

UNSETTLED GERMANS: THE RECEPTION AND RESETTLEMENT OF EAST GERMAN  
REFUGEES IN WEST GERMANY, 1949-1961

By

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## ABSTRACT

### UNSETTLED GERMANS: THE RECEPTION AND RESETTLEMENT OF EAST GERMAN REFUGEES IN WEST GERMANY, 1949-1961

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This study focuses on the migration of East German refugees into West Berlin and West Germany between the establishment of the GDR and FRG in 1949 and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, an influx that, over the course of twelve years, totaled more than three million individuals. While the newcomers were physically indistinguishable and, apart from a few regional differences, shared a common language, culture and religious background with those already residing in West Germany, the presence of these refugees, like that of many other groups of migrants, was still considered a significant danger to the public order – a perception that was deeply rooted in the historical context of migration in Germany. In response to the influx, the Federal Republic and West Berlin established a comprehensive registration process for refugees, which attempted to determine whether refugees had a valid reason for their flight, and set up temporary camps to accommodate those awaiting resettlement in West Germany. Longer-term solutions included the creation of new employment opportunities and the construction of adequate (and permanent) housing in West German cities. However, these efforts required the cooperation of organizations and agencies at several levels of government, and disagreements among the West German *Länder*, West Berlin, and the Federal Government had a significant impact on the reception process.

The ongoing migration of refugees also created new areas of concern, in particular the perceived overcrowding of West Berlin and the shifting demographics in both East and West

Germany. The West German Government invested heavily in the international effort to study, categorize and propose solutions to problems of migration in the postwar era, creating a network of researchers, bureaucrats and leading politicians that maintained a significant influence over government decisions. One particular concern shared by the government and public in West Germany was that uncontrolled migration of refugees from East to West Germany would have a negative impact on a future reunified German state. However, the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 effectively rendered these debates moot. Once the refugees ceased to arrive by the thousands, those remaining in West Berlin were quickly resettled and within a few years, issues of German refugee migration were no longer at the forefront of West German public discourse.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AER – Association for the Study of the European Refugee Problem

AWR – Association for the Study of the World Refugee Problem

BAK – Bundesarchiv Koblenz

BMGDF – Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen (Federal Ministry for all-German Questions)

BMVFK – Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge, und Kriegsgeschädigte (Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims)

DIVO – Deutsche Institut für Volksumfragen (German Institute for Public Polling)

DRK-B – Deutsche Rote Kreuz – Berlin (German Red Cross – [West] Berlin)

LAB – Landesarchiv Berlin

NARA – National Archives and Records Administration

NSHA – Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv

REMP – Research Group for European Migration Problems

## MAPS

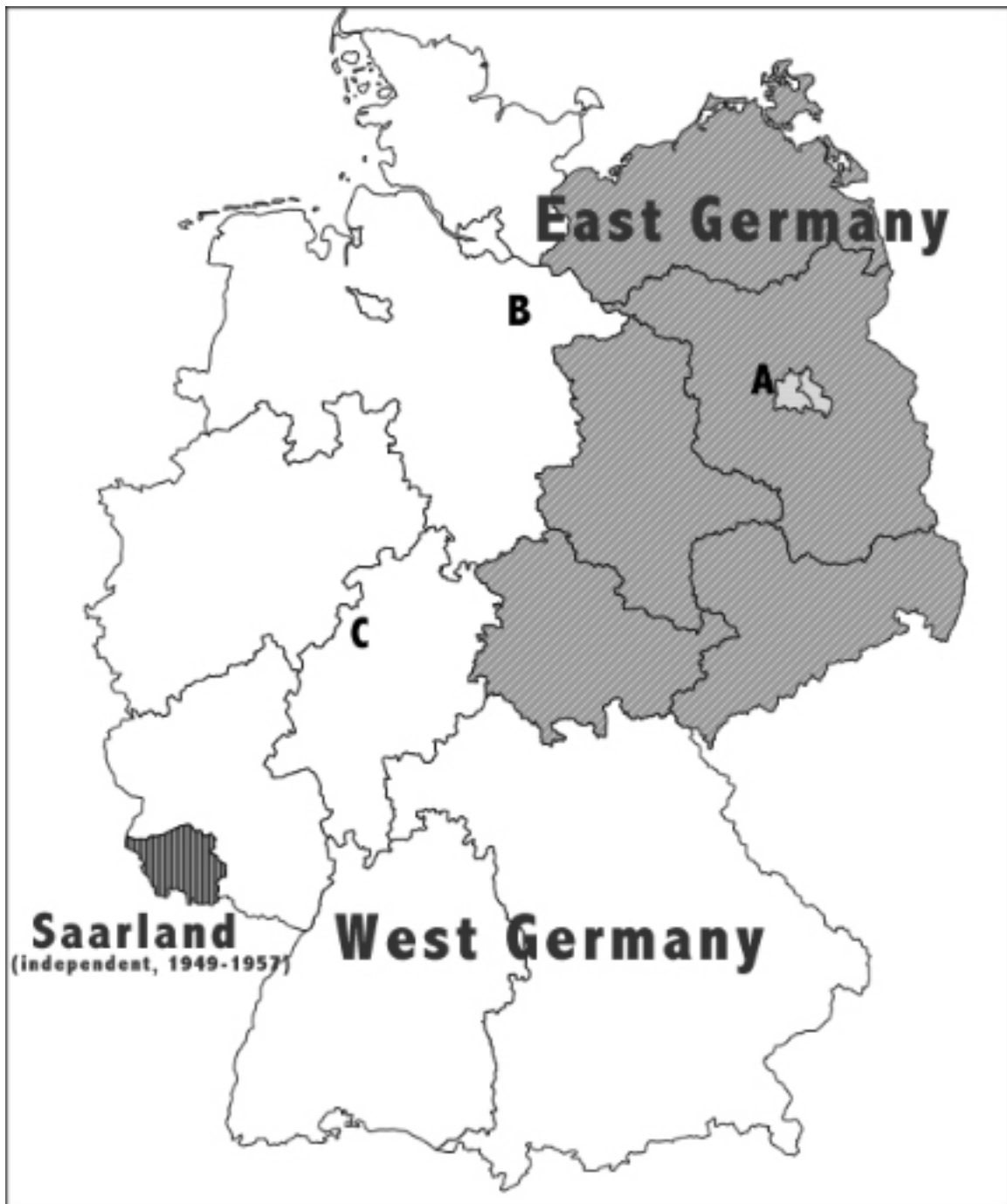
### East and West Berlin in the 1950s



- A: 8 Kuno-Fischer Str. - Main Reception Center, 1950-1953
- B: Other reception offices, 1950-1953
- C: Proposed reception center, Spandau (never built)
- D: Tempelhof Airport
- E: Marienfelde Emergency Reception Camp, opened 1953
- F: Mehringplatz
- G: Kladow



East and West Germany in the 1950s



- A. West Berlin
- B. Uelzen Emergency Reception Camp
- C. Giessen Emergency Reception Camp

## Introduction:

### The Twelve-Year Emergency

In the early hours of Sunday, August 13th, 1961, members of the East German People's Police and construction workers from the German Democratic Republic sealed the border between East and West Berlin and began constructing the system of barriers that would quickly become known as the Berlin Wall. By the time most Berliners realized what was happening, the western half of the city – the areas occupied by American, British and French soldiers since the end of the Second World War – had been enclosed by barbed wire. Within a week, concrete barriers and a five-foot concrete block wall were erected to demarcate the border: the first version of what would become the iconic structure of the Cold War in Germany. With these actions, the East German government effectively ended a decade of nearly free movement between the two halves of Berlin, and, by extension, between the two German states. It also ended the unregulated migration of hundreds of thousands of its own citizens every year through West Berlin into West Germany, nearly four million in all between 1949 and 1961; such losses could not be overlooked, even in the GDR's own statistical reports.

Yet while the Wall itself has become the focal point of Cold War history in Berlin and Germany – witness the recent twentieth anniversary celebrations of its fall in 1989 – it was built more than sixteen years after the end of the war and twelve years after the two German states were established. In retrospective accounts of the political give and take that developed between the superpowers and their German proxies during the 1950s, it is hard to escape the notion that the construction of the Wall was somehow inevitable. There is some truth to this perspective: many

Germans, from both East and West, may have been shocked at the audacity of a full border closure through the center of Berlin, but it is unlikely that they were surprised on that August 13. Indeed, at several points during the previous decade, fears that the East Germans were on the verge of “shutting the gate,” replicating the measures taken in 1952 to close off the much longer border between East and West Germany, influenced the number of refugees registering their arrival in West Berlin and West Germany. During these twelve years, the border that would come to be demarcated by the Berlin Wall, along with the border between the two German states, was far from solid and impermeable. Indeed, it was easily crossed by at least four million East Germans who registered as refugees in West Germany and West Berlin; thousands more undoubtedly crossed the border as visitors.

The subject of my dissertation is how West German and West Berliner authorities dealt with the problems posed by the arrival of these refugees between the establishment of separate East and West German states in 1949 and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. In particular, I seek to understand the “attitudes toward and perceptions of” these East German refugees, to use a turn of phrase coined by Harald Kleinschmidt.<sup>1</sup> I focus on two separate, but related, aspects of this process: first, the development of the institutions established to register, examine and eventually resettle the East German refugees, and second, the role played by academics, researchers, and government officials who sought to understand this migration and direct official responses. Both aspects are intellectual in nature, concerned with how West Germans, both within and outside the Federal Government, perceived this refugee migration. In both cases, however, I argue that West German perceptions of this refugee migration were thoroughly rooted in a specific historical and political

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<sup>1</sup> Harald Kleinschmidt, *People on the Move: Attitudes Towards and Perceptions of Migration in Medieval and Modern Europe* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

context, the Western occupation zones and later West Germany after World War II and during the Cold War. This context informed the creation of various systems intended to understand and control that migration: on one side, the reception processes that registered and screened incoming refugees, and on the other, the academic research that sought to provide answers and propose solutions. Thus, the two aspects I study have a common foundation in the tendency of the Federal Government and the West German public to view these refugees as potential threats to social stability. Newspapers stoked fears that among the newcomers were criminals, smugglers, or Communist agents, forcing the authorities in charge of the reception process in both West Berlin and West Germany to defend their criteria for acceptance and rejection. Thus, institutions for refugee reception were created to both diminish the uncertainty posed by these migrations and to publicize the efforts made by the authorities to respond to these perceived threats.

Such practices will sound familiar to those who study migration; despite the refugees' status as West German citizens, they were treated as migrants. While registration and the subsequent reception process were nominally voluntary, refugees could not receive residence or work permits without being recognized as genuine refugees, those who had fled East Germany for political, not economic, reasons. They were essentially forced to accept their temporary detention, as well as a series of examinations intended to prove or disprove their reasons for fleeing East Germany. Indeed, there is little difference between how the Federal Republic treated East German refugees in 1952, and how they came to treat Croatian refugees in 1992 or Afghan refugees in 2010. The common thread is their status as migrants; citizenship played a role – the East German refugees were somewhat better off than Polish or Czechoslovak border-crossers – but it did not protect them from detention and examination. It is crucial to remember that, even in a situation where migrants and

non-migrants were physically indistinguishable and shared a common language, culture and religious background, the presence of East German refugees in West Berlin and West Germany was still considered a significant danger to the public order.

Yet this is not simply an analysis of how a Foucaultian state assumes and exercises power over the individuals under its control, especially those seeking to cross an arbitrary border imposed by postwar occupation forces. Crucially, there is little sense of a broader plan on the part of the Federal Government for dealing with this migration; authorities, from the Federal ministries to the district residency offices, nearly always preferred reactive measures to more permanent and systematic solutions. This much should be clear from the official term for refugee screening, the Emergency Reception Procedure (*Notaufnahmeverfahren*). Refugees were initially registered and housed in temporary quarters, and even when structures were built specifically for these purposes, like the reception center and camp that opened in 1953 at Marienfelde, in southern West Berlin, they were designed to be converted into rentable apartments after the reunification of Berlin. This focus on ad hoc measures grew out of the belief that the postwar division between East and West Germany would be temporary; many believed that the refugees would cease to be an issue following the inevitable political solution to German division. In retrospect, these hopes were clearly misplaced, but this perception influenced official and public attitudes toward the refugees.

However, this emergency mindset had little effect on the actual migration of refugees. Even during the slowest periods of the mid-1950s, several hundred refugees arrived in West Berlin every week. They would line up and wait to register at the official reception centers, first at 8 Kuno-Fischer-Strasse, in the district of Charlottenburg, and after the summer of 1953 at the Marienfelde reception center. To receive their residence and work permits, legally required for those intending to

live and seek employment in West Berlin or the Federal Republic, they endured a health examination, inspections and a gauntlet of interviewers, with representatives of the Federal Republic and the potential destination *Länder* as well as with the intelligence services of all three western Allies, a process faced by every individual who had crossed the Iron Curtain.<sup>2</sup> Until the establishment of the Marienfelde center in 1953, these various offices occupied space in several buildings scattered across the West Berlin districts of Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf. Refugees awaiting a decision on their applications for asylum or a flight to West Germany lived in one of dozens of camps established in disused residential and industrial buildings around the city. Even the eventual flight to West Germany was not the end of refugees' reliance on outside support; most spent months at separate transit camps, operated by the West German *Länder*, waiting for permanent housing to be built near worksites. Any delays in construction (as happened in North Rhine-Westphalia in 1954, when builders ran low on construction supplies) had a ripple effect on the entire process, holding up the transfer of refugees between camps and out of West Berlin.

The process was plagued by inefficiencies and failures of planning. In West Berlin, living space, supplies, and flights to West Germany were scarce, particularly in early 1953, when the numbers arriving in the city exceeded even the most pessimistic predictions of West Berlin's Senator for Social Affairs.<sup>3</sup> Early in the decade, the West German economy was unprepared to employ hundreds of thousands of new arrivals, and the planned reconstruction of West German cities often failed to take into account the task of housing refugees. Likewise, in subsequent years, West Berlin and the Federal *Länder* reacted to a gradual decline in the numbers of arriving refugees by closing

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<sup>2</sup> Jörn Donner, *Report from Berlin*, trans. Albin T. Anderson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> *Flüchtlinge überfluten die Insel Berlin: Denkschrift des Senats von Berlin*, Feb. 6, 1953.

down (and often selling off) buildings used as refugee camps and processing centers. This trend reversed in 1960 and 1961, when the numbers registering as refugees increased, and expanding camp capacity became much more difficult. Indeed, even though the number of refugees arriving in West Berlin fluctuated over the course of the 1950s, the average time individual refugees spent in reception camps alone (not including their stays in transit camps) rarely dropped below three weeks, a statistic that shows the inability of West German authorities to adapt to fluctuations in the numbers arriving.

The mundane details of refugee registration, reception, welfare and housing lack the excitement of the sensational ‘escapes’ of major political and cultural figures, or inherent geopolitical importance of the summits and negotiations that took place in London, Paris and Geneva in those years. Even when politicians or the media recognized individual refugees, more often than not they were portrayed as heroic anti-communists rejecting all that the German Democratic Republic claimed to represent.<sup>4</sup> The view that refugees were motivated primarily by political concerns overlooks the interest of the West German and West Berlin authorities in controlling and even reducing this migration. This assumption was important within the Cold War context, since it supported Western contentions that the East Germans viewed their own government as illegitimate. The West German government continually tried to explain fluctuations in refugee arrivals by referring to various actions taken by the East German leadership. The trope of refugees “voting with their feet,” perhaps most closely associated with the Berlin representative, mayor and later West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, suggests that these individuals were primarily motivated by

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<sup>4</sup> This focus was not only limited to contemporary accounts and studies of the refugees, but is also found in much more recent works, e.g. Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961-1989* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006).

political opposition to the East German system.<sup>5</sup>

However, if political refugees were viewed as legitimate migrants, the converse was also true: all other (that is, non-political) motivations for migration were, by definition, illegitimate, and those migrants did not deserve the benefits due to genuine political refugees. My work takes the position that refugees from East Germany decided to move west for many different reasons; political opinions or actions were important, but not dominant, and my research is not limited to those who were accepted as political refugees. However, I am less concerned with migration in the opposite direction; although East Germany tried to publicize its own set of institutions to receive disgruntled West German refugees – designed to be a nearly mirror-image copy of its western counterpart – the West Germans who moved to the East did so without the same sense of disruption that characterized refugee migration in the other direction. Instrumentalizing the refugees within the political context of the early Cold War may have made their arrival more palatable to the West German government, but it obscures the acrimonious debates over how many refugees were truly fleeing political persecution, and how many merely wanted to improve their position in life; for many reasons, most West Germans preferred to see fewer of the former, and none of the latter.

Perhaps this refugee migration lacks the easy categorization of political conflicts, or it seems too intertwined with the controversial postwar expulsions (which brought four times as many people to West Germany, in a much shorter period) or overshadowed by the subsequent arrival of foreign guestworkers in the late 1950s and 1960s. Yet if the history of contemporary Germany is largely defined by three primary factors – the relationship between the former East and West Germany, symbolized and exacerbated by the isolation of the Berlin Wall; the influence of immigration,

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<sup>5</sup> For one example, see Willy Brandt, *The Ordeal of Coexistence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).



particularly that of guestworkers from the Mediterranean basin; and the experience of transnational cooperation, epitomized by European integration – then the refugee migration of the 1950s is directly related to all three. At the time, the refugees were seen as an object lesson in the differences between capitalist and communist states, and their movement played a role in the propaganda conflict between the two systems. The construction of the Berlin Wall, much like the establishment of a closed inter-German border in 1952, brought an end to this mass emigration, leaving only a much smaller – and more easily handled – level of migration in subsequent years. This allowed both German governments, East and West, the opportunity to stabilize their societies with minimal disruption. Refugees being resettled from transit camps in West Berlin and throughout West Germany also formed a mobile, concentrated pool of workers, many of whom had been trained in various industrial skills and trades before leaving East Germany. The expansion of West German industry during the 1950s rested in part on the flexibility of this labor resource, and as it tapered off in the later years of the decade – and ceased entirely after 1961 – foreign guestworkers were imported to fill a similar role. The migration and planned resettlement of refugees were also areas of interest to international organizations like the International Labor Office and the newly established Council of Europe. Their involvement, along with that of other prominent social scientists from across the continent, seems to have led to the realization among some West Germans that the international arena was a much better venue for considering issues of migration. By the mid-1960s, even conservative West German politicians like Franz Josef Strauss had concluded that reunification – a necessary prelude to solving the problem of refugees – could only be attained via inter-European cooperation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Franz Josef Strauss, *The Grand Design: A European Solution to German Unification*, trans. Brian

Previous research on migration in Europe during this period has generally focused more on the problems posed by displaced persons in postwar Europe and the postcolonial and foreign labor migrations in the 1960s and 1970s. Likewise, the study of refugees has been dominated, understandably, by a focus on non-European refugee movements or the departure of European-descended refugees from postcolonial countries in Africa and Asia.<sup>7</sup> East German refugees, if mentioned, are considered as part of a wider ‘anti-communist’ migration from the entire Eastern Bloc, and the particular challenges of receiving erstwhile citizens and nationals in West Germany are overlooked.<sup>8</sup> Works on migration into West Germany, or migration in the context of the divided Germanys, have also followed these two lines of inquiry, focusing either on the importation of forced labor during World War II and the resulting presence of former forced laborers as displaced persons in postwar Europe, or on the immigration of foreign guestworkers in the 1950s and 1960s and the development of minority communities in subsequent decades.<sup>9</sup> While these are clearly important areas of research, they reinforce the attitude that the academic study of migration is oriented primarily toward the movement of foreigners and that the movement of co-nationals is of lesser

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Connell (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965).

<sup>7</sup> See Nevzat Soguk, *States and Strangers: Refugees and Displacements of Statecraft* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Andrea L. Smith, ed. *Europe’s Invisible Migrants* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003); and Peter Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees: Beyond States of Emergency* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Klaus J. Bade, *Migration in European History*, trans. Allison Brown (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003); Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650*, 2nd Ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling and Anton Kaes, *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration 1955-2005* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007); Rita Chin, *The Guestworker Question in Postwar Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2007); Wesley D. Chapin, *Germany for the Germans? The Political Effects of International Migration* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997); Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler's foreign workers: enforced foreign labor in Germany under the Third Reich*, trans. William Templer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

importance. This latter migration, along with the increasing visibility of non-German migrants within West German society, has also helped to revise public perceptions of what qualifies as migration.

Even the history of the postwar expulsions of Germans from in Eastern Europe and the former eastern German territories has been left largely to works that play on nostalgia for the ‘lost territories’ or that (again) instrumentalize expellees’ experiences in the service of showing Germans as victims of the Second World War. Only in the past three decades have a few scholars, first in German and then much later in English, begun to take a more critical view of the postwar expellee phenomenon – though any visit to a German bookstore will demonstrate that critical views on the expulsions remain a minority among the published works on this topic.<sup>10</sup> The work of Paul Lüttinger on the “integration myth” and Rainer Schulze, initially on the Lower Saxon town of Celle and later on the wider experience of expellees in postwar West Germany, have been instrumental in demonstrating the often poor relations between natives and resettled expellees and the superficial nature of refugees’ integration. Lüttinger’s 1989 monograph on the integration of the expellees into West German society demonstrated rather conclusively that economic integration – a metric limited, in essence, to expellees finding permanent jobs – was not an ideal method of measuring social or cultural integration, and suggested that, even decades later, many former expellees had never

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<sup>10</sup> Works in German from the late 1980s include both general works like Rainer Schulze, Doris von der Brelie-Lewien and Helga Grebling, *Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in der westdeutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte* (Hildesheim: Verlag August Lax, 1987) and regionally based studies, including Martina Krug, *Flüchtlinge im Raum Hannover und in der Stadt Hameln, 1945-1952* (Hildesheim: Verlag August Lax, 1988) and Rainer Schulze, *Unruhige Zeiten: Erlebnisberichte aus dem Landkreis Celle 1945-1949* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1990).

completely adapted to their new surroundings.<sup>11</sup> Beginning with his monograph on expellees in Celle, *Unruhige Zeiten* in 1990, and continuing with a series of articles and edited collections, Rainer Schulze has become the most prominent of the German historians of this migration. Schulze has also taken the lead in providing for English-language translations of his findings.<sup>12</sup>

Such efforts have opened the door for more general English-language works on the expellees; in the past few years monographs by Pertti Ahonen, Ian Connor and Matthew Frank have been published, and the 2008 compilation *Germans and the East*, edited by Charles Ingrao and Franz A. J. Szabo includes chapters on expellees by John C. Swanson, Emilia Hrabovec and William Glenn Gray.<sup>13</sup> Notably, most of these works limit themselves to studying expellee populations, rather than

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Lüttinger, *Integration der Vertriebenen: Eine empirische Analyse* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Rainer Schulze, with Reinhard Rohde and Rainer Voss, *Zwischen Heimat und Zuhause: Deutsche Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in (West-)Deutschland 1945-2000* (Osnabrück: secolo Verlag, 2001); Rainer Schulze, "Growing Discontent: Relations between Native and Refugee Populations in a Rural District in Western Germany after the Second World War," in Robert Moeller, ed. *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Rainer Schulze, "The Struggle of Past and Present in Individual Identities: The Case of German Refugees and Expellees from the East," in David Rock and Stefan Wolff, eds., *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002); and Rainer Schulze, "The Politics of Memory: Flight and Expulsion of German Populations after the Second World War and German Collective Memory," *National Identities*, Vol. 8 No. 4 (December 2006), 367-382. Schulze was also one of six major scholars involved on the recent comparative work on postwar expulsions Pertti Ahonen, et al, *People on the Mover: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and its Aftermath* (Oxford: Berg, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe 1945-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Ian Connor, *Refugees and expellees in post-war Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); Matthew Frank, *Expelling the Germans: British Opinion and Post-1945 Population Transfer in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); John C. Swanson, "The Second World War and its Aftermath: Ethnic German Communities in the East"; Emilia Hrabovec, "Austro-Czechoslovak Relations and the Expulsion of the Germans"; and William Glenn Gray, "West Germany and the Lost German East: Two Narratives," in Charles Ingrao and

extending their analysis to the subsequent migration of East German refugees. There has also been a tendency to view the postwar expulsions more in terms of the Second World War itself and of debates about war victims – the focus of Robert Moeller’s *War Stories*, for one example – rather than within the historical context of German migration.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, the East German refugees of the 1950s (of whom between one quarter and one third were themselves expellees) remain overshadowed by this earlier migration. However, in the decade after the resurgence of German academic interest in the expellees in the 1980s, a few scholars did turn their attention to the East German refugees. One was Volker Ackermann, who wrote a *Habilitation* on the political and popular controversies regarding the status of ‘true’ refugees in the 1950s, published as *Der ‘Echte’ Flüchtling* in 1995. Ackermann’s highly technical focus on this single debate, pivoting on the precise definition of the term ‘political refugee,’ assumes that his reader is familiar with the basic history of the refugees as well as the postwar expulsions.<sup>15</sup> Around the same time, Helge Heidemeyer provided a more definitive account of the political aspects of West German and West Berlin refugee policy in *Flucht und Zuwanderung aus der SBZ/DDR 1945/49-1961*. Published in 1994, Heidemeyer’s book was among the first works on postwar West Germany that took advantage of newly opened archival material in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Heidemeyer followed this work in 2005 by collaborating with Bettina Effner on the collection *Flucht im geteilten Deutschland*. It is telling that this compilation, easily the best work on East German refugees of the past decade, is the catalog to the permanent exhibition at the museum of the *Erinnerungsstätte*

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Franz A. J. Szabo, eds., *The Germans and the East* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Robert Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> Volker Ackermann, *Der „Echte“ Flüchtling* (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 1995).

*Notaufnahmelager Marienfelde*. In addition, in trying to locate itself within a city crowded with historical museums and sites – and being distant from the main tourist circuit – this museum, along with the editors of the book, have chosen to primarily focus on political refugees. It includes major sections on the Stasi attempts to infiltrate the camp as well as the participation of refugees in popular culture.<sup>16</sup> Works analyzing migration in the opposite direction, on the five hundred thousand or so individuals who moved from West to East Germany, are only now being written.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to filling this gap in the English-language scholarship, my dissertation also draws on additional archival sources, including the files of the United States Military Government in Germany (during the postwar occupation) and its successor, the Office of the High Commissioner for Germany, along with the United States Department of State's Office of German Affairs (headed during this period by Eleanor Lansing Dulles, sister of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles). These sources provide insight into the relationship between the American and West German governments on the subject of refugee migration and its effect on the status of West Berlin. Similarly, the files of the United States Army, in particular its intelligence and counterintelligence divisions remain a key source on the process of refugee interviews and interrogations, at least until the files of the West German Federal Information Service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*) pertaining to this era are declassified.

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<sup>16</sup> Helge Heidemeyer, *Flucht und Zuwanderung aus der SBZ/DDR 1945/49-1961: Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis zum Bau der Berliner Mauer* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1994); Bettina Effner and Helge Heidemeyer, Eds., *Flucht im geteilten Deutschland: Erinnerungsstätte Notaufnahmelager Marienfelde* (Berlin:be.bra verlag, 2005). The museum at Marienfelde has also published what seems to be the only recent English-language work on the East German refugees, a 60-page pamphlet entitled "Escape to Freedom," based on the original German guide to the museum "*Fluchtziel Berlin*." On a related subject, the daily movement of workers (non-refugees) across Berlin's internal boundaries (*Grenzgänger*) before the construction of the wall, see Frank Roggenbuch, *Das Berliner Grenzgängerproblem* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Bernd Stöver, *Zuflucht DDR: Spione und andere Übersiedler* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2009).

The expansion and reorganization of the Landesarchiv Berlin, along with the ongoing declassification and indexing of files generated in 1950s West Berlin, has also been helpful in creating a new understanding of the process of refugee reception, particularly during the years before the adoption of the Federal Emergency Reception Procedure in 1952. Unsurprisingly, such sources provide a much more nuanced viewpoint of the registration and resettlement process than either the pronouncements of leading politicians or the compilations of escape stories produced for domestic and international consumption.<sup>18</sup> While useful, such sources tend to overlook the messiness of refugee registration in favor of highlighting anti-communist and pro-Western credentials. Admittedly, this makes it very difficult, though not impossible, to bring in the voices of individual refugees. I have found refugees' personal accounts in the letters written to transit camp leaders, reception committee members and government ministries, all written in the hope that some person, at some level of government, could be persuaded to help them personally. However, the advantage to bureaucratic sources is that issues such as medical screenings, security interviews, and the processes of determining refugees' futures in West Germany can be brought to light. It should also be noted that such sources do not present a single, unified view of the reception process from the point of view of an all-knowing state; rather, they provide insight into the alternating periods of cooperation and conflict between individuals, offices, and levels of government. I see this as a crucial perspective, which considers the importance of government interventions while acknowledging their limitations. There are a few disadvantages to this approach: much like West Berlin's statisticians, I have no direct records of individuals who did not register for recognition as refugees, or of those who registered but did not show up for subsequent examinations and hearings.

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<sup>18</sup> For example, see Erika von Hornstein, *Beyond the Berlin Wall* (London: Wolff, 1962).

My first chapter will focus on the historical context of migration to, from, within and through Germany through the postwar expulsions. Refugee migration during the 1950s cannot be understood solely in reference to the Second World War or the Cold War, but should be seen as part of a continuous process from the prewar period, through 1945 and on to the mid-1960s. This understanding of migration has complex and deep roots in the history of German and European mobility, in particular the problematic role of migration in German history and historiography. This is partially the result of the idiosyncratic relationship of migration to historical conceptions of the German nation, in particular the close association of nation with language, territory and landscape. One result of the negative side of these attitudes has been the problematization of migration and migrants: the perception that migration is inherently opposed to settled life and the assumption that migration is a problem that requires a practical solution. Due to the recent focus on foreign immigration to Germany and Europe, the postwar migration of other Germans has in retrospect seemed less disruptive; yet at the time, it was quite problematic.

This historical context was a crucial ingredient in the establishment of the extensive system of migration control encountered by refugees upon their arrival in West Berlin and West Germany, the subject of my second and third chapters. It is clear that the magnitude of the refugee influx, especially between 1950 and 1953, overwhelmed West German and West Berlin's expectations, and so the establishment of a registration process and provision of short-term refugee housing occurred on a largely ad hoc basis. Because the division of East and West Germany seemed to be temporary, there was little incentive to create lasting institutions. Indeed, to even discuss this eventuality would likely have invited condemnation. This was the context for significant controversies, in particular over the percentage of refugees that were fleeing political persecution and thus deserved to be



admitted into the resettlement program over those whose motives were more economic in nature.

Even those refugees accepted for resettlement, however, required further government intervention in their lives. Refugees who had registered in West Berlin and were assigned to West German Länder for resettlement – a number that included between 80 and 95 percent of new arrivals in the city – needed to be flown to their new homes, since ground transportation risked East German interdiction. My third chapter focuses on the efforts of the Federal and Land governments to smooth out this process by establishing transit camps in the Länder, to provide assistance to employers seeking to expand and hire refugees, and to construct adequate permanent housing for new residents. These latter two goals were particularly important, given the scale of the postwar rebuilding effort throughout the country.

As with the preceding two chapters, my fourth and fifth chapters will also consider problems and solutions related to the arrival of refugees, but on a longer time scale: the shifting demographics of both East and West Germany, rural-to-urban migration, proposals for the integration of refugee populations and hopes for an eventual reunification of both countries. Of particular importance here is the international effort to study, categorize and propose solutions to problems of migration in the postwar era. Refugees were a popular topic of study in the 1950s, and the Federal Republic provided significant financial support to at least one major scholarly association, the Association for the Study of European Refugee Problems. These networks of scholarship, linking researchers, bureaucrats and leading politicians, maintained a significant influence over government decisions, though both groups eventually paid a price for their close contacts.

Yet the technocratic focus on such varied issues raised by refugee migration, whether the determination of refugee status or the demographic development of East and West Germany, should

not obscure the effect of this migration on the most important issue in the mind of most West Germans during this period: reunification. My fifth chapter will look at the effect of the continuing arrival of refugees on the prospect of German reunification. Echoing the fears of the demographers, many West Germans feared that the refugee exodus, like the postwar expulsions, could lead to the eventual depopulation of East Germany and the replacement of a lost German population with other groups from the Soviet Union. Such fears provided yet another impetus for the ongoing attempts to limit and control this migration, and also led to efforts to understand the effect of refugee migration on domestic and international public opinion. This chapter will also focus on the work done by organizations like West Berlin's Office for All-Berlin Questions to help bring about reunification more quickly.

The construction of the Berlin Wall had a dampening effect on these debates, and in the end, the politicians were right: once the refugees ceased to arrive by the thousands, those remaining in West Berlin were quickly resettled and the reception structure could be largely dismantled. While a few refugees still sought to cross the newly fortified border, occasionally dying in the attempt, they were easily cast as political victims of the East German state, and the debate over whether they deserved recognition as political refugees was largely forgotten. Within a few years, issues of inter-German migration were no longer at the forefront of West German public discourse. The increasing temporal distance from the immediate postwar and pre-wall years tended to ratify the status quo. This gradual process of distancing was the genesis of the 'integration myth,' as described by Paul Lüttinger: the economic expansion of the 1950s largely erased the gaps in employment and income levels between West German natives and newcomers, giving the impression that other aspects of integration proceeded at a similar pace. Yet this is a situation where historical memories do not tell

the entire story, and revisiting the refugees' reception and integration reveals that these were much more fraught processes than are often remembered. In part, that can be understood to be a product of a specific historical context, but it also highlights a fundamental ambivalence toward migration on the part of non-migrants.

## Chapter I

### The Problem of Migration in German History

*Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen,  
Ich far dahin mein Strassen  
In fremde Land dahin.  
Mein Freud ist mir genommen,  
Die ich nit weiss bekummen,  
Wo ich im Elend bin.<sup>1</sup>*  
Heinrich Isaac, 1450-1517

On April 2nd, 1953, nearly two thousand East German refugees, unemployed workers, and pensioners living in West Berlin filed into the Titania-Palast, a theater in the city's southwestern district of Steglitz, for a evening concert. Admission was free: the event was funded by the cultural liaison office of West Berlin's Senator for Social Affairs, which supported a wide variety of activities for the benefit of West Berlin residents living on government support. Following short introductions by Herrmann Mirbt, representing Senator Otto Bach, and Wolfgang Hoffman-Harmisch, head of the cultural liaison office, 130 singers from the Berliner Lehrer-Gesangverein, directed by Martin Hänsel, took the stage to sing a selection of well-known German folksongs. Hänsel knew his audience well; his group opened their concert with Heinrich Isaac's "Innsbruck, ich muß dich lassen," which, although composed by an itinerant Flemish composer who lived most of his life in Renaissance Florence, was considered an iconic piece in the German musical tradition. Even as it was followed by songs written by Goethe and von Herrmannsthal, and set to music by Schubert and

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<sup>1</sup> Innsbruck I must now leave you/ I take my path from here/ into a foreign land./ My joy is taken from me/ I don't know what will happen/ when I will be far away. German text from Heinrich Isaac, *Weltliche Werke*, Johannes Wolf, ed., *Denkmaler der Tonkunst in Österreich*, vol. 28 (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1959), 12.

Mendelssohn, among others, one imagines that the refugees in the audience found the opening piece, a lament by an unnamed emigrant, to be among the most poignant moments of the entire evening. At the very least, it contributed to the concert's success; Hänsel and his schoolteachers were invited to repeat the performance two weeks later for a completely new audience.<sup>2</sup>

“Innsbruck, ich muß dich lassen,” in this case as both a poem/song and a programming decision, occupies an important position at the intersection of West German attitudes toward migration in the 1950s, connecting the ongoing migration of refugees from East Germany with the longer history of the migration of German-speakers throughout Europe. Yet it is not the only way by which earlier migrations were recalled: references to a new *Völkerwanderung*, recalling the mass migrations of Germanic groups during antiquity and the early medieval period, appeared often in news reports on refugees and government briefings.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the example of Huguenot and Salzburg Protestant refugees in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Prussia were routinely cited by West Germans as precedents for acting in support of the refugees' interests.<sup>4</sup> Nor was Heinrich Isaac the only artist to be remembered for his views on migration. In a 1959 radio address, Peter Paul Nahm, the State Secretary (deputy to the minister) in the Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees,

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<sup>2</sup> Full concert program in Landesarchiv Berlin (LAB) B Rep 008 Nr. 386.

<sup>3</sup> “Völkerwanderung,” *Die Neue Zeitung*, Mar. 17, 1953; “Besonders begrüßen wir dabei, dass auch das Problem der Flüchtlinge, das durch de von den kommunistischen Tyrannen ausgelöste Völkerwanderung immer dringlicher wird, auf Europäische Ebene gehoben wird.” Wilhelm Kintzel (Vorsitzender der Vereinigung Politischer Ostflüchtlinge) to Sekretariat der Beratenden Versammlung des Europa-Rates, Oct. 6, 1952, Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BAK) B 137/197; Wolfgang Hoffmann-Harmisch, “Berlin – Das Tor zur Freiheit: Eine Stadt meistert die neue Völkerwanderung” (newsreel script), LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 386.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, comments by Werner Middelman “...konnte die Aufnahme der Hugenotten Vorbild sein...” in Kurzprotokoll der Referentenbesprechung über das Vorhaben der „Forschungsgruppe Eingliederung,” BAK B 150/1911.

and War Victims<sup>5</sup> noted that, “a century ago, the poet [Johann Ludwig] Uhland would have considered it natural that a shepherd boy would be buried in the cemetery of his native mountain chapel...[while] today in Germany barely a third of the inhabitants die near the location of their birth.”<sup>6</sup>

Such attitudes toward migration are not unique to Germany; views like Nahm’s, which attempt to recall an ideal pre-migratory past, can be found almost anywhere. However, given this historical context, the refugee migration of the 1950s (not to mention the expulsions of the immediate postwar years) clearly aroused a deep-seated ambivalence toward migration among many West Germans, drawing on three important aspects of historical migration patterns. The first of these is a negative understanding of emigration, especially emigration from a historical homeland (or *Heimat*, in German, though that is a much more complex concept), as a form of abandonment. This can be seen in many different contexts, but is perhaps best demonstrated by the concern shown toward the phenomenon of migration from rural villages to industrial towns and cities from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. A significant corollary to this is the perception of immigrants as intruders, even in cases, like that of the East German refugees, where the immigrants are largely indistinguishable from the native population. Both of these also tie into the third aspect, the notion

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<sup>5</sup> *Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte.*

<sup>6</sup> “Vor 100 Jahren war es dem Dichter Uhland noch eine Selbstverständlichkeit, dass sein Hirtenknabe einst auf dem Friedhof seiner heimatlichen Bergkapelle begraben wird. Heute stirbt in Deutschland kaum noch ein Drittel der Menschen am Ort der Geburt.” The likely reference is Uhland’s poem *Des Knaben Berglied*, though it is possible that Nahm was also thinking of Heinrich Heine’s *Der Hirtenknabe*. Earlier in the same address, Nahm also made references to two other Romantic-era poems, Wilhelm Ganzhorn’s *Im Schönsten Wiesengrunde* and Wilhelm Müller’s *Am Brunnen vor der Tore*, noting that in the modern world the beautiful meadows had been replaced by factories and the springs by gas stations. Peter Paul Nahm, “Unteilbares Deutschland” (Address, Westdeutsche Rundfunk, Sept. 12, 1959), BAK B 150/2746.

of “German land,” that is, land to the east of the Elbe River colonized – and in many cases, reclaimed or transformed – by German migrants from the middle ages to the nineteenth century. As will be seen in Chapter 5, many West German anxieties about reunification can be traced to this deep connection between history and territory. This territorial conception of history creates a perception that a group – in this case the Germans, though that is a nebulous concept until well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century – is intimately connected to the landscapes, territories and borders that its members inhabit, and that history, at its deepest level, is an account of territorial expansion and contraction over the course of time. This grows out of the idea that the ideal purpose of land is to be occupied and used, and when distinct groups of people are in direct competition, the acquisition and occupation of land is a zero-sum game. In nearly every work recalling German migration to the east, from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century, the migrants were seen as invited settlers or colonists improving uninhabited lands, bringing in Western European technologies, skills and habits and thereby earning their superiority. For example, the 18th-century travel writer Georg Forster, though a resident of Vilnius and thus a Polish subject, criticized the lack of ability in the local populations, which he characterized as “Polish management” (*polnische Wirtschaft*).<sup>7</sup> This and other such works rely on essentialist understandings of ethnic and national identities to support their contentions, and portrayed (migrant) German industriousness in opposition to the native inability to perform the same tasks of improvement.

When combined with a philosophy that holds rural life to be ideal and necessary, as was often the case in Germany well into the twentieth century, this conception of history was (and continues to be) particularly challenged by migration. Emigration is perceived as a betrayal of the

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 51.

land (and, indeed, the nation); migration to the cities is perceived as damaging to rural communities, and immigration (particularly that of foreigners) is perceived as potentially changing the demographic balance of an area. The German word for this process – *Landflucht*, escaping or fleeing the land – is related to *Flüchtling*, the most common term for refugee. Further complicating approaches to the migration of Germans is the lack of a single German state before 1871. Each individual state, regardless of size, had its own laws on emigration and immigration, and as Andreas Fahrmeir has argued, prior to the creation of the German Empire, it was common for cities to be politically distinct from their hinterlands, and for individuals to be considered both Germans and foreigners, depending on which particular state they found themselves.<sup>8</sup> This fragmentation was also the source of regional identities that remained important well into the twentieth century.

In their book *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories*, Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer liken this disregard of the long history of German migration to “an extraordinary act of amnesia,” citing Klaus Bade’s lament that German public discourse has, in recent years, generally ignored the long history of migration into, through, and out of Germany in favor of a view of history that favors non-migrants. Even more damaging, Jarausch and Geyer argue, is that German narratives of migration tend to focus on failures rather than successes, whether those of the Germans

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<sup>8</sup> Andreas Fahrmeir, *Citizens and Aliens: Foreigners and the Law in Britain and the German States, 1789-1870* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 20-23; see also Jeffrey Peck, Mitchell Ash, and Christiane Lemke, “Natives, Strangers, and Foreigners: Constituting Germans by Constructing Others,” in Konrad Jarausch, Ed., *After Unity: Reconfiguring German Identities* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), 63; and Howard Sargent, “Diasporic Citizens: Germans Abroad in the Framing of German Citizenship Law,” in Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal and Nancy Reagin, eds., *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 18-22.



who emigrated or the immigrants who resisted integration.<sup>9</sup> Even so, in focusing on this amnesia, Bade, Jarausch and Geyer do not give Germans full credit for their ambivalence towards migration. To say that Germans have forgotten their long history of migration is far too simple: instead, there is a tendency to present an incomplete history of migration, highlighting certain aspects while overlooking or discounting others, that goes far beyond accounting for successes or failures. Indeed, some episodes of migration are considered in a positive light. As seen above, this was common in cases where scholars sought to demonstrate the beneficial nature of German influence and presence, particularly in relation to historically German-dominated areas of Central and Eastern Europe. This is the heart of the German ambivalence about migration: even as migration in the service of colonization and expansion is celebrated, the understanding of the role played by migration in German history is routinely obscured by a much more publicly compelling, if unrealistic, national narrative that features a long-settled and stable German nation. This is the version of the past that has led numerous commentators to repeat the contention that “Germany is not a country of immigration” when such a statement is clearly far from the truth.<sup>10</sup> While this attitude has become

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<sup>9</sup> Konrad H. Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 198; citing Klaus J. Bade, "From Emigration to Immigration: The German Experience in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Migration Past, Migration Future*, 1-37 (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> This has been a common theme since at least the 1982 *Bundestag* elections. For one recent example, the quote by Hamburg Interior Minister Udo Nagel in Daniela Gerson and Chris Bryant, “Germany Begins Repatriating Afghan Refugees,” *Der Spiegel Online*, Sept. 26, 2005 (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,376718,00.html>, accessed Sept. 3, 2010). See also Philip L. Martin, “Germany: Managing Migration in the Twenty-First Century” in Wayne A. Cornelius, ed., *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 221; Holger Kolb, “Immigration into a Non-immigration Country: The German Experience,” Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Information Series 2008-04.

somewhat outdated over the last decade or two, it has historically affected public perceptions of migration, in the sense that it supports a conception of German experience that is based on stasis.

