The government eventually allowed the owners of private archives to get back those copies of documents the ICE might have made in their records.

23 ICE. "Switzerland, the National-Socialism and the Second World War." Zurich. (2002)

24 "Die Arbeiten der UEK, von Spezialuntersuchungen abgesehen, keine grundlegend neuen Erkenntnisse brachten." Regula Ludi. "Die Historisierung der Erinnerung." *Traverse*: 2013/1. 283.

danger; refusal of diplomatic protection for the country's own citizens; the generous credits which the Federal Government granted to the 'Axis' under the terms of the clearing agreements; the unduly long tolerance of very large-scale goods transits through the Alps for Germany's benefit; arms supplies to the Nazi state. [...] All of this frequently amounted to not merely a violation of formal law, but also of the *ordre public* to which reference was so often made. [...] Today's Switzerland must face up to its past."<sup>25</sup>

The ICE, though, did not make any recommendations, not even concerning restitution. As stated at the conclusion of its final report, "The task of the Commission did not include clarification in individual cases of what belonged to whom or direct involvement with the material restitution of dormant accounts and of cultural and other assets."<sup>26</sup> However, a government decision required that the Commission inform the government in the event it found specific indications of property claims.<sup>27</sup> In a footnote to its final report, the ICE stated that it had not found anything to suggest such property claims.<sup>28</sup>

Consequently, the measures undertaken, as detailed below, were not directly based on the Commission's findings.<sup>29</sup> Several weeks after the establishment of the ICE, the government laid the legal foundation for a Swiss fund for victims of the Holocaust who were in need. This humanitarian fund was endowed with approximately 300 million Swiss francs.

How then did the government and Parliament react to the ICE's reports? When Carl Ludwig's report on the refugee policy was published, a commentary by the Federal Councilor in charge of this policy after 1941 was appended to the publication. A group of citizens now asked the government to do the same; it requested that the government comment thor-

25 ICE. "Switzerland, the National-Socialism and the Second World War." 521–522.

26 ICE. "Switzerland, the National-Socialism and the Second World War." 512.

27 "Verordnung über die historische und rechtliche Untersuchung des Schicksals der infolge der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft in die Schweiz gelangten Vermögenswerte." 25 June 1997 ([www.uek.ch](http://www.uek.ch) > Auftrag).

28 ICE. "Switzerland, the National-Socialism and the Second World War." 525.

29 After the publication of the interim report on the refugees in 1999, the government, however, had decided to establish a credit line of 15 million Swiss francs to promote greater awareness of human rights and prevent racism and antisemitism.

oughly on the ICE's report and adopt a critical view of it.<sup>30</sup> The government refused to draft such a comment about the report. It might have been surprising should the government have tasked the Commission with examining a long list of topics and then to have eventually questioned its findings once the report was published.

Finally, the government made official declarations on both interim reports and their conclusions, as well as on the final report. In this rather long declaration, the government thanked the ICE's members and the research staff, "for the high quality and broad scope of their work." Regarding refugee policy, it stated that: "The fact that Switzerland offered shelter to more persecuted people than it turned away does not mitigate its responsibility towards those who were discriminated against as a result of the 'J' stamp, nor towards those whom it turned away and abandoned to unspeakable suffering, deportation, and death. The Federal Council remains conscious of those errors for which it offered its apologies in 1995."<sup>31</sup>

As for Parliament itself, which established the legal basis of the ICE, it has not organized in plenum any discussion or ceremony with representatives of the ICE.

Since the first 1998 report on gold transactions, the ICE's reports have been commented on in articles and even books, leading some former ICE's members or researchers to respond.<sup>32</sup> Two points should be briefly addressed here. Starting with a 1999 report and updated in 2001 and 2002, the findings and the interpretation of the refugee policy have remained the focus of critical comments. Concerning the number of refugees who were denied entry into Switzerland or turned back, the ICE's starting point

30 "Der Bundesrat möge [...] zum Schlussbericht der Kommission [...] ausführlich und kritisch Stellung nehmen." Arbeitskreis Gelebte Geschichte, ed. *Erpresste Schweiz*, Stäfa: 2002). 176–177.

31 "Declaration of the Federal Council on the occasion of the publication of the final report of the [ICE]." 22 March 2002 ([www.admin.ch](http://www.admin.ch) > Documentation > Media release). On 7 May 1995, the president of the Swiss Confederation had made the following statement in the parliament: "Le Conseil fédéral regrette profondément cette erreur, tout en restant conscient que pareille aberration est en dernier lieu inexcusable. [...] Nous ne pouvons que nous incliner silencieusement devant ceux que nous avons entraînés dans la souffrance et dans la captivité, voire dans la mort." (*Bulletin officiel de l'Assemblée fédérale*. 1995. III, Annexe. 719).

32 For a recent bibliography of these comments, see Regula Ludi. "Die Historisierung der Erinnerung." *Traverse*: 2013/1. 290–292.

was actually a study by the Swiss Federal Archives published on the eve of the Commission's work.<sup>33</sup> However, the ICE arrived at a lower estimate—slightly more than 20, 000 individuals.<sup>34</sup> The claims of eyewitnesses that they had been involved in the narrative about the role of Switzerland at the time of the Holocaust was a second remarkable point amongst reactions to the Commission's reports. The ICE opened a “contact point” for eyewitnesses. Some of them created an association which published several statements, media releases and letters to the government, all dealing with the ICE.<sup>35</sup> Several reasons may explain the claim of eyewitnesses. One of them is likely linked to the broad scope of the ICE research work. The broader and nearer the mandate is to an overall narrative of a country's history, the more likely eyewitnesses might wish to assert that this narrative does not correspond to their personal view of it.

### **Other Historical Investigations of the 1990s and 2000s on the Swiss Role during the Holocaust**

As mentioned above, three other official research projects were carried out alongside that of the ICE. The “Independent Committee of Eminent Persons” (ICEP), chaired by US citizen Paul Volcker, was tasked to investigate accounts belonging to Holocaust victims in Swiss banks. The ICEP was established following a “Memorandum of Understanding” signed in May 1996 between Jewish organizations and the Swiss Bankers Association, half a year before the creation of the ICE. The parties to the “Memorandum” agreed to cooperate in order to ensure that the Swiss Government dealt with the question of looted assets in Swiss banks or in other institutions. The government publicly announced that it agreed with this request, and a formal project was submitted to Parliament at the end of August 1996, eventually leading to the creation of the ICE.<sup>36</sup> The ICEP appointed inde-

33 Guido Koller. “Entscheidungen über Leben und Tod.” *Studien und Quellen*. Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, 1996. 91–101.

34 ICE. “Switzerland, the National-Socialism and the Second World War.” 118.

35 See [www.gelebte-geschichte.ch](http://www.gelebte-geschichte.ch).

36 MoU: “Appendix A of ICEP, Report on Dormant Accounts of Victims of Nazi Persecutions.” Berne (1999). ([http://www.crt-ii.org/icep\\_report.phtml](http://www.crt-ii.org/icep_report.phtml)), “Declaration of the Federal Council, Appendix C” (ibidem). Parliamentary initiative

pendent auditing companies, and the Swiss Bankers Association ensured that the auditors gained unfettered access to all relevant files in Swiss banking institutions regarding possible dormant accounts. The ICEP published its report at the end of 1999.<sup>37</sup> The bank accounts identified in the ICEP's investigation were published by an institution tasked to distributing 1.25 billion US dollars, money paid by the major Swiss banks in the framework of a global settlement with Jewish organizations in 1998–1999. Based on that settlement, account owners, but also refugees, victims of slave labor and former owners of looted assets were entitled to file claims for restitution or compensation. The results of the ICEP's investigations set the ground for procedures of restitution of bank accounts.<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, a state-commissioned study was conducted by two Swiss historians and published at the same time the ICE was created.<sup>39</sup> The objective of this research was to establish possible links between the assets of war and Holocaust victims, and compensation agreements Switzerland had settled with several Eastern European states. Based on the study's results, the government published a list of about 500 dormant bank accounts, alongside a legal possibility of claiming restitution.<sup>40</sup>

Thirdly, a Swiss historian was tasked by the Federal Office for Culture to report on looted art. His report was available about two years after the ICE had started its own investigations. There was cooperation between this historian, Thomas Buomberger, and the Commission, which delivered its

Committee for Legal Affairs "Fortunes tombées en déshérence." ([www.parlament.ch](http://www.parlament.ch), Database of parliamentary proceedings, item 96.0434). On the context leading to the creation of the ICE, see also Thomas Maissen. *Verweigerte Erinnerung*. Zurich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2005. 57–230.

- 37 MoU: Appendix A of ICEP, Report on Dormant Accounts of Victims of Nazi Persecutions. Berne (1999).
- 38 For the link between the ICEP and the restitution measures: CRT. "Introduction to the Claims Resolution Process." (<http://www.crt-ii.org/introduction.phtml>) and H. Junz. "Confronting Holocaust History." *Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism* No. 8 May 2003. 1–6.
- 39 Peter Hug and Marc Perrenoud. *In der Schweiz liegende Vermögenswerte von Nazi-Opfern und Entschädigungsabkommen mit Oststaaten*. Bern: Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, 1997.
- 40 FDFA, Publication of a list of name, (Press Release, 18.1.1999). "Swiss Government pays out CHF 1 Mln to Nazi Victims." *Wall Street Journal*. 26 June 2002.

own report in 2001.<sup>41</sup> Although it had also access to private archives, the Commission's scientific results on looted art were largely similar to Buomberger's findings. This study led to the establishment of a "contact point" for looted art at the Federal Office of Culture in early 1999.

It is noteworthy that the scope of these three official research reports was clearly and narrowly defined and that all led to specific measures or decisions. Contrary to this, the ICE had a very broad scope of investigation, yet its findings did not directly result in any specific measures, decisions or recommendations.<sup>42</sup>

41 Thomas Buomberger, *Raubkunst—Kunstraub*, (Zurich, 1998). ICE. "Esther Tisa Francini e.a., Fluchtgut—Raubgut." Zurich: 2001. Besides looted art, the ICE also dealt with "flight assets" (Fluchtgut), those cultural assets which were transferred to Switzerland by their lawful owners in an attempt to prevent them from being seized by the Nazi authorities.

42 For detailed presentation of the decisions and measures, see also T. Maissen. *Verweigerte Erinnerung*. 291–599.





## **Section V**

# **The Challenges of Holocaust Remembrance and Education in Neutral Countries**



**Yessica San Román**

## **Introduction**

In the last decade, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance has gone to great lengths to establish guidelines for optimum practices in Holocaust education and remembrance in order to support the intent of the “Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust.” As a result, documents with concrete guidelines on why and how to teach the Holocaust are now readily available to everyone.<sup>1</sup> Also available are suggestions and recommendations on how to organize commemoration events.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, a Multi-Year Work Plan for Holocaust Memorial Days has been put in place to foster the involvement of government representatives, policy makers and representatives of civil society in Holocaust remembrance programs.

The objective of the following section of this volume is, foremost, to learn about how Holocaust education and remembrance is being conducted in countries that were neutral during World War II. A further intention is to gain a better understanding of the specificity and the inherent complexity of the challenges facing those engaged in Holocaust education and remembrance in these countries.

Despite the fact that the challenges faced by the wartime neutral countries are not entirely different from those confronting educators in what were the Allied countries, there are some obvious differences. While both categories of nations never suffered Nazi occupation, nor witnessed firsthand the persecution and murder of Jews on their territory, there are some aspects of our topic that are particular to the neutral countries.

One of the differences unquestionably stems from what might be called the “neutral attitude” itself. That is, those countries deal with the consequences of having had a certain flexibility to maneuver as they reacted to the events of the Holocaust. This circumstance raises a fundamental question about the categories of Holocaust history—were the neutral countries

1 [www.holocaustremembrance.com/educate/teaching-guidelines](http://www.holocaustremembrance.com/educate/teaching-guidelines).

2 [www.holocaustremembrance.com/focus/holocaust-memorial-days](http://www.holocaustremembrance.com/focus/holocaust-memorial-days).

bystanders, rescuers or perpetrators? Such basic questions still have no clear answers.

How, then, do these open questions affect educational programs and commemoration events in these countries? While for many years the prevailing narrative in Switzerland and Sweden centered on their role as rescuers, today we have courageous illustrations of how such questions exist as a central topic of educational goals, something seen in the Swiss teaching material that facilitates controversial debates.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, we have Spain and Turkey, wartime neutral countries with only a few years' experience in conducting Holocaust education and remembrance. Here again, we can detect a focus on rescue stories on the one hand and, as is probably the case in many countries, the absence of any linkage to their own national narrative. In other words, the Holocaust is still often taught as a historical event that took place far away, and one often subsumed into the existence of the extermination camps as the central element of Holocaust history.

