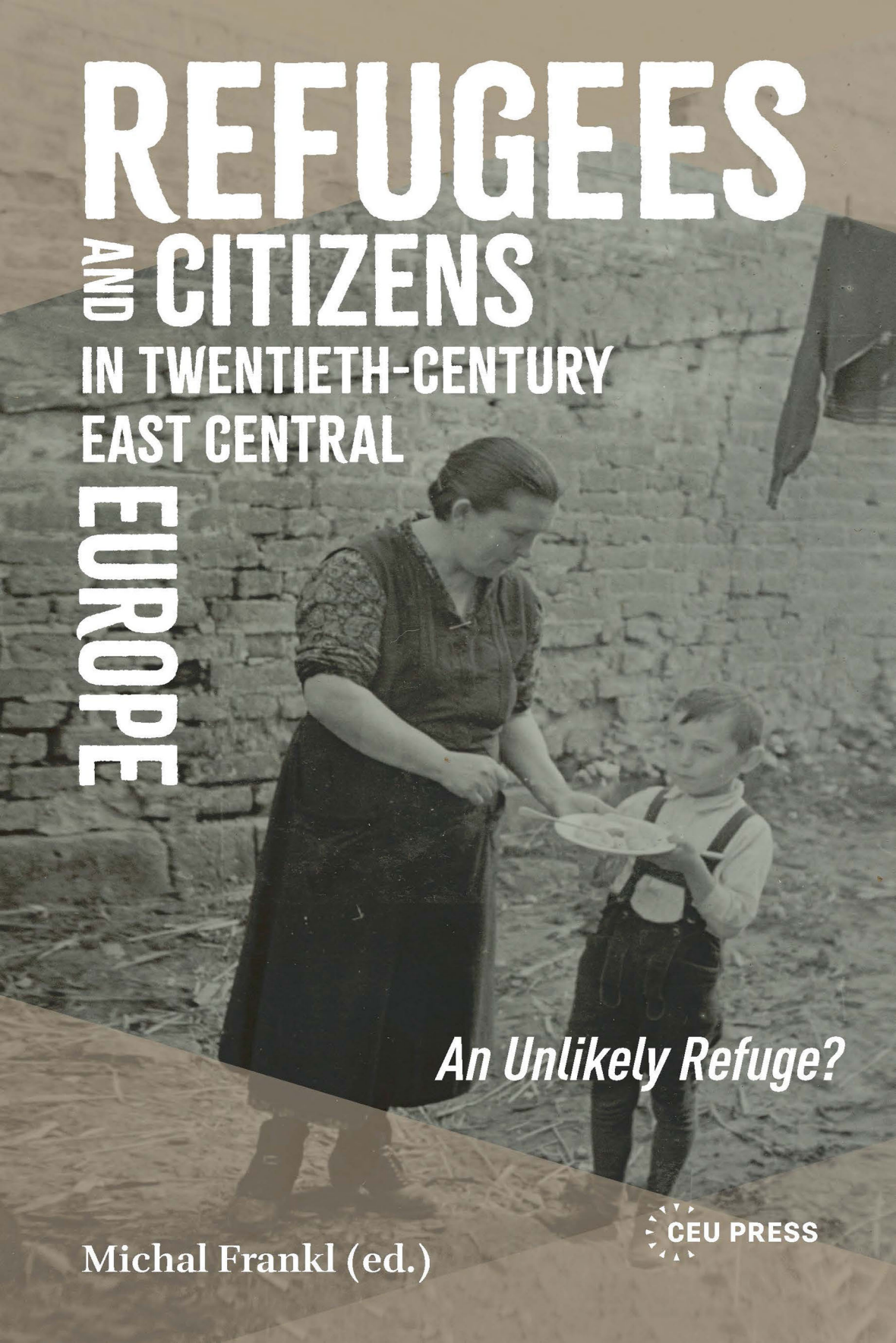
REFUGEES AND CITIZENS IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY EAST CENTRAL EUROPE



An Unlikely Refuge?

Michal Frankl (ed.)

CEU PRESS

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Edited by
Michal Frankl

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Refugees and Citizens in East-Central Europe in the Twentieth Century: Introduction to an Unlikely Refuge

Michal Frankl

Abstract: The introduction challenges the perception of East-Central Europe as a space that only produces refugees rather than also contributing to solutions to their situation. It traces the disappearance of the region in works devoted to refugee protection and links this to the construction of the self-image of the "Western" liberal refugee regime. Summarizing the chapters, the introduction sketches the various ways in which East-Central Europe also provided protection, from the First World War to the post-communist transformation, from the Habsburg Empire through nation-states to state-socialist countries. In doing so, it hopes to inspire research about the plurality of refugee regimes globally.

Keywords: East-Central Europe; refugee regimes; humanitarianism; citizenship; state socialism

When Dana Němcová (1934–2023) spoke about her personal humanitarian commitment to refugees, she felt compelled to start with her own story: When she was four years old, her family had to flee from the town of Chomutov (Komotau in German), which lay within the borderlands of the Bohemian Lands transferred to Nazi Germany as a result of the Munich Agreement (September 29, 1938). While her father was still serving in the Czechoslovak army and was deployed to the border, she and her mother found refuge with relatives in the interior of the country. When the war and occupation finally ended and they returned to their home, she witnessed the expulsion of local Germans. Even though they arrived after the "wild transfer" (*divoký odsun*)—the initial chaotic, bloody, and often murderous

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removal immediately after the liberation—Němcová still witnessed violent ("ugly") scenes of the Revolutionary Guards against the remaining Germans and the remaking of society in the absence of the expelled ethnic group. Not much later, after the communists took power in Czechoslovakia in 1948, friends of the family and "people whom my parents respected" fled to the West.[1]

Němcová went on to become an important figure in the Czechoslovak dissident and human rights movement. In September 1989, she co-authored a statement by Charter 77, the leading Czechoslovak dissident organization, which criticized the situation of East German refugees in the West German embassy in Prague and called for a humane solution.[2] Through this work and her own childhood experience, she became acutely aware that the "problem of refugeedom" was "very frequent" in the twentieth century, providing her personal version of the often-used label of the period as the "age of refugees."[3] Soon after the demise of state socialism, she was elected to the Czechoslovak Parliament and pushed for the adoption of the first refugee law and the 1951 Geneva Convention. She co-founded one of the early Czech nongovernmental aid organizations, which assisted mainly refugees from Yugoslavia. As Němcová's account shows, being a refugee was a deeply personal, intimate experience for many citizens in East-Central Europe. Personal and familial experience blurred the division between those who needed help and those who gave it. Citizens and many humanitarians had their own refugee stories or could easily identify with the struggles to obtain a passport and visa, cross a border, and find a new home. In many situations in the twentieth century, refugee stories—in their many forms and directions—were highly visible and tangible.

Němcová's life story and her narrative introduce some of the key questions addressed by the contributions in this volume and more broadly in the European Research Council Consolidator project *Unlikely Refuge? Refugees and Citizens in East-Central Europe in the 20th Century*.[4] It reveals both the lived experience of refugees and the aid given or denied to refugees as essential and understudied parts of the history of East-Central Europe. It also opens questions about the role and significance of historical precedents of assistance to endangered people for subsequent, and even today's, approaches

1 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Dana Němcová, recorded online on March 11, 2021, by Karla Koutková. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations in this volume are by the respective authors.

2 Prečan, *Ke svobodě přes Prahu*, 49–50.

3 Interview with Dana Němcová.

4 "Unlikely Refuge?," www.unlikely-refuge.eu.

to refugees. Another oral history interview recorded as part of the project illustrates just how important historical memory was for the aid during the post-communist transformation, and especially for the humanitarianism that has emerged from the involvement in dissent. Janina Ochojska (b. 1955) is the founder of the Polish branch of the EquiLibre organization and of the Polish Humanitarian Action (Polska akcja humanitarna) which provides aid in Poland and worldwide. In the early 1990s, she was a key actor in Polish efforts to assist refugees from Yugoslavia. More recently, as a member of the European Parliament, she has been one of the voices calling for a more compassionate approach to refugees. Her life, work, and public advocacy are an example of refugee assistance within and from the region.

Ochojska described how she worked closely with Magdalena Grodzka-Gużkowska, who assisted Jews during the Holocaust and participated in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. Yet when searching for a usable past beyond her own contacts and networks, she relied on the history of humanitarianism as communicated through the media. Discussing the hard choices made while selecting refugees for the convoys evacuating families from besieged Sarajevo, she drew a comparison with the dilemmas of Nicholas Winton, who organized *Kindertransporte* from Prague in 1938–39.[5] This aligns with the tendency to highlight Western humanitarian actors over those acting locally.[6] The tension between personal refugee histories and local aid on the one hand, and perceptions of East-Central Europe as a place to leave and a recipient of Western aid, on the other, inspired us to discuss the region as an "unlikely refuge."

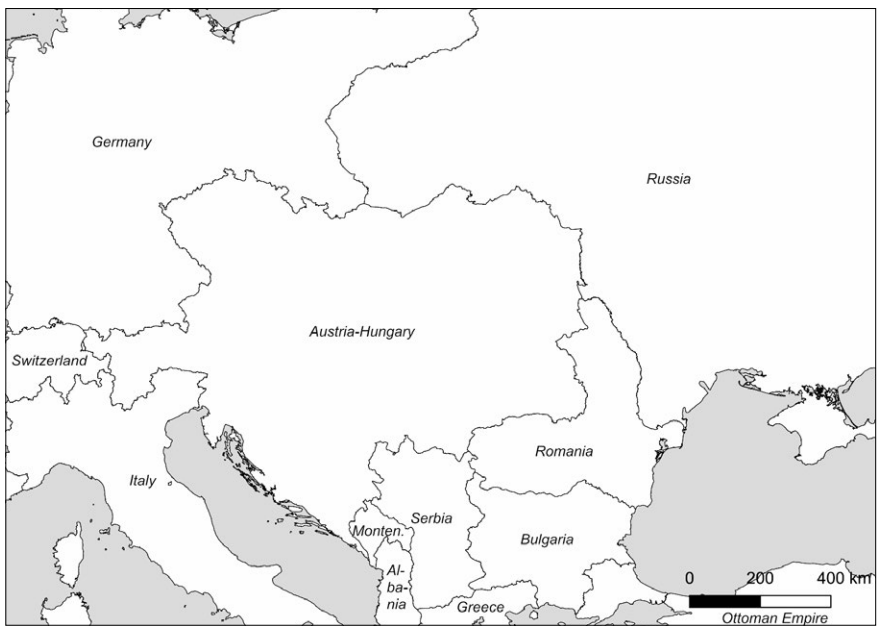
A Disaster Space

The list of human displacements that have taken place in East-Central Europe in the twentieth century seems almost endless. The human toll of wars, from local to regional to "world" wars, of shifting borders and oppressive political regimes, has helped shape our understanding of the role of migration in the region. East-Central Europeans fled because of ethnic conflicts over territory, political power, and cultural dominance that led to violence and ethnic cleansing; the region was the stage for the Nazi genocide of Jews and Roma.

5 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Janina Ochojska, recorded online on June 21, 2024, by Lidia Zessin-Jurek.

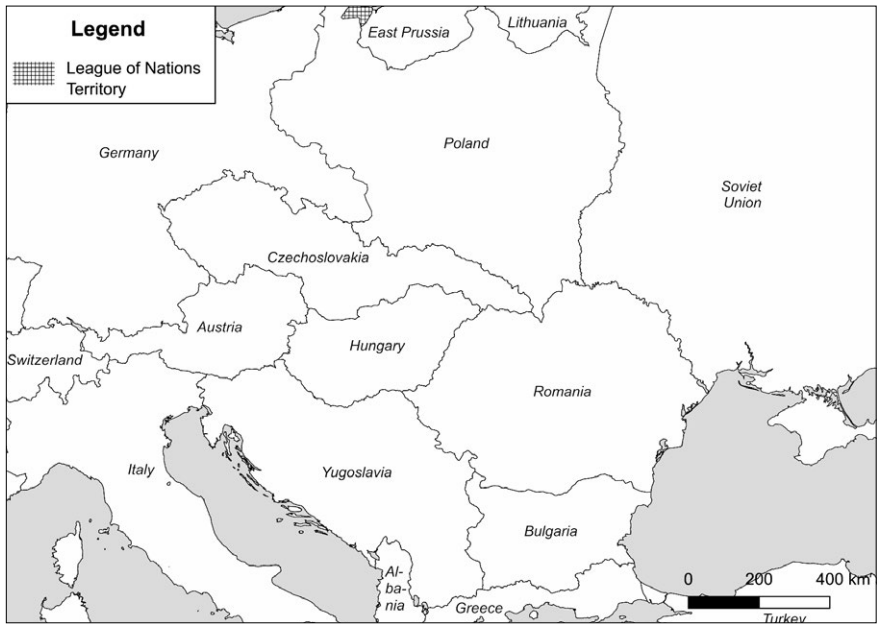
6 In this volume, we use the capitalized terms East and West (or Eastern and Western), unless they are part of geographic names, as constructed and imagined entities rather than geographic terms referring to clearly outlined regions.

East-Central Europeans left when short-lived interwar democracies were replaced by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes that suppressed political and other freedoms, built fences, and incarcerated opponents. The reluctance of those displaced by the Second World War to return to their home countries, many of which were soon to be ruled by new communist governments, and then the flight from state socialism, became iconic moments of the westward direction of refugee migration. Many migrated because of material need: structural underdevelopment, measured by the increasingly globalized capitalist markets, functioned as a "migration trigger" within and beyond the region. Indeed, in a continuation of nineteenth-century patterns of labor migration, tens of millions of Eastern Europeans moved to the West in the course of the twentieth century. Europe's East is thus often perceived—both in public discourse and by historians—as a disaster space, with involuntary migration as a consequence of oppression, violence, and poverty. As we know from critical disaster studies, the disasters of East-Central Europe are, like other disasters, not natural, but constructed and political.[7] The East is presumed to contribute to, rather than alleviate, the "refugee problem."

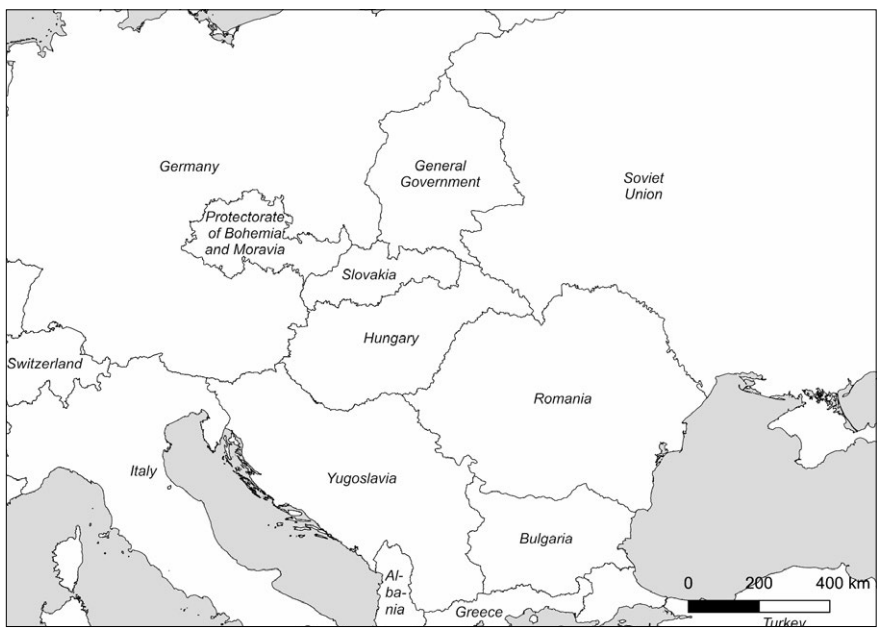


Map 0.1: East-Central Europe before the First World War (1914). Author: Aneta Plzáková for the Unlikely Refuge? project.

7 Horowitz and Remes, "Introducing Critical Disaster Studies," 1–8.



Map 0.2: East-Central Europe after the creation of the nation-states (1922). Author: Aneta Plzáková for the Unlikely Refuge? project.



Map 0.3: East-Central Europe after the outbreak of the Second World War (December 1939). Author: Aneta Plzáková for the Unlikely Refuge? project.

Map 0.4: East-Central Europe after the Second World War (1950). Author: Aneta Plzáková for the Unlikely Refuge? project.

Map 0.5: East-Central Europe after the end of state-socialist regimes and dissolution of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia (2000). Author: Aneta Plzáková for the Unlikely Refuge? project.

Unsurprisingly, the reasons for flight and emigration to the mostly Western countries that were perceived as safer remained at the center of historiography and dominated in the public perception.[8] Few research efforts, aside perhaps from the study of refugees during the First World War,[9] have treated the imagined European West and East as a whole.[10] As a result, the East of Europe seems to have no history of refugee reception worthy of attention, and few discernible continuities in the treatment of refugees. This has reinforced the tendency to associate refugees with particular ethnic and/or religious groups, with an emphasis on their politics and the preservation of linguistic and cultural identities. Thus, in a region characterized by ethnic diversity and conflict, refugees appear to be both an affirmation and an aberration. On the one hand, group labeling accompanied discussions of ethnic minorities and recent attempts to revive a history of tolerant multiethnic coexistence. On the other hand, "exile" was mostly understood as unnatural and temporary in a context where unity of territory and ethnicity was considered the ideal. This corresponded with the experience of "exile" during the two world wars and under state socialism and offered a path to make sense of refugees within the framework of national histories. The acceptance of refugees' minority status and the emphasis on the unnaturalness of their condition both characterize what scholars of migration have called "methodological nationalism."[11]

What is more, East-Central Europe has not disappeared from the radar of imagined contributions to solving the refugee problem in one single step but rather as part of a longer process. It is helpful to compare two major international surveys describing the European and global refugee regimes: The work of John Hope Simpson (1868–1961) and Joseph B. Schechtman (1891–1970) serves as an example of collections of actionable knowledge about refugees at the end of the 1930s and during the Cold War. Despite differences in their approach, both experts believed in the power of measuring, counting, and managing refugee flows in order to provide information on which to base international migration policy. Recent scholarship has critiqued both scholars—Simpson for colonial-style knowledge production[12] and Schechtman for embracing population transfer as a solution.[13]

8 See the state-of-the-field studies of the *Unlikely Refuge?* project published in "East-Central Europe as a Place of Refuge," 4.

9 Gatrell and Zhvanko, *Europe on the Move*.

10 Poutrus, *Umkämpftes Asyl*; Bresselau von Bressensdorf, *Über Grenzen*.

11 Wimmer and Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism," 576–610.

12 Schult, "Interwar Statistics," 1–21.

13 Rubin, "Vladimir Jabotinsky," 20–23.

In order to gather information for his survey in the late 1930s, Simpson dispatched a number of rapporteurs to East-Central Europe and engaged officials as well as aid workers. Refugee representatives, such as Aleksandr Iziumov, who worked in the Russian historical exile archives in Prague, readily provided statistics and information about their groups. In doing so, they promoted their particular understanding of exile and refugee status as a form of nationality abroad. Simpson's compendium therefore also reproduced group terminology in making sense of refugees; this corresponded to the language and the scope of activity of interwar high commissioners for refugees. On this basis, and while transatlantic migration was severely restricted, the survey recognized countries such as Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia as regions which received and assisted refugees and co-produced solutions to refugees' situation.[14]

Unlike Simpson, Schechtman showed no interest in East-Central Europe in his summary of refugee situations around the world in the 1960s. This was not only because "the centre of gravity of the global refugee problem has shifted from Europe to Asia" or because the "hard core" refugees in Europe and the "new arrivals from behind the Iron Curtain" appeared manageable.[15] Drawing on Western sources, often collected during the World Refugee Year (1959–60),[16] he discussed a number of situations on the Western side of the "Iron Curtain," as if constructing a border woven from the reception and integration of Cold War refugees. These included the settlement of "hard core" refugees, Germans expelled from the East, and Karelian refugees in Finland, as well as Muslims driven out of Bulgaria and North African refugees in France, one of the first post-colonial refugee situations.

The absence of the region as a place of refuge is all the more striking because Schechtman himself was born in Odessa and was socialized in Eastern Europe. He became an internationally recognized expert on population movements, working and publishing in the United States from 1941. As a committed revisionist Zionist, he witnessed the disappearance of Jewish life in Eastern Europe while promoting the resettlement in Palestine and Israel. Like many others, and in line with his right-wing nationalist politics, Schechtman ignored the refugees who were accommodated in state-socialist countries. As Antonio Ferrara recently noted, Schechtman's works "do not cover events taking place within the Soviet Union—an unfortunate pattern repeated in most of the later historiography."[17] Exceptions—such as the

14 Hope Simpson, *The Refugee Problem*.

15 Schechtman, *The Refugee in the World*, xiv.

16 Gatrell, *Free World?*

17 Ferrara, "Eugene Kulischer, Joseph Schechtman," 734.

Vietnamese who headed north or Koreans who repatriated to North Korea from Japan—are only mentioned in passing, and with a touch of skepticism. Schechtman's book is only one example of a broader genre which associated refugee protection and integration with the anti-communist West. Eastern Europe was now a region to leave. Anti-communism was an important driving force behind the generalization of the post-Second World War refugee regime.

The narratives of refugee history are more than just accounts of people forced to leave their homes or the responses of governments and societies. They have been, and still are, a way of verbalizing and visualizing the differences, problems, and backwardness of Europe's East in the twentieth century. In fact, perceptions of refugeedom in the West and the East developed in an entangled process, co-defining each other. It is remarkable how closely the perception of the East corresponds to the imagined version of the Western refugee regime as its negative mirror image. The East, associated with closed borders and walls, totalitarian repression and a lack of political freedom, and economic stagnation, was unimaginable as a space for developing approaches to refugee assistance and protection. Conversely, refugees from the East to the West confirmed the self-stereotype of democratic freedoms, open borders, and (especially toward the end of the Cold War) human rights. Patterns of labor migration seemed to confirm the same hierarchy: Westward labor migration conveyed ideas of economic freedom and opportunity. For a long time, tensions between refugee and labor migration were limited by the political interest in admitting anti-communist refugees. Until the 1980s, the Western refugee regime was catalyzed and held together by the binary view of the world, and at the same time facilitated by the difficulty most "Easterners" had to cross the "Iron Curtain."[18] Migration co-produced the binary image of the West and the East and refugees in the East, if noticed at all, were hardly more than a detail, a peculiarity, a paradox. Even a recent history that analyzes international refugee policies as a "fluid, polycentric ensemble of national as well as international institutions, bi- and multilateral actions, as well as legal norms and global practices" barely notices the parallel refugee regime in the period when it was most viable.[19]

The exclusion of East-Central Europe from imagined solutions to refugee situations reflects the foundations of the international refugee regime after the Second World War. Building on older concepts, the framers of twentieth-century laws adopted the idea of a sanctuary that corresponded to the territory of the nation-state, albeit embedded in international conventions and

18 For instance, Loescher and Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness*.

19 Schönhagen, *Geschichte der internationalen Flüchtlingspolitik*, 16.

supported by international organizations. As a result, taking in particular the Nazi-period and Second World War situation of closed borders into consideration, the border is imagined as separating persecution from safety. The refugee's ability to claim protection at the moment of entering sovereign territory is seen as a pillar of the international refugee regime. This implies a duality and tension between the protection of refugees in the spaces of an orderly state, under the rule of law, and the disorderly space in which humanitarian assistance is to be delivered. While the post-Second World War refugee regime is not entirely a product of colonial history, the impacts of colonial legacies and divisions are clearly significant in its emergence.[20] These issues reverberate through the histories of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the ultimate organizational imprint of the Western refugee regime. As the UN became increasingly involved in refugee situations, managing large numbers of displaced people and administering refugee camps or organizing repatriation, especially in the 1990s and beyond, critics expressed concerns about its scope of activities being extended beyond providing legal protection.[21]

The (dis)appearance of East-Central Europe on a symbolic map of refugee spaces testifies to a partial, one-dimensional, teleological approach to refugee history. In contrast, this volume focuses on the region, both to examine the complexity of refugee statuses in situations characterized by changing political and legal orders and shifting borders and to look beyond the ideal image of liberal democracies. This has become even more important in recent decades, for the region has been significantly affected by refugee migration since the end of state-socialist regimes. The accommodation of Yugoslav refugees of the 1990s and Ukrainians fleeing from the Russian invasion in 2022 stands out against the flat refusal to receive even negligible groups of refugees from Syria starting in 2015. The different reactions to large numbers of refugees—real or imagined—make visible both the influence of ethnic hierarchies and long histories of categorization on the one hand and the capacity of the governments and nongovernmental organizations to provide aid on the other hand.

Refugee Regimes in the Plural

Imagining East-Central Europe as a space of refugee reception, assistance, and protection goes against the conventional wisdom and the dominant

20 See for instance Krause, "Colonial Roots."

21 See for instance Loescher, *The UNHCR and World Politics*.

historiographical tradition. This volume focuses on East-Central Europe not only as a site of persecution, expulsion, and flight, but also as a region where the meanings of refugeedom were co-produced and negotiated between refugees, societies, aid organizations, and governments. The individual chapters, although they do not address all aspects of our team's research, do represent the broader agenda of the *Unlikely Refuge?* project. Therefore, the following overview both summarizes the contributions and seeks to outline the contexts and questions explored by the project as a whole.

While all the chapters deal with East-Central Europe, they aspire to do more than simply set the record straight on this one region. We argue that East-Central Europe is indispensable for understanding the Western refugee regime and for writing a global history of refugees. Discussing East-Central Europe contributes to this debate from the perspective of a region that lacked direct experience of Western colonial expansion but nevertheless shared many links with European colonialism and the concepts and practices established as part of colonial rule.[22] Examining it therefore has the potential to enrich the debate about protection in different legal, social, and spatial contexts. Putting East-Central Europe back on the map of refugee history hardly means promoting an embellished image; the contributions here also reveal cases in which entry or support was denied or made uncertain and temporary. The volume therefore seeks to leave behind the simplified juxtaposition of spaces of disaster and unfreedom with those imagined to be safe, free, and prosperous. It explores different and diverse ways in which protection was delivered or denied, through law, state measures, voluntary action, and other means.

Arranged roughly in chronological order, the contributions here cover the experience of refugees and the responses of other actors in a range of situations and geographical contexts. The volume is unique in examining refugee protection across the political regimes of the twentieth century, beginning with the Habsburg Empire, through the interwar nation (and nationalizing) states, the collapsing states of the late 1930s, state-socialist regimes, and finally, the post-communist period. While the chapters are very diverse, they address a number of key themes. They share a focus on refuge in an unstable, evolving political environment. Refugee status has been (re)negotiated in the narratives here against backdrop of the formation of nation-states and their citizenship regimes, or their destruction, as well as against authoritarian and totalitarian governments. From the perspective of East-Central Europe in the twentieth century, refugee status is as much a

22 Representative of a broader discussion is Huigen and Kołodziejczyk, *East Central Europe*.

function of national sovereignty and its legal framework, as it is of dramatic political transformations. Conceptual instability and fluidity contribute to this: Rather than working from and with a fixed definition of a *refugee*, we recognize the constructed and contested nature of this concept and explore its changing meaning. We look at who was considered a refugee, when, where, and by whom, and what such a label implied. In doing so, the volume encourages thinking beyond the 1951 Convention and shows that the categorization of refugees cannot simply be derived from national and international law. Following Peter Gatrell, we understand *refugeedom* as a "matrix involving administrative practices, legal norms, social relations and refugees' experiences, and how these have been represented in cultural terms."[23] On the other hand, we use the overlapping term *refugee regime* in contexts where the institutions and norms involved in the determination of refugee status and protection are involved.[24]

The many ways in which citizens and organizations provided aid were crucial, not only in caring for those in need, but also in shaping the refugee experience. Doina Anca Cretu offers a new perspective on humanitarianism in the refugee camps set up in the Habsburg monarchy as a temporary and spatially limited path to rehabilitation and future citizenship. She shows not only the precarious situation of the mostly poor Jewish refugees who were confined in camps in southern Moravia, but also how the ideas of Jewish aid workers and state officials converged and conflicted. Her research illustrates how the different scales of humanitarianism intersected—from local aid to Jewish relief organizations on the national level to the transnational aid represented in particular by the Israelitische Allianz and the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

Jewish humanitarianism opens up the broader theme of refugee aid workers at home in the region whose contribution has in many cases been forgotten or underestimated, both because the prevailing views of humanitarianism see it as a Western-based and transnational operation and because the sources of local organizations have so often been destroyed or are difficult to access. Historians are only now discovering figures such as Marie Schmolka, a leading figure in Czechoslovak refugee aid in the 1930s. Her activities not only reflected her dedication and commitment to Jewish welfare, but also the growing professionalization of aid work in the interwar period. Schmolka chaired the Czechoslovak National Committee, which coordinated private aid organizations and was well known internationally,

23 Gatrell, "Refugees," 170.

24 Kleist, "Refugee Regime," 167–85.

participating in the advisory body of the high commissioner for refugees from Germany of the interwar League of Nations.[25] Actors like Schmolka were much more than just a source of information for Western surveys; they developed innovative solutions and bridged between the different scales of humanitarianism.[26]

New nation-states are central to the history of refugees in East-Central Europe. The *Unlikely Refuge*? project looks at five countries that emerged—figuratively speaking—from the ruins of the Habsburg Empire after the end of the First World War. Drawing on Hannah Arendt and her identification of statelessness as the key aspect of the nation-states in interwar Europe, the political scientist Aristide R. Zolberg argues that "massive refugee flows are most prominently a concomitant of the secular transformation of a world of empires and of small self-sufficient communities or tribes into a world of national states."[27] From the early modern expulsions of Jews from Spain or Protestants from France, to the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy to the post-colonial states in Africa, the nation-state in the making, with its tendencies toward religious and ethnic homogenization, has emerged as the key form of persecution that generates large groups of refugees.

This is certainly true of the countries and situations examined in this volume. The drawing of new territorial borders, the division of people into citizens and foreigners, and the ethnic homogenization, especially during and after the two world wars, had a dramatic impact on societies—in other words, on both those who remained and those who were forced to leave. In the *Unlikely Refuge?* project and this volume, however, we enrich this perspective by examining both the causes of flight and facets of reception. This includes not only the history of the refugees themselves, but also—and most importantly—the history of the "host" society. In particular, we look at how refugees and provision of protection (or its withdrawal) also co-produced the institutions, the legal order, citizenship, and welfare of the new territorial entities. The history of East-Central Europe shows that the formation of nation-states typically, on one hand, produces refugees and, on the other, creates the institutions of assistance. Protection was uncertain, situational,

25 Brade and Holmes, "Troublesome Sainthood," 3–40; Hájková, "Marie Schmolka," 36–49; Čapková and Frankl, *Unsichere Zuflucht*.

26 See also the volume that originated from the 2021 *Unlikely Refuge?* workshop on humanitarianism in Central and Eastern Europe, Cretu and Frankl, *Humanitarian Mobilisation in Central and Eastern Europe*. The workshop, like the volume, demonstrates the growing interest of researchers in humanitarianism on the margins and in alternatives to Western transnational aid.

27 Zolberg, "Formation of New States," 30.

and often precarious, but it highlights the capacity of nation-states to both repel people on the move and to provide aid and status.

Several chapters outline the process that resulted in the *political refugee*. Francesca Rolandi does so in relation to the dynamic and contested border space between Italy and Yugoslavia after the First World War. Focusing on the uncertainty and multiple temporalities of these refugees, she shows the connection between the concepts of political refugee, ethnic and political identity, and border spaces. Her research shows how in many, if not most, situations, it is difficult to distinguish between a narrow concept of political refugees as those who actively oppose a government for political reasons and a broader category of those who are persecuted because of their identity. Both the political and ethnic identities of the refugees who crossed the new border between the twin cities of Fiume and Sušak co-produced the spaces and times of their refugee experience.

In the interwar period, the new countries in East-Central Europe—Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland—were perceived as a space of protection for political refugees, often referred to in the parlance of the time, and in the self-description of these displaced people, as "emigrants." Refugees fleeing the dissolution of the Russian Empire and the revolution settled in many places, with a particular concentration in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. State officials and aid workers in the region were involved in the interwar international refugee regime: They participated in the work of both high commissioners, issued Nansen passports, collected fees, and contributed to the production of knowledge about refugees. The histories of these refugee groups linked the accepted international norms of non-refoulement of political refugees, the making of the international protection and of its institutions on the one hand, and the state-making and specific political conditions on the other. They show that internationalization and nationalization, in the sense of the construction of institutions of the nation-state and the application its categories, were intertwined processes.[28]

Lidia Zessin-Jurek looks at the relationship of the nation-state and its citizenship regimes to refugees from a different angle, through the absence of any protection in the constellation of invasion and defeat. Her close reading of the recollections of refugees who witnessed the dissolution and absence of state power in Poland in the weeks following the invasion by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1939 shows how the erasure of state authorities, state spaces, and state times affected the refugee experience. Sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars in other disciplines have already

28 Wheatley, "Central Europe," 900–911.

begun to unravel refugee temporalities, or subjectively perceived and lived time.[29] Zessin-Jurek adds to this research by proposing a new typology of concepts related to the refugee time in the absence of state protection. Her study also illustrates how research about refugees during the Holocaust can contribute methodologically to the broader field of refugee and migration studies.

Historiography focused on political refugees has paid much less attention to "undemocratic" refugees, but it is worthwhile to disregard our political assumptions about what is right or wrong and broaden the concept of "refugee" to include those aligned with ideologies that ran counter to liberal democracy and regimes which violated human rights. Many expected the communist revolution to herald a new age of freedom and equality characterized by the rule of the proletariat and the abolition of liberal political freedoms. The alternative concept of refugees and their support existed in the transnational refugee movement of the interwar period: It was understood as support for freedom fighters and conditioned on ideological purity and loyalty.[30] Refugees on the other side of the political spectrum were also protected: This could include the Schwarze Front (Black Front), a splinter group of German Fascists, or Spanish Francoist refugees who found refuge in Czechoslovakia,[31] Ustaša Croats supported in Hungary,[32] or Austrian Nazis, who fled not only to Germany, but also to Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Their protection was imperfect, unstable, and subject to political pressure, but it was also a sign that an abstract, value-neutral concept of the "political" refugee was at work.

In fact, both refugee regimes developed from a common pedigree and similar concepts of refugee worthiness and agency. In particular, the nineteenth-century model of the political refugee in Europe proved formative. After all, the recognition of refugee protection in constitutions of state-socialist countries echoed the French revolutionary constitution's vision of asylum for foreigners who have been banned due to their struggle for freedom.[33] The specific political orientation of these "exiles" may have been less important than the construction of a "political" refugee. Polish rebels, nationalist liberals, or socialist revolutionaries were all considered worthy of protection, regardless of their specific ideology and actions.

29 See for instance Jacobsen, Karlsen, and Khosravi, *Waiting*.

30 Lupp, *Von der Klassensolidarität*; Caestecker, "Red Aid," 304–31.

31 Száraz, "Poskytovanie azylu," 255–81.

32 Hamerli, "Croatian Political Refugees," 624–46.

33 Cabot, *La gauche et les migrations*, 16–17.

Although in practice, government responses were often situational and uncertain, the concept of non-refoulement for political refugees underpinned the twentieth-century protection regime. With the communist takeover of the former Russian Empire and later with the Cold War, the neutral concept of a refugee lost much of its weight and the refugee regime was effectively split in two. The underlying logic of classifying displaced people, however, remained similar: According to the binary logic of the Cold War, the involuntary movement of people across borders seemed easy to categorize and infused with meaning, even when, as was often the case, these categories and meanings contradicted the intent or understanding of the displaced. This politicized understanding of refugee agency largely disregarded other motives for migration and complex matrixes of making sense of the world, decision-making, and action. The Cold War contributed to a predictable but critically reduced image of the refugee.

The contributors to this volume are not the first to criticize the ideological underpinnings of the Western refugee regime and its shortcomings, especially its repeated failure to receive refugees who did not come from the East. Whereas there has been increased interest in labor migration,[34] a conversation that connects refugees on both sides of the Iron Curtain is still largely lacking. Without idealizing the reality of state socialism, this volume collectively argues that the split-screen perspective has obscured significant similarities and mutual influences between the two refugee regimes. Reconstructing communist refugee policy, in turn, appears to be a necessary step in critically assessing its counterpart in the West.

Nikola Tohma traces the real meaning of being a "political refugee" in state-socialist Czechoslovakia, weaving together in a single interpretive framework histories that are typically described separately and/or in group terms. Building on its interwar refugee history and image as a "progressive" country, Czechoslovakia had been known as a place of political "exile," or a "communist Geneva," but Tohma's analysis has broader implications. She unearths the precarious effect of refugee policies in illiberal conditions where—as in interwar Czechoslovakia—refugee status was based on practice rather than a legal category. Instead, integration through labor and a diversity of refugee identities and strategies characterized the Eastern refugee regime.

Julia Reinke's chapter links seemingly surprising phenomena: children as political refugees, ethnic changes to border areas, and, yes, food. She examines and compares the reception and care for refugees from the Greek Civil War in Poland and East Germany. This expression of communist solidarity cannot

34 Gatrell, *The Unsettling of Europe*.

be separated from the other contexts of postwar reconstruction, especially the ethnic cleansing of Germans from Poland (and Czechoslovakia) and their reception as *Vertriebene* (expellees) in Germany. Many Greek refugees were initially resettled in the *ziemie odzyskane*, the western borderlands now largely cleared of the previous population (similarly, in Czechoslovakia, many were placed in communities from which Germans had been expelled). Reinke's research also points to specificities of care under state socialism: An emphasis on collective accommodation and education rather than a focus on the family[35] contributed to the spatial settings of (child) refugeedom and made expertise about food and its accessibility all the more important.

Maximilian Graf takes a look at the strange things that happened to Austrian, and by extension Western, refugee policy as the Cold War entered its softer phase and while both the West and East were increasingly confronted with the arrival of refugees from "Third World" countries. The détente, or easing of tensions, between the two geopolitical blocs paradoxically undermined the openness and protection afforded to refugees fleeing from the East. While it may seem that the Western model prevailed with the dissolution of state socialism, both were significantly weakened by the end of the Cold War. Focusing on the case of Polish refugees fleeing the repression of strikes and the martial law in Poland in 1981, he analyzes the changing understanding of people seeking refuge. Those who only a few years earlier had been treated as "political" refugees fleeing persecution, similar to Hungarians in 1956 or Czechoslovaks in 1968, were now increasingly labeled economic migrants.

The rapid collapse of state-socialist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989 put the region back on the imaginary map as a possible refuge. Yet simplistic claims of a rupture and the notion of a new beginning as part of the post-communist transformation also reproduced Cold War binary views. At the same time, when the former state-socialist countries were cutting border fences, acceding to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and adopting new refugee laws and institutions, the very refugee regime they were joining was being weakened by changing perceptions of displaced people and a tendency toward securitization. As the logic of the Cold War became obsolete, much of the agency ascribed to "political" refugees and the purpose of refugee status vanished. These contradictory processes combined with the post-communist transformation into a very specific amalgam of institutional and legislative empowerment which developed hand in glove with the deconstruction of protection.

The transformation from state socialism to liberal democracy and free market economy introduced its own kind of temporality: For many, this

35 Zahra, *The Lost Children*.

took the form of selling their present well-being for the promise of future prosperity. Helping others while also expecting help from the West introduced specific tensions into the refugee regime in East-Central Europe. Karla Koutková revisits *temporary protection*, a widely discussed and contested phenomenon, particularly in relation to refugees fleeing the wars following the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. From an anthropological perspective, Koutková paints a more complex picture by contrasting the temporalities stemming from the legal status and the times of the state with refugee temporalities related to their family situation or work. She reveals significant gaps between the different temporal orders: Although Koutková's interviewees were perhaps for the most part a welcome and "privileged" group of refugees in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic (Czechia), they still experienced the "temporary protection" and these gaps between institutional and personal time as distressing. Her analysis is all the more important as "temporary protection" reflects the need to provide for war victims, and a similar legal instrument is being used across Europe to help refugees fleeing Ukraine as a result of the Russian invasion in 2022.

Finally, language matters. By analyzing Hungarian encyclopedias from the second half of the nineteenth century until the end of the twentieth century, Ágnes Kelemen makes a strong case for conceptual history. She traces the different concepts applied to refugees in these authoritative sources of knowledge in relation to other terms such as citizen and citizenship or emigration. In doing so, she also deconstructs Hungary's moral panic over refugees in 2015, and beyond. While—as Kelemen also points out—more conceptual research is needed, what stands out is the instability of the term "refugee" as such. In Hungary, as in other post-Habsburg countries, this term has long been used to refer to citizens displaced during the First World War ("internally displaced persons" in current legal parlance) or to recognize the status and claims of co-ethnic refugees arriving across new borders, for instance to Hungary once the Trianon borders were drawn or to Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement. In contrast to "emigrants" with their ascribed agency, refugees were often thought of as a mass of people to be counted and managed.[36]

The encyclopedic anchoring of the term "refugee" in the definition in the Geneva Convention was mostly delayed to the 1990s, as one of the terminological shifts of the transformation in former state-socialist countries. This is best illustrated by the disparity between German encyclopedias on both sides of the "Iron Curtain." For example, while *Brockhaus*, published in

36 See also Frankl, "Scripting Refugees," 555–86.

Wiesbaden in 1968, contains an entry on *Flüchtling* (refugee),[37] discussing international and national legal frameworks as well as refugee statistics, the term is completely absent from *Meyers Neues Lexikon* published in Leipzig in 1972.[38] We do not yet understand how the parallel definition of "refugee" in the Eastern bloc influenced this terminological development. However, the different semantics of the refugee do not indicate an insurmountable difference, but rather the twisted path of different concepts of refugees that converged in twentieth-century East-Central Europe.

Taken together, the chapters in this volume show how research on refugees in East-Central Europe, or more broadly on places of refuge considered "unlikely" from the perspective of liberal democracy, contributes to a wider trend of considering a global history of refugees and looking beyond Western templates. It also reminds us not to apply concepts retrospectively and to avoid the determinism in which refugee protection evolved naturally—notably from the high commissioners for refugees in interwar Europe—to the Geneva Convention of 1951 and its subsequent extensions. The tour through different refugee situations, from centers to borders, across political regimes and a variety of actors, helps us to think of refugee regimes in plural. Even in today's world, it is more typical for people to find refuge in political spaces that do not fit the model of a Western liberal democracy. Rather than a clear and stable legal status, most refugees enjoy no, or only partial, legal protection, have to cope with a changing political environment, and are often considered labor migrants. From the opposite perspective, the stability of such a status may well be an illusion; in response to a perceived "migration crisis," even many countries belonging to the Western political and military structures have compromised legal instruments and principles that were only recently considered inviolable.

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37 "Flüchtling," in *Brockhaus Enzyklopädie*, 364–65.

38 Göschel, *Meyers neues Lexikon*, vol. 4, *Drepa–Flush*.

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About the Author

Michal Frankl is Head of the Department of Knowledge and Participation at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO). He was the Principal Investigator of the ERC Consolidator Project *Unlikely Refuge?* hosted at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

1. Jewish Refugees, Encampment, and the Humanitarian Paradox in Austria-Hungary during the First World War

Doina Anca Cretu

Abstract: This chapter is an analysis of what the author calls an ecosystem of humanitarian aid designed for Jews placed in refugee camps in Austria-Hungary during the First World War. This entailed the intertwining of state policies of assistance, the establishment and rise of philanthropic Jewish organizations (i.e., Israelitische Allianz zu Wien, Baron Hirsch Stiftung), and the mobilization of transnational actors, such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The chapter traces the genesis and dimensions of this ecosystem of humanitarian aid. More significantly, it highlights the arguably paradoxical ways assistance for Jewish refugees functioned within and, at times, reinforced the containment and segregation that encampment entailed in wartime Austria-Hungary.

Keywords: Humanitarianism; Jews; refugees; refugee camps

> When the gates opened, thousands of people who had previously been crammed together like animals in cages started screaming at us. Their solitude rejoiced at the sight of us, embraced us through iron bars. The barracks were arranged in rows. Each row separately. As we were herded inside like cattle, we were enveloped in stale air full of germs… It was there, in that fortress, that thousands of people were kept locked up, separated from the whole world—just to check that they did not carry infectious diseases. Exhausted people didn't care anymore. They were looking for a resting place for their stiffened limbs. Tired, they collapsed onto the bare, dirty floor. […] Exhausted, they rested their heads on their hands […] and fell asleep like drunkards…[1]

1 Lee, *Oczami dziecka*, 348.

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Thus wrote Malka Lee in her memoirs about arriving in the refugee camp of Nikolsburg/Mikulov (hereafter Nikolsburg) in Moravia in the first few months of the First World War. Lee, who went on to gain recognition as an American Jewish author and poet, was at the time—in September 1914—a ten-year-old girl named Malka Leopold, one of the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees who were evacuated from Galicia, in the eastern part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, after a Russian invasion. By November 1914, Lee was one of over six thousand Jewish refugees from Galicia who arrived in the camp of Nikolsburg, established close to, but explicitly segregated from the town of the same name. They had traveled by foot and on trains for two months, since the moment of the Russian invasion. Many of these Jewish refugees arrived in small towns in imperial Austria, with many relocated in Bohemia, Moravia, Upper and Lower Austria, and Styria. Others went to Prague, Budapest, or, indeed, Vienna. By 1915, approximately seventy-seven thousand Jewish refugees had arrived in Vienna, while twenty thousand had reached Budapest and fifteen thousand had come to Prague.[2] Some had sufficient means in these early days of the war to rent apartments or they went to live with relatives in the towns and villages under the monarchy. Most of them, however, like Malka Lee, were without means and were placed in quickly constructed refugee camps. Nikolsburg was just one of these refugee camps designed for Jews coming from the east that authorities in Vienna established in the early months of the war. Jewish refugees, coming primarily from Galicia, as well as from Bukovina, were also placed in Pohrlitz/Pohořelice (hereafter Pohrlitz), Gaya/Kyjov (hereafter Gaya), and Deutschbrod/Německý Brod/Havlíčkův Brod (hereafter Deutschbrod) in Moravia, as well as in Bruck an der Leitha in Lower Austria. This placement of Jews from the east in quickly constructed barracks marked the genesis of encampment as a refugee policy in wartime Austria-Hungary.

This chapter looks at the case of Jewish refugees to explore the multifaceted *regime of immobility* that the government put in place during the war. Confinement and segregation of those considered foreigners from the east were the core motivations for establishing refugee camps in the Austrian hinterland in the early days of the war. These camps also, however, saw the emergence of relief work and, ultimately, of what I have previously called *reactive humanitarianism*.[3] Initially, it was the urgency to contain refugees that mattered the most, but hunger and disease within the camps soon led

2 Rechter, "Die große Katastrophe," 19–21; Berkley, *Vienna and Its Jews*, 137–40; Rechter, *Jews of Vienna*, 68–69.

3 Cretu, "Child Assistance," 510–27.

to the mobilization of state and non-state resources to alleviate suffering. In this context, the plight of Jewish refugees generated a certain humanitarian ecosystem in refugee camps, in which state-driven humanitarian assistance, non-state Jewish philanthropic societies, and international agents of aid were all intertwined. Both domestic and international assistance organizations worked within the bounds of state-produced humanitarianism and further reinforced encampment as a method of refugee assistance rather than as a tool of containment and separation.

The case of Jewish refugees living in the camps of imperial Austria and the mobilization of their assistance is exceptional for a number of reasons. While other refugees coming from other parts of the monarchy and placed in camps received assistance primarily through the state and local committees attached to government planning of relief and welfare,[4] non-state actors, both domestic and international, responded to the plight of displaced Jews. On one hand, this should be placed within the prewar history of philanthropy for Jews as a form of solidarity. In Austria-Hungary, the mobilization for Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia and elsewhere in the nineteenth century was notable.[5] Once the First World War started, however, philanthropy for Jews added a new layer, by providing immediate material aid for those suffering under the war. Historians have excellently documented the flight of and assistance for Jewish refugees in Austria-Hungary's bigger cities.[6] These studies describe the emergence of Jewish, often women-led, philanthropy or the expansion of relief and welfare programs.[7] They generally highlight a form of civic association in which Jewish philanthropists played a central role in providing aid for Jewish refugees in the monarchy's largest cities.[8] My analysis, on the other hand, suggests that the state was the main channel of control and assistance in refugee camps. In this context, Jewish refugees were objects of a multi-dimensional form of relief, driven by the state in cooperation with pre-existing Jewish philanthropic associations, local committees, a diaspora-based international form of help, and middlemen and women who emerged as mediators of assistance.

This chapter maps how state officials included assistance for Jewish refugees in the blueprints of encampment. It goes on to explore the non-state

4 This is particularly evident in the case of Italian-speaking refugees.

5 See, for example, Unowsky, *Plunder*, 55–57, 150, 165, 179.

6 On Vienna see Rechter, *Jews of Vienna*; Healy, *Vienna*; on Prague see Morelon, *Streetscapes*; on Budapest: Kind-Kovács, *Budapest's Children*.

7 See further *Zehn Jahre Arbeit*; Hecht, *Zwischen Feminismus und Zionismus*.

8 Rechter, *Jews of Vienna*, 74–76; Hoffmann-Holter, *Abreisemachung*, 43–47; and Jäger-Sustenau, "Der Wiener Gemeinderat," 10–12.

dimension of relief for Jewish refugees and how this overlapped with the state officials' vision and practices. This rather exceptional multi-actor mobilization of relief for Jewish refugees allows for further reflection on the relationship between humanitarianism and encampment as displacement policy during the war. Scholars of Jewish history have already unpacked the meaning of assistance mobilization in times of war in relation to Jewish identity and proactivity of a Jewish civil society in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.[9] My purpose here, on the other hand, is to focus on the rapport between humanitarianism and encampment to reveal how varied humanitarian actors interpreted and used the camp system as a means to assist refugees rather than as a technology of containment par excellence.

This analysis incorporates voices from multiple sources: first, it relies on state archives and documents generated by the administrative bodies in charge of refugee policies. In addition, it includes material produced by two protagonists of this story, namely, the Jewish philanthropic organizations Israelitische Allianz zu Wien and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). It is important to note that access to some of these philanthropists' sources remains limited, as documents are scattered among different locations, including Moscow and Jerusalem; other aid actors, such as the JDC, have opened their archives to research. To compensate here for the unequal access to archival material, I have used state documents to facilitate a sort of triangulation. The local-national-international humanitarian ecosystem that I write about emerges from the outlines of the main architects of refugee encampment: officials within the Ministry of the Interior designed the structure and scope of the refugee camp, inspected it, and developed and shifted policies. They also relied on and at times collaborated with both domestic and international philanthropists. While it is important to be aware of the biases inherent within state and institutional sources, reading and understanding them remains vital for the broader understanding of refugee encampment and its historical development.

Overall, the lens of Jewish philanthropic aid and its cooperation with the state in the context of encampment is a fruitful angle to unpack the tenuous, fluid, and rather murky relationship between "coercion and care" (in Aidan Forth's words)[10] in Austria-Hungary in the First World War. More broadly, this case study provides a useful exploration of the rise of modern refugee encampment during the First World War. In my analysis, the war,

9 See Rechter, *Jews of Vienna*; Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity*; Kieval, *Making of Czech Jewry*; Panter, *Jüdische Erfahrungen*.

10 Forth, *Barbed-Wire Imperialism*, 18.

or more particularly, its conditions and consequences, generated a refugee policy that merged containment and relief mechanisms; in this context, it enabled forms of collaboration between state and non-state actors in the sociopolitical realm of the refugee camp.

A Regime of Immobility

Although there is little consensus in the historiography regarding an exact chronology of refugee encampment, the idea of placing people on the move in spaces of containment certainly by far predates the First World War. There are documented cases during the era of the American Civil War of African American slaves who had fled from plantations being held in a kind of camp.[11] The historical precedent that scholars have highlighted for the use of refugee camps as a technology of population control is the Second Boer War (1899–1902) in South Africa. In that violent war of attrition, British forces removed about 250,000 men, women, and children from their homes, enclosed them in nearby towns, and eventually interned them in a network of about one hundred camps. Whether or not these camps should be classified as housing refugees remains up for debate, as doing so replicates the language of British imperial actors who claimed that these encamped people were refugees. More broadly, I argue that there were camps designed to eliminate people as a measure of control of British imperialism.[12] A more conventional approach to this periodization looks to the era of the Second World War: It was then, some have argued, that refugee camps became sites of professionalized assistance that incorporated political, juridical, and bureaucratic technologies of population containment. This view has much to do with the emergence of an international refugee regime in the wake of the establishment of the United Nations and its agencies, focused on relief and rehabilitation of those displaced by war, persecution, and forced expulsion.[13]

Up until recently, historians of refugees have spent limited time in exploring the camp as a method of displacement control in the era of the First World War. Historians such as Benjamin Thomas White and Michelle Tusan have attributed the creation of the modern refugee camp to the intersection of local relief and a growing international bureaucratic and humanitarian

11 See Manning, "Contraband Camps."

12 Forth, *Barbed-Wire Imperialism*.

13 Gatrell, *Making of the Modern Refugee*, 85–198.

apparatus that poured human and material resources into these spaces of containment in the Middle East during and after the war.[14] These existent narratives, however, highlight the refugee camp as a British invention or as the spaces where international organizations (namely the League of Nations in its early years) conceptualized and crystallized much of their relief work for refugees in the aftermath of the First World War. This work is important as it challenges what I consider to be a problematic chronology of refugee encampment. Nevertheless, the refugee camp as a space of mobilization of humanitarian relief as opposed to a mere avenue to stop people had already appeared in wartime Europe. In the Netherlands, for example, a few camps were designed for over twenty thousand Belgian refugees.[15] It was in Austria-Hungary, however, that a complex system of encampment and what I call here a fully fledged regime of immobility emerged in response to wartime mass displacement; then, as many as two million people were documented as displaced after enemy invasions, military evacuations, and the direct destruction of their livelihoods.[16]

The official and, indeed, formal story of refugee encampment can be situated in September 1914, when the Ministry of the Interior in Vienna released a document addressed to local administrators and police stations across the monarchy; in this note, just days after the Russian invasion, officials sketched a policy of refugee confinement that highlighted the potential of encampment to manage mass displacement from the east. As noted previously, authorities attempted to apply a classification method: refugees' financial capacity to support themselves and their families determined whether they were sent for containment in camps or granted some degree of augmented autonomy outside the barracks. Beyond this, classifications based on nationality and confession further informed the organization of encampment.[17] It was a method that, in official terms, sought to control movement and perform care through the making of artificial notions of homeland. In this framework, Jews from the eastern part of the monarchy were placed in camps in Moravia, as well as Lower Austria, whereas

14 White, "Humans and Animals," 216–36; Tusan, "The Concentration Camp," 824–60.

15 Schrover, "Exile and Migration (The Netherlands)."

16 Work on refugees in Austria-Hungary in the First World War is ever-expanding; see, for example Mentzel, "Kriegsflüchtlinge in Cisleithanien im Ersten Weltkrieg"; Thorpe, "Displacing Empire," 102–26; Ruszała, *Galicyski Eksodus*; Frizzera, *Cittadini dimezzati*; Boisserie and Mondini, *I disarmati*.

17 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (ÖStA), Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (AVA), Ministerium des Innern (MdI), allg. 19, Karton 1921, "Instruktion betreffend die Beförderung und Unterbringung von Flüchtlinge aus Galizien und der Bukowina," September 15, 1914.

Ruthenians or Christian Poles fleeing from the same areas in the east were sent to camps in distinct spaces in Carinthia, Lower Austria, Bohemia, and Styria. By 1915, refugees fleeing the southern part of the monarchy—Italians, Croats, or Slovenians—were placed in different camps progressively built and organized in Styria and Upper and Lower Austria.[18]

In 1915, the very same Ministry of the Interior published a document mapping the rationale for refugee policy. According to its outline, containment methods were intended to address fears of epidemic diseases, ethnic conflicts, or social clashes as local populations perceived refugees as competitors in terms of access to food. Possible tensions between locals and refugees, as well as the appeasement of a potential "foreign" element shaped the logic of segregation. The document also, however, revealed a longer-term vision of the refugee camp as space of care.

The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben famously interpreted the refugee camp as a "space of exception" shaped by exclusionary practices directed by the sovereign power; in this thinking, refugees are "stripped of every political status and wholly reduced to bare life."[19] In the case of camps in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the state treated refugees as objects of control and segregation. In this sense, the camp was indeed a way to exclude them. In my argument, however, Agamben's theorizing is reductionist and restrictive in the broader understanding of the camp as a space of refugeedom.[20] In fact, the crystallization of refugee encampment in Austria-Hungary during the First World War was based on the intersection of exclusions and inclusions, and containment ultimately met assistance.

Humanitarianism in Austria-Hungary's refugee camps had two key features in terms of its organization: First, the central aid giver was the state, as officials reconsidered encampment not only as a form of containment but also as a space of assistance. Refugees living in camps were those who were deemed financially unable to take care of themselves. These were mostly women, children, and elderly people without proof of economic or even social backups. In practical terms, they were thus dependent upon the state's care. The central government in Vienna, along with local committees, developed a humanitarian agenda that focused on controlling epidemics, implementing

18 A good description of this classification system can be found in Thorpe, "Displacing Empire," 105–09.

19 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 171.