Combined, these factors have ensured that the study of migration in the German context has demonstrated an idiosyncratic pattern of celebration, ambivalence, and problematization. When these areas overlap, as they have in the period of this study, there is often a significant debate over the role and presence of migration in history. Thus, historical context is necessary in order to understand the conceptualizations of migration in postwar West Germany. Therefore, this chapter is not about Germans migrating. Rather, it is about how Germans – mostly historians, but also other scholars, politicians and bureaucrats, migrants and non-migrants – understood the concept of migration in German history. I will trace the development of the various strands of German thought on migration, from the positive valuation of colonization and settlement, to the ambivalence over German emigration and the largely negative perceptions of and responses to rural migration, all of which are implicit in many of the sources from this period. It is not intended to be comprehensive; rather it is intended to illuminate the historical context of the problematization of migration in postwar West Germany. This is not to suggest that such concepts are particularly German, to use the term in a loose, cultural-linguistic sense, or even that their expression is limited to a certain group, a certain place, or a certain time; the case of postwar Germany is, however, one instance where this ambivalent attitude toward migration was particularly influential, with significant political and cultural ramifications.

As Harald Kleinschmidt has noted, the ways that historians understand and discuss migration have their roots in nineteenth-century perceptions of migration.<sup>11</sup> For many German historians prior to the twentieth century, mobility was an integral part of national history, from the early medieval *Völkerwanderung*, which established the Germanic peoples as the successors of the Roman Empire, via late medieval German expansion to the east, to the resettlement of various groups of Germans on the eastern borders of Prussia and the Holy Roman Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That portions of this history (particularly the more distant ones) were largely mythical was unimportant. Neither those early medieval mass migrants nor the premodern settlers and colonists were Germans, at least by any modern definition. Indeed, to see them as such requires that one overlook the meaninglessness of national terms in the pre-modern era. It was only in the nineteenth century that historians like August Wilhelm Schlegel (brother of Friedrich) and Josef Freiherr von Eichendorff began to trace unbroken chains of national belonging into the distant past, as they charted the development of supposedly essential national characteristics.<sup>12</sup>

In *The Myth of Nations*, Patrick Geary addresses the long history of such reified nationalisms. The concept of ‘nation’ as an ethnically homogenous group can be traced to its nineteenth century transition from an intellectual formulation to a popular political concept, normally focusing on the primacy of culture and language.<sup>13</sup> Eventually, these ideas ossified, creating concepts of national characteristics that were perceived as unchanging and existing outside of history. Such characteristics

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<sup>11</sup> Harald Kleinschmidt, *People on the Move: Attitudes Towards and Perceptions of Migration in Medieval and Modern Europe* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 198.

<sup>12</sup> Liulevicius, 60, 77.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 17-18.

were thought to arise not only through the actions and experiences of a particular group, whether linguistic or cultural, but also through the group's interactions with other monolithic, homogenous nations. All of these conceptions of cultural meetings and interactions suppose that such groups are easily identifiable by their supposed characteristics, and where migration occurred, clear winners and losers emerged. At the same time, the dominant understanding of migration in Europe shifted dramatically. Prior to the nineteenth century, migration was seen as an intrusion on the static world order, a legacy from medieval historical thought. By contrast, later theorists began to understand migration as a source of historical change, implying that it could have significant short- and long-term effects on cities, regions and states.<sup>14</sup>

In the German context, at least, this shift in the understanding of migration also helped to solidify a conceptual border between the core German-language area (roughly modern Germany and Austria, northern Switzerland and a few other peripheral regions) and the wider world, particularly the territories to the east. During the late nineteenth century, the study of the East as a historical region became an important part of German academia, to the extent that it was increasingly seen as a separate academic discipline under the name *Ostforschung*, or East-research. *Ostforschung* continued to play a major role through the end of World War II, when it was largely discredited by its close ties to the Nazi regime – ties facilitated by its proponents' deeply-embedded philosophies of racialism and German nationalism – though many of its foremost proponents and their students continued to be influential in the postwar decade.<sup>15</sup> These scholars took the historical narratives of medieval and early modern migration to the east, and located this movement within a historical philosophy that

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<sup>14</sup> Kleinschmidt, 191.

<sup>15</sup> See, in particular, Robert Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 56-58.

presented this migration in terms of a German conquest, colonization, and triumph, despite the fact that the migrants involved would have probably considered themselves in terms of their local or regional identity, as, for example, Württembergers or Hessians.<sup>16</sup> The study of medieval and early modern migration, carried out under the umbrella of *Ostforschung*, was later used to support modern German claims in the east and argue in support of the process of Germanization of the residents of that area, during both the imperial era and under Nazi rule.<sup>17</sup> Even after the Second World War, such historical narratives of eastward migration continued to influence German perceptions of these eastern territories and their inhabitants.<sup>18</sup>

Behind these theories, however, lies the actual process of individuals and groups migrating to the east from the medieval period through the mid-twentieth century (indeed, up until the final months of the Second World War). The ways that West Germans reacted to the arrival of refugees in the 1950s does require some understanding of this historical context. Although few people considered it at the time, the postwar migrations paralleled the contemporary return migration of other colonizing populations from newly independent African and Asian colonies to their ancestors'

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<sup>16</sup> Nora Räthzel, "Aussiedler and Ausländer: Transforming German National Identity," in Ruth A. Starkman, ed., *Transformations of the New Germany* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 165.

<sup>17</sup> Jan Piskorski, "The Historiography of the So-called "East Colonisation" and the Current State of Research," in Balázs Nagy and Marcell Sebók. ... *The Man of Many Devices, Who Wandered Full Many Ways...* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), 654, 657.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Eduard Mühle's profile of Hermann Aubin, focusing on the shifts in his thinking between the 1920s and the 1950s. Eduard Mühle, "The European East on the Mental Map of German Ostforschung," in Eduard Mühle, ed., *Germany and the European East in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

European homelands.<sup>19</sup> Medieval migrations created a significant redistribution of the European population from west to east, and in Central and Eastern Europe, German-speakers from the Rhineland, Swabia and Saxony made up the bulk of the migrants. As Werner Rösener summarized the process of medieval settlement: "...the districts beyond the river [Elbe] were intensively colonized and totally transformed by Germans from the west. New villages were founded, peasants paid rent for inheritable farms, the three-field system spread, and yields increased."<sup>20</sup> Robert Bartlett has extended Rösener's argument beyond the spread of agricultural technology, noting that this migration helped bring Western European religious, cultural, legal, and economic practices to much of this region.<sup>21</sup>

Some of the initial migrations into this area were carried out with violence and the intention of conquest, a process that has been generally, if usually indirectly, traced to the spread of Christianity. Already in the ninth and tenth centuries, bishoprics were created in Hamburg, Magdeburg, Prague and Poznan with the intention of converting non-Christian groups in the region around the Baltic Sea. Conversion was not a foregone conclusion, however, and during the next two centuries, there were several uprisings against representatives of the Church. Eventually, these led to the creation of a significant crusading movement in the area similar to the better-known crusades in the Mediterranean. The Northern Crusades, as this series of military campaigns would come to be known, were, in reality, a number of distinct and separate conquests of non-Christian groups, such

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<sup>19</sup> Andrea L. Smith, ed., *Europe's Invisible Migrants* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), 29; Ceri Peach, "Postwar Migration to Europe: Reflux, Influx, Refuge," *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No. 2, 269-283.

<sup>20</sup> Werner Rösener, *Agrarwirtschaft, Agrarverfassung und Ländliche Gesellschaft im Mittelalter* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1992), 17.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change 950-1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

as the Wends in Mecklenburg and the Livonians of the eastern Baltic, often carried out by armies composed of Germans, Scandinavians, and English soldiers, organized into groups like the Sword Brothers and Teutonic Order.<sup>22</sup> However, regardless of whether migration took the form of settlement or conquest – and at such a distance it can be difficult to make any definitive judgments, as even the military orders themselves could issue grants of land to non-military settlers – the arrival of Western Europeans often meant, in the words of Piotr Górecki, the rapid transfer of “a global package...[including] population, techniques, settlement patterns, knightly and peasant status, freedom, education, literacy, and ‘culture’...”<sup>23</sup> This was portrayed in contemporary sources like the Saxon Chronicle as “turning the wilderness into cultivated land,” a sentiment that would be repeated in many other venues.<sup>24</sup>

The bulk of this migration began in the twelfth century, marked by the founding of Lübeck in 1143, and continued with settlement in modern Brandenburg and Silesia. Over the course of the next century, the German presence throughout Eastern Europe would increase, with significant communities founded from Mecklenburg to Estonia and from Bohemia to Transylvania.<sup>25</sup> In many cases, local leaders were responsible for settling German farmers in their lands. They were aided in this task by recruiters known as *Lokatoren*, who were first granted land and then recruited the settlers

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Knoll, “The Most Unique Crusader State: The Teutonic Order in the Development of the Political Culture of Northeastern Europe during the Middle Ages,” in Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A. J. Szabo, eds., *The Germans and the East* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 38-39.

<sup>23</sup> Piotr Górecki, “Medieval ‘East Colonization’ in Post-War North American and British Historiography,” in Jan M. Piskorski, ed., *Historiographical Approaches to Medieval Colonization of Central Europe* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2002), 27.

<sup>24</sup> *Cronica principium Saxonie*, cited in Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change 950-1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 35.

<sup>25</sup> Bartlett, 113.

themselves from more western areas; they were willing to take the risk of organizing and funding settlement in the hopes of acquiring future rights and monopolies.<sup>26</sup> Robert Bartlett gives the example of Peter of Nysa, who was granted about 8,000 acres by the Bishop of Breslau (Wrocław), provided that he could find settlers; a century later, these lands supported four villages, all with German names.<sup>27</sup> This process was repeated throughout the region, with the result that many local leaders ruled villages with entirely German populations, and with local law codes based heavily on (or copied directly from) German cities like Magdeburg, Lübeck and Kulm (Chełmno).<sup>28</sup> As suggested by both Rösener and Bartlett, these settlers were also seen as the source of “European” farming techniques, such as squared fields and the heavy plow, which allowed for more area to be farmed and therefore a larger harvest. This corresponded with a wider expansion of agricultural techniques across the continent, which in turn led to population growth and (as many would have it) a need for further expansion into either cities or uninhabited land.<sup>29</sup> However, this does not mean that the migrants kept to themselves over the next few centuries: Christian Lübke has called the end result of these migrations *Germania Slavica*, referring to the German-speaking descendants of both

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<sup>26</sup> Franz, 110; Alan Mayhew, *Rural Settlement and Farming in Germany* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1973), 54-55.

<sup>27</sup> Bartlett, 132.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Knoll, “Economic and Political Institutions on the Polish-German Frontier in the Middle Ages: Action, Reaction, Interaction,” in Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay, eds., *Medieval Frontier Societies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 160-161; Elspeth Carruthers, “Making Territories in the High Middle Ages: The Role of Foundation Charters in the German Colonization of the Vistula River,” in Marc S. Rodriguez and Anthony T. Grafton, eds., *Migration in History: Human Migration in Comparative Perspective* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 1-34.

<sup>29</sup> Bartlett, 149, 152; Rösener, 17. See also Peter Erlen’s comparative study of this process in the Baltic, the Netherlands and southwest France. Peter Erlen, *Europäischer Landesausbau und mittelalterliche deutsche Ostsiedlung* (Marburg an der Lahn: Johann-Gottfried-Herder-Institut, 1992), and for a visual demonstration of the difference in plows, see Wilhelm Abel, *Geschichte der deutschen Landwirtschaft*, 3rd Ed. (Stuttgart: Eugen Ulmer Verlag, 1978), 32-33.



Slavs and German settlers that populated the area between Pomerania on the Baltic and Upper Silesia in the farthest parts of the Oder valley. Further east, however, the descendants of German emigrants tended to dominate towns and cities, but did not interact much with the inhabitants of the surrounding areas and thus communities remained rather homogeneous.<sup>30</sup>

In the eighteenth century, migration to the east again increased in volume, as the Prussian kings consolidated their control over much of the southern Baltic coast and its hinterland. A series of wars and epidemics had proven disastrous for the area's population, particularly in East Prussia, but in the early eighteenth century farms left vacant by disease and depopulation were resettled by recruited foreigners and migrants from other Prussian provinces.<sup>31</sup> Later in the century, as King Frederick II sought to improve the Prussian manufacturing base, colonists, particularly skilled artisans, were recruited from western Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Many of these migrants were intended to help build up the Prussian textile industry, particularly the newly established silk factories.<sup>32</sup> Frederick also recruited laborers and engineers to drain numerous marshlands throughout the region: starting with the Oderbruch just east of Berlin, the process continued with the draining of the Stettin Marshes, the Preignitz, and several other areas that had

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<sup>30</sup> Christian Lübke, "Before Colonization: Christendom at the Slav Frontier and Pagan Resistance," in Ingrao and Szabo, 17; Christian Lübke, ed., *Struktur und Wandel im Früh- und Hochmittelalter: Eine Bestandsaufnahme aktueller Forschungen zur Germania Slavica* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998), cited in Klaus Zernack, "The Middle Ages," in Ingrao and Szabo, 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (London: Penguin, 2007), 90; Klaus J. Bade and Jochen Oltmer, "Migration und Integration in Deutschland seit der Frühen Neuzeit," in Rosmarie Beier-de Hann, ed., *Zuwanderungsland Deutschland: Migrationen 1500-2005* (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum/Edition Minerva, 2005), 23.

<sup>32</sup> Clark, 175.

previously been impassable by traffic and unusable for agriculture.<sup>33</sup> Increasing the amount of available land necessitated further migration of agricultural workers to settle and farm. These were again recruited from areas further west, particularly the Palatinate, Württemberg and other areas along the Rhine. As a result of the draining of marshes and the subsequent migration of agricultural workers, German-language villages were (again) established throughout Polish-language regions. However, as Christopher Clark notes, this was probably not an attempt to increase the domination of a German-speaking state over its Polish subjects; Frederick was, himself, notoriously dismissive of the German language (he preferred French), and it is likely that there was no ethnically-based rationale for his support of German migration to East Prussia, despite what later historians imagined.<sup>34</sup> A similar migration took place in Russia, as the German-born Catherine II the Great worked to recruit western Europeans to settle recently conquered territories along the northern coast of the Black Sea, starting in 1762. Settlers were promised freedom from taxes, for periods of up to thirty years, along with expenses, land and special loans. This was a popular option for religious groups that had broken off of established confessional groups, like the Moravians (Herrnhut Brethren), Mennonites and Pietists. Again, German settlers were privileged because members of the Russian aristocracy (many of whom were themselves descended from German ancestors) thought that their presence would help improve local agriculture.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> For a detailed account of this process, see David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006), 21-75.

<sup>34</sup> Clark, 213, 233, 238.

<sup>35</sup> Andreas Gestrich, "German Religious Emigration to Russia in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," in Hartmut Lehmann, Hermann Wellenreuther and Renate Wilson, eds., *In Search of Peace and Prosperity: New German Settlements in Eighteenth-Century Europe and America* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 77-79.

In recent years, Polish historians like Piotr Gorecki and Jan Piskorski have challenged these historical narratives of settlement, but they were still highly influential during the first half of the twentieth century, and informed popular and scholarly perceptions of the historical German presence in the eastern lands.<sup>36</sup> Among the several nationalist-oriented organizations that were founded in the late nineteenth century was the Eastern Marches Association (*Deutscher Ostmarkenverein*, often referred to as the Hakatists, after the combined initials of the founding group), which was devoted to building up the German presence in the eastern parts of the German Empire. They called for a more active approach to Germanization, including the support of new German settlements and the removal of the existing Polish population.<sup>37</sup> In the estimation of Heinrich August Winkler, such groups “transformed the German prejudice against the allegedly racially inferior Poles into a weapon of ethno-cultural warfare, and their efforts were endorsed by the parties of the Right...”<sup>38</sup> In a further example of the racist, and particularly anti-Slavic, rhetoric that was common at the time, David Blackbourn notes that the adjectives ‘green’ and ‘German’ were often interchangeable in nineteenth and early twentieth-century nature writing, especially when areas of German settlement were contrasted to the ‘Slavic wilderness.’<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> For the critique, see n. 22 and Jan M. Piskorski, “The Medieval Colonization of Central Europe as a Problem of World History and Historiography,” *German History*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (July 2004), 323-343; for the previous consensus, see Eduard Mühle, “Putting the East in Order: German Historians and Their Attempts to Rationalize German Eastward Expansion during the 1930s and 1940s,” in Robert L. Nelson, ed., *Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East: 1850 to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 103-104.

<sup>37</sup> T. David Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland, 1945-1960* (Rochester, NY: The University of Rochester Press, 2006), 16-17.

<sup>38</sup> Heinrich August Winkler, *Germany: The Long Road West, Vol. 1: 1789-1933*, Translated by Alexander J. Sager (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 249.

<sup>39</sup> Blackbourn, 9.

Similar, though perhaps less extreme, ideas were also present in the international academic context. In 1931 the German-American historian Edward Otto Lessing edited a short volume entitled “Minorities and Boundaries,” which brought together papers written by several German scholars on the state of German minorities across Europe in the decade since the Versailles Treaty. On the German presence in Czechoslovakia, Emil Lehmann wrote that “the Germans did not come as conquerors but as bearers of civilization,” invited by the Bohemian kings in the Middle Ages and later helping to resettle the country after the depopulation caused by the Thirty Years War. In recalling this history of German migration, Lehmann is clearly supporting the cause of the Sudeten Germans against what he considers the “exaggerated nationalist fanaticism” of the contemporary Czechoslovak government. Lehmann even accuses Czechoslovakia of propagating an alternative national history, based on allegedly forged documents, in which no German migrants could be found.<sup>40</sup>

Later essays in Lessing’s volume were written by Hans Lukaschek, a Silesian politician, Walther Recke, an archivist from Danzig and Wilhelm Vleugels, who argued for the rights of German minorities in various eastern territories (Upper Silesia, Danzig, and East Prussia). All three appealed to the same historical argument as Lehmann, that German settlers and migrants, over the course of several centuries, were historically the primary civilizing influences in these areas.<sup>41</sup> Lessing’s volume represents one attempt to publicize the work of these researchers overseas and possibly influence a wider audience. This was generally a conservative field of study, and many of

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<sup>40</sup> Emil Lehmann, “German Civilization in Czechoslovakia,” in Otto Edward Lessing, ed., *Minorities and Boundaries* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1931), 45-47, 50, 58-59.

<sup>41</sup> Hans Lukaschek, “The Germans in Polish Upper Silesia,” Walther Recke, “The Origin of the Free City of Danzig,” and Wilhelm Vleugels, “East Prussia, Danzig, and the Polish Corridor,” in Lessing, 96-140.

these scholars were more than casual Nazis. Vleugels definitely joined the Party, and Walther Darré, whose work is discussed in the following section, was also deeply involved. Others, though, like Lukaschek and Hermann Aubin, managed to keep a low profile and remained important and influential figures in the postwar years – Lukaschek as the Minister of Displaced Persons, Expellees, and War Victims in the first West German government, and Aubin as a professor in Göttingen, Hamburg, and Freiburg.<sup>42</sup>

However, the Nazis did not maintain a monopoly on nationalist scholarship. Hans Rothfels, whose Jewish ancestry led to his removal from a professorship in Königsberg and his emigration to the United Kingdom and later the United States in the late 1930s, wrote on the historical migrations of Germans into Eastern Europe for *The Review of Politics* in 1946. Even writing for an audience that was likely unsympathetic to German nationalism, Rothfels makes similar claims (though with a more nuanced presentation) to those found in Lessing's volume: the medieval settlement was a "popular and spontaneous movement, which attracted the most vigorous and self-reliant elements, daring and longing for freedom...it was by hard work...[and] by the transfer of an industrious people and of Western institutions, that a major part of eastern Central Europe became fully incorporated into the occidental world..."<sup>43</sup>

Often forgotten in the scholarly celebration of settlement and colonization are the sentiments of the emigrants and those they left behind. Drawing on the connections between population and land, the experience of emigration was often viewed as a negative one, a process of uprooting and of separation, rather than a chance at a new beginning. Such ideas were closely related to the

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<sup>42</sup> Mühle, "The European East," 109.

<sup>43</sup> Hans Rothfels, "Frontiers and Mass Migrations in Eastern Central Europe," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Jan. 1946), 39.

problematization of migration as the opposite of settled life, a “deviation from the residentialist norm.”<sup>44</sup> Consequently, throughout the nineteenth century and especially around the turn of the twentieth, the emigration of Germans came to be seen as signaling a drain of talent and manpower, and a net loss for Germany.<sup>45</sup> Even so, there were attempts to harness this German ‘diaspora’ for the advancement of the home nation. In the two decades prior to the First World War, there were over one hundred overseas chapters of the nationalist-oriented Naval League, with several thousand members; their contributions to the Imperial German Fleet helped fund the construction of the warship *Vaterland*.<sup>46</sup> Other nationalist initiatives, sponsored by the Pan-German League and the Colonial League, sought to encourage remigration, and, failing that, to support emigration to the German attempts at settler colonies in Africa. Both of these alternatives proved to be unattractive, even after the 1897 national emigration law, which explicitly sought to control emigration for the attainment of political goals.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the 1913 citizenship laws (which remained in force for nearly ninety years) allowed Germans living overseas to maintain their German citizenship, even as it made the acquisition of German citizenship for non-German residents exceptionally difficult.<sup>48</sup>

Exacerbating the effects of wider emigration from the German lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the perception of a declining rural population due to mass

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<sup>44</sup> Kleinschmidt, 199.

<sup>45</sup> Jarausch and Geyer, 201.

<sup>46</sup> Stefan Manz, *Migranten und Internierte: Deutsche in Glasgow, 1864-1918* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003), 186-187.

<sup>47</sup> Jarausch and Geyer, 201-202.

<sup>48</sup> Dieter Gosewinkel, “Citizenship in Germany and France at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Some New Observations on an Old Comparison,” in Geoff Eley and Jan Palmowski, eds., *Citizenship and National Identity in twentieth-century Germany* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 38.

migration to German cities. Even though the proportion of agricultural workers within the German population remained high well into the twentieth century, the transition from a primarily agrarian state to an urban-industrial state probably occurred just before the turn of the twentieth century. This shift was accompanied by high levels of geographic mobility; workers were required for labor-intensive coal, steel and textile production, as well as the construction of infrastructure like railroads, factories, and housing.<sup>49</sup> This migration to developing urban areas earned the name *Landflucht* from those who studied it; the implication being that those who migrated to the cities were ‘escaping’ their rural villages.<sup>50</sup> The concept was thus inextricably linked to both a mythic rural existence and negative perceptions of the city and urbanization.

Anxiety about this “flight from the land” arose in the nineteenth century and continued into the twentieth, and was not limited to Germany; the loss of agricultural population was considered to be detrimental to national economies, despite the realization of contemporaries that industrial states had much more efficient agricultural sectors. As noted by Dudley Kirk in 1946, one component of economic efficiency was the ability of rural areas to absorb variations in their population levels, depending on the employment needs of urban industries.<sup>51</sup> Ironically, As Steve Hochstadt has demonstrated, migration to German cities was significantly lower after World War I than it had been during the first fourteen years of the century, and continued to decrease throughout the decade of the 1920s before rising again during the Depression. The majority of migration within Germany

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<sup>49</sup> Bade, Klaus, *Migration in European History*, translated by Allison Brown (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 34-35.

<sup>50</sup> Kleinschmidt, 198.

<sup>51</sup> Dudley Kirk, *Europe’s Population in the Interwar Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press for the League of Nations, 1946), 212, 215.

occurred within largely agricultural areas and between rural villages and nearby towns.<sup>52</sup> That fears of *Landflucht* maintained their relevance in the interwar period may have been due to the realization that previous rural-to-urban movement was most likely irreversible. Another influence was the growing sense that rural life was superior to life in the cities: some experts argued that the continued expansion of urban populations would have a negative effect on social health, pointing to lower birthrates in the cities (at least among the middle classes) and the impact of city life on morality and culture. In such modes of thinking, the solution was clear: reverse the migration to the cities.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, some German intellectuals, like Hans Rothfels and Albert Penck, laid out plans in the 1920s that envisioned the expansion of German controlled agriculture in Eastern Europe, as a way to maintain political and cultural control as well as increase agricultural capacity.<sup>54</sup> This theme was continued in the work of Richard Walther Darré, who as a writer and government planner sought to create a new migration of Germans out of the cities and into smaller settlements, thereby removing them from the unhealthy cities. Darré based his theories on his reading of ancient and medieval history, in particular the examples of ancient Sparta and the medieval Vikings, and argued that the renewal of this agriculturally- and militarily-oriented way of life was the best solution for the

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<sup>52</sup> Steve Hochstadt, *Mobility and Modernity: Migration in Germany 1820-1989* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 220, 239-240.

<sup>53</sup> Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 92-93. The ascendancy of such opinions was, in many ways, a result of the changing political climate in the first half of the twentieth century. Earlier, in the late nineteenth century, urbanization was seen as positive proof of modernization; German cities were seen as leading the world (or at least Europe) in innovative urbanization, a source of considerable national pride at the time. Andrew Lees, *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought, 1820-1940*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 239-240.

<sup>54</sup> Kleinschmidt, 233.



problems of modernity.<sup>55</sup> These opinions were not limited to the largely conservative alarmists like Darré; in 1931 the International Labor Office commissioned two German researchers, Fritz Wilhelm von Bülow of the ILO Agricultural Service and Hans Böker of the International Institute of Agriculture, to tour the Prussian provinces of Pomerania and Saxony and the Free State of Saxony and report on the “Rural Exodus.” Even their scientifically-minded approach, however, began from a negative hypothesis, that “the rural exodus is understood by all to mean a form of migration which brings a train of harmful consequences, affecting first of all rural areas and agriculture, and eventually the whole economic system of the country.”<sup>56</sup>

To be fair, they only regarded migration as problematic when it exceeded the replacement rate of the rural population (which was generally higher than the population as a whole), included landowners and artisans (i.e. occupations other than non-landowning agricultural laborers), and resulted in the net decrease of agricultural output. Von Bülow and Böker conceded that economic factors were most likely at the root of such migrations, including uncompetitive home-based industries of the sort that had formerly supplemented the income of families farming marginal land, and the relatively low wages for agricultural labor in comparison to those available in urban industries. One reason cited for the latter development was that agricultural mechanization had reduced the need for year-round (or even full-season) agricultural employment. However, over the course of their study, von Bülow and Böker did notice major changes in this migration, which were

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<sup>55</sup> R. Walther Darré, *Das Bauerntum als Lebesquell der Nordlichen Rasse* (Munich: J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1929). See also Lees, 283-284. Unsurprisingly, Darré was an early member of the Nazi Party, and, as leader of the party’s Agrarian-Political wing, played a significant role in the process that brought Hitler to power in 1933. See Winkler, 479.

<sup>56</sup> H. Böker and F. W. von Bülow, *The Rural Exodus in Germany*, Series K (Agriculture), No. 12. (Geneva: International Labor Office, 1933), 5. The pair followed this work with a second, also under ILO auspices, of rural-to-urban migration in Czechoslovakia.

tied to the ongoing worldwide economic depression. They noted an increasing tendency of migration from towns back into the villages, and posited a moral rationale in addition to the more obvious economic necessity. In particular, they found a level of idealism among the younger urban residents, who identified rural life with a more natural and simple existence, a partial reaction to the negative aspects of urbanization. However, they considered this increased urban-to-rural migration as temporary, tied to the course of the depression, and warned that this trend would likely be reversed again in the future.<sup>57</sup>

It is likely, however, that none of these scholars and commentators expected that within the next two decades, the demographics of the entire region between Germany's western borders and the central Soviet Union would undergo two major changes, the first during the Second World War and the second in its immediate aftermath. The war provided the Nazi government with an opportunity to rationalize the patterns of German settlement in the East. In addition to the extermination of much of the area's Jewish population and the displacement of other Eastern Europeans, particularly Poles, the government sought to resettle several million descendants of eighteenth and nineteenth-century migrants, known as *Volksdeutsche* (ethnic Germans, to distinguish them from citizens of the German state), from the Soviet Union, the Baltic states and eastern Poland, as well as the Italian region of South Tyrol, to areas closer to, and occasionally within, the prewar German and Austrian borders. The Nazi government referred to this process as a movement "*Heim ins Reich*," indicating a sense of homecoming for these ethnic Germans, although they were intended to occupy land confiscated from Poles and other groups considered to be inferior. This was the first phase of the *Generalplan Ost*, intended to reorganize the ethnic landscape from occupied Poland to the Urals.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 124-126.

This process of planned migration and resettlement was directed by the SS leadership through several agencies within the Nazi hierarchy, including the *Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle* (Repatriation Office for Ethnic Germans) and the Security Service, which controlled the *Einwandererzentralstelle* (Immigration Central Office). Many *Volksdeutsche* seem to have supported this goal, though it is unclear whether many individuals involved in the process grasped the magnitude or ramifications of the entire plan.<sup>58</sup> Temporary camps were set up for those awaiting further resettlement, but the Soviet resurgence and German retreat, beginning in 1943, prevented these plans from being realized. Still, several hundred thousand *Volksdeutsche* were resettled during the war, and although some sought to stay in their homes after the German withdrawal, most of those who remained were forcibly expelled after the war and found their own way back within the postwar German borders.<sup>59</sup>

These individuals were only part of the migration patterns that brought around ten million German expellees into postwar West Germany, beginning during the final months of the Second World War. In addition to the *Volksdeutsche*, many of whom had never left their temporary resettlement camps in occupied Poland, residents of eastern German provinces like Silesia, Pomerania and East Prussia were also included in this number. Many of these had fled west to avoid the Red Army; after the areas east of the Oder-Neisse border were effectively ceded to Poland and the Soviet Union and the Sudetenland was returned to Czechoslovakia, most of those who had originally stayed were forcibly deported by the Soviets or local authorities. Often, these actions were

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<sup>58</sup> "Nazi Government Resettlement Policy," Organizations Inimical to the United States, Investigative Records Repository, Counter Intelligence Corps Collection, Records of the Army General Staff, RG 319, NARA.

<sup>59</sup> Bade, 211; Doris L. Bergen, "Tenuousness and Tenacity: The *Volksdeutschen* of Eastern Europe, World War II, and the Holocaust," in O'Donnell, Bridenthal and Reagin, 279-280; Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 196-197.

justified by the example set by the Germans during the war, of displacing a non-German population to make way for *Volksdeutsche* resettlers. Once in the zones of occupation, these expellees competed for attention, food and housing with another eleven to twelve million non-German displaced persons, and perhaps another ten million Germans who had been driven out of the cities by Allied bombing.<sup>60</sup>

The expulsions brought together all of the problematic features of earlier migrations in concentrated form. Reactions to the expellees themselves were influenced by historically negative attitudes toward migrants. As both Rainer Schulze and Ian Connor have noted, the expellees were originally met with sympathy, but within a few months of their arrival, relations often became much worse. This was partly the result of overcrowded living conditions, especially in rural areas where the newcomers were forced to depend on locals for shelter and assistance. Expellees gained a reputation for being lazy, dishonest and ungrateful, and in extreme situations were criticized for their foreignness or putative “cultural inferiority.”<sup>61</sup> Another major source of anxiety was the loss of prime agricultural land to Poland and the Soviet Union, as well as the displacement of a significant percentage of prewar Germany’s agricultural population, now languishing as expellees rather than operating their own farms. Contemporary sources, though perhaps optimistic, estimated that the formerly German territories seized by Poland and the Soviet Union included around seven million

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<sup>60</sup> Bade, 214-215; John C. Swanson, “The Second World War and its Aftermath: Ethnic German Communities in the East,” in Ingrao and Szabo, 355-357; Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe, 1945-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 22-23.

<sup>61</sup> Ian Connor, *Refugees and Expellees on Postwar Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 65, 67; Rainer Schulze, “Growing Discontent: Relations between Native and Refugee Populations in a Rural District in Western Germany after the Second World War,” in Robert Moeller, ed. *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 59.

hectares of arable land, approximately 55 percent of the prewar German total, which could feed the local population and still produce enough of a surplus to feed over five million other Germans.<sup>62</sup> Expellees and their supporters suggested that the Poles would be unable to adequately farm this now-empty land, an attitude that owed something to anti-Polish prejudice but also expressed a lack of confidence in the Polish government's ability to quickly resettle the area. Many of these resettlers were supposed to have come from the eastern areas of prewar Poland that had been ceded to the Soviet Union during the war, but early estimates by western observers indicated that only about three to four million had actually moved to the newly-acquired territories.<sup>63</sup> Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, was among those who called on the Polish government to demonstrate that they would be "able to develop this territory so that the economic resources were properly used...that it did not become a wilderness...which [the Poles] were unable to populate."<sup>64</sup>

By the middle of 1946, and definitely by 1947, the bulk of expellee migration to the four postwar occupation zones had largely finished: the refugees had been processed, many of the camps had been closed and dismantled, and most of the newcomers had settled down to await a postwar treaty that would allow them to return home. However, as the East German Communists, with Soviet help, began to consolidate their influence in the Soviet Zone, a new and unexpected stream of refugees began to arrive in West Berlin and West Germany. At first, this included no more than a

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<sup>62</sup> Hanns Streit, "Die Ostdeutsche Wirtschaft," In Lutz Mackenson, ed., *Deutsche Heimat Ohne Deutsche: Ein Ostdeutsches Heimatbuch* (Braunschweig: Georg Westermann, 1954), 24; *Handbook of German Affairs* (Washington, DC: Press Office, German Diplomatic Mission, 1954), 77.

<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth Wiskemann, *Germany's Eastern Neighbors: Problems Relating to the Oder-Neisse Line and the Czech Frontier Regions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 218; Hans-Joachim von Körber, "Zum geistigen und sozialen Geschehen hinter der Oder-Neiße-Linie" (1955), BAK BAK B 150/1911.

<sup>64</sup> Ernest Bevin, Oct. 22, 1946, cited in *In the Land of the Dead: Study of the Deportations from Eastern Germany* (New York: Committee Against Mass Expulsion, 1946), 8.

few thousand individuals, mostly those with political (including Nazi) connections. However, between the start of the West Berlin Blockade in 1948 and the foundation of the two separate German states a year later, however, tens of thousands of new refugees would begin moving west. Their arrival would pose a somewhat different problem from that of the expellees, and would help to define the contours of the Federal Republic's first decade.

## Chapter 2

### “Heroes of the Questionnaire”: Reaction and Control in the Refugee Reception Process

On September 21st, 1956, a refugee from East Germany registered for asylum at the Federal Reception Center in Marienfelde, in the southern part of West Berlin. This individual, any one of the several hundred that registered that day, could have been female or male. It was also likely that he or she were relatively young or no more than middle-aged. If the former, he may have accompanied a parent across the border, or crossed with a group of school friends, perhaps trying to avoid conscription into the police or army. Likewise, she may have been an apprentice or trainee, looking to find better job opportunities in West Germany than those available to her in the East. If older, it was more likely that this refugee was a worker, a farmer or shop owner than a teacher or doctor; while the West German media tended to focus on the professionals among the refugees, the percentage of university graduates among the refugees was similar to the percentage in the population as a whole. Perhaps he claimed to be a former political prisoner, one of many who said they had been forced to mine uranium in the mountains near Aue, in Saxony, for use in Soviet nuclear weapons. It is even possible, though unlikely, that she was a spy, or an informer, an employee of the East German security services sent to entice other refugees to return by playing on their disillusionment with life in West Germany, with competition for jobs and the lack of decent housing.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Der Strom der Flüchtlinge,” Schriftenreihe des Senats (Berlin), Dec. 14, 1953, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 156; Kurt Exner and Erich Fäse, “Berlin und die Flüchtlinge,” LAB B Rep 010-01 Nr. 317.

The only thing known for sure is that this individual was the millionth refugee to enter West Berlin from the German Democratic Republic or East Berlin since 1949, a count that did not include the 700,000 that had moved directly from East to West Germany during the same time period, and perhaps another hundred thousand or so who left the Soviet Zone before that year. West Berlin officials declined to recognize any one of the day's several hundred newly-registered refugees as the millionth, preferring to focus on the enormity of the statistic. Perhaps the authorities wished to avoid the potential embarrassment and negative publicity should that person's application for asylum be rejected, though it is doubtful they would have admitted as much.<sup>2</sup>

In an institutional sense, the identity of that particular refugee, or of the million that preceded her or him and the other hundreds of thousands that would register between 1956 and the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 was unimportant to the process of receiving and registering East German refugees throughout this decade. A few were prominent enough that their arrival was a news event, but the majority were mere participants in the refugee 'flows' or 'waves' that streamed into West Berlin and West Germany by the hundreds to thousands every day and the hundreds of thousands every year. Put simply, their flight created a problem for western authorities, and the solution to this problem was evident: every individual who crossed the borders and sought asylum should follow the same specific and detailed institutional path. The "Bundeslabyrinth" included examinations, interviews and hearings designed to gauge refugees' fitness – based on their health, occupation, family status, personal history and political leanings – with the intention of resettlement

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<sup>2</sup> "Eine Million," *Die Welt*, Sept. 21, 1956; "West Berlin Receives its Millionth Refugee," *New York Herald Tribune*, Sept. 22, 1956; "Das Tor zur Freiheit – Tauriges Jubiläum in Berlin," *Das Telegraf* (Berlin), Sept. 22, 1956.



throughout West Germany.<sup>3</sup> Many refugees failed to complete this path, especially during the early part of the decade, when barely half of the arriving refugees were officially accepted into the reception program, while the rest were left to eke out a living in West Berlin. It is unsurprising, then, that Walter von Cube, in his controversial speech criticizing the Federal Government's reaction to the refugee influx, referred to successful asylum-seekers as "Heroes of the Questionnaire" (*Helden des Fragebogens*), as few clearly knew the 'right' answers to the reception committees' questions.<sup>4</sup>

However, even the rejected were not forced to return home, and like all other refugees working their way through the reception process, they were dependent on an extensive network of residence camps and welfare offices, advisory organizations and charities to provide them with necessities of life.

Viewed in terms of sheer numbers, the ability of municipal, state and federal authorities to register and process over three million individual applications, to house, feed and clothe thousands of refugees at any one time, and to organize thousands of flights from West Berlin to West Germany over the course of a decade was quite impressive. That a significant portion of the refugee reception took place in a half-city still devastated by recent war, divided by occupation, and constrained in its ability to expand by an unfriendly hinterland was also a notable feat, especially given the expense borne by the government of West Berlin, over 500 million DM for the entire decade of the 1950s.<sup>5</sup> Yet this process was also defined by its failures and shortcomings, primarily the inability of the authorities – the leaders and bureaucrats within the federal government, those of the *Länder* and

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<sup>3</sup> Julius R. Kaim, "Oststudenten irren durch das Bundeslabyrinth," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, June 6, 1958.

<sup>4</sup> Walter von Cube, "Kommentar der Woche," Bayerischen Rundfunk, Feb. 14, 1953. Transcript in BAK B 106/810.

<sup>5</sup> To be specific, 491 million DM between 1949 and 1958. Jahresbericht 1958, Senator für Arbeit und Sozialwesen, LAB B Rep 004 Nr. 39.

West Berlin, along with charitable and advocacy organizations – to perceive a quickly changing environment and to anticipate future developments in the refugees' situation.

Indeed, nearly the entire reception process consisted of measures instituted in reaction to past events and maintained long after they had ceased to be useful or popular. Even the Federal legislation authorizing the creation of temporary camps for housing refugees, originally passed in July 1952, required three separate extensions, in October 1952, February 1953 and November 1953, before it was finally made permanent in January 1954.<sup>6</sup> While the particulars of the reception process changed frequently – especially before the opening of the Marienfelde facility in West Berlin in the summer of 1953, which combined all of the reception offices into a single complex, along with additional refugee housing – the primary goals remained the same: to maintain control over refugee migration through registration, categorization, and limited approval. Reasons for this were two-fold: to force potential refugees to consider carefully their decision to leave East Germany, and to demonstrate to the wider population in both West Berlin and West Germany that the authorities would not allow the refugee situation to get out of hand. In the words of Thedor Oberländer, the Federal Minister for Expellees, Refugees and Victims of War between 1953 and 1960, the primary intentions of the reception procedure were “...to register the influx [of refugees], oversee matters of security and health, as well as direct the activities of the *Länder*...to prevent the depopulation of the

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<sup>6</sup> BM des Innern, “Verordnung zur Verlängerung der Verordnung über die vorläufige Unterbringung von Flüchtlingen aus der SBZ und dem SBS-Berlin, 13. Oktober 1952,” “Zweiten Verordnung zur Verlängerung der Verordnung über die vorläufige Unterbringung von Flüchtlingen aus der SBZ und dem SBS-Berlin, 14. Februar 1953,” “Dritten Verordnung zur Verlängerung der Verordnung über die vorläufige Unterbringung von Flüchtlingen aus der SBZ und dem SBS-Berlin, 21. November 1953,” “Vierten Verordnung zur Verlängerung der Verordnung über die vorläufige Unterbringung von Flüchtlingen aus der SBZ und dem SBS-Berlin, 5. Januar 1954,” BAK B 106/8512.

Zone (East Germany) through migration and, for the protection of the *Länder*, to bring undesirable persons under [our] control...”<sup>7</sup>

One of the best illustrations of this focus on control was the primary goal of the reception process: to determine whether or not a migrant deserved to be recognized as a political refugee and be accepted into the resettlement program. By the terms of the law establishing the Federal Emergency Reception Procedure, passed on August 22, 1950, recognition would be granted to those who fled East Germany on “political grounds, especially on account of danger to life and limb or for personal freedom,” while allowing for some exceptions based on other compelling grounds.<sup>8</sup> West Berlin’s law establishing refugee commissions, in place between October 1950 and February 1952, adopted similar language, though notably omitting the “other compelling grounds” exception, which gave the commissions less leeway for making their decisions.<sup>9</sup> In both cases, the intention of this language was clear: to exclude those refugees intending to migrate for economic reasons, whether to seek higher-paying employment or enjoy a better standard of living. Unsurprisingly, however, few cases were unambiguous: outside of the several thousand refugees who had been threatened or imprisoned in East Germany for their political activities, most of the new arrivals’ reasons for migration alternated between mild political disillusionment and finding a better job and apartment in West Germany; in the words quoted by Elke Kimmel, many left East Germany, not because they

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<sup>7</sup> “Das Notaufnahmegesetz bezweckte, den Zustrom zu registrieren, polizeilich und gesundheitlich zu überwachen, sowie entsprechend der Aufnahmekraft der Länder zu lenken, die Abwanderung aus der Zone zur Erschwerung einer Entvölkerung der SBZ und zum Schutze der Länder vor unerwünschten Personen unter Kontrolle zu bringen...” Oberländer to Wehner, Jan. 17, 1958. BAK B 136/3922.

<sup>8</sup> “...politische Gründen, insbesondere wegen Gefährdung für Leib und Leben oder die persönlichen Freiheit...” Vockel to Adenauer, 18 November 1950, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 188.

<sup>9</sup> “Die Flüchtlingsbewegung nach Westberlin bis Ende Oktober 1951,” Senator für Sozialwesen, Referat II 4b, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 101.

held specific political grievances, but because “it was no longer reasonable to remain in the Soviet Zone.”<sup>10</sup> For every Gottfried S., a former electrician assigned to work at the uranium mines at Aue, and Karl C., imprisoned for sabotage after routinely failing to meet his work quota, there was a Richard T., a headwaiter who was fired after refusing to join the SED, and Herbert W., who registered as a refugee but subsequently returned home to Dresden to visit his mother before continuing with the reception process.<sup>11</sup>

During the first four years of the reception process, between 1949 and early 1953, nearly half of the refugees arriving in West Berlin – 42 percent, out of around 300,000 new arrivals – had their initial applications for asylum rejected. The percentage of rejections, however, generally declined after the spring of 1953, with the exception of a sharp rise during the summer of 1954. This trend toward fewer rejections was a result of the dramatic influx of refugees into West Berlin during the first few months of the year. This influenced the conscious redefinition of ‘political motives’ at the federal level, based on the argument that “in a totalitarian state, everything is politicized.”<sup>12</sup> As more refugees were accepted into the reception process, it is also possible that individual refugees also

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<sup>10</sup> Elke Kimmel, “...war ihm nicht zuzumuten, länger in der SBZ zu bleiben,” (Berlin: Metropol, 2009); See also the accounts given by refugees in Jörn Donner, *Report from Berlin*, trans. Albin T. Anderson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1961), 42-43, 49; Volker Ackermann’s 1995 monograph *Der „echte“ Flüchtling* (The “Genuine” Refugee) covers this debate over political and economic rationales for flight in detail. Volker Ackermann, *Der „Echte“ Flüchtling* (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Widersprüche; Anträge auf Erteilung von Ausweisen nach dem Bundesvertriebenengesetz (BVFG), NSHA NDS 120 Lüneburg Acc. 156/81 Nr. 210/1; Flüchtlingshilfe: Anträge auf Flüchtlingsausweise; Beschwerden und Verwaltungstreitsachen, NSHA Nds 120 Hannover Acc. 98/85 Nr. 2/10

<sup>12</sup> “In einem totalitären Staat ist alles politisch.” In “Wer ist ‘politischer Flüchtling?’” *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung* Nr. 63, Apr. 2, 1957, p. 541.

learned how to answer the committees' questions in a manner that focused on their political differences with the East German regime.