As a result, the question, "What does the Holocaust have to do with us" is a frequent question that arises, and one that is strengthened by the absence of original memorials that could serve as useful tools for Holocaust education or remembrance. Pupils have no place to visit, nor can commemorative events be organized at locations where these tragic events occurred. Teachers, representatives of civil society and policy-makers need, therefore, to show great pedagogic ingenuity in order to overcome these hurdles.

In fact, the national borders of the neutral countries, as places where crucial events happened, constitute a genuine option that could fill this pedagogic gap. But they could also serve educational and commemoration purposes that could be developed into memorial sites and explored by students. One example of this is the project "Caminos de la libertad" (routes to freedom), located in the Spanish Pyrenees, and where a former prison has been turned into a museum. There are also marked hiking trails where refugees and their guides once walked. Such examples can serve as useful starting points for education and remembrance projects.<sup>4</sup>

All in all, the challenges facing Holocaust education and remembrance in the neutral countries is, in the first place, not only to make the

3 B. Bonhage, P. Gautschi, J. Hodel and G. Spuhle. *Hinschauen und Nachfragen: die Schweiz und die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus im Licht aktueller Fragen*. Zurich: Lehrmittelverlag Zürich, 2006.

4 [www.camidelalibertat.cat](http://www.camidelalibertat.cat).

history of the Holocaust relevant for their own national history, but, more importantly, to come to terms with the often confusing role these countries played within the entirety of Holocaust history. This condition requires an active debate with each country's own past, one that facilitates a critical assessment of responsibility and also of complicity. In fact, it is exactly such an examination that is required for new applicants to become an IHRA member country<sup>5</sup>. Allowing and promoting critical debates on the consequences of one's own national behavior have today become a sign of healthy Holocaust education and remembrance. Moreover, grey zones are probably the most suitable intellectual environment for learning about and from the history of the Holocaust. Neutral countries, therefore, need specific educational and remembrance approaches that take into account different perceptions and interpretations of the ambiguous role their countries played during the Holocaust.

5 Sweden became an IHRA member country in 1998, Switzerland in 2004 and Spain in 2008. Portugal and Turkey are both today, 2016, IHRA observer countries.



Karin Kvist Geverts

## The Challenges of Holocaust Education and Remembrance in Sweden

This article will discuss some of the challenges facing Holocaust education and remembrance in Europe by examining the case of Sweden. As a neutral country on the periphery of the Holocaust, i.e., not a battle ground, as Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke and Oula Silvennoinen have put it, nor part of what has become known as “the bloodlands,” as Timothy Snyder called the region from the Baltic to the Black Sea, but, rather, a country that possessed a certain amount of maneuverability.<sup>1</sup> In the historiography of the Holocaust, Sweden was long categorized as a bystander nation, but, as David Cesarani and Paul A. Levine argued some fifteen years ago, it is necessary, “to restore the distinction between radically different kinds of ‘bystander,’” making a clear distinction between democratic neutral countries and countries under German occupation.<sup>2</sup> They urged for recognition of the importance of agency and the choices available to individuals. By doing so, they added a moral aspect to an evaluation of the bystander category. In the case of Sweden, the behavior of individual officials differed significantly, making it problematic to generalize the behavior of the Swedish polity as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Following Cesarani and Levine’s argument, I have emphasized the importance of discussing bystander behavior rather than

- 1 C. F. Stokholm Banke. “Remembering Europe’s Heart of Darkness.” in M. Pakier & B. Stråth, eds. *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2010; T. Snyder. *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.
- 2 D. Cesarani and P. A. Levine, eds. *Bystanders’ to the Holocaust. A Re-evaluation*. London: Frank Cass, 2002. 3.
- 3 K. Kvist Geverts. “Sweden and the Holocaust: An Attempt to Make Sense of Problematic Categories and Ambivalent Actors.” in H. Edgren, ed. *Looking at the Onlookers and Bystanders. Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Causes and Consequences of Passivity*. Periodical Booklet # 13. Stockholm: The Living History Forum, 2012. 54, 61.



bystander nations in order to ask questions about that “room for maneuvering” during the Holocaust. All the research cited above also discusses the impact on memory culture and national self-image, which possibly affects Holocaust education as well. But, before moving on to discuss Holocaust education and its challenges in a wartime neutral country, we need to look at the context and framework in which this field of research exists, i.e., to get an overview of Holocaust studies and Holocaust historiography in Sweden.

### **Holocaust Studies Challenge the Master Narrative of “the Good Sweden”**

Finnish historian Antero Holmila and I have argued that Swedish historiography of the Holocaust, as well as the memory culture in Sweden, share many similarities with the other Scandinavian countries. And that, in turn, Scandinavian memory culture largely shares a similar trajectory to developments in Holocaust historiography internationally.<sup>4</sup> Most important is the Europeanization of memory culture and identity, where Holocaust awareness is seen as a founding myth for the European community.<sup>5</sup> Following Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider’s division of the postwar period, in the Scandinavian context ‘the memory work’ can also be divided into four phases. First, they assert that the immediate postwar years, 1945 to the 1960s, can be characterized as one of silence about the Holocaust.<sup>6</sup> However, in those Scandinavian countries affected by the war and the Holocaust, such a complete silence never existed. There were a few early voices and documentation projects, for example the remarkable interviews with

- 4 A. Holmila and K. Kvist Geverts. “On Forgetting and Rediscovering the Holocaust in Scandinavia. Introduction to the Special Issue of the Histories and Memories of the Holocaust in Scandinavia.” in A. Holmila and K. Kvist Geverts, eds. special issue: “The Histories and Memories of the Holocaust in Scandinavia.” *Scandinavian Journal of History* Vol. 36, No. 5 (2011). 520–535.
- 5 J. Selling. “Between History and Politics. The Swedish Living History Project as Discursive Formation.” in A. Holmila and K. Kvist Geverts, eds. “The Histories and Memories of the Holocaust....”
- 6 D. Levy and N. Sznaider. *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

survivors made by the Swedes Einar and Gunhild Tegen.<sup>7</sup> The second phase of Holocaust memory, from the 1960s to 1978, can be seen as a turning point, when the Holocaust became visible in public debates.<sup>8</sup> For the Scandinavian countries, this period is marked instead by the establishment of deeply held national master narratives. In Sweden, the master narrative told was that of ‘the good Sweden’ (*det goda Sverige*), a country which rescued tens of thousands of refugees from Nazi terror, including thousands of Jews, while maintaining silence about the less flattering sides of Swedish bystander behavior.<sup>9</sup>

The third phase, 1979 to 1988, is characterized by what is often described as an Americanization of Holocaust remembrance, where the particular American discourse on Holocaust remembrance also had a significant impact on memory cultures in other countries. For the Scandinavian countries this third period can be seen both as the turning point when the Holocaust appeared in public debates and as an Americanization of the Holocaust, beginning with the broadcast of the TV series “Holocaust,” which, together with new research, challenged the dominant Scandinavian master narratives.<sup>10</sup> There is no doubt that these developments helped raise awareness of the Holocaust in general, giving greater weight and status to Holocaust studies in particular.<sup>11</sup>

It is during the fourth and final phase, from the end of the Cold War in 1989 through today, when a cosmopolitization of Holocaust remembrance began. For the Scandinavian countries, this began in the mid-1990s when politically established national commissions started to wrestle with

- 7 G. and E. Tegen. *De Dödsdömda Vittna. Enquetesvar och Intervjuer*. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1945. A successor project to the Tegens’ work was done decades later by Pia-Kristina Garde. See her book in which she traced almost all of the survivors interviewed decades before by the Tegens’, with accounts of their postwar lives. P.-K. Garde. *De dödsdömda vittnar—60 år senare*. Bromma: “Megilla-förlaget”, 2004.
- 8 For example, the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 and the so-call Frankfurt Auschwitz trials between 1963 and 1965 brought the Holocaust, at least to some extent, back into the public sphere, especially in Germany.
- 9 A. Holmila and K. Kvist Geverts. “The Histories and Memories of the Holocaust....”
- 10 A. Holmila and K. Kvist Geverts. “The Histories and Memories of the Holocaust....”
- 11 Stokholm Banke. *Remembering Europe’s Heart of Darkness*. 164.

the questions of guilt and compensation.<sup>12</sup> Another important yet unsurprising element, greatly influenced by the end of the Cold War, occurred when the old master narratives were called into question and re-assessed.<sup>13</sup> First journalists and later scholars questioned Swedish actions and reactions toward the Holocaust.<sup>14</sup> New questions were being asked and new patterns were being discovered, such as that the Germans were often forced to make limited compromises in the way they put their racial policies into practice.<sup>15</sup> The same was also true in the Swedish case. According to Paul Levine, Sweden's "method" of "bureaucratic [diplomatic] resistance [to the Nazi's extermination policy] worked because [...] Germany had a strong interest in maintaining normal diplomatic and trade relations."<sup>16</sup>

When observing the raising of public awareness and increased discourse about the Holocaust, the importance of the US government's "Eisenstat Report" from the late 1990s cannot be over-estimated. The Swedish government's "Commission on Jewish assets in Sweden during World War II" completed its report on stolen Nazi gold and the Swedish Central Bank (*Riksbanken*). Simultaneously, Göran Persson, then Sweden's prime minister, launched an unprecedented public information campaign entitled "Living History" (*Levande historia*). These developments also led to Europe's first publically financed research center dedicated to Holocaust studies, today the Hugo Valentin Centre.<sup>17</sup>

- 12 A. Holmila and K. Kvist Geverts. "The Histories and Memories of the Holocaust ..."
- 13 H. Stenius, M. Österberg, J. Östling, eds. *Nordic narratives of the Second World War: National Historiographies Revisited*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2011 is the most recent examination of the changing World War II narratives in Scandinavia. On the "White Buses," see S. Persson. 'Vi åker till Sverige'. *De vitabussarna 1945*, Rimbo. 2002; and I. Lomfors. *Blind fläck. Minne och glömska kring svenska Röda korsets hjälpsats i Nazityskland 1945*. Stockholm: Atlantis, 2005.
- 14 M.-P. Boëthius. *Heder och samvete. Sverige och andra världskriget*. Stockholm: n.p., 1991; S. Koblik. *The Stones Cry Out. Sweden's Response to the Persecution of the Jews 1933-1945*. New York: 1988.
- 15 P. A. Levine. *From Indifference to Activism: Swedish Diplomacy and the Holocaust, 1938-1944*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Uppsala: Almqvist och Wiksell, 1996. 56.
- 16 P. A. Levine. "Swedish Neutrality during the Second World War: Tactical Success or Moral Compromise?" in N. Wylie, ed. *European Neutrals and Non-Belligerents during the Second World War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 327.
- 17 Formerly known as the "Uppsala Programme for Holocaust and Genocide Studies" (currently the Hugo Valentin Centre).

Furthermore, it seems clear that Persson's campaign also marked the starting point of the process by which Holocaust remembrance became "officially" embedded into European historical memory.<sup>18</sup> In Holocaust studies, some important contributions have been made by Nordic researchers, many of whom were part of Lund University's Department of History research project, "The Holocaust in European Historical Culture."<sup>19</sup> Another major research program worth mentioning is "Sweden's Relationship to Nazism, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust."<sup>20</sup>

### **The Stockholm Declaration and the Establishment of the Living History Forum**

Sweden is the founding nation of today's International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).<sup>21</sup> When, in 1998, Göran Persson proposed the establishment of a body for international collaboration in what was essentially Holocaust studies, he had already initiated the "Living History" national information campaign designed to disseminate knowledge about Holocaust history in Swedish society, particularly among the country's youth population. The initiative was supported by all political parties within the Swedish parliament with the objective of utilizing the history of the Holocaust as the point of departure for raising awareness about the equality (*värdegrund*) of all people and the importance of democratic principles. One of the primary results of the campaign was a book by Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul Levine, *Tell Ye Your Children; A Book about the Holo-*

18 A. Holmila and K. Kvist Geverts. *The Histories and Memories of the Holocaust...*

19 The projects publications are: K.-G. Karlsson & U. Zander, eds. *Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2003; K.-G. Karlsson, U. Zander, eds. *Holocaust Heritage. Inquiries into European Historical Cultures*. Malmö: Sekel, 2004; K.-G. Karlsson and U. Zander, eds. *The Holocaust Post-War Battlefields. Genocide as Historical Culture*. Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag, 2006.

20 S. Ekman and K. Åmark, eds. *Sweden's Relations with Nazism, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. A Survey of Research*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003.

21 Formerly the *Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research*. It changed its name in 2013 to IHRA.

*caust in Europe 1933–1945*.<sup>22</sup> First published in Swedish in early 1998, it was also simultaneously translated into English and Sweden's other major immigrant languages, including Arabic. To date, 1.5 million copies have been distributed in Sweden, and in a score of other languages around the world.