20 For some additional criticism, for example, see Owens, "Reclaiming 'Bare Life?'," 567–82; Sanyal, "Urbanizing Refuge," 558–72; Ramadan, "Spatialising the Refugee Camp," 65–77.

health and hygiene measures, and developing nutritional strategies, as well as organizing rehabilitative education and labor opportunities.

The second underlying organizational feature was its emphasis on ethnic and confessional lines, in sync with the notions of *Heimat* (German, homeland) that the refugee classification officially signified. While the central government took on the main role in terms of providing relief, various associations and committees were established for specific refugee groups. Refugees from Bukovina and Galicia were to be assisted by a Committee for Welfare of Refugees from Galicia and Bukovina. After the invasion of Italian troops in 1915, refugees of Italian, Slovenian, and Croatian nationalities were to be under the care of a generically titled Committee for Refugees from the South. These committees combined private charitable donations with state support in the form of human and financial resources. Briefly put, these official groups cooperated or were under the control of the central government.

In practice, as the war continued, the government in Vienna augmented the implementation of a refugee assistance scheme that had two dimensions: First, it sought to address the emergencies directly and indirectly caused by the war—displacement, homelessness, and disease. Tackling urgent crises of child mortality and the lack of food and proper nutrition became part of the official agenda in refugee camps, where state authorities worked to develop infrastructure, deploy medical professionals, and improve nutrition.[21] At the same time, in the authorities' eyes, relief also entailed ensuring continuous access to education and spiritual care. This meant building schools and offering coursework in children's vernacular languages within a program of cultural welfare (*kulturelle Fürsorge*). In the published sketches of refugee policy in 1915, the Ministry of the Interior explained that it was necessary that schoolchildren be helped to resume their interrupted education and keep them "busy" in an attempt to alleviate any form of "depression."[22] Maintaining continuities in the name of refugees' moral care was one scope of schooling. Intervening in the transformation and the emotional formation of refugees also meant the molding of patriotic and modernized citizens of the monarchy.[23] From this perspective, the camp emerged not only as a political space of exclusionary practices, but also one of attempted integration and citizenship formation. This also meant ensuring a spiritual equilibrium through *Seelsorge*, a form

21 Cretu, "Child Assistance."

22 K. K. Ministerium des Innern, *Staatliche Flüchtlingsfürsorge*, 17–18.

23 Cretu, "War is Destructive, but It Reconstructs Anew…"

of spiritual care defined through the presence of confessional buildings, as well as religious leaders. These became part of what the authorities understood to be what I would call a *formative* method of relief. In this sense, emergency assistance meant feeding and curing people; however, fixing and improving these people as both war victims and as citizens coming from seemingly backward peripheries of the monarchy were ideas embedded in the underlying *Fürsorge*-framework that refugee encampment entailed.

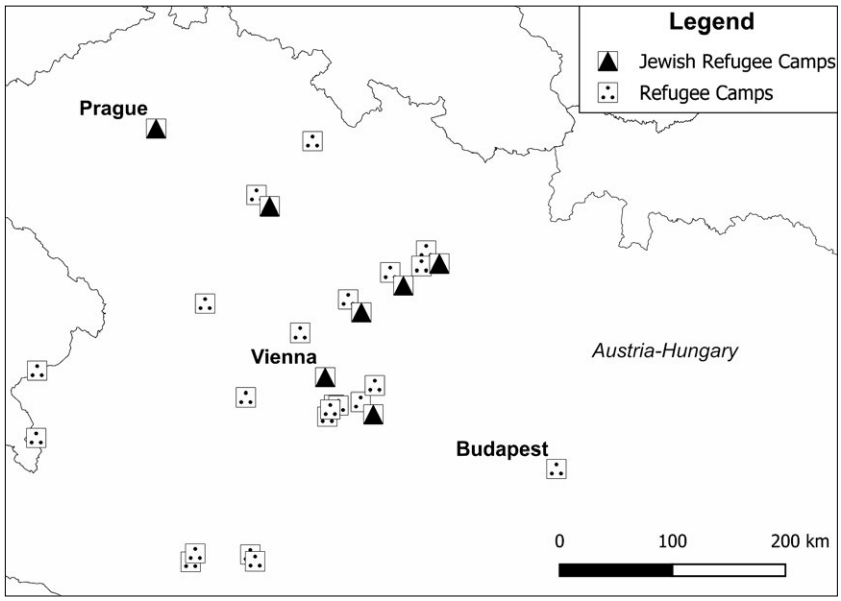
Taking this context into consideration, humanitarianism on behalf of Jewish refugees living in camps was, in fact, at the intersection of a state-claimed project of assistance and Jewish philanthropy. It was primarily centralized, but it also functioned along ethnic and confessional lines. Below I look at how some Jewish aid organizations mobilized relief for war suffering and encamped Jews as supporting actors in the state's regime of immobility.

The Jewish Refugee and the State's Care

Jews were what Jaclyn Granick has called the "war's paradigmatic refugee."[24] They were not only displaced by military clashes and scarcity but were also victims of antisemitic violence. This multifaceted dimension of Jewish displacement influenced how states and localities received, assisted, or rejected them.

The process of encampment of Jewish refugees in wartime Austria-Hungary shows the "regime of immobility" at work. In the fall of 1914, the containment and segregation of displaced Jews was the foremost policy vis-à-vis refugees from Galicia and Bukovina. On the one hand these people were labeled as refugees (*Flüchtlinge*), part of a hyper-mobility caused by the Russian invasion in the east. On the other hand, they were also Jews from the east (*Ostjuden*), which meant they were not only perceived as "foreigners" in relation to locals in Moravia, Bohemia, or the Austrian hinterland, but also prone to be seen through the lens of prewar antisemitic tropes in Austria-Hungary—they were thus deemed uncivilized, dirty, and infectious. It was (at least partially) their Jewishness that authorities and some refugees themselves considered to be the definitive factor for the organization and the experience of encampment.

24 Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism*, 111.



Map 1.1: Major refugee camps in the Habsburg monarchy during the First World War. Author: Aneta Plzáková for the *Unlikely Refuge?* project.

At first, the swift placement in makeshift camps framed displacement management in terms of isolation from the local population. Local complaints about the accommodation of Jewish refugees in the town of Nikolsburg, for example, allegedly motivated plans for forced encampment even in the case of refugees with fairly affluent social status who were financially able to support themselves.[25] This approach was thus at odds with the blueprints for a refugee policy that allowed those with financial means to have more autonomy and settle in various towns and villages of the monarchy. Moreover, once in the camp, refugees were expressly forbidden to leave, "apart from the case of their repatriation."[26] In this context, for many Jewish refugees, the camp was an impermeable space of detention.

Jews living in refugee camps often felt themselves to be on the brink of survival. All refugee camps were prone to epidemics, lack of food, poor hygiene standards, and a lack of proper clothing, and these were the source of recurrent complaints. In some interpretations coming from refugees themselves, it was their Jewishness that fundamentally shaped their general suffering in camps. In one instance, a refugee in Deutschbrod wrote in 1916:

25 Mentzel, "Kriegsflüchtlinge," 304.
26 Mentzel, "Kriegsflüchtlinge," 307.

> … as a result of [poor] eating, new illnesses, named epidemics by the administration of the barracks, arise every day, to which no less than 80 percent [of refugees] fall victim. How many victims will there be from immediate cold? Our barracks administration will certainly be able to conceal it as a terrible outbreak of typhus and make it well known to the public. No, the hunger and the cold will cause us the bitter consequences. If we were really brought here and have to leave our lives behind, we would rather be left to our fate at home! We could sacrifice all our possessions, but at least we could be given our lives.[27]

The sarcastic tone of the note is revelatory for the ways this refugee observed how his status as a displaced person and disease became metonyms for each other in wartime Austria-Hungary. But even more so, it suggests a perception of the fact that their Jewishness mattered in how refugees were treated and how authorities responded to their plight. Indeed, typhus had been an endemic disease by the end of the nineteenth century and in Austria-Hungary (and Germany and Russia), doctors and politicians connected its spread to Jews.[28]

It was their Jewishness, in the eyes of other refugees, that also led to their being abused and mistreated in camps. One such early example came from the camp in Pohrlitz in 1914. In November, several residents of the camp submitted complaints to a relief committee that was in charge of providing clothes and spiritual support. They claimed that a policeman had repeatedly hit them without reason or placed them in solitary confinement.[29] For them, these were signs of targeted violence on display.

Arguably, the strongest reports came from Zionists. Historian Jan Rybak has shown that during the First World War, Zionist groups in East-Central Europe gradually became activists for the improvement of Jews' lives.[30] It was in this vein that the Zionist Central Committee for Western Austria submitted multiple reports and investigations to the offices of the Ministry of the Interior in Vienna. They requested either permission for Jews to live in towns and cities[31] or improvement of conditions with the refugee

27 Mentzel, "Kriegsflüchtlinge," 246–47.

28 See Rybak, "Racialization of Disease," 461–84.

29 Moravský zemský archiv (Moravian Provincial Archives, MZA), Moravské místodržitelství-Presidium, B13, box 1177, Unterbringung von Flüchtlingen in Mähren; Barackenlager in Pohrlitz, Beschwerde der österreichisch-israelitische Union, February 20, 1915.

30 Rybak, *Everyday Zionism*.

31 ÖStA, AVA, MdI, allg.19, box 1921, Protokoll aufgenommen am 26. Oktober 1914 in der Kanzlei des Zionistischen Zentralbüros (Hilfsaktion) in Sachen der in Nikolsburg untergebrachen

camps.[32] One such report from October 1914 is illuminating: An inspection commission affiliated with the Zionist Central Committee for Western Austria visited the refugee camp of Nikolsburg and reported on conflicts between Jews and non-Jewish local residents, administrators' discrimination and violence vis-à-vis refugees, and extreme confinement due to the limited availability of "permission slips" to leave the camp's premises. For this reason, members of the committee called for the abolition of permission slips without exception and the selection of suitable guards with the involvement of delegates elected from among the refugees. Furthermore, they called for improvements to the dietary options for the refugees, which they believed were being intentionally restricted. Finally, in the committee's view, the camp's organization and the "coexistence of people of different sexes, including many unmarried people" severely violated the "modesty and morality" they preferred. In this context, they called for an adaptation of the camp organization according to refugees' immediate physical needs, but also according to their cultural and moral habitus.[33]

In 1915, the liberal Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* published a report from "the field" that outlined the story of life in the camps of Nikolsburg and Pohrlitz. The article carried a dramatic undertone about the poor living conditions for refugees and the illnesses they carried, but it also had a hopeful tone, stressing that, while refugees' suffering was severe, state officials were ready to respond with improved infrastructure, health care, and food provisions.[34] In this sense, by writing about the fate of Jewish refugees living in these camps, the report fundamentally echoed the state's own language and projection of *Fürsorge* schemes. Stories of scarcity, need, violence, or extreme segregation were not unique complaints regarding the conditions of encampment, as refugees from other corners of the monarchy also reported poverty and abuse.[35] Such complaints, I would argue however, revealed limitations of state-driven refugee humanitarian assistance rather than its complete absence. Jewish refugees were also objects of the aid that the regime of immobility in Austria-Hungary entailed; however, it was

galizischen Flüchtlinge in Gegenwart der Herren k.k. Revisor Rudolf Taussig und Charles Bernhardt, October 26, 1914.

32 ÖStA, AVA, MdI, allg.19, box 1921, Protokoll aufgenommen am 26. Oktober 1914; ÖStA, AVA, MdI, allg.19, box 1969, Aron Schwertfinger Letter to Ministry of the Interior and the Central Committee for Refugee Welfare, August 7, 1916.

33 ÖStA, AVA, MdI, allg.19, box 1921, Zionist Central Committee for Western Austria letter to Ministry of the Interior, October 23, 1914.

34 Kläger, "Aus den hölzernen Städten."

35 See, for example, Leoni and Zadra, *La Citta' di Legno*.

limited and heterogeneously implemented. For example, the organization of a Central Committee for Refugees from Ukraine and Bukovina included aid for Jewish refugees. State-based local relief committees were also organized in the areas where these camps were placed. Deutschbrod saw an expansion of health infrastructure. However, by 1917, Nikolsburg and Pohrlitz were partially dismantled because of the acute living conditions and waning of state resources to develop care schemes for refugees. It is difficult to assess whether these refugees' perceived Jewishness shaped the limits of this state-produced humanitarianism. It is possible that central authorities preferred to transfer responsibility for Jewish refugees to Jewish communities and philanthropists. This was in tune with what was happening across Europe during the war, as various governments concluded that the plight of Jews who suffered from poverty or disease was for Jews to solve.

Jewish Philanthropy and Encampment

In May 1915, one Max Blatt wrote a letter to Rabbi Moritz Lewin, living in the town of Nikolsburg. Writing from Frankfurt am Main, Blatt asked Lewin to help his father, Nathan Blatt, who sought to leave the barracks because the poor living conditions had become almost life-threatening. The elder Blatt wanted to stay in a town in Bohemia or Moravia, where he hoped to get by as best as he could with the help of the state and that of his son. It was not easy, however, to get either permission to leave or the promised state support. It was for this reason that Max Blatt wrote to Lewin, who had become known as a man of influence in assisting refugees in their relationship with authorities.[36]

Moritz Lewin was a local mediator in the midst of a humanitarian ecosystem that developed during the war on behalf of Jewish refugees. Based in the town of Nikolsburg, home to one of the largest Jewish communities in Moravia, Lewin's wartime efforts echoed previous mobilization for displaced Jews and organization of spaces of refuge in this province.[37] Lewin ultimately came out of a centuries-long tradition of assistance for displaced people in Jewish Moravia; during the war, his efforts were concentrated on helping

36 Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem (CAHJP), Moritz Lewin Collection, Frankfurt, CS 191, Max Blatt letter to Moritz Lewin, May 11, 1915; with thanks to Michal Frankl for sharing this source.

37 Michael Miller writes particularly about the absorption of refugees in Nikolsburg and Moravia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in *Rabbis and Revolution*, 24–26.

orphaned refugees from Galicia and Bukovina[38] and establishing schools and providing books in Yiddish for schools in refugee camps and in other parts of Moravia.[39] He also tended to do relief work as he was a target point for private donations and thus had money and clothing to dispense. Finally, but not least, he tended to the religious needs of refugees in Moravia as an example of state-backed *Seelsorge* in practice.[40]

Lewin's collaborative endeavors were not unique. In fact, the intertwining of state and non-state actors defined humanitarian efforts for Jewish refugees living in camps more broadly. This can be understood in the specificity of the war context. For one, the state's ability to provide aid was limited due to the war's effects on the economy and agricultural production.[41] In this context, it is possible that giving leeway to Jewish organizations to organize relief emerged as a potent avenue to keep the regime of immobility in place. Furthermore, the calls of the monarchy's elite for a suspension of political infighting and for unity to defend the homelands (*Burgfrieden*) contoured a landscape of loyalty toward the state and framed Jews' support of the war.[42] It was in this war-specific context, I argue, that Jewish philanthropic organizations developed their registers of assistance, and transferred them to the process of refugee encampment.

The leading Jewish organization working to help encamped Jewish refugees was the Israelitische Allianz zu Wien (hereafter Allianz). Founded as an independent Jewish society in Vienna in 1873, the organization was modeled after the Alliance israélite universelle in Paris, which, on paper, had developed a progressive agenda to fight for Jewish emancipation.[43] Robert Wistrich notably highlighted in his analysis of the rise of philanthropy in nineteenth-century Vienna that "the protection of Jews, persecuted for their religious beliefs and denied their civic rights, was perceived and explicitly defined as an international humanitarian task that transcended national, separatist, and confessional boundaries."[44] This organization's foremost objective was to promote Jewish education and civility in Austria-Hungary in order to ensure emancipation of the backward Galician Jewish masses

38 CAHJP, Moritz Lewin Collection, CS 191, Memorandum über die angeregte Errichtung eines Waisenheimes für durch die Kriegsereignisse, besonders durch die Flucht zu Waisen gewordenen Kinder der Israeliten aus Galizien und der Bukowina.

39 Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity*, 70.

40 Rozenblit, *Reconstructing a National Identity*, 70.

41 Clavin, "Austrian Hunger Crisis," 265–78.

42 For a reflection on *Burgfrieden* in Europe see, for example, Fink, "Jewish Diplomacy," 56–88.

43 Bar-Chen, "Prototyp jüdischer Solidarität," 277–96.

44 Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 72.

who adhered to rabbinical orthodoxy and Hassidism. Allianz also believed in educating the less fortunate Jews to foster true patriotism and citizenship. It was a way toward a civilizing mission that was to overcome traditional barriers that separated them from non-Jews.[45]

The First World War and the mass displacement that included Jews from the eastern part of the monarchy entailed a humanitarian mobilization of Allianz that bridged emergency relief and prewar agendas of civilization. In the process, the association claimed a close relationship with imperial authorities for aid provision, as the government reportedly tapped Allianz to provide both the concrete aid and its logistic organization.[46] Allianz assumed this position early on, justifying its efforts to help the refugees in collaboration with the state and local administrators as a "patriotic action initiated for humanitarian reasons."[47] This agenda was eventually put in motion after hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Galicia and Bukovina fled from the war's destruction.

Allianz's relief work for refugees living in camps was driven, however, by the organization's members' interpretation of what these spaces were. They considered the suffering of Jewish refugees living in camps a direct consequence of war and its effects on the social and economic life of the monarchy. In this context, Allianz reports and notes deemed the camp to be a "shelter" within the state's humanitarian landscape. If suffering happened, they suggested, it was despite Austrian officials' humanitarian efforts. From this perspective, the local philanthropic organizations were supplementary in character and extent for much of the war.[48]

In practice, as it did in the case of Jewish refugees living in cities, towns, and villages, Allianz provided material relief, transferred money, organized fundraisings, and ensured adequate clothing for encamped refugees, as well as, when possible, medical supplies. One such example was in Ungarisch-Hradisch, a temporary camp for refugees en route from the Hungarian part of the monarchy to their assigned destinations in imperial Austria. This entailed transferring funds to relief committees to provide decent living conditions for those still on the move, as well as organizing public kitchens, and, by extension, providing warm meals. Allianz reported that in this

45 Wistrich, *Jews of Vienna*, 74.

46 Archive of IKG Vienna, Jerusalem Holdings, Signatur A/W, Archival Record Group 2828, file 34, box 749, Israelitische Allianz zu Wien, "Jahresbericht für 1914" (1915), 8.

47 Ibid., 10–11

48 Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC Archives), New York Office 1914–1918, General Relief through the Israelitische Allianz (1915–1918), folder Overseas Administration, JDC Committees, Israelitische Allianz zu Wien 1917–1918, Digital ID 1513.

particular context it was financial contributions from Jewish individuals and philanthropies that allowed it to provide such care for these refugees.[49] This was indicative of the network of non-state aid that emerged out of the need to address suffering in the monarchy's camps and of Allianz's eventual partnerships, both transnationally and locally.

In addressing emergency relief, Allianz notably collaborated with and became a mediator on the ground for the American Jewish JDC. As the capacity of Jewish philanthropists to provide aid waned during the war, appeals to American Jews became a more standard element of organizing relief for Jewish refugees, including for those living in camps. For instance, in December 1914, Allianz wrote to the American Jewish Committee, a charitable organization founded in the early 1900s, claiming that the "entire domestic charity falls short of sufficient for the burden of misery among fugitives [*sic*]."[50] However, the American Jewish Committee ultimately assumed a limited role in the cooperation with Allianz, as the newly born JDC became the main American collaborator.

The JDC was established in 1914, at the outset of the war, as the Joint Distribution Committee of American Funds for the Relief of Jewish War Sufferers, aiming to relieve non-combatants in the Jewish communities of East-Central Europe in particular.[51] During the war, the JDC became the leading organization engaged in relief work and served primarily as distributor for American Jewish fundraising organizations to establish contact with Jewish victims of war.[52] Overall, the JDC's growing presence in East-Central Europe, albeit from a distance, made it the main actor within a broader landscape of international relief during the First World War.[53]

This growing charitable presence of the JDC became an anchor of relief for refugees and their representatives, as evidenced in the direct appeals that displaced people or local philanthropists addressed to the organization. One such note addressed to the JDC portrayed the request as one to family:

49 JDC Archives, New York Office 1914–1918, General Relief through the Israelitische Allianz (1915–1918), folder Overseas Administration, JDC Committees, Israelitische Allianz zu Wien 1914–1916, Israelitische Allianz zu Wien to the American Jewish Committee, Vienna, December 6, 1916, Digital ID 1381.

50 JDC Archives, Israelitische Allianz zu Wien to the American Jewish Committee, Vienna, December 6, 1916.

51 For an excellent analysis of the birth of the JDC and its work in the interwar period, see Granick, *International Jewish Humanitarianism.*

52 Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper,* 3–7.

53 More organizations emerged, such as the American Red Cross and American Relief Administration, among others. See, for example, Piller and Wylie, *Humanitarianism*.

"American Jews must come to our aid. The Galician Jews [living in the United States] in particular must consider it their sacred duty to help us at this time. They have their own flesh and blood in Galicia, friends, relatives, and out of their plenty in your blessed America, they should do all that is humanly possible to assist us."[54]

In another example, Rabbi Chaim Bazel, a refugee who had reportedly left Palestine and arrived in Austria, wrote to the JDC directly from the camp of Nikolsburg about his living conditions and his needs in this containing and segregating space:

> We are living here *as convicts in a prison*,[55] separated from the whole world and also from the Jewish world—not being able to go out or come in to one of the cities where our merciful brethren are. The old Jewish city of Nikolsburg, the well-known city of Torah and wisdom, has been mingled among other nationalities in the full sense of the word. [...] we are forced to call for help and mercy through you, our dear friend and fellow countryman, to announce our appeal for help broadcast to our generous brethren, to help us in our exile and rehabilitate us to our Holy Land—the sooner the better. [...] This [...] is the echo of the distressed and the sight of unfortunates exiled in a strange country. It is the echo of wanderers who are appealing for help and rescue from starvation in their exile, and to bring them back to their native country alive.[56]

The conditions of Chaim Bazel's departure from Palestine and his eventual fate remain unknown, but this note reveals the contentious rapport he developed with the prison-like space of the camp and the growing importance of the JDC-brand of international assistance as an alternative to what authorities in Vienna had provided. This was an idea that circulated among local refugee representatives who persisted in calling for the improvement of encampment conditions. A note found among the reports of Allianz highlights this in an explicit instance of communication and possible cooperation within a local–national–international ecosystem of humanitarianism for encamped Jews:

54 JDC Archives, New York Office 1914–1918, folder Administration Galicia 1915–1919, Message to the Federation of Galician and Bucovinian Jews of America, Digital ID 7308.

55 Emphasis of author of this chapter.

56 JDC Archives, New York Office 1914–1918, General Relief through the Israelitische Allianz (1915–1918), folder Overseas Administration, JDC Committees, Israelitische Allianz zu Wien 1914–1916, Letter to Rabbi Chaim Barzel, Digital ID 1439.

> The indescribable distress of hundreds of thousands of Jews in the refugees' camps, in the desolated Galician and Russian-Polish communities, must be ameliorated. These people have been stripped of their livelihood by the war. If our work is crippled, it means crushing catastrophe for those unfortunate, unemployed and often unemployable people, for old men, women, and children. Food and shelter and protection against the winter's cold must be afford to them.[57]

Allianz emerged as a veritable facilitator of on-the-ground assistance for the JDC. The Vienna-based organization described the JDC as supplementary to state and local authorities and local societies instead of a backbone of relief work. In this relationship, Allianz facilitated money transfers, engaged inspectors, and oversaw the work of the local committees, in addition to organizing statistics and monthly reports about the conditions of refugees. Given the ever-growing suffering and pecuniary problems, Allianz members welcomed the JDC as a source of support. According to an Allianz report in 1917: "As the distress grew keener, our friends in America, in particular, made ever greater efforts to collect relief funds, and their munificence enabled us (until the break in diplomatic relations) to conduct our widely branched [*sic*] relief activities."[58]

As the above quote suggests, despite these appraisals, the relationship between the two organizations was fractured due to changing military conditions and the JDC's search for its own humanitarian identity in its early years. First, the United States entering in the war on the side of the Allies in 1917 ended the general humanitarian work of the JDC, which had been providing aid, albeit from a distance, to what was now a wartime enemy. Indeed, US humanitarianism was to be primarily for allies or neutral countries. Second, the JDC leadership saw the collaboration with local mediators as inhibitors of its desire to promote Americanness. The aid for Jewish refugees was supposed to be known as primarily American and this led to a break away from the collaboration with Allianz.[59]

57 JDC Archives, Collection New York Office 1914–1918, General Relief through the Israelitische Allianz (1915–1918), folder Overseas Administration, JDC Committees, Israelitische Allianz zu Wien 1917–1918, Report of the Israelitische Allianz zu Wien for the Administrative Year 1916 (June 25, 1917), Digital ID 1501.

58 JDC Archives, Report of the Israelitische Allianz zu Wien for the Administrative Year 1916, June 25, 1917.

59 JDC Archives, Collection New York Office 1914–1918, General Relief through the Israelitische Allianz (1915–1918), folder Overseas Administration, JDC Committees, Israelitische Allianz zu Wien 1914–1916, JDC letter to Fulton Brylawski, June 23, 1916, Digital ID 1423.

Moreover, despite appeals highlighting the dire state of refugees living in camps, the JDC did not specifically include camps in its agenda. Ultimately, even if reports of the ill fate of the encamped refugees such as Chaim Bazel arrived on the desks of JDC representatives, the American organization's presence in camps was, perhaps unsurprisingly, a sideshow during the war. Financially, American Jewish humanitarians showed more concern for Jews in war zones. While a total of about $600,000 in relief aid was provided for refugees placed in camps, as well as in communities, in Moravia or in Lower Austria, the sum sent to Galicia was twice that—$1,300,000 by July 1916.[60]

Allianz, partly in tacit collaboration with the JDC, held state authorities responsible for the state of camps and the fate of refugees living there. In their view, refugees were an imperial problem that the state authorities had to disentangle.[61] Historian David Rechter has claimed that "it could be argued that they had no realistic alternative given their dual commitment to being at one and the same time both proud Jews and faithful Austrian citizens."[62] Thus, in practice, their own relief work duplicated the state's agenda and discourse around refugees living in these spaces. From the perspective of Allianz and the JDC, camps were protective shelters that needed an infusion of money and resources to improve refugees' living conditions. If they failed, it was not the state's fault. In this way, a nexus of state resources and Jewish philanthropy emerged as the backbone of emergency relief for encamped Jewish refugees during the war. At the same time, some philanthropists found refugee camps to be spaces where they could quickly and more specifically implement their own prewar agendas of educating and civilizing Jewish populations from the east.

The drive to civilize *Ostjuden* from Galicia and Bukovina remained a central aim in the broader humanitarian work for encamped refugees. Although Allianz shifted its focus to emergency work more generally, largely in collaboration with the JDC, the prewar ideas of a civilizing mission to educate Jews continued despite the war. According to the annual report of Allianz published in 1916, for example, the "[eastern] Jewish refugees are so entirely different in their religious habits and social practices, it is as if they come from another world."[63] It was an idea that was further

60 JDC Archives, Collection New York Office 1914–1918, General Relief through the Israelitische Allianz (1915–1918), folder Overseas Administration, JDC Committees, Israelitische Allianz zu Wien 1914–1916, letter to Felix Warburg, Digital ID 1428.

61 See Hoffmann-Holter, *Abreisemachung*, 95–101; Rechter, "Ethnicity and the Politics of Welfare," 257–76.

62 Rechter, "Ethnicity and the Politics of Welfare," 265.

63 Siegel, "Between Light and Darkness," 35.

Fig. 1.1a,b: Photographs of Jewish refugees from the barrack camp in Deutschbrod, 1915–1917. Source: Jewish Museum in Prague.

perpetuated in photography documenting the life of Jewish refugees in the camp of Deutschbrod. The series of photos (sampled below) sought to juxtapose eastern and western Jews; traditional dress—namely, caftans and ringlets, symbols of rabbinical orthodoxy were emphasized as features

of these refugees' intrinsic foreignness. In this context, arguably, refugee camps and their state-driven organization allowed the potential for mostly Vienna-based Jewish philanthropy practices to modernize Jews from the east.

The commitment of Allianz leadership to educate in the name of enlightening and modernizing Austrian citizens echoed the principles of the state-driven *kulturelle Fürsorge*. Once it became certain that life in the barracks was to be prolonged due to war complications, Allianz returned to its prewar agendas and focused on organizing "modern elementary education" for refugee children. Allianz assistance schemes also included other training. For instance, the association reported that they organized donations of yarn as well as knitting and sewing utensils in order to give women and girls the opportunity to have a formal and useful employment in and outside the camps.[64] It was an approach that state officials also preferred through their *kulturelle Fürsorge*, as a measure to educate and promote the eventual employability of these refugees.

Allianz's work to organize schooling in particular also echoed the principles of one of its leading collaborators in the name of education: The Baron Hirsch Foundation had been the leading philanthropic organization working to promote the education of Jews from the east since the nineteenth century. Established by Baron Maurice de Hirsch in 1891, the foundation emphasized the value of rehabilitating and essentially modernizing Jews as agricultural people and free farmers within their own colonies. It was a belief particularly targeted at Russian and Galician Jews, as the agenda of the Baron Hirsch Foundation was that "improvement of living conditions and educational standards, were not therefore merely acts of charity but rather designed to transform the eastern European Jews into free, self-supporting, and useful human beings."[65] For this purpose, from the outset, the Baron Hirsch Foundation established child care facilities, primary schools, and recreational facilities, providing schoolbooks, food, and clothing for poor school children, as well as subsidies for teachers. Briefly put, in Robert Wistrich's words, the "Baron Hirsch Foundation was not just another 'charitable' or philanthropic institution but a kind of development agency, a pilot plant for relieving the economic poverty and cultural backwardness of Galician Jewry."[66] It aimed to develop an educational system which would fundamentally modernize the Galician Jews.[67]

64 Israelitische Allianz zu Wien, "Jahresbericht für 1914" (1915), 14–15.

65 Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna*, 77–78.

66 Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna*, 77–78.

67 Grunwald, *Türkenhirsch*, 68–69.

Allianz's and the Baron Hirsch Foundation's approach to education fed into the state's refugee management policy. In this period, refugee camps thus became sites of the intertwining of state-produced refugee welfare measures and Jewish non-state philanthropy, as became evident in the establishment of schools in the various refugee camps where Jews lived. In Nikolsburg, 332 boys and 330 girls were educated; in Pohrlitz, the figures were 203 boys and 204 girls; whereas in Gaya, 209 boys and 212 girls reportedly had access to education.[68] The Ministry of the Interior also reported on this collaborative endeavor, particularly with the Baron Hirsch Foundation, a ubiquitous actor in official state documents. Various reports about schooling and the employment of teachers through the Jewish philanthropic organization's funds designated for camps show the humanitarian ecosystem as forms of encampment at work.[69] At the same time, it reveals the rapport philanthropists themselves developed with camps. In this context, I argue that Allianz, alongside the Baron Hirsch Foundation, thus reinforced the state-defined principles and scope of encampment, understood as measures to relieve, but also to civilize, the perceivedly backward populations of the monarchy.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored ways non-state Jewish philanthropic societies established a form of cooperation, coordination, and, at times, solidarity with the state's organization of refugee welfare in camp spaces. The lens of Jewish refugees and of the facets of a broader ecosystem of care gives insight into the insidious and often murky meaning of camps at the time of their formation in Austria-Hungary during the First World War. The state's refugee policy had an explicit relief component as ideas and practice of emergency help and welfare pervaded the process of encampment. This meant quickly feeding and clothing refugees and curing the sick. It also meant planning for the education, training, or employment of the displaced citizens of the monarchy. At the same time, refugee encampment had an interventionist element, as the state used a regime of immobility to control, contain, and fundamentally separate these people from local populations and larger host

68 Numbers taken from Siegel, "Between Light and Darkness," 36.

69 ÖStA, Kriegsflüchtlingsfürsorge (KFL), Archiv der Republik (AdR), box 16, Kulturelle Fürsorge für jüdische Flüchtlingskinder in Mähren und Steiermark, Volksschulkurse, Mitwirkung der Baron Hirsch Stiftung, October 25, 1916; ÖStA, KFL, AdR, box 16, Kulturelle Flüchtlingsfürsorge Schulbücherbeschaffung.

communities. In this context, I have argued that the relationship between state and Jewish philanthropy reveals what I call a humanitarian paradox. Jewish societies of assistance, whether national or transnational in scope, actively reinforced the process of encampment that placed refugees at the heart of an exclusion–inclusion dichotomy that defined displacement management in this period.

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About the Author

Doina Anca Cretu is Assistant Professor in Modern European History at the University of Warwick. Her research focuses on history of foreign aid and the history of migration, she is the author of *Foreign Aid and State Building in Interwar Romania: In Quest of an Ideal* (Stanford University Press, 2024).

2. Places of Passage or Precarious Sanctuaries? The Negotiations between Refugees and State Authorities in an Upper Adriatic Borderland[1]

Francesca Rolandi

Abstract: This chapter looks at the role of the border cities of Sušak and Fiume, located in Yugoslavia and Italy, respectively, as pathways for refugees from the neighboring country in the inter-war period. Sušak and Fiume acted as transit spots for many escapees who were swiftly removed from the sensitive border area. Yet, the two cities were also conditional havens for a certain number of fugitives, whose presence along the border was deemed strategic for the national interests of the host country. The chapter explores the negotiations over matters of space and time that unfolded between refugees, on the one hand, and state authorities of both the host country and the country of origin on the other.

Keywords: Upper Adriatic; transit; Yugoslavia; Italy; refugees

It was a spring night in May 1930 when the Fiume-born Angelo Adam was spotted by an informant of the Italian police while seemingly plotting with the chief of the Yugoslav border police, Franjo Ujčić, and one unidentified interlocutor in the backroom of the Kauzlarić bar in Sušak, a city just a

1 The author would like to thank Natka Badurina, Ivan Jeličić, Dominique K. Reill, Miha Zobec, and the members of the *Unlikely Refuge?* team for their insightful comments and suggestions.

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few steps away from the border with Italian Fiume.[2] The bar was known as a meeting place for opponents of the Italian government as well as a distribution point for anti-fascist press.[3] Franjo Ujčić was not only in charge of ordinary matters. He was also the main organizer of the local branch of the counterintelligence, and he nurtured a cluster of informers that encompassed members of the pro-Yugoslav irredentist associations and other anti-fascist refugees. Angelo Adam had found himself at odds with the fascist authorities for his political commitment in support of the establishment of the Free State of Fiume.[4] In 1926, he resettled across the border, in Sušak, where his political work unfolded on two levels. While building alliances with all the local stakeholders opposing the Italian government, he cultivated tight relationships with the Italian anti-fascists in France. It was also his efforts that made Fiume a transit spot for those escaping Italy through Yugoslavia.[5]

In 1932, Vjekoslav Servatzy resided together in Fiume with his wife and a maid in a house located in a steep street off what was then called Gabriele D'Annunzio Square. Servatzy officially made his living as a trader. When informed that two men would be waiting for him at noon at the bridge between Fiume and Sušak, he prudently decided not to show up.[6] He reasonably feared that the appointment could turn into one of the ambushes organized by the Yugoslav authorities to eliminate the most wanted representatives of the Ustaša emigration abroad, those ready to resort to terrorism in the fight for Croatian independence against the Yugoslav state. The Sušak-based newspaper *Novi List* repeatedly reported on how Italian authorities were protecting the Ustaša and published a set of iconic images. One of these depicted Servatzy and Ante Pavelić, the future *poglavnik* (leader) of the quisling Independent State of Croatia, at a dinner table in Fiume alongside members of the Italian police and the local fascist party.[7] Servatzy, like other members of the Ustaša movement, was not only busy smuggling anti-Yugoslav newspapers, but he also served as a contact for the Croatian separatists who made their way into Italy.

2 Državni arhiv u Rijeci (State Archives in Rijeka, henceforth DARI), Riječka Kvestura (53), A8, box 335, folder Prossen Vladimiro.

3 DARI, 53, A8, box 337, folder Radman Lucia.

4 The Free State of Fiume was established *de jure* in 1920 with the Rapallo Treaty to settle the territorial controversy over the city of Fiume, claimed by both Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and occupied by Gabriele D'Annunzio's legionnaires. It held the reins of power for less than one year in 1921–22, before being overthrown by a nationalist coup d'état.

5 DARI, 53, A8, box 218, folder Adam Angelo.

6 DARI, 53, A8, box 251, folder Devjak Dragica.

7 "Jedna večera u prefekturi na Rijeci," 1.

In the interwar period, Sušak and Fiume[8] were home to a relatively small number of refugees, while also serving as transit spots for fugitives and migrants who crossed into the neighboring country. This chapter examines the negotiations between refugees from the neighboring country, the host states, and the country of origin, Yugoslavia and Italy respectively, over the length of time to be spent in the border area, in order to reflect upon the entanglement of the spatial and temporal dimensions of transit.

Space provides an ideal lens to explore the ambivalent relationship between Sušak and Fiume. The two cities were closely interconnected urban centers in the Habsburg Empire, developing as an integrated space in which individuals, trends, and goods circulated. The two urban areas were divided only by the Rječina/Eneo river, which flowed a few meters away from their main avenues. Mutual relations that had flourished before 1918 outlived the fragmentation of the post-Habsburg space and resulted in a myriad of cross-border practices. In the aftermath of the First World War, Sušak and Fiume were occupied first by an inter-Allied contingent, then the Italian army, and finally Gabriele D'Annunzio's legionnaires (in the case of Fiume) before being annexed in the end by two conflicting nation-states. In 1923, Sušak was allocated to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (from 1929 on, Yugoslavia), while Fiume officially became part of Italy in 1924.

Despite the establishment of an international border, the entire area remained a permeable space in which not only individuals and goods circulated but also ideas. Cigarettes, meat, and milk were imported into the neighboring state, as well as political leaflets and other media. Some of these imports escaped police control. Although international mobility necessitated the possession of permits to cross the border, the majority of the residents of the two cities could easily access these. People from both sides crossed the border on a daily basis to shop, relax, attend schools, and attend their workplaces, as well as to visit relatives and friends who lived on the other side. In 1923, between six and seven thousand individuals crossed the border daily, a testament to its permeability which did not change significantly in the years to come.[9]

After 1918, the two cities turned into poles of conflicting nationalisms. Sušak was a hotbed of anti-Italian organizations and a northwestern outpost of the central state. While the Yugoslav state in general was weakened by tensions between centralists (mainly, but not exclusively, represented by Serbs) and the Croatian parties advocating autonomy, Sušak stood out

8 In 1947, both urban centers were merged into what is the current city of Rijeka.

9 "Mjesne i društvene vijesti," 3.

within the territory predominantly inhabited by Croats because, until the late 1930s, the city maintained an overarching pro-Yugoslav orientation. Most of the local political forces believed that a border city needed the protection of a strong state and that the Karađorđević dynasty had the merit of having secured the city for the Yugoslav state.[10] Similarly, Fiume had come to symbolize Italian irredentism after nationalists ardently claimed the city at the end of the First World War. As in the rest of the peninsula, the establishment of the fascist regime led to the outlawing of all political parties except for the fascist one. Additionally, "border fascism" was characterized by a strong anti-Slavic attitude which even went so far as to launch a ban on the use of Slavic languages.[11]

The rise of nationalism made its way into the public space. On both sides, the urban landscape was strongly politicized and nationally coded, as epitomized by the proliferation of flags and uniforms. Political rallies, manifestations, and marches often took place in the proximity of the border. The simultaneous aspect of separation and integration of Sušak and Fiume became commonplace in the Yugoslav narrative, which used to refer to them as a brother and sister unnaturally divided by the frontier.[12] While Yugoslavia claimed sovereignty over Fiume, Italy wanted to use the city as a bridgehead for its imperialistic plans. These conflicting features were symbolically epitomized by the fact that the border coincided with a river that was nonetheless easy to cross.

The Sušak–Fiume borderscape[13] was characterized by the entanglement of these two, only apparently conflicting, tensions: political strife on one hand, mundane interdependence on the other. This precarious balance reproduced on a smaller scale the course of relations between Yugoslavia and Italy, two neighbors divided by competing claims over the Adriatic area, which from time to time engaged in a search for a *modus vivendi*.

Hardly the consequence of good neighborly relations, the border's porousness went unchallenged for pragmatic reasons: the economic, cultural, and everyday life of the two cities strongly depended on the smoothness of border crossing. Nonetheless, the close proximity of the two urban centers often fueled political tensions, as nationalist demonstrations could be employed

10 Antić, *Povijest Rijeke*, 301.

11 Vinci, *Sentinelle della patria*.

12 "Sušak," 15.

13 The definition of "borderscape" promises to capture the two antithetical features that characterize this case study: that of a territory shaped by the presence of a political barrier, with all the implications in terms of sovereignty, but also constructed by transnational flows. For a critical reading of the concept, see Dell'Agnese and Szary, "Borderscapes," 4–13.

Fig. 2.1: An aerial view of Sušak and Fiume, 1931. Postcard showing the border between the two municipalities, as well as Yugoslavia and Italy. Copyright: Rijeka State Archives, RI-173.

as a strong-arm tactic directed toward the neighbors, who could clearly follow what was going on across the bridge. These conflicting practices were not only embedded in space but contributed to its construction as well, to the perceptions and lived experience of the individuals who occupied it or gravitated toward certain locations. The border area stood out as both a place of encounter and a site of conflict between the Italian and the Yugoslav states. On both sides, the fluidity created by the porous border was a constant challenge to the sovereignty of the nation-state. The provocative potential of proximity did not end there, though. The permeability of the border made Sušak and Fiume a center of infiltration by agents and informers and hubs for intelligence networks. Both cities established themselves as havens for their enemy's opponents, who could coordinate their political activities just a few hundred meters away from their country of origin under the protection of the host state.[14]

Between the late 1920s and the mid-1930s, both Sušak and Fiume hosted political refugees from Italy and Yugoslavia, respectively. In the first case, this entailed ethnic Slovenes and Croats from Fiume and Istria, who were involved in a myriad of irredentist organizations opposing the Italian state, but also former supporters of the Autonomist Party advocating for the re-establishment of the Free State of Fiume. Although on a smaller scale, as

14 Wille and Reckinger, "Exploring Constructions."

soon as domestic political conflicts escalated in Yugoslavia, Fiume hosted Croatian separatists, in particular members of the newly born movement of the Ustaša, which from its infancy enjoyed the protection and financial support of the Italian government. Besides acting as havens for the few, Sušak and Fiume were transit spots along the route as fugitives and migrants sought protection and a better life in the interior of the neighboring state. In other cases, Yugoslavia and Italy served as springboards to reach a third country. In particular, Austria was often the final destination of a planned escape route, with Italian anti-fascists crossing through Yugoslav territory and Croatian separatists fleeing via Italy.

Yet what made Sušak and Fiume peculiar places of passages was the fact that they were highly sought after by most refugees. The combination of proximity and separation described above allowed political refugees to continue taking part in the struggles in their country of origin while also benefiting from the protection of the host state. Nonetheless, the other side of the coin was tight control. The authorities of both countries tended to allow resettlement in the sensitive border area only to individuals whose presence was deemed strategically advantageous for national interests. Refugees were therefore compelled not only to display their loyalty but often tasked with intelligence missions, ranging from political propaganda to espionage. As witnessed in the cases of Adam and Servatzy, they also happened to be key figures in the infrastructure set up to facilitate the welcoming of refugees from the neighboring country.

Proximity was not only advantageous for political activists. For most refugees from the border area, Sušak and Fiume were perceived as part of a familiar environment, in which they could maintain social capital in the form of a network of acquaintances, keep using the language they felt most comfortable with—for Istrians, often a local dialect quite distinct from standard Croatian—and preserve close ties with loved ones who remained at home. Fugitives themselves were sometimes puzzled by the entanglement of proximity and separation that marked the border area. The writer Zvane Črnja captured this feature in his memoirs, recalling that one of the first things his family did after reaching Sušak and registering as refugees was to sit at a tavern along the border fence and look at the crowd on the Italian side. While enjoying the protection of Yugoslav sovereignty, they allegedly speculated on how the countries got close to each other in that particular place.[15]

The privileged position of going into exile "across the bridge" was not, however, within everyone's reach. Of the many individuals in transit, only

15 Črnja, *Život u žrvnju*, 67.

a few were allowed to resettle in the border area; most were compelled to travel further. As we will see, whether Sušak and Fiume were merely stops along a flight route or became havens depended largely on the interactions between the refugees and the state authorities who could afford protection. Yet, the authorities of the country of origin also entered into those negotiations, in particular advocating the removal of refugees or attempting to bring them to their side.

This chapter is based on archival sources produced in Italy and Yugoslavia and currently located in the archives of Rijeka and Zagreb. Additionally, it engages with press sources, memoirs, and secondary literature. The case of refugees in both Sušak and Fiume allows for a joint investigation of two different national contexts, deeply interconnected through mobility but also divided by conflicting political aspirations. It thus transcends the nation-state framework that has characterized the majority of local historiography to examine two national cases in the place of their encounter, highlighting their mutual interdependence and the existence of similar patterns.

The chapter will offer an overview of scholarship that tackles the issue of transit in history, with a specific focus on the places of passage that were deeply informed by their nature of being temporary hubs along established migration routes. The second part will explore the interaction between authorities of both Sušak and Fiume and the majority of fugitives that went through them, who were swiftly relocated to the interior of the country or abroad. The following part will focus on those refugees who were allowed to remain in the border area, shedding light on the tasks the host state ascribed to them, and the conditional nature of the hospitality received. Subsequently, the chapter will show how the space of maneuver that refugees had gained by drawing on the conflicting relations between Italy and Yugoslavia gradually narrowed as a consequence of the appeasement between the two countries, thus downsizing the feature of transit spots that Sušak and Fiume had acquired.

State of the Field

Scholars have been inspired by the so-called spatial turn to contribute to migration and refugee studies by challenging the role of borders, highlighting continuities and liminal zones, and exploring the local implementation of national or international norms and regulations. In addition, focused micro-studies have shown the potential of investigating local processes of

decision-making.[16] More recently, scholars have explored temporal dimensions to add a new level to their analysis of migration trajectories, ranging from objective temporal norms that institutional actors impose on those on the move to individual perceptions of time by migrants and refugees.[17] As I argue in this chapter, the concept of "transit" provides a fruitful perspective to reflect on the intersection between the spatial and temporal dimensions. In particular, transit spots are places where authorities often force spatial and temporal constraints on people on the move, but they are also the site of struggle as refugees and migrants strive to resist these impositions.

Scholarship has sporadically explored transit as an intermediary phase between mobility and resettlement and a transient stage in long migration trajectories. A first call for an investigation dating back to the late 1990s brought into question a set of practices related to the condition of being in transit, which spanned from the circumstances of border crossing to the material culture of migrants who had left their country and found themselves in a location they regard as temporary.[18] Some of the historical contexts explored are places of passage situated along well-established migration paths, which witnessed the stratification of different instances of voluntary and forced migration. Scholars have studied the port city of Marseille, which acted as a gate for both those entering France and those embarking to reach other locations. An entire economic system based on the needs of migrants in transit developed in the city.[19] As scholarship has shown, starting in the late nineteenth century, big hubs in Central Europe became transit spots for Jewish refugees, who had to cope with the restrictive migration policies implemented in several countries.[20] In other cases, cities or countries played the role of transit hubs for a limited period under specific circumstances. Some Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany ended up stranded in Portugal, waiting to reach the Americas. This has allowed a thorough investigation of the "emotional geographies" connected to the universality of "being in transit."[21] As transient spaces where plans for the future were pondered, transit areas often represented turning points where migration trajectories

16 Pott, "Migrationsregime," 107–34; Wille, *Spaces and Identities in Border Regions*; Langrognet, *Neighbours of Passage*.

17 Cwerner, "The Times of Migration," 7–36; Griffiths, Roger, and Anderson, "Migration, Time and Temporalities"; Baas and Sa Yeoh, "Introduction," 161–68.

18 Green, "Trans-frontieres."

19 Temime, *Marseille transit*; Regnard, "The Transit Stage," 107–24.

20 Dohrn and Pickhan, *Transit und Transformation*; Brinkmann, "From Immigrants," 47–57; Brinkmann, *Points of Passage*; Schmidt, "'The Long March through Leipzig'," 307–29.

21 Kaplan, *Hitler's Jewish Refugees*.

were renegotiated. Additionally, scholars have investigated specific sites or facilities deployed as transit hubs, drawing particular attention to the stratification of uses and their role as *lieux de mémoire*.[22]

Although historians have recently begun addressing the complexity and nonlinearity of the migration trajectories in Eastern Europe,[23] they have paid considerably less attention to transit countries or places of passage. One outstanding exception to this trend is research on Jewish refugees fleeing persecution and extermination in countries of Central Europe through Yugoslavia. There have been systematic studies of the attitudes of the Yugoslav authorities—who were eager to keep these unwanted guests from becoming a burden to the country—and the role of transnational networks to facilitate emigration, as well as of the strategies refugees used to respond to the increasing restrictions in almost all European countries.[24] Nonetheless, a comprehensive review of the various cases involving the concept of transit remains a lacuna in the field.

The peculiar spatial dimension that marks this case study stems from the fact that remaining in the border area was the favorite option of those who fled.[25] Although in many cases of transit in history (for example, that of the Jews in the 1930s and present-day migrants and refugees) temporary settlement in the border area was a condition imposed on refugees by norms and regulations shaped to prevent the migrants' entry into specific countries, in the case of refugees in Sušak and Fiume, this had a more ambivalent meaning. While mobility initially endowed refugees who left their homes with room to maneuver, the opportunity to remain in the places of passage was regarded as more desirable than resettlement to other, more faraway locations. Stability was, however, never permanently gained, for refugees who inhabited the border area were under the constant threat of being removed.

The gap in historiography stands in stark contrast with public discourse in post-socialist Eastern Europe, which frames those countries exclusively as a transit space for individuals eager to reach the western half of the continent. With the springing up of different cul-de-sacs where migrants are stranded at the periphery of Europe in the last twenty years, social scientists have elaborated extensively on transit zones, acknowledging the crucial role such places played in migration paths.[26] The concept of

22 Cassani, Simonetti, and Mira, *Camps of Transit*.

23 Steidl, *On Many Routes*; Zahra, "Migration," 142–54.

24 Ristović, "Jugoslavija," 21–43; Vulesica, "Yugoslavia," 199–220.

25 On considerations on immobility see Schewel, "Understanding Immobility," 328–55.

26 Papadopoulou-Kourkoula, *Transit Migration*.

transit has been critically examined as a politically constructed tool that tends to frame what is often a permanent, albeit precarious, condition as a temporary status.[27] Nevertheless, the set of negotiations taking place in transit zones—which potentially imply a different outcome of the original migration trajectory—still need to be examined in its historical context.

A Place of Passage for Many

Italy's annexation of the Julian March in 1918 triggered the flight of many Slovenes and Croats to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. In the very aftermath of the war, the intense militarization of the border between Sušak and Fiume made other points along the border more attractive for illegal border crossings, but once the situation normalized, Sušak became one of the most popular gates for entering the Yugoslav state.[28] Once refugees crossed the border, they could count on a network of irredentist organizations that offered logistic support, certified the nationality of escapees, and managed their resettlement.[29] This system was embodied on the ground by the police commissioner Frane Ujčić,[30] who provided refugees with train tickets to reach the interior of Yugoslavia. State support was available to a wide range of social groups, not only to political activists—from intellectuals prevented from performing their jobs in Italy to unemployed workers and peasants affected by the post-1929 economic crisis and students from rural areas who sought an education across the border.

Although many refugees would have preferred to stay in Sušak, the local authorities usually tried to remove them as soon as possible. The length of time spent along the border varied according to their position in the hierarchies of belonging in the host state. According to the testimony of a former policeman, while Slovenes and Croatian refugees customarily stayed a few days in Sušak before being escorted to Zagreb, ethnic Italians regarded as political refugees never spent more than twenty-four hours in the city.[31] In the case of fugitives who were other than ethnic Serbs, Croats, or Slovenes, not just the city of Sušak but all of Yugoslavia was meant to be

27 Düvell, Molodikova, and Collyer, *Transit Migration in Europe*; Fontanari, *Lives in Transit*.

28 "Iz Saveza emigrantskih društava," 5; Giron, "Prilike na riječkom području," 237.

29 DARI, 53, A3, box 197, folder 52; "Osnivanje Jugoslavenske matice na Sušaku," *Istra*, July 1, 1932, 5.

30 DARI, Riječka prefektura (8), box 136, Fuoriusciti e propaganda slava in Patria, February 4, 1929.

31 DARI, 53, A9, box 461, folder Srdoc Ermenegildo.

a springboard to reach other countries. The escape route through Fiume and Sušak was popular among Italian anti-fascists who then headed to France through Austria.[32] The Yugoslav authorities often provided them with forged documents to facilitate their departure from the country.[33]

Nonetheless, refugees who lived further away also returned repeatedly to the border area to meet their loved ones. Giulio Cherbavic, who had moved to Belgrade, took advantage of a trip to Sušak to talk with his mother across the border gate.[34] Refugees who were prevented from returning to the Italian territory used the border area as a place of encounter with their family members, who would join on the Italian side and converse through a barbed wire fence. Such scenes have been captured in memoirs, short stories, and poems. These encounters happened in the middle of a crowded square dominated on one side by Sušak's main hotel and meeting place, the Hotel Continental. In his poem *Prid Kontinentalom*, the poet Mate Balota (pseudonym for Mijo Mirković) recounts an encounter with his mother, describing himself "along the barbed wire fence, looking for her, with a scarf on her head."[35] Perhaps the most iconic place for rendezvous was the chapel of Ivan Nepomuk (John of Nepomuk),[36] built on the bridge connecting the two cities. After the border was set to run through it, it became accessible from both sides.[37] Another opportunity for refugees to meet their families opened up on the feast day of the Assumption of Mary (August 15), celebrated at the nearby Trsat sanctuary, when, for several years, border controls were lifted.[38]

In many cases, migration trajectories were not one-directional. The border was permeable to such an extent that the less politicized refugees flowed back and forth between Italy and Yugoslavia for fairly mundane reasons—for example, pupils attending Yugoslav schools visited their families in Italian areas during the summer holidays. They either crossed the border undetected or bribed the Italian guards.[39]

32 DARI, 53, A9, box 461, folder Srdoc Ermenegildo; DARI, 53, A8, folder Cimadori Alfredo.

33 DARI, 8, box 136, Propaganda ed attività antifascista, July 1, 1929; Fiduciari in Italia della Concentrazione antifascista, February 13, 1929; Apih, *Italia*, 33.

34 DARI, 53, A8, box 241, folder Cherbavic Giulio.

35 For the poem *Prid Kontinentalom* by Mate Balota, see Šetić, *Istra*, 131–33; see also Car Emin, "Bjegunac," 20.

36 John of Nepomuk, a saint venerated primarily in East-Central Europe, is often to be found in the proximity of bridges and rivers, as he was thought to protect from disastrous events such as floodings. I thank Michal Frankl for drawing my attention to this.

37 Moravček, "Jedan grad u devet država."

38 Tumpić, *Istarska emigracija*, 36–39; Šetić, *Istra*, 122–33.

39 Šetić, *Istra*, 152; Cerovac, *Antun Cerovac Tončić*, 96–97.

Fig. 2.2: The new bridge over the river Rječina/Eneo separating Fiume and Sušak, 1929. The right side of the photograph features Hotel Continental. Copyright Rijeka State Archives, RI-131.