During those first few years of the reception process, at least through 1952, the threat of rejection was primarily intended to deter prospective refugees. Early in the decade, jobs and housing were still in short supply in most areas of West Germany. The Federal Ministry for Expellees, which had taken the refugees' cause into its portfolio (it would be retitled the Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims in 1953), circulated an information sheet to the reception camps and refugee advisory organizations in February 1951 that made the inadmissibility of economic rationales for migration explicit: "Economic grounds, without accompanying personal danger, will without exception not be considered as grounds for acceptance." The guide also cited the long and difficult reception process, as well as the low percentages of applicants eventually accepted, as reasons to think twice about seeking admission to West Germany as a refugee.<sup>13</sup> The Ministry clearly intended that the majority of refugees would be dissuaded from registering and would return to their homes. Those still unsure whether they would qualify as political refugees could visit one of several advice offices in West Berlin operated by refugee organizations and staffed by former refugees with legal training. Some of these groups took the mission of deterring refugees very seriously: in November 1950, the leader of one refugee organization, the Association of Victims of Stalinism (*Vereinigung der Opfer des Stalinismus*), wrote a letter to the Federal Minister of all-German Questions, Jakob Kaiser, in which he bragged that in just eight weeks his group was

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<sup>13</sup> "Wirtschaftliche Gründe, ohne eine gleichzeitige persönliche Gefährdung, werden im allgemeinen nicht als Aufnahme Gründe anerkannt." Hinweise für Zuwanderer aus der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone (SBZ) und Berlin," BMV, 15 February 1951, LAB B Rep 004 Nr. 21.

responsible for convincing one hundred prospective refugees to return to their homes in East Germany.<sup>14</sup>

The rhetoric of acceptance and rejection also had an impact on the language used to describe the refugees in both internal bureaucratic documents and the media. Despite attempts to limit the use of the term ‘refugee’ (*Flüchtlinge*) to those who had fled East Germany for political reasons, this usage gradually replaced ‘in-migrant’ (*Zuwanderer*) as the preferred term for all newcomers from East Germany. The generally accepted categories gradually became ‘recognized’ and ‘not recognized’ (*anerkanntel nicht anerkannte Flüchtlinge*), with the latter description occasionally replaced by ‘rejected’ refugees (*abgelehnte Flüchtlinge*). Rarely, the term ‘border-crosser’ (*Grenzgänger*) was used to refer to new refugees, but this term properly referred to those Berliners who (legally) lived on one side of the demarcation line and worked on the other.<sup>15</sup> On occasion, official sources referred to unrecognized refugees as ‘illegal in-migrants’ (*illegale Zuwanderer*) or ‘illegal border-crossers’ (*illegale Grenzgänger*). This construction was often shortened to ‘illegals’ (*Illegalen*) in newspaper headlines and colloquial formats.<sup>16</sup> While this term was technically incorrect – the reception laws did not prohibit migration, even without registration – it did reinforce the popular view that many unrecognized refugees were, in fact, criminals, ‘asocials,’ or even Soviet agents, or that they were

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<sup>14</sup> Kalweit to Kaiser, 7 November 1950, BAK B 137/203. The VOS was comprised of refugees who had been imprisoned in the Soviet Zone/German Democratic Republic for political organizing. Hsi-Huey Liang, *Berlin Before the Wall* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 57.

<sup>15</sup> Frank Roggenbuch, *Das Berliner Grenzgängerproblem* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> On terminology, “Die Flüchtlingsbewegung nach Westberlin bis Ende Oktober 1951,” Senator für Sozialwesen, Referat II 4b, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 101 and “Statistisches Material zum Problem der abgewiesenen illegalen Grenzgänger für Westberlin,” Senator für Sozialwesen, Referat II 4b, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 373; See also Günter Granicky, “Die Zuwanderung aus der sowjetischen Besatzungszone,” in Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding, *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, Vol. 3 (Kiel: F. Hirt, 1959), 477.

involved with the black markets in goods and labor.<sup>17</sup> As Heinrich Vockel, the Federal Representative in Berlin, wrote to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in late 1950, the unrecognized East German refugees “live in ruins, occupy themselves with smuggling and the black market in all sorts of dark places, jeopardize the safety of the population [and] spread disease and vices of all kinds.”<sup>18</sup> Or, as the local newspaper *Spandauer Volksblatt* wrote in 1955, the rejected refugees “...lead a sort of shadowy existence, and thus pose a social danger to the public.”<sup>19</sup>

Further cementing this perception of criminality was the tendency to label residents of refugee camps as ‘inmates’ (*insassen*) – as in English, the same word used to describe the imprisoned. Perhaps even less charitably, some refugees were also characterized as “migrant homeless” (*zugewanderte Obdachlose*) in need of state-provided care and housing.<sup>20</sup> Of course, as German citizens residing in West Germany and West Berlin, neither group qualified for official refugee status under most international legal definitions, including the 1946 constitution of the International Refugee Organization and the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. However, this legal distinction was overlooked by all but a few commentators – including the High Commissioner for Refugees himself on occasion – and was rendered moot by the official definition

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<sup>17</sup> Alistair Horne, *Return to Power: A Report on the New Germany* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1956), 189.

<sup>18</sup> “Sie hausen in Ruinen, treiben sich unerkannt an allen möglichen dunklen Orten herum, betreiben Schmuggel und Schwarzhandel, gefährden die Sicherheit der Bevölkerung, verbreiten Krankheiten und Laster aller Art.” Vockel to Adenauer, 18 November 1950, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 188.

<sup>19</sup> “Diese...Menschen führen also eine Art Schattendasein und stellen somit auch eine soziale Gefahr für die Öffentlichkeit dar.” *Spandauer Volksblatt*, January 29, 1955.

<sup>20</sup> Renate Wanstrat, *Strukturanalyse der politisch nicht anerkannten Flüchtlinge in West-Berlin, Teil I: Die Lagerinsassen* (Berlin: Osteuropa Instituts – FU Berlin, 1953); “Errichtung eines Aufnahmeheims für zugewanderte Obdachlose in Neukölln, Erlangerstr. 1-3,” Senator für Sozialwesen, July 5, 1951, LAB B Rep 009 Nr. 128.

of “Soviet Zone Refugee” (*Sowjetzonenflüchtlinge*) as a specific legal category in the Federal Expellee Law (*Bundesvertriebenengesetz*) of 1953.<sup>21</sup>

However, the decision on acceptance or rejection was still well in the future when refugees first crossed the border and arrived in West Berlin or West Germany. Despite the best attempts of the Allied occupation forces and later the East and West German states to control cross-border traffic, the borders between the various partitions and zones of postwar Germany were quite porous. Between 1945 and the summer of 1950 few direct actions were taken regarding refugees from the Soviet Zone/German Democratic Republic in the three Western zones. While permanent moves from one occupation zone to another required permission from the occupation authorities in both, most of those crossing into the American zone in the late 1940s were believed to be searching for food or trying to find or visit family members; U.S. military authorities estimated that only around two percent were fleeing Soviet or East German political pressure. Even so, fearing the economic impact of several thousand extra inhabitants, American occupation forces tried to control this migration by checking travel authorizations at the border and expelling anyone without explicit permission to move between zones.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, during the first half of 1947, U.S. forces detained around 100,000 individuals trying to enter Bavaria from the Soviet Zone; of these, 30,000 were granted permanent or temporary

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<sup>21</sup> Van Heuven Goedhart to Federal Republic of Germany, Feb. 10, 1953, Historical Archives of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, German Refugees, 769/15723, Vol. 1; Jacques Vernant, *The Refugee in the Postwar World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 92-98; Howard Sargent, “Diasporic Citizens: Germans Abroad in the Framing of German Citizenship Law,” in Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal and Nancy Reagin, eds., *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 31.

<sup>22</sup> Marguerite Higgins, “U.S. to return German Flood to Soviet Zone,” *New York Herald Tribune*, Jul. 24, 1947, 6.



passes, while the rest were sent back across the border. However, the military government noted that anti-Russian sentiment among German residents of the Western Zones meant that local authorities, at least in areas along the border, generally sympathized with those fleeing the Soviet Zone, and would sometimes issue residence permits before the Americans could arrest and expel them. Without any sort of registration procedure, it is unknown how many actually crossed the border, especially if they moved in with relatives or friends.

These restrictions could also be waived in certain circumstances: in 1947, the military government in the French Zone requested American permission to recruit laborers from among those border-crossers waiting to be expelled back to the Soviet Zone from the American Zone, in return for the repatriation of German POWs still being used as laborers in France.<sup>23</sup> Within Berlin, residents of the Soviet zone and Soviet sector of Berlin could travel freely, but required the permission of the Allied military government to move permanently to the western sectors, which was only granted in exceptional cases. However, this was difficult to fully control, as the occupation authorities relied on district residence offices to aid in enforcement. Only after the de facto division of Berlin in the fall of 1948, during the Soviet blockade of the western sectors, did the district residence offices begin to question individuals applying for residence permits regarding their political motives for moving from East to West Berlin, and consider classifying them as refugees.<sup>24</sup>

At the beginning of 1949, the office of Berlin's Senator for Social Affairs set up a Refugee Service (*Flüchtlingsdienst*) to register political refugees arriving in West Berlin. Recognition was at the

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<sup>23</sup> AG Cable CC-1233, "Infiltration of Germans from Soviet to U.S. Zone Germany." Aug 12, 1947; AG Cable W-85804, "French have made request..." Jul. 29, 1947, POW and DP Branch Files, OMGUS Civil Administration Division, RG 260, NARA.

<sup>24</sup> "Die rechtliche Entwicklung der Flüchtlingsaufnahme," p. 35-36. Senatsverwaltung für Kreditwesen, LAB B Rep 010-01 Nr. 317.

discretion of the officials in charge of the service, though there were no official guidelines for acceptance beyond a concern for those in political danger. On June 5, 1950, the Senator's office established explicit guidelines by an administrative order on the recognition of political refugees, allowing district-level officials to accept refugees on political grounds while specifically excluding those who cited "economic difficulties, criminal offenses or 'mild discomfort' as reasons for flight."<sup>25</sup> These limitations had an effect: during 1949; the Refugee Service estimated that 70,000 refugees registered during that year, of whom only 30,000 were accepted as political refugees, just under 43 percent. A similar proportion were recognized in 1950 (26,776 accepted out of 62,152 arrivals, also roughly 43 percent) though the percentage dropped in 1951, when only 16,808 were accepted out of 60,975 arrivals, less than 28 percent. This decrease may have been due to the shift in responsibility for refugee reception, which was taken over by the office of the Senator for the Interior in late 1950, in the hopes of establishing a more standardized and citywide recognition process.<sup>26</sup>

Refugee reception procedures in West Germany developed along similar lines. The primary transit camps for refugees in West Germany were at Uelzen, in Lower Saxony, and Giessen, in Hesse. Both of these camps had been established in the immediate postwar period by the occupation authorities – the British and American military governments, respectively – to house German expellees and manage their resettlement. During 1946 and into 1947 the camp at Uelzen, for example, was registering 6,000 expellees every day, a total of 1.3 million individuals passed through the facility in the first two years after the war's end. These camps were intended to be temporary: at Uelzen the British initially erected only eight semi-permanent wood barracks on a disused sports

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<sup>25</sup> "...wirtschaftliche Schwierigkeiten, strafbare Handlungen oder auch nur 'gemütsmäßiges Unbehagen' nicht als Fluchtgrund anerkannt werden konnten." Ibid, 36.

<sup>26</sup> Jahresbericht 1952, Senator für Sozialwesen, LAB B Rep 004 Nr. 39.

field, with the intention that most of the camp's inhabitants, up to 8,000 at any one time during the first few years, would occupy surplus tents provided by the British and Finnish armies. The camp at Giessen was of similar design: four residential barracks in 1949, with offices in a nearby hotel.<sup>27</sup> As the temporary camps became increasingly permanent in the following years, additional buildings were built; by 1958, a survey of the camp at Uelzen counted sixty wood-frame barracks, though several of these were used for offices and the entire camp only housed around 1,000 individuals.<sup>28</sup>

Responsibilities for both German and non-German refugees were transferred to the Federal Republic in 1949. However, both the American and British governments, via their Commissioners, continued to take an interest in the issue of the reception and integration of refugees into West German society, requesting that the Federal Government "discourage the further admission of large numbers of German refugees except for individuals seeking genuine political asylum."<sup>29</sup> Clearly, the impetus for control and registration was not limited to the West Germans. The camps at Giessen and Uelzen were well-placed to handle refugees crossing the border between East and West Germany, and more than 350,000 registered at the two camps between 1949 and the end of 1952, almost twice as many as the 190,000 who registered in West Berlin. Even the closure of the inter-German border by the German Democratic Republic in May 1952 did not completely cut off the two states: the comprehensive border defenses so evident in later decades were not developed immediately, and many displaced residents of the border zone moved directly to West Germany rather than be resettled in the east. The border closure did reduce the number of registrations, but

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<sup>27</sup> Bericht, Beauftragte für das Durchgangslager Giessen, Nov. 17, 1949, BAK B 106/4426.

<sup>28</sup> Notaufnahmелager Uelzen-Bohldamm: Einrichtung – Entwicklung – Aufgaben, Jan. 1, 1958, Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (NSHA) Nds 380 Acc. 30/96 Nr. 16.

<sup>29</sup> HICOG Policy Directive of Nov. 17, 1949, Folder 23, Records of the US Representative to the Combined Travel Board, Office of the US High Commissioner for Germany, RG 466, NARA.

refugees continued to arrive in both camps; in the eighteen months after the border closure, between the summer of 1952 and the end of 1953, the camps at Giessen and Uelzen combined to register more than 100,000 new refugees, about one quarter to the former and the remainder to the latter. By comparison, however, nearly 400,000 registered in West Berlin during this same time period.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, not all refugees registered immediately: Otto and Indura W. who left East Germany via the border between Brandenburg and Lower Saxony on March 26, 1954, did not register in Uelzen until June 16, perhaps indicating that refugees did not know what to do once they had arrived in West Germany.<sup>31</sup>

Both West German camps were located in smaller towns in rural areas near the inter-German border. This meant that they could adapt to fluctuations in the number of arrivals, expanding and contracting as needed, while still keeping all of the reception offices within a single complex. Until the summer of 1953, however, this was not the case in West Berlin, where the various offices were scattered throughout the districts of Charlottenburg and Wilmersdorf. This made the refugees' task in West Berlin significantly more complicated, as after their initial registration in the main reception center at 8 Kuno-Fischer-Strasse, they were expected to travel to the proper offices in succession. To facilitate this path, refugees were provided with a *Laufzettel*, a card with twelve to fifteen lines that would be stamped or signed by each separate office in the proper order. The process started with a medical examination, admission, and a police interview, followed by registration, further questioning and meetings with the Office for the Reception Process

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<sup>30</sup> "Übersicht über die Zuwanderer..." Bundesminister für Vertriebene, Nov. 5, 1953, LAB B Rep. 008 Nr. 101.

<sup>31</sup> Fluchtlingshilfe: Anträge auf Fluchtlingsausweise; Beschwerden und Verwaltungstreitsachen, NSHA Nds 120 Hannover Acc. 98/85 Nr. 2/10.

at Kaiserdamm 85. Further appointments at Fehrbelliner Platz, Meerscheidtstrasse and Bredtschneiderstrasse were necessary to complete the card; the final stop was the transport office, which arranged for transportation out of the city to West Germany. A small consolation: refugees were provided with free public transportation on West Berlin's subways, rail lines and busses for the duration of their stay in the city. However, one of the drawbacks of this situation was the length of time required to complete all of the steps; during the spring of 1953, most refugees could expect to spend three to four weeks shuttling between interviews and hearings in West Berlin, and upwards of a month for more complex cases.<sup>32</sup> Even when the number of refugees declined during the second half of the decade, the average stay in West Berlin remained largely the same: averaging twenty-one days in 1956, and twenty-four in 1958.<sup>33</sup>

Even before the Federal Republic took over the responsibility of refugee reception in West Berlin on February 4, 1952, plans were underway to replace these dispersed offices with one centralized processing center that would receive refugees and shepherd them through the reception procedure, while providing housing for nearly two thousand individuals. The proposed facility was modeled on the existing federally-operated camps at Giessen and Uelzen, and the Federal Republic agreed to cover 85 percent of construction costs, estimated at 2.5 million DM. Initial plans focused on an unused plot of land on Daumstrasse, near central Spandau, north of the industrial district of Siemensstadt. The location was several kilometers from West Berlin's borders with the German Democratic Republic – with the nearest border downstream and across the Havel River – which

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<sup>32</sup> Laufzettel, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 101; "Prozedur der Flüchtlingsaufnahme," Senator für Sozialwesen, Mar. 18, 1953, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 155.

<sup>33</sup> "Halbjahresbericht über die Entwicklung der Berliner Flüchtlingssituation, 1. Halbjahr 1958" Senator für Arbeit und Sozialwesen, BAK B 136/2722.

planners thought to be far enough from East Berlin that all but the most determined refugees would be discouraged from arriving. As the land was already owned by the city of Berlin, there were no barriers to utilizing the entire ten-hectare site: construction plans included thirty barracks, a hospital wing, common areas, and several office buildings.<sup>34</sup> However, the district council of Spandau initially protested this decision, arguing that the location was too close to an already-existing youth home, and that the Senate had not sought its approval before publicizing the project.<sup>35</sup> Also working against the Spandau site was the lack of available land for any expansion of the camp, along with concerns that the ground, located between the Havel and a shipping canal, would not support the planned three to four story buildings.<sup>36</sup> The Senate and representatives of the Federal Republic subsequently reviewed several other proposed sites in Zehlendorf (Quantstrasse), Steglitz (Leydenallee) and Lichtenrade (Steinstrasse) before settling on the Marienfelde location in the spring of 1952. Much like the Spandau site, the land was publicly owned (by the Federal Republic as the legal successor to the former German *Reich*), a key benefit. It was also slightly further from the sector boundaries, though not separated from them by any natural features, as the Spandau site had been.<sup>37</sup> It was also closer to public transportation, being only five hundred meters from a *Stadtbahn* station,

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<sup>34</sup> “Errichtung eines Auffangslagers für politische Flüchtlinge im Verwaltungsbezirk Spandau, Haselhors, Daumstr.” Senatsvorlage Nr. 1171, Dec. 3, 1951, LAB B Rep 009 Nr. 128.

<sup>35</sup> “Zentrales Flüchtlingshem geplant,” Berliner Anzeiger, Sept. 20, 1951.

<sup>36</sup> The district of Spandau seemed to have been among the least cooperative in West Berlin on refugee matters. In 1954, the district again complained that its percentage of refugees – 21.9 percent of the entire West Berlin total were living in the district – exceeded its share of the total West Berlin population, which was around 7.5 percent, and asked the municipal government to reconsider the placement of another transit camp. Entwicklung der Flüchtlingssituation in Spandau, Oct. 26, 1954, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 105.

<sup>37</sup> “Errichtung des Durchgangslagers (Notaufnahmелager) für politische Flüchtlinge im Verwaltungsbezirk Tempelhof-Marienfelde, Marienfelder Allee,” May 5, 1952, LAB B Rep 009 Nr. 128.

another major shortcoming of several proposed sites. This was an important consideration, and not only for the sake of the incoming refugees; the buildings were also designed to be converted into apartments once they were no longer needed to house refugees.<sup>38</sup>

Following their initial registration, refugees arriving in any reception camp, whether in West Berlin, Giessen or Uelzen, followed the same basic steps in the reception process, starting with the medical exam. Given the close quarters in the refugee camps and residences, this was an area of primary concern: the medical service was the only segment of the reception process that was staffed 24 hours per day, using three shifts of doctors, so that even refugees arriving late in the evening could be examined before being assigned to a refugee camp for the night.<sup>39</sup> Refugees showing disease symptoms were moved to a quarantine center or hospital, a stop that could add several weeks to their stay in the reception system. Refugees seeking to leave West Berlin also required a clean bill of health before they were allowed onto flights to West Germany, and the city's district health offices were instructed to be vigilant about the possibility of forged health certificates, especially those that labeled refugees as 'able to fly' (*flugfähig*).<sup>40</sup> Even so, medical screenings were not completely effective: throughout the period, West Berlin officials worked to maintain a surplus of hospital beds in both internal medicine and infectious disease wards, while periodic outbreaks of infectious disease

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<sup>38</sup> Donner, 47.

<sup>39</sup> "Die rechtliche Entwicklung der Flüchtlingsaufnahme," p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> Senator für Gesundheitswesen to Bezirksgesundheitsämter, Mar. 23, 1953, LAB B Rep 012 Nr. 190.

in East Berlin – including diphtheria in 1953 and dysentery in 1959 – necessitated the employment of disinfection specialists in the various camps.<sup>41</sup>

The 1949 reorganization of the medical service in the camp at Uelzen gives a sense of the importance of health facilities to the reception process. The office was not only responsible for the medical screening of refugees both on their arrival in the camp and before their departure for resettlement elsewhere in West Germany, but also the general cleanliness of the camp and medical care for sick residents, including children and infants. For this purpose, the thousand-resident camp was provided with two infirmaries, with space for 55 adults and 32 children, along with a quarantine room for refugees with infectious diseases, a pharmacy, clinical laboratory and x-ray and delousing stations. The entire operation employed 27 individuals, including doctors, nurses, and technicians. Even so, the head doctor of the medical service was still forced to lobby the Health Ministry of Lower Saxony for a grant to set up screening for gonorrhea, naturally “for the protection of the West German population.”<sup>42</sup>

In the West German camps as well as West Berlin, tuberculosis was a particular concern for officials and organizations trying to safeguard public health. In the spring of 1953, the German Red Cross-Berlin (DRK-B) opened a special hospital for refugees with active tuberculosis symptoms at Friedrich-Wilhelm-Strasse 79 in the district of Tempelhof. This facility provided between sixty and eighty beds, and while the organization reported that upkeep costs were somewhat higher than the average refugee camp or hospital, the DRK-B did not discriminate between recognized and

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<sup>41</sup> Schröder to Conrad (Senator für Gesundheitswesen), Jan. 13, 1953, LAB B Rep 012 Nr. 190; Exner (Senator für Arbeit und Sozialwesen) to Amtsarzt, Gesundheitsamt, Bezirksamt Tempelhof, Nov. 9, 1959. LAB B Rep 213 Nr. 1374.

<sup>42</sup> “Aufgaben und Tätigkeit der Hauptverwaltung Gesundheitsdienst,” Zentrales Flüchtlingslager Uelzen-Bohldamm, Nov. 14, 1949, BAK B 106/4426.



unrecognized refugees. Patients at the hospital were provided with “improved” rations over that supplied in the camps – an additional 750 milliliters of milk daily, and real butter instead of margarine – along with a higher standard of personal comfort, specialized therapies, and more stringent sanitation requirements.<sup>43</sup>

However, tuberculosis was not the only disease that gave the authorities reasons to worry. Following the opening of the hospital for tuberculosis patients, the president of the DRK-B, Dr. Dietrich Bloss, sought further assistance from Berlin’s Department of Social Affairs to open a similar facility for the treatment of refugee children, focusing on common childhood infectious diseases like scarlet fever, measles and whooping cough. Bloss’s proposal was partly a reaction to the outbreak of sixty to seventy cases of measles in June 1953 at a large (3500-bed) privately funded (i.e. not operated directly by West Berlin) camp for refugee families at the corner of Siegfriedstrasse and Oderstrasse in Neukölln. The doctor assigned to this camp by the Senator for Social Affairs recommended that a separate location be set up to isolate these children: the regular hospitals were not equipped to handle additional cases of measles, and keeping ill children in close quarters, even with their families, was a danger to other children.<sup>44</sup> No sooner had this facility been set up than the office of the Senator for Social Affairs proposed to use it for children afflicted with other diseases, including polio and bronchitis, along with those suffering from rickets and other nutritional disorders. In response, the DRK-B offered to open a second home for non-infectious refugee children. Within a few months, four separate facilities had opened in outlying districts to treat sick

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<sup>43</sup> Bloss to Bach (Senator für Sozialwesen), Apr. 17, 1953, LAB B Rep 012 Nr. 190. Tuberculosis was still a common, though not a leading, cause of death in West Germany during this period, with around 20,000 deaths from the disease annually in the immediate postwar years, a fatality rate that was cut in half by the late 1950s. See “TB Declining” *The Bulletin*, Sept. 23, 1958.

<sup>44</sup> Mäuser to Bach, June 14, 1953, LAB B Rep 012 Nr. 190.

refugee children, including two in Grunewald, another in Zehlendorf, and a fourth in Frohnau; by November, all were nearly full.<sup>45</sup> It is possible that some refugees may have been parents of young children hoping for better medical care in West Berlin than they could get in East Berlin or the German Democratic Republic; even if their applications for refugee status were rejected, it is possible that the delay of several weeks may have allowed enough time for treatment. A significant percentage of juvenile patients treated in West Berlin hospitals for common childhood diseases were also refugees, including 94 percent of the measles and chicken pox cases recorded in the first six months of 1953. With some diseases, refugee children were also more likely to develop complications: again, in the first six months of 1953, refugee children with scarlet fever were nearly twice as likely, and those with diphtheria were five times more likely than non-refugee children, to develop potentially fatal complications.<sup>46</sup>

While the medical examinations were a clear response to the problems of sanitation and disease created by the concentration of people in mass quarters, the next step in the process was the result of the specific situation in Cold War Germany: a gauntlet of interviews with police, political and intelligence agencies, including those of the three Western allies. While the latter were only required by occupation statute for all new arrivals that had spent more than three months in East Germany or another Communist country, in practice this meant that all incoming refugees had to go through the process. Until the consolidation of the West Berlin reception procedure at Marienfelde, refugees exiting the medical exam with a clean bill of health would be bussed directly to the Allies' security office for these interviews, which served a two-fold purpose: to separate out any

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<sup>45</sup> Bach (Senator für Sozialwesen) to Blos, Aug. 6, 1953, Oct. 3, 1953, Nov. 3, 1953; Blos to Bach (Senator für Sozialwesen), Aug. 15, 1953, LAB B Rep 012 Nr. 190.

<sup>46</sup> Gesundheitsstatistik, 1.1-31.7.1953, Senator für Gesundheit, LAB B Rep 009 Nr. 128.

potentially dangerous individuals and to gain information on conditions on the other side of the border. The former classification included not only possible agents and saboteurs, but also criminals fleeing legitimate prosecution in the German Democratic Republic and individuals re-registering as refugees after having already returned once to East Germany. Refugees carrying identification papers issued by the German Democratic Republic also had to give them up; they were given a receipt in case they wished to return to East Germany; those without identification, or found with falsified papers, went through a second, more thorough police screening.<sup>47</sup>

Names were also checked against a master “blacklist” of individuals whose movements were to be restricted for political or security-related reasons. This list was maintained by the Combined Travel Board, comprised of representatives of the occupying powers, and was tabulated by IBM punchcards, so that revised lists could be compiled and distributed to reception offices in West Berlin and each individual Land every week.<sup>48</sup> This was an important segment of the refugee registration process: fears of subversion and sabotage directed by the East German government against West Berlin and West Germany were a consistent theme in the West German press, sometimes using information provided by the Federal Government. The repetition of such charges provided popular support for the continued focus on registering and controlling incoming refugees, even during the late 1950s, when acceptance rates neared 99 percent.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> “Die rechtliche Entwicklung der Flüchtlingsaufnahme,” p. 38; Vortisch to Polizeipräsidium, Abt. II, “Behandlung der kriminellen Elemente, Agenten...” Mar. 14, 1951, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 189.

<sup>48</sup> Speech delivered by Jean J. Chenard, Director-General (US) of the Combined Travel Board, before a Meeting of Reserve Officers in Germany, 1952, Records of the US Representative to the Combined Travel Board, Office of the US High Commissioner for Germany, RG 466, NARA.

<sup>49</sup> “See, for example, “Ostberlin – Basis der östlichen Spionage,” *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, Jun. 23, 1960 and “Die Bundesregierung legt Zahlenmaterial über die Untergrundtätigkeit des Ostens vor,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Sept. 9, 1960.

For the American occupation forces in Europe, refugee interrogations and interviews also provided one of the few sources of intelligence on border defenses and conditions in East Germany and other Communist states, particularly given the ineffectiveness of other forms of intelligence gathering (such as the intelligence operatives attached to the U.S. military liaison to Soviet forces), and despite the increasing unwillingness of German and Austrian authorities to allow overt intelligence collection among border crossers. All refugees were screened upon arrival, but only those deemed to be useful intelligence sources received a more thorough debriefing. This was a rare occurrence: the West German government estimated that only six percent of refugees actually provided useful intelligence.<sup>50</sup> However, given the hundreds of thousands of refugees interviewed over the course of the decade, even such a small percentage could be considered a significant source of information. The U.S. Army Historical Division report for 1951 discusses efforts made during that year to consolidate the existing system for interviewing recent border crossers. Previously, the refugees had been questioned in succession by several different intelligence agencies and military units (e.g. the CIA, Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC), representatives of the High Commissioner, and the Military Police Customs Unit), a process that could take several days, and required refugees to repeat their stories multiple times. The new system required that the first organization to interview a particular refugee send a report and an identification card to a central file, so that other interested agencies could arrange subsequent interviews. In the eyes of the Historical Division, this was a more efficient system. However, this change – and access to the central card file – only applied

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Maddrell, *Spying on Science: Western Intelligence in Divided Germany 1945-1961* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 56.

to American organizations; British, French or West German efforts were carried out independently.<sup>51</sup>

Going beyond passive information-gathering, the CIC, one of the primary American intelligence agencies operating in West Berlin and along the inter-German border, also recruited some border-crossers for more in-depth activities, including remigration for the purposes of further intelligence collection or convincing others to defect. Internal CIC documents noted that ideal candidates for this remigration would be residents of East Berlin, who were allowed a greater freedom of movement and were likely to have a more thorough knowledge of the city's layout.<sup>52</sup> Given the widespread perception that both sides engaged in similar activities, such interests were something of an open secret, though this did not prevent complaints about the role of the Americans, and to a lesser extent the British and French, in the ostensibly German-run reception process.<sup>53</sup>

Writing in 1959, the Swedish journalist Jörn Donner noted that there were so many agencies operating in West Berlin – more than eighty by his estimation – that intelligence gathering was something of a competitive sport. In an interview with Donner, Berlin's Senator for Internal Affairs, Jochim Lipschitz, confirmed that his office had opened an investigation into the various Western intelligence agencies, even as he believed that their Soviet and East German counterparts

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<sup>51</sup> Historical Division, U.S. Army Europe, *Annual Historical Summary 1951*, pp. 163, Records of the United States Army, Europe, RG 549; NARA.

<sup>52</sup> "Staff Visit to the 430th CIC Detachment, April 10-11, 1952," 430th CIC Detachment Operational reports; "Recruitment of Peripheral SFS Sources, Nov. 22, 1955" CIC Policy Directives Re: SFS/MFS, Investigative Records Repository, Counter Intelligence Corps Collection, Records of the Army General Staff, RG 319, NARA.

<sup>53</sup> "Protest gegen die Flüchtlingsverhöre in den Lagern," *Bild*, Oct. 7, 1958, 1.

outnumbered Western operatives ten or fifteen to one.<sup>54</sup> American intelligence agencies complained about such interference and restrictions from various West German authorities, especially in relation to refugee interrogations: in one instance, the government of Hesse prohibited the Americans from interviewing refugees before their registration with German authorities in Giessen, even if they were picked up by American forces guarding the border. Such actions were within the terms of the various agreements between the United States and the Federal Republic, but the West German government did not always notify the *Länder* of these agreements. American internal reports, however, repeated the concerns expressed by Dörn and Lipschitz: the number of agencies and organizations involved in intelligence work “gave an appearance of multiplicity and confusion of effort to some German officials, especially to those who were unfamiliar with the technical details of intelligence and security work.”<sup>55</sup>

Only after the medical and intelligence screenings did incoming refugees truly enter the reception procedure, the series of interviews and hearings that would determine whether they would be accepted as recognized refugees and provided with resettlement in West Germany. Around one half of one percent of all refugees arriving in West Berlin, at least, were citizens of other Eastern European countries, and were thus not eligible for welfare support from West Berlin or West Germany; however, many of these were transferred to the United States Escapee Program (USEP). West Berlin’s welfare service provided basic services to those who qualified, including changes of clothing, allowances for food, and assistance in locating family members. This was followed by a series of interviews to determine first whether or not newcomers could be admitted to West

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<sup>54</sup> Donner, 77.

<sup>55</sup> Historical Division, U.S. Army, Europe, *Annual Historical Summary 1956*, pp. 130-132, 136-137, Records of the US Army, Europe (USAREUR), RG 549; NARA, College Park, MD.

Germany as recognized refugees, and second, where they could be employed and resettled at the end of the process. Before West Berlin's adoption of the Federal Emergency Reception Procedure on February 4, 1952, this process was different in West Berlin and the West German reception camps at Giessen and Uelzen. In the latter, refugees began with a preliminary interview, stating their personal history and reasons for flight. They also received an identification number and established a file that would follow them through the reception process. More complicated cases could be referred to a second preliminary interview; officials could check the records of various party and advisory organizations that kept track of the political careers of thousands of East Germans connected with the SED and East German government.<sup>56</sup>

At this point, incoming refugees were also separated demographically: families with young children from those with older or without children, groups travelling together from individuals, single males from single females. Many of the refugee camps in West Berlin specialized in housing specific groups, and some refugees were transferred to special reception tracks. In West Berlin, unaccompanied minors (from adolescence through the age of twenty-four) were originally sent back to East Germany; it was believed that they were merely looking for an adventure, not fleeing political persecution. However, by 1952, press reports from the refugee camps indicated that many of these youths did fear conscription into the East German military, police forces and labor service.<sup>57</sup> Following a public outcry, minors began to be segregated by gender in special camps, essentially state-operated orphanages, until they could find apprenticeships. One of these, in the far western

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<sup>56</sup> "Die rechtliche Entwicklung der Flüchtlingsaufnahme," p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> "Angst vor Volkspolizei und Arbeitsdienst," *Badische Zeitung*, Sept. 22, 1952; Radetzky to Landesflüchtlingsverwaltungen, "Begriff der „minderjährigen“ Kinder," Aug. 3, 1956, BAK B 137/83.

suburb of Kladow, housed hundreds of boys, sleeping in 80-bed dormitories while waiting for an opportunity to move to West Germany.<sup>58</sup> In the later part of the decade, youths like these were flown directly to camps at Sandbostel, Westertimke and Friedland, all in northern Lower Saxony, where they went through an abbreviated version of the reception process. In part, this was a response to the belief that younger refugees were more vulnerable to being convinced to return to East Germany; given that they had only known the Nazi and communist systems while growing up, they did not have the ability to make “a mature political judgment about dictatorship and democracy.”<sup>59</sup>

The majority of refugees, families and single adults, continued from the preliminary interviews to schedule an appointment with the reception committee. Depending on the volume of new arrivals, at least three to four days could elapse between the initial registration, the committee hearing, and the committee’s judgment on whether a refugee would be accepted or rejected. Members of the three-person committees were often former refugees themselves; they were at least supposed to have a good knowledge of political conditions in East Germany, though this did not always guarantee impartiality. Hearings for individual refugees generally lasted twenty to thirty minutes, though they could be longer if additional expert testimony was required to determine a refugee’s credibility. Following the hearing, the committees might take several days to determine whether or not a refugee would be recognized. This was the central decision of the entire process, and those accepted as genuine refugees were significantly closer to resettlement and employment in West Berlin and West Germany. Those rejected, however, still had the opportunity to appeal the

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<sup>58</sup> Liang, 101-103.

<sup>59</sup> “...ein reifes politisches Urteil über Diktatur und Demokratie haben.” “Die rechtliche Entwicklung der Flüchtlingsaufnahme,” p. 40; *Nahm to Landesflüchtlingsverwaltungen*, Aug. 1, 1961, NSHA Nds 380 Acc. 62a/65 Nr. 424.



decision within fourteen days, at a hearing with a five-member appeals committee. Here they could restate their reasons for flight and ask the appeals committee to reassess aspects of the case that the original committee may have overlooked. A second rejection at this stage in the process was final. However, rejected refugees could continue to live in the camps, and while they could no longer claim the special welfare benefits for refugees, they could still rely on other forms of welfare, including food assistance and a small monthly allowance.<sup>60</sup> This decision process also employed quite a few people. In 1951, five to six thousand refugees per month were passing through the camp at Uelzen, which had a staff of thirty-two federal employees: seven preliminary interviewers, five reception committees, and two appeals committees. The operation at Giessen was only slightly smaller, with around four thousand refugees arriving every month and nineteen officials involved in the reception process.<sup>61</sup>

In West Berlin, the Senator for Social Affairs had already established a refugee service in 1949, intended to register and provide for former residents of the Soviet Zone and Soviet Sector of Berlin then living in the Western sectors, under the authority of municipal welfare laws dating from 1924.<sup>62</sup> By the terms of the Law for the Recognition of Political Refugees,<sup>63</sup> passed on September 30, 1950, the West Berlin House of Representatives transferred the responsibility for screening incoming refugees to the office of the Senator of the Interior, although responsibility for their

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<sup>60</sup> "Die rechtliche Entwicklung der Flüchtlingsaufnahme," p. 40; Johann Christoph Hampe, "Fluchtstation Berlin," *Sonntagsblatt* (Hamburg), Dec. 4, 1955.

<sup>61</sup> Wilhelm Schulz, "Bericht über meine Dienstreise nach Bonn, Giessen u. Uelzen in der Zeit vom 18.-26. Apr. 1951," LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 188.

<sup>62</sup> The Verordnung über die Fürsorgepflicht vom 13.2.1924. See "Errichtung eines Aufnahmeheims für zugewanderte Obdachlose in Neukölln, Erlangerstr. 1-3," Senator für Sozialwesen, July 5, 1951, LAB B Rep 009 Nr. 128.

<sup>63</sup> Gesetz über die Anerkennung politischer Flüchtlinge.

welfare remained with the office of the Senator for Social Affairs. For the purpose of determining whether refugees were legitimate, this law established refugee commissions to review individual cases and make the final determinations on acceptance or rejection. These three-person commissions were comprised of individuals nominated by the major political parties in proportion to their fractions in the West Berlin House of Representatives, with at least two parties represented on every panel. No specific qualifications required of any appointee, though a few had legal training and many were former residents of the Soviet Zone. At any one time, there were several dozen rotating members of the commissions, each drawing a monthly salary of 300 to 400 DM (15 DM per full day of work). As with the committees at the Federal camps in Giessen and Uelzen, West Berlin's refugee commissioners reviewed the case of each individual or family and determined whether they were to be accepted or rejected under the city's reception law. However, unlike the Federal procedure, West Berlin had no appeals process: the commissions' decisions were final and refugees were not given a second chance to make their case.<sup>64</sup>

The commissions quickly wore out their welcome; within months of their establishment doubts began to be raised about whether the process was fair and objective, and whether the personal histories of the commissioners should disqualify them from the job. Several were allegedly former members of the Nazi party, and at least one was accused of avoiding denazification altogether. Others, themselves refugees from the East and often former members of the eastern CDU or SPD, were accused of having ties to the Communist government. The commissions were also plagued by an inability to anticipate increasing numbers of refugees; from nine active commissions in the fall of 1950, the program was slowly expanded to fifteen by early 1952, even though each increase in the

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<sup>64</sup> Flüchtlingskommissionen, Senator für Sozialwesen, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 143.

number of commissions required the appointment of additional commissioners by the House of Representatives. This was a slow, politically-charged process; consequently, refugees in West Berlin often found their commission hearings postponed multiple times.<sup>65</sup>

In sixteen months under the commissions, between October 1950 and February 1952, 190,000 individuals registered as prospective refugees in West Berlin; of these, only 75,000 were accepted, with more than 110,000 left as unrecognized.<sup>66</sup> While West Berlin adopted the Federal reception procedure, including the appeals process, for refugees arriving after February 4, 1952, those rejected under the previous system still had no recourse; for the next two years or more, they would continue to inhabit a legal gray area, only being allowed to request rescreening under the new procedure in 1954. West Berlin's adoption of the Federal procedure also meant replacing the party-political refugee commissions with committees appointed by the Federal Minister for All-German Affairs, along the model set down in the camps in Giessen and Uelzen.<sup>67</sup> Like the commissions, these were comprised of three members, most of whom had some legal training and were former East German refugees themselves, though not necessarily Berliners. By the end of 1953, there were sixty-five separate reception committees based in the city, with several dozen others at the West German camps.<sup>68</sup>

This change was not the end of controversy over the reception process, nor over the ratio of accepted to rejected refugees, though it occurred just in time for West Berlin's greatest challenge

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<sup>65</sup> "Kampf des politischen Flüchtlings um Anerkennung," *Der Kurier* (Berlin), Sept. 21, 1951.

<sup>66</sup> Senator für Sozialwesen, *Flüchtlingsbewegung nach West-Berlin seit Inkrafttreten des Bundesnotaufnahmegesetz*, 30 May 1952, LAB B Rep 004 Nr. 39.

<sup>67</sup> *Flüchtlinge überfluten die Insel Berlin: Denkschrift des Senats von Berlin*, Feb. 6, 1953, 34.

<sup>68</sup> *Handbook of German Affairs* (Washington, DC: Press Office, German Diplomatic Mission, 1954), 103.

during the entire decade of refugee registration: the dramatic increase in refugee arrivals in 1952 early 1953. This increase was partly a result of the closing of the inter-German border in May 1952, which led to the belief that the border between East and West Berlin would soon follow, as well as forced collectivization of private farms and the raising of labor norms in factories. At the high point of this influx, between January and June, over 223,000 new refugees arrived in West Berlin, nearly doubling the 113,000 that arrived during the entire year of 1952. Arrivals peaked in late February and early March, when more than four thousand refugees were registering every day. By comparison, during the same time period, the West German camps at Giessen and Uelzen combined to register fewer than 7500 new refugees. Even with federal assistance, the city was not prepared to house or care for more than a fraction of these new refugees. As a result, the reception committees were forced to expedite the recognition process and ensure that as many newcomers as possible could be flown to West Germany, where the camps at least had room to expand. Interviews and hearings were shortened, and the reception committees were pressured to make quicker decisions. As a result, rejection rates fell from an average of thirty percent in 1952 to just six percent for the first half of 1953.<sup>69</sup>

While this experience demonstrated the volatility of the refugee situation in West Berlin, it also led to few permanent changes in the process for receiving new refugees. Indeed, as the number of new arrivals declined sharply through the summer of 1953 and early 1954 – after October 1953, the monthly number of new arrivals did not again exceed 25,000 until the summer of 1955 – proposals to tighten the criteria for acceptance were considered at the federal and municipal level.

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<sup>69</sup> BMV, Referat I/2a, “Übersicht über die Zuwanderer...,” 5 November 1953, LAB B Rep. 008 Nr. 101

For the first few months, though, rejection rates remained comparatively low, peaking at ten to fifteen percent.<sup>70</sup>

The previously rejected refugees still living in West Berlin also stood to benefit from the critical situation in the refugee camps during the first few months of 1953. On March fourth, the Senator of the Interior wrote to the Senator for Social Affairs proposing an abbreviated reception procedure for ten thousand previously rejected refugees, even though this total would add to the already overburdened air services to West Germany.<sup>71</sup> The Federal Ministry for Expellees subsequently notified West Berlin authorities that any refugees who had accepted jobs in West Germany would be given a retroactive acceptance and flown to their new place of employment, arguing that anyone able and willing to work would quickly find jobs in the Federal Republic.<sup>72</sup> During the second half of 1953, several thousand refugees rejected under the federal reception procedure in 1952 were recognized and sent to West Germany. None of these offers, however, applied to the hundred thousand refugees rejected under West Berlin's refugee commissions, most of whom remained in the city's refugee camps.<sup>73</sup>

At the beginning of March 1954, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia declared that, due to a shortage of building materials, it could not continue building permanent refugee housing and therefore could not receive any additional refugees in its already-crowded transit camps. As the

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<sup>70</sup> "Erwägungen über eine Verlagerung des Notaufnahmeverfahrens nach dem Bundesgebiet," Senator für Sozialwesen, 31 August 1954, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 105.

<sup>71</sup> Müller, Senator für Inneres, to Bach, Senator für Sozialwesen, 4 March 1953, LAB B Rep 004 Nr. 53.

<sup>72</sup> Senteck, BMV, to Zimmer, Bundenotaufnahmeverfahrens Berlin, 7 March 1953, BAK B 150/6375.