Beginning in January 2000, the Swedish Government organized a series of four major international conferences on the Holocaust, racism and genocide. The first was the Stockholm International Forum on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. Attended by heads of state and delegates from fifty nations, the Forum resulted in a statement of principles known today as "The Stockholm Declaration." Its fourth and fifth points call on all signatory nations to strengthen Holocaust education in schools and universities in their own countries.<sup>23</sup> In 2003, the long-extended information campaign was superseded by a permanent, governmental institution called the "Living History Forum" (*Forum för Levande historia*).<sup>24</sup> The institution's primary target group is teachers and students in secondary schools and upper secondary schools. Since its inception, the Forum has observed a steadily growing demand for educational material and teacher training seminars. Although the Forum's work has been appreciated by Swedish teachers and students, the institution has been criticized for allegedly being a propaganda arm of successive Swedish governments.<sup>25</sup>

- 22 S. Bruchfeld and P. A. Levine. *Tell Ye Your Children... A Book about the Holocaust in Europe 1933–1945*. 1<sup>st</sup> English ed. Stockholm: Regeringskansliet, 1998. An updated and expanded English edition was published in 2010, preceded in 2009 by the up-dated and expanded Swedish version.
- 23 The Stockholm Declaration can be found on the IHRA webpage, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration> (accessed 09.12.2015).
- 24 To date there are a few scholarly works on the activities of the Forum. See, for example, J. Selling. "Between History and Politics. The Swedish Living History Project as Discursive Formation.;" D. Ludvigsson, "Levande historia—inte bara levande historia." *Rapporter til Det 24. Nordiske Historikermøde, Århus 9–13 Aug. 2001*. Bd. 3, *Mod nye historier*. Århus: 2001. 144–177; K. Wagrell. "Cosmopolitan Memory in a National Context: The Case of the 'Living History Forum.'" in D.I. Popescu and T. Schult, eds. *Revisiting Holocaust Representation in the Post-Wit-ness Era*. London: Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- 25 A petition was signed by over 400 Swedish scholars, most of whom were historians, in 2008. They were concerned that the subject of history would be used as a battleground for ideological campaigns by the government. In fact, their main

## The Challenges of Holocaust Remembrance in a Neutral Country

The Stockholm Declaration also encourages IHRA member and observer countries to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust in appropriate ways, including an annual Day of Holocaust Remembrance. In the Swedish context, the push to observe 27 January as such a day for commemoration was made in 1999 by the government. It also proclaimed that this day should serve as a day for reflection on the equal rights of all individuals, and on the importance of democracy and human rights.<sup>26</sup> Initiated by Sweden's federated Jewish community, the first occasion was attended by the prime minister, the royal family and other official government and civil society representatives. It also attracted a great deal of public interest. Since 2004, the Living History Forum has arranged public commemoration ceremonies, usually an outdoor candle lighting ceremony, on 27 January in Stockholm's Raoul Wallenberg Square in the city center. Most often, a member of the governing cabinet is one of the speakers.<sup>27</sup>

Sweden was spared Nazi occupation and remained neutral during the war. The absence in the country of traditional memorial ceremonies, sites and monuments can probably be explained by the fact that Sweden has been a country at peace for the last 200 years. Sweden's collective memory of the Holocaust period relates more to the war itself rather than the Holocaust per se. Since the 1990s Sweden's national self-image has been subjected to scholarly and public re-evaluation, yet the challenges confronting Holocaust remembrance in a neutral country remain.<sup>28</sup>

concern was not Holocaust education but a then recently launched project on crimes against humanity in communist regimes. See the web page <http://www.historieuppropet.se/> (accessed 10.12.2015).

- 26 S. Bruchfeld. "Är det dags att göra sig av med Förintelsen?" *Reflektioner kring ett begrepp.* in L.M. Andersson and K. Kvist Geverts, eds. *En problematisk relation? Flyktingpolitik och judiska flyktingar i Sverige 1920- 1950.* Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2008. 31–70.
- 27 "Country Report Sweden to the IHRA." The Living History Forum: Stockholm, 2013. Here it can be noted that the Swedish calendar does not contain a large number of commemorative days, such as are common in national calendars of other European countries. Sweden has no tradition of days of commemoration and remembrance of this kind.
- 28 "Country Report Sweden to the IHRA."

One such challenge is the lack of authentic historical sites on Swedish soil connected to the Holocaust that students could visit. However, there are places linked to the history of the Holocaust in various ways that can be visited, even if they are not genuine sites, such as camps or killing sites. Such examples might include spots where significant numbers of refugees crossed the Swedish border from Norway and Denmark, or existing locations or buildings made into camps where survivors and other war refugees stayed during the final stages of the war and afterwards. In fact, every year, a large number of Swedish students travel to Holocaust memorial sites, first and foremost in Poland. Approximately ten percent of Swedish students go on such study trips, and since the mid-1990s, these trips have become increasingly popular.<sup>29</sup> This figure has remained constant for the last several years, and visits by Holocaust survivors to classrooms throughout Sweden also remain constant.<sup>30</sup> For this reason, the Living History Forum has produced a guide book for teachers to use for preparation before and use during such excursions to Poland.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, there are places in Sweden whose history serves as a reminder about pro-Nazi political activities that took place before, during and even after the war. This fact was used by the Living History Forum when the project “On this place” was launched. The project’s aim was to help teachers and students to explore their own local history on the basis of local events linked to the history of the Holocaust. The method has been successful and has resulted in a large number of local history activities around Sweden.<sup>32</sup>

29 “Country Report Sweden to the IHRA.”

30 School trips to extermination camps in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe are conducted both by the Living History Forum and by the Swedish Committee Against Antisemitism (SKMA). Schools in some Swedish regions also organizing such trips by themselves.

31 The guide book will be published as an e-book early in 2016.

32 For documentation about this project, “On This Place” (*På denna plats*), see <http://www.levandehistoria.se/klassrummet/pa-denna-plats> (accessed 12.09.2015).

## The State of the Art of Holocaust Education in Sweden

In order to review the status and impact of Holocaust education in Sweden, we must look into at least three different aspects; the requirements and guidelines about Holocaust education as stated in the national curricula, the state of teacher training courses and programs at the universities, colleges and other institutions of higher education and, finally, ask what is actually being done in Swedish schools regarding Holocaust education.

I have already noted the increased awareness of the significance of teaching, remembering and researching the Holocaust, but is the situation reflected in the national curricula? Ylva Wibaeus points to the fact that the subject of history itself has undergone a shift, “from a national education [...] to a democratic education that emphasizes tolerance, solidarity and consideration as its core values.”<sup>33</sup> She argues that it was the anti-democratic forces present in late 1980s Swedish society that pushed moral issues onto the national curriculum. Agreeing with Wibaeus, Niklas Ammert calls this shift a moral turn, seen most vividly in the national curriculum of 1994, in which civic values were emphasized, with the Holocaust being specifically mentioned as one subject that should be taught in Swedish schools.<sup>34</sup> The new curricula of 2011 also emphasize the importance of teaching the Holocaust and other genocides. It should be noted that the Swedish national curriculum is, for the most part, prescribed on a rather general level, with its guidelines being just that, a framework where the teacher decides on a largely individual basis what is actually taught in the classroom. Taking this situation into consideration, we may note that the level of significance given to the Holocaust as an individual subject within the curriculum is noteworthy. For example, there is no specific number given regarding how many classroom hours a teacher is required to devote to the subject.<sup>35</sup>

When reviewing these changes in the curricula, it is perhaps surprising that, in the 1990s, the subject history itself was downgraded to a non-compulsory subject. This is even more curious when one considers that

33 Y. Wibaeus. *Att undervisa om det ofattbara. En ämnesdidaktisk studie om kunskapsområdet Förintelsen i skolans historieundervisning*. Stockholm: Pedagogiska institutionen, Stockholms universitet, 2000. 235.

34 N. Ammert. *Om vad och hur “må” ni berätta? Undervisning om Förintelsen och andra folk mord*. skriftserie #11. The Living History Forum: Stockholm, 2011. 88.

35 “Country Report Sweden to the IHRA.”



this change occurred simultaneously with the investment of considerable resources made for the various phases of the Living History project and its successor, the Living History Forum.<sup>36</sup>

So, given the fact that the new national curriculum explicitly requires teaching of and about the Holocaust, one might expect that more teacher training programs would have been developed that offer courses in Holocaust studies. Thus far, however, this has not been the case.<sup>37</sup> Sweden's only university institution that specializes in Holocaust and genocide studies, the previously mentioned Hugo Valentin Centre, has a Master of Arts program and degree in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. This is the only MA of its kind in Sweden, though there are also a few other examples of individual courses given at a limited number of universities.<sup>38</sup> Apart from the Living History Forum in Stockholm, there are a few other organizations that provide teacher training seminars in Holocaust studies.<sup>39</sup>

Concerning Holocaust education, there are only a few studies about what is being taught in Swedish schools, and how this is being done. In 2007–2008, the Living History Forum conducted a survey on Holocaust education among teachers. Some of the main results point to the fact that teachers in general feel that teaching about the Holocaust is very important. Most teachers believed that Holocaust education functions as a starting point for discussions and teaching focused on broader ethical and moral issues. Most teachers believed their students were interested in learning about the Holocaust. Finally, the survey also indicated that the teachers felt a need for more support in learning about how to teach about the Holocaust.<sup>40</sup>

The proportion of teachers in Sweden who spend more than fifteen hours per academic year teaching about the Holocaust has increased six-fold over the past decade, which seems to indicate that the extensive investment in continuing education within the field of Holocaust education has

36 Y. Wibaeus. *Att undervisa om det ofattbara*. 237. It must be added, however, that history has again been upgraded to a compulsory subject.

37 "Country report Sweden to the IHRA."

38 See, for example, the course, "*Sweden's Relation to Nazism, Nazi-Germany and the Holocaust*," given regularly at Stockholm University's Department of History.

39 For instance, the previously mentioned *Swedish Committee against Antisemitism*, and *Expo*—a non-profit research foundation with aims to study and map anti-democratic, right-wing extremist and racist tendencies in Swedish society.

40 *Den mångtydiga toleransen* (The Many Faces of Tolerance), Report No. 1, (Stockholm, 2010).

paid off. The main challenge for Sweden in the next few years is to influence basic teacher-training which enhances knowledge about and understanding of the Holocaust.<sup>41</sup>

In his 2011 study noted above, N. Ammert found that knowledge about the Holocaust among Swedish pupils is fairly good.<sup>42</sup> The number of hours teachers spend on teaching the Holocaust has increased from 1998 through 2007.<sup>43</sup> He argues that the moral turn in the national curricula is mirrored in teaching in which a pedagogical-political use of history is common, and in which the Holocaust is sometimes used as an example and tool of importance to raise awareness of values of democracy and human rights.<sup>44</sup> This points to one continuing challenge facing Holocaust education—the risk that the Holocaust will be instrumentalized. Wibaeus also points to this risk because of the strong emphasis on the goal of fostering democratically-inclined students.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, she points to the gap between the intentions of teaching Holocaust studies and the actual outcome as understood by the pupils. Since the intentions are seldom explicitly expressed by the teachers, the intention is not always grasped by the pupils, thus making it difficult for them to understand the importance and relevance of Holocaust education. For them, the Holocaust was something that happened a long time ago to somebody else, and learning its lessons today is not obvious to them.<sup>46</sup> Thus the challenges facing Holocaust education in Sweden today seems to lie in articulating clearly the motivation for teaching about the Holocaust itself without using it only as a tool to teach democratic values and human rights in general.

41 “Country Report Sweden to the IHRA.” The Living History Forum: Stockholm, 2013.

42 N. Ammert. *Om vad och hur “må” ni berätta? Undervisning om Förintelsen och andra folkmord*. 13.

43 N. Ammert. *Om vad och hur “må” ni berätta?* 23.

44 N. Ammert. *Om vad och hur “må” ni berätta?* 65, 68, 71.

45 Y. Wibaeus. *Att undervisa om det ofattbara*. 30, 212.

46 Y. Wibaeus. *Att undervisa om det ofattbara*. 213.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Indeed, being a small country like Sweden certainly makes it a challenge to find and fund a large enough number of researchers in Holocaust studies and Holocaust education. These difficulties might be overcome by collaboration either with colleagues in the other Scandinavian countries or with colleagues studying the other wartime neutral countries. Another challenge, which might be even harder to overcome, is the lack of authentic sites. This circumstance, combined with the fact that Sweden was a country without Jewish victims, raises a significant challenge when it comes to making commemoration widely relevant. As previously noted, Swedish teachers are concerned about how to raise interest in the topic since the students have difficulties in seeing the relevance for them today. Finally, when it comes to Sweden's commitment to the "Stockholm Declaration," it is clear that much more needs to be done, particularly concerning the increase and implementation of Holocaust studies in teacher-training and university education for teachers.

Monique Eckmann

## Specific Challenges for Memory and for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust in Switzerland

### Memory in Former Neutral and Bystander Countries

Due to the persistent myths cultivated in neutral countries—focusing on brave resistance and the rescue of Jewish refugees—parts of the general public consider teaching and learning about the Holocaust to be less relevant or necessary in neutral countries than in countries which were occupied or which took active part in committing crimes.