While the Yugoslav state deemed some refugees politically harmless, it was suspicious in other instances due to the refugees' political orientation. This was the case of communists in a country such as interwar Yugoslavia, which had banned the local communist party in 1921 and reframed itself as a bulwark of anti-communism. All around Europe, communist activists learned to count on transnational networks and became used to living under the threat of expulsion. Foreign communists on the run had to negotiate much harder than other refugees with the Yugoslav authorities to obtain the green light to reach other countries. In some instances, the Yugoslav police attempted to exploit their vulnerable position to extort information on their Yugoslav comrades. This was the case of the unorthodox communist Carlo Godina, born in Trieste, who had spent half of his life wandering around Europe. Although his request to stay in Yugoslavia was rejected, he was finally allowed to reach Austria. Both his sisters were Yugoslav nationalists residing in Sušak.[40] Similarly, thanks to his contacts on the ground, the Trieste-born communist Giorgio Jaksetich was sent to Austria rather than being repatriated to Italy, as required by

40 Hrvatski državni arhiv (Croatian State Archives, henceforth HDA), Savska Banovina. Odjeljak upravnog odjeljenja za državnu žaštitu (145), box 103, 32652.

the Italian authorities.[41] In 1927, the Fiume-born communist Antun Ongaro was allowed to reach Austria through Yugoslavia, but he was barred from returning to Yugoslavia.[42]

The oscillating bilateral relations opened up narrow windows of opportunity for political activists who were able to sneak through the cracks of two radically anti-communist systems. Personal connections often played a crucial role. The Fiume communists Mario Cettina and Maria Coholj were allowed to resettle in the interior of Yugoslavia, a move that was perhaps facilitated by Coholj's brother, Rodolfo, a member of the organization Narodna Odbrana (National Defense) and a collaborator with the Yugoslav police.[43] Narodna Odbrana was one of several nationalist organizations that developed a tight relation with the interwar Yugoslav state and acted on its behalf in setting up intelligence networks, intimidating political opponents, and planning attacks against Italy.[44] Furthermore, it seems likely that the terms for the resettlement of Cettina and Coholj required them to abstain from any political engagement and present themselves as generically anti-Italian—although they still appeared, according to an Italian diplomatic source, "as revolutionaries rather than nationalists."[45] Although the course of international relations provided refugees with some space to maneuver, it is also true that the conditional hospitality they enjoyed in Yugoslavia depended on ups and downs in the relations between the two countries. While the Italian and Yugoslav police occasionally took joint action against communist cells,[46] it also happened that communists from Fiume were allowed to reside in Sušak because the potential harm they represented for Italian interests was seen to outweigh any risk that they might spread pernicious ideas within the host country.[47]

Negotiations similar to those described above in Sušak happened on the other side of the border as well. Italian authorities in Fiume granted passage to opponents of the Yugoslav regime, namely Ustaša supporters and individuals labeled as Croatian separatists.[48] The latter were in most cases

41 Diminić, *Sjećanja*, 47.

42 HDA, Zbirka spijunaža i peta kolona (Grupa XI) 1358, folder 1064.

43 DARI, 53, A8, box 244, folder Cohilj Rodolfo; Sobolevski and Giuricin, *Il partito comunista*, 245.

44 Giomi and Petrungaro, "Voluntary Associations."

45 DARI, 53, A8, box 241, folder Cettina Mario; DARI, 53, A8, box 244, folder Coholj Maria and folder Coholj Rodolfo.

46 Antić, *Povijest Rijeke*, 301; Lompar, "'The Red Scare' in Yugoslavia," 117–24.

47 DARI, 8, box 1; box 104, Moretti Giuseppe zanelliano, R. vice consolato d'Italia in Susak, April 30, 1930; box 136, Appunto del R. vice console in Sussak, March 27, 1929.

48 Diminić, *Sjećanja*, 19.

supporters of the Croatian Peasant Party who were at odds with the Yugoslav regime for advocating autonomy for the regions with a predominantly Croatian population.

In most cases, refugees from Yugoslavia were allowed to reach Austria or dispatched to other Italian locations.[49] In the autumn of 1932, Antonio Potočnik,[50] a supporter of the Croatian Peasant Party who found refuge in Italy, was banned from remaining in Fiume as this would have provided a reason for the Yugoslav police to surveil him, but he received permission to reach Austria.[51] The former soldier Osman Imamović, who defected from the Yugoslav army and reached Fiume, asked to be put in contact with the Ustaša, but he was instead sent to Austria.[52] After assassinating a gendarme who allegedly persecuted him because of his pro-Croatian orientation, Peter[53] Šarlja crossed the border into the Zadar enclave and then reached Fiume, where he was hosted by the Ustaša leader Mate Devčić. Officials of the Italian Ministry of the Interior wondered whether to resettle him in Italy or allow him to emigrate.[54] The police defector Gavrilo Šćekić asked to be sent to Austria if staying in Italy was not possible.[55] Similarly, Milan Kalafatić, who was in contact with some Croatian nationalists, agreed to be sent to Austria.[56]

In other cases, resettlement in the proximity of the border was tolerated, provided that refugees were ready to refrain from any political activity. This was the case of Rodolfo Antonio Sersich, a Fiume-born Yugoslav citizen who came to the attention of the Yugoslav police due to his contact with Pavelić; in Fiume, he could draw on the support of his uncle, who was willing to provide for him.[57] Political activism was allowed and even encouraged only when deemed useful for the host country's interests.

49 DARI, 53, A8, box 354, folder Sersich Rodolfo Antonio.

50 Both Italian and Croatian sources tend to, respectively, Italianize and Croatize personal names regardless of their original version. Furthermore, individuals from the border area were used to drawing on multiple versions of their personal names according to circumstances. Therefore, the author has decided to maintain the version as reported in the sources for individuals from the multilingual border area and restore the Croatian version for individuals from other Yugoslav areas, where the use of an Italianized version was unlikely.

51 DARI, 53, A9, box 453, folder Potocnik Antonio.

52 DARI, 53, A9, box 430, folder Imamovic Osman.

53 The personal name Peter, mentioned by Italian sources, is possibly a mistranscription of the name Petar.

54 DARI, 53, A9, box 463, folder Šarlija Petar.

55 DARI, 53, A9, box 463, folder Scekic Gavrilo.

56 DARI, 53, A9, box 432, folder Kalafatic Milan.

57 DARI, 53, A8, box 354, folder Sersich Rodolfo Antonio,

A Conditional Refuge for Few

The tense relations between Yugoslavia and Italy proved fertile ground for the proliferation of irredentist circles, which were particularly dense in the border area. Political refugees often stood out as key figures. Many of them had been approached by the intelligence agencies of their host countries, and a few of them found a profitable way to cooperate. Both those with strong political capital and those who used the border area as a springboard to undertake missions into the neighboring countries managed to negotiate their resettlement in the proximity of the border.

In the aftermath of the First World War, Sušak had already hosted some Fiumian refugees who escaped the city after D'Annunzio's takeover in September 1919. Among them, the most politicized were more likely to remain in Sušak, while all the others were relocated in the interior of the country. After 1922, Riccardo Zanella, the legitimate president of the Free State of Fiume who was overthrown in a nationalist coup d'état, found refuge in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. A number of supporters followed him there, including hundreds of policemen recently hired by his government. Zanella settled in Zagreb first, and then, in 1924, he moved to Belgrade.[58] The collaborative climate allowed by the Treaty of Rome signed in 1924 between Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes temporarily resulted in the Yugoslav decision to stop welcoming new refugees from the neighboring country. Zanella and his entourage were tolerated but not encouraged to undertake any action.[59] Nonetheless, the truce did not last long.

From 1927, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes strengthened its ties with France, which fueled hostility against neighboring Italy.[60] These tensions erupted in the border area, as Sušak renewed its role as a haven for political opponents of the fascist regime, thus becoming a thorn in the side of the Italian government.[61] This coincided with Zanella's attempt at carving out a niche for himself as a mediator between the Italian anti-fascists in France and the Yugoslav authorities. Against the backdrop of a renewed irredentist climate in Yugoslavia, the central government in Belgrade eagerly supported Autonomist refugees in the country, thus making their presence in Sušak visible. In 1930, Zanella opened an office in Sušak to distribute economic

58 Toševa Karpowicz, "Riccardo Zanella," 41–53; see also Dalma, "Svjedočastvo," 48.
59 DARI, Privremene vlade u Rijeci (3), box 46.
60 Bucarelli, "Momenti e problemi," 51.
61 Parlato, *Mezzo secolo di Fiume*, 115.

subsidies to refugees and pay off debts to the former employees of the Free State of Fiume.[62] Sušak became the epicenter of a far-reaching network of pro-Autonomist refugees in the orbit of Angelo Adam. Some of them regarded the Fiumian regional background as their main feature of identity. Some others shared Adam's profile of a republican who had gone through pro-Italian engagement—in some cases as D'Annunzio's legionnaires—and later joined the Autonomist movement. However, this did not prevent them from collaborating with Yugoslav state actors nurturing anti-Italian nationalism.

In the framework of the authoritarian turn that swept Yugoslavia after 1929 with the establishment of the king's dictatorship, the fear of Italian imperialism was deployed to promote an "integral" Yugoslav identity that obscured other national affiliations to reinforce the concept of a uniform Yugoslav nation.[63] At the same time, the crackdown on political opponents particularly targeted the Ustaša supporters, who started drawing on financial support and protection from Italy. Support for the enemies of the enemy developed in parallel in both countries and fueled the two counter-movements. The peculiar geography of both Sušak and Fiume provided refugees with the protection of the neighboring state while the permeability of the border allowed them to actively participate in the political life of their former hometowns. While their political activities at home went underground, their presence remained tangible not least because they were still visible from across the bridge.

A number of personalities whose presence along the border was deemed to be strategic for national interests were allowed to reside in Sušak. The renowned intellectual Viktor Car Emin was not only a member of the most prominent refugee organization, Istra, and a pro-Yugoslav propagandist, but he was also involved in nationalist organizing. In 1932, together with other members of the Sušak establishment, he founded the organization Iron Guard, aimed at fighting against the enemies of "Yugoslav unity."[64] Collaboration with Yugoslav intelligence services often provided refugees with employment in workplaces framed as part of a patriotic infrastructure. Thanks to Ujčić's recommendation, the Istrian Emilio Poplatnik obtained a job at Jadranska Plovidba, the main shipping company endowed with a state-building purpose centered on the strengthening of the ties between Yugoslavia's coastal towns.[65] Similarly, Giuseppe Frol served as a contact

62 DARI, 53, A8, box 249, folder Declich Antonio; DARI, 53, A8, box 293, folder Lasciak Luigi.

63 Zobec, "Salvaging the 'Unredeemed' in Italy," 58.

64 DARI, 53, A3, box 200, folder 180.

65 DARI, 53, A8, box 332, folder Poplatnik Emilio.

for other refugees passing through Sušak on their way to the interior of Yugoslavia. He was employed as a treasurer at the Martinšćica summer camp, run by the irredentist organization Jadranska Straža,[66] which provided the stage for initiatives promoting pan-Yugoslav sentiments. Angelo Adam, a contact for both Poplatnik and Frol, had himself been employed at the Martinšćica camp for a time.[67]

Collaboration with the intelligence services could pay off financially, but it also made informers vulnerable and liable to be blackmailed. When Frol provided shelter for his brother, suspected of being a Croatian separatist, Yugoslav police threatened his dismissal and relocation.[68] Refugees were subjected to police control, and they could be removed from Sušak if their loyalty to the Yugoslav authorities seemed to waver. Giuseppe Moretti, a Zanella supporter, was transferred to Split because he was suspected of collaborating with the Italian police.[69]

The refugees' right to reside along the border was constantly under scrutiny. Both cities were precarious sanctuaries where refugees lived conditionally, aware that any misstep could result in their removal. This is best illustrated by a sensationalist case that made the headlines of Yugoslav newspapers in 1926. Alfredo Sirica, a political refugee born in Southern Italy but residing in Sušak, was caught in the middle of an obscure affair. Two other Sušak-based refugees, Francesco Codrich and Celso Galliani, allegedly tried to kidnap and dispatch him to Italy, a plot that ended in failure. Sirica accused them of being on the payroll of the Italian police, while Galliani and Codrich turned this allegation against Sirica. Codrich and Galliani, who had reached Yugoslavia after killing a fascist and two Italian border guards, respectively, were regarded as political refugees.[70] Arguably, their political status protected them from extradition, but the murky circumstances in which they had become involved cost them their right to stay. Although both men were acquitted in a Yugoslav court, they were compelled to relocate to Serbia.[71] Similarly, Sirica ended up residing in Zagreb under strict surveillance. Perhaps in an attempt to improve his position, he stressed both his anti-fascist and anti-communist credentials in an interview to the Zagreb-based daily *Jutarnji list*.[72]

66 "Ferijalna kolonija je oživjela," 5.
67 DARI, 53, A8, box 218, folder Adam Angelo.
68 DARI, 53, A8, box 261, folder Frol Giuseppe.
69 DARI, 53, A8, box 317, folder Moretti Giuseppe.
70 DARI, 53, A8, box 270, folder Grohovac Fanny (Francesca).
71 DARI, 53, A8, box 244, folder Codrich Francesco; box 262, folder Galliani Celso.
72 DARI, 8, box 2; "Spiunaška afera na Sušaku," 5.

The variety of actors involved certainly endowed refugees with some room for maneuver. In 1929, Adam positioned himself at the center of a transnational network including all the local stakeholders whose common interest was opposition to the Italian fascist regime—from Autonomists and French-based Italian anti-fascists to pro-Yugoslav irredentists from the Julian March and the Yugoslav police.[73] The anti-Italian platform and spatial proximity fostered an odd collaboration between progressive forces on the one hand and organizations financed by the Yugoslav state and inspired by authoritarian tendencies on the other. Adam and other Autonomists cultivated contacts with members of the most extreme pro-Yugoslav nationalist organizations such as Orjuna, characterized by fascist methods and involved in sabotage activities in Italy. According to a source, Adam's contacts with Orjuna were key in acquiring him the right to stay in Sušak.[74] Italian anti-fascists willing to expatriate also relied on the support of nationalist organizations, which were under the influence of the Yugoslav intelligence services.[75]

Refugees' political capital was weighted against the ups and downs of relations between Italy and Yugoslavia. In 1931, when the Yugoslav government started pursuing a compromise with Italy, Adam was removed from Sušak and sent to Zagreb as a sign of goodwill toward the Italian government.[76] Within a couple of months, however, Adam was able to return to Sušak and resume his previous activities, drawing on the support of some of his institutional protectors. Arguably, a change in the course of bilateral relations allowed him to negotiate his way back into the border area.

What emerges from the sources on Sušak is the atmosphere of a border town where the ambiguous boundaries between anti-fascist and anti-Italian sentiments allowed the temporary establishment of a platform featuring actors of differing political orientation. This was the case of the ambivalent relationship between Autonomists and other anti-fascists, on one hand, and the Yugoslav police, on the other. Likewise, rumors circulated about possible contacts between Croatian separatists and communists against the Yugoslav state. While perhaps not openly cooperating, these different actors in Fiume

73 DARI, 53, A3, box 197, folder 52; DARI, 8, box 136, Fuoriusciti. Appunti del console italiano a Susak, February 4, 1929. For a detailed reconstruction of Adam's political networks, see Mantelli, "Galahad in Carnaro," 179–88.

74 DARI, 53, A9, box 444, folder Melada Antonio.

75 Kalc, "L'emigrazione," 42–45.

76 *I documenti diplomatici italiani*, 320. Other sources mention his removal to Zagreb as a consequence of his having organized a strike at the paper factory. See DARI, 53, A8, box 217, folder Adam Angelo. See also Dassovich, *I treni*, 119.

who opposed the centralist government were temporarily drawn together by their common political interests and attempts in resisting the repressive measures taken against them.[77] The Yugoslav government perceived its various opponents as part of the same threat, as was emphasized when Ujčić was summoned to Belgrade in 1932 to report on the situation on the border. He received new instructions on measures to be taken against "emigrants" and communists.[78]

To some extent, Fiume played a role comparable to that of Sušak as a haven for Ustaša refugees. As the authorities cracked down on Croatian separatism in the late 1920s, fugitives started to seek support in Italy and Hungary, the two neighboring states opposing Yugoslavia's territorial claims.[79] It was in this context that Italy began not only allowing Ustaša political refugees into the country but also providing financial aid for initiatives meant at destabilizing Yugoslavia.[80] Thanks to the connivance of the Italian authorities with some well-established emigrants, the Italian enclaves of Zadar and Fiume, strategically positioned as bridgeheads for defense from Yugoslavia, became transit spots for both propaganda materials and weapons and explosives.[81] In particular, Vjekoslav Servatzy's presence in Fiume was of concern to the Yugoslav authorities, who repeatedly tried to infiltrate his entourage.[82]

The year 1932 witnessed a low point in relations between Italy and Yugoslavia. It is clearly not a coincidence that this year also saw the first meeting between Mussolini and Pavelić and the formal establishment of an office in charge of providing support for the Ustaša within the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[83] This tactical rapprochement made its way into the local debate; the Fiume-based newspaper *La Vedetta d'Italia*, for example, featured articles by Ante Pavelić on the geopolitical implications of an upcoming Croatian independence.[84]

In May 1932, the Ustaša were held responsible for a bombing in Sušak in the wake of a pro-Yugoslav meeting.[85] In August 1932, *Novi List* reported

77 HDA, 145, box 107, Grzetić Ivan, hrvatski emigrant, boravak na Rijeci.

78 HDA, 145, box 79, Izvještaj sa Sušaka o sve jaćoj akciji emigranata i komunista.

79 Hamerli, "Croatian Political Refugees," 624–46.

80 Gobetti, *Dittatore per caso*, 33–34, 158.

81 HDA, 145, box 79, Izvještaj sa Sušaka o sve jaćoj akciji emigranata i komunista; box 84, Separatistički antidržavni letki u Rijeci, Kretanje emigranata.

82 Gobetti, *Dittatore per caso*, 35; DARI, 53, A9, box 448, folder Marco Ostric.

83 Gobetti, *Dittatore per caso*, 4.

84 "Il disarmo, Belgrado e la Croazia," 1; "La Croazia e i paesi danubiani," 3.

85 See "Un attentato a Sussak," 1; "La 'Pravda' furibonda," 1.

on the arrest of two workers accused of smuggling weapons and separatist press from Fiume. The instigators, Servatzy and Devčić, had allegedly told the smugglers not to be scared of the Italian police when crossing the border illegally.[86] During those months, several Ustaša leaders, ranging from Pavelić to Gustav Perčec and Andrija Artuković, visited Fiume.[87] Servatzy served as the man on the ground, maintaining contacts with the Italian police.[88] The scheming in the border area culminated in September 1932 with an attempt to provoke an unsuccessful armed uprising in the Yugoslav region of Lika. This, as well as other plots meant to destabilize the Yugoslav state, were planned in Fiume and Zadar, where the infiltrators found a haven. *La Vedetta* described the raid as evidence of Yugoslavia's fragility while praising "the noble Lika mountain people" for setting the example of a future uprising.[89] An article in *Novi List* complained about the hospitality of Fiumian authorities toward the opponents of the Yugoslav government by reporting on the case of a Yugoslav fugitive whom Fiumian fascists had welcomed as a political emigrant, only to eventually realize that he was an ordinary fraudster.[90]

The peculiar combination of interdependence of Sušak and Fiume allowed political refugees to live transnationally: they took part in the political struggles of both countries, enjoying the protection of the host states while maintaining their influence in the political life of their country of origin. Their role in exerting pressure on the neighboring country led to their being permitted to position themselves along the border, although this was generally denied other fugitives, but it also made them more vulnerable to and dependent on the shifting interests of the two hosting countries. On both Italian and Yugoslav soil, refugees worked hard to comply with the conditions authorities set, but, from time to time, they were also able to impose their own agendas. Both states attempted to infiltrate the communities of political refugees across the border,[91] but it was also refugees who were able to penetrate the institutional circles in the neighboring country.[92] In some cases, refugees even allegedly tried to make the most of their situation by playing a double game and collaborating with the intelligence of both countries.[93]

86 "Kako Talijani favoriziraju kriumčarenje oružja," 1; *I documenti diplomatici italiani*, 226.
87 Krizman, *Ante Pavelić*, 96, 101, 186; Ferrara, "Il separatismo croato," 470.
88 M. Hr., "Na Rijeci se priprema oružje," 1.
89 "La situazione interna in Jugoslavia," 1.
90 "Pobjegao iz Sušaka na Rijeku," 1.
91 See HDA, 1358, box 69, 1064; DARI, box 437, folder Beslic Stefano.
92 See DARI, 53, A8, box 217, folder Adam Angelo.
93 DARI, 53, A8, box 354, folder Sgardelli Iginio.

The Twilight of Sušak and Fiume as Transit Spots

Already in 1933, a cautious thaw in relations between Italy and Yugoslavia started affecting the attitude of both countries toward refugees. After the Lika incursion, the Ustaša movement focused its activities on the Italian peninsula, and its key personalities left Rijeka.[94] In the same year, Adam was reported to be experiencing financial difficulties, and he ultimately left for France.[95] From 1934, when Italy started seeking a rapprochement with the French government against Germany, the preconditions for a détente in the Adriatic area were set.[96] The thaw between Italy and Yugoslavia was fostered by the appointment of the pro-Axis prime minister Milan Stojadinović in Yugoslavia.[97] As a consequence, the activities of the political refugees in both Sušak and Fiume were nearly brought to a halt. The shift in the geopolitical constellation greatly reduced the space in which refugees could maneuver. Although groups of Ustašas remained in Italy until 1937, they were no longer a tool of pressure in the border area, while international pressure led to Pavelić's detention in Italy. In the same years, Zanella, the refugee leader who had once drawn on the consistent financial support of Yugoslavia, moved to France.[98]

The Adriatic appeasement led to reinforced mutual cooperation against common targets of repression other than communists. In 1936, one of the first occurrences of open collaboration between the Italian and Yugoslav authorities was reported with dismay by the Italian anti-fascist press. Following a raid on over one hundred anti-fascists in Fiume, the Sušak police arrested an individual suspected of facilitating illegal border crossings and the distribution of anti-fascist press.[99] While open protection for political refugees was brought to a halt, they could still count on some patronage from the neighboring state, which granted them a sort of amnesty or milder punishments. In 1937, the Italian police repatriated ten emigrants to the Yugoslav authorities, who gave assurances they would not be persecuted. In

94 HDA, 145, box 115, Hrvatski emigranti na Rijeci; box 118, Vrbovanje ljudi u Italiji da izvrše nerede u Jugoslaviji; box 126, Podaci o ustaškoj akciji u Rijeci; Gobetti, *Dittatore per caso*, 43, 46, 47, 55; Krizman, *Ante Pavelić*, 136.

95 Dassovich, *I treni*, 248–49.

96 Although historians still debate the question of Italian responsibility in the assassination of King Alexander in Marseille in 1934, that year certainly marked the beginning of a détente between the two countries. See Gobetti, *Dittatore per caso*, 72; and Iuso, *Il fascismo*, 75–76.

97 Gobetti, *Dittatore per caso*, 68.

98 Dassovich, *I treni*, 133.

99 "Arresti in massa a Fiume," 2.

the same year, the Croatian separatist Andrea[100] Luetić was handed over to the Sušak authorities. He returned to his hometown, Šibenik, where the sources suggest he was reinstated in his job on condition of forgoing any political activity.[101] Refugees were no longer pawns in an underground intelligence war waged across the Rječina border. With the Belgrade Pact in 1937, Italy agreed to suppress Ustaša activity in the country.[102] Similarly, the Yugoslav government gradually neutralized the organizations of the Istrian emigrants.[103]

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the shape of negotiations between refugees and state authorities over space and time in the border area. While many refugees were able to spend only a limited amount of time in the places of passage before being relocated somewhere else, a handful of them were allowed to resettle in the border area. The right to reside near the border paid off politically, but it could be revoked if refugees failed to comply with the host country's expectations or events unfolded in such a way that their presence became inconvenient. The length of the refugees' stay in transit spots was initially conditioned by their political capital, but it was further negotiated later, both as a consequence of their behavior and perceived loyalty but also due to external circumstances. While a stable presence along the border was never gained once and for all for refugees, they kept inhabiting the border area conditionally, under the constant threat of removal.

Investigation into the role of Sušak and Fiume as places of passage or precarious sanctuaries shows how refugees' paths were shaped by the course of the relationships between their former and new home. From time to time, Yugoslavia and Italy staged irredentist campaigns and raised tensions, while keeping an eye on the possibility of a rapprochement. This created some room for certain political groups or individuals to maneuver, but it also made it more difficult for them to foresee future developments and their potential repercussions.

The case study of Fiume and Sušak also allows a broader reflection on transit spots located in borderlands along well-established migration

100 The personal name Andrea, mentioned by Italian sources, is possibly an Italianized version of the name Andrej or Andrija.

101 DARI, 53, A9, box 440, folder Luetic Andrea.

102 Gobetti, *Dittatore per caso*, 105.

103 Kalc, "L'emigrazione," 21; Zobec, "Salvaging the 'Unredeemed' in Italy," 60.

routes. The nature of refugees' stay in those places—either final settlement or a transient phase in a longer migration path—was the outcome of a constant interaction between state actors and refugees. It was undoubtedly the host state that decided whether refugees were deserving enough to stay. Yet, from time to time, the countries of origin were able to influence the attitude of the neighbors towards refugees. Thus, the peculiar in-betweenness of the transit spots such as Sušak and Fiume implied a twofold negotiation between refugees, on the one hand, and the authorities of both the host country and the country of origin, on the other.

Finally, refugees not only used to engage in negotiations with the two authorities to achieve their aims. They also contributed to setting up the political and logistical infrastructure that ensured a safe passage or a more extended stay. Space and time along the border never ceased to be matters of negotiation. Rather, transit spots were co-constructed by states and refugees that determined the length of stay, its stable or transient nature, and the extent of conditionality that refugees had to endure.

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About the Author

Francesca Rolandi is a senior research fellow at the University of Florence. She is interested in the social and cultural history of the post-Yugoslav and Upper Adriatic area. Her current research project focuses on the history of refugees, humanitarian practices, and solidarity networks in twentieth-century Yugoslavia.

3. Refugee Temporalities: Time Displacement in the Flight of Polish Jews from Nazism (A Conceptual Study)

Lidia Zessin-Jurek

Abstract: Time is a central dimension of the refugee experience. While much scholarship on Jewish refugee temporality has centered on the bureaucratic limbo of Western European transit hubs and seaports, this chapter broadens the lens beyond the paralysis of waiting. Drawing on a rich body of testimonies from Jewish refugees displaced by the Nazi and Soviet invasions of Poland in 1939, it identifies recurring temporal motifs in refugee narratives shaped by the collapse of state structures and, later, by genocide—such as the interrupted present, unrealized futures, and the erasure of the past. Situated at the intersection of Refugee, Memory, and Holocaust Studies, the chapter develops a set of temporal concepts to articulate the disorienting effects of forced migration.

Keywords: Refugees; Poland; Second World War; statelessness; Holocaust, Memory

"The curtain had fallen on my past life," Stanisław Ulam wrote of September 1939, "cutting it off from my future. There has been a different color and meaning to everything ever since."[1] Ulam—who managed to board a transatlantic ship at the last minute before the war erupted—expressed the sense of a changed tomorrow: the future that followed did not resume the past that war had violently interrupted. Few events disrupt life as profoundly as war and displacement. This chapter argues that war triggers forced migration in space as much as it triggers a parallel *forced migration in time*. Drawing

1 Ulam, *Adventures of a Mathematician*, 116.

Frankl, Michal, ed. *Refugees and Citizens in Twentieth-Century East-Central Europe: An Unlikely Refuge?* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press / Central European University Press, 2026.
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on testimonies of Polish Jews who lived through the coordinated German and Soviet invasions of 1939—which started the Second World War and quickly nullified Polish statehood—it highlights the radical transformations that war, statelessness, and, in the broader context, the genocide of European Jews drove into refugees' temporal frameworks. From these experiences, the chapter also elaborates a set of concepts that open up a broader analytical perspective through which to interpret refugee temporality across varied historical and geographical settings.

Jewish refugeeism during the Second World War is usually understood through stalled movement and waiting for exit, transit, and entry visas. Time itself became a technique of control to regulate refugee mobility. Prominent refugees from Nazi Germany, such as Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, and Anna Seghers, experienced firsthand the bureaucratic delays along the westward and southward refugee routes through transit hubs like Marseille, Lisbon, and Casablanca.[2] The psychological toll of suspended existence and being trapped behind "paper walls" is vividly portrayed in Anna Seghers's 1944 novel *Transit* and its 2018 film adaptation by Christian Petzold, both of which capture the disorienting temporality of bureaucratic limbo.

For most Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi takeover of Poland, time unfolded quite differently. While notable figures like Julian Tuwim, Antoni Słonimski, and Wanda Landowska faced similar entrapment in western seaports, this chapter broadens the discussion of refugee temporality beyond the paralysis of waiting described by prominent exiles. Testimonies from Eastern Europe's volatile refugee landscapes reveal a far broader spectrum of temporal dynamics.

Background

This exploration is crucial because temporality is not merely a backdrop but a critical framework for understanding the refugee experience. Forced migration disrupts core rhythms and expectations, "unhinges"[3] prior projects and goals, and splits life into anticipated and derailed time.[4] The

2 Seghers, *Transit*, 127.

3 Sociologist Ann Game analyzed "time unhinged" by catastrophe, which undermines one's sense of self anchored in an orientation toward the foreseeable future. Game, "Time Unhinged," 122. Gerhard Riemann and Fritz Schuetze likewise analyzed how the total disorganization of daily affairs leads to self-alienation and redefinition of personal identity, see their "'Trajectory' as a Basic Theoretical Concept," 342–43.

4 Of course, the future as such is unknowable, but in a non-war and domestic setting, it is easier to make long-term plans.

perception of time is fundamental: everyone draws from the past, inhabits the present, and projects into the future. But when the present is—as Chaskel Wyszkowski begins his refugee memoir about 1939—"disrupted and thrown into chaos by some explosive earth-shattering event"[5] beyond one's control, and plans collapse, people often lose their bearings—a shared experience underscored throughout this chapter.

Studying something as subjective as the sense of time during a critical life moment of losing one's home (and state) individualizes our view of displaced people. Far from essentializing an internally differentiated refugee time, this chapter brings to the fore how war, while an epochal historical rupture, also marks deeply personal turning points.[6] These turning points often resist the linear narratives commonly associated with migration—narratives that move neatly from losing one "life" at home to acquiring a new one elsewhere. The former life does not let go easily, resurfacing in multiple, unexpected ways. Drawing largely on deeply retrospective refugee testimonies, the chapter does not treat retrospectivity as a threat to authenticity. Rather, it foregrounds how memory actively reshapes emotional experience through the lens of present recollection. Adopting a longue durée approach, it reads these testimonies through what might be called *longue émotivité*—emotions that evolved over time as refugees revisited their experiences.

The Refugee Side of the Story

Historians situating events in time have long recognized that refugee movement cannot be reduced to a statistical addendum to wars and other catastrophes.[7] Increasingly, historical studies center refugees' own perceptions of forced migration, including the emotions tied to their transit paths, the geographies that enabled or constrained their movement, and the places where their journeys concluded.[8]

Alongside the impact of space and distance, historical sources—particularly first-hand testimonies—also illuminate the *time* experienced by refugees. When recounting their stories, refugee witnesses usually strive

5 Wyszkowski, *Perilous Escape*, 9.

6 See Cwerner, "The Times of Migration," 7–36; Griffiths, Rogers, and Anderson, "Migration, Time and Temporalities"; Sagbakken, Bregård, and Varvin, "The Past, the Present, and the Future," 1–16; Ramsay, "Time and the Other in Crisis." "Temporal turn" takes up a critical reflection on fixed caesuras. A relevant text here is Tamm and Olivier, *Rethinking Historical Time*.

7 Marfleet, "Refugees and History," 136–48.

8 See Kaplan, *Hitler's Jewish Refugees*.

to impose a followable temporal order.[9] As much as they try to overcome complexity, forced migration is not a uniform experience. Examining "refugee time" through individual biographies reveals this temporal multiplicity, even as recurring motifs highlight shared experiences across historical cases around the world. One such set of patterns appears in historian Guy Miron's study of time as narrated by German Jews after 1933. He identified their exclusion from the "simultaneity" of German national life and the Nazified calendar, the suspension they endured—caught in anticipation of emigration—as the Nazi regime accelerated and closed off their future horizons.[10]

The following analysis is based primarily on recurring motifs in the testimonies of Polish Jews, drawn from both published and archival sources. Occasional references to non-Jewish accounts are included here to underscore some universal aspects of the refugee experience in Poland. Jewish refugees, who constituted the majority of those fleeing eastward in 1939 to escape German troops, also left the largest body of testimonies describing the outbreak of war. The predominant contributors are those born around 1920 or later. Young adults at the time, they constituted the main cohort of refugees—and many of them lived long enough to make it into what Annette Wieviorka called "the era of the witness."[11]

Time as Context

There is a rich body of multidisciplinary literature dealing with the dualism of "real" vs. "lived" time and its "objective" (measurable) and subjective (perceived) dimensions.[12] The more objective dimensions—both in terms of astronomic and social time—set the framework for historical contextualization. Here, the objective "time-as-context" period covers the short transition between the Nazi attack on Poland and the consolidation of the German and Soviet occupation regimes, in other words, 1939–40. These two invasions *de facto* rendered people internally displaced in Poland stateless. The collapse of the state and the resulting vacuum of protective power increased the intensity of Poland as a space of experienced displacement, thus making it a particularly salient case for the study of forced migration and refugee time(s).

9 Griffin, "Temporality," 419.

10 Miron categorized the temporal strategies adopted by German Jews, including the "time of action" and "wait-and-see" attitude. Miron, *Space and Time under Persecution*.

11 Wieviorka, *Era of the Witness*.

12 Rutz, "The Idea of a Politics of Time," 4.

Both the German attack, which also targeted civilians, and the subsequent Soviet invasion sparked massive refugee movements. Individual experiences of this refugee time were clearly determined by factors of age, gender, social class, and religion. While many people were fleeing from bombed areas, the largest group were young men rallying to join the military defense line[13] or seeking safer places where their families might join them. Refugees of Jewish origin had the most reason to fear the Germans, but Christian population, especially representatives of the Polish state administration and their families, were likewise fleeing—or "evacuating."

Importantly, the broader context of the Jewish flight includes the surge in antisemitism in Poland in the 1930s as well as apprehension of what the Nazis had in store for them. Moreover, the Jewish refugee experience was influenced by their status as a minority and their previous migration history (compared to non-Jewish refugees in the country).[14] While many of the temporal experiences below echo those of modern refugees, what ultimately shaped perspectives of authors quoted here was neither universal nor present at the outset of their journeys. Instead, it happened later—through the genocide of European Jews.

Collapse of Refugee Pasts, Presents, and Futures

To bring conceptual clarity to the varied voices of refugees, I have identified and named recurring time-related experiences—both short- and long-term—and grouped them for discussion. Among the longer-term characteristics, the predominant refugee perception of displaced time is its *collapse* across all three dimensions, typically retold in the order of: present, future, and past.

When read through the lens of perceived time, the testimonies of refugees from Poland usually progress through: (1) anticipation, (2) war displacement, and (3) hindsight. The following sections are organized along these three temporal perceptions that resonate most strongly in refugee accounts. First are projections—a narrative of trepidation and grief anticipating the disruption of present time as it existed until September 1939.

13 On September 6 and 7, Colonel Roman Umiastowski called on all civilian men to form a defense line east of the Vistula River.

14 I analyze these points in a monograph on the 1939 refugee movement of Polish Jews (under preparation).

The time after the outbreak of war marks the moment when anticipation turned into reality. Therefore, the second section discusses both the actual shifts in the flow of time and how they were narrated—primarily through the prism of rupture culminating in the collapse of an expected future. Once the time collapses, refugees convey it as *splintering* into several parallel tracks, including what I termed *emergency time* (the main motif) and a more studied sensation of *limbo time*.

Displacement disrupts the time during but also after the crisis, when people struggle to reconcile their new lives with the earlier versions. The temporal derailments from an expected life sequence often left refugees with the sensation of living in simultaneous overlapping times, including the *phantom time* of their interrupted lives—a concept I introduce later in this text. This temporal complication becomes a defining aspect of their otherness, as refugeedom engendered a coexistence of their actual and potential (shadow) biographies. Therefore, the third dominant temporal sensation reflects the loss of a past that disintegrated with the fall of the Second Republic, a state that failed to protect its citizens during the war, and the memory of them after. For Jewish refugees, the prewar past did not fade away in the natural rhythm of life; it was not only violently taken away, but also later actively erased.[15] Understanding this temporal dimension required expanding the final section beyond the immediate timeframe of displacement during the collapse of the Polish state.

1. Before the War: Anticipation. Collapse of the Present

Except in diaries, the narrators' relationship to all three temporal dimensions—past, present, and future—is deeply retrospective. However, as the Holocaust scholar Lawrence Langer has pointed out, witnesses are necessarily "out of time" as they narrate, yet they bring their audiences "in time" as their stories are received, allowing past and present to coexist.[16] Cathy Caruth, and more recently Amos Goldberg, have explored the many ways trauma survivors relate to time in their recollections.[17] One might add that the narrative anchor—defining past, present, and future—depends on where refugees chose to cast it in their stories. Testimonies of Polish Jews reveal that, in the magic of narrative, the present time often slides

15 The prewar past, taken away and later condemned to oblivion, also affected other groups of Polish refugees from this period to varying degrees, such as the aristocracy and the landed gentry.

16 Langer, "Memory's Time," 15.

17 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*; Goldberg, *Trauma in First Person*.

from the moment of recording memories back to prewar life: that point of return becomes far more than a narrative beginning. The prewar "lived present" was cut off so abruptly and violently that many refugees' sense of "now" remained suspended there.

The accounts often portray the prewar summer of 1939 as if in slow motion, like the "calm before the storm."[18] Especially for young people, it came down in memory almost as a mythical, innocent time—an idyllic build-up period before the loss of home and collapse of the enjoyed present. Many people recall their cozy lives, sheltered by their parents' love, interrupted suddenly and irreparably. Janka Goldberger writes about "that happy summer of 1939, when [...] the world seemed a safe, comfortable place."[19] Aron Goldfarb reminisced his "youthful years of innocence."[20]

It is necessary to address the bias of the sources at this point. In addition to the limitations of memory accuracy, the successive layers of interpretation imposed on it, and non-atypical romanticization of the past lives by refugees, an important factor to consider is who was predisposed to leave written testimony given differing levels of education, socialization, and socioeconomic status. Within the corpus of available sources, it is evident that most authors, like Janka, came from wealthier families. Autobiographies are mostly written by people who had the skills, as well as the ability and resources, to share their experiences. Having said that, there are also numerous Jewish accounts written by the youth from less well-off families, like Aron, or those who were too old to fit under the protective umbrella of the family. For older refugees especially, the years leading up to September 1939 are marked less by blissful harmony than by intensifying social and state-led antisemitic intimidation.[21] Although not a new phenomenon, this escalation—now intersecting with the looming Nazi threat—added immense pressure on the Jewish minority to consider resettlement well before the outbreak of war.

One of the most frequently recurring themes in the testimonies is that of young people who returned from their school break with a strange sense that more than just the summer was coming to an end. From Bolesław Ringler's perspective, people sensed that the carefree time was over and they could no longer plan for the long term. He recalls how in a kind of anticipatory grieving, he looked at the landscape of Truskawiec and Borysław

18 Szedlecki, *Album of My Life*, 54.

19 Goldberger, *Stalin's Little Guest*, 1.

20 Goldfarb (and Diamond), *Maybe You Will Survive*, 3.

21 The growing antisemitic atmosphere is a topic of countless accounts (and secondary literature).

(in southeastern Poland) with sadness because his instincts told him that he might soon lose this view forever.[22] Samuel Goetz expressed a similar anticipatory fear of looming disappearance. He was returning from Rabka to Tarnów at the end of his holiday. When he looked out over the mountainous landscape, he recounts: "I had a feeling I might never see this place again."[23]

"Foreknowledge of Grief"

Paul (Pinkus) Trepman titled the first chapter of his wartime memoirs "A Summer of Foreboding." In his description of the months leading up to September 1, Warsaw was "in the grip of a strange malaise," that of trepidation.[24] "The war came suddenly, but crept up gradually," confirmed another young Warsawer, Yitzkhak Erlichson.[25] Leon Berk recalls the "atmosphere of uncertainty and gloom" that filled the time.[26] Premonitions of many people who soon became refugees capture the anxiety of the immediate future: as if they saw the temporal crack open before their eyes and could do nothing to stop it. Another refugee, in a note deposited in the Warsaw Ghetto archive, put it just as graphically: "We lived as if on a volcano."[27]

These personal accounts depict a sense of time running out. The most common metaphor used to express the shrinking horizon and intensifying threat was that of a "gathering storm"[28] and a "looming black cloud": "The clouds of the final storm began to blacken the sky,"[29] "A black cloud moved in over our heads and our existence."[30] Those who did not manage to escape share similar recollections, like Etunia Katz in *Our Tomorrows Never Came*: "A storm was brewing [...] and the gathering clouds were floating in our direction."[31] Though Nazism was still outside the country's borders, it was described as an "impending shadow" looming over the present and casting uncertainty on any plans for the future, "a sort of foreknowledge of the grief" in the words of Barbara Padowicz.[32] A typical reminiscence of that time, the chapter "Clouds" by Krystyna Eichler, describes a mixture of unrest and

22 Ringler, *Wspomnienia z Borysławia*, 5.
23 Goetz, *I Never Saw My Face*, 35.
24 Trepman, *Among Men and Beasts*, 1.
25 Erlichson, *My Four Years in Soviet Russia*, 7.
26 Berk, *Destined to Live*, 4.
27 *Iber a grenec*, 69–105. For the similar metaphor about life at the foot of a volcano, see e.g. Machler, *Moskiewski czas*, 15.
28 Lando, *Saved by My Face*, 19.
29 Cytrynowski, *And I Will Remember*, 192.
30 Kryger (and Welch), *A Passover in Rome*, 12.
31 Katz, *Our Tomorrows Never Came*, 3.
32 Padowicz, *Flight to Freedom*, 1.

attempts to banish her negative thoughts as she prepared to submit her papers to the Warsaw University of Technology on September 1. Her thoughts the day before: "Like Cassandra [...] I see black and heavy clouds gathering over my sunny Ithaca [...] There was a strange atmosphere of anxiety. Could I have known that this was the last evening of the world in which I lived? That here I was standing over an abyss where misery, suffering, hunger, Siberia, and slavery were in store?"[33]

Parallel to the anticipatory nostalgia and a slowdown is the perspective of those saying they not only presumed that war would come but also took feverish measures to protect themselves and others from danger. They included officials and military officers trying to prepare the country's defense and later evacuating its most valuable assets. They also included families, mainly Jewish, who felt that the country would not be able to guarantee their safety, despite the omnipresent state propaganda masking the state's vulnerability and describing its defenses as "strong, tight, and ready." Many expressed mounting anxiety as they awaited foreign visas, feeling overwhelmed by the vision of time running out and their inability to leave the country. In the words of Sonia Caplan from Tarnów, whose émigré father urged the family in his letters to "leave everything as is" and escape: "The last days in August were like an accelerated, animated film, so rapidly did momentous events succeed one another."[34] For the men drafted in late August into the army, a large proportion of whom would soon become refugees, time accelerated as well.

The Paradox of Awareness and Denial

As the accounts above illustrate, while most authors later acknowledged that there were ample signs of war's return to the region, the testimonies reveal a peculiar interweaving of two extremes: awareness and denial. Many witnesses recognized this dissonance, describing it as "the paradox of the golden dream and the black nightmare"[35] they had lived before the war. It is important to understand that the fear of war stems not only from the anticipated violence but also from the disruption it poses to the perceived natural rhythm of life. The narratives indicate that many people *refused the future*: the pre-scripted and impending ruptures in their private timelines. Although they could not have foreseen the extent to which the war would affect them, they struggled with their helplessness, facing a future they had

33 Eichler, *Śladami Odysei*, 65.
34 Caplan, *Passport*, 25.
35 Caplan, *Passport*, 10.

hoped to shape—now at best suspended, at worst, totally aborted. "The real world had encroached on the idyll we were spinning for our future [...] We put our psychic defense mechanism to work: we simply tried to evade the issues" is how Sonia Caplan, who did not manage to leave the country in time, retrospectively diagnosed what she called "our stubborn wishful thinking."[36] As recounted by Jerzy Tymiński—in his memoir with the telling title *This September Lasted Six Years*—in the last months before the war people "lived to the fullest as if to accumulate life in advance."[37] The evasion of an impending future is a common refugee motif, more recently expressed by Ukrainian refugees fleeing the 2022 Russian invasion. Despite the warning signs and growing tension, many of them say: "We were trying to stay calm... Everyone hoped until the very end that it wasn't going to happen."[38]

With no way of knowing the dimensions of the future war, people were also obviously caught up in the rhythms of everyday life. Itzhak Kotkowski, who was waiting for a South American visa, noted: "The majority of Poland's citizenry continued to dismiss the warnings of a possible war. I practised Spanish phrases and idioms, Ania was preoccupied with her own calendar and little Dorenka was too young either to understand or to engage in self-delusion."[39] Wanda Ryś, who had embarked on a new period in her "family time"— she was newly married and due to give birth any day—emphatically states that, busy with her new life, she ignored the signs and "did not anticipate the horror of the days to come."[40] Rather than an exception or a function of a narrative, such declared lack of foresight might have been another typical, if subconscious, act of refusing to surrender one's personal *time as hostage* to great upheavals over which the individual has no control. Notably, this was the last time most of the memoirists lived "family time"—at least with their prewar families. This may account for the desire to freeze time as it was, a prominent feature in their accounts.

This wrestling with shrinking time and the impending future unfolded not only on an individual level but also on a collective, political scale. During the first days of the war, Jerzy Kuncewicz observed confused vacationers staying in Kazimierz Dolny, many of them Jewish friends

36 Caplan, *Passport*, 10.
37 Tymiński, *Ten wrzesień trwał sześć lat*, 16.
38 Ihor Pliushchakov, interviewed for: "Understanding the Ukrainian War."
39 Kotkowski, *Wiles of Destiny*, 5.
40 Ryś-Straszyńska, "Wybuch wojny 1939".

of his.[41] What echoed throughout their discussions about whether to return home at all or flee immediately was a refusal to relinquish the "hopeful time" of national statehood. Many testimonies suggest that people were reluctant to shed their illusions about the possibility of continuing the sovereign statehood their country had gained only twenty years earlier.[42] Ritualized national life plays a crucial role in shaping communal temporality, imbuing time with collective meaning. While Jewish Poles had many reasons to be skeptical of Polishness, their lives were naturally structured around the local national timeline. Despite mounting discrimination, Polish statehood remained their primary buffer against the threat of Hitler.

2. Wartime: Projection to Reality. Collapse of the Future

As the refugee accounts move on to the outbreak of war, they convey the splintering of time. The previously continuous trajectories of individual lives broke into parallel paths. At this point, the anticipated collapse of the present took hold, triggering even more dramatic shifts: acceleration, slowdown, and looping, that swept away refugees' imagined future and all previous plans.

Emergency Time—Actual Temporal Change

The most immediate path refugees entered was that of *emergency time*, where they had to make urgent decisions amid complete uncertainty about the future, both in the short and long term. Emergency time was marked by deprivation and suspension, disrupting not only the rhythms of daily life, but also broader biographical cycles, including fertility, nuptials, mortality, and even aging. What intensified the already chaotic rhythms of people fleeing or considering escape was the absence of safety, the violence of war, the sudden disappearance of the state's regulation, and the gradual disintegration of the infrastructure that had supported civilian life. Testimonies describe a world where basic tasks became exponentially more difficult: it suddenly took longer to get food (breadlines), secure water (damaged waterworks, wells drained dry by refugee masses) and traverse any distance (jammed transportation arteries, lack of petrol, blown-up railway tracks). For people on the road, the

41 *Maria i Jerzy Kuncewiczowie o Wrześniu 1939*, interviewed by Mirosław Derecki, "Kamena," 8.

42 Finkelstein, *Hitler, Stalin, Mum and Dad*.

disappearance of "state time" was disorienting—not only because the state lost the capacity to structure their lives through official calendars, but also because it felt like a return to a deeply premodern existence, where daily rhythms were punctuated by nature and the constant threat of human violence, rather than by the contractual rules of social interdependence.[43]

Time fell off its rails: refugees struggled to maintain even the most basic daily routines, from sleep to mealtime. During their flight, day often became night, and night, day.[44] Many found it safer to walk at night and rest (as best they could) during the day. "Formal rhythms" were likewise derailed: the working or school day, the order of the week, and religious or public holidays all became irrelevant under the chaos of war. The holy days, which once regulated the rhythm of time and provided solace to many people, now served merely as orientation markers in time. Numerous testimonies recount that the heaviest bombing of Warsaw occurred around Yom Kippur, or that they left home at the beginning of Rosh Hashanah.[45] Some skipped weekly services at temples for fear of bombs, while others attended them for the exact same reason.

Time displacement also affected "family rhythms," be they regular baths for the baby, treatments for medical conditions, or wedding preparations.[46] Many things were put on hold. Decades later, Anna Pasternak admits weeping as she wrote about her four-year-old sick brother Dawid's suffering after their mother was forced to interrupt his therapy—which was impossible to continue on the moving cart or in the peasant huts where they sheltered on their way east.[47]

War and refugeedom interfered in multiple ways with the timing of private life cycles. They suspended family plans and affected those already underway. Pregnant women generally chose not to flee, especially those in advanced stages of pregnancy, for childbirth could not be put on hold. Women with newborns tended to stay put, as well.[48] For them, this time was largely associated with waiting for news or the return of husbands who had fled—one indicator of the gender differences associated with the temporal experience of this refugee moment.

Teodora Żukowska, instead of embarking on her honeymoon, bid farewell to her newly married husband who went with other men to the east to form

43 Which would be a reverse of the phenomenon described by Elias, *Essay on Time*.

44 E.g., Cytrynowski, *And I will Remember*, 202.

45 Eisenberg, "Escape to Russia," 1.

46 Rieger, *I Didn't Tell Them Anything*, 30.

47 Pasternak, *Untold Story*. The boy never recovered and soon died in Siberia.

48 Roma Talasewicz, in: Ejbuszyc, *Memory Is Our Home*, 104.

a defense line and in no time became a war refugee.[49] After the surrender, the men bound for the army still "marched to nowhere"[50] or "in circles"[51] for some time, fearing that their military profile might endanger them and their families if they returned home. Jewish men often continued on their way eastward hoping to secure shelter for their families. As far as getting married was concerned, the war and displacement sometimes cancelled such plans but also often abruptly accelerated them so that the young people could part, or escape, as a married couple.[52] Getting married gave them more certainty of one another in the face of the challenges of refugee life ahead. Importantly, it also gave them their parents' blessing for the journey into the unknown together. Those whose children had already reached adulthood and the elderly usually did not flee—yet another important, time-related way in which the war encroached on private life.

Age was the most decisive factor in situations where independent decisions to escape were made. The elderly, guided by concerns for their physical condition and so as not to slow down younger relatives, stayed put. This was usually the last time the refugees would see them. This major biographical rupture, when the continuity of generational connection was broken, recurs like a refrain in their memoirs: "I would never see them again." This is followed by bitter regrets for the lost future with the dear ones, and directed against oneself, as well—for not making the most of their time with relatives: "If only I had known I would be missing in the near future my entire family."[53]

Not only the elderly, but also young children were of concern in terms of their "refugee capacity." They were therefore instructed to be obedient and behave more grown-up. With few exceptions, descriptions of children on the road confirm that they lived up bravely to such expectations. "I knew it was not the time to ask questions,"[54] seemed to be the prevalent feeling. Following this temporal derailment as experienced by children, a typical motif of refugee memories is that of a sudden end of childhood and accelerated aging. "I felt the sharp pain of sudden maturity," and "Manhood was forced upon me abruptly at seventeen years of age, when the Nazis invaded Poland in the Fall of 1939" are the words of Eliezer Urbach.[55] This

49 Żukowska, *Na skraju dwóch światów*, 12.

50 Landau, *A Lost World*, 122.

51 Karol, *Between Two Worlds*, 18.

52 The press noted that the last days before the outbreak of war were record-breaking in terms of the number of marriages, "Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny," 20.

53 Szedlecki, *Album of My Life*, 2.

54 Pasternak, *Untold Story*, 80.

55 Urbach (and Weigand), *Out of the Fury*, 31, 2.

abrupt modification of the "mental age" of children and adolescents is repeated in countless accounts.

A serious invasion into the rhythm of family life was the sudden death of (also younger) relatives at the hands of the Germans, buried under rubble, strafed by German aircraft, or gone missing during an attempt to cross the border into the USSR.[56] Confrontation with death as the ultimate end (irreversibility) of time interfered with identity development. They not only prematurely discontinued familial relationships but also contributed to a shortened sense of one's own future, given that such death was perceived as qualitatively different from dying in peacetime. Moreover, in the crisis of war and forced displacement, a shortened time horizon often changed the approach to the consequences of one's own actions. Emergency time was *time bracketed* from normalcy also in that it reduced the sense of (moral) responsibility: the rules of peacetime no longer applied. While on the road, many refugees admit that they did not hesitate (as they would have before) to steal an apple from a tree, eat non-kosher food, defy authority figures, or dress in the "European garb"[57] for the first time, as well as make selfish decisions.[58]

As this suggests, the derailment of time consisted as much in falling off the "normal" rails as in setting out on strange new ones. Countless accounts attest to the fact that these new rails led into a completely unknown future. No one knew how far or long it would take. The Christian refugee, Stanisław Vincenz, crossing the border into Romania and witnessing the fall of Poland, felt as if he was becoming "a citizen of Atlantis, a land lost in time." He complained he was not "a clairvoyant" because he wanted to know: "How long will it last? How were we to console ourselves? Like the Babylonians after the great catastrophe […]. That it would all last at most nine hundred years?"[59] The Nazi slogan spoke of a thousand-year Reich. When asked by Chaim Grade how long it took them to reach Poland, the Soviets, on the other hand, would reply: "twenty years—because they had been trying since the October Revolution" and were preparing for their patience to be rewarded with a long stay.[60] There are many more recorded temporal impressions of how an interrupted present blurred the future. A few are discussed below, selected for their frequency of appearance.

56 Zessin-Jurek, "No Man's Land", forthcoming.

57 Cytrynowski, *And I will Remember*, 203.

58 For example, if there was no room in the car for everyone in the family who wanted to evacuate.

59 Vincenz, *Dialogi z Sowietami*, 19.

60 Grade, *My Mother's Sabbath Days*, 224.

Déjà-vu Time

The break in time had its actual and perceived dimensions. These affected both private and public life cycles. The national dimension of the 1939 disaster was clear: "The collapse of a country of thirty-six million people happened in an instant as if the whole history of independent Poland for the last twenty years had been a dream, and now there was a terrible awakening", in the words of Julius Margolin.[61] The fragility of the "stable time" was striking, as was the thinness of the line separating continuity from rupture (stable time "hung not even by a thread, but by a spider's web"[62]). Like in many regions of recurring violence still today, people would again be tested by war and occupation and felt intergenerationally trapped in the vicious cycle of time. Some parallels of the cyclical nature of events ran deep: "What happened in September of 1939 mirrored Poland's fate of the past 150 years. Three different times, the Germans and Russians carved up Polish territory."[63] But most often, leaving their homes, and taking few belongings, the older refugees recalled a similar critical event a quarter of a century earlier with memories of "the entire family moving among crowds of others."[64] During the First World War, they had also ventured into the unknown, fleeing the conflagration. In some refugee cases, this sense of repeated time was compounded by the fact that both wars displaced them to the same areas (e.g., into Russia).[65] After the first war, with the return home, interrupted life was taken up again, whereas with regard to the second war, the emphasis in the accounts was on the fact that the previous life had ended completely (the topic of this chapter's last section).

This temporal displacement was uncanny and linked not only to an eerie sense of a doom loop or déjà vu, but also to the intensity of the devastation observed. The nature of the violence made some think not so much of a repetition, but of some major epochal civilizational reversal. The poet Mieczysław Jastrun recalled that during his refugee trek, whenever a sense of normalcy returned at the sight of blue skies, it was shattered by "an apocalyptic bird returning in low flight." This was a reference to German bombers. Their strafing refugees raised questions in his mind: "I have long since lost spatial orientation and sense of time. […] Is this why I lived and toiled for so long, to return to the cave?

61 Margolin, *Journey*, 8.

62 Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki*, 150.

63 Pomerantz (with Lyric Wallwork Winik), *Run East*, 20.

64 Michlewitz, *Frayed Lives*, 19.

65 Horn, *Pamiętnik Żydówki*; the author's father was in Siberia in the First World War; Frusztajer, *From Siberia to America*; the author's parents were both exiled in Siberia in the tsarist period.

Why all this science, civilization, the work of generations?"[66] A refugee woman from Warsaw, whenever she reminisced about the moment she tried to escape an air raid, also remembered her disbelief at what had been happening in that real time.[67] The stress made her feel as if her own time had separated from this reality and run in parallel. Often mentioned was the illusion that one might wake up from a bad dream to a life lived just a few days before. Mercilessly, however, people were "each day woken up"[68] or "jarred back to this new, unavoidable reality."[69] They divided time into "our"—that is, normal, non-war time—and "a new, ragged and arrogant time of war, in which weeks, days, and even hours claimed to overturn centuries."[70] Refugees would sometimes fall into the illusion of a "normal time" under the influence of the beautiful weather accompanying their escape. But that other time "chased" and unfailingly caught up with them.