<sup>73</sup> "Die Berliner Flüchtlingssituation, Anfang Dezember 1953", Senator für Sozialwesen, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 101.

largest state in West Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia had received more than half of the refugees resettled during the previous four years. This led to renewed efforts to limit the number of refugees accepted via the Federal reception procedure, and the percentage of rejections in Berlin rose from thirteen percent in October 1953 to twenty-five percent in March 1954 and over forty percent in the first two weeks of April.<sup>74</sup> However, at the same time, many in West Berlin and the federal republic seem to have realized that the continued rejection of refugees was not an effective strategy for limiting the number of arrivals. Rejection rates declined quickly beginning in May, and remained low during the spring of 1955, when the numbers of refugees arriving in West Berlin increased yet again.<sup>75</sup>

In January 1954, the Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims confirmed its support for the retroactive legalization of rejected refugees who had resided in West Berlin or West Germany for more than six months, arguing that this step “would induce these shadowy individuals to leave their nomadic lives and find steady work.”<sup>76</sup> Previously rejected refugees deemed ‘safe’ by the authorities – i.e. not criminals or former SED members – were allowed to begin the process of reapplying for asylum in the fall of 1954.<sup>77</sup> However, there was little agreement between the federal government, the West German *Länder*, or the municipal authorities in West Berlin on

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<sup>74</sup> “Konsequenzen der Notaufnahme-Verschärfung,” Senator für Arbeit und Sozialwesen, 30 April 1954, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 105.

<sup>75</sup> “Jahresbericht über die Entwicklung der Berliner Flüchtlingssituation im Jahre 1955,” LAB B Rep 002 Nr. 8943.

<sup>76</sup> “...dieser lichtscheuen Personen dazu veranlassen wird, ihr Wanderleben aufzugeben und wieder einer geregelten Arbeit nachzugehen.” Zdralek, BMV to Bundespräsidialamt, 25 January 1954, BAK B 122/2091; Peters (Wiederaufbauminister Nordrhein-Westfal) to Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, June 25, 1954, BAK B 134/524.

<sup>77</sup> “Hoffnungsstrahl für ‘Illegale’”, *Das Telegraf* (Berlin), 25 September 1954.

how to proceed with this task. In many parts of West Germany, recognized refugees flown out of Berlin in early 1953 were still living in camps, waiting for the completion of more permanent housing; any additional refugees would only add to this population. During the second half of 1954, around fourteen hundred of these previously-rejected refugees were able to find employment in West Germany with the help of the various state labor administrations (*Länderarbeitsverwaltungen*): 932 men as metalworkers and tailors and 466 women as domestic servants.<sup>78</sup> Only in the summer of 1955 were the refugee ministers of the various state governments ready to approve a larger-scale investment of 150 million marks for additional housing construction and the resettlement of six thousand work-ready (*arbeitsfähig*) refugees, along with an additional six thousand dependents, out of West Berlin.<sup>79</sup>

By 1955, many of the rejected refugees had been living in West Berlin's refugee camps for several years. However, even refugees who had been accepted for resettlement could spend weeks or months in refugee camps waiting to be flown from West Berlin to West Germany, moved into a secondary transit camp, or provided with an apartment or house of their own, depending on the complexity of individual cases and the time of year. Some, at most twenty to thirty percent, were able to rely on relatives or acquaintances to provide a place to stay, but the majority did not have that option.<sup>80</sup> Following the judgment of the reception committee, working-age refugees who had been granted asylum entered another round of interviews, with the representatives of the West German *Länder* and West Berlin, to determine where they would be resettled and, often, employed.

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<sup>78</sup> "Jahresbericht über die Entwicklung der Berliner Flüchtlingssituation im Jahre 1954: Arbeitsvermittlung für abgelehnte Flüchtlinge," LAB B Rep 002 Nr. 8943.

<sup>79</sup> Kurzprotokoll, Konferenz der Flüchtlingsminister der Länder, 23 June 1955, Bonn, BAK B 134/524; Berlin, *Neue Zeitung*, 13 July 1955.

<sup>80</sup> "Der Strom der Flüchtlinge," 6.

Refugees were given some input regarding their final destination, but the decision was often dependent on the availability of jobs and housing (see chapter 3). Families were expected to accompany a primary earner – generally a father, though many women with young children had been widowed during the war – but seem to have spent longer periods in camps waiting for adequate housing to be constructed. Those staying in West Berlin, by agreement four percent of new arrivals, but often more in practice, were given their West Berlin identification papers and were thus allowed to live and find work in the city, though with the pace of residential construction in the city, many continued to live in the camps for months or years. Those refugees assigned to West Germany only needed to wait for their turn to be flown out of West Berlin or bussed from Giessen and Uelzen, though like the West Berliners, many would live for several months in transit camps in the various *Länder*, again waiting on the establishment of new jobs or apartment construction.<sup>81</sup> After the passage of the Federal Expellee Law of 1953, which provided special benefits to expellees, refugees who were not originally from the former German territories east of the postwar borders, and thus did not qualify as expellees, were given identification papers marked with a ‘C,’ which allowed them similar privileges within West Berlin’s social welfare system.<sup>82</sup>

In the meantime, refugees, both recognized and unrecognized, continued to live in mass quarters. In Berlin, the refugee camps – a misnomer in this case, as most were situated in disused commercial and industrial buildings – were operated by the city, charitable organizations like the German Red Cross or religious foundations like *Caritas* (Roman Catholic) and *Evangelische*

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<sup>81</sup> “Die rechtliche Entwicklung der Flüchtlingsaufnahme,” p. 40.

<sup>82</sup> “Rechtsstellung von Zuwanderern aus der Sowjetzone,” Mar. 9, 1954, BMVFK, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 105; “Der Flüchtlingsausweis ‘C’,” *Unser Kampf – Unsere Arbeit: Mitteilungsblatt der VPO*, Nov. 1953. Filed in BAK B 137/197.



*Hilfswerk* (Protestant). In these locations, it was common for one or two families to share a single room, while single individuals were accommodated in large barrack-like rooms. In February 1952, the city counted forty-seven separate camps, with around six thousand individual places. As the number of refugees registering in West Berlin increased through that year and into 1953, more camps were opened. Within a year, twenty-eight new camps had opened, increasing the total camp capacity across the city to 32,000 refugees.<sup>83</sup> Ernst Reuter, at the time Mayor of West Berlin, also suggested that empty buildings could be seized by the city to house additional refugees in an emergency.<sup>84</sup> In some areas, municipal buildings could be converted into refugee housing, as was the case with the former garage for street-sweepers on Erlangerstrasse in Neukölln that was converted, at a cost of nearly 50,000 DM, to house 250 individuals. Other refugees were housed in barracks in Borsigwalde that were formerly occupied by foreign forced laborers during the Second World War.<sup>85</sup>

One of the largest camps in West Berlin was located in the former military quartermaster depot at 156 Askaniering in Spandau, operated by the private organization “Bund für Freiheit und Recht.” The building had beds for three thousand refugees: ten large rooms, with space for 150-200 individuals each, and forty-five smaller, twenty-person rooms. The Askaniering camp also had its own hundred-bed hospital and a separate kindergarten for refugee children, and was staffed by fifty full-time employees, including cooks, doctors, nurses, and a teacher. However, such locations were rare, and smaller camps played an important role. The camp “Seebad Mariendorf,” operated by Margarete Hilgner, the property owner, had 456 beds in twelve rooms, the largest being able to

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<sup>83</sup> *Flüchtlinge überfluten die Insel Berlin: Denkschrift des Senats von Berlin*, Feb. 6, 1953.

<sup>84</sup> “Record 5,000 Flee to West in Single Day,” *New York Herald Tribune*, Mar. 3, 1953.

<sup>85</sup> “Errichtung eines Aufnahmeheims für zugewanderte Obdachlose in Neukölln, Erlangerstr. 1-3,” Senator für Sozialwesen, July 5, 1951, LAB B Rep 009 Nr. 128; LAB B Rep 009 Nr. 126.

house eighty people, while the German Red Cross-Berlin operated a camp in an apartment building at Alt-Moabit 126, across the street from the Moabit prison in Wedding, that housed three hundred refugees in forty rooms. Both of these smaller camps had sickrooms with full-time nurses and on-call doctors provided by district health offices, while prepared meals were purchased from public kitchens or distributed by the Red Cross.<sup>86</sup>

It was in the interests of the various West Berlin and West German authorities to make these camps, for all of their disadvantages, into “showcases of the Federal Republic.”<sup>87</sup> To this end, the office of the Senator for Social Affairs in West Berlin maintained a cultural section to provide activities for refugees living in West Berlin camps. These included free or subsidized tickets to shows, movies, concerts and sporting events, an education center that provided free lectures, and a 37-piece orchestra that gave biweekly concerts. The Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs also provided a 500-volume mobile library that moved between camp locations throughout the city.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, major newspapers, including the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Kölner Rundschau*, and the *Rheinischen Merkur* provided free copies of their daily editions for refugees living in the primary reception camps, while other newspapers, like *Der Stimme* and *Ost-West Kurier*, were hired by the

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<sup>86</sup> Bericht über die Prüfung der Flüchtlingslager, Sept. 22, 1953, Senator für Sozialwesen, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 101.

<sup>87</sup> “Den Wünschen der Bundesregierung und der nieders. Landesregierung, das Lager Uelzen zum „Schaufenster der Bundesrepublik“ zu machen...” Notaufnahmelager Uelzen-Bohldamm: Einrichtung – Entwicklung – Aufgaben, Jan. 1, 1958, NSHA Nds 380 Acc. 30/96 Nr. 16.

<sup>88</sup> Kulturreferat, Senator für Sozialwesen, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 386; Zentralstelle für Kulturelle Betreuung, Abt. Komitee Flüchtlingsdank, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 105.

Refugee Ministry, at a cost of DM 11,000 per month, to print special editions focusing on refugees' concerns.<sup>89</sup>

In the camp at Uelzen, the religious charities Caritas and Hilfswerk each operated cultural programs and cosponsored a library and reading room, while in 1958 a television was installed in one of the camp's common areas for the entertainment of residents.<sup>90</sup> Camp residents also provided a captive audience for educational purposes. In 1954, the organization "Europäische Aktionsgemeinschaft E.V." and the Federal Ministry of the Interior sponsored a bus equipped to show educational films on a four-month tour through the various refugee camps of West Berlin and West Germany. These films were intended to support the concept of European unification, and the tour plan laid out a set of talking points for the post-screening discussions, including "Germans and European Unification," "Socialism Betrayed (A Confrontation with Communism)," "The Refugee Question: A European Problem," and "Rights and Duties of Democratic Citizens."<sup>91</sup>

Refugees in the camps also drew a small allowance, but were not allowed to take other jobs or live on their own. In West Berlin, the municipal authorities issued DM 5 every month to unmarried recognized refugees living in the camps, while married couples received DM 8 to share; unrecognized refugees received less. Dependent children also received a monthly allowance, DM 3 if over the age of sixteen, one if under. However, families were limited to DM 12 total, though this did not include the additional support for food costs, housing expenses and other allowances, which

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<sup>89</sup> "Freiexemplare von Tageszeitungen für Sowjetzonen-Flüchtlingslager," Selbach to Six, Mar. 16, 1953, BAK B 145/1732; BM für Flüchtlinge, Referat II/1, Aufzeichnung: Versorgung der Flüchtlingslager mit Zeitungen, Mar. 17, 1953, BAK B 145/1732.

<sup>90</sup> Notaufnahmелager Uelzen-Bohldamm: Einrichtung – Entwicklung – Aufgaben, Jan. 1, 1958, NSHA Nds 380 Acc. 30/96 Nr. 16.

<sup>91</sup> Warneke (Europäische Aktionsgemeinschaft E.V) to Bundesministerium des Innern, June 28, 1954, BAK B 106/9840.

could total as much as DM 90 per person.<sup>92</sup> Some refugees were surprised at the differences between the camps in West Berlin and various parts of West Germany, and not always in a positive way. Gerda W., a war widow with twin 10-year-old daughters, was recognized as a refugee in 1953 and flown to the transit camp at Weinsberg, in Baden-Württemberg. While there, she received 33 marks every week in welfare payments for her family, of which 7.20 automatically went back to the camp for meals. When she was later moved to a camp at Rastatt im Breisgau, the basic allowance remained the same, but the camp deducted 23 marks per week for food. Baden-Württemberg and Hamburg were the only *Länder* that did not provide an additional allowance for refugees; in other areas, refugees could receive up to 2.50 extra per day.<sup>93</sup> Starting in 1955, former political prisoners over the age of twenty-four received an additional stipend of thirty marks per month, doubled if they had spent more than two years in an East German or Soviet prison.<sup>94</sup>

Such stipends were a necessary part of camp life; in West Berlin, unemployment remained high well into the 1950s, and even longtime residents had difficulties finding employment. Refugees were not issued a work permit unless they were granted asylum and assigned to West Berlin, and most were thus officially unable to seek employment. Some – the city estimated around ten thousand – worked in temporary or undocumented positions, the so-called ‘black work’ (*Schwarzarbeit*), mostly in construction.<sup>95</sup> Without the monthly allowances, it is likely that this number would have been higher. The official ban on employment was less important in the Federal

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<sup>92</sup> “Politische Flüchtlinge in Westberlin,” Senator für Sozialwesen, 10 Dec. 1951, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 104; *Handbook of German Affairs* (Washington, DC: Press Office, German Diplomatic Mission, 1954), 103.

<sup>93</sup> Gerda W. to Adenauer, Nov. 16, 1953, BAK B 106/9840.

<sup>94</sup> Senator für Sozialwesen, Jahresbericht 1957, LAB B Rep 012 Nr. 175.

<sup>95</sup> Benecke (Bürgermeister Zehlendorf) to Senatskanzlei, Jul. 28, 1951, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 188.

Republic, where unemployment rates were declining as the economy expanded and even the unrecognized refugees could often find jobs without much trouble.<sup>96</sup>

The process of refugee reception was not without its critics. Ernst Ballweg, writing in a Cologne-based legal journal, the *Zeitschrift für Verwaltungsrecht und Verwaltungspolitik* in July 1952, criticized the Emergency Reception Law as ineffective and legally unenforceable, arguing that the Federal Republic did not have the legal ability to limit or control the internal migration of German citizens. Ballweg took particular issue with the ability of federal officials to determine whether or not refugees could be granted asylum on political grounds, asserting that the existing reception laws were clearly not immigration laws, and should not be treated as such.<sup>97</sup> Others criticized the process for being too bureaucratic. At the height of the refugee arrivals in early 1953, Johannes Stumm, the head of West Berlin's police force, complained that his department could barely investigate all of the newly arriving refugees for past crimes, let alone issue any more than two thousand identity cards in a day.<sup>98</sup>

Most famously, the editor-in-chief of Bavarian Radio, Walter von Cube, used his weekly address on February 14, 1953 to criticize the government's handling of the refugee problem, calling federally provided refugee relief "suicidal humanitarianism." Part of this critique was based on the sheer cost of dealing with the refugees, from the federal employees needed to maintain the registration process to the necessities of housing construction and job creation in West Germany. Von Cube cited the American immigration system positively, noting that the United States, with

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<sup>96</sup> Armin Grünbacher, *Reconstruction and Cold War in Germany* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 204.

<sup>97</sup> Ernst Ballweg, "Die Notaufnahmegesetz: ein unanwendbares und unwirksames Gesetz," *Zeitschrift für Verwaltungsrecht und Verwaltungspolitik*, Jul. 13, 1952. In LAB B Rep 004 Nr. 53.

<sup>98</sup> "Flüchtlingsabfertigung zu bürokratisch," *Spandauer Volksblatt*, Mar. 3, 1953.

three times the population and fifteen times the national budget of West Germany, only allowed 154,000 well screened and controlled immigrants every year, half as many as the Federal Republic. However, the scandal in von Cube's address was not this enumeration of the cost of providing for the refugees; rather, it was his proposal that a true solution to this problem was the complete closure of the inter-German border by the Federal Republic, to prevent further immigration, followed by political recognition of the German Democratic Republic and the signing of a trade agreement between the two countries. Von Cube's address inspired a major debate within the federal government, focusing less on refugee issues than on his right to use his position as head of a broadcasting agency to make statements critical of official policy regarding East Germany, in particular his assertion that the East German government could indirectly influence political and social conditions in West Germany.<sup>99</sup>

However, not all critics of the federal government wanted to see stricter criteria for refugee reception; some of the advocacy organizations representing refugee interests argued for a lighter touch. In a 1949 telegram to Theodor Heuss, the Federal President, Gerhard Falkenhagen, a lawyer affiliated with the Landmannschaft Berlin-Mark Brandenburg, complained about the government's treatment of his fellow refugees. Falkenhagen argued for a sort of equivalency between the postwar expellees and the East German refugees in the emergency laws passed to provide additional support for the former group, as well as for the extension of the right to asylum to all who crossed the border to West Germany, not just political refugees. His telegram generated responses from both Heuss's

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<sup>99</sup> Oberländer to Bayerischen Landtag, Feb 27, 1953, BAK B 106/810.

office as well as that of the Federal Minister for all-German questions, though neither promised anything more than a continuation of existing policies.<sup>100</sup>

Falkenhagen's associate in the Landsmannschaft Berlin-Mark-Brandenburg, Walter von Keudell (a former member of the Weimar-era Reichstag and the Minister of the Interior between 1927 and 1928) created a minor scandal several years later by repeating similar claims in the November 1953 edition of the *Berlin-Brandenburger Kurier*, the organization's monthly newsletter. The article was also reprinted three weeks later in the newspaper *Die Welt*, ensuring a wide audience and the imprimatur of one of West Germany's leading conservative news outlets. Von Keudell criticized the federal government for failing to extend benefits enjoyed by the former expellees to East German refugees, in particular the financial assistance granted to those who had significant wartime and postwar losses, and warned that the government could not take the political support of the East German refugees for granted. The root of these problems, von Keudell asserted, was the reception process, which forced refugees to defend their motives for fleeing East Germany while representatives of the federal government were more interested in finding reasons to deny asylum, a situation in which "the refugees often appeared to be the liars."<sup>101</sup> As with Falkenhagen's letter, von Keudell's article (at least the version printed in *Die Welt*) generated comment within the federal government, particularly at the Ministry for All-German Questions, and ended with a letter to von Keudell over the signature of Franz Thedieck, the ministry's state secretary. The ministry conceded von Keudell's points that the dividing line between political and economic reasons for flight was not

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<sup>100</sup> Falkenhagen to Heuss, Sept. 17, 1949; von Aulock to Falkenhagen, Nov. 15, 1949;

<sup>101</sup> "...wobei der Flüchtlinge nicht selten als Lügner erscheint..." Walter von Keudell, "Der Weg der Enttäuschten: Die Versorgung der Sowjetzonen-Flüchtlinge in der Bundesrepublik," *Berlin-Brandenburger Kurier*, Nov. 2, 1953, reprinted in *Die Welt*, Nov. 26, 1953.

particularly well defined, but defended the integrity of the reception process and its continued interest in evaluating refugees' motives. It claimed that since that nearly all aspects of life in East Germany were influenced by the regime's political viewpoints, refugees needed to demonstrate that their particular situation was exceptional.<sup>102</sup>

Critics of the system could also exploit gaps in the public's familiarity with the reception procedure, particularly the decision to admit or deny individual refugees. Given West German attitudes toward the Soviets and what was widely considered a puppet regime in East Germany, it is perhaps unsurprising that this dynamic would favor the refugees' views of the process against the government's. In May 1951, the FDP-affiliated *Hamburger Freie Presse* published an article on the alleged experiences of a former *Volkspolizist* from Rostock, Hans S. as he tried to register for asylum in West Berlin. The profile sensationalized the steps taken by the 21-year-old S. in the reception process, including his interviews with Allied intelligence agencies, where he provided details about his training, the strength of his police unit, and a sketch of their barracks before being informed that providing this information would not influence the commission's decision to accept or reject his application. His application was eventually rejected by the refugee commission, on the grounds that neither his life nor his freedom were endangered before his flight to West Berlin. Following this rejection, the article alleged that S. spent several weeks living in the bombed-out basement of the Anhalter Bahnhof before moving into a refugee shelter operated by a charitable organization.<sup>103</sup> The article, which closed by criticizing West Berlin for creating a "social nobody" out of a willing convert, was reprinted in several other West German papers over the following weeks, including the

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<sup>102</sup> Thedieck to von Keudell, Jan, 1954 BAK B 137/207.

<sup>103</sup> G. Müller, "Volkspolizist S. sucht die Freiheit, aber die Freiheit schickt ihn wider zurück," *Hamburger Freie Presse*, May 19/20, 1951.



Süddeutsche Zeitung, and generated enough comment that the press office of the West Berlin Senate tried to follow up with the refugee office for more details on this particular case. The latter responded, privately, that nobody by that name, *Volkspolizist* or otherwise, could be found in their files.<sup>104</sup>

Still, sympathy for individual refugees and their trials with the reception process was not necessarily an indication of wider acceptance. In a survey taken in the spring of 1953, many West Berliners feared the effect of thousands of newcomers on the city's health. Some cited economic reasons: "Berlin needs a lot of money for [the refugees]," said one survey respondent, "...food may be rationed again in West Berlin, or where will all the stuff come from for these masses of people?" Others feared that the arrival of more refugees would lead to higher unemployment and higher taxes. "The Federal Government doesn't help us sufficiently...there will be no longer a chance to get a job because too many people will live in Berlin...many refugees will work illicitly...Berlin will become a town of pensioners and unemployed." A few Berliners accused the refugees of receiving preferential treatment from the Berlin Senate and employers, and that the refugees' welfare privileges and government-provided allowances were enabling luxury: "[the refugees] are clothed from top to toe while the unemployed don't even get a pair of shoes...houses are built for them while sometimes five old residents must share two rooms...good jobs are given to refugees while the Berliners must wait...they will work for less money so that we will be out of a job." A few West Berliners even suggested that this negative economic impact was engineered by the Soviets, intended to depress

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<sup>104</sup> Presseamt des Senats Berlin to Flüchtlingsstelle, 8 Kuno-Fischer-Str., June 1, 1951; Flüchtlingsstelle to Presseamt, June 4, 1951, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 189.

standards of living and create “riots and unrest,” in the hope that the situation would eventually become intolerable.<sup>105</sup>

West Berlin did face significant economic problems during these years, more so than in the Federal Republic. Even the gradual reconstruction of Berlin’s industrial capacity during the early 1950s did not substantially reduce the proportion of those receiving unemployment benefits, estimated at one in three working-age residents in the city of around 2.2 million people.<sup>106</sup> This was a particular area of concern for the Office of German Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, which identified a number of obstacles to Berlin joining the ranks of the “*good* cities of the western world” (emphasis in the original). These obstacles included the numbers of unemployed, including those out of work for more than one year and recent school graduates, as well as the unregistered refugees and those refugees remaining in Berlin. Through all of this, however, West Berliners were largely satisfied with the response of their city’s government to the situation. By contrast, a significant number of West Berliners, forty percent, were dissatisfied with the refugee relief efforts of the Federal Republic. Major criticisms centered on the federal government’s failure to provide enough financial support to the West Berlin authorities, along with their inability to move refugees out of West Berlin at the same rate at which they were arriving.<sup>107</sup> Even after additional flights from Berlin to West Germany were added in the late spring of 1953, West Berliners, along with their leaders,

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<sup>105</sup> “Current Appraisal of West Berlin Morale with Reactions to the Refugee Influx” (Report 2-177, April 20, 1953), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA.

<sup>106</sup> Leo Schwartz, *Refugees in Germany Today* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1957), 32.

<sup>107</sup> Report 2-177, April 20, 1953.

continued to urge the Federal Government and international organizations to provide additional financial support as a means of helping the city cope.<sup>108</sup>

This does not mean that all refugees were necessarily welcomed openly. Despite the sympathetic portrayals of many 'average' refugees, and the media's fascination when prominent East Germans registered for asylum, suspicion and distrust of refugees' motives were common, as seen in the survey comments above. Some West Germans intimated that the advantage in the reception process went "not to the honest and simple refugee, rather to the clever and cunning ones, who knew how to procure documents and press their claims."<sup>109</sup> Every stage of the reception process, with the possible exception of the medical exam, was intended to weed out individuals who did not deserve to be counted as refugees, yet this debate continued throughout the decade. In part, this was due to the continued presence of unrecognized refugees, who could easily be portrayed as, at best, lazy and work-shy economic migrants, if not as criminals, black marketers, or Soviet agents.

However, despite such hostility toward the refugees, at no time were much more than fifty to sixty percent of West Germans or West Berliners critical of their presence. Many refugees reported that neither their experiences with West Berliners nor the registration and screening process had much effect on their general perception of the West. Only a few percent said that their opinions had changed for the worse, a number that only increased slightly for longer stays in Berlin. Even among those refugees who had been rejected during the screening process, but had not left West Berlin, only fifteen percent reported that their opinions were more negative. Among the rest, the largest

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<sup>108</sup> Willy Brandt, "Preface," *Flüchtlingsprobleme in Berlin*, Special Edition of *Integration* (Munich/Augsburg: Hofmann-Druck und Verlag, 1956).

<sup>109</sup> "...oft nicht der ehrliche und einfache Flüchtling, sondern der raffinierte und verschlagene, der seine Unterlagen besser zu beschaffen und geltend zu machen weiss." Quoted in Kimmel, 53.

percentage said that their perception of the West was unchanged, and a smaller number, fifteen to thirty percent, depending on demographic group and length of time spent in West Berlin, said that their opinion had changed for the better. Of these, several were impressed by the standard of living in West Berlin and noted the positive reception they received from West Berliners. According to one refugee, "...even the unemployed can manage here."<sup>110</sup> Even so, by the second half of the decade, over 900,000 of West Berlin's total population of 2.2 million people received some form of assistance from the city, whether pension, welfare, or housing relief.<sup>111</sup>

This side of the reception process may indicate why returning to East Germany was also rare among the refugees, even among the small, but significant percentage that had negative opinions of their time in the West. In one account, out of 60,000 refugees living in West Berlin in March 1953, it was reported that only 88 had sought to return.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, when surveyed in 1952, the vast majority of refugees (over 80 percent) said that their experiences had not made them regret their decision to come to West Berlin. Even among those rejected by the screening process, only six percent wished that they had remained at home.<sup>113</sup> East German records bear this out: East Berlin's Department for Internal Affairs (*Abteilung für Innere Angelegenheiten*) operated a reception and information office on Neue Königstrasse (now Otto-Braun-Strasse) and a camp in the southeastern district of Karlshorst intended to process both returning refugees and migrants from West Germany,

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<sup>110</sup> "Are the Difficulties of Recent East Zone Refugees Breeding Dissatisfaction with the West?" (Report 2-157, October 13, 1952), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA.

<sup>111</sup> "Berlin" in *Report of the Zellerbach Commission on the European Refugee Situation* (New York: International Rescue Committee, 1956), V-3.

<sup>112</sup> "Berlin Refugee Difficulties," *The Times (London)*, March 20, 1953, p. 6.

<sup>113</sup> Report 2-157, October 13, 1952.

though after 1955 the responsibility for the returnees was transferred, in part, to the *Volkspolizei*.<sup>114</sup>

However, these offices were responsible for significantly fewer registrations than their counterparts in the West: in 1955, they counted 11,953 individuals, including 7,834 returnees.<sup>115</sup> Given that East Berlin alone admitted to losing 16,027 residents during that same time period, the resulting deficit was apparent even to the East German regime.<sup>116</sup>

Public perceptions of the refugees' experiences in West Berlin and West Germany give some sense of the importance of the process of refugee registration, despite the valid criticisms of inefficiency and unfairness. However, even ineffective measures can be preferable to no measures at all, particularly with potential threats to public health and political welfare a constant worry, and it is clear that many West Germans (though perhaps fewer West Berliners) did not give much thought to the constant arrival of thousands of new refugees. Indeed, in the monthly public opinion reports made to the federal government by the market research firm EMNID, refugee issues only dominated the public consciousness during the first half of 1953; as the numbers of refugees arriving declined and then remained mostly constant through the end of the decade, economic issues like taxes and pensions came to the forefront.<sup>117</sup>

In 1952, the Association of Political East-Refugees (*Verein politischer Ostflüchlinge*, or VPO) issued a call for all Germans to be conscious of refugees' situations, reminding them that "most

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<sup>114</sup> Abt. für Innere Angelegenheiten to Ständigen Stellvertreter des Oberbürgermeisters, "Änderung der Struktur der Auskunftsstelle Neue Königstraße," LAB C Rep 124 Nr. 296.

<sup>115</sup> Magistrat von Groß-Berlin, Abt. für Innere Angelegenheiten, "Aufnahmestelle 1955," LAB C Rep 124 Nr. 296.

<sup>116</sup> Magistrat von Groß-Berlin, Referat Bevölkerungsbewegung, "Jahresbericht 1957," LAB C Rep 124 Nr. 296

<sup>117</sup> "Der Wünsche der Öffentlichkeit an die Bundesregierung in Wirtschafts und Sozialpolitischer Beziehung," EMNID, BAK B 145/4262-4268.

political refugees from the East, so far as they are recognized, are deserving fighters, forced to yield to the superior force of the [East German] system...they deserve respect, not disdain.”<sup>118</sup> However, while going through the reception process and living in the camps, whether in West Berlin or rural West Germany, these refugees remained distant from the majority of West Germans. This was not a permanent solution: to leave the camps, the refugees needed jobs and housing, and obtaining these required much more interaction with the wider West German population.

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<sup>118</sup> “...politische Ostflüchtlinge, so weit sie anerkannt sind, meist verdiente Kämpfer sind, die nur der Übermacht des Terror-Systems weichen mussten...nicht Geringschätzung, sondern Achtung haben sie verdient,” “Politische Flüchtlinge sind keine Bettler!”, *Unser Kampf – Unsere Arbeit: Mitteilungsblatt der VPO*, Nov. 1952. Filed in BAK B 137/197.

### Chapter 3

## Moving Out of the Camps: Refugee Resettlement, Employment, and Housing Construction

Among the refugees arriving in West Berlin in March 1952 were Edmund N., an East German mason, along with his wife and two young children. Their reasons for leaving East Germany are unknown, but the family's application for official refugee status was unsuccessful. They stayed on in the city, unwilling to return home to rural East Germany, four additional "illegals" among the thousands in West Berlin's camps. Later that summer, Edmund answered an advertisement for trained masons posted in the Charlottenburg labor office and moved to Baden-Württemberg to pursue the job. Demand for trained construction workers was high, and his new employer was apparently willing to overlook his status as an unrecognized refugee. Edmund was also able to avoid the requirement of a valid residence permit by staying with his sister in her one-room apartment in Rheinhausen, near Freiburg. This was a fortunate break; most refugees would have been unable to take such a position without some alternative housing arrangement. However, the close quarters meant that Edmund was unable to bring his family to Freiburg with him, and they remained in a refugee camp in West Berlin. In the end, the separation would prove to be too much for Edmund and his family, and even with his steady employment, he failed to convince the authorities to reconsider his case. By the end of the year, he felt that he had no choice but to leave his new job and rejoin his family in West Berlin.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund N. to Leiter des Bundesnotaufnahmeverfahrens Gießen, Nov. 25, 1952, BAK B 150/6375.

Refugees like Edmund N. were an anomaly, especially coming from West Berlin. Even the recognized refugees, those accepted for resettlement in West Germany, had little choice but to remain in the camps until other opportunities were available. As seen in chapter two, the need to control and organize East German refugees in West Berlin and West Germany was intended to address the immediate problems posed by their arrival. However, accepting refugees through the registration process also created new problems for the various authorities; faced with a growing population in the reception camps, the West German and West Berlin governments needed to find both employment and housing for the newcomers, as well as transportation for their resettlement. Employment, however, required the construction of new factories and the establishment of new businesses, or at least the expansion of existing employers' workforces. Housing construction, especially in smaller cities and towns in West Germany, lagged considerably behind the creation of new jobs, a situation that created the need for a third level of smaller residential camps for employed refugees and their families awaiting the construction of a new home. Thus, newly-arrived refugees from East Germany, having already spent a month at a reception camp in West Berlin and several weeks awaiting employment at a transit camp (*Durchgangslager*) in West Germany, might spend an additional few months in mass housing in their new hometowns, waiting for the construction of their future house or apartment.

This was, to many, a problematic situation. Life in the refugee camps was believed to have a negative effect on their inhabitants: as the chairman of the association of charitable organizations in Lower Saxony warned, "long-time camp residents [have] a great danger of moral despair...camp life



is the source of the harshest deprivation for family and nation, especially for the young.”<sup>2</sup> Similar criticisms came from the refugees themselves. In 1954, Wally K., a childless war widow living in a camp in Duderstadt, wrote to the appeals office of the federal refugee ministry to complain that she and her elderly, blind mother had been overlooked in the awarding of apartments in a newly-constructed twenty-unit complex in favor of families with children. Given her years living in the Duderstadt camp, where she had resided since her arrival in West Germany in 1949, she wanted to know whether “it was finally time for her to live like a human being.”<sup>3</sup> The implication in both accounts is that no one living in the refugee camps could consider themselves fully integrated into West German life.

However, such critiques were not enough to convince the authorities to forego an organized response to refugee resettlement and allow refugees the freedom to live on their own, outside the camp system, without state supervision. On the surface, such policies seemed legally and constitutionally questionable; by the terms of Article 11 of the *Grundgesetz*, the West German constitution of 1949, German citizens had the right to free movement throughout the territory of the Federal Republic. While both the federal Emergency Reception Law and West Berlin’s Law on Movement to Berlin (*Gesetz über den Zuzug nach Berlin*) placed restrictions on refugees’ movements, requiring registration and continued control over resettlement efforts, these laws were seen as

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<sup>2</sup> “...die große Gefahr moralischer Verzweiflung der oft auf lange Zeit in Lagern Untergebrachten. Lagerleben ist schwerster Substanzverlust für Familie und Volk, insbesondere für die Jugend!” in “Lagernot ist Volksnot!,” Arbeitsgemeinschaft der freien Wohlfahrtspflege im Lande Niedersachsen, D. Wolff, Vorsitzender, Oct. 27, 1958. NSHA Nds 50 Acc. 2000/100 Nr. 300.

<sup>3</sup> “...meinen Sie nicht auch es endlich an der Zeit ist wie ein Mensch zu wohnen?” Wally K. to Beschwerdeamt Bonn, Oct. 4, 1954, NSHA Nds 300 Acc. 27/71 Nr. 155.

necessary to address a situation of emergency.<sup>4</sup> In the early 1950s, an East German refugee challenged these restrictions in a case that eventually reached the Federal Constitutional Court, hoping to overturn his rejection under the Emergency Reception Procedure. The court upheld the existing laws, arguing that the Federal Government had the right to limit mobility for the sake of public order, and that the fundamental purpose of the various refugee laws was to protect West German democracy from East German agitators and saboteurs.<sup>5</sup>

Legal and constitutional issues aside, the primary obstacle for refugees leaving West Berlin was the 150 kilometers of East Germany they needed to cross; to avoid complications with the East German authorities, they could not take land routes. Thus, accepted refugees had to fly directly from West Berlin to West German airports, primarily Frankfurt, Munich, Hanover and Düsseldorf. At the beginning of the 1950s, only a few hundred refugees could be flown out every day, a total that sufficed well into 1952. In early 1953, however, as the number of refugees requiring flights rose, a backlog of hundreds, then thousands of refugees began to mount in West Berlin. During the month of February, around 35,000 refugees arrived in West Berlin, but of the nearly 22,000 who were recognized (many of whom had originally arrived during December and January) only 14,000 were flown out of the city, an average of five hundred per day.<sup>6</sup> The authorities worked to raise capacity,

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<sup>4</sup> Oberländer (Bundesminister für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte) to Wehner (Vorsitzenden des Bundestagsausschusses für gesamtdeutsche und Berliner Fragen), Jan. 17, 1958, BAK B 136/3922.

<sup>5</sup> Bundesverfassungsgericht – 1 BvL 104/52, May 7, 1953, BAK B 106/9840; see also Riedel (Bundesministerium für Vertriebene) to Herbert R. (Zweibrücken-Pfalz), Nov. 2, 1951, BAK B 150/4111.

<sup>6</sup> Monatsbericht 2/53, Senator für Sozialwesen, LAB B Rep 004 Nr. 39; “West Berlin’s Refugee Influx: Growing Problem of Dispersal,” *The Guardian*, Mar. 3, 1953.

and achieved a daily rate of over one thousand during the first week of March. However, on March 6, newspapers reported that 17,000 refugees were still waiting for their flights out of the city.<sup>7</sup>

Through this, the city and federal government worked to increase the number of flights to West Germany, though administrative confusion proved to be a significant obstacle, as there was little coordination between the reception committees and the transportation office. Starting March 11, new charter agreements between West Berlin, Pan-American Airways and British European Airways provided 1500 seats for refugees every day. However, the committees were only able to approve a few hundred refugees, and in the first week, half of the scheduled flights had to be cancelled.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the month, though, 1500 to 1900 refugees were being flown out every day, with an all-time high of 2110 on March 26. In an age of wide-body jets with seats for two hundred passengers or more, these numbers may seem unimpressive. Given that most of the planes being used at the time only seated fifteen to thirty passengers – the largest were a handful of 57-seat DC-4s – providing for a thousand people could require several dozen individual flights. In addition, the federal government was adamant that no Allied military aircraft be used to transport refugees, perhaps fearing a propaganda backlash. Indeed, the West Berlin administration celebrated when a British charter airline with three 32-seat airplanes was hired to assist with the effort.<sup>9</sup>

Although the immediate crisis of early 1953 passed quickly – the existing system was again able to provide all needed flights by late summer – there were periods when various *Länder* could not keep up with their commitments to accept refugees flown out of West Berlin. For example, in the summer of 1957, North Rhine-Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg and Hamburg all received fewer

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<sup>7</sup> “No Military Aircraft: More Flights from Berlin,” *The Guardian*, Mar. 7, 1953.

<sup>8</sup> “Airliners Idle in Berlin,” *The Times (London)*, Mar. 13, 1953, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Flüchtlingsbericht, March 1953, Senator für Sozialwesen, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 155.

refugees than had been assigned to them due to a lack of available housing and camp space; of the three, only North Rhine-Westphalia was able to make up for this shortfall in 1958. At the same time, both Bavaria and Hesse also struggled to meet their quotas.<sup>10</sup> However, even brief increases in the numbers of refugees arriving in West Berlin, as happened in late August 1958, when new registrations doubled from 400-500 to nearly 1,000 daily, led to overcrowding in the refugee camps and renewed calls for increasing the rate of reception and transportation, as well as providing new accommodations in the destination *Länder*.<sup>11</sup>

Despite this pressure, very few refugees seem to have considered emigration. Between 1949 and 1956, only around 68,000 West Germans, refugee or non-refugee, emigrated. The majority of these, around 58,000, went to the United States and Canada (not including German women who had married American servicemen – it is unclear how many were included in this category), with the remainder settling in other European countries, Australia, and South Africa. A small number also migrated to South America: the director of the Argentine Immigration Office had sought specifically to recruit East German refugees, though it is unclear how many actually emigrated.<sup>12</sup> Especially early in the decade, a few scholars and bureaucrats proposed refugee emigration as an alternative to resettlement in West Germany, though such ideas never gained traction with either the refugees or foreign governments. For example, while the United States allowed the immigration of a certain number of German expellees under Section 12 of the amended Displaced Persons Act of 1948, the wording of that section specifically excluded refugees born in those parts of Germany (and Austria)

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<sup>10</sup> Halbjahresberichte über die Berliner Flüchtlingssituation, Jan. 1958 and June 1958, LAB B Rep 012 Nr. 175.

<sup>11</sup> “Refugee Problem Agitates the Nation,” *The Bulletin*, Sept. 9, 1958, 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> “Wanted: German Immigrants,” *The Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 39 (Oct. 8, 1957), 5.

that had been occupied by the Soviets.<sup>13</sup> In addition, destination governments would bear the cost of resettling East German refugees, not the West Germans; at an estimated \$2,500 in resettlement costs per refugee, this was perhaps unlikely.<sup>14</sup>

The division of the refugees between the West German *Länder* was determined by an agreement between representatives of the newly established federal government and the *Länder* in a meeting at Uelzen in 1949; the resulting percentages were thereafter referred to as the “Uelzen Key” (*Uelzener Schlüssel*). North Rhine-Westphalia and the three *Länder* that would later merge to form Baden-Württemberg each took roughly one quarter of the total refugees passing through the transit camps, while Rhineland-Palatinate, Lower Saxony, Bavaria and Hesse took most of the remainder. Schleswig-Holstein, of all the West German *Länder*, was the only one that refused to accept new refugees under the agreement; it was still struggling to integrate a large expellee population. These initial proportions were routinely adjusted between 1949 and 1953, to help various *Länder* cope with the pressures of resettlement. Thus, between July 1951 to April 1952, the share of refugees taken by North Rhine-Westphalia increased from around 24 percent to more than 64 percent, as Lower Saxony, Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate saw their collective share drop from 40 percent to just six percent. The inclusion of West Berlin in the Uelzen Key from February 1952, following the city’s adoption of the Federal Emergency Reception Procedure, allowed a stabilization of these proportions, and allowed West Berlin to gradually reduce the percentage of those officially staying in

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<sup>13</sup> John Gibson to Sen. Homer Ferguson, August 21, 1951, Subject File: German Ethnics, Box 72, Legal Division – Office of the General Consul, Displaced Persons Commission, RG 278, NARA.

<sup>14</sup> Whether emigration could even have a noticeable effect on West German demography was also up for debate. See ECA Technical Assistance Commission, 2.

the city from 20 percent of all arriving refugees in 1951 to just four percent in 1953 – not including unrecognized refugees staying in West Berlin, which increased the total substantially.<sup>15</sup>

The distribution percentages set in January 1953 remained in force until the Saarland joined the Federal Republic in 1957. At that point, a temporary agreement adjusted the shares so that the Saarland would receive three percent of the new refugees, while significantly reducing the share going to North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg from over 70 percent to 55 percent. West Berlin, Lower Saxony and Bavaria all saw their shares increase to make up for these reductions. This temporary agreement was superseded by the *Friedland Schlüssel*, which took effect January 1, 1958, which linked refugee distribution more closely to each *Land's* share of the general population, and included the so-called 'late resettlers' (*Spätaussiedler*), ethnic Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia who had remained through the postwar expulsions before being induced to leave during the mid-1950s.<sup>16</sup> However, all of these distribution formulae only applied to the new refugees going through the reception process, and the director of each reception camp (Marienfelde, Uelzen or Giessen) appointed a subordinate to meet with *Land* representatives to make the final determination of refugees' destinations. West Berlin was a special case, since residents of the city were subject to a 'moving-in law' (*Zuzugsgesetz*) that gave priority to refugees with close family members or jobs in West Berlin, as well as those originally from East Berlin and the surrounding

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<sup>15</sup> "Übersicht über die Zuwanderer..." Bundesminister für Vertriebene, Nov. 5, 1953, LAB B Rep. 008 Nr. 101.

<sup>16</sup> Senator für Arbeit und Sozialwesen, Jahresbericht über die Entwicklung der Berliner Flüchtlingssituation, 1958, BAK B 136/2722; 23. Sitzung des Fachausschusses für Flüchtlingsfrage, Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin, Dec. 14, 1957, LAB B Rep 012 Nr. 175.

area. One estimate held that as many as half of the refugees registering at Marienfelde preferred to stay in West Berlin, even though the city was only responsible for taking five percent.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, while the distribution was controlled through the Emergency Reception Procedure, there was little federal control over whether the *Länder* actually accepted their share of refugees. Because the Uelzen Key was only an agreement, and did not have the force of law, the federal government had no means of enforcing the resettlement proportions, and was occasionally reduced to negotiating with *Land* governments to ensure that they accepted their agreed shares. Indeed, before 1952, each *Land* set its own criteria for granting residence permits to refugees, without any input from Bonn.<sup>18</sup> Further transfers of population between *Länder* were occasionally necessary as well, especially from the sparsely populated border areas of Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, the initial points of entry for many East German refugees, to the urban areas farther west. Facing considerable unemployment in 1952, Lower Saxony sought to resettle 300,000 unemployed former expellees and East German refugees in other areas of West Germany where jobs and housing were easier to find. To make this plan palatable to North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg, the resettlement process was planned to take four years, with only seventy to eighty thousand people resettled every year.<sup>19</sup>

It is difficult to track down the exact level of refugee dispersal through resettlement, but the example of many former inhabitants of the Thuringian village of Geisa, just east of the intra-German

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<sup>17</sup> "System of Assigning Refugees to Berlin," Williams to Daugherty, Sept. 17, 1959, LAB B Rep 010-01 Nr. 317.