Therefore, education—as well as public manifestations of memory—in the neutral countries needs to take into account this situation as the starting point for specific educational and memorial approaches. These countries have to deal with ambiguity of perception, soft denial and divided memories. Additionally, they usually have no authentic “*lieux de mémoire*” (historical sites of memory), where imprisonment, deportation or destruction actually occurred.

In Switzerland, “bystander country” par excellence (according to Raul Hilberg), educators have to address what is an ambiguity of perception of the past. It is less that we face open Holocaust denial, but rather a climate of soft denial, in which the responsibility of Swiss authorities is moderated, or an insistence on the impossibility of choice in Switzerland during the war prevails. In addition, we have to deal with divided memory<sup>1</sup> of the wartime period, conflicting views on the interpretation of Swiss public responsibility and on an assessment of the possible *marges de manœuvre* (or *Handlungsspielräume*), (margins of maneuverability, elbow room).

Additionally, education and public memorialization have to be addressed in a country without former concentration camps or killing sites. The border, however, can be considered as the most significant memo-

1 A. Margalit. *Ethics of Memory*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002.

rial site—a location of rescue and asylum, but also of dismissal and expulsion leading to the death camps. Hence, a specific pedagogical approach in neutral or bystander countries needs to take into account these factors and to address and even challenge them.

### **The Case of Switzerland and the Specific Context of Memorialization**

As we know, neutral countries have cultivated myths of rescue of Jewish refugees. In the case of Switzerland, there is the myth of brave resistance against an enemy surrounding its borders. Indeed, according to Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg, Switzerland was not only a “bystander country *par excellence*,” it was completely surrounded by the forces of the Axis, a state in the heart of a totalitarian sea, a spectator in the eye of the storm.<sup>2</sup>

For many years, Swiss memory of World War II was marked by this feeling of being surrounded, by a memory of courageous resistance against a powerful enemy. Indeed, on 1 September, 1939, immediately after the invasion of Poland by the Nazi army, Switzerland declared a general mobilization to the army of all men of military age. This event, commonly known as “the Mob,” changed everyday life in the country from one day to the next. While the men served at the border, the women ran the country—the businesses and enterprises, farms, public services, etc. This period represented a watershed experience. Parallel to this, there persisted memories of the rescue of some deserters and refugees as well as an awareness of not having rescued enough Jewish refugees.

The historical facts have been known to those who wanted to know, and Swiss historians had already conducted research on the topic in the 1950s, as well as in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>3</sup> But during the last two decades, many important things have happened, shaping a renewed public debate: the work of the Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland—Second World War (the ICE, established in 1996), the publication of their results (2001 and 2002), the decision of the ministries of education of the Council of Europe to establish a Holocaust Remembrance Day (adopted by Switzerland in 2003) and the membership of Switzerland to the International

2 R. Hilberg *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish catastrophe, 1933–1945*. New York: Aaron Asher Books, 1992.

3 See François Wisard’s essay in this volume.

Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2004. All of these events stimulated new developments in remembrance, educational initiatives and the production of new pedagogic material. In 1994–1995, Switzerland signed and ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. All these new developments created space for new pedagogical and civic initiatives, including dealing with the history and memory of the Holocaust.

These components characterize memorialization and memory culture in Switzerland today. Indeed, one can observe the following main factors: First, an ambiguity of perception of the past regarding the involvement of Swiss authorities. In Switzerland, instead of; it is less that we face open Holocaust denial—this still exists, but is limited to extreme, far right-wing circles—than that we confront an unclear picture and mixed emotions.

Secondly, there is a climate of soft denial, i.e., a tendency to relativize and trivialize the Holocaust. Regarding our own country's involvement, there is a tendency to diminish the responsibility of Swiss authorities, particularly regarding the “Nazi gold” issue, economic involvement with Nazi Germany, and questions regarding refugee policy. The argument heard repeatedly is that Swiss authorities had no other choice than the one taken, because Switzerland was surrounded and threatened by the enemy. However, the courage of some Swiss citizens, both public and private figures, shows that action was possible.

Two of the best known of these figures are Carl Lutz and Paul Grüninger. Carl Lutz and other Swiss diplomats active in Budapest from 1942 to 1945 saved over 60,000 Jews, by issuing “letters of protection” and establishing “safe houses” in Budapest. Paul Grüninger was a canton border police commander, who, in 1938, falsified the visas of refugees fleeing annexed Austria in order to legalize their status during a period when entry to Switzerland was restricted, thereby saving several hundreds or even thousands of Jewish refugees. Paul Grüninger was condemned by canton authorities and dismissed, and was only rehabilitated posthumously. Much later, a Swiss parliamentary committee was formed and made responsible for rehabilitating Swiss citizens found guilty of helping refugees during war, and it was a difficult struggle even in the 1990s to obtain their rehabilitation.<sup>4</sup>

4 <http://www.parlament.ch/f/organe-mitglieder/kommissionen/weitere-kommissionen/rehabilitierungskommission/Documents/bericht-rehako-schlussbericht-2009-03-02-f.pdf>.

One of the characteristics of soft denial is that not only were their actions criticized in Switzerland, but that their rehabilitation and recognition came so late.

Thirdly, Switzerland's role in World War II is still subject to controversies, conflicting views and ongoing debates about the result of the work of the ICE, as well as the quite emotional debates about the responsibility of Swiss authorities and attitudes of the Swiss population. This is also demonstrated in the issue of divided memories and of conflicting views on the interpretation today of public responsibility and the leeway, i.e., margin of maneuverability, available to the authorities during the war.

Some everyday patterns of discursive practices in group conversations have been observed in a qualitative study that examines intergenerational transmission of memory of the war in Switzerland. Authors Peter and Nicole Burgermeister note three main patterns of argumentation, which can be summed up by key words such as "courageous," for resistance and humanitarian action; "not-Swiss", as the Holocaust is seen as a German and not a Swiss issue; and "ambivalence", describing ambivalent attitudes towards the memory of the Holocaust in Switzerland.<sup>5</sup> Similar attitudes can certainly be noticed in other former neutral countries.

An important aspect for education and memorialization in Switzerland is the lack of historical sites of memory. There are no former sites of deportation, no concentration camps, no killing sites and no authentic places for students and teachers to visit and learn in. So what might be a historical site of memory in Switzerland? For Switzerland, only the border is a significant and authentic memorial site—a location for both rescue and asylum, for dismissal and expulsion leading to death. Thus, the Holocaust remains invisible in public space in Switzerland. This could partly explain why there are practically no museums or memorials in the country; only some sites have been marked, mainly as a result of private or community initiatives.<sup>6</sup> The best known of these plaques commemorates Paul Grüninger, but even their visibility is limited.

5 N. Peter and N. Burgermeister. "Der Holocaust und die Schweiz. Konkurrierende Erinnerungen im intergenerationellen Dialog." in B. Ziegler, P. Gautschi, B. Schaer & C. Schneider, eds. *Die Schweiz und die Shoa. Von Kontroversen zu neuen Fragen.* Zürich: Chronos, 2012. 19–28.

6 A first mapping has recently been done by Fabienne Meyer. "Monumentales Gedächtnis—Denkmale der Shoah in der Schweiz." M.A. thesis. Zurich, 2015.

These characteristics can be considered common features for most formerly neutral countries, i.e., soft denial, ambiguity of perception of the past, divided memories and an absence of authentic sites of events, except the borders. So, even if the Holocaust is widely considered by the population and by students as an immense crime that is not denied, the question often arises, “But what does the Holocaust have to do with us, with Switzerland”? This question relates also to a tendency of dealing with the Holocaust as an historical and sacralized topic, rather than as a historical one. Indeed, as soon as the students are faced with studying concrete historical facts and documents, this question rapidly vanishes. We will come back to this question when looking at teaching material and pedagogic options for teaching the history of the Holocaust and relating it to the context and history of the neutral countries.

### **Experiences and Representations of Swiss History Teachers**

We conducted research based on interviews with history teachers in the French- and Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland, which provided insight into how they approach the topic of the Holocaust and World War II and into their experiences while teaching about it.<sup>7</sup> World War II and the Holocaust are compulsory in all history curricula, and the Holocaust is usually taught within the framework of the history of the war. Teachers also address the role and actions of Swiss authorities.

To begin, the interviewed teachers are of the opinion that the Holocaust is a crucial and central topic and impossible to ignore. They have very high moral expectations for themselves, as well as for their students. Many of the teachers consider this topic unique. Teaching about the Holocaust appears to be a self-imposed mission, and they expect that their own moral indignation will be strongly shared by their students. Also, some teachers reveal how they advocate, sometimes too strongly, compassion with the Jewish victims. Additionally, some carry the expectation that teaching and learning about the Holocaust will automatically also be a fight against racism and one for human rights, or at least that it will change students' attitudes. However, these expectations run the risk of ending in frustration

7 M. Eckmann and C. Heimberg. *Mémoire et pédagogie. Autour de la transmission de la destruction des Juifs d'Europe*. Geneva: Institut d'études sociales, IES, 2011.



and disappointment for the teachers if their students do not show the commitment they expect them to, or if the students do not meet their teachers' high expectations.

Yet, most students are very interested in the topic and often wish to learn more about it. They occasionally seek to link it to questions about other genocides, and they are sometimes reluctant to explore the topic, linking it to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, tending to compare or even to equate the two topics. However, as soon as the teachers focus on the historical facts and processes of the Holocaust, this distraction fades. When the teachers have high moral expectations and call too vehemently for empathy with the victims, this sometimes generates resistance and an unwillingness to learn on the part of the students. Though real conflicts or incidents are rare, teachers are anxious about this possibility and often anticipate them—a fact that could even induce some conflicts. However, as a consequence, they prepare and introduce the topic especially cautiously to the students.

### **Challenges for Education**

To summarize, we envisaged five key challenges and perspectives for educational approaches in former neutral countries, and I will illustrate some of them here with pedagogical materials produced in Switzerland in the past few years. Of course, some of these are common to educational perspectives in every country, but this combination might be more precisely relevant to former neutral countries.

- 1) The challenge is to combine a general history and a specific history of the involvement and the role of one's own—in our case neutral—country regarding the Holocaust. This is a basic challenge in many countries; but particularly difficult for neutral countries is the feeling of a huge geographical and historical distance on the part of the general public. This is a basic challenge in many countries. But particularly difficult for neutral countries is the feeling on the part of the general public that they are geographically and historically far removed from the events. Further factors are the lack of visibility of this history and the limited time usually given to this topic in the curricula.
- 2) Regarding divided memories, the challenge is how to give space to all wartime memories and to adopt multiple perspectives of past experi-

ences, i.e., to give space to a certain polyphony and to multiple interpretations of the role of neutral countries, as these roles are discussed by historians today. Also, one possibility is to let the historians speak for themselves, and to expose students to controversial analysis and testimonies, in order to assess and discuss them. The material produced by the Swiss Historical Commission (ICE) is of great value in this regard, but it has to be selected and prepared as teaching material, which has only partially been accomplished to date.

- 3) Because there are no authentic sites within the country, visits of memorials or other fieldtrips by schools are rather exceptional and cannot constitute an element of a core program. Therefore, we should deal with both the absence of such places and with the traces of memory and memories at the borders. Indeed, as the place where refugees and conscientious objectors tried to enter the country or where entry was denied, many stories are coming to light and can be told. Stories involving refugees searching for rescue, helpers, witnesses, etc. The border could also become a place for dialogue about these memories. Only recently have such initiatives begun, such as the publication of materials allowing teachers to organize a hiking tour with their pupils on paths that once served for travelling refugees between 1939 and 1945.<sup>8</sup>
- 4) Concerning the role of public policy of the neutral countries, it is crucial to examine closely, based on historical documents, the specific margins of maneuverability, especially regarding trade with the Nazis and the refugee policy. It seems very important not to limit this exploration to situations in Germany or, for instance, occupied Poland, but to explore with the students these margins of maneuverability and to deal with zones of action and inaction within the Swiss administration, that is, by individuals who helped even though they were punished, as was the case for rescuers such as Paul Grüninger.
- 5) Regarding soft denial, one helpful approach is to study not only wartime history, but also postwar history, including the history of memorialization. This means also examining the trials and the sentences of rescuers and the trials or impunity granted to collaborators and perpetrators. This entails looking at the long and difficult struggles for recognition and rehabilitation of rescuers like Grüninger—an ongoing

8 Claire Luchetta-Rentchnik, *Faisons parler la frontière*. Documentation/ DIP Canton de Genève, Geneva, 2011.

struggle, which is also a history of the present, considering that it took fifty years for Grüninger's conviction to be annulled.

### **Examples of Teaching Materials and Memory Publications**

I will now discuss some examples of teaching materials and their pedagogic focus, one which allows the history of the Holocaust in various contexts to be addressed.