Asynchronous Time of the Blitzkrieg

Another splintering of time that recurs in refugee narratives is related to this very chase and the division of time between that of the invaders and that of the invaded. "Enemy time" ran at a very different speed from "refugee time." Even for the most pessimistic predictors, the radical divergence in both tempos was a bitter surprise. The war waged by the Germans turned out to be a Blitzkrieg, a flash war. "They moved at an incredible speed,"[71] "with lightning speed"[72] and "the German attack was so swift and sudden"[73]—refugees unanimously emphasize. They usually add that Blitzkrieg, both as a term and a practice, was previously unknown to them and the world. "Blitzkrieg warfare was altogether different from the war endured just a few years earlier, both in terms of technology and its potential for rapid, widespread devastation—we simply did not know where to turn or what to do."[74] This radical asynchrony led refugees to make many errors in their logical response to the challenge. The common wisdom—as Adam Broner from Łódź recalled—came from the experience of the First World War,

66 Jastrun, *Pamięć i milczenie*, 177.
67 "Godło Warszawianka".
68 Winiewicz, *Co pamiętam*, 155.
69 Whiteman, *Lonek's Journey*, 18.
70 Vincenz, *Dialogi z Sowietami*, 26.
71 Prager Kogosowski, *The Times of My Life*, 12.
72 Gliksman, *Tell the West*, 23.
73 Urbach (and Weigand), *Out of the Fury*, 11.
74 Kotkowski, *The Wiles of Destiny*, 10.

when it took the Germans three months to reach his city.[75] Now it only took a couple of days. Salomon Polaniecki speaks of "agonizingly slow time" on the road.[76] The speed of his family's escape from Brzesko was regulated by the walking pace of the younger children and the grandfather.[77]

Particularly striking was the immediacy of the violence that fell from the sky on the unforewarned civilians in the form of Luftwaffe bombings. Air raids are always described with the vocabulary of rapid movement. Anna Pasternak was a little girl thrown by the force of an explosion far into a rural field. She later remembered that it took her time to realize she was injured: "All this happened so suddenly, so unexpectedly, so quickly that I did not know what to make of it."[78] Fleeing under air raids clearly targeting refugees meant needing to jump suddenly out of the road and hide in ditches or bushes over and over again. "Our progress between the attacks was painfully slow," Jerzy Lando complained, even though his family had the good fortune of having escaped from Łódź in a motorized vehicle.[79] Some refugees, like Adam Starkopf in his memoir *There is Always Time to Die*, reported that it was better to walk than ride: "You could make much better time on the clogged highways if you travelled on foot; [...] You could dash for shelter in the fields or woods in a matter of seconds."[80] Baruch Frusztajer confirms a similar attention to time measured in seconds. Although his family took horses, they walked alongside them: "I wasn't allowed to sit on them for very long, because my parents were afraid that if the German planes came, I would not have enough time to climb down and run into the woods."[81] Another survivor wrote that he had barely made it over a bridge when the planes hit it: "I managed to cheat death by a few seconds!"[82] During such days, when seconds could decide life, the new enemy time gave refugees very little chance of reaching safety before it intersected with the much slower speed of their flight. A case described in countless testimonies (also by refugees fleeing the Blitzkrieg in France in June 1940[83]): the Wehrmacht overtook the fleeing men and women—and reached the places to which they were moving far ahead of them.

75 Broner, *My War Against the Nazis*, 75.
76 Brouwers and Ditzhuijzen, *Run, Janina, Run!*, 62.
77 Polaniecki, "Czas gorzkich ziół," 17.
78 Pasternak, *Untold Story*, 85.
79 Lando, *Saved by My Face*, 29.
80 Starkopf, *There is Always Time to Die*, 15.
81 Frusztajer, *From Siberia to America*, 46.
82 Dąbrowski, *To i owo*, 13.
83 Seghers, *Transit*, 69.

When the refugees did manage to get somewhere before the German troops, they were taken by surprise by the Soviet launch of an offensive from the east on September 17. The sight of the Soviet troops constituted a burdensome puzzle. It was difficult to determine whether they had come to help or further harm the country. The Soviets also had a different pace of operation, conspicuous for the refugee memoirists: "We have realized the situation: two gigantic systems […] have come together for nothing else but to tear our country apart. They came upon it impetuously, one like an avalanche with a bang, the other like a silent glacier with a moraine underneath."[84]

Limbo Time: Shapeless Future and Impermanence

"Time—and timing—had been crucial in our race against the Holocaust"[85] wrote Leo Melamed and yet: "Time was against us, and it too became our enemy"[86] noted Helena Singer, when recapping September 1939 years later. The refugees' time, less efficient and unable to keep up with modern warfare, was fraught with its own confusing dynamics, turbulence, and volatility that strongly affected their sense of orientation and reshaped their lived experience of duration. Time could unnaturally speed up, leaving no room for reflection; it could slow down so that it was almost palpable ("I sensed every second of danger"[87]); or it could take on an obscure monotony.

"Time seemed to stand still"[88] when Eliezer Urbach was waiting to board the train to the east and German soldiers walked near. For other refugees, hours spent in shelters during bombardment dragged on: "The first raid seemed to have no end"[89]; "There [a cellar in Kielce—ed.] we experienced what seemed to us an endless hell of explosions"[90]; "It seemed like an eternity, but it may have only been 15 or 20 minutes"[91] [swimming across the River Bug to cross the border]; "The bombs kept raining down for seemingly an interminable amount of time, though it probably was no more than 15 minutes"[92]; "The bombing of Turka continued for several minutes, which seemed like eternity,"[93] as did the days they spent in the open-air border

84 Vincenz, *Dialogi z Sowietami*, 19–20. "Avalanche" is a common metaphor, see e.g. Simcha Simchovitch's poem *There*, in *The Remnant*, 2.

85 Melamed, *Escape to the Futures*, 53.

86 Singer, "September Journeys."

87 Pomerantz (with Lyric Wallwork Winik), *Run East*, 31.

88 Urbach, *Out of the Fury*, 37.

89 Zieliński, *Pamiętnik*, 5.

90 Feingold, *Joe's Violin*, 24.

91 Hamermesh, *The River of Angry Dogs*, 73.

92 Horovitz, *Avoiding the Cracks*, 22.

93 Goldrich, *The Escape to Freedom*, 38.

blockade that had been set up along the German-Soviet demarcation line. The pace of refugees depended on completely new and often arbitrary (f)actors. Countless accounts speak of a no man's land at the border as an ultimate limbo space. They had to wait in bare, flooded, or frozen fields for the Soviet border guards to let them into the occupation zone, feeling more and more degraded as the days and weeks passed. But time was relative—for Rose Kryger, not weeks spent there, but minutes when crossing some hundreds meters of no man's land and trying to avoid the attention of the border guards, seemed incredibly long: "I do not know how long we ran, it seemed like forever."[94] Refugees "desperately waited long days" for a smuggler to help them cross the border, in "the bitterly cold frozen barns."[95] Recounting her parents' experience, Debra Michlewitz noted: "Waiting becomes an art [...] and sometimes it is better to forgo an opportunity and wait for a safer one. Impatience no longer exists. It is a luxury of a lost life."[96] And often it was not the rhythm imposed by other humans, but the rhythm of nature that determined the refugee pace, when they waited for the moonlight to fade or for the border river to freeze over so that they could cross it.

In turn, the days on the road often blended into the monotony of the kilometers covered. In the words of Jack Pomerantz: "The days faded one into another. I had no meals, no temple, no work, nothing to give shape or form to my time. I just kept walking, in a kind of stupor."[97] Similar impressions of shapeless *trance time* were recorded by Deborah Ferziger: "Most of the time I walked. I didn't know where I was going. I just knew I couldn't stop."[98] Many other refugees echo these sentiments: "Semi-conscious, for the first time in my life I dragged myself along as if in a trance"[99]; "We march on. I guess we will always march like this, stumble and march on."[100]

At a time not regulated by fixed train schedules but by the rhythm of German bombing raids, the refugees' horizon of predictable life dramatically shortened to the next day, sometimes to the next hour. Anxiety, however, affected not only what happened on the "surface of time," but also the perception of the longue durée. With the crisis of war, the continuity of time as it was known came to an end. The sense of security that usually

94 Kryger (and Welch), *A Passover in Rome*, 20.

95 Starzycki, "Relacja 1992".

96 Michlewitz, *Frayed Lives*, 125.

97 Pomerantz (with Lyric Wallwork Winik), *Run East*, 19.

98 Rieger, *I Didn't Tell Them Anything*, 34; the author also included the manuscript of her mother's memoirs, from which the quote is taken.

99 Winiewicz, *Co pamiętam*, 139. About "trance time" also Horovitz, *Avoiding the Cracks,* 21.

100 Herzbaum, *Lost Between Worlds*, 17.

comes from the predictability of time has likewise been lost. A teenage boy, Lonek Jarosławicz escaping with his mother and little brother on a horse cart, remembered "the constant suspense" and that "life no longer offered any stability or predictability [...], instead—roller-coaster twists of fate."[101]

When their wandering came to the first halt, usually upon arrival in the Soviet zone of Poland's occupation, people tried to shake off the formless emergency time and regain some horizon of the future: "I stopped with my family in the small Polish borderland town of Rovno, and here I did everything in my power to try and normalize our makeshift refugee life."[102] Their experience as refugees in a stateless space was one of quick initiative and self-reliance. But wherever they arrived, they naturally hoped to regain long-term progress-oriented thinking. For some, it was this larger biographical time scale rather than looking for safety that convinced them to leave home in the first place. The young especially did not want to postpone their plans but rather sought to continue with their lives, professional and domestic routines. Meanwhile, as it turned out, rather than some future-oriented feeling of stability, the Soviet occupation offered a sense of out-of-control limbo and impermanence.

The relatively few who managed to escape via Romania to France were then stuck for long periods in Lisbon and Casablanca, waiting for overseas visas at consulates. Among those who fled to the east of Poland, some continued their refugee journey deeper into the Soviet Union, but tens of thousands of Jewish refugees, seeing no future in the Soviet-controlled eastern territories, either returned to the German side and (usually) perished, or spent weeks queuing outside the headquarters of the Mixed German-Soviet Commission in Przemyśl, Lviv, and Bialystok to sign up for return to the German zone. For this "act of disloyalty towards the USSR" they were deported by the NKVD in the opposite direction—initially to forced labor in remote areas of Siberia, Kazakhstan, and the Arctic regions of the Soviet Union, and then, after June 1941, "amnestied" and able to flee into Central Asia, which became the next stage of their "cascading displacement."[103]

Although the internally displaced were not confined to refugee camps upon their arrival in the Soviet zone, they also faced a sense of hiatus that is characteristic of such detention centers.[104] Everyone was looking for a roof over their head, as well as work, or even school or university, which were available under the Soviets. However, many remained paralyzed by

101 Eliott Jarosławicz, in: Whiteman, *Lonek's Journey*, 19–20.

102 Gliksman, *Tell the West*, 27.

103 I develop this term in Zessin-Jurek, *Holocaust Survivors, Siberians, Refugees, Veterans*.

104 Horst and Grabska, *Introduction*, 1–18.

the loss of both home and any meaningful long-term orientation; their country no longer existed, and the occupying forces did not recognize their rights as Polish citizens. With little organized relief, except through informal networks, many refugees did not know where to seek help or how to think about the future. "The civilian population arrived in Tarnopol—men, women, children with depressed looks frozen in anticipation of something that was to come, but no one knew what or when. It was a very sad sight, but even sadder was the fact that we were part of that crowd."[105] Salomon Polaniecki remembers that after fleeing from home and finding temporary shelter, his family's life got stuck at a point where their perspective was limited to one day: "The return to Brzesko, home, became an obscure point, because 'the day after tomorrow,' 'next week,' 'next month' ceased to exist in the imagination. There was only 'today' and how to survive today, how to organize food for everyone, what to wear."[106]

Jack Pomerantz, writing from within the refugee condition, remembered the temporal sensation of the loss of progressive future-oriented flow, which he contrasted with the parallel "non-refugee time"—while the "residents continued about their business, newcomers tried to fit in." For the latter, "the present became indistinguishable from the future, the past seemed distant and gradually an abstraction."[107] Michał Roemer, a resident of the area now under Soviet patronage whose perspective came from the host society, corroborates this split temporality. While working at the university, he observed arriving refugees. In his diary of mid-December 1939, Roemer noted the defeatism of the refugees in remarkably similar "limbo" terms to how they themselves reported it, with: "ground slipping away from under their feet, a multitude of castaways of the war catastrophe, people affected by misfortune, derailed, with no tomorrow and no today."[108]

3. Postwar: Hindsight. The Loss of the Past

As recounted by refugees, emergency time left little room for deliberation. The future was difficult to re-imagine, the past removed from the picture: "I didn't have much time to dwell on the reasons for all the tragedy around

105 Harok, *Byłem tam*, 100.
106 Polaniecki, "Czas gorzkich ziół," 25.
107 Pomerantz, *Run East*, 23.
108 Römer, *Dzienniki*.

me. There was too much chaos and commotion outside"[109]; or in Genia Landau's words: "Running away [...] I didn't have much time for reflection, because we were swept along with the general stream of refugees."[110] Only later did the consequences of decisions and the dimension of change become apparent. Looking back, the refugees had no doubt that the beginning of their displacement marked the main caesura in their lives. It was a central point of reference on their biographical maps.

Most authors report with astonishing detail not only on the individual dates but even the hours of the early wartime events. Even those who suggest they have no memory for dates and will simply recount "the toil of the day and the fear of the night"[111] in general terms, consistently mention September 1 and 17 as watershed dates. The vast majority of published memoirs start on September 1—the landmark date along which most refugee narrators, whether writing immediately after the war or decades later, divide their lives.[112] The phrasing they use is pretty much the same: "September 1, 1939. It was the beginning and the end—it was when life stopped";[113] "On Friday, September 1 my world came to an end";[114] "September 1939 changed my life forever";[115] "On that fateful day, our lives changed forever";[116] "The world as I knew it had ended."[117] This date brought irreversible and radical cuts: "We were running for our lives. My free and peaceful life, stable home, and steady job had just been wiped out."[118] Samuel Cywiak and his parents bid each other farewell in the bombed town of Wyszków, knowing "that our lives would never be the same again";[119] "In September 1939 something in all of us slowly died."[120]

The certainty with which the authors situate the September caesura in their lives bears the strong mark of a retrospective view. When the war broke out, other scenarios for the course of the conflict were imaginable, and there was even hope that Britain and France might provide actual support.

109 Lysakowski, *Siberian Odyssey*, 29.
110 Landau, "Wspomnienia i przeżycia wojenne," 216.
111 Abramowicz-Horowitz, "Świat wiedział i milczał," 2.
112 This temporal division is a collective experience of this generation, see Fink, *A Scrap of Time*.
113 Abramowicz-Horowitz, "Świat wiedział i milczał," 21.
114 Waydenfeld, *Droga lodowa*, 29.
115 Goetz, *I Never Saw My Face*, 27.
116 Pasternak, *Untold Story*, 23.
117 Szer, *To Our Children*, 56.
118 Urbach, *Out of the Fury*, 22.
119 Cywiak (and Swesky), *Flight from Fear*, 16.
120 Kryger (and Welch), *A Passover in Rome*, 12.

Many authors thus admit, like Mietek Sieradzki, that when they left home they did not initially realize "the gravity of the step toward an unknown future."[121] For Janka Goldberger, the beginning of the refugee period was "The End of Real Life" as she titled the chapter of her memoir: she had thought that after a while her family would return home and "things will be back to normal,"[122] but they never were.

This brings us back to the concept of *longue émotivité*. While a traumatological timeline may appear divided into "before" and "after"—a break in time—its deeper logic rests on emotional continuity. Trauma does not occur in sealed-off moments, leaving survivors merely "stuck" in the past; over time, it re-engages them in new contexts. As the remainder of this text will show, traumatic memory is less about static recall than a process of transformative reactivation.[123]

The hindsight, or the fact that the testimonies were usually written many years after the war, allows us to complete this analysis with refugees' reflections on the third dimension of time they contemplated—their refugee past. When the crisis period came to an end, those who survived did so into a completely transformed future. Unlike the Jewish Poles who had stayed behind and mostly perished, the refugee survivors did have a future, albeit a completely different one than expected. The interruption of the expected trajectory of their lives, as discussed in the previous section, reconfigured refugees' attitudes toward what had been before. In their case, achieving this "other" future came at a very high cost. Jewish life in Poland had been destroyed and there were no conditions for its proper memorialization. A country that did not emerge from the wartime as a pluralistic democracy left little space for the genuine expression of Jewish identity and loss. It was rarely possible to reassemble the future by referring to a meaningful past.

Most of the Jewish refugees who survived did not achieve stability until many years later. Their forced migration in time continued. When they were finally at liberty to decide where to settle after the war, whether they chose to go to the new communist republic of Poland or gave up the idea of living there, no one truly returned "home"—to their interrupted lives, to social and family functions. Although their abodes and personal belongings had been physically destroyed, taken over by new inhabitants or the new regime, it was in a physical sense that their return was closest to a homecoming. In

121 Sieradzki, *By a Twist of History*, 17.

122 Goldberger, *Stalin's Little Guest*, 5.

123 I thank Ren Bell, Christina Morus and Raz Segal for helpful conversation on this topic during the seminar at Stockton University.

an identity-based sense, on the other hand, it was impossible. As a result of the genocide, Jewish refugee survivors could not resume their previous lives, had no one to return to, no relatives or friends.

Despite the magnitude of the catastrophe that befell them, as already discussed in the Holocaust literature,[124] after the war neither the Polish state nor public memory gave due space to their lost past—the lost people, culture, and places. Because the new regime tightly controlled the conditions of public memory and the majority of society did not care to remember, a "structural forgetting" of the Jews began. Returnees had little opportunity to engage with their lost past. Outside Poland, it was only a little easier. Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, there was no adequate space to commemorate their loss, whether in their prolonged stay in displaced persons' camps in Europe or their new lives on both American continents, in Australia, or even Israel. Their past had limited connection to the new social environments they inhabited, with their own timelines of community practice often misaligning with those they had previously performed. As a result, both place and time fostered a sense of displacement, divided rather than connected.[125] In each of these contexts, some refugees felt compelled to sever ties with their Jewish identity entirely. Many distanced themselves from the language of their childhood (such as Yiddish or Polish), not only for practical reasons or out of resentment, but also as a form of emotional self-preservation, requiring the suppression of much of their past personal identity, no longer needed.

On the one hand, it was too painful to remember being part of another human constellation—another "peoplescape"—that had been destroyed within a few years. On the other, in order to form a new identity, the old one often had to be discarded, and some things "consigned to a shadow world,"[126] as Paul Connerton reflects on traumatic forgetting. Into thus freed space, a different kind of memory could be fitted—what Alison Landsberg called "prosthetic memory," a past not lived but worn, like a borrowed limb

124 See e.g. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead*. The study of this refugee experience cannot be disentangled from the sequence of events leading to genocide, and literature on it.

125 The past echoed with unsynchronized practice of time; some refugees in the USA pondered which calendar (the one brought from Poland which predated the war?) to use to coordinate holidays celebrated in the family, such as Mother's Day. David Thaler to Meier and Estera Landau, private correspondence, Cedar Rapids to New York, March 29, 1969 (author's archive). Integrative and exclusive social functions of time (and rhythms that create invisible threads between people) were discussed by Edward T. Hall and Eviatar Zerubavel, among others, see: Tarkowska, *Czas w życiu Polaków*, 20.

126 Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting," 63.

as a means of integrating into a community.[127] The progressive loss of one's own past was shaped both by external forces and by an internal response to violent displacement.

Phantom Time (*and Memory*)

In this way, another dimension of time—what I term *phantom time*—emerges within the refugees' memory framework and their testimonies. It awakens *phantom memory* of the life one might have lived, flickering alongside or competing with prosthetic memory, the borrowed lives of others. Together, they reflect the refugees' splintered and displaced timelines. Phantoms are born from the abrupt interruption of the present in 1939, and the impossibility of re-entering or continuing that time as a postwar future. They also arise from the effective erasure of the refugees' past in public memory, leaving individual, intimate recollections as the only space in which to process the lost temporality of all *might have been*(*s*)—by cultivating their phantom presence. Over time, these interrupted moments sometimes resurfaced with intensity, forming imagined parallel axes of *lives unlived*: lives that could have, or should have, unfolded but did not. Depending on whether the phantom manifested purely as pain or also carried a reminder of former strength, some refugees came to accept it, while others sought to suppress it—relegating it to a shadow world.

This parallel phantom time that haunted former refugees, and survivors more broadly, had two facets. One was the fate they had escaped: *the future they were spared*. As Debra Michlewitz writes, when her family fled from Warsaw (the German zone) to Białystok (the Soviet zone), they moved not only though space but also through time: the narrow gap between the two cities separated two worlds that existed "in different dimensions which defined different futures."[128] The Soviet zone allowed some opportunity for a future, while the German side equaled death. This duality is also reflected in Leo Melamed's memoir titled *Escape to the Futures*. Michlewitz uses also a metaphor of the refugee period as a time tunnel, describing her family's autumn escape as "finding the rabbit hole and tripping into the future."[129] Their escape was a leap in time, a leap to life, which was experienced by a minority—and a life far from expected.

The second facet was what should have happened: *the future of which they were deprived*. Also here, we find references to the refugee journey as "the

127 Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*.
128 Michlewitz, *Frayed Lives*, 130.
129 Michlewitz, *Frayed Lives*, 121.

tunnel of time," but with a bleaker meaning. Samuel Iwry, who was displaced as far as Shanghai, wrote that when he re-emerged from "a very dark tunnel [...] black refugee life of ten years, painful years," anything that made him happy and that he looked forward to, was lost: "I found out that my parents, my sisters, their husbands, and their children were all slaughtered."[130]

While some refugees in their later self-narratives consistently deny the significance of their prewar past and fully embrace the present they have, others contemplate different scenarios in their heads. They accepted "The Past as the Present," as the Jewish refugee historian (from Germany) George Mosse titled his memoir's final chapter: "my acceptance of myself was set within the constant awareness of a past which refused to go away."[131] In this way, the future could not simply unfold independently; as one reflection puts it, "Future time so depended on a past event that both moments coexist symbiotically."[132] For Polish Jewish refugee survivors this became particularly visible in the 1990s (with the post-communist opening of the borders), when they began "pilgrimages to the past"[133] on a larger scale.

"Pilgrimages to the past" form a powerful metaphor that entwines spatial movement with a movement in time. Thoughts of alternative scenarios, of their time continuing as before, surrounded the refugee memoirists. Above all, there has been speculation about the unrealized lives of lost children (younger siblings, nephews, nieces, etc.), but also their own unrealized time. Fifty years after the war, having visited his original family home, Eliezer Urbach shares his thoughts: "If the war had not come to dislocate me, I would no doubt be living there now, happily operating the inn as my father's heir."[134] When visiting Łódź, Mira Hamermesh called a similar voice in her head a "speculative monologue": "all the what-ifs."[135] This persistent phantom time endures sometimes among people two generations removed from the war. In the 2024 feature film *A Real Pain*, writer-director-actor Jesse Eisenberg futilely seeks to "reconnect to the past" going from New York to Poland. While strolling through a sunlit park in the Polish capital, Eisenberg's protagonist says to his cousin, "In some parallel universe, you and I are Polish," envisioning what their lives might have been and trying to distinguish between "phantom" and "real pains," shaped by history's unalterable course.

130 Iwry, *To Wear the Dust of War*, 42.

131 Mosse, *Confronting History*, 219.

132 Michlewitz, *Frayed Lives*, 18.

133 Broner, *My War Against the Nazis*, 190; the term also used by Hamermesh, *The River of Angry Dogs*, 12.

134 Urbach, *Out of the Fury*, 212.

135 Hamermesh, *The River of Angry Dogs*, 205.

Many refugees valued their current situation, particularly as they had ample reason to fear for their future in Poland, even had war not broken out. But many still longed for their interrupted lives; their thoughts caught in multiplicity of temporalities. Celia Ores, for example, who lived in New York, reflected on a visit to her hometown in 1996: "Had I stayed in Dubienka, I'm not sure I would have been able to travel the world, pursue an education and become a doctor. But who knows. The war had interrupted and transformed our lives in such an extraordinary way."[136] Anthropologist Marita Eastmond writes about the dichotomization of the self in relation to time and place as revealed in refugee narratives, reflecting the tension between here and there, now and then.[137] I could add that some wartime refugees do have the possibility to return after the conflict is over. Deciding not to do so may mean that one lives with an inner conflict of an existing but unexploited possibility. In a situation of wartime genocide, antisemitic violence persisting after the war, and the subsequent marginalization of their memory, the "return" of Jewish refugees to Poland was rarely a viable option and therefore confined to a phantom version of their lives. The world they had left no longer existed or was extinct. Some referred to themselves as "remnants"[138] or "living fossils."[139] Those who remained in Poland described their lives as "a kind of a museum exhibit," like a living display of "archeology".[140]

Even during the memory boom at the turn of the century, which, among other things, sparked a search for the "absent Polish Jew"[141] and led to a partial "return of Jewishness" to Polish space, these sites could hardly fulfill the criteria of authenticity. Ruth Ellen Gruber thus called them a "virtually Jewish" world in which imagined life co-exists with physical reality.[142] In this case, the phantom time affects not the surviving refugees, but those on the local ground—who either long for their lost neighbors, as part of the "spectral turn"[143] and "retroactive catastrophe"[144] considerations, or hope to commodify their memory for tourism. Either way, also Poland—as second-generation

136 Ores, *Reading Pushkin in Siberia*, 81. Scholarly literature reflects on the fact that, while forced migration produces a negative shock of loss, by reconfiguring the lives of individuals, it may also prove socially reinforcing in the long term.

137 Eastmond, "Stories as Lived Experience," 255.

138 Simchovitch, *The Remnant*.

139 Lichtenberg, "My Father's Escape from Warsaw."

140 Konstanty Gebert quoted in: Niezabitowska and Tomaszewski, *Remnants*, 96.

141 Underhill, "Next Year in Drohobych," 581–59.

142 Gruber, *Virtually Jewish*.

143 Dziuban, *Spectral Turn*.

144 The term expresses the delayed emergence of empathic consciousness regarding the victims of the Shoah in Poland, Czapliński, "Retroactive Catastrophe."

survivor Konstanty Gebert put it, "has had a piece of its past and its culture amputated,"[145] and with that loss come phantom pains of its own.

Phantom to Material

The above highlights that the role of phantom memory was not only one of binary antagonism (real vs. spectral), but also of therapeutic fantasy (escape) or retrospective return. Nowhere is this more evident than in the testimony. While anguished accounts, as explored in the rich reflection on Holocaust witnessing, may give vent to suffering,[146] the testimonies of Polish Jewish refugees reveal another important aspect: the deep constructivist role of storytelling. Through testimony, witnesses liquify the spectral or phantom time, allowing it to solidify in the form of a recorded narrative. The refugee records become new emplacements or containers for this materialized time, which otherwise, in Ann Szedlecki's words explaining why she decided to write her memoir, would have been "shattered and gone without a trace."[147] Phantom time feeds on both memory and imagination. Witnesses "not only tell stories, after the fact, about their experiences, but live out their lives in storied form."[148] In research on personal narrative, this is often understood as the self-formative power of storytelling, shaped by the need for meaning-making. However, "living in storied form" can also be seen as (re)living the past in parallel with the present, where the narrative past continuously intertwines with and informs current experience.

This study suggests that in recounting their experiences, individuals not only present themselves to their recipients within a carefully chosen autobiographical frame but also seek a new location for the continuity of time that prematurely ended: a shelter for their lost, "stray" and phantom time. In their relationship with a real or imagined audience (our role as the recipients!), and by stepping into the role of witnesses, they gain the chance to express phantom time—otherwise invisible and overwritten by prosthesis—thus opposing helplessness and piecing together their fractured identity.

The elusive "what wasn't"—including the broken promise—yearns for memory just as much as the past that did occur, even if it should achieve only the form of a "phantom memory." Testimony grants *temporal agency* to witnesses, enabling them to shape the void left by the violence perpetuated on their time. Julius Thomas Fraser, the doyen of time studies, wrote that the

145 Konstanty Gebert quoted in: Niezabitowska and Tomaszewski, *Remnants*, 103.
146 Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*; Laub, "Truth and Testimony," 90.
147 Szedlecki, *Album of My Life*, 165.
148 Ochberg, "Life Stories and Storied Lives," 61.

Second World War imparted a crucial lesson to him: the freedom to control one's time (restricted back then) was the fundamental aspect of existence.[149] Phantom time reclaims a modicum of that lost freedom. The freedom they refused to surrender—as mentioned earlier in the text. Articulated memory—if we insert a hyphen into this all-to-familiar phrase—"re-presents the past."

Joseph Fajngold (born 1923 in Warsaw) begins his refugee memoir with the words: "I think of my father, my mother, my brothers, and together we seem to be a fragment of a world that has vanished, and perhaps what I am trying to do here is to keep a trace of that world alive."[150] Similar is the reflection that in testimony "all timelines intersect, lives fray, and then you patch and stitch them together."[151] Both acts underscore the argument with which this chapter began: that war produces not only spatial migration but also forced migration through time. Understanding refugee temporality is therefore essential to grasping the full experience of displacement.

We also began with reference to the film *Transit*, which ends with the song "Road to Nowhere." Its lyrics "Here the time is on our side" suggest that while grand historical forces may push our most cherished personal time to nowherelands, we still retain the power to tell and thus partially reclaim that time. Similarly, a song about time accompanies the classic film about refugees fleeing Nazism, 1942's *Casablanca*. Although time passes, it cannot erase memories and emotions, "The fundamental things apply / As time goes by." Yet, as time goes by, not only do memories endure, but so does the human capacity to inflict mass displacement and genocide. Thus, the final word belongs to Sayed, a Rohingya refugee who lost eight family members in the 2017 genocide in Burma/Myanmar. He described this tragedy in terms of "the future of his family having been killed,"[152] capturing the persistent genocidal loop that continues to cast its nefarious shadow.

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149 *The Voices of Time*, xvii.

150 Feingold, *Joe's Violin*, 1.

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About the Author

Lidia Zessin-Jurek is a Visiting Professor in the Holocaust and Genocide Studies Program at Stockton University, New Jersey (2024–2026). She specializes in Holocaust and Gulag memory, as well as refugee movements in Eastern Europe. Her work focuses on Polish Jewish Holocaust survivors deported to the Soviet Union.

4. The Construction of a Political Refugee: Foreign Comrades in 1950s Socialist Czechoslovakia

Nikola Tohma

Abstract: Focusing on post-1948 Czechoslovakia, the chapter investigates the parameters of protection that the Eastern Bloc provided to political refugees from capitalist countries and countries undergoing military and civil conflicts. The analysis approaches the category of "asylum" in state socialism as both a formal and informal status, following political rather than legal criteria. Political refugeedom was constructed from above, both as a result of East-West competition and Cold War securitization of migration, as well as from below, as an expression of personal identity and a communist collective mission. Similar to the Western model of refugee protection, refugeedom in the East involved a vast range of individual motivations and often overlapped with labor migration.

Keywords: Cold War; asylum; Eastern Bloc; solidarity; socialism

During the Cold War, the migration from the communist East to the liberal democratic West, as the notional "flight to freedom," became a symbol of the presumed Western supremacy in the sphere of human rights protection. Researchers have only recently started challenging this one-sided perception, pointing to the existence of human rights and humanitarian agendas in the authoritarian regimes of people's democracies.[1] The abundance of research on the West as the Cold War refuge[2] and the Eastern bloc

1 Hong, *Cold War Germany*; Hachmeister, *Selbstorganisation*; Richardson-Little, *The Human Rights Dictatorship*.

2 Marrus, *Unwanted*, 347–71; Bade, "Migration and Migration Policies in the Cold War," 217–75.

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(including Czechoslovakia) as the constant producer of refugees[3] overlooks the smaller, yet complementary and therefore noteworthy, flow of migrants heading to the newly established communist regimes. Just as the United States and Western European postwar immigration policy prioritized asylum seekers with a staunchly anti-communist background,[4] the Eastern bloc countries welcomed similarly minded migrants who claimed protection based on their pro-communist political viewpoints. Yet, as the West tended to label newcomers from the East as political refugees and disregard other motivations,[5] being a political refugee in the East could encompass a broad range of life situations, the adopting of various identities, and complex strategies as people made their more or less voluntary choices in illiberal conditions.

Refugee management thus formed an integral part of the East-West competition over moral supremacy. According to the Polish historian Anna Mazurkiewicz, "[p]eople who crossed the Cold War divide were [...] exploitable propaganda assets," used as a means of psychological warfare.[6] While political refugeedom on both sides surely served pragmatic foreign political and domestic purposes, as an idealistic concept it also testified to the new postwar identity of the receiving "capitalist" and "socialist" host societies, to which the arriving refugees directly contributed. Scholars have largely acknowledged the coordinated efforts of Western nations to establish institutional mechanisms of refugee protection within the framework of the United Nations, but parallel joint action taken between members of the Eastern bloc to welcome like-minded refugees regardless of their different cultural contexts has gone mostly unnoticed. Driven by their internationalist appeal, their endeavor often transcended the borders of individual communist nation-states. This chapter thus attempts to formulate a more integrated perspective on the Eastern alternative of Western refugee protection, hoping to provide the basis for future comparative studies of asylum procedures and practices, terminologies, and discourses related to refugeedom across these boundaries.

Taking the Eastern bloc perspective, the national communist parties, the state authorities, humanitarian actors, media, and mass political and professional organizations were in the position of (re)constructing the parameters of political refugeedom from above, exploiting it for their

3 For instance, Nekola, "Czechoslovak Refugees," 25–35; Raska, *Czech Refugees*.

4 Verovšek, "Screening Migrants in the Early Cold War," 154–79; Allen, *Interrogation Nation*.

5 Comte, "Waging the Cold War," 461–81.

6 Mazurkiewicz, "Repatriation or Redefection?," 112.

purposes of legitimization and popular mobilization.[7] On the other hand, the migrating individuals themselves shaped the understanding of political refugeedom, constructing the category from below around their self-perception, experience, and goals. Calling themselves dominantly "political emigration,"[8] "exiles," and "political asylees" (and labeled as such in official sources more often than by the more generic term "refugees"), they claimed a special status: based on their personal backgrounds, they were convinced to deserve social recognition (more than mere protection) for their adherence to communist ideology and merit in the revolutionary struggle. A political refugee from the Greek Civil War (1946–49) in socialist Poland, Filippos Fylaktos, captured the sentiment of his compatriots, emphasizing the higher political objectives of their migration: "We were proud of our mission as political refugees and not immigrants; it was a mission to serve ideas and not to gain material benefits."[9] Their personal identification as political refugees within their imagined (and politicized) diasporic communities often blended with martyrdom and victimhood. A shared sense of having uniquely suffered lent the term "exile" an air of exclusiveness—which could even verge into dismissiveness of other refugee experiences.[10]

Identifying as loyal comrades, partisans, and revolutionaries, many political refugees to the East understood their migration not as a "refuge" but rather as a temporary withdrawal to realign or continue their mission using different means. The deputy of the Guatemalan Labor Party (PGT), Carlos Manuel Pellecer, fled from Guatemala to Argentina with other leading communists after the US-inspired coup there in 1954 and later settled in Czechoslovakia. He described his political refugeedom as both an act of precaution and his duty: "I took the order from our party leadership in Guatemala to depart from my homeland as they expected me and other high-ranking comrades […] to face persecution and revenge from the US-serving dictatorship due to which we would not be fully useful. On the contrary, we would become an obstacle in the organizational work and the illegal fight […]."[11] Yet, as this chapter aims to show, it would be overly simplistic to

7 Tohma and Reinke, "'Like we would help brothers or sisters?'," 13–41.

8 This broad term was used more often than the term "political emigrants." It seemed to emphasize the collective aspect of this type of migration related to entire groups of mutually connected people.

9 Fylaktos, *Pos ezisa stin politiki mou prosfygia*, 617.

10 Tohma, "The Role of Martyrdom," 188–205.

11 Národní archiv (National Archives of the Czech Republic, NACR), NAD 1261 KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945–1989 (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia – Central Committee 1945–1989),

approach the category of political refugeedom in the people's democracies solely through the eyes of communist professionals who hardly represented a homogeneous group with commonly defined aims.

The communist credentials included in political refugees' profiles could be a matter of personal convictions, opportunist choices, imposed perceptions, pretense, or even efforts to avoid attention and fit into a communist society and comply with the pro-Soviet conception of political loyalty as narrowly defined by the authoritarian regime. Political refugees were diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, social status, class origin, religion, and age. They included partisans, workers and trade unionists, and high-level communists, as well as left-wing intelligentsia. Women—alongside men—were publicly active, often had previous partisan or resistance experience, and contributed to their host societies via political engagement, intellectual work, and physical labor. Children, orphaned or within families, did not earn the status of political refugees per se but were subject to immense international and domestic politicization. Furthermore, they often faced potential future civic or social exclusion upon return to their homeland. In that sense, political refugeedom had a deep, life-long influence on their fates as well.[12]

The early phase of socialist Czechoslovakia in the late 1940s and 1950s provides a valuable opportunity to study the East's conception of political refugeedom. The country was attractive for refugees as one of the most industrially developed Eastern bloc countries and a center of both political and cultural activity—"a showcase of the 'peace and democracy camp'" to quote the Czech historian Ondřej Vojtěchovský.[13] It also had a significant interwar tradition of developing either state-organized or grassroots aid mechanisms for political refugees, including those established by communist networks and the Red Aid program,[14] especially for refugees from Bolshevik Russia from the early 1920s onwards[15] and from Nazi Germany after 1933.[16]

specifically 1261/0/11, box 36, unit 48, item 12, translation of the letter by Comrade Pellecer, February 19, 1955.

12 Regarding the lives of children from Greece and North Korea in the Western and Eastern contexts, see especially Danforth and van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War*; Baerentzen, "The 'Paidomazoma' and the Queen's Camps," 127–58; Van Steen, *Adoption, Memory, and Cold War Greece*; Kim, *Adopted Territory*; Apor, "The School," 21–38; and Ungureanu, "Displacement," 20–36.

13 Vojtěchovský, "Soudruzi, nebo vetřelci?," 25.

14 Hering and Schilde, *Die Rote Hilfe*; Wagnerová, "'A zapomenuti vejdeme do dějin…'"; Caestecker, "Red Aid," 304–31.

15 Chinyaeva, *Russians outside Russia*, 50–52, 64–65; Andreyev and Savický, *Russia Abroad*, 29–44.

16 Čapková and Frankl, *Unsichere Zuflucht*.

Longer continuities of aid surpassed the divides caused by the Second World War and the regime change in Czechoslovakia. For instance, the postwar reception of refugees from Francoist Spain built upon the legacy of the strong interwar Czechoslovak presence in the International Brigades.[17]

Based on archival materials, media outlets, and refugees' memoirs, this chapter examines a variety of refugee situations along with the general parameters, motives, and functions of refugee aid framed by internationalist solidarity as outlined in the first section. It then investigates the construction of political refugeedom from above, focusing on the application of asylum in the East, and Czechoslovakia in particular, against the backdrop of the parallel Western asylum practice. Since Czechoslovak authorities did not keep accurate records of either asylum or citizenship applications filed by refugees, we can only reflect on the entire process from the shattered pieces of individual requests.[18] Although institutional, political, and private networks and refugee agencies played a critical role as facilitators of a successful asylum process in Czechoslovakia, their success was limited due to the inherent political volatility intertwined with security concerns and internal ideological divisions within the communist movement. The concept of political refugeedom was, however, also constructed from below, as seen in refugees' personal reflection, identifications, and emotional perceptions of their situation and status. In the final section, I focus on the labor integration of political refugees and their contribution to "building socialism" in Czechoslovakia as an inherent part of their refugee experience.

Political Refugeedom and Internationalist Solidarity

Czechoslovakia became a Cold War place of refuge within a few months after the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ) seized power in February 1948. Most refugees arriving were fleeing from armed conflicts and political upheaval, typically as a result of US involvement. The country welcomed more than twelve thousand Greek Civil War refugees, mainly partisans of Greek and Macedonian ethnicity and a substantial number of children.[19] Nearly two thousand North Korean children and youth, mostly orphans of deceased partisans, were granted humanitarian aid and education in

17 Nálevka, "Španělé v poválečném Československu."
18 Vojtěchovský, "Soudruzi, nebo vetřelci?," 28–29.
19 See Hradečný, *Řecká komunita*.

connection with the Korean War (1950–53).[20] Several dozen individuals took refuge in Czechoslovakia after escaping persecution as a result of US-sponsored coups that had installed anti-communist governments in their countries of origin—namely, Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954).[21] Hundreds of individuals who faced political persecution in the West sought Czechoslovak protection, be it as a result of the post-1948 crackdown and criminalization of the former Second World War resistance and workers' movement in Italy;[22] the deportations by the French government of the exiled, dominantly working-class Spanish Republicans[23] and mostly middle-class Portuguese opponents of Salazar's regime in the same period;[24] or the attempts to curb the public influence of individuals, mainly intellectuals, in countries like the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australia in anti-communist campaigns associated with McCarthyism.[25]

In contrast, the so-called Informbureau emigrants formed a specific category of political refugees, who either arrived in the Eastern bloc from socialist Yugoslavia or, as Yugoslav citizens, became trapped abroad following the 1948 Tito-Stalin split. The Yugoslav group in Czechoslovakia numbered nearly two hundred members and was composed of many high-level personalities, including diplomats, intellectuals, and artists, as well as a group of about eighty vocational trainees placed in local industrial production.[26] Other pro-Soviet groups previously based in Yugoslavia, including hundreds of Greek and Macedonian partisans and Spanish Republican army officers, relocated to Czechoslovakia as well.[27]

These refugee groups mostly arrived in the Eastern bloc as a result of Moscow-backed transnational assistance, negotiated between national communist parties, especially the international departments of their central committees, and coordinated with the national ministries of foreign affairs and embassies.[28] As illustrated by the Czechoslovak case, refugee aid was, however, preceded by bilateral acts of support as well. It included the recognition of the exiled Spanish government of José Giral as a sign of

20 Tohma, "The Czechoslovak Red Cross." More broadly, see Gatrell, "Korean Refugees," 275–91.

21 Perutka, *Checoslovaquia*; Zídek, "Le pragmatisme contre l'idéologie," 75–80.

22 Cooke, "Red Spring," 861–96; see also Ponzani, "Trials of Partisans," 121–38.

23 Nálevka, "Španělé v poválečném Československu," 83–88. See also Timko, "The Spanish Communist Exile," 85.

24 Szobi, "Portugalci v 'komunistické Ženevě'," 613.

25 See Olšáková, "V krajině za zrcadlem," 719–43; Bartošek, *Zpráva o putování*.

26 Vojtěchovský, *Z Prahy proti Titovi!*

27 Nálevka, "Španělé v poválečném Československu," 83–88.

28 Large-scale coordination was indispensable for the mass migration from Greece and North Korea, cf. Tsekou, *Ellines politikoi prosfyges*; Szyc, "Program pomocy," 273–90.

long-term Czechoslovak political support;[29] long-term cooperation with Italian communists (PCI), who kept their party archive in Prague, and a positive experience from hosting 1,500 labor migrants based on the 1946 Italian-Czechoslovak agreement;[30] material, medical, and expert aid for Greek and North Korean partisans;[31] as well as arms supplies during the Guatemalan revolution (1944–54).[32] Such multi-level interconnectedness and consistency of cooperation suggest that the reception of political refugees was part of a larger enterprise, building on internationalist solidarity as a core principle of the emerging Eastern bloc community, strengthening its internal cohesion, and fostering mutual contacts, even going as far as individual refugee groups supporting each other politically and financially.[33]

Socialist solidarity as a major identity marker helped distinguish people's democracies from liberal democracies. By framing political refugees in communist states as victims of Western warmongering, imperialist dominance, capitalist exploitation, and persisting fascism, the people's democracies could foster their image of a peace camp and a progressivist, liberated, classless society. Despite the great geographical distance, Czechoslovakia thus offered to help Guatemalan communists to save them from the newly installed "fascist regime" (1954–57),[34] positively reflecting on the declaration of the "United Guatemalan emigration in Mexico" from October 1954, which highlighted the commonly accentuated values of "freedom," "democracy," "brotherhood," "solidarity," "determination," and "perseverance."[35]

Supporting communism abroad went hand in hand, however, with Soviet expansionism, and mingled with the foreign political ambitions of individual Eastern bloc countries. Such aspirations can be best illustrated by the engagement of Czechoslovakia in Latin America, where the country used its interwar diplomatic and economic ties to open the door

29 Nálevka, "Španělé v poválečném Československu," 77–82.

30 Cooke, "From Partisan to Party Cadre," 65.

31 Hradečný, "Zdrženlivý internacionalismus," 58–92; Janeček, "Československo-korejské vztahy."

32 Opatrný, "Czechoslovak–Latin American Relations," 16.

33 NACR, 1261/2 KSČ ÚV 100/3, vol. 139, unit 546, Economic and financial situation of Greek political emigration, 1952.

34 Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, MZV), Teritoriální odbory – Tajné 1945–1954 (Territorial Departments – Secret, TO-T), Guatemala, box 1, Guatemala—Asylum Applications—Instructions for the Czechoslovak Embassy in Buenos Aires, September 14, 1954.

35 MZV, Generální secretariat —A 1945–1954 (General Secretariat—A 1945–1954), box 151, Declaration, 1–5.

for the growing Soviet influence.[36] In a similar vein, the humanitarian aid provided to political refugees to the East reflected both the idealistic and pragmatic aspects of the geopolitical project aimed at building a global community of "comrades." Therefore, even if deemed deserving of protection and support, the individual political refugees still had to navigate the intricate administrative system of asylum, tinted with a securitization agenda and political pressures, and earn their position in the state-socialist societies.

Asylum in the East as a Volatile Category

The concept of asylum under state socialism had been fundamentally different than in the liberal democratic West. While in the Western tradition, the right to asylum entails a human right outlined in the 1948 Universal Declaration (UDHR), such a framing of asylum as universal and grounded in the human rights agenda was missing in the early days of the Cold War from state-socialist discourse, which instead emphasized the notion of international solidarity. Following the Soviet example amidst the Cold War divide, the Eastern bloc countries were not among the signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol, which proved a groundbreaking achievement in defining who a refugee is and stipulating the rights of asylees and the responsibilities of nations toward them.[37]

Despite these significant developments in international law, asylum as practiced in the West historically showed that the political and economic interests of the nation-states played a greater role in their decision-making than the presumably incontestable entitlement of applicants to refugee protection.[38] Especially in the Cold War, asylum represented one of the major tools of the nation-states' foreign policy.[39] Given the politicization of migration from the Eastern bloc, the concept of political refugeedom has been dominantly identified as a Cold War phenomenon,[40] fueled by the Western European countries implementing the 1951 Convention to protect even those refugees who were not suffering direct political persecution and chose to emigrate from the East for economic reasons. Framing their

36 Opatrný, "Czechoslovak–Latin American Relations," 12–37.

37 Ben-Nun, "From *Ad Hoc* to Universal," 23–44; Neumann, "Recht auf Asyl," 229–334.

38 Schuster, "Asylum and the Lessons of History," 40–41; Szczepanikova, "From the Right of Asylum to Migration Management," 790; Pupavac, "Refugees in the 'Sick Role'," 7–8.

39 Zolberg, "The Formation of New States," 155.

40 Bade, "Migration History," 446–51; Kushner, "Vereinigtes Königreich und Irland," 839–40.

migration as an escape from state socialism, which was cast as the cause of the applicants' negative economic conditions, led to the relaxation of the definition of political refugees.[41]

The Eastern bloc countries, too, instrumentalized the right to asylum to serve political aims, and the category of political refugees was flexibly adjusted to suit the needs of the communist regimes. Most countries of East-Central Europe included asylum in their post-1945 "Sovietized" constitutions, inspired by the USSR's constitution from 1936, which granted asylum "to foreign citizens persecuted for defending the interests of workers, or scientific activity, or the national liberation struggle."[42] Czechoslovakia, however, only adopted a similar definition of asylum in the constitution of July 11, 1960, applicable to "citizens of a foreign state persecuted for defending the interests of the working people, for participating in the national liberation movement, for scientific or artistic work, or for acting in defense of peace."[43] Before the 1960 enactment, the refugee policies in communist Czechoslovakia, although ideologically shaped according to the Soviet model, still greatly relied on the rather inconsistent administrative practice characteristic of the approach of interwar Czechoslovakia (1918–38) toward political refugees.[44]

The authorities in socialist Czechoslovakia recognized the lack of a legal basis for granting asylum as a noteworthy problem. On the one hand, the state considered political refugees as deserving greater social recognition that would translate into upgrading their legal status and thus differentiating them from "standard" foreign nationals.[45] On the other hand, the missing definition of who deserved such status led the authorities to create ad hoc working definitions to respond to ongoing processes. For instance, in December 1948, the Ministry of the Interior indicated that asylum could be granted to "foreigners who fled from a country that persecuted them for their communist, socialist, and anti-fascist convictions."[46] This statement was part of the ministerial instruction for all units of the Czechoslovak secret police, the State Security, to be on the watch for people illegally crossing the border. Specifically, it made them notice "people fleeing from Italy, Yugoslavia, Spanish Republicans from France, Greeks, and

41 Xenos, "Refugees," 422.

42 The Constitution of the USSR, December 5, 1936, ch. 10, art. 129.

43 The Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, July 11, 1960, ch. 2, art. 33.

44 Kryska, "Právo azylu," 133, 144–45, 147.

45 Botu and Konečný, *Řečtí uprchlíci*, 356.

46 NACR, 1261/2 KSČ ÚV 100/3, vol. 2, unit 6, Illegal Crossings of State Borders, December 14, 1948.

other refugees from certain West European states,"[47] naming some of the dominant refugee groups seeking Czechoslovak "asylum." Whether assessed through the lens of working or enacted definitions, the legal framing of political refugeedom appeared to be secondary as the administrative practice reflected mostly security-related and political parameters for appraising the personal profiles of relevant applicants, with the authorities inevitably contributing to the concurrent construction of the category of political refugeedom from above.

Those deemed to be political refugees reached Czechoslovakia on various paths, ranging from pre-negotiated mass transfers and individual "asylum" applications, often with the financial assistance of the KSČ, to unexpected illegal border crossings. While large groups typically received collective residence permits without needing to demonstrate much personal action, independent asylum seekers had to earn their status. The decision-making of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the KSČ, which was responsible for the approval of individual applications, was both administratively arbitrary and politically purposeful. Based on background checks, it favored applicants with personal connections and recommendations provided by their respective national communist bodies.[48] Given the intricacy of the procedure and potential lack of supporting evidence, some applicants preferred to live in Czechoslovakia as foreign nationals until they could apply for Czechoslovak citizenship after five years of residence. However, the review process for obtaining citizenship once again considered an applicant's criminal record, political profile, and class origin. The applicants were also required to renounce their original citizenship.[49]

Membership in a communist party and other communist associations, pro-communist political activism, or partisan struggle belonged to the main assets that refugees could present along with proof of persecution in the country of origin. For instance, Czechoslovakia granted asylum in 1958 to a US-based married couple, the Korean workers John and Anna Yuhn, who faced labor discrimination as members of the Communist Party of the USA

47 NACR, 1261/2 KSČ ÚV 100/3, vol. 2, unit 6, Illegal Crossings of State Borders, December 14, 1948.

48 NACR, 1261/0/11, box 100, unit 117, item 17, Resolution of the 117th Meeting of the Political Bureau of the CC KSČ, May 7, 1956.

49 Citizenship was granted based on Act No. 194/1949 Coll. on the Acquisition and Loss of Czechoslovak Citizenship; see also NACR 850/1 Ministerstvo vnitra II – tajné (Ministry of the Interior II – Secret), sign. 213, box 192. Directive for processing applications of foreigners for Czechoslovak citizenship employed in enterprises important for the defense of the state pursuant to Act No. 131/36 Coll. 6, par. 22 on the defense of the state.

(CPUSA). Their imminent deportation to South Korea had been forestalled in cooperation with the non-partisan Los Angeles Committee for Protection of Foreign Born, which acted as an intermediary in other asylum requests filed by US non-natives, as well.[50] The KSČ also granted Matthew Brzowich asylum in December 1954; US authorities had ordered his deportation as a Yugoslav citizen and a CPUSA member based on the investigation of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). In his asylum request, Brzowich expressed fear that he might be physically harmed and outlined his plan to use the Czechoslovak travel and visa documents to delay his deportation.[51] An earlier asylum application by another CPUSA member, Noel Field, had, however, been rejected, which suggests that a confirmed communist profile alone might not suffice as other factors could come into play. In August 1948, the HUAC classified Field, an employee of the Geneva-based charitable Unitarian Service Committee, which aided victims of fascism, as a Soviet agent. The Czechoslovak refusal to provide him with protection probably stemmed from an increased level of suspicion toward Western communists; this later escalated into political show trials.[52]

Given the non-existence of an independent legal and organizational framework for providing asylum, Czechoslovak embassies played a crucial role in receiving, verifying, and evaluating asylum applications as part of the country's visa application regime. For instance, Brzowich benefited from the fact that the Czechoslovak embassy in Washington, DC, vouched for the accuracy of the information provided. On the other hand, in January 1955, the absence of such a guarantee and the impossibility of checking the data given led authorities at the Czechoslovak embassy in Paris to reject the asylum application of Solomon Solin Sydney, an Egyptian citizen who as a proclaimed member of the Communist Party of Egypt faced potential arrest in his country.[53] At that point, the embassy in Cairo was paralyzed due to the worsening relations between Czechoslovakia and anti-communist Egypt, aggravated by the 1952 coup and the rise of Egyptian nationalism. The Czechoslovak authorities thus chose to turn down the applicant although they were aware of the ongoing political trials of local communists.[54]

50 MZV, TO-T Korea 1955–1959, box 5, Request of the North Korean Embassy regarding John Juhn, July 30, 1958.

51 NACR, 1261/0/11, box 29, unit 38, item 27, Political asylum for Matthew Brzowich, December 28, 1954.

52 Bartošek, *Zpráva o putování*, 61–63.

53 NACR, 1261/0/11, box 29, unit 38, item 28, Political asylum for Solomon Solin Sydney, January 3, 1955.

54 Zídek and Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ*, 50–54.

In other cases, Czechoslovak diplomats made substantial efforts to reach out and assist foreign communists in danger. The KSČ approved a visa for a group of thirty-two Guatemalan communists in January 1955 after they were declined Argentinian asylum and were stranded in Villa Devoto prison in Buenos Aires.[55] Despite multiple Czechoslovak interventions and readiness to cover their travel expenses, the attempts ultimately failed, which the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs attributed to US political pressure on the Argentinian government.[56] Remarkably, it was not a Czechoslovak authority who initiated this aid action but rather the Prague-based Guatemalan deputy Pellecer (quoted in the introduction), who had already received Czechoslovak asylum in August 1954. Shortly after Pellecer fled from Argentina, a Guatemalan communist youth leader, Ricardo Ramírez de Léon, followed suit, likewise leaving Argentina with Czechoslovak assistance. Both men thereby exploited previously established political contacts: Pellecer had visited Prague in 1948,[57] and Ramírez de Léon probably passed through Czechoslovakia in early 1953 when he attended a youth conference in Vienna and visited Romania and Hungary.[58]

Beyond international communist networks, Czechoslovak communist-dominated mass professional and interest organizations became platforms to follow, publicize, and mediate the cases of political refugees, for instance, by sending protest notes to foreign governments and endorsing the applications of individuals seeking asylum in Czechoslovakia. The Central Committee of Trade Unions and the Czechoslovak Youth Association became involved, for example, in the campaign mentioned above on behalf of the thirty-two imprisoned Guatemalans (themselves composed of trade unionists and one student leader), accusing Argentina of holding them in "inhumane conditions."[59] The Czechoslovak Red Cross, which after the communist takeover continued operating as a semi-independent organization, intervened on behalf of an imprisoned Portuguese communist, Georgette Ferreira. Following her release in 1959, she emigrated to Czechoslovakia upon the

55 MZV, TO-T 1945-1954 Guatemala, box 1, Announcement, October 8, 1954; and Arrests of Guatemalan political refugees in Mexico, October 7, 1954.

56 MZV, General Secretariat—A 1945–1954, box 151, Asylum for Guatemalan refugees interned in Argentina, April 26, 1955.

57 MZV, TO-T 1945–1954 Guatemala, box 1, Political asylum for Carlos Manuel Pellecer, August 23, 1954.

58 MZV, TO-T 1945–1954 Guatemala, box 1, Political asylum for Ricardo Ramírez de Léon, September 29, 1954.

59 MZV, General Secretariat—A 1945–1954, box 151, Political asylum for Roberto Paz Ligorria, June 20, 1955; see also NA, 1261/0/11, box 29, unit 38, item 26, Political asylum for the victims of terror in Guatemala, January 4, 1955.

invitation of the Czechoslovak Women's Union.[60] These mass organizations thus mobilized their memberships in support of asylum seekers with whom they could personally identify based on commonalities of their political and professional backgrounds, gender, and age.

Apart from institutional mechanisms, political refugees relied on past personal contacts. Most prominently, the Spanish group benefited from having made acquaintances among Czechoslovak Interbrigadists during the Spanish Civil War. Some of these contacts later occupied high positions in the security apparatus in postwar Czechoslovakia. While their assistance initially accelerated the Spaniards' integration into Czechoslovak society, it became a burden once the Interbrigadists fell out of favor with the Stalinist regime and faced prosecution as representatives of supposedly Western influences. The Spanish group in Prague, represented by Vincente Uribe, a minister in the Republican government-in-exile, and by the Republican military officers Enrique Líster and Juan Modesto, eventually avoided repercussions by disowning their former allies and pledging their loyalty to the Czechoslovak regime.[61]

The State Security forces kept a close watch on political refugees, who were seen as suspicious both as foreigners with potentially harmful contacts with enemy states and as possible ideological "factionists" who might challenge the Czechoslovak pro-Soviet orientation.[62] Ideological differences naturally crystallized against the background of the large-scale Yugoslav-Soviet (1948) and Sino-Soviet split (1961) and the local rivalries and power struggles within the individual refugee groups. The small Yugoslav community was shaken by the ongoing antagonisms between its moderate and radical members, the latter vilifying the first leader of the Yugoslav emigrants in Czechoslovakia, the medical doctor Josip Milunić. With KSČ consent, Milunić and his wife were ousted into a sort of internal political exile: accused of sabotage and pro-Titoist espionage, they were expelled from the communist party and the emigrant community and forced to move outside Prague.[63] Interestingly, their "exile within an exile," meaning that even in Czechoslovakia they were sidelined in political terms, took the form of their forced spatial transfer from the country's political center to its periphery.