<sup>18</sup> Alex (Leiter des Aufnahmeverfahrens im Notaufnahmelager Gießen) to Lukaschek, Oct. 3, 1952, BAK B 150/4094.

<sup>19</sup> Niedersächsische Minister für Vertriebene, Presseinformation Nr. 9/52, Mar. 28, 1952, NSHA VVP 18 Nr. 116.

border, can give some indication. When the border was closed in 1952, the East German authorities established an exclusion zone of five kilometers behind the actual demarcation line. Along the border, residents of villages within this zone were displaced; the East German government intended to resettle them in other parts of East Germany, but many took advantage of the confusion during the summer of 1952 to cross into West Germany as refugees.<sup>20</sup> Of the nearly two thousand inhabitants of Geisa in 1950, several hundred ended up in the Federal Republic, most of whom passed through the refugee camp at Geissen, approximately a hundred kilometers west of the village. After their arrival in West Germany, many subscribed to the “Geisaer Heimatbrief,” a newsletter that helped displaced residents keep up with news from their hometown, and which also tried to publish contact information for the benefit of former inhabitants.

These addresses indicate that by early 1953, many former Geisaers were living quite close to their former home, either in Hünfeld, a town just across the border in West Germany. Others were living in and around Fulda, the nearest major West German city and the historical power in the region, which was about thirty kilometers southwest of Geisa. A handful were still living in refugee camps in Solingen and elsewhere, while still others, perhaps a quarter to a third of the families, had moved to larger cities like Frankfurt, Cologne and Dortmund. Other than those who stayed within the immediate area, very few Geisaers ended up in smaller towns and villages in West Germany, indicating that those who moved out of the immediate area probably did so for employment reasons, rather than to recreate their former existence.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Wieland Führ, *The Berlin Wall and inner-German border*, trans. by Michael Scuffil (Petersberg, Germany: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2009), 43.

<sup>21</sup> Fehr (“Geisaer Heimatbrief”) to Heuss (Bundespräsident), Feb. 19, 1953, including three issues of “Geisaer Heimatbrief” from 1952 and 1953, BAK B 122/2091. For a similar account of a



Ideally, refugees leaving the main reception camps in West Berlin, Giessen and Uelzen would be taken directly to a newly constructed house or apartment near a worksite requiring new laborers. However, few were so lucky. Once in West Germany, most refugees were initially moved to transit camps operated by the *Land* to which they had been assigned. This was no guarantee that the transit camps were actually located in that particular *Land*: after its primary transit camps at Massen, Warburg and Wipperfürth were filled to capacity in 1952, North Rhine-Westphalia was forced to begin renting space in refugee camps in Lower Saxony, which had fewer inhabitants and more open space for construction.<sup>22</sup> As in West Berlin, refugees living near existing employers had to make do with an assortment of buildings, regardless of their suitability for long-term habitation. Thus, a former hospital in the Lower Saxony town of Neuhaus (Oste) was donated to the state government for use for temporary refugee housing in 1958, as was a former hotel in Darmstadt (with space for 75 refugees) and a market hall in Limburg (with space for 20). In other towns and cities, unused factory buildings and gymnasias were requisitioned.<sup>23</sup> Where such buildings were unavailable or being used, as in Duisburg, Essen and Dortmund and other cities in the Ruhr region, *Land* governments – in these cases, North Rhine-Westphalia – had to build new facilities in the vicinity of employers.<sup>24</sup>

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community on the intra-German border, see Daphne Berdahl, *Where The World Ended*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> “Die Folgen des neuen Flüchtlingsstroms über Berlin für Nordrhein-Westfalen,” BAK B 150/6421; Lukaschek to Ministerpräsidenten der Länder, July 26, 1952, NSHA Nds. 300 Acc. 27/71 Nr. 141.

<sup>23</sup> Bereitstellung und Auflösung von Notunterkünften für Flüchtlinge aus der DDR, NSHA Nds 380 Acc 30/96 Nr. 3.

<sup>24</sup> “Die Folgen des neuen Flüchtlingsstroms über Berlin für Nordrhein-Westfalen.”

Many refugees in West Germany were housed in former military barracks; unlike empty factories and commercial buildings, they were conveniently government-owned and, at the beginning of the 1950s, they had also been empty for several years. Having been designed for this use, these buildings could also house large numbers of people without the need for significant renovation: some of the largest included the Wilhelmsburg-Kaserne in Ulm (4,000 spaces), the Lettow-Vorbeck Kaserne in Hamburg (5,000 spaces) and the Blankensee-Kaserne in Lübeck (8,000 spaces); altogether, nearly 100,000 refugees could be accommodated in these facilities.<sup>25</sup> An informal agreement between the Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims and the Ministry of Defense allowed for the housing of refugees until the facilities were required to house future West German military forces.<sup>26</sup> Subsequently, in preparation for the establishment of the Bundeswehr in 1955, the Ministry of Defense sought to regain control of 25 former military facilities in North Rhine-Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, a plan that would displace nearly 50,000 refugees. The Ministry estimated that replacing these barracks with entirely new buildings for military use would cost around three hundred million marks, even if the shortages of construction workers and material could be overcome.<sup>27</sup> Resettling this many refugees would cost about half as much, and would take place over six to twelve months, provided the *Länder* were willing to cooperate with an special resettlement program. The Ministry of Defense agreed to provide the affected *Länder* with an additional DM 1,000 per refugee – above the DM 1,500 already provided by the federal government – as an incentive to accelerate housing construction in the surrounding

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<sup>25</sup> “Pressekonferenz mit Bundesminister Prof. Dr. Dr. Oberländer,” Jul. 3, 1954, BAK B 150/6375; Bereitstellung und Auflösung von Notunterkünften für Flüchtlinge aus der DDR, NSHA Nds 380 Acc 30/96 Nr. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Blank (BM für Verteidigung) to Oberländer, Oct. 8, 1955, BAK B 150/4737.

<sup>27</sup> Kohlenbach (BM für Wohnungsbau) to BM für Verteidigung, Dec. 21, 1955, BAK B 150/4737.

areas.<sup>28</sup> The Ministry of Defense also contributed DM 100,000,000 to the *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau*, a sum also matched by the Ministry for Housing Construction, to help provide subsidized loans to the displaced refugees.<sup>29</sup>

This relatively easy capitulation, while expensive, is one indication that neither West Berlin nor the Federal Republic was willing to maintain the total camp capacities that had been necessary during 1952 and 1953, especially once the number of refugees arriving in West Berlin declined in the second half of the decade. Indeed, this is further evidence of the emergency mindset that had been prevalent within the Federal Government and West Berlin administration earlier in the decade, and which had led to three separate extensions to the temporary refugee housing law before a permanent extension was finally passed. During the second half of the 1950s, the authorities worked to consolidate refugee housing, close camps and sell off the buildings and land. This was a short-term success, but it also meant that when refugee arrivals increased suddenly, as they did at the end of the decade, the remaining camps were again put under severe stress. In September 1959, for example, there were 800 refugee camps throughout West Berlin and West Germany, housing approximately 126,000 East German refugees, reflecting an increase of about 25 percent over the previous few years.<sup>30</sup> One major problem area were the camps in Lower Saxony being rented by North Rhine-Westphalia to house the latter *Land's* surplus refugee population; in June 1958, nearly 73,000 refugees destined for resettlement in North Rhine-Westphalia were occupying camps in

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<sup>28</sup> Kabinetttvorlage, Jan 17, 1956; Beitrag zur Pressebesprechung, Jan 4, 1956, BAK B 150/4737; Oberländer to Wehner, Jan. 17, 1958, BAK B 136/3922.

<sup>29</sup> Armin Grünbacher, *Reconstruction and Cold War in Germany: The Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (1948-1961)* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 189.

<sup>30</sup> Werner Middelman, Refugees in Germany: Address to the International Committee for World Refugee Year, Geneva, Sept. 11, 1959, BAK B 150/755.

Lower Saxony meant to hold only 31,000 people. In such cases, rooms intended to house four single refugees might be refurnished to hold six or eight, while two or three families might have to share a single apartment.<sup>31</sup>

By 1961, when the majority of refugees were again entering through West Berlin, conditions in the city's reception camps were particularly bad. At a conference of several *Land* refugee ministers in July 1961, the assembled officials agreed to raise the daily capacity of the flights from West Berlin to 1,800 individuals: 1,000 who had completed the normal procedure, and 800 new arrivals, who would bypass Marienfelde and be sent directly to reception camps at Uelzen (430), Friedland (170) and Giessen (200). Additional camps at Sandbostel and Hanau, with capacities of 1200 refugees each, would be prepared for an emergency, but the assembled ministers warned that a daily average of 2250 arrivals would likely be catastrophic for the reception system, from Marienfelde to the smaller transit camps in the *Länder*, even though nearly twice as many refugees had arrived daily during the height of the March 1953 exodus. The representatives from Lower Saxony and Hesse requested that the governments in North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg follow through on their agreements to take in and resettle their assigned shares of refugees and prevent another backup, as had happened several times during the previous decade. All agreed that refugees should ideally spend no more than four weeks between arrival and final resettlement, and that "West Berlin should be no more than an information center."<sup>32</sup>

Of course, flying refugees to the West German *Länder* and placing them in transit camps was still a temporary solution. The two major indicators for the integration of refugees into West

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<sup>31</sup> Flüchtlingsstatistik, June 1958 and December 1958, NSHA Nds 380 Acc 30/96 Nr. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Flüchtlingsministerkonferenz, Jul. 24, 1961, NSHA Nds 380 Acc 62a/65 Nr. 424.

German society were employment and housing construction, and efforts to provide for both deserve a closer look. Employment, especially for adult males with families, was considered a key step toward full integration in West German society, though in the case of the East German refugees, their situation was affected by the millions of expellees still seeking jobs after arriving in West Germany in the immediate postwar years. In a survey of the West German population taken in 1950, unemployment was considered the most pressing problem facing the recently established federal government, even though most blamed both the arrival of expellees and refugees as well as allied occupation policies for the problem.<sup>33</sup> By 1951, only 75 percent of the expellees had found steady employment, while employment rates among the nearly 1.5 million East German refugees were somewhat lower, around 67 percent, though it is not clear whether this statistic included the thousands whose applications for reception had been rejected.<sup>34</sup> Employment figures were also an important political metric; the East German government claimed to provide full employment to their workers, so there was a perception of pressure on the West Germans to compete. Indeed, most refugees had been employed in East Germany, even if many preferred to take the chance of finding new employment in West Germany. With certain categories of refugees, particularly skilled workers, providing new jobs was relatively easy; the federal and *Länder* governments both provided financial incentives to businesses hiring resettled refugees. The Minister for Refugees in Lower Saxony estimated that providing these incentives cost his *Land* DM 8,000-10,000 for each additional employed refugee; at around ten thousand new jobs per year in Lower Saxony alone, the annual total

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<sup>33</sup> "The Problem of Unemployment in Western Germany" (Report 2-22, June 5, 1950), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA.

<sup>34</sup> H. Christian Sonne et al., *The Integration of Refugees into German Life*, ECA Technical Assistance Commission (1951), 2, 8.

came to nearly DM 100 million. In addition to the costs borne by the *Länder*, the Federal Government estimated that each newly created job cost it DM 5,000, and even more in heavy industry, sums that included employer aid, training, temporary housing and the cost of transporting workers to their new employers.<sup>35</sup>

The Federal Government also supported this additional industrial employment through loans given to both new and already-existing companies to expand their operations. Because the refugees were substantially more mobile than the non-refugee population of West Germany, it was expected that most would be willing to accept jobs regardless of location, provided housing – either temporary or permanent – was available.<sup>36</sup> Vocational training programs, modeled on the refugee apprenticeship program established in the camp at Wahlstedt in Schleswig-Holstein during the late 1940s, helped unskilled or untrained refugees prepare for employment. This was especially important for young men and women who arrived in West Germany unaccompanied by parents or other family members and without previous training.<sup>37</sup> However, the programs established in 1950 and 1951 did not anticipate the rising number of refugee registrations in 1952 and 1953, which created a need for additional measures in support of employment. For example, in February 1953, the Employers' Associations of North Rhine-Westphalia (*Arbeitgeberverbände Nordrhein-Westfal*) announced that they would create new positions for thirty thousand refugees. In addition, the employers would contribute 150 million marks to the construction of housing for their new workers

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<sup>35</sup> "Wohnungen sind die wichtigste Voraussetzung," *Die Zeit*, Jan. 3, 1952.

<sup>36</sup> ECA Technical Assistance Commission, 10-11.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

and their families.<sup>38</sup> While this was an exceptional case – and a necessity, given the state of West Berlin’s refugee camps in early 1953 – it wasn’t the last time that West German employers would turn to the refugees as a ready source of trained and highly mobile labor.

Some non-governmental organizations also worked to help refugees find employers with available positions and assist in their resettlement. One of these programs, sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, sought to “bridge [the] human relations gap” between government placement and resettlement and the individual refugees by facilitating the migration of working-age refugees – male heads of households or young men intending to start an apprenticeship – from camps in Lower Saxony directly to cities in the Ruhr. Once at their destinations, the AFSC would provide them with housing and training in needed industrial skills, allowing them to acclimate to their new surroundings. Once they had steady employment, they could apply for government-sponsored family reunification and housing assistance. The AFSC argued that this process was more humane than resettling an entire family in a new location before allowing those of working age to seek employment.<sup>39</sup>

Supporting formerly independent artisans and craftsmen among the refugees was more difficult; many of these workers had to take other employment rather than work in their preferred area, and one 1959 estimate held that over one million refugees were working in fields other than those in which they had been trained.<sup>40</sup> West Berlin passed legislation that allowed East German

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<sup>38</sup> Der Tag, Feb. 22, 1953.

<sup>39</sup> Tony Radspieler, “AFSC Placement and Resettlement Program in the German Ruhr,” *REMP Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (April/June, 1955), 34-40.

<sup>40</sup> Niedersächsische Minister für Vertriebene, Presseinformation Nr. 9/52, Mar. 28, 1952, NSHA VVP 18 Nr. 116; Werner Middelman, *Refugees in Germany: Address to the International Committee for World Refugee Year*, Geneva, Sept. 11, 1959, BAK B 150/755.

refugees intending to start their own businesses to apply for extra federal government funds through the existing “equalization of burden” (*Lastenausgleich*) programs, though a separate category was established to set them apart from expellees, who were the primary target of these policies.<sup>41</sup> In contrast to industrial employment, which was only favored insofar as it contributed to the West German economy and was easier to support directly, the work of independent artisans was valued for deeper reasons. In the words of the Economic Cooperation Administration, it “constitutes a wholesome way of life, with many values and compensations, [including] a social value in the esteem others have for the craftsman, an educational value through learning by doing, [and] an aesthetic value in the love of beauty...”<sup>42</sup> However, because West Berlin and West Germany had their own populations of artisans and craftsmen, many refugees were prevented from operating independently, at least outside of construction-related fields, and were forced to accept subordinate positions or find employment in different fields.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, accommodating the several thousand professional workers – lawyers, doctors, teachers and professors, among others – was also difficult, not least because creating positions for them in West German universities, schools and hospitals was more complicated than creating new industrial employment. Refugee doctors were often employed in local health offices in West Berlin, and filled many of the staff positions at a new hospital established in the district of Tempelhof in 1959.<sup>44</sup> Still, skilled and professional workers arriving from East Germany were reported to be

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<sup>41</sup> Abgeordnetenhaus West Berlin, 3. Sitzung des Ausschusses für Heimatvertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Lagern, Feb. 15, 1954, LAB B Rep 001 Nr. 220.

<sup>42</sup> ECA Technical Assistance Commission, 14.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>44</sup> DRK-B Krankenhaus, Gesundheitsamt, Bezirk Tempelhof, LAB B Rep 213 Nr. 1374.



finding “suitable and well-paid” employment in their areas of expertise, and in 1959 Werner Middelmann, of the Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims estimated that 93.5 percent of refugee professionals were reestablished in their fields.<sup>45</sup> One problem was the negative perception of East German professional education. In West Berlin, refugee students looking to sit for the *Abitur*, the secondary exit exam that determined placement in universities and professional schools, were required to retake many of the subjects they had already passed in East Germany, with the exception of mathematics. Special programs were set up to provide the Western interpretation of history, politics, and literature.<sup>46</sup>

The Federal Government also took an interest in the continued integration of overlooked demographic categories into the West German workforce, particularly young single refugee women. As a part of the general commitment to a certain level of gender equality in the German Democratic Republic, many of these women had been trained in industrial and mechanical trades, for example, as crane operators and truck and tractor drivers. When they arrived in the transit camp for unaccompanied youths (i.e. those under 24, arriving without their parents) in Gelchsheim, near Würzburg in northern Bavaria, the local labor offices did not know what to do with women trained in fields that tended to be limited to men, particularly when the only employment opportunities available locally for unmarried women were as domestic servants and hospital maids, neither of

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<sup>45</sup> “The Soviet Zone Today: The Plight of the Intelligentsia,” *The Bulletin*, Sept. 2, 1956, 4-5; “Emigration of the Intelligentsia,” *The Bulletin*, Aug. 4, 1959, 5; “Two Millions Fled the Zone Since 1949,” *The Bulletin*, Dec. 10, 1959; Werner Middelmann, Refugees in Germany: Address to the International Committee for World Refugee Year, Geneva, Sept. 11, 1959, BAK B 150/755.

<sup>46</sup> Hsi-Huey Liang, *Berlin Before the Wall: A Foreign Student’s Diary with Sketches* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 19.

which particularly interested these women.<sup>47</sup> When reports of this issue reached the Federal Institute for Job Placement and Unemployment Insurance (*Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung*), Maria Böckling, an administrator within the organization, passed along the recommendation that, except in cases where law or safety prohibited it, these young women “should have the opportunity to utilize their professional knowledge to the fullest extent.”<sup>48</sup> Among other federal agencies, the West German postal service was willing to work with the labor offices to employ female refugees qualified as telecommunications technicians in various construction programs.<sup>49</sup>

Of course, these women were not the only refugees forced by the circumstances to work in fields other than those in which they had worked in East Germany. Agricultural employment among the refugees was another special case. The areas of prewar Germany east of the Elbe River were historically more rural than the western areas that became West Germany, and had traditionally supplied the large western cities of the Ruhr, Rhine and Main valleys with a significant share of their produce. The division of Germany thus introduced two worrying factors – feeding the western cities with domestic agricultural production, and employing the agricultural workers among the refugees. These were exacerbated by the fear that the migration of agricultural refugees, if not directed toward the establishment and expansion of farms in West Germany, would constitute a second source of rural-to-urban migration and potentially remove farming families permanently from their rural

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<sup>47</sup> Abt. IV, BMVFK to Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung, Nov. 7, 1959 and Landesarbeitsamt Nordbayern to Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung, Dec. 23, 1959, BAK B 119/2307.

<sup>48</sup> “...bei der [Stelle] sie Gelegenheit hat, ihre Berufskenntnisse möglichst weitgehend zu verwerten.” Böckling to Abt. IV, BMVFK, Feb. 9, 1960, BAK B 119/2307.

<sup>49</sup> Schneider (BM für das Post- und Fernmeldewesen) to Böckling, Mar. 9, 1960, BAK B 119/2307.

roots.<sup>50</sup> As seen in Chapter One, this was a problematic situation, even though the actual share of farmers among the refugees never exceeded fifteen percent, and that for only a few months in the first half of 1953.<sup>51</sup> Still, in March 1953, Wenzel Jaksch, a Social Democratic politician and head of the Bureau for Expellees, Refugees, and Evacuees (*Landesamt für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Evakuierte*) in Hesse, called for a federal declaration of a state of emergency, under which it would be possible to appropriate unused agricultural land in West Germany and distribute it to refugee farmers without going through legal channels.<sup>52</sup>

These efforts were made possible, in part, by wartime losses as well as the gradual migration of West Germans from rural areas to major cities; during the first half of the decade, approximately 1.8 million people moved away from West German communities of less than 2,000 inhabitants.<sup>53</sup> Worries about the declining rural population also had a practical side; the combination of migration with the postwar loss of agricultural land east of the Oder meant that, in 1951, West Germany was only producing 55 percent of its domestic food requirements. While industrial and commercial exports could help balance the needed agricultural imports, particularly from the United States and South America, the preferred path of Jaksch and others was the expansion of West German

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<sup>50</sup> Lieselotte Müller, "Zum Problem der bäuerlichen Flüchtlinge aus der SBZ/DDR," in *Flüchtlingsprobleme in Berlin*, Beiheft zur *Integration* (Augsburg: Hofmann Druck und Verlag, 1956), 52-53.

<sup>51</sup> "Übersicht über die Zuwanderer..." Bundesminister für Vertriebene, Nov. 5, 1953, LAB B Rep. 008 Nr. 101.

<sup>52</sup> "West Berlin's Refugee Influx: Farmers' Plight," *The Guardian*, Mar. 3, 1953.

<sup>53</sup> "West Germans on the Move," *The Bulletin*, Sept. 1, 1959, 5.

agriculture through the employment of refugee farmers and the reclamation of nonproductive land.<sup>54</sup>

Refugee farmers, especially those fleeing East Germany to avoid collectivization, were often portrayed sympathetically in the media. Stories focused on their former “ties to the land” and special knowledge of agriculture, drawing contrasts with the perceived inability of the East German communist functionaries, based in East Berlin, to understand basic concepts of agriculture. In one interview published in *The Bulletin*, a weekly newsletter published by the Press Office of the West German government, one refugee farmer said: “I just couldn’t bear the idea of becoming a slave on the land where my family had lived for over a century...the chairman [of the collective farm] dictates what is to be done on the basis of party directives which just do not make sense...some of those in the cooperative do not mind...[because] they don’t know what it is like to own one’s land.”<sup>55</sup> The publication of stories like this indicated the Federal Republic’s interest in supporting family-run farms throughout West Germany; in more concrete terms, the US High Commissioner’s Office estimated in 1953 that the Federal Republic was spending around DM 50,000 per family on purchasing land and equipment for agricultural resettlement, not including the cost of land reclamation efforts begun in areas of northern West Germany near Emsland and Lüneberg.<sup>56</sup>

While providing employment and farmland for refugees was clearly important, the construction of refugee housing was an even more visible aspect of the increasingly permanent position of refugees in West Germany. Indeed, the economic historian Armin Grünbacher has called

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<sup>54</sup> ECA Technical Assistance Commission, 17-18.

<sup>55</sup> “Fleeing from ‘Persuasion’,” *The Bulletin*, April 5, 1960, 4-5.

<sup>56</sup> Reber to Conant, Telegram CT-8296, 10 June 1953, 570.1: Refugees, Security-Segregated General Records, RG 466 HICOG, NARA.

housing construction “the real economic miracle in post-war Germany.”<sup>57</sup> In 1945, the three western occupation zones of Germany counted fewer than 8.5 million intact housing units – a number that included both apartments and single-family houses. Over two million units had been destroyed during the war, leaving their inhabitants homeless. The Federal Ministry for Housing Construction (*Bundesministerium für Wohnungsbau*) estimated that the total housing unit deficit, including destroyed houses as well as those required for housing expellees and refugees, was around six million, a statistic that did not even take into account natural population increases or the arrival of refugees from East Germany in the postwar decade.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the first West German cabinet included a ministry devoted entirely to housing construction, and the Bundestag had already passed an initial housing construction law in April 1950.<sup>59</sup> This provided an initial housing grant of DM 1,500 from the *Länder* to every admitted refugee, an amount that was later raised to DM 2,000 to cover increased building costs.<sup>60</sup>

Of course, even in the absence of newly arrived refugees, housing construction was a crucial part of the rebuilding of German cities in the aftermath of wartime destruction. This was especially true in the central districts of West Berlin, where eighty percent of the prewar buildings had suffered severe damage.<sup>61</sup> The situation in the major West German cities was no different; construction would have been a major expenditure regardless of the refugee situation. However, three quarters of

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<sup>57</sup> Grünbacher, 190, 261.

<sup>58</sup> “Wohnungbestand im Gebiet der Bundesrepublik,” *Tatsachen zum Probleme der deutschen Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge* (Bonn: BMVFK, 1967), 16.

<sup>59</sup> “The Federal Ministry for Housing Construction,” *The Bulletin*, Aug. 26, 1958, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Oberländer to Wehner, Jan. 17, 1958, BAK B 136/3922.

<sup>61</sup> Otto Bach, “Die Wirtschaftliche und Soziale Sicherheit Berlins,” *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte*, Oct. 1952, 601.

the housing units built in the Federal Republic during the early 1950s were reserved for refugees from the Soviet Zone; only the remainder were open to all German citizens. Even so, more refugees were arriving in West Germany than houses and apartments were being constructed, especially in 1950 and 1951. In North Rhine-Westphalia, for example, 537,000 new refugees arrived in those two years; out of the estimated 134,000 new homes required to house them, only 105,000 were actually constructed. Counting the expellees and previously resettled refugees still awaiting a final residence, 1.4 million people, more than ten percent of North Rhine-Westphalia's population, were receiving state and municipal housing assistance, and one estimate in 1952 noted that the *Land* still faced a deficit of over one million units.<sup>62</sup>

Construction also provided employment for many West Germans, and unemployed expellees and refugees in particular: while technical training was required for a few construction jobs, unskilled laborers and former agricultural workers could often find some project willing to take them on. Thus, in 1958, approximately two million West Germans – around ten percent of the entire working population of the country – were employed in various construction-related jobs. A similar percent of the Federal Government's budget was spent on new construction, of which around half went toward new housing, while the remainder financed industrial construction and public works.<sup>63</sup> Given the scale of construction throughout the decade, it is likely that an even higher percentage of the West German economy was devoted to construction earlier in the 1950s. Furthermore, housing

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<sup>62</sup> Reinhold Nimptsch, "Flüchtlingsumsiedlung und Wohnungsbedarf in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte* Sept. 1951, 518-519; "Die Folgen des neuen Flüchtlingsstroms über Berlin für Nordrhein-Westfalen."

<sup>63</sup> "The Building Trade Reports," *The Bulletin*, Aug. 26, 1958, 5.

construction was often a precondition for expanding employment in other fields, especially in West German cities.<sup>64</sup>

As with employment, some construction projects also served a political purpose, as they were seen as one way of demonstrating the superiority of the West German system over that of East Germany. In West Berlin, especially, many comparisons were made between the various projects planned and built in the Western zones and the showcase residential construction project in East Berlin, the *Stalinallee*. While some American officials pressured the government of West Berlin to find some way to match the scope of this East German project, they struggled to find projects that could compete at that scale.<sup>65</sup> Instead, housing construction (and, in many cases, refurbishment and reconstruction) in West Berlin tended to be dispersed among many individual sites. This meant that the number of new and newly available housing units in West Berlin routinely surpassed the number available in East Berlin, even without any major projects to highlight the city's progress. While the initial phases of the *Stalinallee* were under construction in 1953 and 1954, more than thirty thousand new housing units, most reserved specifically for East German refugees, were completed in West Berlin. These were almost entirely financed through public means; DM 440 million from the West Berlin, Federal Republic, and various aid organization budgets, and DM 112 million from private sources, including mortgages and building loans.<sup>66</sup> A portion of the former sum included a DM 20 million donation from the United States, part of a total DM 63 million package for refugee

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<sup>64</sup> "Wohnungen sind die wichtigste Voraussetzung," *Die Zeit*, Jan. 3, 1952.

<sup>65</sup> F. A. Voigt, "A City of Contrasts: Confidence Under Difficulties," *The Guardian*, May 6, 1953, 6.

<sup>66</sup> Schwedler (Senator für Bau- und Wohnungswesen) to Preusker (Bundesminister für Wohnungsbau) "Wohnungsbauprogramm für Sowjetzonenflüchtlinge." Apr. 24, 1955, BAK B 134/524.

housing in both West Berlin and West Germany organized by the Foreign Operations Administration and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation.<sup>67</sup> By 1958, the West Berlin Senate estimated that their housing construction program was about halfway to the goal of 200,000 new housing units over the totals from 1949. Since full capacity for the city's construction industry in the late 1950s was estimated at twenty thousand units per year, it was considered likely that Berlin's housing problems would be solved within five to six years, provided that population growth could be kept in check – given then-current levels of outmigration, excessive growth was considered unlikely.<sup>68</sup>

The approximate four to one ratio of public to private construction financing in West Berlin indicates that housing for refugees was one sector that required significant public investments. The subsidized rents and low interest rates required were not attractive to private lenders, so quasi-governmental institutions like the *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau* played an important role as a channel for millions of dollars and marks destined for housing construction.<sup>69</sup> Outside of West Berlin, funding levels for housing construction were tied to the levels of refugee resettlement in the various *Länder*, according to a formula agreed upon in Düsseldorf in November 1950, and thus referred to as the *Düsseldorfer Schlüssel*. North Rhine-Westphalia received the greatest share – nearly thirty percent of the total federal housing expenditure – but *Länder* like Lower Saxony and Bavaria, with fewer inhabitants but higher numbers of new refugees, received larger shares than their populations would otherwise indicate. The *Düsseldorfer Schlüssel* did not include financing for

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<sup>67</sup> Harris (FOA) to Blücher (Bundesminister für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit), Jan. 25, 1954, BAK B 150/6375.

<sup>68</sup> F. A. Voigt, 6.

<sup>69</sup> Armin Grünbacher, *Reconstruction and Cold War in Germany* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 191.



housing construction in West Berlin, however, so special measures were required to ensure that the city was provided with funding.<sup>70</sup> However, in 1953, some officials in the Federal government were accused of working to increase the number of refugees settled outside of West Berlin, since this would reduce the amount of American aid going to that city and help redirect that aid to West German cities. The Foreign Operations Administration, the main clearinghouse for American aid, eventually disallowed this practice, arguing that slowing the rate of construction in West Berlin would reduce the number of available construction jobs in the city. Since construction was a major source of employment for refugees, diverting funds away from West Berlin would have a significant effect on the city's ability to receive and house additional newcomers.<sup>71</sup>

The scale of the rebuilding effort in both West Germany and West Berlin also inspired debate on how to replace destroyed buildings as well as expand the amount of housing to accommodate the expellees and refugees. The speed of rebuilding meant that most new construction was relatively nondescript, but in some parts of West Berlin and West Germany, architects and urban planners were allowed the opportunity to propose ambitious new building projects, with the intention of completely reorienting the urban landscape. Instead of constructing new buildings on the footprints of the old buildings, these planners sought to replace the older style with high-rise apartment blocks, arguing that such projects, designed with straight lines and limited ornamentation, would represent a complete break with the past.<sup>72</sup> This was an attractive concept in postwar West Germany, and some local authorities and planning boards worked to realize these

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<sup>70</sup> Nimptsch, 521.

<sup>71</sup> Grünbacher, 205.

<sup>72</sup> On the debate over modernism in architecture, see Nathan Glazer, *From A Cause to a Style: Modernist Architecture's Encounter with the American City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007) 7-9.

visions of reorganized cities. Some projects were constructed, like le Corbusier's 337-unit modular *Unité d'Habitation* in Charlottenburg, West Berlin and the *Hansaviertel* complex in the district of Tiergarten, constructed for the International Building Exhibition in Berlin in 1957. Others, however, never moved past the blueprint stage, or were forced to make severe compromises to gain public acceptance.

One project in this latter category was the 'Hannibal' site in the hills to the south of central Stuttgart. Architects Werner Jäger and Otto Müller proposed a single building, 650 meters wide and 18 stories tall in the central section, with a planned 1200 apartments intended to house around 5,000 people. The project seems to have generated excitement among some Stuttgart residents, possibly including many refugees who had been resettled in the area; the builders claimed that 4,000 individuals had applied to purchase an apartment within months of the project's announcement in 1959. However, critics of the project, predicting that housing on this scale would be detrimental and dehumanizing to its inhabitants, managed to delay the project for nearly a decade and eventually force major changes to its design.<sup>73</sup>

In West Berlin, a similar opportunity was presented by the reconstruction of the area around Mehringplatz, at the southern end of Friedrichstrasse, in northern Kreuzberg. Like the more famous Pariserplatz and Leipziger Platz, Mehringplatz (originally known as Belle-Alliance-Platz) was on the edge of what had once been the city walls, and contained a monument and fountain commemorating the post-Napoleonic peace. The 19th-century ring of buildings surrounding the platz was completely destroyed during the war: within the entire 17.5 hectare site, seventy percent of the prewar buildings had been completely destroyed, and only eight percent were in a usable

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<sup>73</sup> "Hannibal ante portas," *The Bulletin*, July 20, 1959, 4.

condition. This was a particularly visible parcel of land, a rough square between Wilhelmstrasse and Lindenstrasse on the north bank of the Landwehr Canal, close to the old city center and about a kilometer south of the boundary between the American and Soviet Zones. A smaller area, across the canal from Mehringplatz, had been chosen as the site of the *Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek* (American Memorial Library), also built during the early 1950s. The area was well-served by public transportation, with the Hallesches Tor U-Bahn station occupying the southern edge of the site and offering access to the major east-west and north-south subway lines. Because of its proximity to the sector boundary, the Mehringplatz area was seen as an ideal site for a Western response to the construction of the Stalinallee in East Berlin, at least compared to the building projects underway in the outlying districts.<sup>74</sup>

The first postwar plan for the site's reconstruction was proposed by Bruno Döring in 1949 and submitted to the Kreuzberg Planning Commission that same year. Döring's plan maintained the original circular pattern of the platz and the existing memorial and fountain at the center, with a ring of six to eight-story flat-façade steel and glass buildings describing the circle's edge. Döring also suggested that one parcel at the southern end, left over as city property when Gitschinerstrasse was redirected along the Landwehr Canal to the south of the platz, should be used for a new Kreuzberg district office or as a new headquarters for the municipal transit company BVG. Whatever its merits, the city administration seems to have overlooked the plan; Döring was never formally commissioned to provide a design for the site, and had only spoken informally with Friedrich Furlinger, the head of the Kreuzberg Planning Commission, before submitting his plans for the site.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Schwedler to Preusker, Apr. 24, 1955, BAK B 134/524.

<sup>75</sup> *Bebauung Mehring- und Blucherplatz, Baupläne von Bruno Döring*, LAB B Rep 009 Nr. 238.

A more ambitious plan was commissioned by West Berlin's Senator for Building and Housing Affairs and the local organization *Gemeinnützige Heimstätten Aktiengesellschaft* (GEHAG), and awarded to the émigré German architect Walter Gropius and his Boston-based design firm, the Architects' Collaborative, to be assisted by the Berlin architect and urban planner Wils Ebert, a former Bauhaus student of Gropius. In early 1957, the Architect's Collaborative, supported by the promise of a DM 25 million donation from the United States, submitted three plans for the site. These differed primarily in design detail: all three envisioned a project that would house 2,000 families, drawn from West Berlin's refugee population, in an assortment of high- and low-rise apartment blocks surrounded by parkland. These plans also called for a revision of the local road network, erasing all traces of the former circular platz (except for the central statue and fountain), and installing a new avenue, the "Southern Tangent" to connect Kreuzberg with the rest of West Berlin. This project was intended to provide a showcase for both German-American cooperation and new modes of urban living. Gropius conceded that a significant portion of the project's expenses would lie in purchasing the 180 plots of land in the area that were still privately owned, even though most owners had made no attempt to rebuild since the war's end. Still, his project proposal argued this was preferable to allowing the unique opportunity for redevelopment on a large scale to slip away.<sup>76</sup>

Despite the support of such a prominent architect, as well as that of Eleanor Lansing Dulles, the head of the Office of German Affairs at the U.S. Department of State (and sister of the American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles), the Gropius proposal never moved beyond the planning phase. Gropius cited the expense of buying out property owners as one reason, though the architect

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<sup>76</sup> Walter Gropius, "Projekt Berlin-Mehringplatz," GDR Numerical Files 2-E-1 E.2: Projects, U.S. Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

also blamed Rolf Schwedler, the Senator for Building and Housing Affairs, for changing the parameters of the project. Only after seeing the new plans did Schwedler insist that the established circular form of the platz should be retained, a change that Gropius considered “old-fashioned and against recognized modern views in urban development...”<sup>77</sup> However, it is probable that other factors were also working against the Mehringplatz plan. West Berlin already had its showcase modernist architectural attraction in the Hansaviertel, and the Mehringplatz site was several kilometers from the emerging West Berlin centers of Schöneberg and the Kurfürstendamm. Eventually, as with the ‘Hannibal’ project in Stuttgart, a much less ambitious – though no less modernist – project was constructed based on Wils Ebert’s designs, maintaining the circular pattern of the former Belle-Alliance-Platz, though with a double-ring of low apartment buildings, similar to Döring’s original 1949 plan. Despite its isolation in Cold-War-era West Berlin, the city’s reunification has reintegrated Mehringplatz into Berlin’s modern fabric. Ironically, the once-marginal area has recently become an inadvertent tourist destination, situated on the path between the Hallesches Tor U-Bahn station and a much newer project by another internationally renowned architect – Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum Berlin.

Not all modernist plans focused on these ambitious “machines for living,” however. Some West Germans preferred to follow the lead of the British and American urban planners who advocated suburban expansion as superior to urban reconstruction. In 1960, Paul Lücke, the Federal Minister of Housing Construction between 1957 and 1965 and former chair of the Bundestag Committee for Housing Construction, travelled to the London suburbs to tour the ‘New Towns’ of

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<sup>77</sup> Gropius to E. L. Dulles, May 28, 1957; E. L. Dulles to Gropius, June 6, 1957; Gropius to E. L. Dulles, July 17, 1957, GDR Numerical Files 2-E.5 Housing and Construction Programs, U.S. Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage. By comparison with the large apartment complexes being planned and built in many West German cities, these were lower-density suburban projects, built in formerly rural areas and connected to London by public transportation and an expanded highway system. Lücke admired the British towns' pedestrianized commercial areas (a rarity in German cities of the period), as well as their predominant focus on single-family homes with small gardens, which he believed increased the residents' overall harmony with nature.<sup>78</sup> Transporting these ideas to West Germany, the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior planned four new communities on former military factories and depots in Geretsried, Waldkraiburg, Traunreut and Neutraubling, all with low-density housing and newly constructed public buildings.<sup>79</sup> A similar community was also planned at Tannenbusch, on the north side of Bonn, an entirely new residential district of low apartment buildings and smaller houses, along with commercial areas and entertainment facilities, intended to house refugees as well as employees of the newly established Federal Government.<sup>80</sup>

One such lower-density project was planned for West Berlin, comprising several hundred prefabricated houses to be imported from Finland and paid for by a \$5 million subsidy provided to the International Cooperation Administration by the Finnish government. This offer was originally made in 1954, but delays in planning put off a final decision until early 1957, and several changes were necessary. Some of the original grant was used to provide housing assistance to Greece and Pakistan, while devaluation of the Finnish currency meant that fewer houses could be purchased. In addition, the U.S. Air Force had since purchased the original site in Spandau for the installation of

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<sup>78</sup> "U.K. Town Planning – A Model for Germany," *The Bulletin*, May 17, 1960, 4.

<sup>79</sup> Karl Jering, "New Communities in West Germany," *Integration*, Vol. 3 No. 3/4 (Fall 1954), 289-291.

<sup>80</sup> "Self-Portrait of a Crowded Capital," *The Bulletin*, Dec. 13, 1960, 5.

communications equipment, and a new construction site was acquired in Kladow, near Potsdam in southwestern West Berlin. Eventually, 346 two-story, 80 square meter townhouses were erected at that location, between the British airfield at Gatow and the western edge of the Wannsee.<sup>81</sup> While this project did allow for Berliners and refugees to purchase houses for significantly less than the going rate for new-constructed houses, there were some complaints that the installation of prefabricated housing did not help unemployed refugee artisans.<sup>82</sup>

This controversy that pitted the construction of landmark apartment complexes against suburban expansion extended beyond the realm of architectural philosophy, into party politics. In a 1956 meeting of West Berlin's CDU committee, Ernst Lemmer, a Bundestag member who would become the Minister for All-German Questions in 1957, called anti-modernist town planner Albert König a 'psychopath' for turning opposition to large-scale apartment blocks into a partisan issue. Lemmer agreed that high-rises were not necessarily "compatible with the family and housing ideals" of the CDU, but saw the need for social housing solutions as more important than controversies over design.<sup>83</sup>

Yet such ambitious plans accounted for only a fraction of all housing construction throughout the country. In much of Lower Saxony, for example, construction projects were considerably smaller. In towns like Osterode, Celle and Lingen, the average project might have been a row of duplexes or a small apartment block with six to twelve units, built at a cost of fifty to one

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<sup>81</sup> "Finnmark Prefabricated Houses for Berlin Refugee Housing Program," October 15 1957, GDR Numerical Files 2-E.5, Housing and Construction Programs, Office of German Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs, Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

<sup>82</sup> Stanley Baruch to Leon Goldenberg, "Housing and Construction Programs in West Berlin," January 23, 1957, GDR Numerical Files 2-E.5, Housing and Construction Programs, Office of German Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs, Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

<sup>83</sup> CDU Landesvorstand Berlin, 2nd Sitting, June 1, 1956, LAB B Rep 246 Nr. 3.

hundred thousand marks. Projects in larger cities like Wolfsburg, Hildesheim or Osnabrück might have twenty to fifty units, completed at a cost of around three hundred thousand marks.

Throughout Lower Saxony, only a few hundred separate housing units were completed every year during the 1950s, a rate that barely maintained pace with the number of refugees being resettled.<sup>84</sup>

This meant that not all of the arriving refugees necessarily were moving into newly-constructed buildings; in one district, all 600 new refugees arriving during 1953 had to move into older buildings, since none of the local construction projects had been completed.<sup>85</sup>

One common theme between the Mehringplatz proposal of Walter Gropius and the establishment of garden city inspired developments in Kladow and elsewhere was the central role of foreign aid in financing housing construction for refugees. This included a promised DM 25 million donation to the Mehringplatz project, and about half of that amount to the complex in Kladow.<sup>86</sup> In 1953, the U.S. provided \$15 million through the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) to be used for the housing of refugees, either directly or indirectly (e.g. by allowing existing housing to be vacated in favor of refugees). Contributions through the rest of the decade added another \$25 million, but even the combined total only covered ten percent of the total cost of housing construction in West Berlin. The balance was paid by German sources, both public and private. By

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<sup>84</sup> Wohnungsbau für Flüchtlinge aus der sowjetischen Besatzungszone, Bauvorhaben in den Regierungsbezirken Osnabrück, Hildesheim, Lüneburg, NSHA Nds. 300 Acc. 27/71 Nr. 155.

<sup>85</sup> Regierungspräsident Osnabrück to Niedersächsische Sozialminister, Jan. 5, 1954, NSHA Nds. 300 Acc. 27/71 Nr. 155.

<sup>86</sup> West Berlin Housing Programs: Counterpart and U.S. Owned Local Currency, Mar. 31, 1958, GDR Numerical Files 2-E.5, Housing and Construction Programs, Office of German Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs, Department of State, RG 59, NARA.



1958, housing construction in the city was entirely financed through German sources, and ICA aid was phased out.<sup>87</sup>

In addition, other American-funded aid programs indirectly helped the refugees, including \$500 million to re-establish heavy industry in West Berlin, which helped to reduce the number of unemployed to less than 100,000 in 1958, after it had been above 300,000 earlier in the decade.<sup>88</sup> However, even as American aid was phased out in 1958 and 1959, some experts within the State Department expressed concern that American politicians or businessmen might notice the sums spent on housing construction in West Berlin, and question whether that money was better spent on construction in the United States. However, as an investment in the support of a crucial Cold War ally, there seems to have been little significant debate over this aid.<sup>89</sup>

The United States Government was not the only source of international aid to West Berlin and West Germany. Responding to the influx of refugees in early 1953, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Ford Foundation worked to provide assistance with the unexpected rise in refugee registrations. In February of that year, the UNHCR appealed to the various governments of the United Nations and the Council of Europe, as well as non-affiliated governments in the Vatican, Switzerland, and Finland to provide aid to West Berlin and West Germany, and requested that the West German government provide customs exemptions and transportation costs for all goods provided for refugee relief – the Finnish housing that would be

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<sup>87</sup> Thomas P. Coogan and Bernard Wagner, Report on West Berlin Housing Programs, 18 June 1958, GDR Numerical Files 2-E.5, Housing and Construction Programs, Office of German Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs, Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

<sup>88</sup> “What We Have Done In Berlin” 14 April, 1958, Berlin Numerical Files 3B, Office of German Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs, Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. n. 72, Baruch to Goldenberg, 23 Jan. 1957.

erected in Kladow was an outgrowth of this request, even though it took several years to materialize. At the same time, the Ford Foundation provided nearly DM 2 million (twenty percent of the total cost) toward the immediate construction of seventeen permanent housing projects in cities and suburbs around West Germany, using prefabricated houses imported from Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Italy. These two-family units were to be provided with furniture, utility connections and built-in appliances, and were intended to serve families in “reasonable comfort for many years.”<sup>90</sup> Several years later, in 1957, the Council of Europe established a ‘Resettlement Fund’ for the refugees, providing DM 15 million for the construction of housing in Berlin.<sup>91</sup>

Similar arrangements could be negotiated for home furnishings as well. The government of the Netherlands, also through the mediation of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, donated furniture worth 100,000 guilders to North Rhine-Westphalia to help furnish newly constructed apartments for refugees. Seventy-two apartments received a full complement of Dutch furniture, including a dining table and chairs, a stove, cupboards and four beds with mattresses and wool blankets. The Netherlands also provided transportation for the goods up to the border crossing at Zevenaar, though the North Rhine-Westphalia government was responsible for subsequent transport costs.<sup>92</sup>

While foreign aid was a key component fueling West German reconstruction, especially in West Berlin, it was also meant to create the perception of assistance and remind West Berliners and West Germans of their benefactors. For example, the International Cooperation Administration

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<sup>90</sup> Ford Foundation Grant, Berlin, Sept. 1, 1953, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 104.