#### **Teaching materials combining history and memory in Switzerland:**

“*Survivre et témoigner*” (Survive and Testify)<sup>9</sup> is an educational package containing a DVD with filmed testimonies of Holocaust survivors who reached Switzerland as refugees. Six individuals tell how they escaped the Nazi regime and how they crossed the Swiss border. Some also talk about how it felt to know about those who were been left behind. There is a wealth of material relating to testimonies from concentration camps or ghettos, but material that contains specific testimonies related to Switzerland is rare. This bilingual German–French educational package contains six short films and a booklet with details about the portraits. There are also didactical suggestions and background material to download as a PDF. The package also combines history and memory as it includes two interviews with Swiss historians from the ICE historical commission.

#### **A multimedia, multi-perspective approach to the World War II period in Switzerland:**

“*L’histoire c’est moi*” (This History, It Is I) is a multimedia exhibition that contains 555 oral testimonies relating to the period of 1939–1945 in Switzerland and 22 short movies.<sup>10</sup> This is the largest Swiss oral history project for the World War II period, and it is based on interviews conducted between 1999–2001. This is a multi-perspective approach to wartime Switzerland, and documents both the exceptional and ordinary experiences of

9 FSCI/SIG, E. Pruschy, ed. *Über Leben Erzählen/Survivre et témoigner*. (Survival and Testimony; Holocaust Survivors in Switzerland). Geneva and Zurich: Pestalozzianum, 2007.

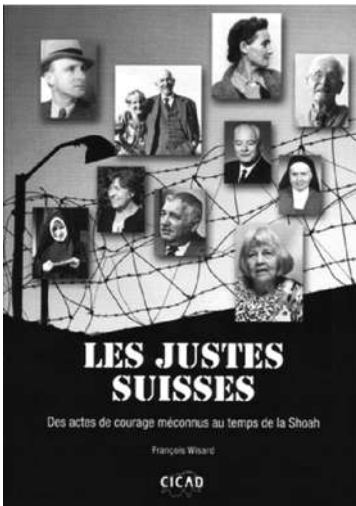
10 Association ARCHIMOB, Lausanne <http://www.archimob.ch/d/expo/impress.html>.



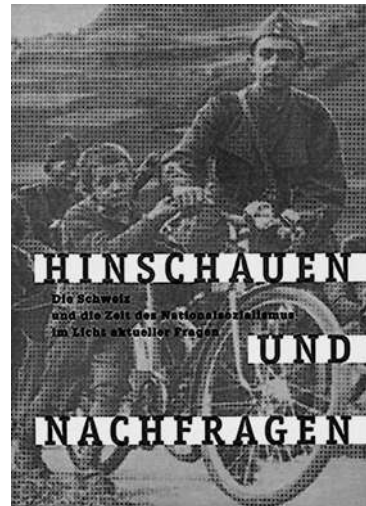
Teaching materials combining history and memory in Switzerland.



A multimedia, multi-perspective approach to the World War II period in Switzerland.



Dealing with Swiss rescuers.



Switzerland and the period of National Socialism in light of current issues.

these 555 witnesses. Although the Holocaust is a rather marginal topic in the testimonies, it is important to also hear these memories, as they are part of the polyphony of voices. The exhibition was presented from 2004 to 2008 in various Swiss cities, and was visited by over 100,000 people, including many school classes participating in didactical programs.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Dealing with Swiss rescuers:**

It is more and more popular for teachers and student to approach history through the stories of rescuers. This is done in order to make the rescuers visible, to honor those who showed courage and to explore the margins of maneuverability available to these private and public figures at the time. There are movies about Carl Lutz and Paul Grüninger, the most famous Swiss rescuers. There is also a very useful overview of sixty Swiss citizens who helped to save thousands of Jews,<sup>12</sup> a volume intended for pedagogical use. These materials allow us to deal with history during the war, and also with post-history—not least with the difficult path leading to the rehabilitation of these individuals and an acknowledgment of their courage.

#### **Switzerland and the period of National Socialism in light of current issues:**

The handbook *Hinschauen und Nachfragen: Die Schweiz und die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Looking and Enquiring; Switzerland and the Period of National Socialism) portrays history in light of contemporary issues.<sup>13</sup> It presents the findings of recent historical research conducted by, for example, the Historical Commissions (ICE), and explores past and present debates, including those that are still emotional topics in Switzerland. The volume portrays a variety of historical individuals, showing contrasting views on the events from before, during and after the war. The volume also offers numerous useful didactical perspectives and historical sources, including photographs, texts, caricatures, statistics, etc. The value of this approach is to acknowledge the dialectics of resistance and *Anpassung* (accommo-

- 11 N. Fink. *Paroles de témoins, paroles d'élèves. La mémoire et l'histoire de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, de l'espace public au monde scolaire*. Berne: Lang, 2014.
- 12 F. Wisard. *Les Justes Suisses*. Geneva: 2007. The publication includes complete references to films and other documents.
- 13 B. Bonhage, P. Gautschi, J. Hodel & G. Spuhler. *Hinschauen und Nachfragen: die Schweiz und die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus im Licht aktueller Fragen*. Zurich: Lehrmittelverlag Zürich, 2006.

dation, assimilation, adaptation), such controversial debates as those concerning looted art and reparations, asylum politics and the decriminalization of former rescuers. In short, it offers a multi-perspective educational tool.

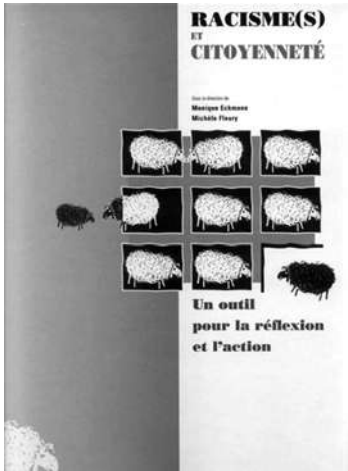
**Broaden the focus: Include the Shoah<sup>14</sup> when dealing with various forms of racism**

It is important that the topic of the *Shoah* as a phenomenon is not only dealt with in specific programs. The Holocaust is a part of history, and, as such, also part of the history of the various forms of racism. Thus, it is impossible to confront racism without also confronting the Holocaust. An educational publication *Racisme(s) et citoyenneté*<sup>15</sup> (Racism and Citizenship) provides background materials for understanding various forms of racism, and also offer tools for acting against it, such as pedagogical intervention, as well as legal instruments created in past decades. This material consists of 50 articles based on recent research in history, pedagogy and law that demonstrate that Switzerland, like other countries, has been involved in racist or antisemitic policies or actions. Therefore, when dealing with racism, we also deal with the *Shoah*.

The publication contains various reproductions of original documents relating to anti-black racism or colonialism, as well as with antisemitism and the Shoah. Some articles document Swiss refugee policy, such as a German passport with a “J”-stamp, a Swiss certificate of “aryanity,” Riegner’s telegram of August 1942, written in Geneva. There is also a letter from a Swiss diplomat opposing “aryanized language” in official Swiss documents. These are documents that allow a study of Swiss involvement during the war, which was not uniform, and presents various positions, including the margins of maneuverability at the disposal of actors at that time.

14 In the French-speaking parts of Switzerland, the word Shoah is preferred to Holocaust, and it is therefore used in connection with French publications here.

15 M. Eckmann and M. Fleury, eds. *Racisme(s) et citoyenneté. Un outil pour la réflexion et l’action*. Geneva: Institut d’études sociales, IES, 2005.



Broaden the focus: Include the Shoah when dealing with various forms of racism.

## Conclusions and perspectives

Dealing with the Holocaust reveals the difficulties of coming to terms with the past in a formerly neutral country. There are possibilities and pitfalls relating to education about the past, as well as for contemporary issues in neutral or bystander countries. The above-mentioned five key issues might well constitute a common challenge for all former neutral countries, and it would be interesting to further investigate how they are addressed in these various countries. Additional issues, too, would be worth exploring and could include:

- The challenge of combining an overall history and a specific—critical—history of the involvement and the role of one's own country regarding the Holocaust.
- The issue of divided memories and the need for educational materials that document the multiple experiences within our countries and illustrate the complexity and the polyphony of existing voices.
- The lack of—or, perhaps, more accurately, ignorance about—authentic sites within many of these countries, with attention paid to 'the border' as a specific place of history and memory, and as a possible site of encounter and memorials.

- The question of specific margins of maneuverability in former neutral countries, and the long time it took to rehabilitate some of those who opposed their orders and the need to recognize their courage.
- As for the issue of soft denial, a useful approach to combat this phenomenon would be to study not only wartime history, but to deal with postwar history as well. This includes, for example, dealing with the materials produced in the context of the related trials, the court decisions of some actors and with the impunity of others, the comments of the press, the public debates, the excuses and the restitution processes, etc.—in short, the history of memorialization. It is indeed not the same to teach history and to teach the history of the memory. The process of the development of memory and memorialization is, in fact, a very important indicator of the stages and the state of how a society deals with its own difficult past.

Finally, the challenges we face in education and memorialization in formerly neutral countries, and the educational approaches developed here, might well give indications to a wider spectrum of countries outside of Europe, and contribute to the development of educational perspectives in other regions of the world.





Nora Şeni

## A Breakdown of Memorial Processes in Turkey

### A Strange Indifference

While the intellectual and art worlds in Turkey are aware of the Holocaust, they do not necessarily feel that this unique episode in the history of humanity is in any way relevant to them. The horrors of the Second World War, which Turkey, as a neutral country, was not involved in, tend to be used merely as catchphrases. Catchphrases which need not be questioned since, from a Turkish perspective, historical truths and the responsibilities of various states seem to have been established once and for all in Europe. All that is left to do is to move on. The processes that European countries have engaged in to transform the individual memories of Holocaust survivors first into a collective memory and then into public memorial policies, and the players and actions that have contributed to this process are not known in Turkey. I use the term *memorial policies* to refer to those processes through which the individual and private memories of victims are first shared within close, family or community circles, and then gradually become a part of the collective consciousness on the national and/or international scale, until they ultimately give rise to public policies such as educational or commemorative programs, or programs setting up memorial sites. We know that, upon returning, these survivors found few people prepared to listen to the account of the tortures they had undergone. And it is not the mere “passage of time” that has made their accounts audible. The work of historians and documentarians has given these narratives an intangible coefficient of truth. The activities of researchers/Nazi hunters such as the Klarsfelds or Simon Wiesenthal, the major trials that they made possible—that of Klaus Barbie, of Touvier, of Eichmann, the so-called Frankfurt Auschwitz trial (1963–1965)—all of these kept up the pressure in Europe, and succeeded in informing and raising awareness among people, right through to those sections of society that were reluctant to accept the historical truth and indifferent to the desire for justice. The acknowledgement by the states that were involved in the extermination of Euro-

pean Jews of their involvement and responsibility could have completed this memorial process, but this was not the case. Stupefaction turned into existential questions about humanity and dehumanization,<sup>1</sup> on the detection of the warning signs of totalitarianism and on its mode of operation—the reaction mutated into vigilance, and has continued to shape Western thought.<sup>2</sup>

The memorial processes, the critical thought that they sparked,<sup>3</sup> and the literary, historical, philosophical works to which they give birth, have all been ignored by Turkish intellectuals and artists. The works of historians such as Robert Paxton, Henry Rousso, or Christopher Browning<sup>4</sup> have still not been translated; the Klarsfelds' Nazi hunting remains unknown, as does their struggle to have Nazis brought to trial. No university, even among those that are considered to be the best in Turkey, has to this day given any significant place to the study of the extermination of the European Jews in particular, or of mass killings in general. Even the very active History Foundation (*Tarih Vakfı*), which is always keen to publish research into the Armenian genocide and to take part in organizing conferences

- 1 Primo Levi. *Si c'est un homme*. Paris: Julliard, 1987.
- 2 Alain Finkielkraut, ed. *L'interminable écriture de l'Extermination*. Paris: Folio Gallimard, 2010.
- 3 Turkish intellectual circles did not take an interest in the kinds of debates introduced by philosopher Theodor Adorno, in particular regarding what might be the meaning of writing poetry after Auschwitz, a sentence from which has been used as an epigraph. This is taken from a passage in "Cultural Criticism and Society", reprinted as the first essay in *Prisms*. Here is the entire passage, from the English translation by Samuel and Shierry Weber: "The more total society becomes, the greater the reification of the mind and the more paradoxical its effort to escape reification on its own. Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation." T. W. Adorno. *Prisms*. Cambridge: 1983. 34.
- 4 R. Paxton. *Vichy France and the Jews*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995. E. Conan and H. Rousso. *Vichy, Un passé qui ne passe pas*. Paris: Fayard, 1994. C. Browning. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1992.

on this topic, has not yet demonstrated any interest in the Holocaust.<sup>5</sup> As a result, people in Turkey have not been exposed to multiple representations, in terms of witness statements and images, of the atrocities of the Holocaust, of the footage shot just after the camps were opened, of the mass graves, the journeys on cattle trains and the roundups. All that people know about this extermination is a few catchphrases, which do indeed point towards knowledge about this period of history, but do not necessarily inspire the active feelings of horror or shock that then give rise to the question: “how was this possible?”<sup>6</sup> The rich literary production that comes out of Turkey, its artistic creation, its research in the field of history, none of them have really to this day been arrested by this burning question, which still shapes thought, mentalities and policies in Europe and beyond, in the postwar Western world.