Since Czechoslovak asylum, like the Soviet practice, was constructed as a political rather than legal category, it generally granted its holder a certain

60 Szobi, "Portugalci v 'komunistické Ženevě'," 616.

61 Nálevka, "Španělé v poválečném Československu," 89–93.

62 Bárta, "Politická emigrace," 178.

63 Vojtěchovský, *Z Prahy proti Titovi!*, 150–94.

informal political status but failed to provide substantial legal protection.[64] The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the KSČ could instantly cancel the residence permit with a single decision.[65] In one instance, the authorities effectively revoked the asylum status of several Greeks whom they blamed for undermining communist unity and deported them.[66] In September 1955, Charalambos Panagiotidis was trapped on a short-term Austrian visa in Vienna and faced extradition to Greece, in a case that demonstrates how the expellees sometimes found themselves in potentially dangerous situations that could lead to prosecution in their home countries. Addressing the Greek communist representation in Czechoslovakia, Panagiotidis did not provide many details explaining his situation, yet he accused his political opponents of boycotting the party's work. In an emotional appeal, he wrote: "I ask you to accept my request and enable my return to Czechoslovakia. I didn't do anything that would force you to expel me in such a manner because even our enemy in the mountains [a reference to the Greek Civil War] would not be judged in such a way as you condemned me."[67] He interpreted his deportation as the result of a personal grievance and a betrayal of the common political cause.

Along with a group of Spaniards expelled from France, a former soldier of the Republican army, Francisco Arias, received Czechoslovak asylum in mid-1947, even before the communist takeover of power there.[68] Arias faced deportation in late 1951 for failing to manifest enough political loyalty. To his misfortune, he came to the attention of the secret police by seeking collaborators among refugees to collect information about activities within the immigrant communities. Arias worked as an accountant in Prague, where he was sociable and well-connected with both Spanish and Italian refugees. He was thus a convenient contact for the State Security forces, especially because they could blackmail him for his personal encounters with multiple women to whom he falsely promised sham marriage as a means to emigrate

64 Tohma, "Statelessness," 115–42.

65 NACR, 1261/0/11, box 100, unit 117, item 17, Resolution of the 117th Meeting of the Political Bureau of the CC KSČ, May 7, 1956.

66 For instance, Archiv bezpečnostních složek (Security Services Archive, ABS), A 2/2 Sekretariát ministra vnitra, II. díl (Secretariat of the Minister of the Interior, part II), unit 249, Factionalism of Greek political emigration in Czechoslovakia; and unit 928, Resolution of the Presidium of the CC of KSČ of June 9, 1964, on the Greek political emigration in Czechoslovakia.

67 NACR, 1261/2 KSČ ÚV 100/3, vol. 140, unit 548/1, A request from Charalambos Panagiotidis.

68 As of the 1946 parliamentary election, the KSČ controlled crucial posts in the first coalition cabinet led by the communist leader Klement Gottwald. They included the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Information, which both played a significant role in administering of aid to foreign communists and communist refugees.

to the West, which was a criminal offense. State Security forces attempted to persuade Arias to cooperate with them, suggesting that he should feel gratitude for the aid the country had provided him: in Czechoslovakia he had received free treatments for tuberculosis, they reminded him, whereas the French had seen fit to throw him in jail. Arias, however, allegedly stated in response that he was contributing to the country's advancement enough through his diligence and extraordinary work ethic. His interrogators countered by claiming that "since he is an active anti-fascist fighter, he is expected to do more than a standard citizen."[69] Having eventually rejected their proposal, Arias was ultimately assessed as having "a permanently negative attitude toward our popular democratic regime" and extradited to West Germany.[70] Even successful asylum applicants often found themselves engaged in a difficult balancing act, attempting to reconcile their ambiguous status as refugees and the authoritarian regime's unpredictable expectations with their own complex individual refugee profiles.

Just as migration to the West was often motivated by a combination of factors, those seeking political protection in the Eastern bloc were driven by various factors as well. These were naturally of a political and economic nature, but there were also many unique reasons of a personal nature. Given its relatively advanced state of industrial and agricultural development, Czechoslovakia was attractive to refugees from more rural areas in southern Europe, but economic motives also played a role for political refugees from Latin America. Facing "a tough economic situation" and the "practical impossibility of finding a job" in Mexico, Guatemalans approached the local Czechoslovak embassy with asylum applications emphasizing their lack of resources and even with requests for Czechoslovak authorities to help party members find jobs in Mexican companies with Czechoslovak economic ties, thus allowing them to continue their political struggle.[71] Since those who sought Czechoslovak asylum for political or economic reasons, and at times with seemingly dishonest or deceitful motives (at least from the point of view of the national security authorities), tended to arrive in the country by illegally crossing the border, their applications could be seen to conflict with state security or even be tainted or delayed by the resulting criminal proceedings.

69 ABS, Sbírka tajných spolupracovníků (Collection of Secret Collaborators, TS), TS-589352 MV Arias, Francisco (March 9, 1919).

70 ABS, TS-589352 MV Arias, Francisco (March 9, 1919).

71 MZV, TO-T 1955–1959 Guatemala, box 1, Mexico, November 28, 1955; and letter from January 6, 1956.

In mid-1962, based on an agreement with the Greek embassy in Prague, Czechoslovakia deported two Greeks, who had been arrested in December 1961 after illegally crossing the Czechoslovak border by hiding on a cargo train carrying lemons from Greece to Poland. They voluntarily reported themselves to the authorities near the border town of Štúrovo, asking for asylum based on alleged persecution in Greece for their communist convictions. The police were immediately suspicious in this case, for these two individuals had destroyed their identity documents and removed anything that could identify them, including labels on their clothes. The subsequent investigation discovered that they had been suspected of petty crimes in Greece and of avoiding military service. Moreover, it had been their original intention when fleeing to board a train bound for West Germany, whence they planned to continue to the US. They had ended up in Czechoslovakia by mistake when they snuck onto the wrong train. Labeling them as "adventurers," the Czechoslovak authorities concluded that their claims to being political refugees were a mere pretense. Any continuation of their presence in Czechoslovak territory was thus deemed "undesirable."[72]

Compared to the previous case, the story of Aladino Cicalini, a watchman by profession, illustrates how an otherwise clear instance of an illegal crossing of a person with a criminal background could be positively endorsed if interpreted through the ideological lens of an anti-capitalist and anti-fascist fight. Before Cicalini received Czechoslovak asylum in August 1961, as a result of a PCI recommendation based on his unconfirmed communist membership, he was under threat of extradition to Italy for having fatally shot his employer over money disputes. To avoid punishment, Cicalini illegally entered Czechoslovakia from Austria, for which he had to subsequently serve a one-year prison sentence.[73] In the asylum assessment process, the Czechoslovak authorities considered his allegedly lower intelligence and minimum education, but also his class background as a worker and the presumed fact that his employer was a rich factory and land owner and an alleged former fascist, concluding that Cicalini might have committed his crime as "a result of inhumane exploitation."[74]

The case of Ezio Cecconi, a construction worker who joined the PCI in 1959 and attempted to cross the border on foot from Bavaria in January 1961,

72 ABS, Odbor pro mezinárodní styky (Department for International Relations, A 11), unit 74, Emigration of Greek nationals to Czechoslovakia.

73 ABS, Sekretariát I. náměstka MV plk. Jana Záruby (Secretariat of the First Undersecretary of the Ministry of the Interior, Colonel Jan Záruba, A 9), unit 645, Asylum for Aladino Cicalini.

74 ABS, A 9, unit 645, Asylum for Aladino Cicalini.

shows, on the other hand, just how arbitrary the decisions of the Czechoslovak authorities could be. After Cecconi was arrested at the border, he presented his passport and a membership card of the Italian Communist Youth Federation (FGCI), applying for asylum on the grounds of his "hard life in Italy, where he could not find a job."[75] Although Cecconi probably really sought employment and his communist profile appeared to be genuine, he also turned out to be avoiding military conscription in Italy and had previously served minor sentences in prison for petty theft. While the Czechoslovak authorities questioned his real motivations for fleeing from Italy, the trajectory of his flight was also suspicious: he had initially attempted twice to cross the border to Yugoslavia without success, after which he allegedly traveled to France and Spain, still looking for a job. Eventually, arriving in West Germany, he tried to enter East Germany five times. After that, he was taken into custody until the Italian embassy helped him get on a train to Italy. He had, however, dropped off the train halfway, which is how he had come from Bavaria to reach the Czechoslovak border. Seemingly eager to get rid of this ambiguous case, Czechoslovak authorities decided on his swift deportation to West Germany without notifying the Italian authorities. Specifically, they feared a potential scandal: "After his return to Italy, Cecconi could harm the reputation of our country by claiming that he was rejected here as a political refugee and, on top of that, was extradited to Italian authorities for punishment."[76] Granting asylum was not only a matter of reputation but also a propaganda instrument, empowering certain applicants in their dealing with the authorities and defining their role as political refugees.

Political Refugeedom as an Identity

News that the American economist George S. Wheeler and his wife Eleanor had applied to Czechoslovakia for asylum status, announced at a press conference of the Ministry of Information in April 1950, was met with shock in the West. George Wheeler had served under President Roosevelt as an adviser on the New Deal policy, and later worked with General Lucius D. Clay to facilitate West Germany's postwar economic reconstruction.[77] Eleanor Wheeler, who worked as a translator in Czechoslovakia, described

75 ABS, A 11, unit 854, Asylum for Ezio Cecconi.
76 ABS, A 11, unit 854, Asylum for Ezio Cecconi.
77 Bašta, "Propagandistické využití kausy," 224–51.

in a letter how surprised they were by the extensive public reaction to their decision: "[T]he echo is louder than we thought."[78] She made it clear that they were acting out of their persuasion, expressing their presumed anti-war, and thus, in her view, anti-Truman and pro-Soviet attitudes, being thankful for Czechoslovak hospitality and charmed by the local cultural environment.[79]

Along with sincere ideological ardor, a vision of a stable academic career in the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences motivated several other pro-communist researchers from the United States, including the electrical engineer Morton Nadler and the chemical engineer George L. Standard, both of whom faced political investigations and possible exclusion from public life in their homeland.[80] It can thus be argued that career prospects played a role in their political emigration as well. Furthermore, the case of Marcel Aymonin, a former director of the French Institute and a cultural attaché in Prague, suggests that Czechoslovakia also granted asylum to non-communist high-level officials when this was seen to benefit the country's foreign policy. Aymonin sought asylum for opportunistic personal and professional reasons and not due to his political convictions. He was nevertheless willing to publicly denounce the French government for its presumed imperialist politics, thus serving the foreign political aims of Czechoslovakia (and the wider Eastern bloc).[81]

His self-interested calculation was, however, rather exceptional. Most cases of political refugeedom involved deeply held sentiments, a sense of commitment—even pride—but also pronounced victimhood. Claiming recognition for the suffering of all Greek Civil War refugees, Lysimachos Papadopulos wrote in his memoir:

> The sadness experienced by political emigrants, however, differed in many ways from that of any other emigrants living abroad. […] Political emigrants left [their homeland] out of necessity, they had been persecuted, [and] uprooted from their native land; they had been humiliated, threatened, and dishonored as enemies of the country for which they had sacrificed everything. Their right to their home had been taken away. Their possessions, which had been divided up by their persecutors as the robes of Christ, had been confiscated. That is why the political emigrants are

78 Wheeler, *Letters from Prague*, 112–13.
79 Wheeler, *Letters from Prague*, 113–14.
80 Durnová and Olšáková, "Academic Asylum Seekers," 90–103.
81 Olšáková, "V krajině za zrcadlem," 730–33.

> in anguish, persistently demanding the right to return to their country, legitimately desiring to return home with their heads held high.[82]

Papadopulos's quote, among others, explains why many political refugees considered their status as refugees temporary and strove to repatriate because "the longing for home became a daily struggle for them."[83] His reference to the ultimate sacrifice made by Jesus Christ (as religiosity was not exceptional among Greek communists) underlines the emotiveness and even spirituality behind his understanding of political refugeedom.

Conscious of their sacrifice and seeking social recognition, political refugees were also sensitive when their contribution to the communist cause was cast in doubt. Forced to flee from Iran, Tudeh party member Hamid Zargari considered Czechoslovakia his "second homeland."[84] Yet he felt "extremely insulted" when the political loyalty of the entire group of Iranians was questioned at a meeting with the representatives of the Czechoslovak Red Cross and Václav Moravec, the deputy head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the KSČ. Moravec interrogated them one by one to gain insight into their profile and decide about their further professional engagement. First doubting Zargari's worker background, given his prominent position as a military officer, Moravec then allegedly stated that, since all present Iranians were "intellectuals," they first needed to "spend some time working in coal mines in Ostrava to get to know the working class."[85] According to Zargari, who spoke the "language" of the international "Left," "[t]here was silence after his speech. […] So, they don't trust us! Most of us were sentenced to death and our indictment by the Iranian junta was for, among other things, loyalty to the Soviet Union and internationalism."[86] Arguing that some Iranians in Czechoslovakia at that point already worked in manual professions, those present at the meeting demanded an opportunity to pursue academic studies. By putting the authorities under pressure, in part by threatening that they would apply for asylum in another country, they eventually succeeded in their claim and even received university scholarships.[87]

Willingness to work as a request, precondition, or necessity—as well as an expression of a particular strategy of refugees or their identity—has been

82 Olšáková, "V krajině za zrcadlem," 730–33.
83 Papadopulos, *Den návratu*, 234.
84 Zargari, *Chtěli jsme odstranit šáha*, 5.
85 Zargari, *Chtěli jsme odstranit šáha*, 116.
86 Zargari, *Chtěli jsme odstranit šáha*, 116.
87 Zargari, *Chtěli jsme odstranit šáha*, 117.

Fig.4.1: Between 1947 and 1957, the Vír water dam was constructed through the labor of Greek Civil War refugees, including the miner Georg Georgiu (pictured left in October 1952). However, the work site also served to concentrate and isolate many presumably politically disloyal refugees. Photo © ČTK / Tachezy Jan, all rights reserved.

central to most of the cases analyzed above. In communist regimes, the social integration (of those capable of working) through labor or education leading to future employment was directly linked to political refugees' status and to the continuation of their residence permit. Both physical and intellectual labor were crucial in the communist regime's "building of socialism" during the postwar economic reconstruction and the subsequent pressure to constantly increase industrial and agricultural production. The next section will thus expand on the interconnections between political refugeedom and labor.

Working Together for Socialism

In practice, categories of political refugeedom and labor migration often overlapped in both the East and West, especially in the context of postwar

reconstruction and the increased need for labor forces. Where the West tended to use a more meritocratic approach, however, the Eastern bloc often ranked applicants based on political loyalty and class background rather than their potential economic impact. This reflects the state-socialist understanding of social rights as imposed from above on a collective basis, regardless of individual contribution. In exchange for refugees' work, the social welfare system provided them with equal access to health care and social rights even as non-citizens.[88] Nonetheless, the right to work in popular democracies also entailed a duty, and its avoidance was penalized by law. Finding suitable positions for work was therefore an integral part of granting asylum, and a lack of "adequate" jobs could result in the rejection of otherwise politically suitable applicants.[89]

A range of state institutions was engaged in the process, starting from the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the KSČ that coordinated the placement of high-ranking foreign communists with state planning authorities that monitored work capacities in production. The Social Department of the Czechoslovak Red Cross took care of the specific medical, social, economic, and cultural needs of refugees.[90] The self-administration of refugee communities, controlling both their labor integration and political organization, took the form of centralized communist associations, named *Řecký komitét* (Greek Committee), *Španělský komitét* (Spanish Committee), and so on. Endowed with various functions and competencies depending on the needs of individual refugee groups, socially heterogeneous and of diverse size, these bodies were dominantly funded by the Central Committee of the KSČ to serve as an alternative for the foreign communist parties, whose operation in Czechoslovakia was forbidden.[91]

Prague, as a sort of "communist Geneva,"[92] was the seat for several Soviet-controlled international organizations that provided job opportunities for communist professionals who settled in Czechoslovakia. Some of these associations had emerged directly in Prague, such as the International Union of Students (IUS) founded in 1946 to commemorate the Nazi reprisals against Czech universities in 1939. Other organizations were transferred to

88 Tohma, "Statelessness," 115–42. See also Smith, "Social Rights," 387–88; Siefert, "Introduction," 1–24.

89 MZV, TO-T 1955–1959 Guatemala, box 1, Asylum for Professor Torres, May 15, 1958, and September 10, 1958.

90 Jukl and Majrichová, *Století s Červeným křížem*, 90.

91 Bárta, "Politická emigrace," 175–80.

92 Referring to the work of French historian of communism Annie Kriegel, the term was used by a Czech historian Bartošek, *Zpráva o putování*, 103–9.

the Czechoslovak capital after having faced political pressure in Western European countries. These included the Copenhagen-based International Organization of Journalists and the Brussels-based International Broadcasting Organization (both established in 1946 and moved in 1949) and the Paris-based World Peace Council (established in 1950 and moved in 1951). Prague also co-hosted the World Federation of Democratic Youth with its headquarters in Budapest, originally located in London (1945). Finally, in 1956, Prague became the seat of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) after it was expelled from Vienna. Established in Paris in 1945, this organization had split just four years later into a pro-Western and a pro-Soviet one.[93]

The concentrated presence of these organizations made Prague a convenient hub for international communist meetings, for instance, between Portuguese communists based in France and Soviet delegations from Moscow, or for sustaining contacts between the Portuguese and the Spanish anti-fascist resistance. The long-term general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain, Dolores Ibárruri, visited Prague several times, including for the party's sixth congress, where she ceded her post.[94] Among those who found jobs in these "migrating" institutions was the aforementioned Guatemalan deputy Pellecer, later employed in the WFTU, who had declared his intention to attend the assembly of its seventh session in Warsaw in December 1954 in his asylum application.[95] His colleague Ramírez de Léon was given a position in the IUS,[96] as was Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou—who in the 1970s and 1980s served as the leader of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan[97]—and most of the two-dozen communists from Australia and New Zealand, whom the Czech historian Petr Hrubý has called "revolutionary travelers" in reference to their worldwide migration seeking contacts to launch a communist revolution in their homeland.[98] The working conditions in these organizations were often challenging, especially in the beginning when faced with a lack of offices, low salaries, and insufficient

93 World Federation of Trade Unions, *The World Federation of Trade Unions,* 67–68. For recent research on international organizations in Prague in later years, see Pešta, "A Hub of Anti-Colonialism," 492–513.

94 Kirschenbaum, "Exile," 566–89; Szobi, "Portugalci v 'komunistické Ženevě'," 612–13.

95 MZV, TO-T 1945–1954 Guatemala, box 1, Asylum for R. Ramírez de Léon a C. M. Pellecer, October 19, 1954.

96 MZV, TO-T 1955–1959 Guatemala, box 1, Report on the Meeting with the Secretary of the United Labor Party of Guatemala, September 19, 1956.

97 Zídek and Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ*, 112–18.

98 Hrubý, *Nebezpeční snílci*, 45–62.

Fig. 4.2: International students carrying a Soviet delegate on their shoulders during the session of the Second Congress of the IUS in the Industrial Palace in Prague in August 1950. Photo © ČTK / Havelka Zdeněk, all rights reserved.

accommodation, but eventually their budgets grew to alleviate some of these problems. Their employees still had to reckon with surveillance by the secret police as high-profile political personalities of continuous interest to the authorities. Many of them became informants, further increasing the atmosphere of fear and pressure in times of political trials.[99]

Intellectuals often found employment in education, research, and media. As an important parallel to refugees in the West,[100] they participated in the production of knowledge about their native countries and its conveyance within their national communities in Czechoslovakia, contributing to the formation of their political identities. As journalists

99 Bartošek, *Zpráva o putování*, 103–9; Hrubý, *Nebezpeční snílci*, 62–63.
100 Cf. Rajaram, "Refugee and Migrant Knowledge," 38–52.

and editors, they worked for foreign-language newspapers, such as *Democrazia Popolare* (in Italian, Popular Democracy), *Nova borba* (in Serbo-Croatian, New Struggle), and *Agonistis* (in Greek, Fighter), and managed special programs for the Czechoslovak radio broadcasting, including both the Spanish *Radio Praga*[101] and its Portuguese variant, directed by the local leader of the Portuguese communists, José Gregório.[102] These programs were short-lived, for they reached only a minimal audience. Even broadcasting in Greek, which Czechoslovak radio introduced in 1950 as a block of fifteen to thirty minutes daily with the hope of raising the interest of thousands of listeners, was shut down in 1957 due to its allegedly low quality. Prague also, however, hosted the clandestine radio station *Oggi in Italia* (Italy Today), run by the PCI between 1952 and 1968. Using a transmitter in East Germany, it reached out over the Iron Curtain to provide the workers' movement in Italy with an alternative to officially permitted media sources.[103]

Other important producers of knowledge about their countries could be found among refugee academics, especially those trained in humanities, who were prone to political pressures in their countries of origin. Philology departments in Czechoslovakia expanded in response to political demands to accommodate the sudden inflow of native-speaking experts. Having started his career at the IUS, Mansour Shaki joined the Oriental Institute, where he published a Czech-Persian conversation handbook.[104] A former high-ranking Republican officer, Antonio Cordón García, who was appointed professor of Spanish language and literature at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, co-authored a book providing a Marxist view of Spanish history.[105] Dimitris Papas, who held degrees in law and philosophy, was appointed the head of the department of Modern Greek philology at the university in Prague after he became a close collaborator of the Ministry of Information; his department helped educate teachers who could ensure the education of Greek child refugees in Czechoslovakia.[106] In another example, included here to illustrate the wide range of such cases, Ian Milner—an Australian citizen and former employee of the political department of the UN Security Council Secretariat, as well as a Soviet and Czechoslovak spy facing an FBI investigation—took refuge in

101 Nálevka, "Španělé v poválečném Československu," 91–92.
102 Szobi, "Portugalci v 'komunistické Ženevě'," 615.
103 Cooke, "Red Spring," 886.
104 Zídek and Sieber, *Československo a Blízký východ,* 112–18.
105 Nálevka, "Španělé v poválečném Československu," 90.
106 Dostálová, "Výuka řeckého jazyka," 174–75.

Czechoslovakia in 1950. There he accepted a position as associate professor in the department of English studies, while continuing his parallel cooperation with the State Security.[107]

Given his prominence, the former president of Guatemala Jacobo Árbenz represented a rather specific case of a political refugee; he used his Czechoslovak "exile" with its superior living conditions as a time for a temporal retreat, personal recuperation, and political realignment rather than consistent work. Together with his family, Árbenz stayed in Czechoslovakia between September 1955 and October 1956, first in a hotel and then in a private villa with a personal cook. Interestingly, Árbenz himself was not a communist, but he gained the trust of Czechoslovak authorities for the legalization of the PGT during his time in office (1951–54).[108] The Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs showed substantial empathy, describing Árbenz after his arrival from France as "introverted and anxious" due to the "harassment and injustice suffered [during his stay] in the West."[109] Despite their original expectation that Árbenz would fund his own stay, Czechoslovakia eventually covered part of his expenses, including his family's medical treatment and schooling for his children.[110] While in Prague, Árbenz worked on a book about Guatemala and gave several interviews to Western journalists. He also held a meeting with Czechoslovak President Zápotocký and Prime Minister Novotný and visited China and the USSR.[111] In the end, he left to continue his political struggle in Latin America after receiving a visa for Uruguay.

Unlike a handful of prominent individuals, most refugees had to earn their living in manual professions. Besides their general contribution to Czechoslovak economic reconstruction, refugees from Greece, in particular, helped resettle the country's vacated borderland, which had been ethnically cleansed of its domestic German population in the aftermath of the Second World War, and revived local agricultural and industrial production, especially of textiles.[112] The inflow of laborers, even if unskilled, was welcomed

107 Hrubý, *Nebezpeční snílci*, 123–79.

108 MZV, TO-T 1955–1959 Guatemala, box 1, Guatemalan emigration in Mexico, October 10, 1955; see also Getchell, "Revisiting the 1954 Coup in Guatemala," 74.

109 MZV, TO-T 1955–1959 Guatemala, box 1, Arrival of Colonel Árbenz, September 3, 1955.

110 MZV, TO-T 1955–1959 Guatemala, box 1, Settlement of the expenses for the stay of Colonel Árbenz, September 26, 1956.

111 MZV, TO-T 1955–1959 Guatemala, box 1, Report of January 9, 1956; and Visit of Colonel Árbenz to the Czechoslovak President, January 10, 1956.

112 NACR, 1261/2 KSČ ÚV 100/3, vol. 144, unit 563, Meeting on the deployment of workforce, September 15, 1949 and Employment agenda, December 1, 1950.

Fig. 4.3: Former president of Guatemala Jacobo Árbenz pictured with his family after their arrival in Zermatt in Switzerland in 1955. Photo © ČTK, all rights reserved.

by the management of factories, pressured by the norms of the first five-year plan.[113] At workplaces, refugees often sought to improve their working conditions and receive adequate pay for their work, but the paternalistic system of ideologized labor, characteristic of state-socialist economic production, along with an absence of independent labor unions, deprived them of sufficient leverage to demand their rights or express discontent with the amount of work, enforced through "socialist competition."[114]

The Czechoslovak authorities attempted to fit them into their experiments in agricultural collectives, yet the exemplary farm bearing the name of the Greek Stalinist leader Nikos Zachariadis was forced to shut down in 1953 after three years of operation amid reports of animal abuse and the vast degradation of property.[115] Italians who were working in similar collectives and attempted to share their knowledge and skills developed in Italy continuously reported meager living conditions with insufficient accommodation

113 NACR, 1261/2 KSČ ÚV 100/3, vol. 144, unit 563, Deployment of Greeks in weaving mills, November 19, 1949.

114 NACR, 1261/2 KSČ ÚV 100/3, vol. 144, unit 563, Report on Greek emigration in Czechoslovakia, July 10, 1951.

115 NACR, 1169 Československý červený kříž (Czechoslovak Red Cross), box 21, The provision of care by the Czechoslovak Red Cross to political emigration by January 1, 1952, 10.

and a monotonous diet.[116] The authorities were generally satisfied with the work performance of refugees and could even empathize with their specific needs and the limits of their life situations.[117] Nevertheless, they tended to impose a set of desired socialist "values" on them, which, furthermore, political refugees themselves at times adopted with strict asceticism (as even the introductory quote by Filippos Fylaktos suggests)—including discipline, diligence, modesty, and respect for common property.[118]

Conclusion

Within the context of the increasingly global nature of migration, the concept of political asylum in the Eastern bloc developed along parallel lines to Western structures of asylum as a legally non-binding institution and politically volatile alternative to the Western model. In the case of the socialist East, the ambiguous decision-making rested primarily in the hands of the national communist parties and their security organs. Despite its intricacy, unpredictability, and even hostility, the asylum procedure in the East deserves academic attention because it enhances the understanding of Cold War refugeedom, which has thus far centered on Western optics. Constructed by both the countries of origin and of refuge, the concept of political refugeedom helped to constitute and assert the identity of state-socialist societies within and without. Furthermore, behind the blatant deficiencies of the asylum system in the Eastern bloc, there was a loose system of transnational cooperation, operating through communist networks, which declared internationalist solidarity as a core principle in the management of their mutual relationships.

At the center of this simplified ideological view of political refugeedom in the East stood individual asylum seekers attempting to navigate the arbitrary application process. In their attempts to highlight their personal contribution to communism, the political persecution they had endured, and their humble class origins, they mainly relied on their political affiliations and professional and personal contacts. As some of the cases analyzed above have shown, various other factors came into play. The evolving foreign political situation, domestic ideological pressures, or even

116 Cooke, "Red Spring," 884–89.

117 NACR, 1261/2 KSČ ÚV 100/3, vol. 50, unit 239, Report on Italian collectives, October 10, 1949.

118 NACR, 1261/2 KSČ ÚV 100/3, vol. 188, unit 657, Spanish emigration in Czechoslovakia, September 18, 1950.

just a simple lack of verifiable data could result in the eventual rejection of otherwise suitable candidates. Furthermore, even those who had been granted asylum could fall out of favor with the authorities or the party and have their status revoked. Individuals with a more prominent political profile—who stood in the spotlight of public interest and were thus attributed greater political responsibility—were subjected to increased security control and stricter assessment criteria. The existence of an authoritarian regime in Czechoslovakia limited the opportunities of those affected to defend themselves, although requests submitted by groups of refugees tended to be more successful than individual petitions.

Adding to the complexity of political refugeedom in East-Central Europe and bringing it closer to the Western practice, the migration of those who were labeled, or who labeled themselves, as political refugees was often motivated by combinations of political, economic, and personal factors, including having been accused or convicted of non-political crimes in their homeland. Moreover, the motivations of asylum seekers were often fluid and interchangeable over the course of their refugeedom. The work integration of refugees, a central element of their lived experience of asylum, further blurs the contours of the image of the desirable political refugee, highlighting a strict labor hierarchy that, in contrast to the ever-present glorification of the worker class, placed professional communists and prominent personalities in favored positions. Czechoslovakia as a refuge served as an incubator for future communist leaders and an amplifier for ideologies and knowledge. Unlike those refugees whose manual work literally changed the contours of postwar Czechoslovakia during its economic reconstruction, the more politically involved refugees often found themselves engaged in perilous ideological struggles, thus risking the retraction of the protection which had initially been provided to them.

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About the Author

Nikola Tohma is a researcher at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences. She focuses on political refugeedom, social rights, and labor integration of adult refugees, as well as aid and education for child refugees in socialist Czechoslovakia.

5. The "Stomach Question": Food and Refugee Children from Greece in East Germany and Poland

Julia Reinke

Abstract: This chapter analyzes the reception of refugees from the Greek Civil War (1946–49) in postwar Poland and East Germany. While this was part of a coordinated action by the Eastern Bloc, the comparison brings to light national differences and explicates similarities. These can be found especially in the collectivist approach towards refugee children, who were supposed to be raised as future cadres for a socialist Greece but were marked by traumatic flight experiences. As a different take on this ideologically determined refugee reception, the chapter introduces the "stomach question" as lens for an integrated study of the refugees and their host communities. Bringing together refugee history with food history, this contributes to a multifaceted analysis of East Germany and Poland as places of refuge.

Keywords: German Democratic Republic (GDR); Polish People's Republic; Greek Civil War; food history; child refugees

Introduction

Between 1948 and 1950, East Germany and Poland, among other countries of the emerging Eastern bloc, became places of refuge for refugee children from the Greek Civil War (1946–49).

> It was a group as if [of people] captured and banished to exile. You got the impression that the children were specially formed and programmed. Extremely reserved and [hiding] in their little bundles. Like-minded and

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> with nervous and uncoordinated reactions, they were similar to automatons. […] The civil war had left its marks in the group of our fosterlings.[1]

With these words, the chief director of the specially established state education center (Państwowy Ośrodek Wychowawczy, POW) in Lądek-Zdrój, Wacław Kopczyński, described the initial sight of the visibly traumatized young refugees as they arrived at their temporary refuge in the fall of 1948. Similarly, Dionisios Sturis opened his well-received, "bestselling"[2] book *Nowe Życie* (New Life) with a dramatic scenic depiction of, in his words, the "children of war" upon their arrival at the train station of the Silesian spa town: timidly exiting the train "in rags, starved out, coughing, with scabbed-over heads, matted hair, ulcerating eyes, soaked with sweat, dirty, more and more terrified, often not remembering their last name."[3]

This transport to Lądek-Zdrój, counting more than one thousand children, along with some caregivers, was part of a broader coordinated action by countries of the emerging Eastern bloc. In various waves and transports, starting in 1948 and intensifying after the cessation of the fighting in Greece, at least 55,881 refugees, but likely 70,000 or more, took refuge not only in Poland, but across the bloc.[4] The communist partisans, who had lost the battle against the Western-oriented and -supported royal government in Athens, along with their relatives and some civilians fleeing the war-ridden areas, were hosted not only within the Soviet Union (Tashkent) but also in other countries. These included Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the East German Soviet Zone of Occupation (Sowjetische Besatzungszone, SBZ), which was to become the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in October 1949. The humanitarian assistance provided to these refugees was an expression of international solidarity which marked the political positioning of the host countries,[5] but it also constituted one arena of their postwar reconstruction in transitioning toward the imminent Cold War order.

1 Sprawozdanie Dyrektora Naczelnego Państwowego Ośrodka Wychowawczego, magistra Wacława Kopczyńskiego, dotyczące przyjęcia dzieci z Macedonii Egejskiej. Organizacja Państwowego Ośrodka Wychowawczego, opieka, wychowanie i edukacja dzieci, August 30, 1949, in *Makedonskite begalci vo Polska / Macedońscy uchodźcy w Polsce*, 70–124, at 86. A longer version of this quote is also cited by Kurpiel, *Cztery nazwiska*, 75–76, and by Sturis, *Nowe Życie*, 134–35.

2 Zessin-Jurek, "Poland, a Country of Refuge?," 515–54, 541.

3 Sturis, *Nowe Życie*, 7.

4 For the numbers and the distribution, see Troebst and Tutaj, "Zerstrittene Gäste," 193–225, at 200. Considering the difficulties with documentation and varying statistics, some estimates even range as high as 70,000 to 100,000. See Troebst, "'Grieche ohne Heimat'," 245–71, at 246.

5 For a detailed exploration of this solidarity, see Tohma and Reinke, "'Like we would help brothers or sisters?'," 1–29.

The refugees from the Greek Civil War thus figure as "emblematic refugees"[6] to the Polish People's Republic (as of 1952 officially Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL), but also more generally to socialist East-Central Europe as a whole due to the bloc-wide reception. Accordingly, previous historiography has focused strongly on a political perspective following the Cold War paradigm, not rarely perpetuating the ideological narrative put forth by the Communist Party of Greece (Kommounistiko Komma Elladas, KKE) which characterized this forced migration as political exile. It was initially supposed to be of only temporary nature. The expectation was that they would soon return to resume fighting and that it would eventually be possible to build a "Free Greece" under a socialist framework.[7]

For a long time, historians treated episodes of East-Central European refugee history as exceptional phenomena, analyzing each in an isolated fashion within the confines of national frameworks.[8] More recent scholarship has increasingly applied comparative approaches to study those refugee histories that fell outside the parameters of the better known policies implemented after the war and eventually codified in the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees from 1951.[9] Cold War logic associated this international cooperation with the "Western side". In fact, none of the aforementioned Eastern bloc states was a signatory of the Geneva Convention, while the policy for dealing with the Greek Civil War refugees was in principle inspired by Moscow instead and followed the pattern of the reception of refugees from the Civil War in Spain (1936–39).[10] On the other hand, individual countries such as East Germany and Poland did have very different starting situations, deriving not least from having recently been on opposing sides in the Second World War and from the various events in its aftermath. As one of the successor states of the Third Reich, the SBZ and then GDR, despite

6 Zessin-Jurek, "Poland, a Country of Refuge?," 542.

7 For a critical discussion of this KKE narrative, based on the example of Czechoslovakia but valid for the broader problem, see Tohma, "The Role of Martyrdom," 8–13. For an overall rather uncritical adoption in the historiography of the East German case, see Panoussi, *Politisches Exil*.

8 See also Frankl, "East Central Europe," 473–89, esp. 484. One partial exception to this rule is Stefan Troebst's work. Pointing out the issue of language requirements regarding literature and especially comparative studies, he himself worked on both East Germany and Poland and insistently refers to the joint character of this refugee reception, sporadically drawing comparisons between the German and the Polish case; see Troebst, "'Grieche ohne Heimat,'" 246–47 and 256–57, as well as—vice versa—Troebst and Tutaj, "Zerstrittene Gäste," for instance 205, 207. For broader international approaches, see Danforth and van Boeschoten, *Children of the Greek Civil War*; Tsekou, *Ellines politikoi prosfyges*.

9 See most recently Schönhagen, "Internationale Flüchtlingspolitik," 26–56.

10 For the reception of refugee children of the Spanish Civil War see Qualls, *Stalin's Niños*.

officially repudiating this legacy, still had to cope with the fascist past, which showed also while joining this socialist action for refugee assistance. In addition to taking in the refugees from Greece, the incipient East German state was facing the task of accommodating more than four million co-ethnic refugees and expellees[11] from eastern territories like Silesia and Pomerania that now largely belonged to postwar Poland. The Polish state, however, was also adapting to substantial shifts in its borders. While it had obviously been one of the major victims of German aggression, the postwar maps drawn up by the Allies represented gains in the West but also losses in the East.[12] This "westward shift" also meant a considerable exchange of populations. These fluctuations significantly influenced Polish postwar policies[13] and thus the starting situation for receiving the refugees from Greece.

Against this background, this chapter examines these two "Eastern" (i.e., within the Soviet sphere of influence) countries' reception of refugees from a comparative perspective. During the period in question, East Germany and Poland had a closely sealed mutual border, despite their geographical proximity and incorporation into the same geopolitical macrostructure.[14] An intra-bloc comparison of how they dealt with the same migration challenge during their major transition to postwar communist states provides a more nuanced understanding of "Eastern" refugee policy. To this end, the focus here is on the implementation of refugee care on the ground, rather than on the central official policies usually examined. Inspired by micro-historical impulses, studying everyday life issues in this way foregrounds an integrated history of the refugees and those who helped them. Doing so helps gain critical distance toward the ideological narrative and balances it with a more human take. The issue of *food* was chosen specifically for this purpose. According to the sociologist Eva Barlösius, food is a "social total phenomenon" (*soziales Totalphänomen*, following Marcel Mauss).[15]

11 For an overview on this dominant conceptual pair of terms, political usage and self-descriptions, see most recently Röger, "Vertreibung," esp. 6, which also has further literature.

12 For this shift of Poland's postwar borders see for instance Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene*, 35–50; from a perspective focusing on various individual experiences, Halicka, *Polens Wilder Westen*, 100–151.

13 See Thum, "Integrating without a Host Society," 55–82.

14 See the subchapter "Alltag und Lebenswelt in den deutsch-polnischen Grenzgebieten der Nachkriegszeit" in Trutkowski, *Der geteilte Ostblock*, 38–46. For Zgorzelec specifically see Wołk, "Życie Codziennie w Zgorzelcu," 337–51, reprinted with a personal inscribed dedication to the editor in Wojecki, *Zgorzelec*, 11–25.

15 See the introduction "Gesellschaften sind so, wie sie essen" for a general discussion of the significance of food and connected practices in societies, Barlösius, *Soziologie des Essens*, 19–31, at 29.

It thus offers an anthropological category which cuts across the national lines while at the same time allowing for the capturing of complex social, cultural, and, not least, political processes. Constituting one of the main interfaces between refugees and their host society, it sheds light on various aspects of refugee management.

The analysis is based primarily on archival sources of local and regional provenience. Marcin Gołębniak, in his ethnographic study on the Greek (refugee) diaspora in Poland, has aptly classified relevant sources on the macro, meso, and micro level as "governing," "controlling," and "reporting." This corresponds respectively to central authorities (the state party and government), regionally authored sources by federal state or *województwo* inspection boards, and local producers like the state education centers Państwowe Ośrodki Wychowawcze and the East German equivalent, a combination of children's homes under the name "Free Greece" (Heimkombinat "Freies Griechenland").[16] Hence, especially meso and micro sources—administrative records, correspondence, and, first and foremost, elaborate reports—are informative in regard to methods, means, challenges, and responses in the implementation of refugee care. This is even more so because the language used for more practical matters is by and large noticeably less steeped in (albeit not devoid of) the highly ideologized terminology of high-level governmental or party sources written in a formulaic and thus often opaque manner.

The chapter starts with a discussion of similarities and differences of key policies of both states. While the refugee groups differed in terms of numbers and structure, the approach to public communication stands out as a major difference that reveals how these nations dealt with their respective histories and the consequences of these. In the fields of personnel and the general educational approach, however, we can observe striking similarities that point to shared basic principles in hosting these "model refugees to the Eastern bloc," especially regarding the refugee children. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the issue of food and nutrition. This perspective provides space to take into account the children's experiences, recognize the implications of their flight, and contextualize this major interface between the refugees and their new surroundings. The "stomach question" ultimately not only enriches our understanding of East Germany and Poland as places of refuge in the postwar era, but also further develops an often underappreciated angle of refugee history.

16 Gołębniak, *Dzieci z rozbitego statku*, 46. Despite the fact that he bases his study on sources from the late 1950s and 1960s, this fundamental pattern holds true for the postwar era analyzed in this chapter as well.

Receiving Refugee Children from Greece

On their way to Poland and East Germany, the children from Greece had already passed through different stations. After their initial sojourns in adjacent states, the refugees were then transported in a series of "migrational waves" to more remote destinations in the Eastern bloc.[17] Although these efforts were part of the coordinated multinational bloc action, there are observable differences even at the macro level in how plans were executed from one country to the next.

In the case of East Germany, the first of two train transports arrived in the state of Saxony in August 1949 with 342 refugee children on board. This was roughly two months before the SBZ officially became the GDR with the adoption of the constitution on October 7. A second train brought another 720 young refugees in July 1950.[18] These children thus came to East Germany at the time when the state itself was still in a nascent phase. Only few years had passed since the end of the Second World War, and the GDR struggled with both the legacy of the National Socialist past and the competition with the neighboring West Germany, the Federal Republic of Germany as of May 1949. Moreover, East Germany was trying to cope with the reception of over four million co-ethnic "refugees," "expellees," or "resettlers" (*Umsiedler*, in the official language of the East German state party Socialist Unity Party of Germany [Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED]) from eastern territories that Germany had lost in consequence of the war.[19]

For Poland, we can distinguish three different stages of Greek Civil War refugee reception. Already in October 1948 and April 1949, the country received also almost exclusively children—according to the most cited data presented by scholar Mieczysław Wojecki, which he based on Greek information, 3,105 during this time.[20] However, shortly before the cessation of military action in the Greek war territories in the fall of 1949, Poland also accepted roughly 9,300 adult refugees—partisans and their sympathizers,

17 Kurpiel, *Cztery nazwiska*, 72.

18 Troebst, "Die 'Griechenlandkinder-Aktion'," republished in Troebst, *Zwischen Arktis, Adria und Armenien*, 257–80, at 271; the commonly cited eight hundred is probably the roughly rounded-up figure of 720 children and teenagers, accompanied by some Greek teachers and educators.

19 See Reinke, "Refugees in the 'Better Germany'."

20 For the numbers in this paragraph see Wojecki, *Uchodźcy polityczni z Grecji*, 21. Among his many publications, this pioneer study may be considered the standard work on the Polish case to the present. Even recent international research still refers to the numbers presented by Wojecki. See, for instance, Fleming, "Greek 'Heroes'," 375–97, at 378.

but also less politically affiliated civilians. By the year 1956, in the third phase, another 800 refugees came to Poland in the course of family reunifications, adding up to a total of more than 13,200. Such phases were indeed a common modality for most Eastern bloc countries; the case of Czechoslovakia, for example, was similar. Thus, it was a distinctive feature of the East German reception of refugees that the refugee children in the SBZ/GDR were accompanied by only a few dozen adults, functionaries, and teachers.[21]

On the other hand, two main features characterize the Polish case. The first is the significant share of ethnic Macedonians from Greece who had fought alongside the communist partisans of Hellenic origin. The shared Slavic language background constituted an advantage for these refugees when adapting to their new Polish surroundings,[22] but this factor also harbored potential for ethnic conflict within the refugee community, despite the theoretical solidarity under the banner of internationalism that was essential to communist ideology.[23] While this aspect was not unique to Poland—once again, there are parallels with the Czechoslovak case[24]—a second specific feature distinguishes Poland from East Germany and other countries of reception: the level of secrecy. The Polish authorities went to great lengths to conceal their acceptance of refugees from Greece—from their transportation, in 76 percent of cases by boat, to their accommodation and care in the initial period up until late 1951.[25] Scholars have suggested various reasons for this at the international and domestic levels. The historian Michael Fleming aptly attributes it to

> concern about the response of the wider international community to the evacuation of Greeks and the reaction of Polish society, which had, through five years of communist propaganda, been educated to view Poland as being rightfully nationally homogeneous.[26]

Dionisios Sturis places stronger emphasis on the international dimension, suggesting a closer connection to Polish military assistance given to the partisans during the civil war and highlighting the role of the international debate about the transfer of children from Greece to Eastern bloc states

21 Cf. also Troebst, "Grieche ohne Heimat," 247–49.
22 See Kurpiel, *Cztery nazwiska*, 196.
23 Explored in depth by Kurpiel, *Cztery nazwiska*.
24 With references to further literature: Tohma, "The Role of Martyrdom," 4.
25 See Fleming, "Greek 'Heroes,'" 378–83.
26 Fleming, "Greek 'Heroes,'" 380.

(the highly disputed so-called *paidomazoma*).[27] While this surely did play a role, the other decisive factor was indeed the prevailing "pursuit of Polish homogeneity"[28] in the aftermath of the war. As the reception of refugees from Greece constituted an apparent break with this policy,[29] this context should not be underestimated as reason for the secrecy of the refugee reception.

Unlike Poland, the East German regime—and, for that matter, Czechoslovakia—adopted a public strategy of raising both funds and awareness in an orchestrated campaign for solidarity with the refugees from Greece.[30] This is not to say that there were no challenges to overcome in creating acceptance among the East German population, particularly in the localities where the refugees were accommodated. Although complaints were often voiced rather subtly and quickly reprimanded by the dominating discourse under the consolidating socialist rule transitioning toward socialist German (quasi) statehood, there were people who expressed criticism regarding the fundraising for the Greeks, pointing out the Germans' own postwar plight and the needs of co-ethnic "refugees and resettlers."[31] But against the backdrop of the Nazi past and the GDR's attempts to present itself as "the better Germany," the truly antifascist German state, the new regime had more to win than to lose regarding its reputation as it sought to banish the memories of Germany as the aggressor in the Second World War and integrate with its neighbors to the east in the new, shared geopolitical structure of the Eastern bloc.[32]

Poland, meanwhile, strove to maintain a veil of secrecy by settling the young refugees from Greece in its new territories that were still in the process of being repopulated after the expulsion of their previous inhabitants who had identified, or had been identified, as German.[33] Initially quarantined and accommodated in secluded Silesian spa towns such as Lądek-Zdrój for several months, the state education centers were successively transferred to

27 See Sturis, *Nowe Życie*, 98–109, 126–37. The reception of approximately twenty-eight thousand children by Eastern bloc countries has been most controversially discussed as *paidomazoma*, i.e., child abduction, a communist "blood tax." The most balanced analysis remains Baerentzen, "The 'Paidomazoma' and the Queen's Camps," 127–58.

28 Kulczycki, "The Pursuit of Polish Homogeneity," published online February 20, 2020, as well as Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*.

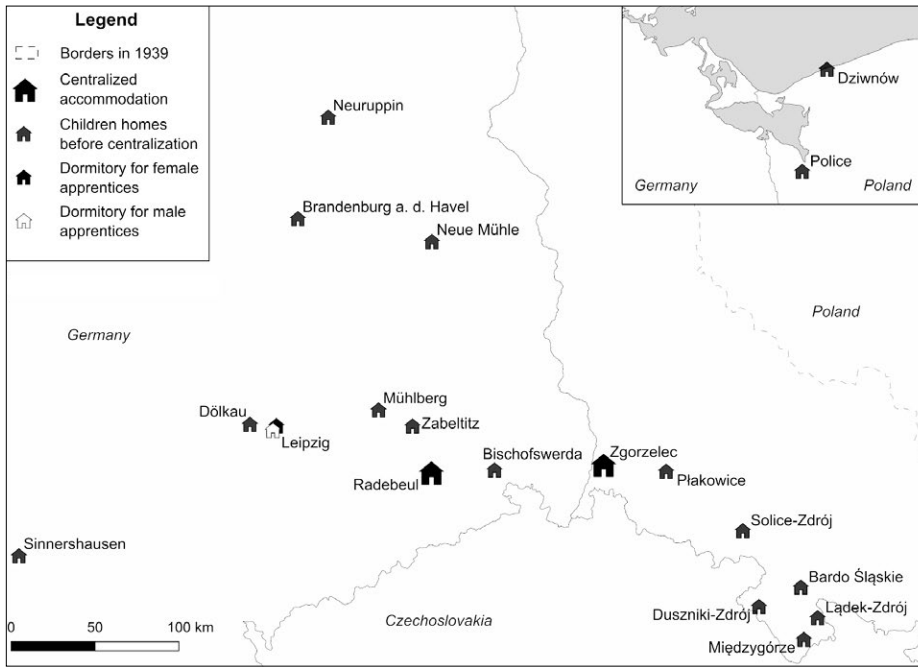
29 Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 254–55.

30 Examined in depth in Tohma and Reinke, "'Like we would help brothers or sisters?'"

31 For an analysis of this criticism and competition, see Reinke, "Refugees in the 'Better Germany.'", esp. 153–56.

32 See Tohma and Reinke, "'Like we would help brothers or sisters?'"

33 For the repopulation, see Thum, "Integrating without a Host Society."



Map 5.1: The homes for the refugees from Greece on both sides of the new postwar German-Polish border. After initial reception, the accommodation was centralized in Radebeul near Dresden and in Zgorzelec (later in Police), respectively. Created by Aneta Plzáková for the *Unlikely Refuge?* project.

a centralized accommodation in various facilities in Zgorzelec,[34] which, due to its location at the new, increasingly securitized border, offered suitable seclusion as well. Later, in the second half of 1951, the center in Zgorzelec was liquidated and the adults were scattered to other places mainly in Silesia, while a new centralized Państwowy Ośrodek Wychowawczy was set up in Police near Szczecin.[35]

Despite the authorities' efforts for secrecy, the Polish personnel involved in the refugee management and local care constituted an interface between the receiving side and the refugees. According to Michael Fleming, "in 1950 there were 1,500 Poles servicing the needs of the refugees."[36] Regarding the personnel policy, Poland in fact took a similar course to East Germany. Both countries struggled with finding suitable staff, suffering from high labor

34 For details on the institutional structures, see Kurpiel, *Cztery nazwiska*, 74–93, as well as Kubasiewicz, "Children and Youth," 186–95.

35 For more on the state educational center POW in Police near Szczecin, see the study by Sitarz, "Społeczność grecka i macedońska," 93–154, specifically 107–27, and Sitarz, "Uchodźcy z Grecji w Polsce."

36 Fleming, "Greek 'Heroes,'" 383.

turnover,[37] which in the German case was also aggravated by employees emigrating to West Germany. As the head manager of the Heimkombinat "Freies Griechenland" complained at a meeting in Radebeul in July 1951: "It must not happen again that educators leave us to go to the West. The constant change moreover affects our [Greek] children terribly."[38]

While a strong ideological affiliation of the staff dealing with the refugees was the desired overall aim,[39] it is striking how both countries likewise relied on primarily employing people of the younger generation. In the East German case, this was largely due to efforts to avoid the involvement of anyone with a Nazi background (even though this was a complicated process and especially in the beginning could not be implemented fully). For Poland, chief director Wacław Kopczyński explained the rationale behind the *polityka personalna* (personnel policy) as the result of both practical and partially financial concerns as well as of an educational mission that promised social advancement for rural strata:

> The first option is to retain employees in the localities by making the organization of a comfortable family life possible for them, with raised salaries. With that possibility is connected the question of the number of residential houses for the employees and their families as well as food provisions and family worries. […] The second option is to recruit worker and farmer youth to work in the centers who do not have the appropriate conditions in their surroundings to receive education, giving them an education and the possibility to obtain the profession of educator. We chose the second option.[40]

However, he also placed emphasis on the right attitude of the staff, tasked with the often-demanding responsibility of dealing with the traumatized

37 For the Polish case see for example Archiwum Państwowe w Szczecinie (State Archive in Szczecin, hereafter APSz), POW w Policach Nr. 22, Wacław Kopczyński, Sprawozdania z działalności Wydziału Wychowawczego w Lądku-Zdroju od 15 X. 1948 r. do 30. VIII. 1949 r. Plan Ośrodka, 1948–1949, 16.

38 Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (hereafter SächsHStA), 11401 Landesregierung Sachsen (LRS), Ministerium für Volksbildung (MfV), Nr. 2784, [Hilde] Hamann, head manager, minutes of a meeting at the Kulturhaus Radebeul, July 14, 1951, 1. The same minutes are also contained in SächsHStA, 11401 LRS, MfV, Nr. 470. For struggles with recruiting personnel, see also Zloch, *Das Wissen der Einwanderungsgesellschaft*, 100–106.

39 Cf. also Qualls, "From Hooligans to Disciplined Students," 131–54, who emphasizes not only the ideological, but also moral dimension of the educators as role models.

40 APSz, POW w Policach Nr. 22, Wacław Kopczyński, Sprawozdania z działalności Wydziału Wychowawczego w Lądku-Zdroju od 15 X. 1948 r. do 30. VIII. 1949 r. Plan Ośrodka, 1948–1949, 17–18.

children. Therefore, a crucial requirement for him was "enthusiasm for the work, which in our action is indispensable."[41] After all, the staff had to live up to the standard of the Greek personnel, which, according to Marcin Gołębniak's refugee interviews, included many *ideowcy*, staunch advocates who as participants in the Greek Civil War enthusiastically engaged in passing on their experiences and strong communist stance in the refugee care.[42]

The overarching purpose and corresponding strategy of raising the children were also strikingly similar in both cases. In accordance with socialist values, decisions concerning accommodation favored a collectivist approach in which the children and teenagers were generally placed in children's homes instead of, for instance, with foster families. While initially, the different trajectories of their flight and resettlement had separated the children from their families, it was primarily for ideological reasons that the children in Poland—in the same manner as in the SBZ/GDR—for the most part remained in collective residential accommodation. This happened largely regardless of their familial situation. According to data from 1956, there were roughly 3,600 refugee children from Greece in Poland, and of these, 2,380 had parents living in other parts of the country, while the parents of approximately 500 others were still in Greece. There were only 620 semi-orphans and only 113 complete orphans.[43] Even though this statistic is for a later time, these numbers still serve as an informative indicator of the fundamental underlying policy applied from the start, which followed the concept of "social orphans" rather than biological ones. As has been explored in a study on socialist Czechoslovakia, but it also holds true for the accommodation of refugees from Greece in both countries discussed here, this meant prioritizing collective and institutionalized child care for "children whose parents were not in a position to care for and educate their children in the manner considered appropriate and necessary."[44] It was only in 1952/53 that some children could reunite with their parents in Poland as a result of a "requalification" process which reassessed the living conditions the refugees had managed to establish by that point.[45]

In adopting collective care, the socialist approach to refugee children differed significantly from contemporary Western standards, which

41 Kopczyński, Sprawozdania z działalności Wydziału Wychowawczego, 17–18.

42 See Gołębniak, *Dzieci z rozbitego statku*, 120, 97.

43 Cf. Sitarz, "Społeczność grecka i macedońska," 100, again citing the empirical research of Wojecki, "Szkolnictwo uchodźców politycznych," 217–23, at 217.

44 Henschel, "'All Children Are Ours'," 122–44, quotes on 122 and 131.

45 Cf. Kubasiewicz, "Children and Youth," 192, based on Wojecki, *Uchodźcy polityczni z Grecji*, 39–40.

generally preferred familial structures, precisely as an "antidote" to totalitarian ideologies and indoctrination.[46] The socialist refugee assistance, in contrast, explicitly pursued a different kind of rehabilitation, viewing the refugee children as potential cadres for building up socialism in Greece once conditions allowed. Consequently, the Grundschule "Freies Griechenland" ("Free Greece" Elementary School) in Radebeul near Dresden formulated the following educational goals for its pupils:

> to be brought up as conscious, determined, and disciplined patriots and fighters for the liberation of their fatherland from the monarcho-fascist yoke, and to be trained for building up Greece [...] to a progressive democratic country.[47]

And Wacław Kopczyński similarly phrased the projected aim of the Polish state education center as

> to set up conditions for the stay as well as create an educational atmosphere, in which the fosterlings entrusted to us can develop in a normal way physically, intellectually, and socially, and gradually prepare for their role as builders of the[ir] free Macedonian-Greek fatherland.[48]

The imposed roles as future cadres, however, faced obstacles arising from the children's severe trauma and the fate of being child refugees which shone through in various ways. Reports and accounts mention incidents of terror, framed as "collective hallucinations,"[49] paranoia and delusions of persecution, behaviors still shaped by partisan training, as well as struggles with bedwetting.[50] The next section explores the question of food in which this dilemma particularly manifested itself and challenged the authorities, gaining special importance against the backdrop of the collective accommodation and dining in the socialist systems that made food an institutional matter.

46 Cf. Zahra, "Lost Children," 45–86, quote 56.

47 SächsHStA, 11401 LRS, MfV, Nr. 470, Objectives of the Schooling and Educational Work of the Elementary School Steinbachstraße "Freies Griechenland," 2–3, quote 2.