<sup>91</sup> Werner Middelman, Refugees in Germany: Address to the International Committee for World Refugee Year, Geneva, Sept. 11, 1959, BAK B 150/755.

<sup>92</sup> Nahm to Platte (Minister für Arbeit und Soziales, Nordrhein-Westfalen), Aug. 20, 1954; Rörholt (UNHCR Representative in West Germany) to Middelman, June 23, 1953, BAK B 150/576.

stipulated that signs denoting the source of the funding be erected at construction sites financed in part by American aid.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, the experience of refugee resettlement, employment and housing construction seems to indicate that these efforts were mostly domestic in scope; emigration was a minor factor, and the reconstruction of West Berlin and the West German cities was largely accomplished through local investment and labor.

Much like the institutionalized reception process outlined in the previous chapter, the construction of the Berlin Wall removed much of the immediate need and justification for continued refugee resettlement. However, such efforts within West Germany continued for several years after 1961. As late as 1964, the border *Länder* – Bavaria, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein – asked for Federal assistance to resettle around 120,000 former refugees to North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg. The total cost for this movement came to 265 million DM, or more than two thousand Marks per person, not including those additional millions that went to housing construction in the destination *Länder*.<sup>94</sup> Even in West Berlin, though, the reconstruction programs of the 1950s and early 1960s had succeeded in providing adequate housing for the vast majority of received refugees, while unemployment throughout West Germany was at historically low levels. However, the process of creating employment and constructing housing, while more permanent than refugee camps and welfare payments, was still considered a temporary solution to the problem of East German refugees. None of these measures addressed the long-term problems of shifting demographics and German reunification.

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<sup>93</sup> Harris to Blücher, Jan. 25, 1954, BAK B 150/6375.

<sup>94</sup> “Verordnung zur Änderung und Ergänzung...” Feb. 12, 1964, BM für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte, BAK B 150/6221.

### Studying the Danger of Demographic Change: Controversies at the Intersection of Government and Academia

In September 1959, a group of sociologists, demographers, historians, economists and other social scientists from around Europe gathered in West Berlin to attend the ninth annual meeting of the Association for the Study of the European Refugee Problem (abbreviated to AER, after the French version of the name: *Association Européenne pour l'Etude du Problème des Réfugiés*) and its affiliated organization, the Association for the Study of the World Refugee Program (AWR). The meeting was hosted by the AER's German Section, comprising more than one hundred and fifty scholars and researchers at German universities, research centers and government ministries, with the intention of showing off West Berlin's progress in dealing with its own refugee problem while still focusing on the continuing process of reception and resettlement. In addition to the lectures and presentations characteristic of most academic conferences, attendees' schedules also included a visit to the Marienfelde reception camp.<sup>1</sup> At the opening session, Professor Walter Schätzel, director of the Institute for International Law and Politics at the University of Bonn, chairman of the German Section and First Vice President of the AER, welcomed the 240 assembled scholars to his hometown by recalling the organization's ten-year history and its members' research on refugees throughout Europe and around the world. He ended by linking this work to the very real problems posed by the migration of refugees into West Berlin and West Germany during this period, including the provision of welfare and housing, as well as the process of economic integration through

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<sup>1</sup> "Flüchtlinge als Objekt der Wissenschaft: Internationale Experten-Tagung in der Berliner Kongresshalle," *Der Kurier*, Aug. 26, 1959.

employment.<sup>2</sup>

However, Professor Schätzel's address gave little hint of the controversy that was already brewing between the German Section and the Federal Government, in particular the Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims, which had provided significant funding for the organization during previous years and strongly supported its goal of publicizing refugee issues – German and otherwise – in the international arena. Few political considerations had the ability to disrupt this relationship, but one in particular was the strained relations between West Germany and Poland. In late 1958, Professor Karim Gökyay, a scholar from the University of Istanbul and president of the AER and AWR, had proposed inviting several Polish researchers from the University of Warsaw to the meeting in West Berlin as a gesture of international scholarly friendship. This proposal was supported by René Oderbolz, a pastor from Geneva and the groups' combined General Secretary. Preliminary discussions were held in January 1959 between Gottfried Hobus, Schätzel's deputy, and the representative of the Polish cultural attaché in West Germany in order to convince the Polish government that the conference, although meeting in West Berlin, was organized by a neutral and international body, and not directly affiliated with the West German government.<sup>3</sup> Because an official invitation would require the support of the host section, the section's leadership, including Schätzel and Hobus, considered this proposal at a meeting in March 1959, where the possibility of resistance to the idea among the section's rank and file was brought up. Walter Arke,

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Schätzel, "Begrüßungsworte," AER 9. Generalversammlung, Aug. 26, 1959, BAK B 150/2756; Denkschrift: Die Europäische Forschungsgruppe für Flüchtlingsfragen – Ziele, Mitglieder, Organisation, 1959-1960, BAK B 150/2752.

<sup>3</sup> Alois Vogt (Frijtof-Nansen-Institut, Vaduz) to Gottfried Hobus (Vizegeneralsekretär der AER), Mar. 2, 1959, BAK B 150/2755; Protokoll der Sitzung des Kuratoriums der Deutschen Sektion, Nürnberg, Jan. 31, 1959.

another member of the German Section and a midlevel employee of the Ministry of Expellees, Refugees and War Victims, suggested that if the AER/AWR leadership did extend an invitation to the Poles, many members of the German Section might consider withdrawing or even resigning from the organization, possibly leading to a cancellation of the conference.<sup>4</sup> Hobus, at least, was still willing to consider the proposal if the Polish scholars would submit their papers to the organizers in advance and refrain from discussing politically sensitive issues, namely the expulsion of Germans from Poland after the war, and provided that neither the Federal nor the West Berlin governments objected to the invitation.<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, however, the German Section, in a meeting held on April 16, voted as a group to withdraw their sponsorship of the West Berlin conference if such an invitation was extended, a decision that was communicated by Schätzel to Gökey the following week. While it is unclear how many members were in favor of blocking the invitation, this was not a unanimous verdict; several members of the organization registered their private dissatisfaction with the situation and argued for a more moderate stance. Walter Arke, in a private memo addressed to a colleague at the Ministry for All-German Questions, called the decision “regrettable” (*ist zu bedauern*) and argued that a cancellation of the meeting would work against the West German interest in publicizing the problem of refugees in West Berlin.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the relationship between the various ministries of the Federal Government and the German Section (as well as within the German Section) was already at a low point when Hobus was

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<sup>4</sup> Protokoll diner Besprechung in Bad Godesberg, Mar. 19, 1959, BAK B 150/2755.

<sup>5</sup> Arke to Schätzel, Mar. 25, 1959, BAK B 150/2755; Unterredung zwischen Klein (Protokollchef Berlin) und Sallinger (Zentralverband politischer Osrflüchtlinge), May 28, 1959, BAK B 15-/2755.

<sup>6</sup> Bundesminister für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte to Bundesminister für gesamtdeutsche Fragen, April (after April 22) 1959, BAK B 150/2755.

questioned about this issue at a press conference on the final day of the West Berlin meeting in August. Rather than admitting the complicity of the German Section's leaders and membership, he instead blamed the Federal Government for vetoing the invitation to the Poles.<sup>7</sup> Hobus's claim was subsequently reprinted in several newspapers, drawing an angry response from Peter Paul Nahm, the State Secretary in the Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims (deputy to Minister Theodor Oberländer) and himself a member of the section since 1952 – though it was not clear whether he had attended the meeting in April. Schätzel was forced to publicly confirm that the Federal Government played no role in rejecting Gökey's proposal, and the leaders of the German Section were forced to apologize to the Ministry, as well as Gökey and Oderbolz, for their handling of the situation.<sup>8</sup>

This conflict signaled the effective end of a decade-long period of cooperation between the West German government and the German section of the AER, though the relationship had been strained for several years before 1959. However, it had little impact on the members of the other thirteen national sections of the AER/AWR, which officially merged in 1962 to form the Association for the Study of the International Refugee Problem. Neither was this the only group of researchers on migration and refugee issues active during the 1950s, though it was probably the largest. Several members were also affiliated with the Research Group for European Migration Problems (REMP), based in the Netherlands while others worked with the United Nations and other international organizations. However, the academic study of migration and refugees that grew up in the postwar years had deep roots in Germany, Berlin in particular. Eugene Kulischer, one of the few leading

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<sup>7</sup> "Bonn gegen polnische Teilnahme," *Der Tagesspiegel*, Sept. 1, 1959.

<sup>8</sup> Nahm to Schätzel, Sept. 8, 1959; Gökey to Schätzel, Sept. 18, 1959; Schätzel to Nahm, Sept. 23, 1959; Nahm to Schätzel, Oct. 7, 1959, BAK B 150/2755.

scholars who had been involved in the field since before the war, taught at the University of Berlin in the 1920s, while several of the scholars attending the AER/AWR conference in 1959, including Gunther Beijer and Friedrich Edding, had been students at the university thirty years earlier.

This conflict also shows the active connections between the government ministries responsible for implementing and enforcing migration policies and the scholars and researchers studying migration as a distinct phenomenon in postwar Europe. West Germany was not an isolated case in this respect. Other members of the AER/AWR and REMP consortia consulted with their own governments as well as many international organizations, in particular the International Labor Organization and various United Nations offices. Their research and recommendations reflected a consensus that, while reserving a role for states in organizing and regulating migration, was critical of the increased controls aimed at preventing migration that had been in place since the First World War. Most supported policies aimed at ensuring the right of individuals to migrate freely, a mainstream position among scholars of migration at the time. As Edgar Salin, a professor at the University of Basel, wrote on the confluence of democracy and “nomadism” in a 1950 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, “[t]he fate of the European Continent may depend upon whether, gradually, a solution is found for the refugee problem. Those who are really aware of the situation...realize that it cannot be mended by German strength alone...we may compare the calming effect of the free immigration and emigration of the nineteenth century with the results of autarchy and isolationism in the twentieth.”<sup>9</sup> For Salin, free migration was the ideal, but failing that, the regulation of migration was far preferable to its prevention. Eugene Kulischer was more realistic about the ability of states to recreate the era of free migration, given the settlement of Siberia and the American west.

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<sup>9</sup> Edgar Salin, “Social Forces in Germany Today,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Jan., 1950), pp. 265-277.



However, he did call for the loosening of migration regulations and an end to states' "amateurish planning" of migratory movements.<sup>10</sup>

One way of understanding the level of consensus and interaction between Kulischer, Salin and other scholars of migration during this period is through the concepts of "thought collectives" and "thought styles," terms coined by Ludwik Fleck in the late 1930s and somewhat popularized in the study of science by Thomas S. Kuhn. To Fleck, a thought collective constituted "a community of persons mutually exchanging ideas or maintaining intellectual interaction," that is, individuals engaging in social activities that lead to scholarly consensus, whether through formal means such as conferences and publications or through more informal contacts.<sup>11</sup> Thus, among scholars and researchers studying migration, whether from sociological, political, economic or demographic perspectives, the twin scholarly activities of publishing research and attending conferences allowed for the development of a "thought collective," constructed around a belief that dangerous overconcentrations of population were a primary concern in the post-World War II era.

This consensus, to the extent that it provided limits and constraints on how these scholars and researchers approached the issue of migration, is a clear illustration of a "thought style." By focusing on concepts like population density, rates of growth and migration, economic potential, and area of arable land, these researchers sought to establish specific rules that would indicate the level of danger posed to societies by overpopulation. These analyses of population issues assumed that overpopulation was problematic, an abnormal situation requiring immediate and occasionally

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<sup>10</sup> Eugene Kulischer, *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 322.

<sup>11</sup> Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, translated by Fred Bradley and Thaddeus J. Trenn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 39.

drastic solutions, and their authors were not reticent about proposing significant changes to government policies in Europe and North America or advocating international action: some called for an expansion of overseas emigration, while others sought to replicate the conditions of the late nineteenth century, when greater industrial and agricultural investment in Western Europe allowed for increased levels of employment and production.

These researchers also found a ready audience in European and North American government officials and the leaders of international organizations, who were also interested in practical solutions to both local and broader problems of migration. While the central issue of the loosening of migration restrictions found little traction within governments, state officials were able to tap into these networks and occasionally co-opt them, either by providing funding to organizations or employing individual researchers. This was definitely the case in West Germany, where the combination of a politically active expellee and refugee population, ministries devoted to refugee affairs at both the federal and state levels and an established tradition of the academic study of migration meant that this research was financially supported.<sup>12</sup> For much of the period, this relationship was a positive one, and all sides benefitted from their connections. However, the close association also led to charges of bias and conflict between researchers and government officials, as would be seen in some of the interactions between the AER and West German government. However, this influence did flow in both directions; bureaucrats within the West German ministries occasionally advocated for positions more in-tune with their academic peers than the official government line.

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<sup>12</sup> BMVFK, Referat II/2a, Vermerk, Aug. 29, 1955, BAK B 150/2753; "Denkschrift über die AER und die Deutsche Sektion e.V. der AER," Mar. 1957, BAK B 150/2754.

The development of this particular “thought style” was largely a product of the work of Eugene Kulischer, one of the most influential experts on migration and demography during this period. As a researcher and theorist, he wrote several definitive works proposing and refining a theory of the role played by migration history. However, he was also a political refugee several times over, which undoubtedly affected his interest in the topic, and led to his employment by the International Labor Office studying wartime refugees in the 1940s. A native of Kiev, he studied law and taught at the University of St. Petersburg and Kiev State University before fleeing the Ukraine in 1920. Arriving in Germany, he took a position as *Privatdozent* in the Institute of Foreign Economics and Law at the University of Berlin and began his research into historical migration patterns. Working with his younger brother Alexander, the two published *Kriegs- und Wanderzüge: Weltgeschichte als Völkerbewegung* (War and Migration: World History as the Movement of Peoples) in 1932. This book marked the genesis of a theory that Kulischer would return to several times in the final 24 years of his life, the centrality of migration as a factor for historical development and a primary source of both conflict and its resolution.<sup>13</sup> Since this work was only concerned with the period up to 1917, it had little practical impact, and the brothers began to revise it in order to take into account the contemporary period – as well as their own experiences. However, their Jewish ancestry meant that the two Kulischers were forced out of their academic positions after the Nazi takeover in 1933. They subsequently left Berlin, heading first to Denmark and eventually reaching Paris in 1936. Proving again that moving within the international network of scholars and research institutions was relatively easy, Eugene, now in his fifties, took a position as research fellow with the *Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique*. The German invasion of France in 1940, however,

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<sup>13</sup> Eugene Kulischer and Alexander Kulischer, *Kriegs- und Wanderzüge: Weltgeschichte als Völkerbewegung* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1932)

forced the brothers to flee again. Eugene succeeded, settling in North America. Alexander, however, did not: arrested while trying to cross into Vichy France, he died in a concentration camp.<sup>14</sup>

After arriving in North America, Kulischer was engaged as a researcher on European migration issues for the International Labor Office, which had moved to Montreal from Geneva for the duration of the war. While in this position, he authored several studies on wartime migration in Europe, and was the first person to use the term “displaced persons” to refer to concentration camp inmates and forced laborers who had been deported from their home countries to Germany during the war. Moving from Montreal to Washington, DC in 1944, Kulischer lectured at American University and was hired as a consultant to the American Office of Strategic Services on European population issues. While in these positions, he published several shorter studies on migration and continued to translate and prepare the work he and his brother had begun in Paris. This was published in 1948 as *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917-1947*. While originally intended as a chronological sequel to *Kriegs- und Wanderzüge*, Kulischer took the opportunity to summarize the arguments of his earlier work in the first two sections, in part to introduce his theories to an Anglophone audience. *Europe on the Move* cemented Kulischer’s reputation among scholars and researchers of migration, and for the next decade or so, few books and articles on migration failed to cite his work.

During the last few years of his life, Kulischer was clearly one of the leading scholars of migration in the world, serving as a consultant to the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Library of

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<sup>14</sup> For biographical information, see the Preface to Eugene Kulischer, *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), v-vi; see also Michael K. Roof, “In Memoriam: Eugene M. Kulischer,” *R.E.M.P Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 3 (July-Sept., 1956), 41-44; and A. J. Jaffe, “Notes on the Population Theory of Eugene M. Kulischer,” *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* Vol. 40, No. 2 (Apr. 1962), 187-206.

Congress and contributing the article on Migration to the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica in 1952. As an established (and clearly anti-Communist) expert on Russia and Eastern Europe, living in Washington DC during the early years of the Cold War, he was often called upon to provide comment on the situation in the Soviet Union for American scholars and government officials.<sup>15</sup> He also continued to work on a magnum opus, a compilation and expansion of his previous works on migration, and a further revision of his theoretical bases. This manuscript, intended to be a four-volume work tentatively titled *History as Movement of Peoples and Civilizations*, remained unfinished at his death in 1956.

In all of his works, Kulischer elaborated on the central contention of his theory of migration, that human mobility has been, is, and will likely continue to be the central process in world history, a process he termed ‘the perpetual great migration.’ All levels of migrations were included in his analysis, from transcontinental and transoceanic colonization through limited intra-city movement; even at widely varying scales, migration was always evidence of differential population pressures. All other human experience proceeded from the ability or inability of populations to migrate: wars, trade, internal development, and economic advances were thus subordinate to the need for mobility. The relationship between war and migration was at the heart of Kulischer’s thesis; he argued that conflict and violence were created by the prevention of peaceful migration as well as the unwilling introduction of migrants into unfamiliar societies. In addition, war itself created migration, in the concentrated movements of armies and the dispersed flight of refugees, as well as the settlement of

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Eugene Kulischer, “Population Changes Behind the Iron Curtain,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 271, Moscow’s European Satellites (Sept. 1950), 100-111.

conquered territories after the cessation of hostilities.<sup>16</sup> In *Europe on the Move*, the work published in 1948, Kulischer backed up these theories with his concrete analysis of migratory movements in Europe and Russia since 1917, based largely on his wartime research for the ILO. In the section summing up the effects of wartime migration in Europe, for example, he noted that wartime migrations, uninhibited by “social factors and artificial barriers,” all of which would have moderated peacetime migration, shifted the balance point of European population westwards, from Russia toward Germany. Because this migration was not accomplished through peaceful means, it only exacerbated Europe’s population problems by creating overpopulation in Central Europe. Alleviating this pressure would require allowing overpopulated regions and countries – in this case, Germany – to shed their excess population peacefully, using migration as a sort of ‘safety valve.’ Kulischer was adamant that a failure to address these issues could result in a resumption of conflict.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond theoretical speculation and practical analysis, Kulischer also sought to influence the discipline of demography. He criticized his peers and colleagues for problematizing migration, that is, assuming that the natural state of human civilization had always been sedentary and non-migratory and considering any departure from that pattern as abnormal. As Kulischer argued in the second part of the work, adapted from the earlier *Kriegs- und Wanderzüge*, migration is “at once perpetual, partial, and universal...it never ceases, it affects every people, but at a given moment it sets in motion only a small number of each population; hence the illusion of immobility.”<sup>18</sup> Kulischer aimed his criticism at demographers who focused on other facets of population growth and decline, like fertility and mortality, and who considered migration to be an unnatural (and

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<sup>16</sup> Kulischer, *Europe*, 18-23.

<sup>17</sup> Kulischer, *Europe*, 306, 380.

<sup>18</sup> Kulischer, *Europe*, 9.

unpredictable) irruption into settled life. Because they did not account for significant population movements in their demographic projections, many demographers were unable to anticipate the effects of mass population movements in the wake of 20<sup>th</sup> century wars.<sup>19</sup>

For Kulischer, the source of these misunderstandings was the second half of the nineteenth century, a period when Western Europe saw a relative lack of armed conflict, rapidly expanding industrial and agricultural production, and the availability of a major outlet for migration to North and South America. These circumstances allowed for significant population growth and no decline in standards of living. Because this same period also saw the establishment of the academic and bureaucratic discipline of demography, long-term extrapolations from contemporary statistics were considered ‘normal’ levels of population growth. However, Kulischer argued, and was later proved correct, that these statistics were actually demographic outliers.<sup>20</sup> However, he did not advocate a complete break from these commonly held views on population and demography. Like many of his contemporaries, Kulischer was concerned about unnatural concentrations of population, and theorized that individuals and groups invariably sought social and economic equilibrium through either migration or violence. In the process, he replaced one form of problematization with another: Kulischer, and those who followed his lead, often argued that migration without restrictions was an absolute necessity in the modern world. Were people not allowed the freedom to migrate as necessary, population differentials – and, most importantly, overpopulation – would undoubtedly lead to conflict and catastrophe.

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<sup>19</sup> Kulischer, *Europe*, 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> On Kulischer’s opposition to the transition theory of population, see Jaffe, 191-195.

It is also important to note that Kulischer, though he focused on quantitative definitions of overpopulation, still argued that public perceptions of overcrowding were just as important. Thus, the leading solution to problems of overpopulation, like those that Europe experienced at the end of the Second World War, was to seek a greater equalization of economic density by supporting the right of migration: "...every reasonable regulation favoring migration...is a step towards world peace, while every barrier against the peaceful movements of people...is a step towards the promotion of war."<sup>21</sup> However, this forecast of a return to European conflict as a result of the population pressures caused by postwar migration clearly never came to pass. Even the migration of refugees out of East Germany during the 1950s, a movement that Kulischer would likely have criticized, did not decisively shift this balance.

Kulischer's theories on migration and population were influential, not least among the community of academics and officials who studied migration or dealt with migrants and refugees on a regular basis. His theoretical and historically grounded approach to migration, especially in the first two parts of *Europe on the Move*, provided an ideal counterpoint to more practical and concrete studies published under the auspices of governments and international organizations. These included Jacques Vernant, commissioned by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees to provide a comprehensive report on global refugee movements, published as *The Refugee in the Postwar World* in 1953, and the International Labor Office, Kulischer's one-time employer, which published a comprehensive study on world migration trends in 1959.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Jaffe, 204; Kulischer, *Migration*, 463; Kulischer, *Europe*, 325.

<sup>22</sup> Jacques Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-war World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953); International Labor Office, *International Migration 1945-1957*, ILO Studies and Reports, New Series, No. 54 (Geneva, 1959).



Like Kulischer, a majority of these officials and scholars focused on the unprecedented nature of politically-motivated migrations during and after the war, and sought to understand the often-disruptive effects of these migrations on the countries of origin and destination, as well as the refugees themselves.<sup>23</sup> Thus, postwar studies of migration focused primarily on practical themes – understanding specific situations of migration and providing policy advice for governments and international organizations. Academics also looked to promote their research through the establishment of scholarly associations; the remainder of this section will focus on two of these, the Research Group for European Migration Problems (REMP) and the Association for the Study of the European Refugee Problem (AER), which were both founded in the early 1950s.

The driving force behind the creation of REMP was Gunther Beijer, a sociologist and demographer living in The Hague. A native of Berlin, Beijer had been a metalworker and trade unionist before attending the Hochschule für Politik and the University of Berlin, studying social economics. Like Kulischer, he was a refugee; active in Social Democratic politics during the 1920s, he left Germany in 1933 and completed his doctorate at the University of Basel before moving to the Netherlands with his wife, a Dutch citizen.<sup>24</sup> Despite being an exile and former Nazi opponent, he did not leave the Netherlands during the war, but survived the German occupation by going underground. After the war he became a Dutch citizen and seems to have at that point adopted the Dutch spelling of his surname – it had originally been ‘Beyer’ – for use in his academic publications.

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<sup>23</sup> ILO, *International Migration*, 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Karl Schwartz, “Dr. Gunther Beyer,” *International Migration*, Vol 21, No. 2 (1983). It is possible that Beijer, a student at the University of Berlin during the late 1920s, may have been familiar with – or perhaps even studied under – Kulischer, who taught at the university from 1921 to 1935. While there is no evidence supporting a personal connection, it is likely that Beijer had at least read Kulischer’s first monograph on migration, published in 1932, and he was clearly familiar with Kulischer’s later works.

For the rest of his life, only a handful of his German colleagues and correspondents continued to use the German spelling. Leo Schwartz, an American scholar of migration writing on German refugees during this period, attested to Beijer's assimilation in his adopted country, citing him as an example of a 'non-German' scholar interested in the migration of German refugees.<sup>25</sup>

The early research topics and publications of REMP reflected Beijer's preoccupation with issues of migration in Germany. The group itself grew out of a research project undertaken in the late 1940s by Pieter Jan Bouman, Beijer, and J. J. Oudegeest. Published in 1950 under the title *The Refugee Problem in Western Germany*, this initial study established the hallmarks of the group's later research and publishing agenda: an internationalist perspective, specific policy recommendations, and a tendency for comprehensive statistical analysis. The book's translation into English by H. A. Marx also ensured a broad academic audience, and established English as the primary language of REMP publications for the next thirty years, despite the group having relatively few anglophone members.

The tone of *The Refugee Problem* echoed that of Kulischer a few years earlier, particularly its focus on the political and social dangers posed by overpopulation in West Germany. As Bouman noted in the first chapter, "The lack of adaptation...and the shortage of living accommodation, together with increasing impoverishment, no doubt contribute to the dangerous development of

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<sup>25</sup> Schwartz was either unaware of Beijer's background, or he believed that, as Beijer did not repeat the nationalist consensus on German expellees and refugees that was common among German politicians (from all major parties) and many German scholars, he had successfully shed this identity. Leo W. Schwartz, *Refugees in Germany Today* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1957), 156.

mass living [i.e. refugee camps] which threatens modern society to an increasing extent.”<sup>26</sup> However, these scholars (particularly Beijer, author of four of the work’s six chapters) also devoted a significant amount of research to the statistical definition of overpopulation, looking at population density – overall and compared to arable land – along with percentage of food requirements produced domestically, availability of housing and living space, and levels of unemployment.<sup>27</sup> Beijer found that the refugee influx had a significant demographic effect on West Germany, pointing out the seventeen percent increase in population density since 1939 along with significant reductions in domestic food production, along with chronic housing and employment shortages. Beijer also noted a few demographic positives: in particular, the age distribution among the refugees was skewed toward the young and working age (20-40), a group that was less represented among the non-migrant population.<sup>28</sup> This pattern would be repeated often in later refugee migrations out of East Germany. In keeping with their plan to provide specific policy recommendations, the authors suggested that West Germany should endeavor to integrate its refugees through economic decentralization and the even redistribution of population. Because such moves would reduce migration-related tensions within Germany, they also suggested that international aid would be well spent on resettlement and rebuilding. In support of this contention, they cited the example of

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<sup>26</sup> P.J. Bouman, “Some Sociological and Social-psychological Considerations,” in P. J. Bouman, G. Beijer, and J. J. Oudegeest, *The Refugee Problem in Western Germany*, translated by H. A. Marx (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950), 7.

<sup>27</sup> Gunther Beijer, “The Dangers of the Refugee Problem in Western Germany,” *ibid*, 18-21.

<sup>28</sup> Gunther Beijer, “Positive Economic Influences of the Refugees in Western Germany,” *ibid*, 26.

Schlüchtern, a district near Fulda, where cooperation among residents, refugees, charitable relief organizations, and the federal and *Land* governments led to an equitable resettlement plan.<sup>29</sup>

This appeal to pragmatism and social justice clearly found an audience. The authors, Beijer in particular, were convinced of the need for greater international collaboration among demographers, sociologists, and economists in order to study and provide guidance on migration and refugee policy to European and international governments. The Research Group for European Migration Problems was officially established in 1952 with two national representatives: Beijer, representing the Netherlands, and Friedrich Edding, a researcher at the *Institut für Weltwirtschaft* in Kiel, representing Germany. The primary aim of the organization, as articulated in P.J. Boumann's introductory note to Hilde Wander's *The Importance of Emigration for the Solution of the Population Problems in Western Europe* – the first book in the REMP publication series – was to bring together researchers “convinced that the necessary integration of the economies and the distribution of investments in Europe must be accompanied by free migration of labour,” and that the group would be “concerned with questions of immediate and practical significance...on a basis free of national, party political, and confessional bias.”<sup>30</sup> A further elaboration of sorts appeared in the second supplement to the *REMP Bulletin* in May 1954, titled *Modern Migration: A Challenge to the West* and possibly written by migration scholar H. A. Citroen or a representative of the Intergovernmental Committee on European Migration (ICEM):

“The problem [consists of] of restoring a reasonable balance between the capacity of countries in Central and Southern Europe to support their people without a politically disastrous decline in living conditions...a great many people are trying to make a living, raise

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<sup>29</sup> Gunther Beijer, “Plans and Examples for Constructive Solutions,” *ibid*, 33.

<sup>30</sup> Hilde Wander, *The Importance of Emigration as a Solution to Population Problems*, Publications of the Research Group for European Migration Problems 1 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1951), ix.

families and carry on the great traditions of Western civilization in certain parts of Europe when they would almost certainly be better able to accomplish these elementary human objectives somewhere else...[it is necessary to] restore a reasonable balance between Europe's population and resources..."<sup>31</sup>

Even before its official foundation, the first monographs sponsored by the group began to appear in 1951, including Wander's book and Friedrich Edding's *The Refugees as a Burden, a Stimulus, and a Challenge to the West German Economy*. These two works, along with the initial collaboration between Boumann, Beijer, and Oudegeest, demonstrate the centrality of Germany and the migration of Germans to the group's organizers. Beijer's position as editor of the publication series and the *Bulletin* probably influenced this focus. In addition to editing, Beijer also contributed articles and statistical tables to various issues of the *Bulletin*, including "Overseas Migration of European Agriculturalists, 1918-1940 and 1946-1956" and "Applications for Emigration in Western Germany, 1950-1956" in 1958 along with "Demographic Consequences of the Flight of Intellectuals, Highly Skilled, Skilled, and Unskilled Workers from Eastern to Western Germany" in 1959, and solicited articles and longer studies on German migration from Tony Radspieler, G. Ipsen, H. Heyn, and G. C. Paikert, among others.

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<sup>31</sup> This work, a 28-page pamphlet, has no listed author, though it may be an updated version of H. A. Citroen's *European Migration Overseas, Past and Future*, published in 1951 as the second publication in the REMP's publication series. The introduction implies that Gunther Beijer, the editor of the *Bulletin*, was not the author. Among other things, this publication cemented the status of REMP as the de facto research arm of ICEM. The two organizations would merge their journals – *Migration* and the *REMP Bulletin* – in 1962, with Beijer continuing to serve as the editor of the newly-established *International Migration*. As the ICEM later shed its primarily European focus to become the Intergovernmental Committee on Migration (ICM) and later the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the REMP continued to be a co-sponsor of the journal until Beijer's retirement in 1980, at which point the name was allowed to fade away. Cf. *Modern Migration: A Challenge to the West*, REMP Bulletin, Supplement 2 (May 1954); Marianne Ducasse-Rogier, *The International Organization for Migration, 1951-2001* (Geneva: IOM-OIM, 2001).

The analysis in both Wander's and Edding's monographs followed closely on that of *The Refugee Problem in Western Germany*. By most statistical measures, Western Germany had experienced exceptionally high rates of population growth due to migration: an increase of nearly 25 percent between 1939 and 1950, a period when no other Western European country had population growth exceeding 10 percent. Both scholars agreed with the view that overpopulation was a problem, and sought to provide solutions. Wander argued that overpopulation in the Federal Republic invariably affected Europe, and therefore required solutions at the European level. She also criticized the common suggestion that overseas resettlement provided the only permanent solution to the problem of overpopulation, contending that a more equitable distribution of population within Europe would accomplish much the same goal at a substantially lower cost. Directly citing the work of Kulischer, Wander drew a distinction between free migration and compulsory or forced migration. Analyzing the history of migration, she argued that only free migration had a beneficial effect on a country's population ratio, defined as the relationship between population and earning capacity, and that compulsory or forced migration tended to throw societies out of economic equilibrium. Thus, Wander argued that the postwar influx of refugees, being the result of a compulsory migration, had negatively influenced these population ratios in Western Europe, particularly in West Germany.

Wander estimated that within four years (i.e. by 1955), West Germany would see a surplus of two and a half million workers, provided that emigration from East Germany remained at a constant level and no jobs were rendered superfluous by industrial mechanization and retooling. Also working against the absorption of the surplus was the relative inexperience of the unemployed, since most were formerly agricultural workers or office employees, and not amenable to retraining for

industrial labor. This lack of skills also worked against the overseas emigration of such individuals. However, Wander also held that West Germany was in a better position to absorb this labor capacity than other Western European countries like Italy.<sup>32</sup>

Friedrich Edding had more extensive academic connections than Wander, though this may have been a function of his work in the German Bureau of Statistics (*Statistisches Reichsamt*) during the 1930s. A prisoner of war in France from 1944 to 1948, he became interested in refugee issues after his return to West Germany; his family had been evacuated from Berlin just before the end of the war and were living near Lüneberg alongside many other expellees and refugees. After his political rehabilitation – as a government-employed researcher in the 1930s, he had joined the Nazi Party, and as a Wehrmacht infantryman fought on both the Eastern and Western fronts before being captured in Normandy in 1944 – Edding returned to his hometown of Kiel, where he joined the staff of the Institut für Weltwirtschaft. Later in 1948, he accompanied the director of the institute, the SPD politician and former exile Fritz Baade, to the constitutional convention at Herrenchiemsee in Bavaria; in his memoirs, he claimed that attending the convention marked his conversion from former conservative to a supporter of the Social Democrats.<sup>33</sup> It also seems likely that this allowed Edding to reconnect with other members of the West German academic community: within the next few years he would be involved with several high-profile research efforts. In 1950, he served on the Economic Cooperation Administration's Technical Assistance Commission, a committee of American and German scholars that offered a number of proposals to facilitate refugee integration in

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<sup>32</sup> Wander, 29-30.

<sup>33</sup> Friedrich Edding, *Mein Leben mit der Politik, 1914-1999* (Berlin: Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung, 2000), 51-52, 58.

West Germany, published as *The Integration of Refugees into German Life* in 1951.<sup>34</sup> Edding was also involved with the larger West German academic project to document and analyze the postwar expulsions, co-editing, with Eugen Lemberg, a three-volume study entitled *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*. While the initial meetings that led to this work were held at the Refugee Ministry in 1953, the final product was not published until 1959.<sup>35</sup>

In *The Refugees as a Burden, A Stimulus, and a Challenge to the West German Economy*, Edding agreed with Wander that overseas emigration was an unlikely outcome for most of West Germany's surplus population. However, he was much more in favor of policies directed toward economic expansion, since these policies would help alleviate the problems of overcrowded housing and unemployment that had generated friction between the refugees and non-migrant population. Indeed, Edding argued that, given the opportunity and capital, the refugees could potentially have a positive effect on the West German economy.<sup>36</sup> At the time, this position was somewhat controversial among West German scholars: decades later, Edding would claim that *The Refugees as a*

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<sup>34</sup> The ECA Technical Assistance Commission was also known as the Sonne Commission, after its chairman, the American bank executive H. Christian Sonne. See ECA Technical Assistance Commission, *The Integration of Refugees into German Life* (1951).

<sup>35</sup> Friedrich Edding and Eugen Lemberg, Eds., *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland; ihre Eingliederung und ihr Einfluss auf Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Politik und Geistesleben* (Kiel: F. Hirt, 1959). Perhaps the definitive work on the documentation projects is Robert Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), though Moeller's work mentions neither Edding nor his research on migration.

<sup>36</sup> Friedrich Edding, *The Refugees as a Burden, a Stimulus, and a Challenge to the West German Economy*, Publications of the Research Group for European Migration Problems 4 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1951), 45.



*Burden* was written to lay out his true position against those authorities and parties who were “using and abusing” his published work in Kiel for their own ends.<sup>37</sup>

Edding, along with Beijer and Wander, also joined the newly established Association for the Study of the European Refugee Problem, which grew out of an informal meeting in Wiesbaden in 1950 between scholars from eight European countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, and Switzerland) along with the United States. The founding members established the structure of the group, a federation of national sections that worked together to sponsor an itinerant annual conference on migration issues. While the association was chartered in Strasbourg, under French law, West German points of view tended to dominate, and several West German academics – not only Martin Kornrumpf and Walter Schätzel, but also K. V. Müller, from Nuremberg – played major roles in the organization’s founding and expansion.<sup>38</sup>

This effect can be traced to two major factors: an academic infrastructure oriented toward the study of migration and significant support from the Federal Government. Many of these researchers, like Friedrich Edding during the 1930s, had been employed in government-run statistical bureaus; support of independent research seems to have been a logical outgrowth of these activities. Martin Kornrumpf and Günter Granicky, along with several other later members, had been involved with the Düsseldorf-based *Statistisch-Soziologische Arbeitsgruppe* (Statistical-Sociological Working Group) in the late 1940s. At the time, Kornrumpf was working as a statistician and demographer for the Bavarian government, while Granicky worked for the Social

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<sup>37</sup> “Von Behörden, Parteien und Verbänden wurde ich oft ... benutzt oder beschimpft...” Edding, *Mein Leben mit der Politik*, 63.

<sup>38</sup> “Denkschrift über die AER und die Deutsche Sektion e.V. der AER,” Mar. 1957, BAK B 150/2754; AER German Section membership list 1951, BAK B 150/536.

Ministry in North Rhine-Westphalia and was a regular correspondent with Werner Middelmann, at the time a Landrat in Württemberg-Baden. Middelmann was also a member of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der deutschen Flüchtlingsverwaltungen* (Working Association of German Refugee Authorities), a committee that brought together the refugee services of several *Länder* in the British and American occupation zones, and thus had contacts in both academic and governmental circles.<sup>39</sup> However, though he clearly considered himself a leading expert on migration and published an analysis of the subject in 1953, Middelmann was not a scholar by training – he had been a factory manager prior to entering the government in the American zone in 1946 – and he never joined the AER or any other academic organization.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the presence of such a large refugee population in West Germany during the early 1950s also contributed to the Federal Government's willingness to fund research, both to publicize its challenges and to work toward practical solutions. The prominence of West German academics within the organization and West German pretensions toward academic leadership in Europe also contributed to this influence. The association leadership later claimed that the absence of conference papers on the German expellees and refugees at the 1950 meeting of the International Sociological Association in Zürich was a major factor in the genesis of the AER.<sup>41</sup>

At the association's first annual conference, held during the meeting of the International Red Cross at Hannover in 1951, Martin Kornrumpf was elected to be the organization's first General

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<sup>39</sup> Kurzprotokoll über die Arbeitsitzung am 17. November 1949... Nov. 21, 1949, BAK B 150/4426; Edding to Dittrich, BAK B 167/215.

<sup>40</sup> See Werner Middelmann, *Die internationale Flüchtlingsfrage* (Bad Homburg: Gehlen Verlag, 1953). This work, a 20-page pamphlet, drew on the research of Beijer, Edding and Wander, as published by REMF, as well as several English-language sources published in the United States.

<sup>41</sup> "Denkschrift über die AER und die Deutsche Sektion e.V. der AER," Mar. 1957, BAK B 150/2754.

Secretary (deputy to the president) as well as the president of the German Section. Other attendees in Hannover included Günter Granicky, Friedrich Edding and Hilde Wander, all of whom were listed as founding members of the section, while one of the speakers at that meeting was the Lower Saxony Refugee Minister, Heinrich Albertz.<sup>42</sup> By the 1952 conference in Kornrumpf's native Munich, several other notable German scholars and politicians had joined the German Section, including Theodor Oberländer, then a prominent member of the *Bund der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten* (BHE), a political party representing expellee interests, and Peter Paul Nahm, head of the Refugee Office in Hesse.<sup>43</sup> Both would later become important figures in the Ministry of Expellees, Refugees and War Victims. By the middle of the decade, the German section was the largest of any national section; counting over 150 members, it averaged around a third of the total AER/AWR membership.

Given that the Austrian section was the second largest, and the Swiss, Dutch and Israeli sections included several native German-speakers, it is perhaps unsurprising that more than half of the annual meetings between 1951 and 1962 took place within the Germanosphere (Hannover in 1951, Munich in 1952, Vaduz in 1956 and 1962, Vienna in 1958, West Berlin in 1959 and Weggis, Switzerland in 1960) or near its borders (Strasbourg in 1953 and Arnhem, in the Netherlands, in 1957). Even in meetings in Austria, Liechtenstein and Switzerland, German topics often predominated, and German expellees and refugees were a particular area of focus. However, for conferences in other countries, the host sections had their own opportunity to set the general

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<sup>42</sup> AER German Section membership list 1951, BAK B 150/536.

<sup>43</sup> Oberländer would be appointed as Minister for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims in October 1953, following the West German federal elections of the previous month. AER German Section membership list 1952, BAK B 150/535.

research agenda; for example, the conference at Arnhem gave the Dutch section a chance to discuss the integration of Dutch and Ambonese (South Moluccan) refugees who had left Indonesia after the former colony declared its independence.<sup>44</sup>

However, leadership positions were distributed around the various national sections, perhaps with the intention of heading off potential criticisms of the group. Karim Gökay, from Istanbul and a member of the Turkish section, was elected as AER president at the first meeting in 1951, a position he held for over a decade, while other board members included René Oderbolz of Switzerland, Heikki Waris of Finland and Hilda Verwey-Jonker of the Netherlands. Indeed, the division of the AER into national sections – which provided more representation to French, Italian, Greek and Norwegian scholars than their numbers would otherwise suggest – seems to have been designed to reduce the influence of the Germans, as none of the various topical “expert committees” included more than two representatives of a national section. Thus, in one example, the International Expert Committee on Migration and Overpopulation for the fifth General Assembly, held in 1955 in Helsinki, included Martin Kornrumpf and Renate Wanstrat (Germany), Gunther Beijer and G.H.L. Zeegers (Netherlands), Corrado Gini (Italy), M. Jacobsen (France) and Karl Loewy (Israel).<sup>45</sup> Scholars could also join independent of the national sections – at least two Americans, Philip Raup of the University of Minnesota and Eugene W. Moore of the National Catholic Welfare Conference were members of International Expert Committees – but it seems that few actually did. Perhaps the German domination of the organization also worked to dissuade the

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<sup>44</sup> Seventh AER/AWR General Assembly, Arnhem, Netherlands [], BAK B 150/2754.

<sup>45</sup> Program, Fifth AER General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, BAK B 150/2756

participation of other Anglophones in the association; the United Kingdom was the single major country in Western Europe not represented by at least one member.

In addition to the dominance of the German Section on the location of conferences and the subjects of research, the West German government and several *Land* governments (Bavaria and Hesse in particular) provided considerable and overt financial support to both the AER organization as well as the German Section. They were not alone in this: Karim Gökay in Turkey and Heikki Waris in Finland also successfully lobbied their governments for grants, and the association also pursued private and philanthropic funding, including a major donation from Prince Franz-Joseph II of Liechtenstein in 1956.<sup>46</sup> However, the Federal Government, and the Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims in particular, were consistently among the most important sources of financial support for the German Section, and, by extension, the AER/AWR. According to the section's 1953 budget, the Refugee Ministry provided DM 5,000, nearly half of the group's total receipts of DM 10,240, while an additional DM 2,450 was provided by other federal ministries and *Land* governments, including research grants from the Ministry for Economy and travel grants from the Foreign Office. Even considering the 150 section members, annual dues, at only DM 10 per member, provided less than one fifth of the section's revenue, barely more than the amount received from academic institutions and in private (and unnamed) donations.<sup>47</sup>

Between 1953 and 1955, the German Section's budget trebled, yet the ministry's contribution kept pace, a subsidy of DM 16,740 out of total revenue of DM 33,700. In those two years, the total percentage of the section's budget covered by Federal Government contributions

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<sup>46</sup> Minutes of Internal Conference of AER Council, Helsinki, Finland, Aug. 12, 1955 BAK B 150/2756;

<sup>47</sup> Protokoll über die Besprechung von 14. Januar 1954..., 16 Jan, 1954, BAK B 150/537

actually increased, in part due to a DM 6,500 subsidy from the Higher Education Bureau (*Hochschulreferat*) of the Auswärtiges Amt. By 1955, the German Section was also contributing an additional DM 1000 per month from its own budget to the overall AER budget, meaning that the West German government was indirectly the organization's largest supporter.<sup>48</sup> On a few occasions between 1953 and 1955, the Ministry for Refugees, Expellees and War Victims also directly reimbursed members of the German Section's *Kuratorium* (executive board) for costs incurred while traveling between their home institutions and meetings in various West German cities. The Ministry for All-German Questions also provided a one-time grant of DM 15,000 to help finance a 1956 meeting of the AER/AWR leadership in West Berlin.<sup>49</sup>

While there was no explicit *quid pro quo* attached to this funding, it is clear that the intention of this support was to maintain the issues of German expellee and refugee at the forefront of academic discussions. As Theodor Oberländer wrote to Walter Stain, the Bavarian Minister for Labor and Social Welfare, in 1957: "On the development of the AER the federal government is naturally not uninterested. As I have explained repeatedly to [various] federal committees, it is vital that the German expellee and refugee problem continues to be at the forefront of international discussion, and that it therefore appears valuable to me to have an international academic conversation regarding all refugee problems, naturally including the German, taking place."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> BMVFK, Referat II/2a, Vermerk, Aug. 29, 1955, BAK B 150/2753.