Readers keen to lay their hands on a critical analysis of the role played by Turkey during the Second World War in connection to the Jews have had to wait for the works of Rıfat Bali, of Corry Gutstadt, and of İzzet Bahar,<sup>7</sup> who are still struggling to make themselves heard within the plethora of productions that, while they may not quite deserve to be described as propaganda, are nevertheless “useful” for the purposes of official policies.<sup>8</sup> These latter works have been remarkably consistent, from the end of the 1980s to this day, in presenting the image of a Turkey that has supposedly

- 5 I must here do justice and pay homage to the historian Vangelis Kechriotis, who died in August 2015, and who was an assiduous participant in the “Enjeux et Politiques mémoriels” cycle of conferences organized in Istanbul under my direction (with the collaboration of the *Mémorial de la Shoah* (Paris), the Université Paris 8, the *Institut Français* in Turkey and *Anadolu Kültür*). He represented both the History Foundation (*Tarih Vakfı*) of which he was a member and the History Department of Bogaziçi University, where he was a brilliant teacher.
- 6 N. Şeni, interviewed by Karel Valensi “Türkiye’debirdahaaslabilincigelişmedi” (The conscience of *never again* has not developed in Turkey), *Şalom*, 21 October, 2015, [http://www.salom.com.tr/haber-96802-turkiyede\\_bir\\_daha\\_asla\\_bilinci\\_gelismedi\\_.html](http://www.salom.com.tr/haber-96802-turkiyede_bir_daha_asla_bilinci_gelismedi_.html).
- 7 R. Bali. “Parita Gemisinin Serüveni”, (The Adventure of the Parita Liner), *Tarihve Toplum*, No. 214 (October 2001). 4–10. C. Gutstadt. *Turkey, the Jews, and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013. İ. Bahar. *Turkey and the Rescue of the European Jews*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- 8 See the article by P. Dost, “Myths of Rescue and Its Use and Abuse in Turkey” in the present volume.

come to the rescue of European Judaism twice: for the first time in 1492, and the second during the Second World War—an image that aims to protect the country from accusations that it was responsible for the Armenian genocide in 1915. While Turkey has indeed been taking part for a few years in public commemorations of Holocaust victims, in particular those held every 27 January, these actions seem to be mainly motivated by concessions made to geopolitical strategies governed by the desire to dismiss accusations related to the Armenian genocide.

### **A Cumbersome and Unrecognized National Memory**

History is not short of ways in which to weigh painfully on the memory of the Turks in relation to atrocities other than the Holocaust, and which have been experienced directly by the peoples of this country, with the Armenian genocide being the major tragedy that radically transformed the ethno-demographic balance of Anatolia. From the very end of the Ottoman Empire to Republican Turkey, the demographic desire to create an ethnically and religiously homogenous population centered on the Sunnite Turks was a crucial factor, giving rise to various forms of intimidation, persecution and massacres of the country's other populations. While the mass murder that was inflicted on the Kurdish and Alevi communities cannot be compared to the scale of the Armenian genocide, the massacres of Dersim in 1937 and 1938<sup>9</sup> still resulted, depending on which sources you refer to, in the death of between 8,000 and 13,000 people. Several villages were burnt down and thousands of people were deported to the West of Anatolia. The massacres of Maraş in 1978 had between 500 and 1000 victims. In Dersim and in Maraş, state-controlled forces were directly involved. Finally, the massacres of Sivas in 1993 killed 37 people, including 34 Alevi intellectuals who had travelled to Sivas for a festival. They were burnt alive in the middle of the city in a hotel (the Madımak hotel); the fire was lit and celebrated by the men of the town (there are no women to be seen in the archive images

9 Şükrü Aslan. "Toplu katliamlar, toplumsal bellek, Yüzleşme ve hafıza politikaları, Dersim olayı" (Large-scale massacres, collective memory, policies of memory and confrontation, the Dersim case") conference, 12 May, 2015, SALT Istanbul, in. N. Şeni, ed. *Avrupave Türkiye' de Hafıza Politikaları* (Memorial Policies, Europe, Turkey) to be published in late 2016, Istanbul.

of this incident). To these episodes must be added the trauma of the population exchanges between Greece and Turkey in the early 1920s. The Jews were subjected to the so-called Thrace pogroms (*Trakya olayları*) in 1934, namely pogroms that took place in the cities of Edirne and Kırklareli, and they were ruined by the 1942 wealth tax (*Varlık Vergisi*). During the pogrom that took place in the night from 6–7 September, 1955, all of the stalls and shops run by non-Muslim merchants were vandalized and pillaged, and their homes were attacked and ransacked.

The Armenian genocide, which led to the death of almost a million people, and has sparked a high level of activism within the diaspora, is the only one of these persecutions to have attracted significant attention on the national and international level. The assassination of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink on 19 January, 2007, marked the beginning of a new era in Turkey's memorial processes. Close to a hundred thousand people marched in response to it, chanting "We are all Armenian." Hrant Dink was the leader of a new generation of Armenians who "wanted to raise public awareness of the opinions, difficulties and suffering of Turkish minorities, and more particularly of the Armenian community",<sup>10</sup> and his assassination sparked an unprecedented wave of condemnations in Turkey and throughout the world. One year later, a collective of Turkish intellectuals launched a petition asking for the Armenians' forgiveness for the 1915 genocide. Since then, the taboo surrounding the term "genocide" has been lifted, public commemoration ceremonies are organized by civil society on 24 April each year, and the centenary of the genocide in April 2015 was commemorated through major events, concerts and conferences that were covered by Turkish and foreign media. In April 2014, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was then prime minister, offered his condolences to the descendants of the million massacred Armenians. Although this was a first in the history of Turkey, it did not however lead to an acknowledgement of the genocide. Turkey does admit that massacres took place during "displacements of the Armenian populations", but it currently denies that they were of a genocidal nature. This still-to-be-proffered acknowledgement is a major issue in Turkish foreign policy, in particular within the context of its EU accession bid, and of its relationship with France, which almost passed a law penalizing the denial of the Armenian genocide in 2012.

10 Vicken Cheterian. "Qui a tué Hrant Dink", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 23 January, 2007.

As for the killings of Alevi and Kurds, while a sham trial was actually held, in particular for the Sivas “bonfire” in 1993, justice has not been done: it is no longer possible to look for evidence and for the people responsible due to prescription.<sup>11</sup> While the indignation inspired by this event remains acute, to this day no public commemorative event recalls these assassinations and supports the mourning and memorial work carried out by relatives of the victims.

### **Instrumentalizing Jewish Memory**

While the Jews of Turkey were not subjected to large-scale massacres, the aforementioned Thrace pogroms, economic pressure, the informal obligation to involve a Turkish Muslim “associate” in any business, the virulent antisemitism during World War II, the 1942 wealth tax (*Varlık Vergisi*), the pillaging that took place during the night from 6–7 September, 1955,—it only became possible for historians to start exploring all of this from the 1980s–1990s. But establishing where the historical truth lies is not equivalent to forcing people to acknowledge it, and does not necessarily spark reparations or commemorations—both gestures that have been sorely missing in Turkey when it comes to the topic of the infringement of the rights of Greeks, Armenians and Jews. Each group has adopted “low profile” forms of conduct commensurate to its demographic weight.<sup>12</sup>

As far as the Jews are concerned, we might say that they are somewhat captive-consenting when it comes to the diplomatic strategy of successive Turkish governments, which consists of dodging the accusation of Armenian genocide. We can observe that their memorial policy opportunely converges and combines with that of the Turkish state. While this trend became clearer in the run-up to 2015, it started as early as the 1980s. The launch in 1992 of the Quincentennial Foundation brought together high ranking officials and internationally known Turkish and Jewish economic elites to celebrate, among other things through conferences in the

11 Nora Şeni. “Vahşetin Sıradanlaşması”, (The Banalization of Barbarism), *Radikal*, 18/03/2012, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/vahsetin-siradanlasmasi-1082297/>.

12 Turkey now has remaining populations of around 17,000 Jews, 60,000 Armenians, and less than 3,000 Greeks.

US and in Turkey, the five hundredth anniversary of the Ottoman Empire's welcoming of the Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal. The Foundation's purpose was "to remind the whole world, by all available means, [of] the high human qualities of the Turkish people as Nation and State". In 2001, the Foundation opened a "Jewish Museum of Turkey" in Istanbul, which presents a history of Jews in Turkish lands, purged of its unpleasant episodes.<sup>13</sup> "Eliding seismic changes over time—from the tolerance of the Ottoman centuries to the more problematic republican years—the museum presents the last 500 years as an almost uninterrupted bed of roses for Jews in Turkey, while adding a few myths of its own."<sup>14</sup>

Concerning the chronology of Holocaust remembrance activities carried out by Turkish Jews, one has to first keep in mind that this community did not associate itself with European remembrance rituals any earlier than 1980, and secondly that these rituals only became public during the decade from 2010, after Turkey became an observer (in 2008) of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). One of the compulsory stages of becoming a full member country is to establish a "Holocaust Memorial Day (on January 27, or another date chosen by the applicant country)."<sup>15</sup> The first commemoration on Holocaust International Remembrance Day was thus organized by the Jewish community in Istanbul at the Neve Şalom Synagogue in 2010. Every year, Turkish officials, members of civil society, scholars and journalists are invited to participate in this ceremony. In 2014, the Jewish Community took another step and organized the ceremony outside a Jewish site, at Kadir Has University. This "opening up" of the Jewish community of Turkey, which usually prefers not to be noticed, not to attract attention, has developed in perfect synchrony with the efforts of the Turkish government working

13 For the conditions of daily life for Jews in the Ottoman Empire, cf. Nora Şeni, "İstanbul Mahalle and Venetian Ghetto. Is the Comparison Relevant?" in K. Emiroğlu, O. Özel, E. Özveren, S. Ünsal, eds. *Akdeniz Dünyası, Düşünce, Tarih Görünümü*, (*The Mediterranean World; the Idea, the Past and Present*). İstanbul: İletişim, 2006. 161–73 ; and "Ville Ottomane et Représentation du Corps Féminin", *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 456–457, July-August 1984. 66–95.

14 William Armstrong. "Turkey and the rescue of European Jews" in *Hurriyet Daily News*, 30 April, 2015.

15 From the IHRA's web site, *Membership Criteria* <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/membership-criteria>.



towards fulfilling the IHRA's membership requirements. Turkey remains an observer country to the IHRA since 2008.

It was also in the early 2010s that the general public became aware of the tragedies of the boats transporting Jewish refugees during the Second World War, fleeing Bulgaria (the *Salvador*, 1940) and Romania (the *Struma*, 1941) and heading to Palestine, and that sank near Istanbul's shores, in the Marmara or Black Sea. One became the subject of a memorial ceremony.<sup>16</sup> A Jewish businessman working within the Turkish economic environment first launched the commemoration of the wreck of the *Struma* in 2012. Although there were no Turkish officials of any rank participating in the ceremony, the event was widely covered by the media and was successful in raising public awareness of the tragedy. Three years later, on 24 February, 2015, the *Struma* commemoration was organized as an official state ceremony for the first time, with the participation of the Minister of Culture and Tourism and the chief Rabbi of Turkey, İzak Haleva. The ceremony took place exactly two months before the centennial commemorations of the Armenian genocide in Istanbul, on 24 April.

For the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, the 2015 celebration took place in Ankara, at Bilkent University, and not in Istanbul, where the majority of Turkish Jews live, because the Speaker of Parliament Cemil Çiçek would be attending the ceremony. Ankara was chosen by the government to highlight the official aspect of this ceremony. But the Speaker took this opportunity to take a jab at Turkish Jews by talking "about Israel and Palestine and how this dispute stands in front of all Middle Eastern problems as well as the problems that we complain about in here. He continued to talk about Palestinian rights, Jerusalem, Al Aqsa, the Gaza attacks and the Mavi Marmara..."<sup>17</sup> This gives an idea of the nature of most official Turkish initiatives in relation to the Holocaust: every

16 Although the *Struma* tragedy has been well documented in Turkey by historians for more than fifteen years public opinion is just discovering it. The other shipwrecks that occurred during WW2 within Turkish shores are also well documented but remain not mentioned. The *Struma* disaster is presented as a one-time accident, a unique tragedy of the kind that happened in Turkey during the Second World War.