48 Sprawozdanie Dyrektora Naczelnego, 78. Also cited by Kurpiel, *Cztery nazwiska*, 82.

49 Sprawozdanie Dyrektora Naczelnego, 86.

50 For mentions of bedwetting, see SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, Landeskommission für Staatliche Kontrolle Sachsen, Dresden, July 27, 1951, Bericht über die Überprüfung „Freies Griechenland", 19; APSz, POW w Policach Nr. 21, Sprawozdania z działalności Państwowego Ośrodka Wychowawczego w Zgorzelcu 1950–1951, 10 (12).

The "Stomach Question": Food and Nutrition as a Challenge in Refugee Care

Most research on the question of food in connection with migration has addressed cases of immigration;[51] in this context, scholar Charles T. Lee has even proposed the concept of "culinary citizenship"[52] to highlight the power of food with regard to belonging and participation. While the field of food history has been thriving for several decades,[53] it has only recently begun addressing questions related to refugee history.[54] This is all the more remarkable because, as Karen Agutter and Rachel A. Ankeny have argued, "when migration is forced or traumatic, food and how it is prepared and consumed takes on an even more important role."[55] Questions related to food can thus serve as a lens that brings together multiple dimensions in refugee care, shedding light on both the perspective of the refugee children and the situation of their host communities. These questions touch upon aspects ranging from taste and health to the production and allocation of food.[56] They bring together practical issues with questions of how the children were affected physically and psychologically by their flight and subsequent situation, and relate to negotiating cultural otherness as well as outright political considerations in the organization of supplies, particularly in view of the postwar shortage economies. Numerous discussions in German contemporary sources as well as repeated mentions in Polish accounts demonstrate that this was a highly significant matter, which thus far has been addressed, however, primarily in the form of anecdotes to illustrate culture shock.[57] Instead of assuming "food to

51 For a landmark study in German scholarship, using the case of West Germany, see Möhring, *Fremdes Essen*. For a longitudinal study that integrates labor migration and refugee movement see Ivanović, "Integration on a Plate," 135–56.

52 See the 2015 abstract by Lee, "Culinary Citizenship"; Lee, "Improvising 'Nonexistent Rights'," 79–89.

53 For a thorough overview see Scholliers, "Twenty-Five Years," 449–71.

54 Especially two studies on non-European cases provide instructive examples: Dusselier, "Does Food Make Place?," 137–65; Agutter and Ankeny, "Food and the Challenge," 531–53.

55 Agutter and Ankeny, "Food and the Challenge," 548.

56 The applicability of food as a *lens* to study complex social phenomena has already been postulated for instance by Möhring, *Fremdes Essen*, 14, and Agutter and Ankeny, "Food and the Challenge," 541, 548.

57 See, for instance, the documentary *Die Griechenlandkinder von Radebeul*, from the series *Der Osten—entdecke wo Du lebst*, part 146, 2014, copy in Stadtarchiv Radebeul, and the very short subchapter "Der heimatliche Geschmack—griechisches Essen" in Maruschke, *Kinder griechischer Bürgerkriegsflüchtlinge*, 98–99. The "anecdotal" often served to dismiss the relevance of food history, cf. Scholliers, "Twenty-Five Years," 453, for such criticism towards ethnologically inspired approaches in the field's history.

be just food,"[58] the following section examines how this story both tells about the refugee children's conditions and reveals challenges for the local authorities who were entrusted with the custody of and providing care for the children.

As a result of their wartime and flight experiences, many children were malnourished and underweight when they arrived in their places of refuge. For example, statistics compiled an entire year after arrival still counted only about one third of nearly four hundred children in East Germany as having "good" (126) or "very good" (only 3) nutritional status, not even one third (110) as "medium," and more than one third as "poor" (144) or "very bad" (13).[59] The first meal in their new surroundings accordingly figures prominently in many of the later accounts of former child refugees.[60] Their responses ranged from frenetic excitement to an amazed, almost shy awe: Panagiotis Gekas, a Greek child refugee in East Germany, recalls in his autobiography how none of the children dared to be the first to start eating.[61] The traces the civil war had left manifested in the children's fear that this treat might be a onetime exception. Afraid of having to go hungry again, many had developed a "hoarding urge,"[62] as reported in other contexts as well. They sought to exploit the occasion as much as possible to put aside provisions for the future. As Kostek Christu recounted his first meal in Lądek-Zdrój:

> We didn't believe our eyes. We were like wild, starved animals. We dug into the bread rolls, the apples; we hid bread in our pockets and later under our beds. For a week we were afraid that we would go hungry again, [so] we hoarded.[63]

Not all the refugee children, however, reacted in this way. Various sources of that time report incidents in which children refused to eat the foreign food they were given in their new homes. This phenomenon has been observed in other refugee contexts as well, both from the same period and in more recent times. For example, Philip Cooke, in his microhistorical study on Italian emigrants to Czechoslovakia in the early 1950s, speaks of their initial

58 Agutter and Ankeny, "Food and the Challenge," 548.

59 See SächsHStA, 11859 SED-Kreisleitung Dresden-Land, IV/4.04. Nr. 148, "Untersuchungsergebnis unserer griechischen Freunde," Radebeul, August 14, 1951.

60 For this observation see also Kurpiel, *Cztery nazwiska*, 82–83.

61 Gekas, *Der Kirschbaum auf dem Berge*, 52.

62 For example, a German refugee interned on the Isle of Man in 1940 later reported having witnessed such behavior by fellow internees. See Nyburg, "Food in Exile," 173–90, at 179–80, quote 180.

63 Sturis, *Nowe Życie*, 137.

refusal of the local food as an "instance […] of rebellion."[64] Likewise, there were food riots in Australian "migrant hostels" that housed displaced persons from Europe after the Second World War[65] and in concentration camps for Japanese people in the US during the war.[66] Larissa Fleischmann's study of dealing with post-2015 refugees in Germany describes the example of an eminently political hunger strike. Pointing out "how the refusal of food provided at their reception facility served as a means for asylum seekers to demonstrate political agency," Fleischmann criticized the "actors involved in the reception of asylum seekers" for "*depoliticiz*[*ing*] the protests" and reducing them to "mere dissatisfaction with the food provided."[67] In contrast, Andreas Kossert devotes a subchapter of his monograph *Flight* to "culinary homesickness," using various refugee stories to stress how "the smell and the taste of the [familiar] dishes take them back to their old home[land], at least in the kitchen, and often make the first interface to the people in their new surroundings."[68]

Given their young age and the initial problems of communicating in the new, foreign language, their attitudes toward food indeed represented a possible avenue for the children to express their needs and desperation as well as emotions of uprootedness, trauma, or homesickness. While the general policies discussed above treated them mainly as future cadres for a political cause, this drew attention to their vulnerability as *children*, and what is more, child refugees. Some caregivers seemed to understand the potential comfort of familiar food, even more so for refugees "challenged by the trauma and uncertainty of migration."[69] An employee who reported on conditions in the children's home in Sinnershausen (Thuringia) in January 1950 expressed concern about the physical state of the children, who looked "pale and not well nourished."[70] While acknowledging the fact that the children would eventually have to get used to German cuisine if they were to stay in Germany for the longer term, she went on to advise in an empathic manner:

64 Cooke, "Red Spring," 861–96, quote 873.

65 Cf. Agutter and Ankeny, "Food and the Challenge," 541.

66 Cf. Dusselier, "Does Food Make Place?," 139, 148.

67 See her subchapter, "(De)politicizing the Meanings of Food: The Intermediation of Migrant Protests in Bad Waldsee," in Fleischmann, *Contested Solidarity*, 161–75, quotes 161–62. Emphasis in original.

68 Kossert, *Flucht*, 300, 302.

69 Agutter and Ankeny, "Food and the Challenge," 541–42.

70 Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (hereafter BArch), DR/2/6220, Bl. 368–70 verso, internal report on education and in school care, January 5, 1950, quote on 2. For the following quotes see ibid., 4.

> But for settling in and overcoming the initial strangeness it would be necessary to organize the menu the way the children are used to from their home, because the stomach question [*Magenfrage*, emphasis added] simply plays a role not to be underrated in this phase of getting settled in.

And she continued to point out some consequences: "If for days, as was the case in Sinnershausen, the bowls are cleared away almost untouched, this signifies an alarming sinking of morale." Contrary to the Australian example, where authorities voiced a strong expectation that the children in the "migrant hostels" would assimilate more quickly than the adults regarding their food habits,[71] this East German case shows at least some understanding for the initial transition period in the new host society, recognizing that the children's rejection of food is a warning sign.

The question of adjusting to new foods had implications beyond the emotional and psychological dimension. It was not solely a question of taste, but also a matter of digestibility, most relevant for helping the children to recover. As Mieczysław Wojecki mentioned in a footnote within his much-cited study, many Greek and Macedonian children, due to their famished state, could not ingest the heavy "Polish dishes prepared with butter, bacon or lard," so they had to be sent on a two-month health cure for the summer holidays in 1950.[72] One former child refugee even remembered fatal consequences for some children whose bodies were overwhelmed by the sudden availability of food. Having been starved for so long, their stomachs could not handle the rapid intake, so that some got ill and "started dying in the end, because [they were] hungry, and all at once, they ate too much."[73] German sources likewise reveal concern about "wholesome food" for the children. An audit of Greek children homes assessed critically:

> The children's diet shows major weaknesses, for in many cases they have not been given food that is easily digestible for them. We would like to draw particular attention to the fact that the kitchens should, as far as possible, prepare the national dishes of our Greek friends. The state of health of the children and young people is extremely worrying due to inadequate and poor nutrition.[74]

71 See Agutter and Ankeny, "Food and the Challenge," 547.

72 Wojecki, *Uchodźcy polityczni z Grecji*, 30 n 23.

73 Durlow, "Z Grecji do Polski," 125–52, quote 137.

74 SächsHStA, 11859 SED-Kreisleitung Dresden-Land, IV/4.04. Nr. 148, Letter to the district committee of the Volkssolidarität Leipzig, August 10, 1951.

In view of the high political value ascribed to the ideological "model refugees" (i.e., the "Greek friends"), the authorities were visibly dedicated to ensuring good nutrition for the refugees in their care. In Poland, food was to be served four or five times a day—three main meals and one or two snacks in between (for small or ill children). On average these provided them with at least 3,500 calories per day.[75] While the center in Lądek-Zdrój in theory aimed at a daily calorie intake of 4,000, practical complications like poorly stored food that had gone to waste caused the actual average calories for the year 1950 to fall short of this goal.[76] Nevertheless, they provided about 3,000 per person, which was still a privileged supply. In the immediate postwar period before 1949, Polish food stamps in practice often only amounted to a provision of "slightly over 900 calories for even the recipients of the most generous allowances."[77]

In East Germany, authorities organizing the refugee management faced similar challenges. Starting from a factual average calorie supply in the immediate postwar time (especially in the dire *Hungerwinter* of 1946/47) which only provided for the critical intake of 960 calories per person per day,[78] inspections occasionally also had to report food gone bad due to deficiencies of storage facilities and mismanagement (aggravated by the structures of the planned economy, as a report subtly criticized the "disorganized [*planlose*] distribution of donations to the homes").[79] At the same time, refugee children in East Germany were also privileged in terms of food. With groceries still being rationed, this meant classifying them in a high-ranking group in terms of the ration book, entitling them to a richer

75 APSz, POW w Policach Nr. 65, Sprawozdania z przygotowania i organizacji wczasów letnich dla dzieci Państwowego Ośrodka Wychowawczego w Zgorzelcu, Sprawozdanie z organizacji placówek wczasów letnich dla dzieci P.O.W., July 23, 1951, 1.

76 See APSz, POW w Policach Nr. 38, Protokoły posiedzeń kierowników zespołów Ośrodka Wychowawczego w Lądku-Zdroju, 1948–1949, Protokół Nr. 1, November 15, 1948, 2, where 4,000 is advised, and APSz, POW w Policach Nr. 21, Sprawozdania z działalności Państwowego Ośrodka Wychowawczego w Zgorzelcu 1950–1951, "Sprawozdanie Wydziału Gospodarczego za czas od 1. I. 1950 r. do 31. XII. 1950 roku," 69, mentioning an average of 3,103 calories per person.

77 Jastrząb, "Rationing in Poland," 143–72, at 147.

78 See Gries, *Rationen-Gesellschaft*, 103. While Leipzig in this study represents East Germany, the struggles in an urban environment were even worse than in rural areas. For a critical back story of the calorie and its humanitarian utilization, see Cullather, "The Foreign Policy of the Calorie," 337–64; for Cold War competition especially 363.

79 For the quote, see SächsHStA, 11859 SED-Kreisleitung Dresden-Land, IV/4.04. Nr. 148, Zwischenbericht an die SED-Landesleitung, August 18, 1951, 2. Cf. also the complaints in an inspection report for two homes near Dresden from August 13, 1951, SächsHStA, 11859 SED-Kreisleitung Dresden-Land, IV/4.04. Nr. 148.

supply of food and especially much sought after southern fruits.[80] Due to frequent changes in the ration system, it is difficult to quantify the extent of these privileges.[81] An inspection report for the Heimkombinat from July 1951 stated that "children, teenagers, teachers, and educators receive the same ration allowance, the provisions follow the collective fare according to the rates for children in convalescent homes,"[82] entailing more generous rations than regular children's homes. In addition, extra milk rations were provided, along with various food donations adding to the refugees' diet (though it was being disputed whether those should be counted toward the regular rates or not).[83] However, a letter from the central committee of the Volkssolidarität ("People's Solidarity," in charge of financing the material care for the refugees) reminded the Heimkombinat regarding the Greek apprentices in the GDR that they were to be provided for "unitarily according to the basic ration [*Grundkarte*] and additional card B," this being "one level above the ration allowance for the German apprentices."[84] Explicitly informing the Heimkombinat that this was the highest possible classification and putting the Greek teenagers above their German peers, this signals the character of "status symbols," which "quantity and quality of the allocated food"[85] assumed in the East German society.

Good nutrition and especially fruits were not only relevant for accommodating the refugee children's taste and eating habits, however, but were a vital element to help combat tuberculosis (and other illnesses). In this context, fruits and vitamins took on greater significance in terms of the children's health status.[86] As late as 1953, the Heimkombinat's head physi-

80 For efforts to secure additional fruit rations, see SächsHStA, 11859 SED-Kreisleitung Dresden-Land, IV/4.04. Nr. 148, Kurzer Situationsbericht über folgende Heime in denen Griechische Jugendliche ihren Ferienaufenthalt verleben sollen, undated [August 1951]. However, in the Polish case, one of Anna Kurpiel's interlocutors repudiated oranges as a symbol of alleged abundance. See Kurpiel, *Cztery nazwiska*, 96.

81 See Harsh, "The Politics of Provisioning," 194–222.

82 SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, Bericht über die Überprüfung „Freies Griechenland," July 27, 1951, 12. A report from September 7, 1951 mentions that the children previously had received the—even better—ration card A, SächsHStA, 11859 SED-Kreisleitung Dresden-Land, IV/4.04. Nr. 148, Bericht über die Untersuchung der griechischen Freunde.

83 See, for instance, SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, Bericht über die Überprüfung „Freies Griechenland," July 27, 1951, 6.

84 SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, letter Zentralausschuss der Volkssolidarität Berlin to "Freies Griechenland," regarding "Provisions for Greek apprentices in the GDR," October 1, 1951.

85 Gries, *Rationen-Gesellschaft*, 97.

86 Cf. Dusselier, "Does Food Make Place?," 142, which mentions "skin diseases caused by vitamin deficiencies."

cian Wilhelm Haberzeth warned against lowering the daily rations, citing the risk of tuberculosis and "the lack of parental care."[87] Also in Poland, the shortage of fruits "which are indispensable for the child's development,"[88] sometimes caused problems such as children picking and consuming fruits that were not yet ripe. If the health conditions of the children left a lot to be desired, the few functionaries of the Greek communist party, serving as intermediaries between the refugee children and the SED, were sure to remind their German comrades of the urgent need to care for their children. A report to the Saxon branch of the SED from August 1951 cites this Greek criticism, expressed very carefully, yet at the same time again revealing the intentions regarding the refugee children and their role of being the future cadres and workforce in a desired "socialist Greece": "Good health of the children means so much to us [...] as our party [the Communist Party of Greece] already had to give away so much blood."[89]

While the question of favoritism in provisioning challenged the socialist promise of equality,[90] engendering cases of envy[91] as well as of pilfering, especially by personnel,[92] the "stomach question" entails one more aspect in which the two postwar countries can be compared here: the approach to cultural otherness.[93] The German authorities appeared forthrightly to ascribe the children's refusal to eat the food to the question of cuisine. As in the aforementioned quote, the established term used was "national dishes"—in one instance, the typed "international dishes" was even crossed

87 BArch, DR 2/6220, 96, letter Haberzeth to the management of the Heimkombinat "Freies Griechenland," undated [summer 1953]. For an earlier example of the connection of food and nutrition with health and "child prosperity" in refugee care, see Cretu, "Child Assistance," 510–27, at 521.

88 APSz, POW w Policach Nr. 22, Sprawozdania z działalności Wydziału Wychowawczego w Lądku-Zdroju od 15 X. 1948 r. do 30. VIII. 1949 r.—Plan Ośrodka—1948—1949, Załącznik Nr. 42 [appendix No. 42], 82.

89 SächsHStA, 11859 SED-Kreisleitung Dresden-Land, IV/4.04. Nr. 148, Zwischenbericht an die SED-Landesleitung, August 18, 1951, 2.

90 See Jastrząb, "Rationing in Poland," 165–70.

91 For some envious comments, cited in a critical way, see SächsHStA, 11859 SED-Kreisleitung Dresden-Land, IV/4.04. Nr. 148, Zwischenbericht an die SED-Landesleitung, August 18, 1951, 2. For the Polish case, Troebst and Tutaj speak of "occasional resentment among the local population" in view of the state privileging the refugees (however, without referring to any specific sources). See Troebst and Tutaj, "Zerstrittene Gäste," 204.

92 Such accusations, whether merely speculative or not, can repeatedly be found in the sources. See, for example, SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, Bericht über die Überprüfung der Lage der griechischen Kinder und Jugendlichen in Radebeul, Heidenau und Leipzig, July 24–27, 1951, 47 (7). Cf. for similar incidents Dusselier, "Does Food Make Place?," 147.

93 Cf. Möhring, *Fremdes Essen*, 13, 29–30, 157.

out by hand and revised to "national dishes,"[94] pointing to the prevailing conception of national culturalism.

In the Polish case, this discussion took place in a more subtle and pragmatic manner. One example of a menu served in a children's home reveals a rather typical Polish cuisine, consisting of butter, bread, and (cereal?) coffee for breakfast, and for dinner a traditional two-course meal of pea soup followed by cabbage and potatoes and *kompot* (stewed fruit beverage), with sugared berries as a snack.[95] However, likes and dislikes were indeed recognized as well. At one meeting of the Councils of the Center in Lądek-Zdrój, the problem was addressed, "that large numbers of the children do not finish their milk soups."[96] Problematic dishes and individual food items were thus certainly discussed, albeit without strongly relating them to national cuisines. Another Polish report noted distaste for sweet dough and beetroot, but a preference for bread, cabbage, and, above all, onions, additionally giving the specific advice that sour dishes were preferred over those with much salt.[97] Although some products were not always easy to obtain—for example beans, peas, and herring, as another report for the year 1950 complained—without any culturalist framing, the report showed consideration for the children by concluding: "It has to be emphasized that those products should be the base of our menu because they are very much liked by the children."[98]

Two factors may have contributed to this different, apparently less charged way of dealing with food preferences. The first is the fact that in the Polish case, there were a considerable number of adult refugees living in the region, as well. While it could not be detected in the sources that the responsible kitchen personnel, especially the chefs, were primarily of Greek or Macedonian origin, especially when they were settled all together

94 SächsHStA, 11859 SED-Kreisleitung Dresden-Land, IV/4.04. Nr. 148, Kurzer Situationsbericht über folgende Heime in denen Griechische Jugendliche ihren Ferienaufenthalt verleben sollen, undated [August 1951].

95 APSz, POW w Policach Nr. 65, Sprawozdania z przygotowania i organizacji wczasów letnich dla dzieci Państwowego Ośrodka Wychowawczego w Zgorzelcu, Sprawozdanie z organizacji placówek wczasów letnich dla dzieci P.O.W., July 23, 1951, 2. Cf. also Sturis, *Nowe Życie*, 137.

96 APSz, POW w Policach, Nr. 13, Protokół Nr. I. z zebrania Rady Ośrodka w Lądku-Zdroju, November 24, 1948, 1.

97 APSz, POW w Policach Nr. 22, Sprawozdania z działalności Wydziału Wychowawczego w Lądku-Zdroju od 15 X. 1948 r. do 30. VIII. 1949 r.—Plan Ośrodka—1948—1949, Załącznik Nr. 42 [appendix No. 42], 82.

98 APSz, POW w Policach Nr. 21, Sprawozdania z działalności Państwowego Ośrodka Wychowawczego w Zgorzelcu 1950–1951, "Sprawozdanie Wydziału Gospodarczego za czas od 1. I. 1950 r. do 31. XII. 1950 roku," 68.

Fig. 5.1: "650 Greek children live a boarding school life in a home in Sobotín", photographed by Josef Mucha, September 16, 1949. Similar to the home in Czechoslovakia portrayed here, the collective accommodation in East Germany and Poland entailed communal dining, making food an important topic for the host institutions. © ČTK / Mucha Josef / Profimedia.

in Zgorzelec, the presence of adults from the same region may well have helped implement a cuisine that was appealing to the refugee children as well, particularly as the adult refugees were increasingly involved in cultivating produce in the surrounding local agricultural cooperatives.[99] This tendency to greater self-sustenance was also the case for the Italians in Czechoslovakia, who after some failed attempts eventually managed to increase the cultivation of familiar produce.[100] In East Germany, a (kitchen) garden affiliated with the Heimkombinat "Freies Griechenland" was supposed to contribute to a better supply of fruits and vegetables. But because

99 Wojecki, *Uchodźcy polityczni z Grecji*, 48–50.
100 See Cooke, "Red Spring," 886–88.

the refugee group in the GDR consisted overwhelmingly of children and teenagers, this practice was most likely introduced only some years after their arrival and differed in its scale from the agricultural work of the adults in the other countries.[101] It took some time until at least some vegetables could be grown privately by Greeks in the GDR, if they had a garden they could make use of.[102]

The second factor relates to the repopulating of what the Polish official language framed as "recovered territories" (*ziemie odzyskane*) in the postwar Polish West. In an article on "traditional Lower Silesian cuisine," the regional ethnographic expert Anna Kurpiel posed the tricky question in her title: *Czyli jaka?* ("So what kind?")[103] As the population exchange had also led to an exchange of "culinary traditions," various layers of heritage came together in this postwar "cultural, national, and ethnic melting pot."[104] Among other examples, Kurpiel mentions "*ser zgorzelecki*"—a Polish feta cheese adaption specific to Zgorzelec—as a legacy of the refugees from the Greek Civil War who made this town the "capital of Greeks in Poland" in the postwar period.[105] While this certainly did not take place over night, there are indications that within the framework of newly composed local communities in place in the *ziemie odzyskane*, there may have been more opportunity to integrate foreign influences and a less clear division between "national dishes" than in the German case. The Zgorzelec everyday life chronicler Zdzisław Wołk reported about the gradual impact of the refugees' presence on the ground:

> In the stores, bell pepper and lamb meat appeared which were consumed at that time exclusively by Greeks. Poles approached the Greek vegetables, fruits, and dishes with indifference, but over time they began integrating them into their menu.[106]

In East Germany, on the other hand, the influx of refugees from Greece did not lead to such a diversification of the "foodscape"—or *Speisegeografie*.[107]

101 See SächsHStA, 11430 Bezirkstag/ Rat des Bezirkes Dresden, Nr. 6437, 15–16, letter to the District Council regarding the Gärtnerei Wachwitz, April 22, 1954.

102 See Maruschke, *Kinder griechischer Bürgerkriegsflüchtlinge*, 98–99.

103 Kurpiel, "Tradycyjna kuchnia dolnośląska," 90–100.

104 Kurpiel, "Tradycyjna kuchnia dolnośląska," 90.

105 Kurpiel, "Tradycyjna kuchnia dolnośląska," 95.

106 Wołk, "Życie Codziennie w Zgorzelcu," 342 [16].

107 Möhring, *Fremdes Essen*, 18 and 69. In this, East Germany also developed differently from West Germany, connected to the different situation with labor migrants but first and foremost

The East German authorities took a different approach to alleviating the "stomach question," which in a way also acknowledged a certain knowledge transfer in the culinary realm, albeit within the rather limited sphere of the homes for the Greek children: The author of the report about the "stomach question" described how the housemaster of one home for Greek refugee children had tried, with the help of an interpreter, to find out "which dishes were customary in Greece." These efforts had been futile, though, because no one knew how to correctly prepare the "foreign dishes."[108] In the end, the SED authorities turned to the few adults who had accompanied the children as teachers and minders; there were a few among them who were described as skilled in cooking "the Greek way."[109] The SED ordered them to work in the largest of the children's homes[110] and also suggested special cooking classes for German kitchen personnel.[111] By August 1951, the Greeks had designed a menu aligned with their preferences, to be cooked under the direction of a Greek chef.[112] However, the attempt to grant the Greek refugees greater autonomy, as practiced in other cases as well, with "mess hall" or "food committees,"[113] met with some resistance among the German staff. The SED ascribed this to suspicions of the German personnel misappropriating provisions and not handling the foods correctly, and consequently not wanting the Greeks to have a say or any control.[114] The party therefore ordered the establishment of so-called *Küchenkommissionen*, kitchen committees, which were to be staffed at least equally with German and Greek representatives, although the SED proposed up to 80 percent Greek participation.[115] This was

due to the lack of large-scale international tourism, cf. Ivanović, "Integration on a Plate," 138–41.

108 BArch, DR/2/6220, Bl. 368–70 verso, internal report on "education and in school care," January 5, 1950, 2.

109 A report, however, complained that two Greek women, "who would be capable of cooking," were only employed for "menial jobs in the kitchen" by the German management, SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, Bericht über die Überprüfung „Freies Griechenland," July 27, 1951, 12.

110 SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, Bericht über die Überprüfung „Freies Griechenland," July 27, 1951, 12.

111 BArch, DR/2/6220, Bl. 368–70 verso, internal report on education and in school care, January 5, 1950, 4.

112 See SächsHStA, 11859 SED-Kreisleitung Dresden-Land, IV/4.04. Nr. 148, letter to SED-Landesleitung, August 3, 1951.

113 For a similar approach of a "mess hall" or "food committee," see Dusselier, "Does Food Make Place?," 146–48.

114 SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, Bericht über die Überprüfung "Freies Griechenland," July 27, 1951, 12–13.

115 SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, Bericht über die Überprüfung "Freies Griechenland," July 27, 1951, 13.

particularly important to the East German authorities, due to some peculiar reasoning: When differences and disagreement between the German and the Greek kitchen staff were reported, the SED officials suspected that a major factor responsible for this was that "the kitchen staff consists for the most part of women not affiliated with the party [*parteilos*]."[116]

Thus ultimately linking good and empathetic care for the refugee children with the political affiliation of the personnel, the SED once again emphasized and marked the reception of the refugees from the Greek Civil War as a project intimately connected with the state ideology. This can also be interpreted, however, in connection with the difficulties of dealing with nationalistic, hostile thought in continuity from the German fascist past: The same directives for inspections in 1951 included both a background check of the personnel—in order to avoid "malevolent and reactionary forces" among them—as well as instructions that staff were to ensure that food was prepared "in accordance with the national identity [*nationale Eigenheiten*] and habits (this is connected with tolerability and digestibility), meaning, so-called national dishes."[117]

Conclusion

The reception of refugee children from the Greek Civil War in East Germany and Poland as part of the coordinated action by the Eastern bloc is a multifaceted, transnational story. Comparing the two neighboring countries in their respective postwar transitions toward socialism highlights the different national starting situations that were dealt with in specific ways, while approaches taken regarding personnel policy as well as the accommodation and education principles reveal striking similarities and testify to the ideological nature of this endeavor. Ultimately, all three of the socialist regimes involved viewed the refugee children as future cadres, often prioritizing their physical health over helping them cope with the trauma of their flight. The physical and emotional toll of what the refugees had been through, on the other hand, found expression in various ways, not least in the field of food. This concerned the "nutritional and stomach filling

116 SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, Bericht über die Überprüfung "Freies Griechenland," July 27, 1951, 13.

117 SächsHStA, 11856 SED-Landesleitung Sachsen, Nr. IV/A/1435, Directives for the audit of the situation of Greek youth and children in Saxony, undated [approx. spring 1951], quotes on 2 and 3, respectively. For food and national identity, see also Ivanović, "Integration on a Plate," 145.

necessity of food," but also went beyond this "obvious" need.[118] In particular, other functions like the "ability to eat foods that were sensually pleasing," "satisfying acquired tastes, recalling pleasant memories, and providing comfort" make food an instructive lens for researching refugee history.

In addition to addressing the refugees' perspective on questions ranging from handling the provided meals after long starvation to the refusal to eat, the "stomach question" also offers an avenue to analyze how the national was conceived in this explicitly international solidarity action. Despite the fact that they themselves were struggling with shortages in their postwar economies, both host countries strove to ensure the best possible supply for their fosterlings. The national culturalist framing of the cuisine as evidenced by the East German authorities, however, points to an essentialized conception of cultural difference.[119] Postwar Poland, on the other hand, was dealing with the new composition of a society in the "recovered territories" after its westward shift and the accompanying population exchange. In addition to the involvement of a larger number of adult refugees working in agriculture and taking part in the care for refugees, the situation in (western) Poland may arguably have provided more leeway in the "culinary melting pot." The East German authorities, by contrast, linked the question of cuisine more strongly to the people employed in refugee care and their political affiliation. Instructions regarding both the question of the menu as well as of the staff's background indicate an apprehension of negative continuities in terms of persons and/or hostile thought from the recent German fascist past, suggesting a conscious effort to distance the care for the (communist) refugees from Greece from anything that might have such negative connotations.

In this way, the "social total phenomenon" food offers potential for an integrated history of refugees and their host societies. It both accentuates the traumata of refugee children against the backdrop of their projected roles as future cadres and uncovers subtle "national" specifics, which contributes to the comparative approach. Both parts of this chapter thus propose more nuances in the research of the "emblematic refugees" to socialist East Germany and Poland, giving due regard to individual national pathways within the "bloc action" as well as suggesting new perspectives on this ideologically determined refugee history.

118 Dusselier, "Does Food Make Place?," 159; the next quotes ibid.

119 In line with and supporting this notion, the few restaurants with "foreign" cuisine in the GDR figured as *Nationalitätengaststätten* (nationalities restaurants), see Möhring, *Fremdes Essen*, 103.

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About the Author

Julia Reinke is a PhD candidate at the University of Jena. Her research interests include German and Polish history (nineteenth–twentieth century) and migration history with a focus on refugee studies.

6. From Refugees to Labor Migrants: Cold War Austria in the East-Central European Context

Maximilian Graf

Abstract: The success story of the Western Cold War concept of the political refugee is increasingly being revisited by recent scholarship. This chapter joins the debate by addressing changing practices of granting asylum in Austria throughout the Cold War. Differentiation between politically and economically motivated migration constitutes a persistent tension in refugee policies. Despite the Cold War logic, the framing of East Europeans moving westward gradually shifted from refugees to labor migrants. Departing from the country's popular image as a refugee haven, the chapter explores the impact of détente, changing global migration patterns, recruitment of foreign labor force, and economic crises on the heated debates about asylum at the end of the Cold War which resulted in more restrictive asylum legislation.

Keywords: Détente; migration; Poland; asylum

The first decades of the Cold War have been described as a "golden age" for refugees.[1] Indeed, the Western Cold War concept of the political refugee (embodied by the 1951 Geneva Convention) became a feature of the Cold War rivalry and resulted in unprecedentedly generous asylum policies. This period coincided with *les trente glorieuses*, three decades of economic growth that created demand for foreign labor in many industrialized Western countries. Furthermore, the effects of globalization on migration only gradually started to become visible. More recently, however, scholars have

1 For example, Ther, *The Outsiders*.

Frankl, Michal, ed. *Refugees and Citizens in Twentieth-Century East-Central Europe: An Unlikely Refuge?* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press / Central European University Press, 2026.
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been revisiting the success story of the concept of political refugee in the West, suggesting that the actual practice of granting asylum had its flaws (immigration quotas, selective acceptance of refugees depending on their origins and ideological backgrounds, and economic considerations). Attempts to differentiate between political and economical motivations for migration create an inherent tension in refugee policies. Even before the end of the Cold War Eastern Europeans moving westward were gradually seen less as refugees and more as labor migrants.

This development is analyzed here in a case study of neutral Austria that constituted a crucial junction of East–West migration. Despite the country's reputation as a place of first asylum and refugee transit (shaped by its response to the Hungarian refugees of 1956 and its enabling of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union since the 1960s), the question of who qualified as a political refugee and who was considered an economic migrant was an issue of constant discussion, and the practice of granting asylum underwent changes already in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite the expansion of the Geneva Convention in 1967 that applied beyond Europe's borders and the 1970s' human rights revolution (with dissidents as a highly visible group of welcome European political refugees and a certain opening up to refugees from the Global South), Austria became less accepting of ordinary refugees from Eastern Europe.[2] How and why did this change come about?

Against the historical background of developments since 1945, this chapter looks at the persistent flaws in the concept of the political refugee and examines how and why the Austrian treatment of migration from Eastern Europe changed from the 1970s to the early 1990s. It opens with an exploration of the potential impact of the age of détente and resulting changes in dealing with communist regimes and then addresses the repercussions of the economic crises of the 1970s and the resulting end to active recruitment of foreign workers. Finally, it outlines changing patterns of global migration.

The Making of a Cold War Refuge and Its Flaws

Even today, contemporary Austrian politicians and journalists regularly refer to positive memories of their country's response to the various "waves of refugees" from neighboring communist countries. Historical research, however, has challenged the image of Austrians consistently welcoming

2 For a detailed discussion of the state of the field, see Graf, "Austria as a Cold War Refuge," 619–49.

refugees who had been living under communism. After debunking this myth, this chapter moves on by taking a thorough look at the factors that influenced Austria's changing attitude toward refugees in the second half of the twentieth century.[3] It makes sense here to begin by considering the formative years of Austria's Cold War asylum policies.

At the end of the Second World War, as many as 1.65 million displaced persons (DPs) and German-speaking expellees were stranded in postwar Austria. They were everything but welcome: The Austrian government regarded them as a burden and aimed to repatriate or resettle them. Some 350,000 nevertheless stayed in the country permanently, and Austria complained about a lack of international support in dealing with them. Despite these tensions, however, the developing Western concept of the political refugee as an escapee from communist rule fell on fertile ground in Austria during the decade of quadripartite Allied occupation, no doubt in part due to the country's anti-communist stance.

In 1955, Austria regained its sovereignty with the conclusion of the State Treaty and adopted a neutrality law.[4] Its new status was tested already in autumn 1956 when the Soviet Union violently suppressed the Hungarian uprising and nearly 180,000 persons fled into Austria. All these refugees were granted political asylum, but only a small percentage of them stayed in Austria permanently. International anti-communist solidarity ensured that most could quickly travel onward.[5] All escapees from communist rule were considered political refugees regardless of their actual motivations. According to Emmanuel Comte, their swift resettlement in the West aimed to stabilize West Germany and other countries bordering the Eastern bloc.[6] As Austrian state secretary for foreign affairs, Bruno Kreisky was conscious of his country's international reputation and standing with other Western nations. Alluding to Switzerland's role as the home of the Red Cross, he advocated for Austria to take on a new and globally visible role as an asylum-granting country.[7]

Meanwhile, however, flaws in Austria's record as a refuge had become visible as well: In late 1956, as it became clear that—despite overwhelming anti-communist solidarity in the West and international support—not all Hungarian refugees would move on to other destinations, the tone of

3 For a critical reassessment, see Graf and Knoll, "In Transit or Asylum Seekers?," 91–111. For a monograph-length analysis, see Knoll, *Zwischen Aufnahme und Transit*.

4 Stourzh and Mueller, *A Cold War over Austria*.

5 Gémes, *Austria and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution*.

6 Comte, "Waging the Cold War," 461–81.

7 Kreisky, *Im Strom der Politik*, 231.

public discourse changed. Refugees initially portrayed as heroic freedom fighters were soon denounced as ungrateful and parasitical. Austrians' initial willingness to be helpful quickly subsided as these "victims of communism" began competing with them for jobs and accommodation.[8] From that moment on, the "We've already done so much for refugees" argument was ever present in Austrian discourse about flight and migration; in 1956–57 regarding the otherwise forgotten DPs, later and to the present day with reference to 1956. Whenever Austria faced a "refugee crisis," it called for international support, and until the 1970s, the West responded accordingly by helping with resettlement.[9] From the Austrian perspective, however, aid and resettlement never happened quickly enough, and the country was left with the impression that receiving countries were picking the best people and leaving Austria with those no one else wanted. The resealing of Hungary's border with Austria in 1957 did not prevent further refugee movements across the Iron Curtain, but the number did go down until the year 1968 to an annual influx of approximately four thousand people per year, of whom a large majority was granted asylum.[10]

Following the crushing of the Prague Spring between August and late October 1968, some 162,000 persons came to Austria. As in 1956, Austria decided to grant asylum to all refugees who applied for it. In late summer 1968, the Austrian government called upon the international community for support, but the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was only in a position to help those recognized as refugees under the Geneva Convention. In total, a mere twelve thousand Czechs and Slovaks applied for asylum in Austria, and it is estimated that only two to three thousand stayed in Austria permanently. For most refugees, Austria only served as a temporary haven. Many returned to Czechoslovakia or migrated to other Western countries in need of a skilled workforce. Although complaints about the resulting costs were heard, Austrian media covered the refugees from Czechoslovakia as "transients," and the population responded less critically than it had to the Hungarian refugees in 1956–57.[11] The overwhelming public sympathy for the Prague Spring in Austria (and probably the fact that a smaller number of people intended to settle in the country) secured a much more enduring sympathy for those who fled the military intervention. In 1968, domestic and international anti-communist solidarity—characteristic

8 Zierer, "Willkommen Ungarnflüchtlinge 1956?," 157–71.

9 Knoll, "Calling for Support," 387–407.

10 Stanek, *Verfolgt Verjagt Vertrieben*, 82–86.

11 Stern, "Die tschechoslowakische Emigration," 1025–43.

for Austria as a country of first asylum and refugee transit—was still in place. However, things were about to change.

Throughout the 1970s, asylum for dissidents was portrayed as a continuation of the country's humanitarian tradition. In 1976, Kreisky (who served as chancellor from 1970–83) spoke out in favor of dissidents several times. After the expatriation of the East German dissident singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann in November 1976, Kreisky offered all East European dissidents asylum in Austria. After the publication of Charter 77, which criticized the government for failing to implement human rights provisions it had signed in the Helsinki Final Act, many Czechoslovak dissidents were persecuted. Not all of them were happy about Kreisky's offer since the Czechoslovak authorities could use it as a pretext to exile them. Still, some claimed asylum in Austria in 1977, and many more followed in the years after.[12] These dissidents, however, constituted a privileged group of refugees. At the same time, the general acceptance rates for the growing number of asylum seekers from Czechoslovakia (with a first peak in 1979) and other East European countries started to decline. Within the general discourse about economic crises and their repercussions on the national job market, public and political discussions about refugees turned negative and subsequently affected asylum decisions.[13]

Game Changers? Détente, Labor Migration, and the Global South

Neutral Austria, located between the East and West of a divided Cold War Europe, had been a pioneer in developing détente—a relaxation of tensions between the blocs. The reasons for that were twofold: First, the Soviet Union aimed to model and manage Austrian neutrality within its foreign policy concept of "peaceful coexistence," and encouraged Vienna to develop relations with the socialist countries. Second, Austria aimed to profit from good relationships with the "people's democracies," not least in the economic field, and continuously improved its relations with the socialist camp throughout the 1960s.[14] The country was a determined Western actor in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe

12 Gilde, *Österreich im KSZE-Prozess*, 289–304.

13 Janýř, "Tschechoslowakei 1968," 182–88; Valeš, "Die tschechoslowakischen Flüchtlinge 1968–1989," 172–82; Haváč, "Czech Refugees," 82–97; Valeš, "Die tschechoslowakischen Flüchtlinge 1968–1989," 172–82.

14 Mueller, *A Good Example*, 39–132. On Austrian 'Ostpolitik' in general, see Suppan and Mueller, *Peaceful Coexistence*.

(CSCE) and with regard to the economic, political, societal, humanitarian, and ideological dimensions of East-West détente. Starting in the mid-1970s, improving relations with socialist states, especially increasing economic cooperation, progress (however limited) on humanitarian issues, and in some cases even a growing permeability of borders contributed to a gradual change in attitudes toward refugees from these countries. Despite persisting ideological incompatibilities and differing societal systems, the socialist regimes were increasingly treated during the period of détente as partners (at least economically) and thus not as a source of mass flight.[15] As Eastern European fears of a "revanchist" Germany abated, so did Western European fears of communist expansion. Therefore, détente is one of the crucial explanatory factors for the changing attitudes toward refugees.

A second factor is rooted in (inter)national economic developments. Juxtaposing Austria's history as a refuge with the country's policies regarding labor migration and foreigners facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the changes from the 1970s onward. Labor recruitment started as soon as the remaining DPs had been absorbed into the job market: After a national compromise (the so-called Raab-Olah agreement) of 1961 securing the needed additional workforce for the Austrian economy and preserving the privileged access of Austrian nationals to the domestic labor market, Austria signed agreements with Spain (1962), Turkey (1964), and Yugoslavia (1966). Intended to serve the temporary needs of the Austrian economy, the guest workers were the most substantial group of immigrants since the postwar DPs and expellees.[16]

The example of migration from Yugoslavia in particular supports the reading of Austria's history as a refuge within the context of the country's understanding of détente and its recruitment of foreign labor. After the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, Yugoslavia had become a special case between East and West. Although Yugoslavia remained a single-party dictatorship, Belgrade's efforts to improve relations with the West led to a quick rapprochement between Austria and Yugoslavia.[17] For people who wanted to flee Yugoslavia, this was a game changer: The more bilateral relations improved, the less willing Austria was to acknowledge Yugoslav refugees. Instead, throughout the 1950s, they were mostly perceived as economic migrants,[18] and Austria was considerate of how receiving refugees might

15 For my observations regarding Austria's CSCE politics, see Graf, "European Détente," 249–74.

16 On labor migration, see Rupnow, "The History and Memory," 37–65; Meighörner, *Hier Zuhause*; Gürses, Kogoj, and Mattl, *Gastarbajteri*; Bakondy, *Viel Glück!*.

17 Graf, "Upside-down," 197–206.

18 Rolandi, "Escaping Yugoslavia," 85–109; Engelke, *Jeder Flüchtling*. Also, see Zahra, "'Prisoners of the Postwar'," 191–215; Stanek, *Verfolgt Verjagt Vertrieben*, 79–81.

affect relations with Yugoslavia.[19] In 1954, two thousand refugees from Yugoslavia entered Austria, but only a small percentage claimed political persecution as the reason for their flight. Most of them attributed their migration to the low living standards in their home country and expressed hopes of emigrating overseas. Austrian officials discussed this matter in depth, seeking ways to deny asylum to those whose primary motivation for leaving was economic. Internal deliberations even included the idea of establishing labor camps for refugees that might serve to deter potential migrants.[20] Similar debates occurred when Hungarian refugees started arriving in Austria during the liberalization period prior to the revolution of 1956. Only the bloody crackdown changed the Austrian attitude. Despite the political decision to collectively grant asylum to all Hungarian refugees in 1956, and Czechs and Slovaks in 1968, the desire to differentiate between political and economic refugees from Eastern Europe never disappeared. In 1964, in spite of political liberalizations in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, the Ministry of the Interior noted increasing numbers of asylum seekers. Those from Yugoslavia were often considered seasonal migrant workers in the agricultural sector. An internal assessment states: "The largest share of asylum seekers wants to migrate overseas or hopes to find better opportunities to earn money in Austria."[21]

Given this assessment, the Ministry of the Interior expressed "reservations about a general abolition" of visa requirements with socialist states as proposed by Bulgaria in the mid-1960s.[22] Greater freedom of movement across the Iron Curtain without visas only gradually made it onto Austria's Cold War agenda, and from the Viennese government's perspective it was always meant to foster travel and not migration. When Austrian foreign minister Kreisky visited Bulgaria in 1965, he explained Austria's hesitation by saying "that the difficulties were especially great where neighboring states

19 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Archiv der Republik (ÖStA/AdR), Bundeskanzleramt/Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (BKA/AA), II-Pol, Jugoslawien 9, Gr.Zl. 142.428-Pol/54, GZ. 142.481-Pol/54, memo "Steigender Zustrom von Flüchtlingen aus Jugoslawien," Vienna, March 25, 1954

20 ÖStA/AdR, BKA/AA, II-Pol, Jugoslawien 9, Gr.Zl. 142.428-Pol/54, GZ. 148.542-Pol/54, Referatsabschrift des Resumé der interministeriellen Besprechung vom 10. Dezember 1954, in: Memo "Massnahmen zur Eindämmung des Flüchtlingsstromes aus Jugoslawien," Vienna, December 22, 1954.

21 ÖStA/AdR, Bundesministerium für Inneres (BMI), 12U, box 189, memo "Asyl- und Flüchtlingswesen." For similar statements in another context, see BPD Wien, July 1, 1961, ÖStA/AdR, BMI, 12U, box 134.

22 ÖStA/AdR, Bundesministerium für auswärtige Angelegenheiten (BMAA)/II-Pol, Bulgaria 2, Gr.Zl. 131.851-6/65, GZ. 136.655-6/65, memo "Bulgarien – bulgarischer Vorschlag auf Aufhebung des Sichtvermerkszwanges," Vienna, May 14, 1965.

were concerned. This was the case, for example, with Yugoslavia. Austria does not want to become an immigration country. It is too small for that."[23]

From the mid-1960s, Austrian labor recruitment in Yugoslavia de facto regulated a migration pattern that had already begun and now developed on an even greater scale.[24] Difficulties surrounding their integration became increasingly obvious in the early 1970s,[25] especially in the cities. The Austrian minister of trade, Josef Staribacher, noted in his diary that labor migrants

> are considered outcasts and are then crammed into some scandalous quarters and naturally form a pure ghetto there. The government should make much more effort to integrate these guest workers into Austria as quickly as possible. The best solution would be, as has been done for centuries in Vienna, to accept them as Austrian citizens.[26]

However, this was not on the agenda, and the existence of "Yugoslav ghettos" fed anti-guest worker sentiments. Staribacher noted: "Instead of trying to assimilate the guest workers, the opposite development will occur through ghetto formation and xenophobia."[27]

The first peak of foreign labor in Austria was reached in 1973, with 230,000 foreign workers representing almost 9 percent of the total workforce in Austria. Approximately two-thirds of guest workers came from Yugoslavia, less than 20 percent from Turkey, and the rest from Germany, Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Northern Africa. The first oil price shock resulted in a recruitment stop and a freeze of the number of foreign workers at the level of 1973. A quarter of the foreign workforce lost their residence and work permits. According to the Austrian government, the situation on the job market called for a further reduction. Staribacher noted in his diary: "I have full understanding for this, although I say that as socialists, we should also be ashamed of this attitude. When our economic system needs workers, guest workers are brought in, and when we get into a recession, we throw them out again quite brutally."[28]

23 ÖStA/AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, Bulgaria 2, Gr.Zl. 131.851-6/65, GZ. 139.853-6/65, Memcon Kreisky–Bachev, Vienna, July 22, 1965.

24 Ivanović "Die Beschäftigung," 35–48; Ivanović, *Geburtstag pišeš normalno*; Lorber, *Angeworben*; for an English summary, see Lorber, "To Come into the Focus," 161–85.

25 Staribacher diaries, March 5, 1971. For the online edition, see *Tagebücher Josef Staribacher*.

26 Staribacher diaries, May 26, 1972.

27 Staribacher diaries, April 5, 1973. On the social and spatial segregation of Yugoslav (and Turkish) migrants, see Weigl, *Migration und Integration*, 73–78.

28 Staribacher diaries, January 7, 1976.

Xenophobic tendencies in Austrian society were hardly anything new, but as they became more prominent in the discussions over the guest worker question, the government aimed to counteract them by referring to the multinational legacies of the Habsburg Empire. These processes overlapped with another aggravation to the economic situation in Europe after the second oil price shock of 1979. In Austria (with a strong but largely unreformed nationalized industrial sector), this meant the definitive end of full employment and lower tolerance of foreign competitors on the job market. This development certainly contributed to the changing Austrian attitude toward refugees from the late 1970s but especially in the 1980s.

A third factor that must be considered are changes in global migration patterns. Until the 1970s, Austria did not receive refugees from the Global South. When approached by the international community, the government usually referred to the country being itself overburdened with hosting refugees, and, for the same reason, Vienna's financial contributions to international refugee care never reached the level of similar states. However, in the 1970s, Austria received Chileans, Kurds, Asians from Uganda, and Vietnamese "boat people" in small numbers but not significantly smaller than the numbers received by other European countries. Because of the rather assimilatory Austrian understanding of integration, refugees from the Global South were primarily regarded as a problem, but this was not true for all groups. Solidarity with the "boat people," who had become a subject of global media coverage, was strong. The regularly increased quotas for "boat people" were largely facilitated by the willingness of NGOs and civil society to accommodate these refugees and cover the costs of their integration. Parallel to solidarity with the "boat people" and in the shadow of the reception of dissidents, the number of Eastern European refugees in Austria increased rapidly. With the exception of 1968, their number reached a twenty-year peak in 1979. Faced with exhausted reception capacities, Austria deplored the duration and selectivity of immigration procedures in the United States, Australia, and Canada that caused "long waiting periods," "uncertainty and dissatisfaction among the refugees," and "a number of other problems." Once again, Austria felt overburdened and left alone: "In view of the refugee situation in the Indochinese region, other countries often overlook the problems and costs that Austria incurs as a country of first asylum for Eastern European refugees." When a steadily growing number of Poles reached Austria in 1981, this had repercussions on the country's global refugee policy. Chancellor Kreisky rejected additional admissions of "boat people." Moreover, Austria regarded the global response to the Indochinese

refugee situation as a reason for not reserving any resettlement quotas for Polish asylum seekers in Austria.[29]

Exemplify the Transformation: The Crucial Case of the Polish Refugees in the Early 1980s

The "Polish crisis" of 1980–83 constituted another major intra-bloc crisis of the Cold War, both in theory and in view of contemporaries comparable to 1956 and 1968, but the developments of détente had changed attitudes, perceptions, and mutual (i.e., economic) dependencies. Additionally, the international economic situation had dramatically worsened, and with some delay its effects were showing on Austria, with its large structurally unreformed nationalized industries. To understand the change, we must take a look at Austrian-Polish relations within the context of détente before we turn to the refugee situation of 1981.

Poland had led the way in Austria's Ostpolitik in the early 1960s, and political and economic relations flourished in the 1970s. In mid-1980, overall relations were labeled as "being of privileged character" by the Austrian government. From summer 1980 onward, the independent trade union Solidarność posed a growing challenge to the Polish regime. During the initial phase of the Polish protest movement, Chancellor Kreisky and most Austrian officials sympathized with Solidarność, if cautiously. As the crisis in Poland escalated over the course of 1981, Kreisky's stance became more restrained and the debate in Austria more contentious. The chancellor was upset when Polish coal deliveries to Austria ceased and called upon Polish miners to return to work. The labor strikes turned a bad economic situation in Poland worse.[30]

Austrian officials had previously turned a blind eye to temporary or seasonal unofficial labor migration from Poland, which had existed since the second half of the 1970s.[31] The desperate state of the Polish economy in 1981 pushed many Polish citizens to flee to—or through—Austria, even though they were not (yet) politically persecuted. In the context of Cold War refugee discourses after 1945, these Polish citizens represent a special case. Here was the first substantial cohort of Cold War refugees whose homeland did not have a common border with Austria. Their arrival was made possible by an

29 For a first historical approach to this topic, see Graf, "Humanitarianism with Limits," 367–87.
30 Graf, "Österreich," 201–21.
31 Stanek, *Verfolgt Verjagt Vertrieben*, 146–47.

agreement from 1972 that allowed for visa-free travel. Polish refugees could travel to Austria legally without a visa as tourists and apply for asylum once they arrived. In the course of the spring 1981, the number of applicants had increased substantially in comparison to previous years. By October 1981, almost twenty-two thousand Poles had applied, in addition to approximately five thousand "unrecorded tourists" from Poland who stayed in Austria. When the refugee camps were filled, the government housed people in inns and bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Only 10 percent of those applying for asylum status were deemed eligible under the Geneva Convention. The rest received a (temporary) residence permit.[32]

As in 1956 and 1968, the Austrian government called on the international community to help master the "refugee crisis," but this time the response was minimal. Kreisky wrote to President Ronald Reagan calling for the United States to admit as many refugees as possible. Despite conceding that "[u]ndoubtedly, the refugee problem is much more severe in areas of crises on other continents," Kreisky insisted "that Austria is not an immigration country and her capacity to absorb refugees [is] therefore limited."[33] Frustrated with the slow resettlement of Polish refugees, the minister of the interior, Erwin Lanc, complained that the UNHCR was "determined to utilize the larger contingents of immigration countries for refugees from Vietnam. Therefore, there is hardly any room for the refugees from the East, especially for the Poles."[34]

The Poles who had come to Austria were perceived as labor migrants by both the international community and in domestic politics. Interestingly, the representatives of the Polish regime shared this view. Visiting Austria in November 1981, the Polish foreign minister, Joszef Czyrek, stated: "The practice of granting asylum is a remnant of the Cold War, which does not apply to young people who are looking for happiness and prosperity and suddenly 'refine' themselves into political refugees."[35]

The majority of the Austrian population rejected these Polish asylum seekers, whom they regarded as "economic migrants." The Austrian yellow press fueled this perception, and the government experienced growing domestic pressure. Although Kreisky recalled that the population's reaction had been similar in 1956,[36] his concerns about the public mood grew and in

32 Graf, "Fluchtbewegungen," 123–36; Knoll, "Flucht oder Migration?," 215–30.

33 Kreisky-Archiv, box USA 8, Kreisky to Reagan, August 14, 1981.

34 Staribacher diaries, November 30, 1981.

35 ÖStA/AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, GZ. 166.18.14/23-II.3/81, Memcon Pahr–Czyrek, Vienna, November 10, 1981.

36 Staribacher diaries, September 29, 1981.

a cabinet meeting on December 1, 1981, he "noted that there was a growing aversion in the Austrian population toward the Polish refugees and that the government had to consider demanding visas again."[37] This measure was taken already on December 7, 1981. The reasons given publicly were overcrowded refugee camps and the massive cost of housing and caring for refugees. In reality, it was a concession to public opinion.[38]

Meanwhile, the situation in Poland had deteriorated further, and the communist leadership eventually decided to impose martial law. The new government led by General Wojciech Jaruzelski jailed the leadership of Solidarność and prohibited the labor union. Commenting on the imposition of martial law in Poland, Kreisky announced on Austrian national radio on the morning of December 13: "We always have accepted political refugees […] and have viewed refugees generously. We are against economic refugees because we simply cannot support them."[39] In cases where asylum seekers were in "immediate danger," however, visas had to be issued "without delay."[40] The situation for Polish refugees had improved after the imposition of martial law. Some third-party states agreed to accept refugees from Austria. Moreover, the UNHCR could become active since "there was no doubt any longer that this group qualified for political refugee status." Austria had stopped the influx of refugees coming into the country and was determined to see new arrivals quickly transported to third countries.[41] The support of the international community and agreements to accept refugees, however, arrived slowly, from the Austrian perspective, and a large number of refugees stayed in the country. During the Christmas season, a wave of solidarity swept the country, and private donations increased by leaps and bounds, even as Austrian public opinion and the national and local media continued to voice discontent in the new year. Many Austrians alerted Kreisky to their personal dislike for these refugees in no uncertain terms, sending the chancellor letters that stated, "Austrians do not care for Poles in our land," and demanding that he "send the Poles home!!!" Some letters characterized the Polish refugees as "a dirty pack of lazies."[42]

37 Staribacher diaries, December 1, 1981.

38 Molden, "Die Ost-West-Drehscheibe," 687–774, at 763–65.

39 ÖStA/AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, GZ. 166.03.00/355-II.3/81, ORF-transcript "Hörfunk-Sonderjournal (9 Uhr) vom 13. 12.1981: BK Kreisky zur Entwicklung in Polen," in memo "Polen; Verhängung des Ausnahmezustandes. Information für den Herrn Bundesminister," Vienna, November 14, 1981.

40 Kreisky-Archiv, box Polen 1. Memo "Polen; Visum-Anträge freigelassener Internierter," Vienna, March 1, 1982.

41 ÖStA/AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, GZ. 166.02.40/53-II.3/81, memo "Gespräch des Generalsekretärs des BMAA mit Direktor Homann-Herimberg," Vienna, December 23, 1981.