<sup>49</sup> BMVFK to Schätzel, d.u. 1955 BAK B 150/2754.

<sup>50</sup> "An der Entwicklung der AER ist die Bundesregierung naturgemäss nicht uninteressiert. Ich habe verschiedentlich im Kreise der Bundesressorts erklärt, dass grundsätzlich danach gestrebt werden müsse, das deutsche Vertreibenen- und Flüchtlingsproblem weiterhin in internationaler Diskussion zu halten und dass es daher mir wertvoll erschiene, wenn auch über den Weg der AER ein internationales wissenschaftliches Gespräch über alle Flüchtlingsfragen, darunter natürlich die deutsche, stattfindet." Oberländer to Stain, July 1, 1957, BAK B 150/2754.

Indeed, without this substantial West German support, it is unlikely that the AER could have continued to sponsor annual conferences and the publication of its quarterly journal, *Integration*, and its other activities would have been greatly diminished.<sup>51</sup>

However, too much overt support could clearly send the wrong message about German influence in the AER, a fact not lost on Werner Middelmann in the Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims, though he was perhaps the only senior ministry official who was not a member of the AER. In July 1955, Middelmann wrote to H.A. Cidor, the director of the Division for International Organizations of the Israeli Ministry for Foreign Affairs and occasional contributor to the *REMP Bulletin*, claiming that West German support for the organization was limited to a few “special studies,” and that his ministry was conscious of the AER’s “reputation for independence and non-political approach to the study of migration.”<sup>52</sup> At best, in this case Middelmann is being misleading, as some of the grants provided by the Federal Government were intended for specific research projects. The bulk of the funding, however, seems to have been directed toward the organizations’ general budgets.

One direct result of this funding was a report issued by the AER’s committee of experts on Financial and Social Policy at the third annual meeting in Strasbourg in 1953. This committee, chaired by Heikki Waris, a professor at the University of Helsinki, and Gerhard Ziemer, a director

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<sup>51</sup> By comparison, the REMP did not pursue governmental funding for its efforts, relying on sales of its publications and the *Bulletin*, as well as support from a handful of academic institutions associated with its members, to meet its budget. The result was a considerably less active organization, which held a single general conference (in 1952, at Bennekom, in the Netherlands) and remained on precarious financial ground throughout the entire first decade of its existence. See Gunter Beijer, “Ten Years’ Activities of REMP (1952-1962)” *REMP Bulletin*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (July/Sept. 1961), 82-85.

<sup>52</sup> Middelmann to Cidor, Jul. 1 1955, BAK B 150/2753.

of the *Lastenausgleichbank* in Bad Godesberg, summarized the efforts of the Federal Government to provide financial support for both the expellees and the East German refugees. In one sense, this was a brief update on the situation laid out by Friedrich Edding two years earlier, before the Equalization of Burdens (*Lastenausgleich*) Act passed in 1952. However, the committee was less optimistic than Edding had been regarding the ability of the West German government to rise to the challenge; writing only a year after the act went into effect, they argued that the government had already reached the financial limit of its policies for the integration of refugees, and that any further assistance could only be provided by either increasing the burdens on the West German economy or seeking international assistance.<sup>53</sup> Given the audience at the AER annual congresses, this sort of research could be an effective strategy for the Federal Government. It allowed them to publicize potential shortfalls in an arena where other attendees might be in a position to direct assistance toward the *Lastenausgleichbank*, yet without drawing much attention to potentially unpopular policy decisions.

While the relationship between the West German government and the AER/AWR organization could be construed as unnecessarily intrusive into supposedly nonpolitical research, a certain level of official influence in academic affairs was considered normal and almost to be expected. At the AER's 1954 meeting in Istanbul, Theodor Oberländer, the Federal Minister for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims, announced that the Free University of Berlin would establish a professor's chair in Expellee and Refugee Studies. While this proposal eventually foundered on academic and political infighting – the Free University competed with six other educational institutions for funding from the West Berlin Senate – the relevant Federal ministries were seen as

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<sup>53</sup> International Committee of Experts on Financial and Social Policy, AER, "Report to General Assembly at Strasbourg, Oct. 1-3, 1953," BAK B 150/537.



important sources of influence in the hiring decision. In early 1955, Renate Wanstrat, an expert on the legal issues of East German refugees, *Privatdozent* at the Free University and a leading candidate for the chair, were it to be established, wrote to both the education office of the Interior Ministry and Theodor Oberländer, by then Minister for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims, asking them to consider intervening in the situation. Wanstrat also requested Oberländer's assistance, should the effort to establish a chair in Berlin fail, in finding a more permanent academic position for her somewhere in West Germany, citing her scholarly credentials and her work on the AER's Expert Committee for International Migration.<sup>54</sup>

The participation of Federal officials in the activities of the AER was not limited to financial support. Theodor Oberländer, having joined the organization in 1952, was a member of the Expert Committee on Agriculture that presented research findings at the AER's fourth annual assembly in Istanbul in 1954. The committee, which included members from Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, Austria and the United States<sup>55</sup> was headquartered at Oberländer's government office in Bonn, and the ministry provided free administrative services for the purposes of committee business. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the expert committee's findings supported the view of the Federal Government, that agricultural resettlement of refugee and expellee farmers was crucial to the continued viability of agricultural enterprise in the Federal Republic, and that international assistance was necessary to ensure that resettlement could continue at its current pace.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Wanstrat to Oberländer, Jan. 25, 1955; Wanstrat to Abt. III, BM des Innern, Jan. 10, 1955, BAK B 150/3402.

<sup>55</sup> Philip Raup, a professor at the University of Minnesota, and previously the chief land officer in the Food and Agriculture Branch of the American Office of Military Government in Germany.

<sup>56</sup> AER International Committee of Experts for Agriculture, Report 1954/1955, BAK B 150/3402.

The annual AER congresses were not the only opportunity for scholars to share their research findings. In 1954, the United Nations hosted a high-profile World Population Conference in Rome, with a significant place reserved for papers on migration and refugee issues. The conference attendees, many of whom were also REMP and AER members, represented an international consensus on the academic understanding of the relationship between migration and population, and their presentations reflected the continued intellectual development of ideas regarding the role of emigration and the problem of overpopulation in West Germany and Western Europe. Gunther Beijer, writing with C. A. van den Beld, compared the current situation of refugees in West Germany to that of other Western European countries. Revising earlier cautionary estimates (like that of Wander three years previously), Beijer and van den Beld argued that, despite the influx of ten million refugees into West Germany in the decade since the war, much of this surplus population had been absorbed into the labor force. In the process, this economic assimilation had blunted the most disruptive aspects of excess population. However, the assimilation of unemployed agricultural workers had proceeded much more slowly, and Beijer and van den Beld continued to advocate emigration as an “economically acceptable” path for this group to take.<sup>57</sup>

Also presenting in Rome, Friedrich Edding noted the lack of mass emigration out of western Germany after the war: even though approximately one third of the postwar population had been displaced (if including those made homeless by the bombing of cities), the actual volume of emigration was relatively low. This was partly due to the unwillingness of many countries to accept German migrants, as well as limitations on emigration established by the occupation regimes. Only

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<sup>57</sup> Gunther Beijer and C.A. van den Beld, “Effects of Migration on the Economic Situation of the Population of Selected European Countries of Emigration,” *Proceedings of the World Population Conference, 1954*, Vol. 2, 1-11.

after the 1948 Displaced Persons Act was amended in 1950 did the United States allow the entry of 55,000 German refugees per year, not nearly enough to significantly reduce the surplus population. Edding did see a few improvements in the West German economic situation, particularly a decline in the unemployment rate from ten to five percent between 1950 and 1954. He also argued that future emigration, rather than helping the situation, could potentially represent a net loss of capital through the departure of skilled workers: those individuals most likely to benefit from emigration were also those who tended to receive employment as the economy improved, while the farmers and formerly independent business owners who were holding out for an opportunity to regain their former status were not likely to find the same opportunities elsewhere. Based on his research, Edding concluded that West Germany in 1954 was no longer “an overpopulated country with a high emigration potential,” and that barring any major disruptions, continued population growth and a rising standard of living were not incompatible. Indeed, given a more unified Western European labor market, Edding argued that in the future, the Federal Republic would probably find itself seeking immigrants from elsewhere in Europe.<sup>58</sup>

Edding and Beijer here anticipated the eventual consensus that the postwar refugees were integrated into the West German economy during the ‘Economic Miracle’ of the early 1950s, and that overpopulation had ceased to be a serious problem by 1954.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Edding’s argument likely influenced the Federal Republic’s decision to pursue a “Declaration of Accord” (*Bekanntmachung*)

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<sup>58</sup> Friedrich Edding, “Conditions influencing needs and possibilities of emigration from Western Germany with special reference to the problem of refugees and expellees,” *Ibid*, 15-28.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Dietrich Herrmann, “Immigration and Emigration Before 1968,” in Detlef Junker, Ed. *The United States and Germany in the Era of the Cold War 1945-1990: A Handbook, Vol 1., 1945-1968* (Washington DC: German Historical Institute/Cambridge University Press, 2004), 537-538.

with Italy on the recruitment of Italian guestworkers, an agreement that was negotiated in 1955 and signed in January 1956.<sup>60</sup> In Rome, however, Hilde Wander was less optimistic. She noted that the total number of working-age males in West Germany was still 700,000 less than in 1939, a significant deficit, while the number of Germans not active in the work force had increased by 6.6 million. This number included not only pensioners, but also war invalids and those unable to find employment. By Wander's estimate, economic expansion had benefited many former refugees, but she warned that anything less than continued growth would only exacerbate social conflicts.<sup>61</sup> Other scholars supported this estimation of West German overpopulation: Julius Isaac and Dudley Kirk both argued that the country still suffered from a shortage of young-to-middle-aged men, normally the prime candidates for emigration, and that what would normally be considered a population surplus was instead a surplus of individuals and families who would probably not be interested or eligible for emigration. Wander and Isaac also called for increased migration within West Germany, focusing on regional refugee redistribution and the construction of additional housing in areas still seeing manpower shortages.<sup>62</sup>

Within the circle of scholars associated with REMP and AER/AWR, the perceived desirability of free migration continued unabated despite the easing of population pressures, a marked contrast from the debates within the West German government on the continued migration

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<sup>60</sup> "Declaration of Accord..." in Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling and Anton Kaes, *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration 1955-2005* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 27-28.

<sup>61</sup> Hilde Wander, "Some Problems Associated with the Absorption of Refugee Immigrants to Western Europe with Particular Reference to Western Germany," *Proceedings of the World Population Conference, 1954*, Vol. 2, 495-507.

<sup>62</sup> Julius Issac, "Conditions influencing needs and possibilities of emigration in selected European countries," *ibid*, 81-90; Dudley Kirk, "A survey of recent overseas migration in relation to population pressure in Europe," *ibid*, 93-102.

of refugees. Beijer and Edding (not to mention Kulischer, still working at the Library of Congress) continued to call for a relaxation of migration restrictions within Europe as well as between Europe and other areas of the world. However, Harold Ford Rossetti, an official in the British Ministry of Labour and one of the few who disagreed with this assessment, argued that simply allowing free movement across European borders would not ensure a proper redistribution of population. His research indicated that this was an ineffective strategy in the promotion of internal migration, and he argued that it would be even less viable if implemented in the international arena, given the potential negative public reaction to entirely free borders and their challenges to national distinctions. Rossetti instead pushed for state-controlled movement of workers between countries, in his own way anticipating the guestworker recruitment programs that would be established in following years. This planned redistribution would rely on analysis of countries' needs, in order to avoid threatening resident workers, and on public understanding that this type of controlled migration would be in the national interest.<sup>63</sup> Though Edding and Rossetti would likely have disagreed on many of these issues, there is a certain level of convergence in their proposals, and both strands of thought – the necessity of migration in addressing labor requirements and planned labor redistribution between European states – would be highly influential over the subsequent decade.

These issues of resettlement, integration, and assimilation in West Germany were further studied by Wilhelm Brepohl, M. Lehmkuhler, and W. Wiedemann, who presented the results of their research in the third supplement to the *REMP Bulletin*, published in 1955 under the title *Adjustment of Refugees to their New Environment (Based on the Findings of an Investigation in*

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<sup>63</sup> H. F. Rossetti, "Problems of attaining a better distribution of population between the countries of Western Europe" *ibid*, 201-206.

*Westphalia*).<sup>64</sup> The researchers undertook their fieldwork in an unnamed district (*Kreis*) in North Rhine-Westphalia comprising several towns of varying size, a handful of rural villages, and a local industry limited to mining and cement-making. They sought to establish a theoretical process of refugee adjustment based on the relationships between resettled refugees and their non-refugee neighbors, and to provide a blueprint for further attempts to facilitate integration. In the study, the authors were surprised to find that adequate housing was a more important consideration than employment for many of the refugees: those living in “slums” or other substandard residences were more likely to isolate themselves and therefore less likely to adapt to their new surroundings and assimilate into the local community. The effect of poor housing on families was significant, especially those families headed by single mothers or widows. Employment was still important, though few refugees were able to resume their former occupations or professions, a step that the researchers believed to be a precondition for full assimilation.

The stated goal of Brepohl and his coauthors was to “go beyond the broad generalities [put forward by the press, the government, and the refugee organizations] to seek the understanding which comes of methodically penetrating deeper to discover, classify, and establish recognizable relationships within this maze of problems which touches upon every phase of man and his social institutions...” This was, to a certain extent, a goal shared by many of these researchers, and the expansion of groups like the AER was one result. Brepohl joined the AER in 1955, and at that time, membership may have seemed to be a good career move – Renate Wanstrat, still a *Privatdozent* in West Berlin, also joined during the same year – as the organization enjoyed its close financial and

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<sup>64</sup> W. Brepohl, M. Lehmkuhler, and W. Wiedemann, *Adjustment of Refugees to their New Environment (Based on the Findings of an Investigation in Westphalia)*, REMP Bulletin Supplement 3 (The Hague: Albani, 1955).

academic ties with the West German government and counted nearly 250 of the country's leading scholars and experts on migration.<sup>65</sup> In retrospect, however, this relationship was peaking in 1955, and the second half of the decade would see a series of incidents that would culminate in the scandal following the 1959 West Berlin assembly.

During the previous few years, various Federal ministries had begun experimenting with employing in-house research staff to produce studies and publications. The Ministry of Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims, in producing the book *Vor 10 Jahre* (Ten Years Ago), published in 1955, had carefully parceled out chapters to various offices and individuals within the ministry so as to produce the book quickly and with minimal conflict.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the three-volume *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, edited by Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding and published in 1959, was produced entirely within the Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims by the "Research Group – Integration," organized by Werner Middelmann. Compared to the sums set aside for the AER, this work was exceptionally expensive, with a final budget of more than DM 300,000, not including the salaries of ministry employees assisting contributors with their research.<sup>67</sup> While most of the contributors to these efforts were affiliated with the AER, keeping this work under official control meant that the ministry could determine the editorial line in advance and enforce it through regular committee meetings.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> AER German Section membership list 1955, BAK B150/2753.

<sup>66</sup> BMVFK, Referat II/2a, Vermerk d.u. 1953, BAK B150/2746. See also Wolfgang Steinbichle, Ed., *After Ten Years: A European Problem* (Frankfurt/Main: Wirtschaftsdienst Verlag, 1957).

<sup>67</sup> Kurzprotokoll der Referentenbesprechung..., Jan. 19, 1955; Referat I/3, Vermerk Aug. 10, 1955, BAK B 150/1911.

<sup>68</sup> BMVFK, Forschungsgruppe "Eingliederung," Einleitende Arbeitsbesprechung, June 21, 1954; Einleitende Arbeitsbesprechung, July 26, 1954; Ergebnisprotokoll, Nov. 4, 1955, BAK B 150/1911.

After several successful years, the AER was also beginning to broaden its focus to encompass the study of refugees beyond Western Europe. At the annual assembly at Helsinki in 1955, the organization announced two major developments: the establishment of a parallel Association for the Study of World Refugee Problems (AWR) and the organization of a non-profit institute to provide a fundraising structure for the two research groups. This institute, to be named after the League of Nations High Commissioner Fridtjof Nansen, a pioneer of international refugee relief in the 1920s, found a home in Vaduz, Liechtenstein, after a considerable donation from the principality's leader, Prince Franz-Joseph II, in 1956, though the institute itself would not open its doors until the summer of 1957.<sup>69</sup> In celebration of this new relationship, the 1956 AER/AWR congress was held in Vaduz in August, with preliminary meetings held in West Berlin in March.

The preliminary event, which brought together the leaders of the various national sections to plan the program for the annual assembly, allowed the West Berliners to emphasize the city's role as the first stop for thousands of East German refugees. Willi Brandt, then President of the West Berlin House of Representatives, delivered the greeting at the opening session, and the assembled scholars attended a reception at Schöneberg City Hall, hosted by Mayor Otto Suhr and the Senator for Labor and Social Affairs, Heinrich Kreil, on the final evening of the meeting. Attendees also toured the Marienfelde Reception Center, a residence for non-recognized refugees in the nearby district of Lankwitz, and a 2800-person transit camp near Tempelhof Airport.<sup>70</sup> Clearly, both the West Berlin administration and the AER/AWR leadership expected that the city's situation would be at the forefront of discussion when the full group convened in Vaduz in August.

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<sup>69</sup> Karim Gökyay, "Introduction," *Weggis Report 1960: X. AER/AWR Kongress* (Vaduz: Fridtjof-Nansen-Institut, 1961), 7-8.

<sup>70</sup> Protokoll über die Berliner AWR/AER Tagung vom 22.-24. März 1956, BAK B 150/2753.



For much of the existence of the AER, the overlap between its membership rolls and the Federal ministries was an unqualified success, allowing for significant financial support as well as coordination of research. However, Martin Kornrumpf discovered in 1956 that such close connections did not always work in the organization's favor. Following a decision by the *Bundesrechnungshof* (Federal Audit Authority) in 1955 that funds controlled by the Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims could not be used to support outside institutions without a direct connection to the Ministry's work, and in the spring of 1956 the Ministry suspended its financial support for the AER and the German Section. In response, Theodor Oberländer offered to look into facilitating funding for the AER from the Foreign Office, the proper channel for the support of international organizations, or, failing that, to establish official funding for the AER within the Federal budget. However, this proposal drew no response from Kornrumpf, who was still angry that no one from the Ministry had congratulated him when he was reelected AER General Secretary at the previous year's assembly in Helsinki.<sup>71</sup>

Two months after the West Berlin meeting, on May 31, 1956, Kornrumpf sent a letter to the members of the German Section laying out the financial difficulties faced by the organization following the cessation of the Ministry's financial support, including the suspension of journal publication and an end to reimbursed travel expenses. This angered Oberländer, who called these accusations baseless and misleading in a personal reply to Kornrumpf. Oberländer believed that any financial shortfall was due to Kornrumpf's mismanagement of the section budget, and he did not appreciate Kornrumpf's appeal to the German Section in lieu of responding to Oberländer's earlier

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<sup>71</sup> Unterredung zwischen BM Oberländer and Dr. Kornrumpf über die Entwicklung der AER seit Helsinki und Zukunftspläne, July 21, 1956, BAK B 150/2753

proposal.<sup>72</sup> Meeting in Kornrumpf's Munich office in July, the two men unsuccessfully tried to iron out their differences: Kornrumpf accused the ministry of waging a systematic campaign against his leadership of the German Section, including withholding previously-promised funds along with public and private criticisms of his management. Oberländer responded that the majority of Kornrumpf's charges were a result of miscommunication between the AER/AWR and the Ministry, and that the rest were a result of Kornrumpf's personal animosities.<sup>73</sup>

At the same time, Oberländer was facing criticism from his colleagues in the Federal Cabinet over his connections with the AER/AWR and the German Section. A week after the meeting in Munich with Kornrumpf, he received a letter from Foreign Minister Heinrich von Brentano arguing that continued West German support for the group was unjustified, given that "its scientific achievements...were of no significant importance" ("*...die wissenschaftliche Leistung...von keinerlei nennenswerter Bedeutung gewesen ist...*") and that overt West German support for the organization represented a potential burden on the Federal Republic's foreign policy. Von Brentano pointed out that his office had been fielding complaints from other governments since the 1954 assembly in Istanbul regarding the apparent bias toward West German topics and opinions in the group's conferences, and that once Kornrumpf had publicly indicated that the AER would collapse without West German aid, it was impossible to continue to provide that support. In addition, the recent gift from the Prince of Liechtenstein seemed to indicate, in the eyes of the Foreign Office, that the AER/AWR was, in fact, a foreign foundation, and therefore could not receive Federal funding.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Oberländer to Kornrumpf, June 15, 1956, BAK B 150/537.

<sup>73</sup> Unterredung zwischen BM Oberländer and Dr. Kornrumpf über die Entwicklung der AER seit Helsinki und Zukunftspläne, July 21, 1956, BAK B 150/2753.

<sup>74</sup> Von Brentano to Oberländer, July 31, 1956, BAK B 150/2753.

At an August meeting of the German Section's leadership in Bad Godesberg, two weeks before the opening of the annual assembly in Vaduz, the discussion over funding was somewhat more constructive. Oberländer reiterated that he "considered the AER a necessary institution, and he would be prepared to support its scientific research, were he allowed to finance an international organization with the cultural funds at his disposal."<sup>75</sup> Kornrumpf continued to claim that the Prince of Liechtenstein's gift toward the establishment of the Fridtjof-Nansen-Institut was entirely independent of the AER/AWR, and that the organizations would have no influence on the institute's operations.<sup>76</sup> However, in a long diatribe in the section's meeting in Vaduz two weeks later, Kornrumpf again criticized the Ministry, in particular Oberländer's deputy, Peter Paul Nahm. Kornrumpf asserted that Nahm had promised him in 1955 that the ministry would renew the group's funding for three additional years, a promise that Kornrumpf used to secure his reelection as AER General Secretary at the Helsinki meeting. Kornrumpf also complained about the sums invested in Werner Middelmann's research group, indicating that he had received information on this part of the budget from ministry employees. Finally, he also suggested that Oberländer had cancelled his trip to Vaduz out of spite toward Kornrumpf, and to avoid meeting with the section. In agreement with Kornrumpf's charges, another attendee, Hans Harmsen, then president of the

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<sup>75</sup> "...er nach wie vor eine Institution wie die AER für notwendig halte und bereit sei, die wissenschaftliche Arbeit der deutschen Sektion zu unterstützen, jedoch aus den Kulturmitteln seines Etats nicht dem Verwaltungsbetrieb einer internationalen Organisation finanzieren könne." Kuratoriumssitzung der deutschen Sektion der AER, Aug. 4, 1956, BAK B 150/2753.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

German Society for Demography, called the Federal Government's treatment of the German Section a "scandal."<sup>77</sup>

While Oberländer had not traveled from Bonn to Vaduz, Wolfram Ruhenstroth, head of the statistical office at the Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims, and thus Oberländer's subordinate was present at the meeting. That evening, Ruhenstroth contacted Oberländer and relayed Kornrumpf's and Harmsen's criticisms of the minister's leadership. At a second meeting of the section on the following day, Ruhenstroth delivered Oberländer's official response, criticizing Harmsen for his intemperate use of the term "scandal" and expressing a general regret at the tenor of the previous day's discussion. Oberländer's message also criticized Kornrumpf's dual role in the organization, as both General Secretary of the AER and president of the German Section, and requested that he consider resigning from one of two positions. The section then resolved to look into whether this situation had allowed Kornrumpf to hide his mismanagement of the organization's budget. As a means of recouping some of the financial losses, the section also authorized the AER/AWR to collect additional membership dues from West German members, while Gerhard Ziemer offered to provide a line of credit for the organization through the *Lastenausgleichbank*.<sup>78</sup>

Following the meeting, Harmsen also withdrew his criticism of the ministry from the previous day.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> BMVFK, Referat II/6, Vermerk, Betr.: 6. Generalversammlung der AER, Aug. 27, 1956; Vermerk zum Schreiben des Herrn Prof. Dr. Harmsen von 17 Aug. 1956, Aug. 21, 1956, BAK B 150/2753.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. Ruhenstroth, as head of Department (*Referat*) 6, Section (*Abteilung*) II, reported first to Werner Middelman, who was in charge of Section II and thus directly below Peter Paul Nahm, the State Secretary for the Ministry. It is not clear whether Nahm was in Vaduz. See organizational charts in Lothar Wieland, *Das Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte* (Bonn: Athenaeum Verlag, 1969), 84-87, 95-98.

<sup>79</sup> BMVFK, Referat II/6, Vermerk zum Schreiben des Herrn Prof. Dr. Harmsen v. 17.8.56, Aug. 21, 1956, BAK B150/2753.

Prior to the summer of 1956, these disputes over funding and research direction had been largely kept private. After the Vaduz meeting, this seems to have changed. Increasingly, other leading members of the German section – perhaps notably, those with academic appointments rather than government positions – tried to counter the perception that the organization’s main purpose was to provide a social-scientific imprimatur for West German propaganda. Karl Valentin Müller, Professor of Sociology at the Hochschule für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften in Nuremberg and president of the German Section’s *Kuratorium*, wrote that, regardless of the financial scandals of the previous year, that the AER’s “primary and unsurpassed success” was the “atmosphere of trustworthy, voluntary, international experts standing together” under the organization’s auspices.<sup>80</sup> Müller thus tried to distance himself and the academic members of the German Section from the “amateurs” (*Schlachtenbummler*) who attended the conferences merely to criticize and oppose scholarly work, while defending the ties between the section’s members and the federal government as necessary for addressing West Germany’s problems. However, while calling for continued academic study on the problems of German expellees and refugees, Müller also supported the interests of both German and non-German scholars to consider wider issues of migration and refugee issues in Europe and the world.<sup>81</sup>

However, within the federal government, ministries that had previously supported the German Section and the entire international organization began to question the priorities of the AER/AWR leadership. At a meeting on November 30, 1956, representatives of seven ministries aired their concerns about their ability to continue financial support of the group, given recent

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<sup>80</sup> “Die Atmosphäre des vertrauensvollen übernationalen Zusammenstehens ehrenamtlicher Experten ist der primäre und von keiner anderen Seite erzielte Erfolg der AER bisher gewesen.”

<sup>81</sup> K. V. Müller, “Kuratorium der Deutschen Sektion AER,” Dec. 1956, BAK B 150/2754.

“unsatisfactory” scientific studies. In support of the AER/AWR, Walter Arke, a German Section member and director of the Department for Associations and Organizations in the Ministry of Expellees, Refugees and War Victims, argued that continued financial contributions were the only way to ensure that the German refugee problem would receive international attention. Representatives from the Ministry for Economics and the Ministry for Housing Construction also supported Arke’s position. Representatives from the Foreign Office, the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Finance, however, did not see the point in continuing to support the organization. The Foreign Office, in particular, worried about the perception that the AWR, registered in Vaduz and seemingly financed, in large part, by the Prince of Liechtenstein, was a foundation of a foreign government and thus not a truly international organization. Representatives of the Ministry of Labor argued that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees provided international recognition for refugee issues, and that supporting that office would be a better way to influence other countries. The representatives of the Refugee Ministry responded that the UNHCR was only concerned with international refugees, and that so-called “national refugees,” like those arriving from East Germany, were not necessarily covered under this definition. All agreed, however, that the German Section required more financial discipline to convince them that financing the group’s research was a good use of federal funds.<sup>82</sup>

Over the course of several months, Martin Kornrumpf, the German Section, and the AER/AWR had thus incurred the ire of several West German cabinet members and lost a significant proportion of their annual budget. Perhaps more damaging was the recognition among members of

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<sup>82</sup> Protokoll über die Ressortbesprechung im BM für Vertriebenen, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte, Betr: Europäische Forschungsgruppe für Flüchtlingsfragen, Nov. 30, 1956, BAK B 150/2754.

the section that these developments were affecting the Associations' research priorities. After the meeting in Vaduz, Kornrumpf was induced to resign as president of the German Section in the fall of 1956, and the section elected Walter Schätzel, a professor at the University of Bonn, as his successor. At the beginning of 1957, the two men responded to the criticisms leveled in the meeting of ministry officials by again asserting the German Section's independence of the AWR. They argued that, since its establishment in 1951, the German Section had only been affiliated with the AER. When the decision to create the AWR in parallel to the AER was made in Helsinki in 1955 – at a meeting attended by both men – the national sections did not automatically become a part of the new organization. Therefore, even if the Prince of Liechtenstein was providing financial support to the AWR, no direct links existed between the German Section, the Fridtjof-Nansen-Institut and the Prince, and thus no barriers existed to a renewal of West German funding for the German Section.<sup>83</sup>

However, further events in 1957 exposed Kornrumpf to significantly more damaging criticism. In March, following discussions with other national section leaders, Walter Schätzel determined that the AER had never been formally registered in Strasbourg as Kornrumpf had claimed since 1952. The other section presidents, in particular Alois Vogt of the Liechtensteiner Section, saw this as an excellent opportunity to register the AER in Vaduz, as the AWR had been in 1955, and thereby streamline the administration of the two organizations.<sup>84</sup> For the German Section, however, this move would deprive them of a major talking point in their ongoing negotiations over federal funding, that the AER was essentially independent of the AWR and had no institutional ties with Liechtenstein. At a meeting of the executive board in Wiesbaden on April 3rd,

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<sup>83</sup> Schätzel to Oberländer, Jan 8, 1957, BAK B150/2754.

<sup>84</sup> Schätzel to Oberländer, Mar. 13, 1957, BAK B150/2754.

the assembled leaders of the section – not including Kornrumpf, who was apparently sick – considered the fallout of this development, complaining that the registration of the AER in Vaduz would not be approved by a majority of section members. The board also raised the question of an “unknown and mysterious” (*ungeklärt und mysteriös*) sum of DM 25,000 that Kornrumpf had recently received from an unknown party. As he had used this money to pay off debts with Hofmann Verlag in Augsburg relating to the publication of the AER’s journal *Integration*, the board decided to pursue further inquiries rather than take immediate action.<sup>85</sup>

These revelations were not nearly as damaging to Kornrumpf’s reputation as a second set of allegations, arising only days after the April meeting of the executive board, that he had facilitated a DM 200,000 donation to the Fridtjof-Nansen-Institut from an unnamed West German industrialist in return for a grant of Lichtenstein citizenship (and freedom from West German taxation) from Prince Franz-Joseph II. Combined with the Prince’s initial investment in the institute, such a donation would have represented a major windfall for the organization and Kornrumpf himself, who as General Secretary would be in charge of disbursing the funds to the various national sections and expert committees of the AER and AWR.<sup>86</sup> It is unclear whether or not this proposal was serious; an exchange of messages between Wolfram Ruhenstroth at the Refugee Ministry and Georg Schreiner, another member of the German Section from the Bavarian town of Arnstorf, indicated that the deal

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<sup>85</sup> BMVFK, Referat II/2a, Vermerk, Betr.: Kuratoriumssitzung der AER am 3.4.57 in Wiesbaden, Apr. 4, 1957, BAK B 150/2754.

<sup>86</sup> BMVFK, Referat II/6, Vermerk May 6, 1957, BAK B 150/2754.



was far from being confirmed. Even so, Ruhenstroth worried about the effect of these allegations on the AER's prestige, already damaged by the controversy over financing from the previous year.<sup>87</sup>

Although Kornrumpf repeatedly claimed to have been the victim of "Bonn intrigue," he resigned immediately as General Secretary of the AER, but remained in that position with the AWR until the annual assembly at Arnhem in September. It is not clear whether this move was intended to allow him to resign honorably or to force him to give one last public address, during the opening session, without being able to criticize his colleagues, Theodor Oberländer, or the Ministry.

Kornrumpf's speech recounted both the previous four decades of mass refugee migration and defended the work of AER and AWR members who had taken part in the organizations' collective "quest for humane education" ("*...ein Versuch der Erziehung zur Humanität...*") during the previous six years. Echoing K. V. Müller's letter earlier in the year, he defended the links between researchers and governments, not only in West Germany, but also in Finland, Austria, Italy and Turkey; the administrative and financial assistance provided by these governments was irreplaceable and allowed the organizations to engage in important research. This was a prelude to his endorsement, on behalf of the AWR, of the Fridtjof-Nansen-Institut, which had officially opened on July 21, 1957.

Although the donation scandal had led to Kornrumpf's resignation from his post as General Secretary, the Institute subsequently appointed him to its board of directors.<sup>88</sup>

Even though these internal conflicts over funding and leadership roles affected the AER/AWR's focus on research, scholars continued to turn to the organizations as a venue for

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<sup>87</sup> Ruhenstroth to Arke, "Rücksprache mit Herrn Georg Schreiner...am 14.4.57 über Fragen der AER," July 8, 1957, BAK B 150/2754.

<sup>88</sup> Martin Kornrumpf. "Ansprache des Generalsekretärs der AWR-Vaduz bei der feierlichen Eröffnung der 7. Generalversammlung," Sept. 9, 1957, BAK B150/2754.

presenting their findings. The internationalization of the AER/AWR's focus can be seen in two presentations made by Gunther Beijer, the first at the plenary session in the preliminary meeting at West Berlin in March 1956, and the second at the 1957 general assembly in Arnhem, in the Netherlands, where Beijer was a member of the host section. In the former presentation, Beijer discussed the role played by refugee migration in furthering European integration: "On the path of migration – through which refugees and native populations come into contact – they meet as person to person."<sup>89</sup> On a more practical level, and with a special reference to the situation in West Germany, Beijer proposed wage adjustments to encourage migration between western European countries.<sup>90</sup> Eighteen months later, in Arnhem, Beijer presented a paper on "The Refugee Problem in the Middle East" between 1917 and 1957, with a particular emphasis on the migration of Palestinian refugees after the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. Applying the perceived lessons of postwar Europe, Beijer argued that integration of the refugees was the most likely solution to these problems, either within the receiving countries or through the distribution and resettlement of refugees in other areas of the region, and suggested that international aid and Israeli compensation would provide a financial basis for further integration.<sup>91</sup>

However, at the same conference, papers presented by V. N. Müller and Friedrich Edding continued to place West German refugee concerns at the forefront of debate. Müller's paper analyzed one of the more hidden factors of refugee integration, the decline in social prestige endured by former East German residents who had fled to West Germany. Part of this was due to the

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<sup>89</sup> "Auf dem Wege der Wanderung – wodurch Flüchtlinge mit der bodenständige Bevölkerung in Kontakt kommen – kommt es zur Begegnung von Mensch zu Mensch."

<sup>90</sup> Protokoll über die Berliner AWR/AER Tagung vom 22.-24. März 1956, BAK B 150/2753.

<sup>91</sup> Gunther Beijer, "The Refugee Problem in the Middle East," AWR/AER 7th Annual Meeting, Arnhem, Sept. 9-12, 1957, BAK B 150/2754.

difficulty faced by refugees who could not find employment at the same level or in the same field as they had left in East Germany. However, Müller also noted deeper sociological issues, in particular the increasingly divergent social and symbolic languages in the two areas. This meant that while refugees who had arrived in West Germany earlier in the decade had adapted rather easily to life in the Federal Republic, later arrivals found it more difficult.<sup>92</sup>

Following on his 1951 book and 1954 paper for the World Population Conference, Edding's paper focused on the ongoing economic integration of expellees and refugees. He was critical of the tendency of some economists to analyze the integration of migrants merely in terms of income and total production, thereby portraying the expellees and refugees as a net positive for West Germany given the economic advances of the previous decade. While this was not quite a refutation of his argument in *The Refugees as a Burden* in 1951, it is much closer to the West German consensus, evident in publications with the Federal Government's imprimatur: the integration of expellees and refugees in West Germany, while largely successful, was not a desirable outcome for the first postwar decade, and was only accomplished through the "exceptional economic ability and willingness to adapt to the local population" on the part of the migrants.<sup>93</sup>

The relationship between the German Section, the AER/AWR leadership and the West German ministries stabilized after Kornrumpf's final resignation in 1957, but was never quite as close as it had been between 1953 and 1955. Financial support for the organizations had been

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<sup>92</sup> V. N. Müller, "Änderungen der sozialen Werthaltung (Prestige-Ordnung) bei Flüchtlinge aus Mitteldeutschland (sowjetische Besatzungszone)," AWR/AER 7th Annual Meeting, Arnhem, Sept. 9-12, 1957, BAK B 150/2754.

<sup>93</sup> "...war vor allem dem hohen Stand wirtschaftlichen Könnens und der Anpassungsbereitschaft in der aufnehmenden...Bevölkerung..." Friedrich Edding, "Die Wirtschaftliche Bedeutung der Vertriebene und Flüchtlinge für Europa," AWR/AER 7th Annual Meeting, Arnhem, Sept. 9-12, 1957, BAK B 150/2754.

suspended after the *Bundesrechnungshof* decision in 1955, and mistrust between the German Section leadership and the Federal Government culminated in the scandal surrounding the aborted invitation of Polish scholars to the West Berlin conference in 1959. This lack of cooperation also meant that, despite the efforts of various members of the German Section to provide support, the West German commemoration of the 1959-1960 World Refugee Year (WRY) was almost entirely run through the office of Werner Middelman, one of three section directors who reported to Peter Paul Nahm, the ministry's *Staatssekretär* and deputy to Minister Oberländer. Middelman, originally a factory manager in southwestern Germany, had leveraged his knowledge of English and his experience working on refugee issues with the American military government in Württemberg-Baden to present himself as an international expert on German expellees and refugees, becoming a founding member of the Executive Committee advising the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and a representative to the Council of Europe. Middelman also seems to have been one of the Ministry's more fluent English speakers, a skill he likely acquired working in the American occupation government. Thus, he had many contacts with American journalists, and participated in an interview with the American radio host Barbara Welles on WOR in New York City in 1953. He was also the subject of a flattering profile in the August 1954 issue of *The Rotarian*.<sup>94</sup> As noted above, Middelman also chaired the research group within the ministry that produced the three-volume history of the integration of expellees in West Germany edited by Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding. This project brought him into contact with many members of the West German

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<sup>94</sup> Bundespresseamt Auslandsabteilung Referat IV/4, Aktenvermerk, Sept. 3, 1953, BAK B 145/784; Murray Teigh Bloom, "Miracle in West Germany: How this Small Republic has Absorbed 10 Million Refugees," *The Rotarian*, Vol. 85 No. 2 (August, 1954), 24-25, 55-56.

academic community that were studying migration, and the final product conveniently went to press at the beginning of the World Refugee Year in 1959.

In December 1958, Middelmann wrote to the state-level refugee authorities, laying out the Federal Government's plan for the commemoration: "The participation of the Federal Republic in the World Refugee Year offers several advantages. The attention of the world will be refocused on the problem of expellees and refugees, along with foreign refugees, in the Federal Republic...and additional resources from foreign sources will probably be made available. The unresolved political issues [i.e. the former German territories in Eastern Europe], which have been taboo for so long, will again be considered in the international arena..."<sup>95</sup> This would become the central theme of World Refugee Year events in West Germany; the same ideas were present in the resolution, drafted by Middelmann, that Theodor Oberländer offered to the Cabinet a month later, requesting the assistance of the Federal and *Land* governments and various West German groups and organizations in commemorating the WRY.<sup>96</sup>

Middelmann laid out three primary areas of focus for the Federal Government's participation in the World Refugee Year: raising domestic and international awareness of refugee issues in West Germany (in particular, the ongoing arrival of refugees from East Germany), increasing the attention of West Germans toward refugee issues in other countries, mostly by

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<sup>95</sup> "Die Teilnahme der Bundesrepublik am Weltflüchtlingsjahr bietet mehrere Vorteile. Die Aufmerksamkeit der Welt kann erneut auf das Problem der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge sowie der ausländischen Flüchtlinge in der Bundesrepublik gelenkt werden. Es kann erwartet werden, dass in gewissem, wahrscheinlich bescheidenem Ausmaß zusätzliche Mittel aus dem Ausland für die deutschen Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge...das deutsche Vertriebenen- und Flüchtlingsproblem, das bisher im Ausland wegen der damit zusammenhängenden, noch nicht gelösten politischen Probleme weitgehend als ein tabu betrachtet wurde, kann ihm erneut nahegebracht werden..." Middelmann to Landesflüchtlingsverwaltungen, Dec. 12, 1958, BAK B 136/9446.

<sup>96</sup> Oberländer to Staatssekretär des Bundeskanzleramtes, Jan. 6, 1959, BAK B 150/4111.

comparing the situation of refugees in West Germany with that of refugees elsewhere in the world, and collecting donations to support both categories of refugees.<sup>97</sup> In support of the first point, Middelmann's office at the Ministry for Expellees, Refugees, and War Victims produced a six-page, twenty-point fact sheet on refugees in West Germany, including expellees and East German refugees as well as non-German refugees, both wartime displaced persons and refugees from the Eastern Bloc. This was distributed to domestic and international media outlets in both German and in English translation, and was used by the United Nations to write their official educational pamphlet on "The Refugee Problem in the Federal Republic of Germany," part of a comprehensive series published over the course of the year.<sup>98</sup> Middelmann also seems to have been behind most of Oberländer's published essays and speeches on the subject of the WRY; it is unclear whether he was the primary author of pieces that went out under Oberländer's byline or whether he merely provided most of the Minister's background material.<sup>99</sup>

Although West Germany was not yet even a member of the United Nations, domestic commemoration of the WRY seems to have been widespread. Within the first four months of the commemoration, nearly all of the three thousand newspapers and magazines in West Germany were reported to have published at least one article focusing on refugee issues, while the radio and

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<sup>97</sup> Presseinformation, Deutsche Ausschuss für das Weltflüchtlingsjahr, Oct. 1, 1960, BAK B 150/755.

<sup>98</sup> World Refugee Year Secretariat, *The Refugee Problem in the Federal Republic of Germany*, World Refugee Year No. 26 (Geneva: United Nations Organization, 1959). This pamphlet was based on material from "Flüchtlinge in Deutschland"/"Refugees in Germany," BMVFK, Abt. II, BAK B 150/2746, B 150/755.

<sup>99</sup> See "Lindert die Not der Flüchtlinge!" (Radio Address), June 28, 1959; Thodor Oberländer, "Weltflüchtlingsjahr 1959," *Bulletin*, Jan. 7, 1959, 33; Theodor Oberländer, "Der Sinn des Weltflüchtlingsjahr," *Bulletin*, June 27, 1959, 1141; Werner Middelmann, "Weltflüchtlingsjahr – Aufgaben und Zeichen unserer Zeit," Nov. 1959, BAK B 150/2746.

television stations were also contributing to publicity, though it is unclear how much of this content focused on German refugees or others. A special edition of postage stamps was planned for release in April 1960 and the country's Catholic bishops had composed a pastoral letter to be read in churches.<sup>100</sup> Through September of 1960, three months after the official conclusion of the WRY, West Germans had donated more than DM 19 million to refugee assistance, with just over half of that total going to support refugees from East Germany and foreign refugees in West Germany.<sup>101</sup> One particular program, financed by these donations and administered by the German Settlement Bank (*Deutsche Siedlungsbank*), offered grants and loans to refugee farmers from East Germany to establish farms in West Germany. The association with the WRY meant that donations to this fund were considered charitable gifts under West German income tax laws.<sup>102</sup> However, this substantial support for German refugees is somewhat ironic, given that one subtext of much of the material published by the federal republic in support of the WRY highlighted the successes of integration.