17 Karel Valansi. "Never Again", *Şalom*, 10 February, 2015. The event known as the *Mavi Marmara* incident is the military raid by Israel of a Turkish-led aid flotilla to Gaza. It resulted in the death of nine Turks and in the shattering of the once close relations between Ankara and Jerusalem. For my analysis of this event see. N. Şeni.



On 24 February, 2015, the first ever official state ceremony took place to commemorate the 768 Jewish passengers who drowned when the *Struma* sank. The ceremony was attended by the Minister of Culture and Tourism and the Chief Rabbi.

*Courtesy of Berge Arabian Photo*

move seems addressed mainly, if not solely, at an international audience in general, and at the IHRA in particular. What is new is the reaction of the representatives of the Jewish Community and of the *Şalom*:<sup>18</sup> they have not refrained, as they would have done a few years ago, from expressing indignation and criticism of the Parliament's Speaker.

### **Structural reasons for the unwillingness of the Turkish State to confront its recent history**

The question to be asked here would be how to analyze the weakness of memorial processes in Turkey, the country's weak inclination and strong resistance to facing past tragedies. Turkey has resisted conforming to a new

"Les Arabes, les Turcs, si proches, si lointains" *Hérodote*, 160 (2016), forthcoming in March 2016.

18 *Şalom* is the weekly newspaper of the Jews of Turkey.

democratic standard that has become compulsory for contemporary states that claim to function according to a democratic regime: to face its own past, its own history, to recognize its responsibility in committing atrocities and mass crimes, and to ask for forgiveness. In July 1995, the French President Jacques Chirac recognized for the first time the responsibility of the French state and of the French people in the deportation of Jews and the collaboration of French authorities with the occupying forces. In 1991, Austria voted in a law enabling the foundation of an Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service (Gedenkdienst), an independent organization whose aim is to stress that Austria is facing up to its past, that it recognizes its responsibilities regarding Nazi crimes, and that it is committed to the saying “never again”, as chancellor Franz Vranitzky expressed it in Jerusalem in June 1993. Norway asked the Jews for pardon in 2012, Bulgaria in 2013, Belgium in 2002 and again in 2005.

My first argument in trying to highlight the Turkish reluctance and disinclination to face up to the country’s history would be to recall that the Turkish Republic was founded in the early twentieth century based on the knowledge that all Ottoman territories where a Turkish/Muslim population was not in the majority had been lost. This provided the major basis for the political habitus of the Turkish state, consisting in giving its territories a homogeneous population, demographically dominated by Turkish Muslim people. Within one century, starting with the Armenian massacres, all the wealth and property of non-Muslims in Anatolia was transferred to Turkish Sunni Muslims. Turkey’s determination to preserve what would be its choice of democratic regime is strongly overshadowed by this compulsory drive towards a religiously and ethnically homogenous society composed mainly of Turkish Sunnite Muslims—this is in fact an obsession inherited from the decades of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century, and which has remained powerful to this day. This strong inclination towards homogeneity is incompatible with democracy, the accountability of state action and transparency.

Turkey did not take part in the Second World War, this is a well-known fact. But what is less known is that, not having shared the atrocities of the war and of the Holocaust with European populations had determining consequences in terms of public affairs, legislation, and political and administrative institutions, which were all shaped by a single overriding priority: to maintain peace. The Second World War also determined individual and collective mentalities, consciences, political and social behaviors, and ways

of thinking. While post-Second World War European administrations and public and individual minds are deeply influenced by the famous “never again”, (a case which illustrates how slogans and clichés are not so insignificant), while institutions are well trained to detect, even before they appear, any signs of totalitarianism or assaults against the rule of law or individual rights, Turkey lacks these kinds of mechanisms. Eyes and ears in this country are not trained to immediately detect any signs of anything threatening the principles of equality, human rights, freedom of expression—in short, the founding principles of a formal democracy. One of the reasons why democracy is so important to the European mentality is that it is the most decisive tool for achieving peace. While postwar Europe was obsessed with producing peace-making institutions and legislation, Turkey remained obsessed with the dream of a religiously/ethnically homogenous society. This is another reason why individual and collective patterns of thought in Turkey also remained untouched by another big question of the postwar era: “How was all this possible, how did European culture and civilization give way to such a barbaric period?” This question underlies all of European postwar literature, philosophy, artistic creation, social sciences etc. Postwar Turkish intellectual and artistic circles remained indifferent to this question, as I mentioned in the introductory lines to the present article. This might be one of the reasons why it has not to this day been possible to create sufficient pressure in terms of public opinion in Turkey in favor of facing up to the past and its tragedies, not only where the Armenian genocide is concerned, but also in relation to Kurdish and Alevi massacres and persecutions, and injustices against Jews and non-Muslims in general.

But the question remains: how can such pressure be directed at state authorities in a country where freedom of expression and the rule of law are violently suppressed, as has been the case in Turkey since 2013? One positive element should be added to this picture, one that might give us some hope: the still powerful desire of an important section of Turkish society (which already feels “European”) to be part of Europe and of the Western world. Turkey has centuries-long traditions and a political habitus that have arisen out of this desire. To be European today is to share the political and ideological conclusions inspired by the Second World War. It is most important to grasp and acknowledge the kind of close ties that connect memorial issues and democracy. There is no social cohesion and democratic rule without memorial initiatives and policies. Facing up to the past requires strategic thought, players creating events, diffusing histori-

cal knowledge, and raising conscience about memorial issues concerning the Holocaust. This is what we have been trying to do since November 2013 with a series of quasi-monthly conferences in Istanbul about how France, Germany and Bosnia dealt with their own memorial issues after the Second World War. The author of the present article set up this program with the collaboration of *Le Mémorial de la Shoah* (Paris), the *Institut Français* of Turkey, the French Institute of Geopolitics at Paris 8 University and *Anadolu Kültür*, a Turkish NGO. We have screened documentary films that transformed the French view of collaboration during the war, invited historians like Annette Wieviorka, Henry Rousso, Serge Klarsfeld, and Jean-Arnault Dérens, and we have tried to reveal the identity of the actors that have determined our new knowledge about the role of the French state in the deportation of Jews. The idea is to create a platform for more detailed discussions about how to build and construct a memorial policy; the aim is also to touch opinion makers, scholars, intellectuals and journalists. The aim is to contribute to Turkey's effort to find its own "never again".

Marta Simó

## Challenges for Memory, Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust in Spain

Although Spain was a neutral country during World War II, specific factors in its history set it apart from other neutrals, and need to be considered when analyzing its approach to memorialization, teaching and learning about the Holocaust.

The Spanish Civil War ended just before the outbreak of World War II. Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy participated in the Civil War, aiding the Nationalists, while the Soviet Union supported the Republicans. Two of the many consequences of that bloody conflict were the exile of nearly 500,000 Spanish Republicans to France, and Franco's debt to Adolf Hitler for his help in the Civil War. These two issues affect the categorization of Spain as a neutral country. On the one hand, approximately 9,300 Spaniards became victims of National Socialism, and Franco's government became a collaborator with the Nazi regime.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Spain remained governed by a totalitarian regime until 1975. The authoritarian and fascist character of the regime controlled the entire educational system and education in the country.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 For more on this topic, see B. Rother. *Franco y el Holocausto*. Madrid: Marcial Pons Ediciones, 2005; M. Ros Agudo, *La Guerra secreta de Franco*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2002; Ch. Leitz, *Sympathy for the Devil. Neutral Europe and Nazi Germany in World War II*. New York: New York UP, 2001; W. H. Bowen, *Spaniards and Nazi Germany: Collaboration in the New Order*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000.
- 2 M. Carretero, "History Learning Research in Spain and Latin America." in M. Köster et al. *Researching History Education. International Perspectives and Disciplinary Traditions*. Wochenschau Verlag. Web. 2014. 57.

## Spain and the Memorialization of the Holocaust

In 1953, US President Eisenhower visited Spain and signed a contract agreement regarding military cooperation with General Franco. From that moment, the regime succeeded in creating the idea of Spain as a neutral country, one without any connection to the Holocaust. At that time, education was very nationalistic, authoritarian and religious, with most fascist ideas suppressed together with any inklings of antisemitism. In the framework of the Cold War, Franco's regime was able to justify its collaboration with Nazi Germany by emphasizing the fight against communism and Bolshevism, at the same time omitting the persecution of Jews in publications or in the memories of Spanish soldiers from the "Blue Division," which fought alongside Nazi troops on the Eastern front.

As with many other countries in Europe, specific reference to the Holocaust was completely absent from the prevailing national narrative. The role played by National Catholicism, a unique institution that shaped education for many years, together with the country's small Jewish community, which was silenced, forced to remain invisible or even to convert, did not help the development of Spain's Holocaust memory.

An important change occurred in the 1970s. The economic and political transformation of the country meant that it needed a modern educational system, one that would facilitate Spain's transition to becoming a member of the European Community. However, the country's transition from dictatorship to democracy in the context of historical memory was based on a "pact of forgetting." This meant that there was no debate of memories between winners and losers of the Civil War, no speaking about Franco's Nazi-friendly regime and no discussion regarding the fate of some 9,300 Spanish political prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. Regarding Jewish memory, this pact of forgetting meant, in part, that no link was made between the Civil War and the participation of Jews in the International Brigades, no mention of shared memories in French concentration camps such as Gurs and Rivesaltes and no memory of the Sephardic Jews and Jews born in Spain and with Spanish nationality murdered in extermination camps.

This period would have disappeared into historical obliviousness had it not been for one exception—the role played by Amical Mauthausen<sup>3</sup> as the

3 Amical de Mauthausen is an association that brings together Spanish Republican ex-deportees from the Nazi concentration camps, as well as relatives and friends of

only institution that helps to keep alive the memory of the deported Spanish Republicans but with limited inclusion of the memory of the extermination of European Jewry. Another small change occurred in 1986 when Spain joined the European Union. The need to belong to the European Community pushed political institutions to participate in a common European history and European collective memory. Another important element in these changes was the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with Israel.

Finally, we can point to some recent important developments. These include the government's decision of 10 December, 2004, to declare 27 January as official Holocaust Remembrance Day, and to establish the *Centro Sefarad-Israel* in 2006. The Historical Memory Law of 2007 has the specific goal of preserving Republican memory and Republican sites of memory. Finally, Spain's 2008 ascension to membership in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) must be noted. Since then, and for the first time, teaching about the Holocaust has been included in the Spanish educational curriculum, using a multi-disciplinary approach.

These things mark Spain's approach to memorialization, teaching and learning about the Holocaust, which exhibits the following main features. First, an ambiguous commitment on the part of policy makers on this issue, which is evident in the absence of any university-level department of Holocaust Studies, difficulties concerning archival access, a lack of any museums or documentation centers and a basic lack of empirical research.

Secondly, Spain's role during World War II is a subject that continues to generate controversy. Historical memory became a matter of political identity confronting political parties and their respective narrative constructions. It is also a fact that Franco's regime has never been condemned for its responsibility in the deportation of Spanish Republicans to Nazi concentration camps. This continues to be a burning and controversial issue with implications for Holocaust education. The same circumstance prevails regarding the role played by the regime in helping Jewish refugees, Sephardic Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, the role of Spanish diplomats and the passage over the Pyrenees.

the survivors and of those murdered at the camps. Amical Mauthausen represents deportees from the Austrian concentration camp and from all other Third Reich camps; the association took the name "Mauthausen", the camp that was the main destination of Spanish deportees. For more information see: <http://www.amical-mauthausen.org/eng/who-are-we/?id=1>.



Thirdly, the continuing controversies regarding the collaboration of Franco's government with Nazi Germany during the war, including the "Blue Division," Spanish volunteers working in Nazi Germany, the supply of raw materials for Germany's war machine and postwar help provided to Nazi officials enabling them to escape to Spain or to pass through the country.

Fourth is the shared problem with the other neutral countries, which all lack proper memory sites. In the case of Spain, however, some Nazi concentration camps represent Republican memory. The most emblematic is Mauthausen, but this list also includes Dachau and Buchenwald.

Finally, the phenomenon of a new antisemitism. On the one hand, camouflaged as anti-Zionism, expressed mainly by leftist groups that trivialize the Holocaust, not least by making comparisons between it and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and on the other hand, the emergence of new forms of neo-Nazism, which is characterized not only by racism and xenophobia, but also by a banalization of the Holocaust, and often used in political spheres and political discourses.