42 See the extensive file in Kreisky-Archiv, box Polen 1.

The worst tensions over the refugee situation in Austria had subsided by June 1982, due both to the reinstatement of visa requirements and increased international aid. The United States, Canada, and Australia all agreed to accept sizable contingents of Polish refugees. Switzerland accepted one thousand refugees, and other countries smaller numbers. Austria continued to plead for the emigration of refugees, because, as Foreign Ministry officials argued, "Austria would not be able to take tens of thousands of refugees, due to its size and economic strength." They added: "Our country can only continue its humanitarian role if the international community will help us master this difficult task."[43] Like in 1956 and 1968, Austria only agreed to serve as a port of transit for the refugees of 1981–82. What was different in the Polish crisis was the negativity of the refugee discourse from the beginning.

The more the Cold War drew to a close, the more this tendency surfaced. Faced with economic crises and a lagging job market, Austrian attitudes toward refugees as evidenced in public and political discourse about refugees were increasingly negative, which affected decisions whether to grant or deny asylum. The trend of declining accepting rates continued, and the Austrian chancellors received monthly briefings on the exact numbers of asylum seekers.[44] In 1984 a substantially higher number of Polish citizens traveled to Austria (often in organized groups) and claimed asylum there. The Ministry of the Interior became concerned and called for visa quotas to reduce the number of potential asylum seekers, but the Foreign Ministry ruled this out.[45] While Austrian authorities aimed to prevent rising numbers of asylum seekers, civil society started to voice its concerns about this tendency and the conditions for refugees in Austria in general. Unlike in other Western European countries (for example Switzerland), more than 90 percent of refugees in Austria were still of Eastern European origin. In Austria, the shift to a growing percentage of refugees from the Global South happened only after the end of the Cold War.[46] Still, Austria's practice of dealing with refugees from Eastern Europe was already affected by the new

43 ÖStA/AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, GZ. 166.02.40/79-II.3/82, Hietsch (Abt. IV.2) to Sektion II, Vienna, June 30, 1982, Zl. 0.07.01/180-IV.2/82.

44 For the monthly reports from 1983 to the early 1990s, see ÖStA/AdR, Kabinett Vranitzky, box "Flüchtlinge."

45 ÖStA/AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, GZ. 166.02.40/5-II.3/84, Wotava to BMAA, Warsaw, April 5, 1984, Zl. 57-Res/84; ÖStA/AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, GZ. 166.03.10/1-II.3/84, Information für den Herrn Bundesminister, Vienna, April 13, 1984; ÖStA/AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, GZ. 166.03.10/2-II.3/84, Information für den Herrn Bundesminister. SV-Erteilung an polnische Staatsangehörige, Vienna, April 12, 1984.

46 "Die Österreicher sind 'flüchtlingsmüde'," 2.

global dimension of refugee affairs, namely the slower resettlement of those East Europeans who arrived in Austria.

Migration Crisis: The Dissolution of the Iron Curtain and the Resealing of Borders

Against the background of the lifting of the martial law in 1983, Austrian-Polish relations improved again, and the existing treaty was re-activated in early 1988 to allow visa-free travel. The outcome of the renewed political turmoil—that ultimately led to a peaceful end of communist rule in Poland—was still uncertain, and a high number of Polish refugees once again entered Austria. Between January and October 1988, 5,833 Poles applied for political asylum in Austria. Only 7 percent of them were granted asylum status. By mid-November 1988, the Austrian government was once again providing for four thousand Polish citizens.[47] Public and political reactions mirrored what had happened in 1981: Faced with increasing numbers of Polish and Hungarian refugees, the Austrian government implemented an accelerated procedure for their asylum claims in spring 1988.[48] This step soon caused resistance and even hunger strikes by the refugees who expected negative decisions.[49] The Ministry of the Interior produced an information leaflet urging potential asylum seekers to reconsider their emigration decision and warning that they had little chance of being granted asylum or finding work. As for those who intended to migrate through Austria to destinations further away, the leaflet stressed that there were barely any immigration quotas available and that filing an asylum claim in Austria would nullify a future claim in a third country.[50]

Newspapers and angry letters to the chancellor voiced discontent with the government's inability to put an end to the continuous arrival of refugees, who many considered to be economic migrants in search of a better life in Austria. Given the dramatic changes occurring in Eastern Europe,

47 Kreisky-Archiv, Depositum Franz Vranitzky, AP, box "MP Grosz Ungarn Nov. 88; MP Rakowski (Polen) Nov. 88; AM Johannes CSSR," "Flüchtlingssituation," November 16, 1988, in folder "Besuch Premierminister Rakowski; 24.–26. 11. 1988.,"

48 ÖStA/AdR, Kabinett Vranitzky, Box "Flüchtlinge," Blecha to Vranitzky, Vienna, March 22, 1988; ÖStA/AdR, Kabinett Vranitzky, box "Flüchtlinge." Einlageblatt zu Zl. 18.001/44-II/6/88.

49 ÖStA/AdR, Kabinett Vranitzky, box "Flüchtlinge," Gizowski to Flemming, Vienna, July 1, 1988.

50 ÖStA/AdR, Kabinett Vranitzky, box "Flüchtlinge," Merkblatt "An alle Asylwerber aus Ungarn und Polen," March 1988.

the Austrian Foreign Ministry began to fear and prepare for more drastic scenarios at the end of 1988. In case of a deteriorating domestic situation in Eastern Europe, "suddenly growing streams of refugees" seemed likely, and Austria needed to be prepared this time.[51] These developments stood at the beginning of a "migration crisis" as perceived by politicians and significant parts of the country's media landscape.

The dissatisfying living conditions at home and the models of peaceful transformation and democratization unfolding in Poland and Hungary led many East Germans to leave the unreformed German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the summer of 1989. The initial motivation, however, came from the apparent opening of the Iron Curtain along the Austrian-Hungarian border. Relations between Austria and Hungary had been improving dramatically ever since the 1960s and gradually even represented a "masterpiece of European détente." Due to both Austrian pressure and domestic changes in Hungary, the border between the two countries had become porous. The Hungarian government had completed removing deadly minefields along the border with Austria in 1971. This led to increased contacts across the border zone and regional cooperation. In 1979, visa-free travel was introduced, which greatly increased border crossings. In 1988, Hungary introduced an internationally valid passport, and Hungarians took advantage of the new opportunities to travel in the West. In the spring of 1989, the rest of the border installations between Austria and Hungary were removed. That summer, dramatic pictures from the opening of the Austrian-Hungarian border were seen around the world. In an iconic photo op, the Austrian and Hungarian foreign ministers, Alois Mock and Gyula Horn, cut the barbed wire of the Iron Curtain in June 1989. These instances all served as invitations for East Germans to flee their country.[52]

Another critical moment in shaping the course for events to come was the Hungarian reform communist government's response to the arrival of (initially mostly) Hungarian refugees from Romania. They had suffered a great deal in the late Ceaușescu years under the campaign to "systematize towns and villages" and in other ways. Grassroots support among the population for these refugees pressed the government to react and put an end to the delusion of "brotherly" relations with Romania. In need of a legal basis to accept and support the refugees, the Hungarian government thus joined the 1951 Refugee Convention in the spring of 1989. In the end,

51 ÖStA/AdR, BMAA, II-Pol, GZ. 701.03/19-II-3/88, Information "Osteuropa im Wandel? Zur innenpolitischen Bewegung in den WP-Staaten und Jugoslawien," Vienna, November 11, 1988.

52 For a detailed analysis, see Graf, "The Opening," 138–58.

the acceptance of one group of refugees necessitated providing the same assistance to another group that started to arrive at the very moment when Hungary became a signatory.[53]

The number of attempts to leave the GDR had dramatically increased by mid-June 1989. In the course of the Pan-European Picnic on August 19, some six hundred East German citizens crossed the border into Austria in just one day. In terms of numbers, this represented the largest group of refugees escaping the GDR since the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961.[54] In the weeks between the picnic and the opening of the Hungarian border on September 11, civil society on the Austrian side of the border took care of East German refugees. The Red Cross organized camps and provided for refugees until they could be directed toward the West German embassy in Vienna. For many locals, these events conjured vivid memories of 1956. On September 10, the Red Cross had already set up welcome centers at the border. When thousands of refugees began crossing the border the next day, they received food and medical care, if needed. During the first few days after the border opening, as many as fifty thousand East Germans may have crossed from Hungary through Austria on their way to West Germany. These refugees received a warm welcome in Austria as "transiting refugees." The international community was impressed by the spontaneous Austrian aid efforts, which contrasted with the previous discussions of migration crisis.[55]

However, in the summer and fall of 1989, concerns in Austria grew again with regard to growing numbers of refugees coming to the country as a result of turmoil and the political transitions in the rest of Eastern Europe. With the dismantling of the Iron Curtain, the issue of how to secure the eastern borders became more urgent. Austrians feared an "invasion" of Romanian and other Eastern European citizens.[56] Austria was no exception to the general Western trend of declining acceptance rates of the constantly growing number of asylum seekers. Viewed from an East-West perspective shaped by the Cold War, Austria feared being the most exposed—and also being abandoned by the international community that had contributed so much (though never enough from the perspective of Vienna) to the handling of previous refugee movements. Already in late August, the Foreign Ministry concluded: "The upheaval in Eastern Europe is bringing with it a new wave of refugees. Austria will only be able to meet this additional challenge if it

53 For a summary, see Borvendég and Szekér, "Before the Walls Fell Down," 89–156, at 103–5.

54 Graf, "Das Paneuropäische Picknick," 33–59.

55 Graf, "Die Welt," 135–79, at 162–79.

56 Graf, "Die Welt," 157 and 170–71.

continues to separate political refugees from so-called economic refugees while strictly adhering to the principles of the rule of law. Austria must remain a country of asylum for genuinely persecuted people."[57]

In late 1989, refugees from Romania began arriving in Austria. Like Poles in 1981, Romanian passport holders could travel from Hungary to Austria without restrictions and apply for asylum there. Austrian media intensified their critical discussion of the "migration crisis," encouraging the rejection of additional refugees. Shocked by the bloody revolution in Romania, Austrians initially sent generous donations to the stricken country that had overthrown a dictator, but these demonstrations of solidarity nevertheless quickly subsided in Austria and elsewhere in the West. Austrians showed little empathy for refugees who arrived when the upheaval was over and applied for asylum. The political and economic situation changed dramatically at the end of the Cold War and so did the old enemy image about the communist threat that already had faded since the heyday of the détente era. As it became harder for Romanian refugees to continue on to other Western countries from Austria, more of them stayed in the country and expected support. By early 1990, 12,199 Romanian refugees had applied for asylum in Austria in accordance with the Geneva Convention. Media and popular discourses narrowed in on "economic refugees" who were overstaying their welcome in Austria. In addition, Romanian refugees were suspected of being agents of the Romanian state security agency Securitate, criminals, or worse potential sexual predators, constituting security risks for the country. These debates spilled out into the streets in February and March 1990. In the small village of Kaisersteinbruch in Burgenland, for example, protesters gathered in the streets to voice their opposition to the planned accommodation of eight hundred Romanian men in their local Austrian army barracks. In response to public pressure, Austria began to require visas for Romanian citizens wanting to enter the country on March 15, 1990. This quickly reduced the number of refugees entering the country.[58] A similar step followed in regard to Poland later that year, and Austrian armed forces were soon helping to monitor and secure the border to Hungary. Initially planned as a short-term measure, the military involvement lasted until 2011 and was de facto reinstated in 2015. Reimposing control over mobility across borders that had been promoted as open to allow greater "freedom of movement" throughout the Cold War symbolized Austria's attitude toward potential migration from Eastern Europe post-1989.

57 ÖStA/AdR, BMAA, GZ. 713/9-II.3/89, memo "Entwicklungen in Osteuropa. Überlegungen zu einem Konzept der Bundesregierung," Vienna, August 30, 1989.

58 Knoll, "Eine 'Völkerwanderung'?," 511–36.

In discussions about migration, asylum became a contested issue in Austria. The opening of the East, which resulted in heated debates about growing numbers of asylum seekers, led to a change in the country's refugee policy and a new asylum law in 1991–92, which, among other things, introduced today's practice of safe third countries.[59] In consequence, the number of asylum seekers decreased, but with the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the next major influx of refugees was just around the corner. In accordance with the new asylum law, but bearing in mind that they were fleeing from a war-torn region, the refugees from former Yugoslavia were treated as "de facto refugees" (since they had transited at least through Slovenia) and granted temporary residence permits and soon thereafter in 1992–93 also the possibility to work in Austria—not least because the economy was once again in need of an additional workforce.

Conclusion

Austria's role as a country of first asylum and refuge transit was no less than indispensable for the West throughout the Cold War and must be acknowledged appropriately. Nonetheless, the Austrian narrative of the country as an exceptionally welcoming safe haven for refugees is little more than a myth. In general terms, up to the 1980s, the acceptance rates of refugees from communism as political refugees remained high. Many of them wanted to move on anyway, and Austria served as what it always wanted to be: a transit country. Refugees from Europe were preferred over those from the Global South. In the later stages of the Cold War, however, Austria became more reluctant regarding refugees and migration from Eastern Europe as well. This transformation became visible from the late 1970s onward with the "Polish crisis" as the crucial showcase. The progress of détente had changed the perceptions of socialist regimes, and this had implications for how Austria chose to deal with these countries and Vienna's willingness to recognize those who fled as refugees. This holds true not only for Austria but the rest of the West, and it further complicated the handling of "refugee crises." Additionally, international economic developments and their effects on labor migration to Austria were decisive for this development. Yugoslav migration to Austria in the second half of the twentieth century points to the effects of détente and labor migration and shows the interconnectedness of the country's migration history.

59 Knoll, "Eine 'Völkerwanderung'?," 511–36.

Austria's changing attitude toward migration from Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War constitutes no exception from international trends of the time. The country's geographic location at the East-West divide shaped the Austrian discourse, which—despite all differences—calls for comparison with the (West) German case.[60] The centrality of the numbers of asylum seekers—which was no doubt rising but still small compared to other categories of migration—in discourses about migration should be reevaluated within the context of the more general history of migration in Austria and the economic situation's effect on foreigners' access to the Austrian job market. In this regard, despite all the changes resulting from Austria's accession to the European Union (EU) with its single market in 1995, continuities to the EU's eastern enlargements in 2004 and 2007 exist. Even though the 2004 enlargement further added to Austria's already remarkable "membership dividend," the country made full use of the seven-year-transitional period before it opened its labor market for citizens of the new member states in 2011.[61]

The idea of "freedom of movement" originated in the Cold War competition for the hearts and minds of the people and became a central interest of the West, both in developing détente on a bilateral level and within the CSCE process. While the West often saw the demand for "freedom of movement" as a tool to pressure and potentially change socialist regimes in the long term, some of them—like Poland and Hungary, though at different times and to different degrees—regarded it as means to increase their legitimacy at home. The resulting East-West mobility without a doubt contributed to making the Iron Curtain more permeable and finally obsolete. The regimes that rejected this development were in the end to no small degree swept away by its consequences (East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania). However, the potential migratory consequences of increasing mobility across the Iron Curtain were both unintended, or at least unexpected, and in any case undesired. From the perspective of the West, change in Eastern Europe was meant to stabilize those states and societies that had been shaped by emigration (and often mass flight) throughout the Cold War. With the "revolutions of 1989," they were expected to develop into liberal democracies, turning their state-planned economies into prosperous market economies, reducing their citizens' desire to emigrate. The lapse of political persecution and the achievements of détente contributed to the sentiment of seeing East Europeans (varying from country to country and time to time) as rather unwelcome economic migrants, a view that had gradually become dominant since the late 1970s.

60 On Germany, see Poutrus, *Umkämpftes Asyl*.

61 Graf, "The Accession," 91–111.

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About the Author

Maximilian Graf (Austrian State Archive, Vienna) is a historian who specializes in Cold War Studies, the history of communism, and Austrian contemporary history in an international perspective.

7. (Not So) Temporary Refuge? Navigating Multiple Temporalities among 1990s Bosnian Refugees to Czechoslovakia and Czechia

Karla Koutková

Abstract: Between 1991 and 1997, a total of 5,676 citizens of former Yugoslavia were reportedly granted temporary refuge status in Czechoslovakia/Czechia. The shift from permanent asylum to temporary refuge had a profound impact not only on state protection, but also on the everyday lives and strategies of people fleeing a violent conflict. In this interdisciplinary chapter, the author explores temporary refuge first as a legal practice that codified the impermanence in refugee situations, and then as a lived experience of Bosnian recipients of this status. Based on oral histories, she then unpacks the way refugees structure their time in retrospect, and reveals the temporalities shaped by intersections, collisions, and asynchronicities between the institutional, biographic and everyday timescales.

Keywords: temporary protection; oral history; refugee biographies; time

"My wife told me: 'We have to live like we are going to stay here [in Prague] forever. Because to live like we're going to return means we're stuck. If we're going to really stay here forever, then it's okay, if we're not, we just get back, and we didn't lose anything.'"[1] This is what one of the Bosnians who came to Czechoslovakia and Czechia in the 1990s shared with me during a recorded interview describing his refugee experience. Having to cope with

1 Interview with Edib Jaganjac, recorded by Karla Koutková, April 30, 2021, online via Zoom. Some interviewees have chosen to be identified by a pseudonym to protect their privacy.

Frankl, Michal, ed. *Refugees and Citizens in Twentieth-Century East-Central Europe: An Unlikely Refuge?* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press / Central European University Press, 2026.
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an all-pervading sense of temporariness was common among the Bosnians I spoke with. Most of them initially hoped to return to the normalcy of their lives prior to the war in Bosnia.[2] At the same time, those states across Europe that hosted them seemed to share a similar hope concerning the fate of the refugees, namely, that they would be repatriated once the armed conflict in their country had ceased. This hope manifested in a series of domestic legal measures, then known as temporary refuge, which later gave rise to the contemporary concept of temporary protection[3] that has become more prevalent in national legislature and international contexts over the past two decades.[4]

Due to the safer environment and their pre-existing ties and networks, Bosnian refugees tended to favor democratic countries beyond the former Iron Curtain when seeking places of refuge,[5] but some of the post-communist countries offered other incentives. In the Czech case, a window of opportunity arose in the first few months after the break-up of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic when entering the country without a visa was easy even for those who did not initially want to apply for refugee status.[6] Following the example of neighboring Austria, the Czech government adopted temporary refuge as a key legal instrument in regulating the stay of those fleeing the war. This status was extended every twelve months for the duration of the war, leaving the temporary refugees in a particularly precarious situation. According to the Ministry of the Interior's records, Czechoslovakia/Czechia granted temporary refuge to a total of 5,676 citizens of former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 1997.[7]

2 For the sake of brevity, Bosnia stands hereinafter for the official name of the country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Czechia stands for the official title of the country, the Czech Republic (from January 1, 1993; until December 31, 1992, as part of Czechoslovakia).

3 In this text, I use "temporary refuge" for legal practice in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, and "temporary protection" to denote the post-2001 legal practice.

4 The EU's Temporary Protection Directive, passed in 2001, was first invoked on March 3, 2022, in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

5 Halilovich et al., "Mapping the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Diaspora"; Valenta and Ramet, *Bosnian Diaspora*.

6 Apart from the state-organized initiatives to alleviate destruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there were also grassroots efforts, such as *Dječija ambasada* ("Children's embassy" in Serbo-Croatian) that assisted in organized evacuations of Bosnian mothers and children starting in 1992.

7 M. Pilat-Whalenová, *Zkušenosti České republiky s dočasným útočištěm a organizovanou dobrovolnou repatriací do Bosny a Hercegoviny,* Research project performed under the auspices of the Department for Refugees and Integration of Foreigners at Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, and UNHCR liaison office in Prague, 1998. At the war's end in 1995, there were about 1.2 million refugees from Bosnia, of whom only 349,650 had been repatriated by the end of

In this chapter, I explore temporary refuge first as a legal practice that codified the impermanence in refugee situations, and then as a lived experience of Bosnian recipients of this status in the first half of the 1990s. This approach allows for connecting a state-centered perspective on reception policies toward the refugees and integration issues[8] with research that focuses on refugees' self-perception through in-depth narrative analysis,[9] as well as with the emerging field of migration temporalities.[10] Exploring how temporary refuge in Czechia was perceived, shaped, and acted upon by the Bosnians who stayed, the chapter then delves into three temporal intersections, i.e., the various paces of becoming a refugee, building a life, and the parallel subjective and institutionalized processes of homemaking.

This chapter combines insights from relevant legal and anthropological literature related to temporary refuge and Bosnian refugees with oral histories collected using biographic narrative interpretive method in 2021.[11] For the purposes of this research, this method was adjusted in that research participants were asked to talk without interruption for one hour about the circumstances of their life as refugees during the 1990s. During this initial interview, I took notes and used a short break to identify key themes running through the interview to ask additional questions. Potential research participants—i.e., people who came from Bosnia to Czechoslovakia or Czechia at various stages of the Bosnian war—were identified using the snowball technique among people providing aid to refugees and the ex-Yugoslav community in Czechia. For the purposes of an in-depth qualitative analysis, I selected four participants who arrived between 1992 and 1994, at various stages of the Bosnian War, were awarded temporary refuge visas, and ultimately stayed in the country (in one case in another European country). While their age and professional background varies, all four come from an urban, educated background.

1999; 324,100 were still abroad and in need of a more durable solution: Bieber, *Post-War Bosnia*; Halilovich et al., "Mapping the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Diaspora"; Ramet, *Thinking about Yugoslavia*. In contrast with the number of temporary refugees, 275,000 Bosnians remained under some kind of temporary protection in Germany by 1999: Koser and Black, "Limits to Harmonization," 521–43.

8 Franz, "The Bosnian Community," 143–60; Valenta and Ramet, *The Bosnian Diaspora*.

9 Rapoš Božič, Klvaňová, and Jaworsky, "Foreigner, Migrant, or Refugee?," 218–41; Mijić, "Together Divided–Divided Together," 1071–92; Mijić, "Identity," 472–91.

10 Meeus, "How to 'Catch' Floating Populations?," 1775–93; Ramsay, "Incommensurable Futures," 515–38; Robertson, "The Temporalities," 45–60; Robertson, "Migrant, Interrupted," 169–85; Sengul, "Syrian Refugees' Homemaking," 267–97.

11 Wengraf, *Qualitative Research Interviewing*.

Doing research during the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the selection of research participants, reducing the pool to technologically savvy individuals with a middle-class background, who were accessible online. Instead of meeting in person, these interviews were conducted virtually via the Zoom platform and recorded. Although this arguably resulted in a lesser degree of rapport, it was advantageous in other respects, for it allowed participants to conduct the interview from the comfort of their home and, if needed, with the support of a trusted family member. Participants were interviewed in the language of their preference and offered anonymity. Where applicable, their names and other life details have thus been altered here. First names are used throughout for the sake of consistency.

Temporary Refuge

Before 1991, when the violent conflict in former Yugoslavia broke out, the only sort of refuge that refugees and receiving states generally thought of was permanent asylum. While the administrative process for acquiring this status was typically fairly robust and lengthy, navigating it successfully meant that an applicant would be granted a level of stability in the new country. When nationalist forces in Yugoslavia came to power after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and orchestrated Yugoslavia's violent dissolution into six independent republics, the paradigm of the lengthy process leading to permanent asylum changed. As the events in the breakaway republics unfolded, thousands of refugees attempted to flee from the bloodshed, and Western countries were faced with a sudden challenge to the "prevailing paradigm of permanency of protection."[12]

While some scholarship suggests that the roots of temporary refuge date back to the beginning of twentieth century,[13] or to the 1970s,[14] it was in response to the war in the mid-1990s that the concept became widely endorsed and mobilized. Among legal scholars, temporary refuge has been a disputed term, based on its positioning within the international and domestic legal system, and its role vis-à-vis the Geneva Convention.[15] Writing in 1980, Coles, for instance, locates temporary refuge within international law as a measure that should "facilitate

12 Honusková, "The Czech Republic," 241–54.

13 Lambert, "Temporary Refuge from War," 723–45.

14 Jílek, "Dočasné útočiště," 48–63.

15 Cf. Fitzpatrick, "Flight from Asylum," 407–64; Gibney, "Between Control and Humanitarianism," 689–708; Koser and Black, "Limits to Harmonization"; for the post-2015 debate Lambert, "Temporary Refuge from War"; Sengul, "Unpacking Temporary Protection," 16–28.

admission and the obtaining of satisfactory solutions in situations where the scale of refugee influx is such that problems of a humanitarian nature, of public order, of national security or even of international peace and security may be at stake."[16] On the other hand, the Czech legal scholar Dalibor Jílek sees temporary refuge in 1994 as part of the domestic legal system. Post-2000 literature then returns to see it as a "rule of customary international law, based on a considerable amount of consistent state practice across the globe, accepted as law."[17]

The flexibility and pragmatism highlighted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as defining features of temporary refuge, however, also meant that states would have more discretion over its implementation on a national and individual basis. In this way, they could pursue the "humanitarian objective" of protection as well as the "control" one.[18] Notably, some states chose to allow entry to individuals only from certain designated areas, others favored only specific types of refugees, and each state made a decision on what rights the refugees would be afforded.[19] In most cases, however, the rights were fewer than those of refugees as defined under the Geneva Convention.[20]

With regard to the post-1990s dynamic between domestic implementations of temporary refuge and the Geneva Convention, the latter has increasingly been described as outdated and unsuitable in cases involving a large influx of applicants, new circumstances, and in the context of no obligation of admission to a state's territory.[21] The debate has revolved around the proposed double-win potential of temporary protection, i.e., the objective of effectively addressing a large influx of war refugees while maintaining control for states in the form of refugees' anticipated return to their home country once conditions allow it.[22] Opponents of the double-win argument, however, suggest that temporary refuge did not work out for states in the 1990s precisely because it led to permanent integration in so many cases. In fact, when states pushed for repatriation, they were accused of inhumanely treating Bosnians for whom a premature return posed significant risks.[23]

16 Coles, "Temporary Refuge," 196.

17 Lambert, "Temporary Refuge from War."

18 Gibney, "Between Control and Humanitarianism."

19 Džubur, "Temporary Protection Status"; Kerber, "Temporary Protection," 35–50.

20 Cf. Bastaki, "Temporary Protection Regimes," 73–84, comparing the situation of Kuwaiti, Bosnian, and Syrian refugees, or Koser and Black "Limits to Harmonization."

21 Lambert, "Temporary Refuge from War."

22 Honusková, "The Czech Republic"; Ineli-Ciger, "Revisiting Temporary Protection," 197–217.

23 Bastaki, "Temporary Protection Regimes"; Hageboutros, "The Bosnian Refugee Crisis," 50–60.

While most of the legal literature has been concerned with identifying an optimal strategy for states, anthropological literature on refugees in the 1990s focuses on their individual trajectories amid other life challenges, including dealing with traumatic experiences, loss of home, uprootedness, child-rearing, and employment.[24] In this vein, a double-win for states is seen rather as a change in framework, from one of protection to a paradigm of containment. As Franz observes, preference was given to exclusion or repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin, rather than their resettlement in third countries.[25] Along with other exclusionary measures, countries in the European Union and the United States introduced new interpretations of the Geneva Convention—narrowing down definitions of "agents of persecution"—as well as new removal procedures for asylum seekers prior to merit hearings. Comparing the situation of Bosnian refugees in Austria and the US, Franz then wonders why people fleeing the same conflict were granted refugee status under the Geneva Convention in the United States but not in most European countries. In her account, this was due to a particular interpretation of the Geneva Convention that enabled EU states to avoid it; the framework of temporary refuge then allowed EU states to reject a vast majority of asylum applicants.[26]

Both Austria and Czechoslovakia decided around the same time to employ temporary refuge in the fall of 1991.[27] Shortly after the Velvet Revolution of 1989, Czechoslovakia ratified the Geneva Convention and adopted a standard asylum procedure.[28] Applicants for refugee status would have the right to basic material and social protection in one of four refugee camps. If their application was successful, refugees would be entitled to the assistance program of the Czech government, including accommodation and language courses. With the exception of the right to vote and the obligation to military duty, a refugee would have the same rights and duties as a Czech citizen. After five years of residing in Czech territory, a refugee would be entitled to apply for Czech citizenship.[29]

24 Franz, "Bosnian Refugees," 5–25; Franz, *Uprooted and Unwanted*; Franz, "The Bosnian Community"; Halilovich, "Bosnian Austrians," 524–40; Halilovic-Pastuovic, *Bosnian Post-Refugee Transnationalism*.

25 Franz, *Uprooted and Unwanted*.

26 Franz, *Uprooted and Unwanted*, 48–49.

27 In the Czechoslovak case, this was encoded in Governmental Decree no. 803/1991 *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení* which set the ground for later provision of temporary protection to the citizens of former Yugoslavia.

28 For an account of the politicization involved in the construction of the new refugee regime past 1989, cf. Szczepanikova, "From the Right of Asylum to Migration Management," 789–806.

29 Cf. Pilat-Whalenová, "Zkušenosti České republiky."

By the end of 1991, Czech officials had granted temporary refuge status to 2,127 citizens of Yugoslavia.[30] In 1992, the framework for temporary refuge became further encoded as a governmental decree (no. 419 11/7/92). Following the break-up of Czechoslovakia on January 1, 1993, the governments of both Czechia and Slovakia took over this legal provision of the former federal government.[31] Temporary refuge status originally applied to all citizens of former Yugoslavia, but from 1994 onwards only those from Bosnia were eligible.[32]

As per the legal provisions, claiming temporary refuge in Czechoslovakia (and later Czechia) was a matter of choice. People coming as migrants had the right to claim another legal status if they wished to do so. Initially, temporary refuge status ensured not just accommodation in a humanitarian center for those who needed it, but also more personal rights than in Austria. Those who were approved could move freely within the territory of the Czech Republic and apply for work permits, as well as other social and educational benefits.[33] Still, the number of refugees was significantly lower than in neighboring countries.[34] As in other countries, temporary refuge status in Czechoslovakia was extended annually for a year at a time. When the status finally expired (at the end of September 1997 for Bosnians, and for all other nationalities at the end of 1996), its holders had several legal options—they could return home, or apply for refugee status under the Geneva Convention or permanent residency permits for health reasons, seek permission to resettle for family reunification, or apply for a standard residency permit.[35]

The question of whether to stay or leave was always complex and tackled individually. Despite the formal accessibility of filing for refugee status as per the Geneva Convention,[36] very few applications were registered

30 As per standard archiving periods, archival data on the Czechoslovak case is still inaccessible. Pilat-Whalenová's study was provided to the author in 2021 as a source of reference by the Ministry of the Interior after an interview for this project. It was commissioned by the Ministry and the UNHCR to be an evaluation report of their temporary refuge and repatriation program. The author was a former employee of the UNHCR. For other sources cf. Szczepanikova, "From the Right of Asylum to Migration Management."

31 Governmental Decree no. 359 30/7/93.

32 Cf. Pilat-Whalenová, "Zkušenosti České republiky."

33 During the initial phase (1992–93), Bosnian temporary refugees were denied the right to work or to travel freely within Austria. See Franz, *Uprooted and Unwanted*.

34 Cf. Halilovich et al., "Mapping the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Diaspora."

35 Pilat-Whalenová, *Zkušenosti České republiky*.

36 For the duration of temporary refuge provision, the Ministry of the Interior in fact allowed applicants to hold a double status, so that temporary refugees would not lose their current

among the entire ex-Yugoslav community during the early 1990s and after. Moreover, some applicants withdrew their applications before the end of the asylum procedure.[37] As for the option of returning home, the Czech government made its repatriation program voluntary, cooperating with the new government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose task was to make sure there were acceptable locations available to which refugees could return. Between 1996 and 1997, only 472 Bosnian citizens of the 1,231 who remained in the Czechia decided to participate in the repatriation program. Of those, the majority (44 percent) chose to relocate to apartments offered as part of the Czech reconstruction program, while fewer than a third returned to their original homes.[38] Upon return, Bosnian citizens faced a rather harsh economic and social reality. Only 16 percent found stable employment, while the rest had either no income or relied on social assistance. Secondly, discrimination was reported among all, and most of those (73 percent) who had relocated reported feeling disadvantaged in regard to their job market position, access to social benefits, and health insurance.[39]

Multiple Temporalities of Temporary Refuge

Moving beyond the institutionalized logic of temporary refuge from the perspective of states, the following section deals with the subjective experiences of Bosnians who came to Czechia between 1992 and 1994. The analysis builds on a three-fold timescale perspective formulated by Robertson[40] and, earlier, by Meeus:[41] the institutional timescale of policy and governance, biographic timescale of life events and imaginaries, and the timescale of everyday life. Through this prism, Robertson introduced the concepts "contingent" and "indentured" temporality in the case of contemporary migrants, whose life and migration trajectories become staggered when these timescales collide. Unlike a longitudinal study or on-the-move research with contemporary migrants, oral history helps us unpack the way refugees structure their time in retrospect, and reveal the temporalities shaped by intersections, collisions, and asynchronicities between the timescales.

entitlements and would not be forced to move to refugee camps.

37 Pilat-Whalenová, *Zkušenosti České republiky*.

38 Research conducted with repatriated individuals later revealed that the majority would have preferred to return to their prewar homes. Pilat-Whalenová, *Zkušenosti České republiky*.

39 Pilat-Whalenová, *Zkušenosti České republiky*.

40 Robertson, "The Temporalities of International Migration"; Robertson, "Migrant, Interrupted."

41 Meeus, "How to 'Catch' Floating Populations?"

First, there is the temporality of leaving home and becoming a refugee, where the interaction of institutional and biographic timescales helps shape the pacing, duration, and flow. How did people on the move understand their decision to become a (temporary) refugee? Was it an originating point in a series of stages, oriented toward an intended future or—as Griffiths, et al., suggest—a much more erratic, uncertain, and emotional process?[42] Second, I discuss the asynchronicity of institutional and everyday timescales in refugees' attempts to build lives, secure economic incomes, and rethink their futures. How and through which institutions did the decisive control of state over time manifest in their lives? How did refugees grapple with the institutional *chronopolitics* that manifested through regressions and digressions in their professional careers? Finally, what temporalities were at play in the process of homemaking, in which the institutionalized expectations and procedures surrounding one's formal acceptance into society clash with an individual timescale of everyday time and emotional attachments to past, present, and future.

The Differing Paces of Becoming a Refugee

"First of all, we all came for a week, two weeks, a month, until things quiet down, right, and then we'd go back."[43] This is how Sabina, at the time thirty years old and about to give birth to her second child, remembers coming to terms with having to leave her husband and extended family in Sarajevo. Her older daughter, Tanja, was just three years old. The decision to flee in early May 1992 with a toddler and a newborn did not come easy to the mother of two. Early on in the interview, Sabina reflects on a period of deliberation in which evacuation was weighed against other options, risks, and imagined future developments. When the hostilities broke out, their family mobilized personal networks to find a way for the mother and children to evacuate as early as possible: "My dad insisted, my husband did what he could, because we had connections everywhere. […] My husband was a drummer and played in a well-known band, so he knew actors and so on, so through [these acquaintances] we got to *Dječija ambasada* [Children's embassy], who organized […] that women and small children would get out of Sarajevo."[44] Sabina believes that her younger daughter's infancy was the reason they were allowed to board one of the military cargo flights on which older children were no longer allowed.

42 Griffiths, Rogers, and Anderson, "Migration, Time and Temporalities."

43 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Sabina, recorded by Karla Koutková, March 4, 2021, online via Zoom.

44 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Sabina, recorded by Karla Koutková, March 4, 2021.

Their flight on May 1, 1992, landed in Belgrade, where they spent two days in the house of a relative before boarding a second flight to Prague on May 3. While the timing of their departure at the very beginning of the war meant that it was easier for them to get out than later evacuees, the spatial decision to go to Czechoslovakia was based on the family's cultural background and an invitation from distant relatives in the country. Sabina's maternal ancestors had originally come from Czech territory and had moved to Daruvar (Croatia) in the nineteenth century. Until Sabina's childhood family moved to Sarajevo after her mother's death, her family had even spoken a local variant of Czech language.

Sabina and her daughters entered Czechoslovakia on a tourist visa. After about a month, they started to inquire about possibilities to extend their stay. The distant relative who wrote a letter of invitation for them also helped navigate the administrative side of their arrival. As Sabina remembers in her narrative, this was partially due to the unclear legislative and experimental policy-making emblematic of the early 1990s and the problems Czechoslovakia had with its own dissolution at the end of 1992: "That was the only way [then]. I think Czechoslovakia was learning with us how to manage all the refugee legislation. So after that we had a meeting with [an acquaintance], we met him at a session at the Ministry of the Interior, to discuss how to go about it. This relative was taking care of us and provided a guarantee, so we got the temporary stay. Temporary refuge or I don't even remember how it was called."[45]

Sabina's narrated life experiences from then on collide with a series of administrative obstacles and the difficulties of everyday family life that impede on the linearity of her refugee story and make it fragmented into three parts. The ever-changing legal expectations and difficulty in navigating them, as well as complicated cohabitation with Sabina's relatives contributed to their decision to move to live with her aunt in the Croatian town of Daruvar in January 1993. Having left the husband and father behind in Sarajevo, they were reunited with him after a serious war injury in May 1993. In the city where her husband worked for many years, however, they suddenly faced more difficulties because of his ethnic background. Sabina could work as an interpreter for the military, and they ended up staying eight months. Nevertheless, the family felt relieved when they could return to Czechia after eight months in September 1993.

While Sabina's moment of decision came after a series of decisions while already in Czechia, and was reversed shortly after, another participant, Nela, remembers a distinct point in time at a border crossing between Croatia

45 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Sabina, recorded by Karla Koutková, March 4, 2021.

and Bosnia. When she initially left Sarajevo in late November 1992, she was neither fleeing the war nor abandoning her life in Sarajevo but just traveling to Croatia for a medical procedure. Her chronic health problems had gotten worse after the war broke out and during the summer of 1992. Scheduled for surgery in the fall of 1992, she was presented with two options, being operated on in a Sarajevo hospital or undergoing a risky trip out of Bosnia in order to have the surgery in Zagreb. She chose the latter as she could not imagine undergoing surgery in a hospital that was being frequently shelled and then, if she survived, spending her recovery time in the cellar of her house.

Trying to find transportation from besieged Sarajevo to Zagreb in October 1992, she learned about a humanitarian convoy that would include 360 mothers with children from Sarajevo who had been invited by the Czechoslovak government for a temporary stay. The convoy was composed of a bus organized by *Dječija ambasada* and another bus run by the Red Cross for those in need of medical assistance abroad. As she remembers, it took several weeks to overcome wartime complications until the convoy finally departed on November 26, 1992. The family planned for Nela to travel to Zagreb via Split and leave her daughter with her godmother in Split while she was undergoing surgery and recovery.

After three days on the bus headed toward the Croatian border, protection officers from the EU and Czechoslovakia met the travelers to escort the buses to Split and the subsequent flights to Prague. At the border crossing, however, Nela realized she was missing a document she would now need to enter Croatia. Because of this complication, she was among those who were asked to wait in a refugee camp near the border while formalities could be sorted out. At this point, an offer was extended that Nela could switch buses and travel with mothers and children to Czechoslovakia.

> I was thinking and thinking, to stay [or not], kept changing my mind, one moment I felt like going to Czechia, then not, I was totally confused and then eventually decided to go to Czechia. Better than waiting in [war-torn] Bosnia and Herzegovina. So essentially, in that moment I decided to become a refugee. That was the moment I made that decision, because, had I gone to Croatia, I would not have been a refugee, I would have been with my relatives and acquaintances, and that would have been a different life. But having decided to go to Czechia, I had decided that my daughter and I would become refugees.[46]

46 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Nela recorded by Karla Koutková, May 25, 2021, online via Zoom.

Upon arriving in Czechoslovakia, Nela and her daughter immediately obtained the temporary refuge visa at the airport. They never applied for asylum under the Geneva Convention, as they originally hoped to return at the end of the war. Nevertheless, Nela still thought and spoke of herself throughout the interview as a "refugee."

Another Bosnian who did not intend to leave Sarajevo for good and was later granted temporary refuge visa in Czechia, on the other hand, refuses to apply the refugee label to himself.[47] Edib, a well-known figure beyond the Czech Bosnian diaspora and his professional circles, stayed in Sarajevo until 1993 as a wartime surgeon at one of the heavily shelled hospitals.[48] His wife and two small daughters were evacuated to Serbia in May 1992. During their separation, the family managed to keep in touch via the satellite telephone at the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) head office. The family sought a friendly nearby state that did not require visas for Yugoslav citizens, and, in early 1993, Czechia fit this criterion perfectly, because, in the wake of Czechoslovakia's dissolution, "they had other things to do than to care about our war and had not managed yet [to introduce a visa regime]."[49] Three months after Edib's flight landed in Prague, however, this option was no longer available. Personal networks played a role in organizing the family's arrival. A relative of Edib in Switzerland had a Czech friend who was able to pick up his wife and children at the Serbian border. Edib summarizes the role of informal networks in navigating their early 1990s refugee experience, saying "in the Czech Republic, everything was partially still to be arranged via acquaintances."[50]

Although happy to reunite with his family, Edib would not have left Sarajevo of his own volition. After he openly criticized the UN's role in delayed medical evacuations, however, he felt that the international humanitarian apparatus became uncomfortable with him. Shortly after, one of the UN agencies arranged his departure under the pretext of attending a medical congress in Moscow. It was clear there was a chance to join his family in Czechia. After the three months of a touristic stay had elapsed, Edib learned about the temporary refuge visa for which he and his family then applied. When telling his story, however, he rejects being considered a refugee:

47 For the impact of external labeling, cf. Rapoš Božič, Klvaňová, and Jaworsky, "Foreigner, Migrant, or Refugee?"

48 Known as "Doktor Edo" among his family, friends, and the wider Czech Bosnian community, Edib published a memoire of his wartime and postwar experiences, detailing *inter alia* his involvement in the globally medialized case Operation Irma, cf. Jaganjac, *Sarajevská princezna*.

49 Interview with Edib Jaganjac, recorded by Karla Koutková, April 30, 2021, online via Zoom.

50 Interview with Edib Jaganjac, recorded by Karla Koutková, April 30, 2021.

> We never wanted to be refugees. Refugee status in Czechia would mean staying in the camps, one thousand two hundred [Czech] crowns of assistance, and a work ban. Imagine a refugee who came to save his bare life and they ban him from working. So what do you think, I'm going to lie around for a thousand crowns my whole life? But I won't, this is unbelievable for me. If there's a refugee, [they] can be protected by getting some kind of assistance, but why ban [their] work? I never understood this. But this is how it was.[51]

Unlike Edib, who published his memoir about the circumstances of his life in war and after, Zoran, who was sixteen when the war started, never had a chance to talk about these events. He stayed in the cellar of a house in a heavily shelled Sarajevo neighborhood until 1994, and the experience structures the course of his life in retrospect: "In my life I always have my life before and after the war. It seems like I have two totally different lives."[52] Shortly before his eighteenth birthday, his mother started worrying that he would soon be drafted into the army. Through acquaintances, his well-connected musician father managed to obtain permission for Zoran to leave the country, but getting permission and actually leaving were two different things. First, he needed to get out of the besieged city of Sarajevo through an improvised tunnel under the airport, which was both complicated and dangerous. Then, he would need to get out of the country. Because of a truce between the Bosnian and Croatian armies surrounding the city, a window of opportunity opened. "When I went into this tunnel it was, you know, a very strange experience that you leave the city, you leave your parents, […] so you are leaving everything behind, going into some kind of a strange tunnel and hoping you will arrive somewhere where it's safe."[53] Among the items Zoran brought for his new life were the clothes he had on, which he inherited from another boy who died during shelling, and his musical instrument.

After leaving the tunnel, Zoran hoped to reach relatives in Zagreb who could help him board a train. In Zagreb, he received a temporary refuge visa from the Czech embassy and boarded a train to Czechia, where he planned to join his aunt in a small town. After a couple of months there, he applied to study at a conservatory in Prague. These first months marked, in his words,

51 Interview with Edib Jaganjac, recorded by Karla Koutková, April 30, 2021.

52 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Zoran, recorded by Karla Koutková, May 4, 2021, online via Zoom.

53 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Zoran, recorded by Karla Koutková, May 4, 2021.

"the beginning of my refugeeness." For him, being a refugee at this young age meant being "deprived of any rights [...] You were bound in on every level. It was of course in the Czech Republic, at that point it was pretty difficult to arrange all the papers I know that I had to get all this kind of visa and that kind of visa I had, at the same time I was recognized a refugee but [...] you were always begging someone for something."[54]

In the meantime, the rest of his family managed to flee from Bosnia and arrived at a refugee camp in Belgium, where his parents soon successfully applied for refugee status that afforded them permanent residence. Zoran wanted to join them, despite his open asylum application in Czechia. Eventually, he was offered admission to a Belgian music school and moved to rejoin his family. He gained permanent residency in Belgium four years later: "I finally stopped being a refugee, legally at least, I was twenty-four years old, and it was for me an important moment of my life to recapitulate and to make some kind of decisions."[55]

Griffiths et al. suggest that a temporally informed approach—which recognizes decision-making as a flow rather than a singular event—is particularly useful in evaluating decisions to migrate.[56] What these four narratives show us is that there are multiple temporalities at play when it comes to becoming a refugee, and that these are influenced by the intersection of institutional timescales—both in the country of departure and arrival—and other external factors, such as the presence of acquaintances who can offer help and the timing for them and one's individual biographical circumstances, as well as the very individual deliberation about self-identifying as a refugee in light of its societal and personal implications.

Sabina's story exposes the nonlinearity of the process in which the formal difficulties of proceeding intertwined with the options of either relocating or proceeding outside of the formalized refugee framework. Hers is the one that most closely resembles Robertson's staggered temporality.[57] While Nela's becoming a refugee was not intentional in the beginning, it is remembered at a single point in time, almost in synchronicity with the institutional timescale. In Edib's case, the temporal gap between the institutional recognition and his own has possibly never closed. Zoran was able to reconstruct his becoming a refugee as a process that spans several months, as well as

54 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Zoran, recorded by Karla Koutková, May 4, 2021.

55 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Zoran, recorded by Karla Koutková, May 4, 2021.

56 Griffiths, Rogers, and Anderson, "Migration, Time and Temporalities: Review and Prospect."

57 Robertson, "Migrant, Interrupted."

the end of it ("legally at least"), marked literally and figuratively by the trope of the "tunnel." In all of these stories, the institutional timing is separate from the personal one and flows at a different pace.

Professional Setbacks of Building a Life with Temporary Refuge

Because the temporary refuge visa for Bosnians was only extended for one year at a time, the question of return—whether forced or voluntary—kept lingering among research participants and necessitated a constant renegotiation of the decision to stay, weighing the benefits against its economic, emotional, and professional costs. These costs manifested in several ways, and as this section shows, combined to form a series of temporal interventions and setbacks that participants reflected on as systemic. Especially Edib and Nela, who were both advanced in their careers before the war, discussed administrative difficulties they encountered while trying to reestablish their professional as well as family life.

When Edib joined his family in Prague, he wished to get back to work as soon as possible, and resume a part of the family's earlier independence by renting a flat of their own. Soon after his arrival, a family acquaintance helped him find a small one-bedroom apartment in Prague, where the family of four was later joined by Edib's brother-in-law, and several years later, by his father-in-law. The work situation turned out to be very complicated for both Edib and his wife, a general practitioner. Czechia had a procedure of nostrification for medical professionals that consisted of several stages, including a language course and final exam in the Czech language, followed by six months of unpaid internship. In what follows, Edib remembers the professional and temporal setbacks that awaited him:

> The director [of the hospital] with whom I spoke English, as I knew nothing of Czech said: "I will be happy to see you here, come tomorrow. I will go to the ministry today to figure out the conditions, about how it works with employing foreigners from Yugoslavia. I have no idea, we have not had such a case before." Unfortunately, when I came the following day, it turned out [at the ministry] they were implementing nostrifications, that there would be an exam [...] in three or four months, that there would be some training, and that the exam would be in surgery, internal medicine, pediatrics, gynecology, and it would be in Czech. We didn't know any Czech.[58]

58 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Edib Jaganjac, recorded by Karla Koutková, April 30, 2021, online via Zoom.

This meant that Edib and his wife spent the following four months studying Czech and preparing for the exam in order to have their diploma recognized, even though they had been approved as specialists in their respective fields years ago. Through a series of elimination tests, both of them eventually succeeded in passing the written and oral exams. Prior to sitting for a comprehensive final exam, Edib had to do a six-month unpaid internship. It was difficult to find a placement for the internship, since hospitals were not inclined to hire him without the final exam. Eventually, his acquaintance intervened again and secured him a place where Edib could then work for free. Additional time was needed to achieve the level of specialization he had in Sarajevo before the war. In sum, he remembers, "it took me eight or nine years to get the status I had in Yugoslavia for years before coming to Czechia."[59]

Another further challenge to becoming professionally established that Edib recalled when telling his story was the family's precarious financial situation. He and his wife did not earn enough as foreign-born doctors to pay the rent and maintain a modest lifestyle and were forced to rely on the remittances sent by relatives abroad:

> The doctor salaries were incredibly low then, my first salary was around three thousand Czech crowns and our rent was seven thousand, without the help of our relatives living abroad during the first years, we could not survive. […] They would send me a thousand marks, a mark back then was seventeen [Czech] crowns, that means seventeen thousand I was getting [from them] and my salary was three thousand… Just think of the difference between what you needed [to get by] and what the two of us were earning.[60]

Jacobsen, Karlsen, and Khosravi conceptualize chronopolitics as a vantage point of institutionally imposed waiting when states deliberately, or as an outcome of policy developments, impose extended waiting periods for refugees to move ahead with their lives in both spatial and economic terms.[61] In refugees' narratives, chronopolitics comes to the fore in their recollection of encounters with the Department of Foreign Police at Olšanská Street in Prague and the way it affected their professional and family time. Edib, for example, shared an assumption that the level of unpleasantness

59 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Edib Jaganjac, recorded by Karla Koutková, April 30, 2021.
60 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Edib Jaganjac, recorded by Karla Koutková, April 30, 2021.
61 Jacobsen, Karlsen, and Khosravi, *Waiting*.

he encountered was deliberate, intended to "deter foreigners of post-Soviet nationalities in the immediate aftermath of the 1989 revolution." It affected not only the pace with which he could proceed administratively, but also his work at the hospital:

> The foreign police office is one of the most unpleasant places I've seen, including war, because I had to get there two hours before opening time, there were a thousand people queuing up. That [means] to queue up to reach some kind of a bureaucrat, and then it can still happen they just close down before your nose, even though a thousand people are still waiting outside, and that's it. So I have to get another day off at work, which is complicated, because with surgery it's not so easy, there are planned surgeries of other people, and examinations, and all of a sudden you have to be at the foreign police office, spend a day, two, three.[62]

Similarly, Sabina, despite the advantage of speaking Czech, described the difficulties she faced in organizing work and family around encounters with the police and new policies related to families and the custody of children that were being implemented without sufficient notice:

> Foreign police [...] was a nightmare. Once I came, after taking a day's leave from my job, because I had to extend my stay. I came with both girls to the police, because I had nowhere to leave them, it was during the school vacation. I came to the office, and the lady so beautifully, ironically smiled at me and said, "Do you have the paper, that you can take care of [have custody of] the girls?" I said, "No, is that needed?" "Well, yes, from now on, yes." So I literally ran [...] to the telephone booth to call my work to get this prepared for me, traveled across Prague to pick it up, ran back, because if you miss the date, you would either pay a fine, or you might be in trouble, right. So I got back to the office, and she [the officer] said: "Well, but you have just one form, you need a separate one for each daughter."[63]

Nela, who was originally an electrical engineer and managed a team of employees at one of the major Bosnian industrial companies, changed her profession after a series of voluntary engagements at the refugee camp in Czechia. Her narrative centered around the experiences there and her

62 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Edib Jaganjac, recorded by Karla Koutková, April 30, 2021.
63 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Sabina, recorded by Karla Koutková, March 4, 2021, online via Zoom.

priority to keep her daughter afloat at school—a concern she shared with her roommate, another mother of a small child, who, too, was previously at an advanced point of a career as a chemical engineer. In order to keep themselves busy at the camp, they started organizing crafts workshops for women. Nela did not explicitly say why she did not return to her original profession but instead worked her way through the humanitarian NGO sector in Czechia. Her friend, who later left for Italy, succeeded in her original field there, and according to Nela, "lives well."

For Zoran, the period of his life as a refugee collided with the preparation for his professional future as a musician. A reiterating pattern in his narrative is the framework of "normalcy." In essence, "normal life" to him denotes a "non-refugee" life, one that he had before the war and aspired to have in his imagined future: "In this former Yugoslavia we had a pretty normal life." Normalcy, to him, was not restored by escaping the immediate threats of the war. In some sense, it has been fading throughout the years following his stay in Czechia and manifested in a series of restrictions that he encountered:

> You leave the war zone and then for six or seven years you are fighting on the administrative level. [...] You couldn't travel, you couldn't work [...] you have all these limitations as a refugee. So as much as you would like to be a normal person when you're the age of eighteen, nineteen, and try to live a normal life, it was—because you're a refugee—it's basically impossible to live a normal life. Because you were always restrained and that was the most difficult thing to accept.[64]

In order to resume agency in his life, Zoran eventually decided to make a career change the year he was awarded permanent residency status in Belgium, at the age of twenty-four, at a point he marks as the end of his refugee story. Since he was sixteen and became a refugee, he felt that decisions were taken on his behalf. His unbecoming a refugee then intertwined with an emancipation from childhood dependency that had been delayed by the circumstances of war and having to seek refuge in another country.

While the question of becoming a refugee revealed differing paces of institutional and subjective individual perceptions, the domain of building life illustrates temporal superiority of the institutional over the biographical. Upon arrival, and as the nostrification and labor market policies were taking shape in the process of post-communist transformation after 1989, people with temporary refuge status were faced with a series of restrictions that

64 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Zoran, recorded by Karla Koutková, May 4, 2021.

effectively interrupted their careers. "Waiting it out"[65] was a viable strategy with gendered and economic dimensions. In order to remain in a highly specialized field, one needed not only stamina and a sense of professional commitment, but often also additional resources in the form of remittances. Migrant women were especially likely to pursue alternative options, which often meant redirecting to other fields and taking lower-paid jobs.[66]

Homemaking in the Face of Uncertainty

Researchers of migration have recently begun to address homemaking as an affective arena of attachment and belonging.[67] Building on broader questions of exile and agency, Sengul examines refugees' expectations of protection and experiences of extended temporality and uncertainty, as well as their strategies for enabling agency and rebuilding their lives.[68] In a similar vein, narratives from Bosnian refugees of the 1990s offer the possibility of exploring the intertwined temporalities of everyday homemaking and institutional acknowledgment of their continuous presence in the country through permanent settlement and citizenship. How and when do the perceptions of home and the institutionalized residency process align in the narratives?

Sabina feels a deep emotional attachment to Czechia: "I feel like a *Pražačka* [Prague woman]. Recently, I was [spending time] with a colleague of mine, and we were like, we are Prague people, poking fun, I love the culture here, I love [Marek] Eben [a Czech actor and moderator] whom I know from my childhood, the films, the series we were able to watch in former Yugoslavia."[69] In fact, throughout the interview, Sabina repeatedly mentioned—and rejected—the lingering possibility of returning to Sarajevo, partially due to feeling unwelcome and no longer at home there:

> When we started coming [to Sarajevo] at the end of the war, it was always like "Well, you left" and this and that and once I asked "and why didn't you leave?" At the time when I left, everyone had that option. Back then it was still possible to leave Sarajevo, later it was not. And then I hear silence. I used to say, "It was not easy for you, but it was not easy for us either"—to start somewhere else from scratch and be essentially a foreigner. Never

65 Jacobsen, Karlsen, and Khosravi, *Waiting*.

66 As attested by other researchers, cf. Havelková and Ezzeddine, "Women in Between," 179–201.

67 Brun and Fábos, "Mobilizing Home," 177–83.

68 Sengul, "Syrian Refugees' Homemaking in Gaziantep."

69 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Sabina, recorded by Karla Koutková, March 4, 2021.

> here. Even though I feel, I really feel Czech, every now and then someone shows me that I'm not.[70]

Despite yearning for the Sarajevo she once knew, Sabina and her husband were determined to raise their family in Czechia, and to make their daughters feel at home. Although her husband eventually joined the family there after the war, he passed away in 2012. The rest of the family gained Czech citizenship in 2014, when a change to the law allowed double citizenship for all nationals. The reasons for keeping a Bosnian citizenship were at that point, however, largely pragmatic, especially for Sabina's older daughter, as renouncing it meant they would be charged a significant administrative fee.

Nela's story is, in her words, a story of successful integration. Like Sabina, she started contemplating the possibility of return in late 1995, after the Dayton Peace Accords were signed, when her husband could finally join the family. This meant she could undergo her long-postponed medical procedure, while he took care of their daughter. She decided to wait the decision out and stay in Czechia. In 1997, when the Czech government opened the voluntary repatriation program, she eventually chose to apply for permanent residence on humanitarian grounds. At the time of our interview, she typically traveled a few times a year to Sarajevo, but continued to think of Prague as her home.

For Edib and his family, the decision to stay was also deeply emotional, rather than practical. Toward the end of his narrative, he talks about complications his family kept encountering as foreigners living in Czechia. Almost apologetically, he explains this was the reason they renounced their Bosnian citizenship. His wife then initiated an application procedure for Czech citizenship, which, in the end, took a year to come through. At the final interview, Edib was asked why he wanted the citizenship. "I said I don't want it, I'd rather keep my own, but it's impossible to live here without this. [There are] so many problems without this passport."[71] At the time of interview, Edib still felt Yugoslav at heart, and considered both Sarajevo and Prague his home.

In turn, Zoran revealed deep doubts about his identity and belonging as a result of the refugee experience:

> I mean, so you're never a person from the Czech Republic, you're never a person from [Belgium], you can fit in, you can become a resident, you're

70 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Sabina, recorded by Karla Koutková, March 4, 2021.

71 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Edib Jaganjac, recorded by Karla Koutková, April 30, 2021.

> being accepted but [...] I don't know, it's really strange but when you're a refugee you will always ask yourself: Is this my base? Where are my roots?[72]

The question of roots becomes increasingly relevant for Zoran when speaking of his imagined future: "When I'm sixty-five, if I ever get... so old, am I going to, will I need to go back to some kind of roots? Do I need some kind of security to be the same as everyone around you or not?"[73] His reiterations of normalcy attached to the past and the idea of a stable home, too, confirm some of the findings on the displacement of Georgian internally displaced persons from Abkhazia[74] and Syrians in Turkey[75] in that the past is associated with "normality, security, familiarity, wealth, and comfort," while the present and future are interpreted against such lost "normality." Zoran's narrative reveals that these feelings may not go away even decades after an externally successful integration.

In Sabina's, Nela's, and Edib's cases, their perceived home in Czechia was a result of their conscious efforts and asynchronous with the institutional acknowledgment, which was marked by contingency and uncertainty. Unlike in the case of the day-to-day work life of people with temporary refuge, the hierarchy of the institutional over the individual timescale was more ambiguous in the arena of creating an affective attachment to and identifying with the place where one lives. The process and practice of homemaking was marked by a greater sense of autonomy going beyond the institutionalized options into affections that may be evolving, and multiple.

Conclusion

This chapter has contrasted a state-centered approach to the practice of temporary refuge with the bottom-up perspective of Bosnians who came to Czechoslovakia and Czechia in the 1990s and were granted temporary refugee status. While advocates of temporary protection applaud the swifter administrative process and states' greater possibilities for regulation, the downsides become visible when looking at the individual level of refugees. This chapter drew attention to the complexity of temporary refuge with a retrospective look of oral history, revealing the temporal dimension of

72 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Zoran, recorded by Karla Koutková, May 4, 2021.
73 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Zoran, recorded by Karla Koutková, May 4, 2021.
74 Kabachnik, Regulska, and Mitchneck, "Displacing Blame," 123–40.
75 Sengul, "Syrian Refugees' Homemaking in Gaziantep."

narrators' lives as refugees. When it comes to the question of how one understands their decision to become a refugee, the narratives reveal different paces and timings of subjective self-understandings and the institutional timescale with its repeated pattern of yearly readmission. They go beyond the binary of an instant moment versus a flow of stages and suggest that a more nuanced approach is needed that takes into account the societal portrayal of refugees at a given point in time, as well as their agency.

The narratives further reveal the vulnerability of refugees' economic and work situations in the context of the evolving and restrictive institutionalized timescale. As some of them construed it, the chronopolitics of delayed appointments, long waiting times, and lengthy procedures manifested through various instances of the state played into their already existent insecurities. In the words of one of the narrators: "Many people do not understand that when people are fleeing as refugees, their problems start the moment they flee. They are fleeing the war zone but instead of the war problems, […] the other problems are starting to emerge which are in a way just as difficult."[76] It was in manifesting agency vis-à-vis these problems that participants could build their lives with a sense of normalcy, be it in "waiting out" the administrative obstacles and yearly renewals, accepting less qualified jobs, and recreating their work lives, or leaving to live in another country to achieve greater stability through permanent protection. Finally, when it comes to homemaking, both as time spent and needed to create an affective attachment and as the institutional acknowledgment of one's continuous presence, the empirical findings in this chapter reveal a detachment of the two timelines, the institutionalized process of recognition through citizenship, and the individual and emotive effort to disentangle from the imagined idealized past, overcome institutional impediments, and create new lasting attachments.

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76 *Unlikely Refuge?* interview with Zoran, recorded by Karla Koutková, May 4, 2021.

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About the Author

Karla Koutková is a policy anthropologist with a doctorate in Political Science from Central European University in Budapest. She has worked on informality, state-building, migration, and humanitarianism for a variety of interdisciplinary and applied research projects in Bosnia, Hungary, Austria, and Canada.

8. Toward a Conceptual History of Refugees in Hungary

Ágnes Katalin Kelemen

Abstract: Drawing on an examination of Hungarian encyclopedias, the chapter lays the groundwork for the conceptual historical investigation of Hungarian terms related to refugeedom. It traces the recent emergence of the neologism *migráns* (migrant) which carries negative connotations of asylum seekers, as opposed to the word *menekült* (refugee). The chapter makes the case for connecting refugee history as a topic and conceptual history as a method, an approach which will be particularly fruitful for historians of Hungary, since "refugee" is often thought of as the inverse of "citizen" in the Hungarian as well as international discourse of the 2020s, and the Hungarian tradition of conceptual history has been very much concerned with *polgár* (*citoyen*, *bourgeois*) and *állampolgár* (citizen).

Keywords: Refugee; migrant; conceptual history; Hungary; encyclopedias

In 2015, Hungarian officials began referring to non-European asylum seekers as *migránsok* (migrants) as opposed to *menekültek* (refugees, which is a legally unprecise but widely used term for asylum seekers in everyday parlance) in governmental communication. The change was based on the claim that migrants move for economic reasons and are less deserving of support than refugees, who are fleeing from persecution and other potentially fatal threats. Importantly, *migráns* (migrant) as such had rarely been used in such contexts up to this point. Normal usage in the Hungarian language specified whether one was an immigrant or an emigrant. The pejorative usage of the neologism *migráns* in Hungarian is demonstrated in a study by the linguist Roberta Rada that analyzes a corpus of five thousand Hungarian texts, albeit with a focus on other

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terms, namely, *határ*, *határkerítés*, and *határzár* (border, border fence, and border closure).[1]

The present chapter likewise focuses on related terminology and its historical development, mainly with regard to the meanings of *menekült* (refugee), *állampolgár* (citizen), *bevándorló* (immigrant), *kivándorló* and *emigrant* (both of the latter can only be translated as emigrant, but the difference will be detailed later). Many interpretations of refugeedom suggest an inverse relationship between refugee and citizen. To put it simply, refugees are often associated with vulnerability and displacement due to the lack of protection by a state, and such protection is bound to citizenship. For instance, Ukrainian citizens who moved to Hungary due to the current war in Ukraine can apply for asylum. On the other hand, individuals who hold dual Ukrainian-Hungarian citizenship who used to live in Ukraine (in Zakarpattia Oblast) but moved to Hungary because of the same war cannot request asylum. In this system, one is either a refugee or a citizen. *Bevándorlók* (immigrants) and *kivándorlók* and *emigránsok* (emigrants) are chosen as focal points because these are replaced in more recent discourse by the more generic term *migráns* (migrant) to describe, on the one hand, those who would be called "economic migrants" in English or used to be called *gazdasági bevándorlók* (economic immigrants) in Hungarian, and on the other hand to describe unwelcome asylum seekers.

The vehemence of governmental hostility shown toward asylum seekers in 2015 was unusual in Hungary, and *migráns* (migrant) was a neologism (earlier it existed in professional jargon only) that reflected this. On the other hand, there are historical precedents for reserving the term *menekült* (refugee) for those asylum seekers who are welcome. Furthermore, the parallel existence of different meanings and opposed associations with regard to refugee-related concepts—refugee, asylum, citizen(ship), emigrant, emigration, immigrant, immigration, repatriation—is not a novel phenomenon in Hungarian society. Since 2015, however, the battle over whom to call a *menekült* (refugee) has become especially central to public discourse, for it was then that the Hungarian government began questioning the legitimacy of Middle Eastern asylum seekers' quest for refugee status. *Menedék* (asylum), *kivándorlás* (emigration), *bevándorlás* (immigration), and *visszahonosítás* (the legal act of repatriation) are closely connected to refugeedom, and their interpretation has been very influential on that of refugeedom. Hence, this chapter pays attention to the historical development

1 Rada, "Határok… 2015-ben 1. rész," 419–25; Rada, "Határok… 2015-ben 2. rész," 21–34.

of these terms and others, including *menekült* (refugee), *állampolgár* (citizen), *bevándorló* (immigrant), *kivándorló*, and *emigráns* (emigrant).

A conceptual history approach enables scholars to explain changes that look like surprising discrepancies on the surface. For example: Hungary was the first "Second World" country to join the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees during the Cold War— on March 14, 1989[2]—but since the mid-2010s, it has been the member state of the European Union most openly inhospitable to refugees. On the surface, it might appear that the reason for this change was simply that in the 1980s most asylum seekers were Hungarians from Romania, unlike in the mid-2010s. The Fidesz Party (which has governed Hungary since 2010) and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, however, have merely accentuated and accelerated an already ongoing process of declining acceptance of refugees and immigrants, a decline that concerned acceptance of ethnic Hungarians from Romania, too, starting already in the 1990s. Academics who had closely followed and researched the development of Hungary's refugee policy from the late 1980s warned as early as 2008—when the Hungarian Socialist Party was still in government—of the growing xenophobia and called for historical research on refugee reception over time.[3] Since then, Hungary's commitment to human rights and its international obligations has faded from the administrative practice of refugee reception and governmental communications.

Conceptual history is based on the recognition of language's importance in shaping actions. Language systemizes experiences, rendering them comparable and categorizable. Language enables us to connect phenomena across considerable differences of time and space. Without words, human acts cannot be communicated. Hence, there is no society without shared concepts, and at the same time our concepts are rooted in political and social systems. Conceptual history and social history thus depend on each other. Since historians primarily rely on textual sources, they must reflect on how reliable their juxtapositions of words and things are. Both realities and words change—but not at the exact same pace. Words tend to take on new meanings more slowly, only after a certain degree of societal change has already taken place and needs to be discussed. At the same time, concepts have an impact on actions and societal change, as well. Unless we are mindful of the changing meanings of concepts, we may easily misread our sources, or they even may remain unreadable for us.

2 However, non-aligned Yugoslavia was the first socialist country to join the convention (July 28, 1951).

3 Sík and Tóth, "Introduction," 5–7.

The best-known works of conceptual history, such as the German lexicon *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, historicize social phenomena by narrating how the meanings of key social concepts changed over time.[4] In a more recent example, the historian Andreas Kossert, who studies German expellees from East-Central Europe after 1945,[5] narrates escape as a thread around which the story of humankind's universal history can be woven, like the main filament of a text(ile)[6] based on the construction and proliferation of the German term *Flüchtling* (refugee) since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[7] Until then, refugees were named with the French word *réfugiés*, and when the word *Flüchtling* spread, it was still reserved for German refugees.[8]

With regard to the history of Hungary and Hungarians, conceptual history's reflections on the meanings of refugee(dom) and citizen(ship) may be found particularly relevant because the concept of an *állampolgár* (citizen) is closely connected to that of a *polgár* (civilian, the equivalent of the German *Bürger*) which has been a central concern for Hungarian conceptual historians for decades. This has to do with perceptions of the Dualist period (1867–1918) as the most successful period of the country's history, the era when a substantial middle class emerged through the social mobility and urbanization of many peasants. This period is also remembered as something of a golden age of civic liberty, despite the fact that a majority of the population did not have the right to vote and/or be elected as a representative, so that, in fact, few people wielded agency to influence political decisions. Nevertheless, in comparison to the Horthy-era between the two world wars and state socialism, civil society—for instance civilian activism to promote causes through associations—was indeed more encouraged. The importance of the notion of civilian agency and civil society after four decades of state socialism (1949–89) is also demonstrated by the fact that in 1995 one of the parties (Fidesz) began calling itself the Hungarian Civic Party (Magyar Polgári Párt) and organized highly successful "civilian circles" that then played an important role not only in attracting voters but also in mobilizing them during and between election cycles.[9]

4 Brunner, Conze, and Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*.

5 Kossert, *Kalte Heimat*.

6 Kossert, *Flucht*.

7 "Vom Refugié zum Flüchtling in der Moderne—eine Begriffsklärung," in Kossert, *Flucht*, 29–40.

8 Kossert, *Flucht*, 31–34.

9 Fidesz won the parliamentary elections in 1998, 2010, 2014, 2018, and 2022.

Most interpretations of citizenship understand it as an expression of an individual's belonging to a state. Being a refugee, on the other hand, means one's citizenship is fragile or entirely lacking. External refugees leave the country of their original citizenship due to persecution—at the hands of their own state or under an occupying power—or at least a lack of protection. Thus, their relationship with their country is either directly abusive or at least indirectly so in cases where the state is unable to shield them from danger. Those who escape abroad become refugees in a new country where they are not citizens. In this case being a citizen and being a refugee are inverse situations.

In some cases, however, individuals flee from a place of residence within their state of citizenship to another location within the country. The number of such internal refugees (or internally displaced persons, IDPs, in today's terminology)—is steadily rising globally.[10] In such cases, citizens call on their state to fulfill its duty to protect and provide for them. The state's responsibility to do so derives from its sovereignty: Sovereign states' governments are responsible for protecting their citizens' human rights, and, should they be unwilling or unable to do so, an international responsibility emerges.[11] As has been pointed out in many cases, including the current war in Ukraine since 2014, the situation of internally displaced persons is sometimes even more problematic than that of externally displaced refugees, and yet IDPs frequently receive less attention.[12] Because citizenship and refugeedom are connected in this sovereignty-as-responsibility approach, researchers interested in the conceptual history of "citizen" and "citizenship" may benefit from exploring the development of the concepts of "refugee" and "refugeedom."[13]

Importantly, in Hungary the division between internal and external refugees was not always sharp. Those Hungarians who left the territories detached from Hungary as a result of the First World War were initially *de iure* internal refugees while *de facto* they were external, since the neighboring states assumed control of those territories already in 1918 as Austria-Hungary disintegrated. In 1920 the Treaty of Trianon established new state borders according to which the places of origin of the formerly internal refugees now officially belonged to other states. These refugees

10 "Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDCM)," 12.

11 Weiss and Korn, *Internal Displacement*, 1.

12 Mikheieva, Sereda, and Kuzemska, "Forced Displacement," 199–200.

13 See more scholarly approaches to internal displacement in Weiss and Korn, *Internal Displacement*.

thereby became *de iure* external refugees, since their existing Hungarian citizenship was discontinued.[14] Maintaining their Hungarian citizenship required officially opting for it, or repatriation if they failed to opt before the deadline. These refugees are known as "Trianon refugees." This treaty diminished the territory of Hungary to one-third of its former extent and made three million Hungarians inhabitants of other countries. Due to its magnitude, the story of Trianon refugees and the discourse surrounding them greatly influenced thinking about refugees in Hungarian.

Regarding conceptual history, the most important studies by Hungarian scholars in this field include Károly Halmos's work[15] on the *polgár* (civilian) and on *polgárosodás* (embourgeoisement) and Márton Szabó's study on the replacement of the concept of *állampolgár* (citizen) by that of the *dolgozó* (worker) in state socialism.[16] Halmos argued for the usefulness of encyclopedias and lexica as sources by pointing out their place on the intersection and as intermediaries between the scholarly community and the general public. Hence, he followed the diachronic development of the Hungarian terms *polgár* (civilian), *polgárosodás* (embourgeoisement), *civilizáció* (civilization), and *kultúra* (culture) from very first Hungarian encyclopedias and lexica (1831)[17] to the end of state socialism (1989). Importantly, as early as 1862, the notion of *állampolgár* (citizen) was so central to being a *polgár* (civilian) that the former had an entry, while even the most up-to-date encyclopedia did not include an entry for the latter.[18] By the time the classical lexica of the turn of the century (*Pallas*)[19] and the first three decades of the twentieth century (*Révai*)[20] were published, *állampolgár* and *polgár* had parted ways as lexical entries. Twentieth-century reference books dedicate separate entries to *állampolgár* (citizen) and *polgár* (civilian). As mentioned above, other historians have discussed

14 See a concise history of refugee reception in twentieth-century Hungary in Kelemen, "Refugees and the 'Other Hungary'," 491–514.

15 Halmos, "Polgár- Polgárosodás-Civilizáció-Kultúra," 131–66. More recent re-publication in Halmos, *Költség és költészet*, 15–52.

16 Szabó, "A dolgozó mint állampolgár," 151–71.

17 *Közhasznú esmeretek tára: A' Conversations-Lexicon szerént Magyarországra alkalmaztatva*, Pest: Heckenast Gusztáv, 1831–1834, 12 vols.

18 *Egyetemes magyar encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, Pest: Szent István Társulat, 1862, 846.

19 *Pallas nagy lexikona*, Budapest: Pallas, 1893–1904, 18 vols.

20 *Pallas nagy lexikona* and *Révai nagy lexikona*, Budapest: Révai, 1911–1935, 21 vols. The owner of the Pallas publishing house (Pallas Irodalmi és Nyomdai joint stock company), Lajos Gerő, went bankrupt in 1906, hence he sold the rights of the publication to his main creditor, the Révai joint stock company. As a result, there is a lot of overlap between the *Pallas* and *Révai* lexica; both publishers used the help of their contemporary Hungarian scholarly community.

the conceptual history of the latter, but "citizen" is more important for the present study because it is closely connected to refugeedom. Lexical definitions of *állampolgár* (citizen) covered all the practical legal questions that had once been discussed under *polgár* (civilian).[21] These entries defined *állampolgárság* (citizenship) as the individual's connection to the state and the political nation and detailed ways of gaining and losing such a tie and the rights and obligations it entailed. They furthermore highlighted the relevance of citizenship even if the individual sojourned abroad, as the state was still the protector of their interests and also entitled to punish them if they broke its laws. Such semantic shifts reflect the construction and development of practices connected to modern citizenship.

Halmos also highlights which historical changes in political awareness remained underrepresented in encyclopedias and lexica. The end of the First World War did not bring about a caesura, and the Stalinist period (1949–56) failed to produce a comprehensive lexicon. This is not to say that the concepts of citizen and citizenship did not change, but that the circumstances may not have allowed publishers to produce new encyclopedias. This was in the first case in part because the First World War had impeded the completion of series that had been started earlier and now needed to be continued. During the interwar period, however, some lexica emerged which offered alternatives to those published by the prestigious publishing houses and which "cultured" middle-class families were expected to own (i.e., the lexica published by *Pallas* and *Révai*).

The publisher of the social democratic daily newspaper *Népszava* came out with *Társadalmi lexikon*[22] (Social Lexicon)[23] in 1928, which offered a left-wing interpretation of the world in its entries, including topics to which social democrats paid particular attention (such as the problem of alcoholism). The editors of the *Új idők lexikona* (Lexicon of New Times), published from 1936 to 1942,[24] on the contrary, offered a right-wing lens through which to look at the world. They declared their intention to explain the phenomena of the period in a "purely Hungarian" (*színmagyar*) spirit.[25]

21 *Pallas nagy lexikona*, vol. 1. (1893), 403–404; *Révai nagy lexikona*, vol. 1 (1911), 395–96.

22 *Társadalmi lexikon* [Social Lexicon], Budapest: Népszava, 1928.

23 For the sake of readability, the English translations of these titles are used in subsequent references to these volumes despite the fact that no work in English was actually published under this title and the reference is in fact to the Hungarian publication.

24 Since lexica were often published over a time span of years or decades, when referring to entries in them, only the publication year of the relevant volume will be cited throughout this chapter.

25 *Új idők lexikona* [Lexicon of New Times], Budapest: Singer és Wolfner, 1936–1942, 24 vols.

A volume titled *A magyar feltámadás lexikona* (The Lexicon of Hungarian Resurrection) was published in 1930, between the two above, to mark the tenth anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon (1920). Its editors claimed it was meant to commemorate the efforts of those "who participated in the great work of rebuilding Hungary that resulted in laying the foundations of the future Hungary on the ruins of Trianon" with no political or denominational partiality.[26] The result is nevertheless—and of course—no less informed by its editor's politics than its left-wing and nationalist counterparts; it is only ideologically driven in a less explicit form. In the same period, religious denominations also came out with their own new lexica, providing their members with information specifically relevant to their faith.[27]

With regard to citizenship, *Social Lexicon* did not propose any significantly different framing from the mainstream *Pallas* (1893–1904) and *Révai* (1911–35) lexica, but unlike those two publications preceding the First World War, it could reflect on the impact of the Treaty of Trianon. *Social Lexicon* was first published in 1928, while the relevant volumes of *Pallas* and *Révai* containing *állampolgárság* were published in 1893 and 1911, respectively. *Social Lexicon* explained that those citizens of former Greater Hungary who were residing in territories which the Treaty of Trianon detached from Hungary lost their Hungarian citizenship unless they had retained it with the legal act of *optálás* (option). Expressing only mild criticism of the interwar Hungarian political regime, it was noted that *visszahonosítás* (repatriation) through a process of naturalization was in principle possible for those who had not opted for Hungarian citizenship by this legal act of option, but remained uncertain because granting it was in the hands of the interior minister who could decide arbitrarily which petitions to accept.

The peculiarity of *állampolgár* (citizen) in the *Lexicon of New Times* (1936) lies in its mentioning that, "in Germany, a new interpretation of citizenship has recently developed." This sentence remained without any explicit reference to the Nuremberg laws and the infusion of racism into defining who was a German citizen, and it was also left without any explicit value judgment.[28] *The Lexicon of Hungarian Resurrection* (1930) limits itself

26 Foreword of *A magyar feltámadás lexikona: A magyar legújabb kor története* [Lexicon of Hungarian Resurrection: The History of Hungary's Most Recent Era] by the editor Géza Szentmiklóssy (Budapest: Európa, 1930), 5. The phrase "on the ruins of Trianon" refers to the circumstances caused by the Treaty of Trianon.

27 *Zsidó lexikon* [Jewish Lexicon], Budapest: Zsidó lexikon kiadása, 1929; *Katolikus lexikon* [Catholic Lexicon], Budapest: Magyar Kultúra, 1932.

28 *Új idők lexikona*, vols. 1–2 (1936), 257–58.

to explaining the details of Hungary's legislation on citizenship.[29] Overall, we can observe that encyclopedic discussions on the meaning of "citizen" and "citizenship" during the interwar period did not reflect on the dramatic consequences of the Treaty of Trianon (1920) to the extent one would expect. Instead, as we shall see below, these changes were reflected upon in the discussion on refugees.

In the brief period of governance by a coalition of communists and the democratic parties after the Second World War, only the publishers of the classical *Révai* lexicon came up with a new encyclopedia. In it, *állampolgárság* (citizenship) has a very short entry, which directed readers seeking more information about citizens' rights to the entry under *szabadságjogok* (liberty rights), which in turn referred to *emberi jogok* (human rights). It remains a question as to what extent such editorial decisions may be indicative of fears that the political climate—under pressure from the communists and the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary—was evolving toward a regime that would disregard most of the rights explained in this entry. Alongside many other civic liberties, the entry highlighted the freedom of emigration and of choosing citizenship among human rights.[30]

While the Stalinist period went by without its own encyclopedia, *Új magyar lexikon* (New Hungarian Lexicon) was published during the Kádár era (1957–89).[31] This lexicon's *állampolgárság* (citizenship) entry focuses on the modes of gaining and losing Hungarian citizenship. However, separate entries are dedicated to citizens' rights[32] and citizens' obligations.[33] The former lists a few civic liberties that citizens in the Hungarian People's Democracy could in fact not practice (such as the freedom of speech and press). It is noteworthy that these were at the bottom of the list, whereas rights deemed important for ideological reasons were prioritized: the right to work and be paid appropriately, the right to rest and have vacation, the right to the protection of health, the right to state support in case of decreased capability to work, the right to study and access cultural opportunities, and equality among the sexes.[34] The entry on citizens' obligations declares that all obligations are embedded in the duty to help the state build socialism. Hence, citizens are required to guard and strengthen society's common

29 *A magyar feltámadás lexikona*, 50.

30 *Révai kétkötetes lexikona* [Révai's Two-Volume Lexicon], Budapest: Révai Irodalmi Intézet, 1947–1948, vol. 2 (1948), 358–59.

31 *Új magyar lexikon* [New Hungarian Lexicon], Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1959–1981, 8 vols.

32 *Új magyar lexikon*, vol. 1 (8th unchanged edition) (1960), 75–76.

33 *Új magyar lexikon*, vol. 1 (1960), 76.

34 *Új magyar lexikon*, vol. 1 (1960), 76.

property, to enhance the economic achievements of the country, to improve the people's democracy, and to perform military service.[35]

Such encyclopedic definitions of citizens' rights and obligations point in the same direction as the conceptual history of *dolgozó* (worker) by Márton Szabó, although he used different sources (mainly legal and political documents). Szabó analyzed the semantic changes of *dolgozó* (worker) in three distinct periods of Hungarian socialism that represented three distinct types of socialism: the councils' republic of 1919, the period of personality cult (1947–56), and the Kádár regime (1957–89). Szabó puts forward the argument that socialist policy replaced the citizen with the worker in political discourse and constructed a new political subject. Even the constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic tied electoral right (which was largely a formality in any case) and eligibility to being a productive worker. It thus put an end to the idea of citizenship as it had been known in a civilian (or bourgeois) democracy where rights connected to citizenship could not be lost because of economic "uselessness."

Following up on Szabó's narration, we should also look at the most comprehensive encyclopedic endeavor of the post-socialist late twentieth century in Hungary under the patronage of President Árpád Göncz, namely, *Magyar nagylexikon* (Hungarian Encyclopedia, 1993–2004). It displays a return to a pre-socialist understanding of citizenship defined as the legal relationship between a person and a state; it provides a historical overview of the laws that had regulated citizenship in Hungary from the Dualist period (1867–1918) onwards.[36] For contextualizing the Hungarian case, it is important to note—as Michal Frankl has shown—that many of the terms used in the East-Central European region (e.g., *uchodźca* in Polish, *uprchlík* in Czech, *izbeglica* in Croatian and Serbian), similarly to *menekült*[37] in Hungarian, focus on people's going away from somewhere rather than a necessity to protect and shelter people in need.[38] Such etymological observations may lead to the impression that in these cultures refugees are connected to displacement rather than refugeedom. A conceptual historical investigation, however, can lead to a more nuanced conclusion. Regarding the case of the

35 *Új magyar lexikon*, vol. 1 (1960), 75–76.

36 *Magyar nagylexikon* [Hungarian Encyclopedia], Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993, Vol. 1 (1993), 538–39.

37 *Menekült* is derived from the verb *menekül*, which in turn stems from *menik*, an antiquated form of *megy* ("goes"). See *menekül* and *ment* entries in *Etimológiai szótár. Magyar szavak és toldalékok eredete* [Etymological Dictionary. The Origin of Hungarian Words and Appendixes], Budapest: Tinta Könyvkiadó, 2021, 559.

38 See the section titled "Refugee Studies between 'West' and 'East'" in [Frankl], "Detailed Project."

Hungarian term for refugee (*menekült*), it was simply not the most widely used term to discuss people who needed to flee.

The popular mainstream Hungarian lexica of the twentieth century (*Révai*, *New Hungarian Lexicon*, *Hungarian Encyclopedia*), speak about refugeedom under other keywords that focus precisely on the necessity of protection and shelter, namely under *menedék* (asylum) and *menedékjog* (right to asylum). *Menekült* (refugee) per se does not even appear in these works as an entry. This fact, on the other hand, suggests that, in the process of escape, the actor used to be regarded as less important than the social and legal structures they rely on for protection.

The editors of *Révai* in 1915 focused on the medieval Christian concept of *refugium* when discussing asylum and right to asylum.[39] Nevertheless, they mentioned that more recently a similar kind of extraterritoriality and protection from persecution and punishment had been provided by embassies. They also added that asylum could refer to the sheltering of homeless people as well as of prostitutes and alcoholics. The *Lexicon of New Times* (1936–42) likewise referred to the medieval *ius refugii* as a starting point and went into more details of ancient Greek and biblical concepts of asylum, but added information about the contemporary right to asylum as a state's entitlement to deny the extradition of alleged criminals who have escaped to its territory, emphasizing that this was especially relevant in the case of foreigners persecuted in their homeland for political crimes.[40] *Social Lexicon* (1928) does not treat the topic of asylum at all.

One may expect that the impact of the First World War and the arrival of *Trianon menekültek* (Trianon refugees) into the now diminished territory of Hungary could be examined especially well by studying *The Lexicon of Hungarian Resurrection* that was published for the tenth anniversary of the peace treaty. Since this lexicon is organized around biographical entries, however, information about refugees needs to be retrieved mainly from individual biographies. The refugee topic is not dealt with in the focused manner one might expect given the number of Trianon refugees.[41] Readers could see, however, that many of the illustrious members of the interwar Hungarian elite had come from territories detached in 1920.

The *New Hungarian Lexicon* (1959–62) of the state-socialist period explains the right to asylum along the same lines as the *Lexicon of New Times* (1936–42):

39 *Révai nagy lexikona*, vol. 13 (1915), 597.

40 *Új idők lexikona*, vols. 17–18 (1940), 4490.

41 426,000 out of the eight million inhabitants of post-Trianon Hungary. Mocsy, *The Effects of World War I*, 10–12.

the right of refugees to sojourn in a foreign country without being extradited to their homelands where they were considered political criminals. Its authors highlight in addition that contemporary Hungary provided such rights to people who were elsewhere persecuted for their democratic (i.e., socialist or communist) behavior and activity for the liberation of peoples. This lexicon's entry also goes into some detail about what such refugees were entitled to in Hungary in comparison to the rights of citizens.[42] Thus, in this case, *menekült* (refugee) and *állampolgár* (citizen) were interpreted as the inverses of each other and the refugee par excellence was a political refugee. The post-socialist *Hungarian Encyclopedia* (1993–2004) defines *menedékjog* (asylum) as protection given by a state to foreign or stateless people recognized by that state as *menekültek* (refugees), due to persecution (or a well-grounded fear of such) in their homeland or place of residence for belonging to a national or ethnic group or for their religious or political conviction.[43] The authors, thus, had only external refugees in mind. They provided a quite exhaustive overview of the relevant international conventions—including the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees from 1951—and the historical and social importance of the topic under the entry for *menekültügy* (refugee issues).[44]

Emigráns (emigrant) is often understood as a person who—like a refugee—experiences oppression in the home country and therefore—unlike a refugee—leaves without being physically forced to do so. *Révai* (1911–35) defines an emigrant[45] as someone who leaves due to political or religious oppression, either permanently or at least until circumstances improve in their native country. It is important to note that Hungarian also has a second word for emigrant: *kivándorló. Kivándorló* is almost always a label for those who leave their home country in search of better economic circumstances. So much so that the *Lexicon of New Times* (1936–42) defines *emigráció* as emigration (i.e., *kivándorlás*) not for economic but for political reasons.[46] The authors differentiate between forced and voluntary emigrants, the former having fled to escape persecution or punishment. If their crime is of a political nature—i.e., they are not common criminals—they enjoy the right to asylum abroad. Thus, as we can see, *emigráns* (emigrant) functioned as a synonym for *menekült* (refugee) in the 1930s and early 1940s. It is noteworthy

42 *Új magyar lexikon*, vol. 4 (1961), 597.
43 *Magyar nagylexikon*, vol. 12 (2001), 913.
44 *Magyar nagylexikon*, vol. 12 (2001), 913–14.
45 *Révai nagy lexikona*, vol. 6 (1912), 466.
46 *Új idők lexikona*, vols. 7–8 (1937), 2050.

that the same understanding is present in the entry on *emigráció* (emigration) in the late nineteenth-century *Pallas* lexicon.[47]

On the other hand, the *New Hungarian Lexicon* (1959–62) does not make such a sharp distinction between *kivándorló* (emigrant) (1961) and *emigráns* (emigrant) (1960). It allows space for economically motivated emigrants in its *emigráció* (emigration) entry, but it also focuses on emigrants and especially on communities of emigrants whose motivation was political (leaders of the Rákóczi Uprising [1703–11], revolutionaries of 1848 and 1918, as well as emigrants from other nations during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries).[48] Since this lexicon was edited under state socialism, its examples are primarily the Hungarian communist emigrants of the interwar period. Under *kivándorlás* (emigration), this lexicon's authors deal with the mechanisms of labor migration in capitalism particularly from (earlier) colonized countries and note that since unemployment was wiped out and the life standard was developing, *kivándorlás* rapidly diminished from socialist countries. Nevertheless, the authors do acknowledge the impossibility of denying that two hundred thousand Hungarians left after the revolution was repressed in 1956. If *kivándorlás* (emigration) had been as sharply distinguished from *emigráció* (emigration) in this period as had been the case in the *Lexicon of New Times* published during the war, the authors might not have been caught up in this contradiction, since the 1956 refugees would certainly have been considered political rather than economic emigrants. Here, however, the authors were seemingly forced to discuss political emigration under *kivándorlás* too, and thus ended up arguing somewhat problematically that emigration from socialist countries (the GDR and 1956 Hungarian emigration are given as examples in parentheses) resulted from the empty promises and panic caused by imperialists. This also reflects on the significance of labor integration for asylum in state-socialist countries, as Nikola Tohma discusses in another chapter.[49]

The *Hungarian Encyclopedia* (1993–2004) of the post-socialist period likewise does not distinguish clearly between *kivándorlás* (emigration) (2000)[50] and *emigráció* (emigration) (1998).[51] It does make a fine distinction: the *kivándorlás* entry lists economic reasons in the first place (before political and religious), while the entry on *emigráció* lists political motivations first

47 *Pallas nagy lexikona*, vol. 6 (1894), 125.

48 *Új magyar lexikon*, vol. 2 (1960), 192.

49 See the chapter "The Construction of a Political Refugee: Foreign Comrades in 1950s Socialist Czechoslovakia" by Nikola Tohma in this volume.

50 *Magyar nagylexikon*, vol. 11 (2000), 105.

51 *Magyar nagylexikon*, vol. 7 (1998), 291.

(before economic and religious). The entry on *emigráció* touches upon other phenomena relevant to refugee history. On the one hand "inner emigration" is mentioned when someone moves within their home country but withdraws from political life due to compelling circumstances. In addition, *emigráció* is also defined as a totality of refugees or voluntary emigrants (distinguished from refugees) in a foreign land.

Although one may think of refugees as immigrants in a country and Hungarian history includes significant episodes when refugees from abroad arrived in pursuit of refuge,[52] Hungarian lexicon entries on immigration do not refer to refugees, refuge, or asylum. These concepts are relegated to the entries on emigration, which, even if we take into account some degree of national self-centeredness, is hardly justified. Historically, in fact, "Hungarian refugees" were not always Hungarians leaving Hungary, but rather, on several occasions, Hungarians arriving in Hungary.[53] *The Lexicon of New Times* (1936) indeed mentions that immigrants can be foreigners, Hungarians, or returning migrants, still without mentioning that most Hungarian immigrants to Hungary after the First World War were refugees who moved because of the consequences of the Treaty of Trianon.[54] When discussing *bevándorlás* (immigration), *Révai* (1911) quite interestingly does not refer to immigration to Hungary, but does highlight the importance of American immigration law for Hungarians.[55]

Unlike *emigráció*, the Hungarian version of the Latin word *immigráció* (immigration) is rarely used and does not differ semantically from the Hungarian word *bevándorlás* (immigration) to the same degree that *emigráció* (emigration) differs from *kivándorlás* (emigration). *Immigráció* and *bevándorlás* are used interchangeably, as are *immigráns* and *bevándorló* (immigrant). The lexica that do include separate entries (*immigráns* in *Révai* and *immigráció* in the *Lexicon of New Times*) simply define these terms as synonyms of *bevándorló* and *bevándorlás* respectively. Surprisingly, neither of the socialist lexica—*Social Lexicon* (1928) and *New Hungarian*

52 Most famously, but not only, Polish refugees during the Second World War. Even the refugees of the Polish "great emigration"—the political refugees of the resurrection of 1830—often left through Hungary, where they found sympathy and support. On the other hand, during the Second World War not only Polish refugees settled in Hungary, but so did French, British, Italian (Badoglionist), Dutch, Czechoslovak, and Soviet prisoners of war (escapees from Nazi captivity). Kapronczay, *Lengyel menekültek Magyarországon*.

53 Most notably the "Trianon refugees" and Transylvanian Hungarians escaping Ceaușescu's dictatorship in Romania in the 1980s. Kaszás, *Erdélyi menekültek Magyarországon*.

54 *Új idők lexikona*, vols. 3–4 (1936), 906.

55 *Révai nagy lexikona*, vol. 3 (1911), 261.

Lexicon (1959–62)—include an entry for *bevándorlás* or *bevándorló*.[56] The *Hungarian Encyclopedia* (1994) quite unexpectedly discusses the biological understanding (relevant in the context of new animal and plant species' settling in a geographical area) of *bevándorlás* (immigration) as its primary definition rather than foregrounding the social scientific one. The term's legal understanding is provided as a secondary definition in which the authors refer to a person's settling for an indefinite period in a foreign country, possibly with no intention to return home. They add that immigrants do not necessarily give up their original citizenship.[57]

Given the significance of border changes in twentieth-century Hungarian history, an overview of definitions of *opció*/*optálás* (the legal act of opting for citizenship) and *visszahonosítás* (the legal act of repatriation) is due. As expected, *Révai* (1916) only gives a short to-the-point entry on *opció* (option), while *Social Lexicon* (1928) and the *Lexicon of New Times* (1941) go into the details of how the population of the territories detached from Hungary in the Treaty of Trianon were able to opt for citizenship.[58] The *Lexicon of Hungarian Resurrection* dedicates surprisingly little space to this topic.[59] *Hungarian Encyclopedia* (2002) does not list the case of post-Trianon Hungary as an example[60] but does dedicate a separate entry to the "optants' lawsuits."[61] The much older *New Hungarian Lexicon* (1959–62), on the other hand, defined *opció* (option for citizenship) without mentioning this concept's relevance for Hungary, since the protagonists of these lawsuits belonged to the elite of the Horthy era and were thus doomed to contempt and even oblivion in the state-socialist period.[62]

Visszahonosítás (the legal act of repatriation) received a whole section in the *Lexicon of Hungarian Resurrection* (1930)[63] and a short entry in *New*

56 The latter one contains an entry on *immigráció* which is merely a word-by-word translation of the Latin word. *Új magyar lexikon*, vol. 3 (1960), 377.

57 *Magyar nagylexikon*, vol. 3 (1994), 783.

58 Although *Social Lexicon* gives the commercial meaning as the primary definition and the legal one as secondary only. *Révai nagy lexikona*, vol. 4 (1916), 751; *Társadalmi lexikon*, 543; *Új idők Lexikona*, vols. 19–20 (1941), 4889.

59 Markó Jenő dr. entry, in *A magyar feltámadás lexikona*, 832.

60 *Magyar nagylexikon*, vol. 14 (2002), 167.

61 *Magyar nagylexikon*, vol. 14 (2002), 176. Those Hungarians who resided or came from territories lost by Hungary in 1920 but opted for Hungarian citizenship rather than becoming the citizens of Czechoslovakia, Romania or of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, were called *optants* (*optánsok*). The landowners among them—some of them were or successively became leading political figures in Hungary—lost their properties in these countries and hence turned to the international courts.

62 Optálás entry, in *Új magyar lexikon*, vol. 5 (1961), 282.

63 *A magyar feltámadás lexikona*, 51.

Hungarian Lexicon (1961),[64] while *Révai*'s *visszahonosítás* entry directs readers to the entry on *állampolgárság* (citizenship).[65] These sections include technical descriptions of the relevant Hungarian laws. The entry in the *Lexicon of New Times* (1942) likewise focuses on legalities by outlining—in a reflection of the contemporary zeitgeist—the antisemitic legislation that infused the relevant regulation during this period.[66] According to a law passed in 1939, Law 1939: IV, Jews could not be repatriated, and the restoration of their citizenship after 1914 could be withdrawn.[67] The *Hungarian Encyclopedia* (1993–2004), published around the turn of the twenty-first century, does not include an entry on repatriation at all.

As the above detailed comparison of Hungarian lexicon entries demonstrates, experts who authored the mainstream lexica of twentieth-century Hungary highlighted refugees' need for protection and shelter, even though the Hungarian term *menekült* (refugee) suggests a focus on displacement. *Menekült*, however, was for decades defined under other entries, such as *menedék* (asylum) and *menedékjog* (right to asylum). In the meantime, *menekült* (refugee) was also understood as a synonym for *emigráns* (emigrant)—a person who emigrates due to persecution or oppression, unlike a *kivándorló* (emigrant). The latter word is also an equivalent of emigrant, but it is reserved for those who leave voluntarily in search of better economic circumstances. During the second half of the twentieth century, however, this sharp distinction between *emigráns* and *kivándorló* began to fade. The lack of references to refugees and asylum in entries on immigration and immigrants suggests—in accordance with the initial hypothesis of the *Unlikely Refuge?* project[68]—that, despite several significant episodes in which immigrants to Hungary were refugees, Hungary has not been thought of as a likely refuge, not even by its own citizens.

While lexicon entries provide useful snapshots of changes in the interpretation of a term, discourse analysis of a large body of sources—including relevant media articles, political speeches and texts, minutes of parliamentary sessions, and even fiction—will enable us to capture the processes through which the term's meaning changed. The present study is limited to the exploration of the snapshots but aims to introduce further research of a larger body of texts which might explore a further question: How did

64 Here the entry is called *repatriálás*: *Új magyar lexikon*, vol. 5 (1961), 554.

65 *Révai nagy lexikona*, vol. 19 (1926), 384.

66 *Új idők lexikona*, vols. 23–24 (1942), 6134.

67 Moreover, if a Jew lost his or her citizenship at some point and it was restored later than 1914 (which was the case for many Jews when Hungary lost territories in the end of the First World War and they opted for Hungarian citizenship), the restoration was annulled by Law 1939: IV.

68 Frankl, "East Central Europe," 473–89.

the presence of various waves of refugees impact the meaning of *menekült* (refugee) in Hungary, be it the presence of First World War refugees, Trianon refugees, Jewish refugees from Nazism, other refugees during the Second World War, political refugees of the state-socialist period, refugees of the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, or the refugees of 2015?

A thorough discourse analysis of the press related to refugees—with a focus on the most widely read newspapers and periodicals—and an exploration of Hungarian literary corpora is facilitated by the means of digital humanities. It is important to reflect on the relationship between the digital corpora and the canon.[69] From a conceptual history perspective, highly regarded fiction and genre fiction should also be considered. The captivating crime novel *A Sellő titka* (The Mermaid's Secret) by Éva Cserháti, for instance, is a more relevant literary representation of thinking about refugees than many authoritative pieces of Hungarian literature, since several of its central characters arrive in Hungary in 1949 as children fleeing from the Greek Civil War and then grow up in Hungary. This background plays a role in their decisions.[70]

To conclude, this chapter has made the case for connecting refugee history as a topic and conceptual history as a method, an approach that will be particularly fruitful for historians of Hungary, since "refugee" is often thought of as the inverse of "citizen" in the Hungarian, as well as international, discourse of the 2020s and the Hungarian tradition of conceptual history is very much concerned with *polgár* (*citoyen*, *bourgeois*) and *állampolgár* (citizen). Despite the particularly fertile soil that the Hungarian tradition of conceptual history provides for connecting refugee history and the method of conceptual history, a comparative investigation with the conceptual history of refugees in other East-Central European languages would also be a logical continuation of such scholarly endeavors.

In addition, in following a century of development in definitions of *menekült* (refugee), *állampolgár* (citizen), and *bevándorló* (immigrant) among other terms, this chapter has shown that none of these three had a purely negative meaning. This is why a neologism *migráns* (migrant) was needed for the anti-refugee communication of the 2010s and 2020s. While *gazdasági bevándorló*, the equivalent of "economic migrant," could express the same kind of skepticism toward asylum seekers' claims as the English expression, it is easier to attach purely negative connotations to a neologism than to pre-existing terms, and neologisms also grab more attention.

69 For example: *Magyar Történeti Szövegtár* [Hungarian Historical Corpus], http://clara.nytud.hu/mtsz/; *Digitális Irodalmi Akadémia* [Digital Literature Academy], https://pim.hu/hu/dia.

70 Cserháti, *A Sellő titka*.

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About the Author

Ágnes Katalin Kelemen is a social historian of twentieth-century East-Central Europe, with a particular interest in Jewish history and migration. She is an assistant professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary – University of Jewish Studies in Budapest. Previously she worked at the CEU Democracy Institute (Budapest).

Conclusion: (Un)Likely Refuge and (Un)Known Refugees

Michal Frankl

As the team of the *Unlikely Refuge?* project examined archives, searched for testimonies, and discussed the history of refugees in East-Central Europe in the twentieth century, the region was thrust back into the spotlight due to the reactions to and representations of large numbers of people on the move—in some ambiguous and uncomfortable ways.

After years of a growing migration "pressure" in Europe and beyond, the "summer of migration" of 2015 elevated East-Central Europe as a place of transmigration and a space where the brewing "crisis" was made visible. Faced with groups of refugees present at the railway stations in Budapest and elsewhere, the governments abdicated their responsibilities under international and national laws and agreements to register and process asylum applicants, thereby contributing to the perception of an uncontrolled migration, or even an invasion. Border fences, only recently associated with communist "totalitarianism," were now erected in Hungary and Poland to block migrants and refugees. Police and the military were deployed to the borders and violent, extralegal pushbacks became commonplace. In an increasingly hostile and polarized public debate, refugees were recoded as unwanted economic migrants and a security threat. Even news reports about the funding of the *Unlikely Refuge?* project in 2018 received some hostile reactions online which set in motion the mental domino process of reducing refugees to Muslim migrants and ultimately to terrorists. So much money "wasted on thousands of words [...] that we have to receive Muslim migrants?," tweeted the speaker of the populist and nationalist Czech President Miloš Zeman, apparently uninterested in and uninformed about the project itself.[1] The situation of refugees once again became a *moral*

1 Jiří Ovčáček [@exPREZIDENTCR], *Twitter*, November 29, 2018, https://x.com/exPREZIDENTCR/status/1068156155346726913.

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panic: with the alleged dangers to the nation and European civilization all coalescing around the figure of the refugee.

By contrast, starting in February 2022, millions of Ukrainian refugees crossed borders with relative ease and were received with sympathy in the very same region. Governments provided this significantly larger group with legal status based on the temporary protection, the right to work, and welfare support. The arrival of refugees from a country facing an invasion by Russia aligned with the historical experience of many Eastern Europeans, allowing for the easy construction of solidarity. This also aligned with previous trajectories of many labor migrants from Ukraine into the region. Furthermore, the different reactions were also highly gendered, based on the perceived contrast between young, male—and by implication dangerous—refugees from Asia and Africa and the image of innocent women and children deserving of protection coming across the Ukrainian border. Unlike for similar migrants with a different skin color, the stereotypical descriptions of male Ukrainian workers seem to have been forgotten. While white Ukrainian refugees were assisted at border crossings, refugees from the Global East and South, or Roma and Sinti, were sent back or hunted down at the border, as seen in the reappearance of the no man's land between Belarus and Poland.

How does the research presented in this volume explain this combination of generosity and closure? Can the reactions—of governments, NGOs, and societies—be attributed to a longer history of refugeedom in East-Central Europe? Furthermore, the two migration "crises" are often contrasted, but what do the exclusion and inclusion have in common? Examining continuity in refugee regimes in a region characterized by ruptures is not a self-evident scholarly endeavor. Although the interruptions and new beginnings can be analyzed as a recurring pattern, the instability of who is considered a refugee and how such a person is named by others and themselves, as well as who decides and helps, remains a defining feature of refugee regimes in the region. Without overemphasizing these connections, this conclusion brings these uncertainties, which span across the twentieth century and beyond, to the forefront.

The contributions in this volume analyzed a number of refugee situations which were embedded in their particular historical contexts. The Habsburg monarchy, the interwar nation-states, the state-socialist countries, and finally the countries in transformation from communism relied on different legal instruments (if on any) and used varying terminology to address people on the move who sought protection. The experience of refugees fleeing within an empire differed from that of refugees crossing the borders of

nation-states, and again from that of people fleeing wars or seen as political refugees. So did the management of and assistance provided to them.

Governments exhibited different levels of the ability to manage mobile populations, or—as in the case of Poland after the start of the Second World War (chapter by Lidia Zessin-Jurek)—they were simply absent. Together, these contributions—analyzing East-Central Europe and looking at the global refugee regime from this perspective—demonstrate the need for a better understanding of the possibilities and dilemmas of refugee protection in unstable and transforming social, political, and economic contexts, in spaces beyond the imagined stability of Western liberal democracies.

Time and space are recurring themes in the contributions and assume a particular significance in light of changes in borders, sovereignties, and refugee regimes. Research often contrasts the regular state time with the irregular, broken time of the refugees, transforming the linear time into a cyclical time of metaphorical waiting rooms. Scholars have analyzed a variety of refugee spaces and places, often adopting critical stances on the curtailment of mobility and access to territory. However, the contributions here locate refugees in situations in which state, humanitarian, and refugee spaces and times are changing, disputed, and sometimes volatile, and clash in different constellations. This includes the spatial treatment of refugees who, depending on the circumstances, are either removed from or sent to border zones. Ethnic disputes over territory and linguistic borders and nationalist politics co-produced refugee spaces as much as government decisions about refugees did. (Jewish) humanitarianism in the refugee camps in the Habsburg monarchy (see Anca Cretu's chapter) was also embedded in the national reconfiguration of loyalties in the ethnically contested Bohemian Lands (roughly, the current Czech Republic, Czechia). The Yugoslav-Italian borderlands (Francesca Rolandi's chapter) were the setting of a protracted ethnic conflict that continued into the interwar nation-states, and beyond. Additionally, Julia Reinke examines homes for refugee children in the Polish borderlands and in the German Democratic Republic shortly after the Second World War and the expulsion of Germans. Lidia Zessin-Jurek's chapter, which analyzes refugee time in statelessness, focuses on a situation in which territory and sovereignty were in an extreme flux. However, uncertain temporalities underlie all the refugee situations discussed here, even of refugees arriving in countries that signed the 1951 Refugee Convention. Karla Koutková's chapter reveals the effects of the temporary protection instrument, which collided with personal, family, and professional time and was embedded in the particular temporal structure of post-communist transformation.

Ágnes Kelemen's chapter highlights the absence of long-term terminological anchoring of the *refugee* in Hungary. Although a broader, transnational conceptual history of the term in East-Central Europe is still needed, her conclusions certainly apply to encyclopedic knowledge across the region. This indicates that protection and aid were provided, or denied, in most of East-Central Europe in the twentieth century without a firm conceptual and legal framework at the national or international levels. These contradictory elements flowed into both language and legal traditions. The refugees aided in the refugee camps examined by Cretu were at the same time citizens and their refugeedom was defined as a welfare claim on one's own country.[2] Similar frameworks guided the reactions to shrinking state territory and mostly co-ethnic refugees, be it in Hungary after the First World War (mostly from Slovakia and Transylvania), in Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement, or to those who migrated as a result of the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Adding to the complexity, as Zessin-Jurek shows, was the fact that many refugee citizens found themselves in a situation where the collapsed state could not provide any protection. The region is an excellent example of the frequent overlap between citizens and refugees, which contrasts with current international law. Consequently, when the definition of citizen was contested, so was the definition of refugee, and vice versa. Refugees and the reactions to them therefore co-defined these nation-states. Moreover, ethnicity and religion played a key role in their management and public perception.

In parallel and building on the nineteenth-century templates, the figure of a political exile—mostly described as an *emigrant* or *emigré*—remained emblematic in policies and narratives throughout the region. The chapters in this volume demonstrate the enduring concept of individuals or groups leaving their home country for reasons of political exposure, which included not only political ideologies but also the prevalent nationalist politics. Although the general recognition of asylum for political reasons persisted, this volume also reveals the terminological and legal instability, as well as outright arbitrariness in dealing with such refugee figures and groups. Rolandi highlights the combination of agency, political networks, and uncertainty faced by inter-war refugees crossing the border between Fiume and Sušak, who were dependent on political alliances and favors.

2 For instance, in the War Refugee Act of 1917, "Gesetz betreffend den Schutz der Kriegsflüchtlinge," December 31, 1917, no. 15, *Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrathe vertretenen Königreiche und Länder* 8/1918, 81, https://alex.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/alex?aid=rgb&datum=19180004&seite=00000081.

In this sense, the fates of these refugees represent those of larger groups, such as refugees from the former Russian Empire, anti-Nazi refugees, and, conversely, Nazis and right-wing nationalists fleeing countries such as Czechoslovakia, Austria, or Yugoslavia. Maximilian Graf demonstrates how easily political refugees can be recoded into what was already in the 1980s perceived as economic migrants.

As Nikola Tohma demonstrates for Czechoslovakia, ideological affinity notwithstanding, the "asylum" in state socialism was a political decision and a highly volatile status. Even the constitutional clauses, such as in the Czechoslovak constitution of 1961 granting asylum to "foreign nationals persecuted for defending the interests of the working people, for participation in the national liberation struggle, for scientific and artistic work, or for activities in defense of peace,"[3] remained largely declarative. In this respect, the state-socialist asylum shared important features with interwar Czechoslovakia, which—despite being known as a place of asylum for political refugees—relied on the discretion of politicians and officials to provide, restrict, or refuse protection to specific groups. Asylum was not a status determined by an impartial application of the law, but rather the result of complex negotiations that brought together regional and exile politics, population management, and humanitarianism. As such, political asylum required frequent confirmation and renewal. Moreover, the concept of an *emigré* was driven by group concepts of the exile. It was also co-negotiated by refugees in a process which reflected various hierarchies and constructions of the exile along political, ethnic, or social lines.

For the most part, the book critically discusses the approaches of the governments and humanitarians to refugees. However, the contributions also demonstrate the societies' and governments' ability to both receive and refuse refugees. They reveal that refugee numbers and the socioeconomic consequences of accepting them were rarely limiting factors. In many cases, from the First World War to the reception of refugees from Ukraine at the time of this book's writing, governments were able to mobilize the necessary resources and infrastructures, and aid organizations and societies provided support ranging from material aid and housing to legal, educational, and psychological support, thereby facilitating integration.

The history of refugees in East-Central Europe serves as an excellent example of how knowledge, which is constructed and constantly renegotiated, determines reception and the construction of solidarity. While recent

3 "Ústavní zákon ze dne 11. července 1960. Ústava Československé socialistické republiky," 100/1960 Sb. § (1960), odst. 33, https://www.psp.cz/docs/texts/constitution_1960.html.

research has paid much attention to migrant knowledge and analyzed migrants and refugees as knowledge agents, or probing lost knowledge,[4] little attention has been devoted to how the knowledge of and about refugees intersects with knowledge about East-Central Europe as a whole, its societies and nation-states. However, a multiscalar study of knowledge can help integrate the approaches and categorization of states and humanitarian organizations with the experience, reflections, and future perspectives of refugees themselves. Kelemen's chapter suggests a close connection between the conceptual constructions of citizens and refugees in the multiethnic region. Moreover, refugees' own intimate experience—and hence knowledge—of refugeedom, within the region and beyond co-produces the templates through which new refugees are categorized. Many of the refugees who arrived in the countries analyzed here were "known" based on proximity, shared histories, and/or ethnicity. However, the contributions also demonstrate how political ideologies, such as communism, can bridge distances and barriers. These findings remind us that legal definitions of refugees and asylum eligibility, such as those based on the 1951 Convention, compete with other and often historically determined sets of knowledge. Global discourses merge with regional fears for the existence of the nation, as well as with the histories of the national refugees. This combination resulted in the mixture of capacity and selectivity exhibited by the region throughout the twentieth century and during the refugee and migration "crises" of 2015 and 2022.

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4 Representative of a larger body of research, Simone Lässig and Swen Steinberg, "Knowledge on the Move: New Approaches toward a History of Migrant Knowledge," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 43, no. 3 (2017): 313–46. https://doi.org/10.13109/gege.2017.43.3.313; Philipp Strobl and Swen Steinberg, "How to Analyse the Gap: Lost Knowledge and Migration—An Introduction," *Journal of Migration History* 11, no. 1 (February 28, 2025): 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1163/23519924-11010001.

About the author

Michal Frankl is Head of the Department of Knowledge and Participation at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO). He was the Principal Investigator of the ERC Consolidator Project *Unlikely Refuge?* hosted at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Bibliography

The *Unlikely Refuge?* project has compiled an online, publicly accessible, and searchable bibliographical database of the body of research on refugee history in East-Central Europe, that is the Habsburg monarchy, Poland, Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and their successor states, during the twentieth century. Even though the bibliography remains incomplete and is work-in-progress, the authors hope that it can be useful to anyone studying the history of refugees in this region.

The bibliography can be accessed through Zotero:
https://www.zotero.org/groups/4731282/unlikely_refuge_bibliography/library

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