### **Empirical Research on Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust**

As previously noted, the absence of a university department or academic research group in Holocaust Studies has led to a lack of empirical research. However, some work exists in Spain that illustrates the situation today.<sup>4</sup>

Using both quantitative and qualitative research, Marta Simó and *Grupo Eleuterio Quintanilla* analyzed how much secondary students know about the Holocaust.<sup>5</sup> The first study was conducted in Catalonia with 196 students and the second in the Autonomous Region of Asturias with 862 students. In both cases, the research was done based upon a content analysis of curricula and textbooks, and a survey of the students' existing knowledge and attitudes on the topic. The research sought to determine their level of knowledge about the Holocaust, to evaluate the sources

4 This information comes from the "Education Research Project" (ERP) conducted by the IHRA.

5 M. Simó. "Teaching about the Holocaust in Catalonia." MA thesis. Jagiellonian University of Cracow, 2005; and Grupo Eleuterio Quintanilla. *Pensad que esto ha sucedido*. Asturias: Grupo Eleuterio Quintanilla, 2007.

from which they had attained this knowledge and to identify their ethical and moral positions related to Nazism and Judaism. Although these were separate research projects, the results were very similar. They revealed that students had a low to limited historical (fact-based) knowledge of the Holocaust, and that their sources for historical information came mainly from movies and literature. Overt antisemitism, covert antisemitism and Holocaust-denial were present in some answers, as were classic negative stereotypes of Jews. The majority of students stated that they were opposed to National Socialism, with many classifying the Nazis as evil. Other students expressed a moral stance, seeing themselves as defenders of equality and insisted that there are no differences between human beings. Yet another group's explanation on why the Holocaust could have happened was based on their understanding of Nazism as a mental illness and Nazis as barbarians or illiterates.

New research was conducted in 2015 by Jack Jedwab. Individuals in Canada, the US, Germany and Spain were asked to assess the strength of their knowledge about the Holocaust.<sup>6</sup> The primary objective of the surveys was to look at the relationship between self-assessed knowledge of the Holocaust and concerns about antisemitism, as well as how open respondents were to social diversity. The results revealed that knowledge of the Holocaust was highest in Germany at 84%, followed by Canada at 78.4%, and 72.8% for Americans; Spain was the lowest at 57.4%. Even more relevant was the gap for the younger population in Spain; ages 16–24 was at 47.8%, and between 45–54 years at 72.9%.

With respect to levels of antisemitism in Canada, USA and Spain, individuals with a stronger self-assessed knowledge of the Holocaust were more likely to agree that antisemitism was a problem in their society; Germany was the exception here.<sup>7</sup> In response to the question of whether prejudice towards Muslims was a serious problem, there was a gap among Spanish respondents, with three quarters of those with strong knowledge about the Holocaust believing that prejudice towards Muslims was a problem.

6 J. Jedwab. "Measuring Holocaust Knowledge and Its Relationship to Attitudes towards Diversity in Spain, Canada, Germany and the United States." in Z. Gross and D. Stevick. *As the Witnesses Fall Silent: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Holocaust Education in Curriculum, Policy and Practice*. Cham (Switzerland): Springer, 2015. 321–334.

7 In Germany, those who estimated they had little knowledge of the Holocaust consider antisemitism to be a slightly greater problem in society.

This concern was shared by nearly half of those who said they had the least knowledge. Where the gaps are perhaps widest is at the intersection of two factors—the degree of knowledge about the Holocaust and the degree of social distance from Jews and Muslims.<sup>8</sup>

### **New Pedagogical Initiatives and New Teaching Materials**

The establishment of *Centro Sefarad-Israel* in 2006 and Spain's entry into the IHRA in 2008 marked a turning point for Holocaust education in Spain. Today, almost 400 teachers have received training at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. It should be noted that teachers participated as individuals, working alone and self-motivated. More recently there has been an increase of teachers who came in groups and with the support of their schools.

Another initiative is a course conducted in Barcelona on the Holocaust for teachers, educators and civil servants.<sup>9</sup> Next year the course will be given for the fourth time, and more than 140 individuals will participate. The course also provides the opportunity for ten participants to go to Yad Vashem for two weeks of special training.

There are also some initiatives at university level. Since 2012, the elective course "The Holocaust, a Reflection from Medicine" has been given by Professor Esteban Gonzalez at the School of Medicine at the Autonomía University in Madrid. Some 270 students have enrolled in the course to date. There are also courses conducted by the *Fundación UNED* on the Holocaust and antisemitism by Alfredo Hidalgo and Graciela Kohan.

Apart from this, there now exist a significant number of "Working Groups".<sup>10</sup> Among them is the working group "Exile, Deportation and Holocaust."<sup>11</sup>

8 Here the term "social distance" is meant to reflect the degree to which respondents believe that they share values with either Jews or Muslims.

9 "Seminari de formació per al professorat i altres agents educatius." organized by the City Council of Barcelona, *Institut Municipal d'Educació, B'nai B'rith and Centro Sefarad-Israel* under the direction of Professor Xavier Boltaina.

10 There are networks of teachers organized in working groups in Barcelona, Gerona, Gijón, Madrid, Oviedo, Trujillo, Seville, Santiago de Compostela and Valencia, among others.

11 The author of this article works with this group, which is the most active in producing pedagogic tools.

Three years ago, in response to the factors mentioned above, a group of teachers, researchers and civil servants founded a working group to deal with teaching about exile, deportation and the Holocaust, under the umbrella of the Catalan educational department and the “Memorial Democratic.”<sup>12</sup> Among other activities, this group is responsible for organizing the “International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust” for students in secondary school (ages 14–17). This group follows the proposals of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme, and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) from the United Kingdom.<sup>13</sup>

Each year, using material researched and created for the day, a different pedagogical tool is prepared to help teachers and students learn and teach about the Holocaust, through real-life stories linked to local history, when possible. On 2013, the theme chosen was “The Courage to Care.” A free educational booklet was published that aims to provide resources for teachers of secondary education as well as pedagogic material for students to expand their knowledge about the exile of Spanish Republicans in 1939, political deportees, and the Holocaust. It also seeks to promote reflection and analysis of the humane values of those who risked their lives to save others. The booklet presents a historical context and highlights models for responsible behaviour, ethical commitment and respect and courage exhibited through the life stories of Righteous Gentiles and the people they saved.

In 2014, for example, the theme chosen for 27 January was “Journeys.” The idea was to learn about the role journeys played in genocide, and how these journeys were often experiences of persecution and terror for so many people who suffered in the Holocaust and from Nazi persecution. Eight different true stories were chosen, from which two were supplemented with an eight-minute video and pedagogical booklet. The first reason for choosing these two stories was existing access to the original and personal documents, as some members of the working group knew some of the victims’ descendants. The second reason was because they represented shared memories allowing the narrative to include the whole period of the Holocaust, from 1933 to 1945 in Europe, as well as the history of the

12 Spain consists of autonomous regions, each of which has its own education department and independent structures for organization and funding.

13 <http://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/2015/calendar2015.html> and <http://hmd.org.uk/>.

Spanish Civil War, and subsequent exile and deportation of the Republicans. In this sense, the two stories allow an explanation of the two totalitarian regimes—Nazism and Francoism—by broadening students' understanding of the role of perpetrators, collaborators and bystanders; they also reflect the desire to build a bridge with the present through ethical judgments based on democratic and universal values, and practices, in order to become supportive and respectful of others in order to be able to recognize signs of impending genocides.

Another important initiative is the project involving some secondary schools, which work together with *Amical Mauthausen*, visiting original memory sites, mainly Mauthausen and Buchenwald. But projects have been carried out not only at the level of formal education but also within informal pedagogic areas. This is another possible way to raise awareness about the Holocaust, since it is crucial to reach not only educators and students, but also civil society and mass media. The first project of this type is a project within the framework of the EU's "Europe for Citizens" program. It is called "Persecuted and Saved," and seeks to rehabilitate the memory of some of the 120,000 people who crossed the Pyrenees to escape Nazi terror. Most were Jews, but there were also Allied soldiers and airmen, and members of German and French resistance groups. In Catalonia, evasion networks were created to save these refugees and escapees, with a network of rescue ranging from the border crossing in the Pyrenees to the port of Barcelona.

This project defines and retrieves this part of European history and disseminates it through training and public education about these facts. The project consists of several stages. The first is research, in order to find files, private memoirs, witnesses, etc. The second is pedagogic training in three seminars for teachers and professors, cultural workers, people in charge of museums and libraries, and researchers. The project also holds a conference open to the public. The final stage is the broadcasting stage and includes a website that collects all the information concerning the project, creating promotional materials, publishing the proceedings, conducting study days open to the public, and producing an audio-visual presentation based on interviews and personal witnesses.<sup>14</sup>

Another representative project based on an initiative from civil society is the project "*Stolpersteine*,"<sup>15</sup> This project was created by the German art-

14 [www.perseguits.cat](http://www.perseguits.cat).

15 [www.stolpersteine.eu](http://www.stolpersteine.eu).

ist Gunter Demnig, and includes 20 countries, in which more than 50,000 commemoration stones have been laid. In April 2015, for the first time in Catalonia and Spain, five *Stolpersteine* were laid to commemorate the fate of five Republicans who were deported to Mauthausen. This initiative was made possible thanks to a project called “Breaking Silence,” carried out to recover local historical memory by the local government of Navàs, a small town near Barcelona. This is a memory that still needs governmental recognition and one that provides an opportunity for families to openly mourn their relatives who were victims. The primary aim of this project is to help overcome competing memories between Republican and Jewish victims, learn of the destiny of each victim group, its circumstances, what policy lay behind their fate without trivializing or diluting these facts and to also accept the uniqueness and universality of the Holocaust by commemorating the memory of each victim.

### **Conclusions and Perspectives**

To teach and learn about the Holocaust is not an easy task in any country. Although good progress has been made in Spain, difficulties and challenges remain in the following ways. First, there is a need for a proper analysis of the real situation concerning learning and teaching about the Holocaust in Spain today. Therefore, it would be useful to undertake empirical research on these matters. Secondly, although there is a general willingness, a stronger commitment by policy-makers is required, teacher-training in more areas of the country, support for pedagogic research groups and the availability of more pedagogical materials, especially in local languages. Thirdly, Holocaust education must be recognized as an opportunity to approach local and personal experiences traditionally included in certain memory narratives and as an opportunity to work on combining local history of the Holocaust with the universal history of the Holocaust. Finally, dealing with competing memories as shared memories is an important opportunity to expand the aims of Holocaust education as a tool for education in human rights, democracy, multiculturalism and moral values, and against racism, xenophobia, and neo-Nazism.



## **Supplement**



# Archives

## Argentina

Argentine Foreign Ministry Archives, Buenos Aires

(Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina, AHCA)

Argentine National Archives, Buenos Aires

(Archivo General de la Nación de Argentina, AGNA)

## Belgium

Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society, Brussels

(Archives Centre d'Etudes et de Documentation Guerre et Sociétés contemporaines, CEGES)

## Germany

Federal Foreign Office, Political Archive, Berlin

(Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, PA AA)

## Great Britain

Public Record Office, London (PRO)

→ now: The National Archives, London (TNA)

## Israel

Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (CZA)

## Netherlands

University Library Leiden

(Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden)

## Portugal

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, Archival Services, Lisbon

(Arquivo Histórico-Diplomático do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, AHD resp. AHDMNE)

Oliveira Salazar Archive, Lisbon

(Arquivo de Oliveira Salazar, DGARQ/AOS)

**Spain**

Avila General Military Archive

(Archivo General Militar de Ávila, AGMA)

General Archives of the Administration, Alcalá de Henares,

(Archivo General de la Administración, AGA)

Lleida Historical Archive

(Arxiu Historic de Lleida, AHLL)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, Alcalá de Henares

(Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, AMAE)

**Sweden**

The Swedish National Archives, Stockholm

(Riksarkivet)

**Switzerland**

State Archive of the Canton of Ticino, Bellinzona

(Archivio di Stato del Cantone Ticino)

Swiss Federal Archives, Berne

(Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, BAR)

**Turkey**

Archive of the Turkish Prime Minister, Ankara

(TC Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, BCA)

**USA**

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, New York/Jerusalem

(JDC)

Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY

(FDRL)

Leo Baeck Institute, New York

(LBI)

National Archives, Washington DC

(NARA)

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Archives, Washington DC

(USHMM)

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**Uki Goñi** works as an independent researcher and journalist in Argentina. He is the author of *Perón y los alemanes: La verdad sobre el espionaje nazi y los fugitivos del Reich*, Buenos Aires (1998), (a book on the relations between Argentina and Nazi Germany during the war), and *The Real Odessa: How Perón Brought the Nazi War Criminals to Argentina* London (2002) on the escape of Nazi war criminals to Argentina after the war, as well as the difficulties Jewish refugees faced trying to reach Argentina between 1933–1950.

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(2014, in Portuguese) and *Nazi Germany and Southern Europe, 1933–45. Science, Culture and Politics* (forthcoming, Palgrave).

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The volume **Bystanders, Rescuers or Perpetrators? The Neutral Countries and the Shoah** offers a trans-national, comparative perspective on the varied reactions of the neutral countries to the Nazi persecution and murder of the European Jews. It examines the often ambivalent policies of these states towards Jewish refugees as well as towards their own Jewish nationals living in German-occupied countries. By breaking down persistent myths, this volume contributes to a more nuanced understanding of an under-researched chapter of Holocaust history and also considers the challenges and opportunities related to Holocaust education and remembrance in the neutral countries.

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