Middelmann also took charge of the efforts at international outreach for the West German WRY commemoration. In March 1959, he spent a month travelling around the United States, giving television and radio interviews, speaking at universities and meeting with congressmen and newspaper reporters. The tour, jointly sponsored by the US Department of State and the American Friends Service Committee, allowed Middelmann the opportunity to publicize the standard West German line on refugees and expellees to a diverse group of listeners: newspaper readers in Dayton, Seattle, Portland and Los Angeles; members of the Council on Foreign Relations, the American

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<sup>100</sup> BMVFK, Vermerk über Berichte zum Weltflüchtlingsjahr, Oct. 12, 1959, BAK B 150/2746.

<sup>101</sup> Presseinformation, Deutsche Ausschuss für das Weltflüchtlingsjahr, Oct. 1, 1960, BAK B 150/755.

<sup>102</sup> Middelmann to Mordhorst (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Spitzenverband der freien Wohlfahrtspflege), Sept. 14, 1960, BAK B 150/755.

Association of University Professors, the Young Republican Club of San Francisco and the International Rescue Committee; and students at the University of Dayton, Pacific Lutheran College, San Francisco State, UCLA and Cornell College in Iowa. Middelmann was also able to report back to his ministry on American attitudes toward West Germany and its refugee issues, concluding that, on most issues, Americans were generally supportive of the West Germans, but that, the status of West Berlin aside, they were more willing to compromise with the Soviet Union at the expense of the West German position. However, Middelmann also noted that, outside of New York and Washington, American opinions toward West Germany also tended to be more politically “opaque” (*undurchschaubar*), a situation he blamed in part on the influence of Czech- and Polish-American organizations, as well as the slow process of rebuilding networks of German journalists and correspondents after the Second World War. However, this situation also meant that American interest in West Germany, which remained strong, could be easily influenced.<sup>103</sup>

Beyond travel, there were several other avenues open to West German officials seeking to influence an American audience. One was the *Sudeten Bulletin*, an English-language journal published by the officially non-partisan but extremely pro-expellee Sudeten German Archive in Munich. Although it had no definitive connections to the federal government, throughout the 1950s and into the following decade the *Sudeten Bulletin* often published translations of articles and speeches on expellee and refugee issues by West German leaders, including Konrad Adenauer, Willy Brandt, and Heinrich von Brentano. During the World Refugee Year, the monthly journal published articles on East German and non-German refugees in West Germany by Oberländer and Middelmann, respectively, with additional contributions from Peter Paul Nahm and Walter Stain.

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<sup>103</sup> “Aufzeichnungen über die Reise nach den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika vom 1. März 1959 bis 3. April 1959,” Apr. 20, 1959, BAK B 150/2746.



Oberländer's article continued the theme laid out by Middelmann from the beginning of the WRY, drawing comparisons between the refugees in West Germany and those elsewhere in the world. Referring to the million Palestinian refugees who had left Israel after 1948, Oberländer noted that, as with the German expellees and East German refugees, they "were one of two potentials: building blocks or dynamite. Had [the refugees] not become well integrated, the entire federal republic would not be a reliable member of the free world today."<sup>104</sup> Education was another venue for spreading influence: in August 1959, Middelmann was engaged as an instructor at the NATO International Summer School for Teachers, organized by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and held at New College, Oxford University. The assembled secondary-school teachers attended Middelmann's lectures on "Human Rights: Foundation of International Morality" and "The Unity of Europe," in which he laid out the Federal Republic's position on the successes and shortcomings of refugee integration. In particular, he focused on the domestic response to the arrival of the expellees and East German refugees as an example of West Germany overcoming the failure of other nations to consider human rights in the postwar settlements.<sup>105</sup>

However, despite these efforts, the most lasting effect of the commemoration of the World Refugee Year, in West Germany and throughout Western Europe, was the broadening of research on refugees. Whereas groups like the AER and Research Group for European Migration Problems had been primarily interested in European refugees during the 1950s, the study of refugees and migrants in other parts of the world became much more important in subsequent decades. Some evidence of

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<sup>104</sup> Theodor Oberländer, "The Century of Expulsion: One Hundred and Fifty Million People Uprooted," *Sudeten Bulletin*, Feb. 2009, 25-28

<sup>105</sup> Atlantic Treaty Organization, Summer-Kursus für Lehrer höherer Schulen aller Mitgliedsländer der NATO, "Das Menschenrecht – Grundsätze des internationalen Moral" and "Die Einheit Europas," Aug. 6 and 11, 1959, BAK B 150/2746.

this shift can be seen in the consolidation of scholarly organizations. Routinely short of funds, in 1962 the Research Group for European Migration merged its quarterly *Bulletin* with the journal *Migration* of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration – despite its name, the latter group also included a number of North and South American members – to form the new journal *International Migration*, with Gunther Beijer as advisory editor. Also in 1962, at a second annual meeting in Vaduz, the AER and AWR merged to form the Association for the Study of International Refugee Problems (AIR), in which the national sections seem to have played a much less prominent role. While books and papers on European refugees still comprised more than half of a bibliography on refugees published in the Summer 1964 issue of the journal *International Migration*, other areas, in particular East and Southeast Asia, were beginning to be well represented.<sup>106</sup>

The lasting impact of the scandals of 1956 through 1959 on government involvement in research on migration is unclear. Clearly, Eugene Kulischer could move easily between jobs in government, international organizations and universities, much as he had moved easily between Russian, German, French and American academic cultures. This was a harder task for others. Gunther Beijer avoided relying on government funding, but the Research Group for European Migration was reduced to a name on a masthead by the early 1960s and disappeared entirely after his death in 1983. For the members of the AER's German Section, the fallout may have been more severe. In 1961, Friedrich Edding moved from the *Institut für Weltwirtschaft* in Kiel to the *Hochschule für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung* in Frankfurt; in his memoirs, he rated his later career studying education as more important than his years as a migration researcher, and wrote

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<sup>106</sup> "A Bibliography on Refugees," *International Migration* Vol.2 No. 3 (Summer 1964), 235-239.

nothing about his experiences with other AER members.<sup>107</sup> Martin Kornrumpf took a position as a scientific advisor to the Fridtjof-Nansen-Institut in Vaduz and was appointed vice president of the German Nansen Society, a group that seems to have comprised his supporters from within the German Section. Theodor Oberländer, his primary opponent throughout 1956 and 1957, was forced to resign his cabinet position in 1960 following allegations that, as a former officer in the Waffen-SS, he had participated in a wartime massacre of Poles and Jews in Lviv.

Even considering the conflicts and controversies, the partnership between government funding and academic research in West Germany was fruitful, and both sides gained a certain amount of legitimacy. Researchers like Gunther Beijer and Friedrich Edding found that their expertise was a valuable resource for governments, and the some even saw their proposed solutions to various problems of migration put into practice. For the West German government, especially the midlevel section and office directors in the Refugee Ministry, men like Walter Arke and Wolfram Ruhenstroth, membership in the German Section conferred a measure of academic authority on their official responsibilities, while Werner Middelman developed his own forms of influence outside of the academic associations. Ironically, however, the AER/AWR's ties to Liechtenstein and the government of Prince Franz-Joseph II, a major source of antagonism between Martin Kornrumpf and Theodor Oberländer, contributed to the scandals that ended this formerly close relationship. As with the institutional responses to the arrival of East German refugees covered in earlier chapters, this was a crucial period in the development of a West German consensus on refugee issues, in particular the fundamental importance of economic integration. However, the focus on refugees' fates once they had already crossed the border occasionally overlooked the effects of their

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<sup>107</sup> Edding, *Mein Leben*, 64.

departure on East Germany. By the end of the 1950s, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the ongoing migration would have lasting demographic effects on both sides of the border.

## Chapter 5

### “Building Blocks or Dynamite”:

### The Possibility of Reunification and the Problem of Migration

In a radio address broadcast in March of 1961, Ernst Lemmer, at that time Federal Minister for All-German Affairs, called for an end to the migration of East German refugees into the Federal Republic of Germany via West Berlin. Urging residents of East Germany to “think twice” before fleeing their homes and heading west, Lemmer expressed concern that this trend was contributing to the depopulation of the area.<sup>1</sup> While this sentiment was perhaps ironic coming from a former refugee – a former leader in the Eastern branch of the CDU, Lemmer, like his predecessor Jakob Kaiser, had left the Soviet Zone in the late 1940s – the minister was merely repeating the stated policy of the government of the Federal Republic: as seen in previous chapters, the arrival of East German refugees was problematic on many levels. However, Lemmer’s address reminded listeners of yet another problematic aspect of refugee migration: the continued arrival of thousands of East Germans in West Germany did not serve the interests of an eventual German reunification.

There was, however, a more ominous subtext. In an article published the day after Lemmer’s 1961 speech, *The Times*’ Berlin correspondent reviewed Lemmer’s speech and suggested that depopulation between the Elbe and Oder would only encourage the Soviet Union to repopulate the area with immigrants from other areas under their control: Slavs, Mongols, or even Chinese.<sup>2</sup> Such fears were not isolated or fringe sentiments: they were at the heart of Walter von Cube’s criticism of

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<sup>1</sup> Ernst Lemmer, 4. März 1961: Rundfunkansprache des Bundesministers Lemmer über den Sender RIAS, Vol. IV.6, in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, ed. Rainer Salzmänn, 380-382 (Frankfurt am Main, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> “200,000 A Year in Migration from East Germany,” *The Times* (London), 6 March 1961: 10.

the Federal Government's refugee policies in 1953, and were the primary reason he called on the West Germans to work toward an adequate settlement with East Germany and an eventual reunification. Public opinion surveys conducted in the mid-1950s by the *Deutsches Institut für Volksumfragen* (DIVO) for the American High Commissioner's office indicated that many West Germans held similar fears, that the continued arrival of refugees from East Germany could lead to the transfer of land from Germans to non-Germans. One of the benefits of the DIVO survey reports is that they include not only the quantitative data expected of such sources, with sample sizes ranging from 500-1000, but also a significant amount of qualitative material, including a selection of translated answers given by respondents to each survey question. Thus, in addition to noting that 74 percent of West Germans believed that would-be refugees should stay in East Germany, respondents might also add that "it serves [Soviet] interests if the German population of the East Zone decreases...[they want to] resettle the Zone with Communist elements, then they would be in complete control of the country." Of course, one cannot read too much into these responses, as they rarely carry any identifying information other than the relative frequency of similar statements – for example, there is no indication of respondents' age or place of residence, aside from the occasional breakdown by *Land*. However, they do provide one window into the rhetoric surrounding the issue of German reunification.<sup>3</sup>

One of the complaints that had been consistently raised by expellee organizations, their supporters, and the West German government since the end of the war was that the postwar

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<sup>3</sup> Historians of this era might be familiar with these surveys, as they were the subject of the book *Public Opinion in Semi-Sovereign Germany*, published in 1980 by Anna and Richard Merritt. However, when they were preparing the book, the full surveys had not been declassified by the U.S. Department of State, and so the Merritts were limited to providing brief accounts drawn from the introductory pages of each survey report. The entire series has since been declassified, and the reports can be found in the U.S. National Archives in College Park, MD.

expulsions had erased centuries of German influence throughout Central and Eastern Europe. In the words of one American organization sympathetic to the expellee cause, in post-expulsion Poland “...rich agricultural areas [were] reduced to unproductive steppes and once busy industrial cities [were] turned into ghost towns.”<sup>4</sup>

Responses to East German refugee migration tended to be in a similar vein, and during the late 1950s statements from government officials and the responses of survey participants often expressed fear that the continued migration of refugees would lead to the eventual depopulation of the former Soviet Zone. In February 1953, in a meeting with several members of the US. High Commissioner’s office, West German Vice Chancellor and European Recovery Program minister Franz Blücher argued that “the void left by the departure of these refugees [could] be filled by bringing in other ethnic groups.”<sup>5</sup> Echoing this fear, some survey respondents believed that the Soviets made life miserable in the East in order to force out anyone unwilling to follow their dictates, in the process redrawing the demographic map of Europe. In this way, they believed, the Soviets could create a “Little Russia” in the East, or (even worse, perhaps) resettle the area with Central Asians, Mongols, and Chinese; the new residents could then take the jobs left by fleeing refugees, vote for the Communist government, and permanently alter the borders of Germany.<sup>6</sup> Official Federal Government publications compared East German agricultural policies with those of the Chinese Communist Party, stoking fears that ideas and practices were not the only transfers between

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<sup>4</sup> *In the Land of the Dead: Study of the Deportations from Eastern Germany* (New York: Committee Against Mass Expulsion, 1946), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Swope to Reber, “February 3rd Meeting with Dr. Bluecher,” 4 February 1953, 570.1: Refugees, Security-Segregated General Records, RG 466 HICOG, NARA.

<sup>6</sup> Current Appraisal of West Berlin Morale with Reactions to the Refugee Influx” (Report 2-177, April 20, 1953), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA.

the two communist governments, and accused the GDR of a systematic attempt to erase the shared history of the two modern states.<sup>7</sup>

However, while these fears were widespread, a few prominent West Germans were willing to express contrary opinions. Kurt Sieveking, a member of the CDU, Mayor of Hamburg and a former Bundesrat President was one of these. Speaking before the Foreign Press Association (*Verein der Auswärtigen Presse*) early in 1957, Sieveking considered it “unlikely that the Russian government does in earnest cherish the illusion to succeed in russianizing [sic] German territory and German people. Recent events in Poland may very clearly have shown to the Soviets the risk of letting accrue a dangerous amount of hostile tendencies throughout the occupied German area...[however], it is essentially up to the Germans to make public opinion in the world more and more aware of the unjust and unnatural nature of their division.”<sup>8</sup> Even though Sieveking sought to draw attention away from the most extreme fears of diminishing German influence, his statement still relied on the prospect of the East German population resisting Soviet policies.

There could be only one solution to a problem of this nature: reunification. In 1953 Jakob Kaiser, then the Minister for All-German Questions and himself a refugee from East Germany, addressed a meeting of the CDU in Exile (*Exil-CDU*, an organization of former East German conservative politicians) on the topic of “A unified Germany in a unified Europe” (*Das ganze Deutschland in ein geeintes Europa!*). Kaiser criticized the ongoing political debate over the acceptance and rejection of refugees in the reception process, arguing that:

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<sup>7</sup> “The Soviet Zone Today: Red China as Model,” *The Bulletin*, Apr. 26, 1960. “A Refugee Tells Why He Fled,” *The Bulletin*, Oct. 25, 1960.

<sup>8</sup> Kurt Sieveking, “The European Task for German Foreign Policy”, *Aussenpolitik*, Feb. 1957 (translation by Atlantik-Brücke, e.V.), included in Stahl to Lyon, Berlin Numerical Files 2.2, Office of German Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs, U.S. Department of State, RG 59, NARA.



“the greater concern...is the weakening of *Mitteldeutschland* [Middle Germany, the area between West Germany and the eastern territories acquired by Poland] through the loss of so many capable and brave people, [and the] surrender of German land to the communists...the [West German] population must be convinced that any responsible politician knows that there is only one crucial support for the zone and its refugees. This is the reunification of our country. Reunification is necessary for resolving the refugee issue.”<sup>9</sup>

Some evidence for the impact of migration on these visions of reunification can be seen in the level of concern over demographic developments in both West and East Germany during the 1950s. Within a few months of its establishment in 1949, the West German government was already seeking to influence international opinion toward its perceived refugee crisis. In an English-language pamphlet aimed at a North American audience, the Federal Ministry for Expellees warned of the potential for future unrest if no actions were taken to alleviate the burden of refugee support. In comparison to the German situation, readers were asked to imagine the six states of New England being forced to absorb the entire population of Canada, and reminded them that the population density in West Germany was ten times that of the United States, in a country with significantly less agricultural potential.<sup>10</sup> Depopulation was also an important consideration for the Office of German Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. In preparation for continued negotiations in 1961, the following note was included in the office’s briefing papers: “...since the original Khrushchev threat [i.e. that of Nov. 1958], more than 350,000 refugees have come from East Germany to the West,

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<sup>9</sup> “Größere Sorge...macht uns die Schwächung Mitteldeutschlands durch den Verlust so vieler seiner fähigen und tapferen Menschen, die wachsende Überlassung deutschen Bodens and den Kommunismus...die Bevölkerung darf überzeugt sein, dass jeder verantwortliche deutsche Politiker weiß: es gibt nur eine entscheidende Hilfe für die Zone und ihr Flüchtlinge. Das ist die Wiedervereinigung unseres Landes. Die Wiedervereinigung bleibt Vorbedingung für die Lösung der Flüchtlingsfrage.” Ernst Lemmer, “Das ganze Deutschland in ein geeintes Europa!” *Das Bulletin*, Nr. 85 (May 7, 1953).

<sup>10</sup> *Some Facts About Expellees in Germany, 1949*, Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, 1949.

the great majority through Berlin – a further demographic drain which an already underpopulated GDR could ill afford.”<sup>11</sup>

The East German government was also concerned with the effect of migration on its population. In a 1959 report, intended to lay out a second seven-year demographic plan (the first ran from 1952 to 1958), the GDR focused on curbing emigration to the west and increasing the numbers moving the other direction. While this plan required a wholesale reversal of existing migration trends, it was significant for two reasons. The first was the belief that East Berlin, at least, could experience a surplus of migration by 1965, if one included the migration from other regions of East Germany as well as return migration from the West. The second is that there was no indication of any plans to curtail migration beyond convincing people to stay or return – the plan expected illegal emigration to the West to continue, albeit at a reduced rate, throughout the seven year period ending in 1965.<sup>12</sup>

The effect of refugee migration on the viability of East Germany was also of great interest to many West Germans. For example, West Berlin’s Office for All-Berlin Questions (*Büro für gesamtberliner Fragen*) paid close attention to East German population policies, particularly efforts to prevent unauthorized migration to the West and to convince refugees to return to the East.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The Berlin Problem in 1961,” Jan. 10, 1961 and “The Problem of Berlin,” Mar. 23, 1961, Bureau of European Affairs, Office of German Affairs, Records Relating to Berlin, Political 1-2, Negotiations on Berlin and Germany (History), RG 59 Department of State, NARA.

<sup>12</sup> Entwicklung der Bevölkerung des demokratischen Berlin von 1952 bis 1958, Staatliche Zentralverwaltung für Statistik, Bezirksstelle Groß-Berlin, LAB C Rep 306 Nr. 81; Bevölkerungsstatistik von Berlin, Magistrat von Berlin, Wirtschaftsrat des Bezirkes, LAB C Rep 106-02 Nr. 957. See also Analyse über die Bevölkerungspolitik und Arbeitskräfteentwicklung Im Demokratischen Berlin, 1959-1980, LAB C Rep 106-02 Nr. 96.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, “*Republikflucht*” in Büro für Gesamtberliner Fragen, Berlin’s West-Ost-Probleme, Mar. 15, 1956.

Despite variations of rhetoric and focus, these different understandings of refugee migration did have much in common. Most agreed that the migration of thousands of refugees was, at some level, problematic, and that it represented a potential disruption to social or political order in East and West. This much was clear even without the benefit of surveys or statistical research. As the previous three chapters have demonstrated, the processes of refugee registration, resettlement and integration posed significant challenges to West German society and to the government of the Federal Republic. Concerns about depopulation, loss of German influence in the East, and the possible influx of foreign groups into the vacuum left behind also contributed to West German ambivalence toward the arrival of refugees, and illuminate a deeper level of discomfort with the migratory status quo. The migration of refugees out of East Germany clearly recalled the conflation of emigration and abandonment that had been common in previous decades (see chapter one). However, what made this migration seem even more dangerous was that it seemed to threaten the complete depopulation of East Germany, which would represent a more significant loss of historically German territory than even the postwar cessions.

With no way to effectively cut off refugee migration, the Federal Republic and West Berlin could only hope to reduce the numbers seeking to cross the border, while working toward a more permanent solution to the problem of refugees by pursuing German reunification. As seen in the second chapter, the official policy of the Federal Government on refugees reflected this concern: only those refugees whose lives were in direct danger should flee, while the rest should, in the words of Konrad Adenauer, “remain in East Germany, form resistance groups, and retain [the area] for

German Culture.”<sup>14</sup> Even the refugees themselves largely agreed with this stance: when asked in one 1952 survey, 74 percent of refugees (i.e. those who had arrived from East Germany during the previous three years) agreed with the statement of Jakob Kaiser, Minister of All-German Affairs, that “the people of the East Zone should stay on in the East Zone and should come over to the West only if their lives and freedom are endangered.”<sup>15</sup> Clearly, all of these refugees recognized that flight was justified in certain cases (their own, at least), but they also seem to have believed that others had fled East Germany for less noble reasons. However, it was difficult to force potential refugees to reconsider their flight, and by the second half of the 1950s, the West Germans had largely ceased trying. As a result, reunification seemed to be the last potential hope to forestall further demographic shifts.

Of course, there were many reasons for the West Germans to pursue reunification of the two postwar states, but it is clear that this continued westward migration of refugees was a primary concern. West Berliners and West Germans tried to envision a future in which the refugees from East Germany (and perhaps even those from east of the Oder-Neisse border) could freely return to their original homes. In 1952, even before the first major refugee influx of the late winter and spring of 1953, a survey indicated that 85 percent of West Germans thought their country to be overcrowded, and nearly half (49 percent) believed that this prevented them from achieving a satisfactory standard of living. A majority (58 percent) thought that the best option for relieving this population pressure was the recovery of Germany’s eastern territories, including those beyond the

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<sup>14</sup> Berlin Command, Periodic Intelligence Report No. 8, 28 May 1954, RG 549 Records of the United States Army Europe, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (NARA).

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in “Are the Difficulties of Recent East Zone Refugees Breeding Dissatisfaction with the West?” (Report 2-157, October 13, 1952), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA.

Oder-Neisse, while much smaller proportions argued for increased emigration (15 percent) or additional resettlement initiatives (15 percent).<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in a 1954 survey, at least one respondent said that reunification was an opportunity "...to get rid of the refugees for once, that they [can] go back to their home country...[then] the influx of refugees will be over," and "The [East zone] refugees could return to their homes...we'd be among ourselves again at last...West Germany wouldn't be so densely populated anymore."<sup>17</sup>

Naturally, visions of reunification took many different forms. When asked, West Germans generally expressed optimism that the postwar situation was temporary, and that a future, undivided Germany was an attainable goal. Such ideas were not limited to the political extremes or the expellee organizations; by the mid-1950s, one survey organization had stopped asking whether or not West Germans found reunification desirable, since respondents would routinely report a nearly unanimous (and undoubtedly emphatic) 'yes.'<sup>18</sup> Talk of reunification was unavoidable in West German public discourse, and while many were skeptical of the immediate prospects for reunification, this did not stop them from articulating their visions of an eventual solution to this problem. In this way, attitudes toward reunification resembled the attitudes toward the refugee reception process: West Germans merely needed to endure the temporary situation, with the expectation that a permanent solution would be forthcoming.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the decade, when

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<sup>16</sup> Report 2-143, June 30, 1952.

<sup>17</sup> "Section X: West German Opinion on German Reunification, General Attitudes Survey XX-2" (October 1954), Country Project Files – Germany, RG 306, USIA Office of Research, NARA.

<sup>18</sup> "Some Basic Guides to Predicting the Future Behavior of West Germany" (Report 2-143, June 30, 1952), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA.

<sup>19</sup> One example of this attitude is found in "Bundestag Demands Freedom for Soviet Zone Population," *The Bulletin*, Oct. 7, 1958.

survey takers asked about the most important problems facing Germany, reunification routinely led the list, with response percentages ranging from 18 percent to 43 percent, depending on the political and economic context. In other surveys, the question was more open ended and respondents were allowed to list multiple problems. In these cases, the percentage of West Germans mentioning reunification as one of several important issues was much higher, peaking at 70 percent in November 1954, just after the Paris Agreements, which established full sovereignty for West Germany beginning the following year.<sup>20</sup>

However, West German agreement on the issue of reunification was limited to its desirability. The wider debate considered all of the possible variations of a future unified Germany: its geographic limits, its demographic distribution, and its potential international stance. Survey respondents' opinions also differed on the relative likelihood of reunification and the means by which reunification could be achieved. They were split on whether reunification should lead to German neutrality or whether they would be willing to accept East German leaders in a unified government. Most thought that reunification would be beneficial, citing economic and political renewal, a return of national prestige, and a definitive end to the uncertain postwar situation. It was widely agreed that reunification would also help to solve population problems, providing for a reversal of the postwar expulsions and the later influx of East German refugees. Such concerns hinged on some of the most important areas of contention: the territorial integrity and potential boundaries of a reunified German state.

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<sup>20</sup> "Current German Opinion on the Saar (Following the Paris Agreement)" (Report 2-206, December 6, 1954), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA; Elisabeth Noelle and Eric Peter Neumann, *The Germans: Public Opinion Polls 1947-1966* (Allensbach: Verlag für Demoskopie, 1967), 459.

Geographically, there were significant gaps between what West Germans said they wanted and what they thought their country would (or should) receive. In 1952, 61 percent thought that Germany would someday regain areas east of the Oder and Neisse. West German were more pessimistic about the Saar, as only 23 percent thought that area would eventually be incorporated into West Germany, a proportion virtually equal to that of those who thought that the Saar would come under international control and those who had no opinion on the matter.<sup>21</sup> Despite this apparent sympathy for irredentism, West Germans and West Berliners generally supported recovering these eastern territories by diplomacy rather than by force by a 53 percent to 20 percent margin. Even among the refugee and expellee population, only a third of those surveyed supported the use of force to regain their homelands.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, most West Germans understood reunification to be centered on regaining East Germany, the former Soviet zone of occupation (and with it West Berlin, prevented from fully joining the Federal Republic by occupation agreements). As one West German said in 1955, “it is impossible to divide [Germany] into two parts...we are all Germans and we should live in one country called Germany...not several of them.” Indeed, 38 percent of fellow respondents agreed with the statement “the East Zone has always been a part of Germany” when presented with a series of reasons for reunification (the highest percentage of any single answer).<sup>23</sup> However, as late as 1952, well over 80 percent of West Germans also thought that their country had a legal claim to the territories of West and East Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia, while only around half (54 percent)

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<sup>21</sup> “Repercussions in West Germany of the French Ambassadorial Appointment to the Saar” (Report 2-124, February 26, 1952), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA.

<sup>22</sup> Report 2-143, June 30, 1952.

<sup>23</sup> “Reunification: West German Aspirations and Expectations” (Report 2-211, May 9, 1955), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA.

thought the same of the Sudetenland.<sup>24</sup> In a separate survey, taken earlier that year, 68 percent thought that the Saar should be a part of West Germany, though this survey did not consider the issue of a legal claim to the Saar.

Similar patterns were repeated throughout the 1950s. In 1954, following the Paris Agreements, 80 percent of survey respondents thought that Germany had a greater claim than France to the Saar, but only 37 percent thought that it would again come under German control. At the same time, only 42 percent expressed optimism that the areas east of the Oder-Neisse line would eventually be restored as a part of a reunified Germany, a significant drop over the course of the previous two years. In 1955, 92 percent of West Germans favored (75 percent strongly) the return of the eastern territories, but only 17 percent thought there was a good or even fair chance of that happening. Odds of the reunification of East and West Germany fared slightly better, with a slight plurality (47 percent) expressing optimism that reunification was in the future (chances were very good, good, or fair, as opposed to 43 percent who thought that the chance was poor or very poor). In 1955, diplomacy remained the strategy of choice: a plurality of West Germans (29 percent) and West Berliners (35 percent) thought that reunification was more likely to occur via negotiation than through a show of force.<sup>25</sup>

Reunification proposals put forth by the GDR government (like that of September 15, 1951) or the Soviet leadership (March 10, 1952) focused on the creation of a “united, peace-loving and democratic Germany,” new elections, the withdrawal of all occupation forces, and German

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<sup>24</sup> Report 2-143, June 30, 1952.

<sup>25</sup> Report 2-211, May 9, 1955.



neutrality.<sup>26</sup> Because they were predicated on the recognition of the East German government as legitimately able to speak for East Germans, as well as an end to German integration with Western Europe, the government of the Federal Republic was generally unwilling to consider such negotiations. Of course, these proposals were meant to appeal to the West Germans, in the hopes that public opinion might influence the government stance, and starting in late 1951, surveys sought to estimate the effect of these proclamations on the West Germans. Throughout the rest of the decade, West Germans continually opposed reunification if it meant increased communist influence or communist control of the government. In 1952, 76 percent were against the former, and all but 3 percent opposed the latter.<sup>27</sup>

The issue of reunification in exchange for military neutrality, without the commitment to integrate the East German leadership, was more attractive for some West Germans, and survey respondents were questioned several times on their openness to that sort of settlement. In a series of interviews conducted in early 1951, West Germans expressed a preference for political and military integration into Western Europe over reunification and neutrality by a 65 percent to 20 percent margin. However, opinions were not set in stone: when presented with more favorable terms, the percentage accepting neutrality and unification nearly doubled, to 37 percent.<sup>28</sup> The signing of the Austrian State Treaty in 1955 provided another example for the establishment of neutrality on the

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<sup>26</sup> "Resolution of the Volkskammer, 15 September 1951" reproduced in *The Efforts by the Federal Republic of Germany to Re-establish the Unity of Germany by means of All-German Elections* (Bonn: Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs, 1954), 39.

<sup>27</sup> Report 2-143, June 30, 1952.

<sup>28</sup> "German Attitudes on Eve of Paris Deputies Conference" (Report 2-64, March 14, 1951), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA.

“Swiss model.”<sup>29</sup> This sparked some interest among the West German public, and in June of that year, a survey indicated that 43 percent of West Germans, a plurality, preferred a unified, neutral Germany, while 33 percent wanted to continue on the established course of European and Western integration.<sup>30</sup> The middle years of the decade were the high point for the support of neutrality, however: by November 1957, only 21 percent of West Germans continued to support neutrality, not much less than the 27 percent who favored continuing the status quo and the 30 percent who sought a new bilateral system, including the United States and the Soviet Union. However, it is telling that when support for unification and neutrality was at its highest level, West German enthusiasm for reunification dropped sharply. In January 1954, 75 percent were very strongly in favor of an eventual reunification, but sixteen months later, in April 1955, that percentage had dropped to 34 percent; this loss was matched by gains for less emphatic levels of support.<sup>31</sup>

Clearly, the belief that reunification would include territories beyond those of the existing East and West Germany also decreased over the course of the decade. When Ernst Plate, Hamburg’s Senator for Economy and Traffic and FDP member, laid out his reunification proposals in a 1957 article in *Die Welt*, he argued for diplomatic contacts at the sub-national level, between individual *Länder* and districts in West and East Germany, and largely ignored the question of the areas across

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<sup>29</sup> Rolf Steininger, *Austria, Germany, and the Cold War: From the Anschluss to the State Treaty, 1938-1955* (New York: Berghahn, 2008), 128. Ironically, Austrian neutrality was the product of high-level diplomacy, and thus neither involved nor inspired the Austrian public. Ernst Bruckmüller, *The Austrian Nation: Cultural Consciousness and Socio-political Processes*, translated by Lowell E. Bangerter (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 2003), 354-355.

<sup>30</sup> General Attitudes Survey XX-4, June 9, 1955.

<sup>31</sup> Report 2-211, May 9, 1955.

the Oder and Neisse.<sup>32</sup> While the official response to this plan, written by Franz Thedieck, State Secretary in Ernst Lemmer's Ministry for All-German Questions, attacked Plate's proposal for attempting to subvert the federal nature of the West German state, it did not take the opportunity to criticize Plate for failing to mention the prewar borders.<sup>33</sup>

Given these various expectations for reunification, the ongoing migration of refugees was problematic on several levels; beyond the perception of abandonment of "German land" discussed above, the possibility that the refugees would integrate themselves into West German society was a potentially negative development: it contributed to the perceived overcrowding of West Germany, and it seemed that the refugees, once integrated, would have little incentive to return to their original homes after reunification. As a result, those concerned on either count had reasons to work toward a fast and widely amenable solution, namely reunification on the best terms possible. There were practical as well as philosophical sides to these attempts, many focused on outreach and public opinion on both sides of the border, as well as among those responsible for German policy in other countries.

However, these visions of reunification were often impossibly idealistic. At a meeting in early 1958, the CDU's Reunification Committee, working with representatives of local party organizations, approved a list of seven theses on German reunification, beginning with the somewhat optimistic statements "Reunification has already begun" and "The fact that we see no progress on reunification is no reason for pessimism." The committee also recommended that West Germans maintain their contacts with residents of the GDR, whether relatives or acquaintances, arguing that

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<sup>32</sup> Ernst Plate, "Wiedervereinigung – aber wie?" *Die Welt*, Sept. 21, 1957.

<sup>33</sup> Franz Thedieck, "Wiedervereinigung – aber wie? Ein Vorschlag und sein Echo," *Bulletin* Oct. 1, 1957.

this would help the cause of reunification as much as high-level diplomacy.<sup>34</sup> In a similar vein, the plan proposed by the West Berlin SPD in 1955 called for the occupying powers to cede control of border regulations as a sign of their commitment to a unified German authority, with the intention of normalizing cross-border traffic.<sup>35</sup> With the latter proposal, it is unclear whether the SPD's local association actually foresaw cooperation between East and West Germany over border issues or whether this was rhetoric designed to demonstrate the party's independence of the occupation authorities.

However, cooperation across the border was not completely out of the question. The Office for All-Berlin Questions within the West Berlin administration was responsible for maintaining relationships with authorities in East Berlin and keeping the municipal government informed of developments in the city's former Eastern districts. The office's portfolio ranged from the mundane – facilitating garbage collection, postal services, shared utilities and cross-border cemetery visits – to those more in line with the charged political atmosphere – political prisoners, travel restrictions and kidnapping allegations. As a clearinghouse for information on East Berlin and, to a certain extent, the rest of East Germany, the office also tracked the progress of legislation and legal decrees, including those related to issues of migration between East and West Berlin.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "Wie steht es um Deutschland? Sieben Thesen und eine Frage zur Wiedervereinigung," CDU Wiedervereinigungsausschuss, 9. Sitzung, Jan. 10 1958, LAB B Rep 246 Nr. 3.

<sup>35</sup> "Die sozialdemokratische Wiedervereinigungspolitik," SPD-Landesverband Berlin, Apr. 23, 1955, LAB B Rep 245 Nr. 47. See also "SPD Proposals for the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers" in Heinrich von Siegler, ed. *The Reunification and Security of Germany: A Documentary Basis for Discussion* (Munich: Siegler & Co. Verlag, 1957), 107-109.

<sup>36</sup> Amrehn to Vorsitzenden des Ausschusses für Gesamtberliner Fragen, Senat von Berlin, "Aufgaben und Aufbau des Büros für Gesamtberliner Fragen," Dec. 21, 1955. LAB B Rep 002 Nr. 9642.

Working with information gathered from published reports on East Berlin and East Germany, as well as its own contacts, the office compiled quarterly reports on “Berlin’s West-East Problem” (*West-Ost Probleme*) and distributed them throughout the West Berlin administration. While the majority of the Federal Republic and West Berlin administrations were clearly seeking to control, limit and even prevent cross-border migration, the Office of All-Berlin Questions continued to offer programs that ran counter to these attempts, arguing that this support could influence ordinary East Germans to work toward an eventual reunification. Thus, the office provided subsidies for East Germans and East Berliners to attend trade shows and events held in the city, in particular the Berlin International Film Festival, founded in 1951 and intended to showcase West Berlin’s cultural reconstruction. This assistance allowed visitors to purchase tickets with East German marks on an equal basis (1:1) with West German marks, and also included a 50-pfennig coupon for refreshments, so that the visitors could have a snack without changing any additional currency. The office estimated that, at least in 1957 (the only year that statistics were noted), half of the attendees at the Film Festival had come from East Berlin or East Germany.<sup>37</sup>

In addition, starting in 1952, the Office of All-Berlin Questions, along with the city’s Department of Housing Construction, sponsored weekly bus tours of West Berlin for curious Easterners. Every year through 1961, ten to fifteen thousand visitors took part in these free tours, offered on Sundays during the summer months.<sup>38</sup> The office defended this practice by pointing out that the East Germans were providing a very similar service for visitors from the West, which

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<sup>37</sup> Büro für Gesamtberliner Fragen, “Jahresbericht des Senats von Berlin für 1957,” LAB B Rep 002 Nr. 9642.

<sup>38</sup> “Jahresbericht des Senats von Berlin für 1953” and other yearly reports, Büro für Gesamtberliner Fragen, LAB B Rep 002 Nr. 9642.

included a bus tour from the Friedrichstrasse station, along Unter den Linden and finally to the Soviet War Memorial in Treptow via Alexanderplatz and the Stalinallee. After returning to the city hall, the visitors would be treated to coffee and cake, and according to the office's informants, urged them to consider resettling in East Germany.<sup>39</sup>

The Office for All-Berlin Questions, like its counterpart ministry in Bonn, was also responsible for facilitating legal cross-border movements, including the transport of furniture and other household goods.<sup>40</sup> In the shadow of the millions of registered and unregistered refugees, the tens of thousands who were given legal permission to move out of East Germany to the West are easily overlooked. At least for East Berlin, generally between a fifth and a third of all emigration from the city to West Berlin and West Germany was authorized. Later in the decade, in 1958 and 1959, population breakdowns compiled by the East Berlin statistics office show that a majority of legal emigrants were women – 69 percent in the former year, and 77 percent in the latter, while the illegal emigrants were generally split equally.<sup>41</sup> This may indicate that emigration could be authorized for purposes of family reunification.<sup>42</sup>

Of course, despite all of these efforts throughout the decade, reunification never really came close to being attained. Both East and West Germans tended to blame the lack of progress on the

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<sup>39</sup> Büro für gesamtberliner Fragen, Berlin's West-Ost-Probleme, June 15, 1956, LAB B Rep 002 Nr. 2154.

<sup>40</sup> Referat I5a, BMVFK to Landesflüchtlingsverwaltungen, "Interzonenreisen, Einreisen in die SBZ, Ausreisen aus der SBZ, Möbeltransport," Feb. 14, 1956, BAK B 150/878.

<sup>41</sup> "Zu- und Abwanderungen aus Westberlin und Westdeutschland, 1955-1960" Staatliche Zentralverwaltung für Statistik der DDR, Bezirksstelle Berlin, LAB C Rep 306 Nrs. 265-270.

<sup>42</sup> This possibility is also considered by Friedrich Heller in "Legale Übersiedlung in die Bundesrepublik oder nach West-Berlin," Deutsche Fragen: Information und Berichte aus der Zone der Unrechts, Oct. 10, 1958, in BAK B 150/878.

Soviet and East German governments, though West Germans were not unwilling to criticize Adenauer's stance against negotiation with the other side. When asked in 1951, a majority (58 percent) of East German survey respondents were pessimistic toward the prospects for reunification and a plurality (30 percent) blamed their own government for not "mak[ing] any honest proposals and...not want[ing] a reunification." At the same time, only around half of West and East German respondents thought that the Western powers favored German reunification, though the percentage was higher in the east (58 percent) than in the west (47 percent).<sup>43</sup> West Germans were equally divided on whether their government should have considered East German proposals for negotiation: only 43 percent approved of Adenauer's outright refusal, while 40 percent thought that the Chancellor should have attempted negotiation. Those speaking out in favor of negotiations generally supported the principle of negotiation – "we should show our good will" – while those supporting Adenauer's refusal cited mistrust of the Soviets and the East German government.<sup>44</sup> By October 1954, support for Adenauer's handling of the issue of unification had risen to around 60 percent; a similar percent blamed the East Germans for a lack of progress, while most of the remainder (24 percent) held both sides responsible.<sup>45</sup> Opinions changed quickly, however: six months later, in April 1955, the percentage of those blaming the East decreased to 43 percent, edging out the 38 percent who thought both sides should share the blame. At the same time, 30

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<sup>43</sup> "Some Further Soundings on West and East German Opinions on Unity Issues" (Report 2-115, Dec. 19, 1951), Public Opinion Surveys, RG 306 USIA Office of Research, NARA.

<sup>44</sup> Opinions in West Berlin were another story entirely; when West Germans were evenly split on the issue, 73 percent of Berliners supported Adenauer's stance. Report 2-64, Mar. 14, 1951.

<sup>45</sup> General Attitudes Survey XX-2.

percent of those surveyed thought that there was nothing West Germany could do to help the cause of reunification.<sup>46</sup>

By the end of the decade, a general level of pessimism about reunification had set in. In August 1959, 61 percent of West Germans and 67 percent of West Berliners thought that the chances for reunification were bad or very bad.<sup>47</sup> This seems to indicate that, even before the construction of the wall, West German expectations largely mirrored the status quo, a long-term and possibly permanent division of Germany into East and West. Part of this pessimism may have been the realization that political reunification was the province of the former occupiers, and as such was out of the control of the Federal Republic. This may explain, in part, the efforts taken to exercise some measure of control over other aspects of reunification, whether or not those efforts had any real effects.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the Federal Republic could invest 300 million DM in a new train station in Braunschweig, in the hope that the expanded facility would be able to handle the expanded traffic on the line connecting a reunified Berlin with the western regions of a reunified Germany.<sup>49</sup> It was also in this spirit that Heinrich Kreil, Senator for Labor and Social Questions in Berlin, wrote in 1956: “On the day of reunification the reflux of the people who once fled from the Soviet Zone of

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<sup>46</sup> Report 2-211, May 9, 1955.

<sup>47</sup> General Attitudes Survey after the Geneva Talks (August, 1959), Country Project Files – Germany, RG 306, USIA Office of Research, NARA.

<sup>48</sup> Stefan Wolff, “The Politics of Homeland: Irredentism and Reconciliation in the Policies of German Federal Governments and Expellee Organizations toward Ethnic German Minorities in Central and Eastern Europe, 1949-99,” in Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal and Nancy Reagan, eds., *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 288.

<sup>49</sup> “New Stations, New Tracks, New Trains,” *The Bulletin*, Nov. 8, 1960.



Germany will set in. Let us hope that...the Berlin refugee camps will no longer be crowded with people looking for asylum...but with re-immigrants who are anxious to reestablish within a few years in their homeland (*Heimat*) a free and happy life.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Heinrich Kreil, “Berlin and the refugees from the Soviet Occupied Zone of Germany,” *Flüchtlingsprobleme in Berlin*, Special Edition of *Integration* (Munich/Augsburg: Hofmann-Druck und Verlag, 1956).

## Conclusion

### The Price of Ambivalence

In 1961, an East German surgeon and refugee, writing under the pseudonym Herbert Schrader, published a memoir of his final year at a provincial hospital, recounting the events and injustices that led to his decision to leave East Germany in December 1960. Schrader's account ends as he, his wife and young daughter are crossing the border between East and West Berlin, having already transferred most of their belongings via a series of visits to a former colleague living in West Berlin. The reader knows that, with the help of this former colleague, he has accepted a position in a West German hospital, and there is little doubt that this educated professional will find a house or apartment that improves upon the two room walk-up that his family had occupied in East Germany.<sup>1</sup> In this way, the Schraders' story is clearly different from that of millions of other East German refugees, those who crossed the border without the prospect of employment or a final destination in West Germany, spending weeks or months traversing the reception process and waiting in transit camps. They did not have the luxury of personal contacts in West Berlin to help store their possessions and to provide information on employment opportunities, nor did they have clearly defined professional skills to ease their transfer into West German society. Even successful refugees - those who were accepted into the resettlement program - were not guaranteed to find employment in the same fields they had left, and many would continue to inhabit transit camps for several months after arriving in West Germany. For thousands of others, the initial contact with the reception process was a dead end; after their applications for asylum were rejected, these refugees

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert L. Schrader, *No Other Way: The Story of a Doctor from East Germany*, trans. Ewald Osers (New York: David McKay Co., 1964).

were forced to choose between going home and remaining in West Berlin's refugee camps indefinitely, unable to find employment or live independently.

Yet the omission of the Schraders' encounter with the reception process illustrates a larger point: when considering this migration, individual refugees' escapes tend to be the exciting part of the story. Their subsequent encounters with bureaucracy rarely measure up. It is difficult to romanticize or memorialize the refugee camp experience: the long weeks of queues, cots and cafeteria meals. Thus, compared with the attention given to the various Cold War-era borders, in particular the Berlin Wall, but also the former border between East and West Germany, the sites related to the refugee reception process are largely overlooked. The reception center in Marienfelde has been turned into a museum, though it is so far from the city's center that all but the most determined tourists might never find it. The building at 8 Kuno-Fischer-Straße, though it is less than a kilometer from Berlin's massive International Congress Center, is deep in a residential neighborhoods, and has only a small plaque to remind pedestrians of its role from 1950 to 1953. Dozens of other buildings in Berlin and Western Germany that housed reception offices or temporary refugee camps lack any reminders of this period; even if the towns of Giessen or Uelzen wanted to memorialize this aspect of their municipal histories, it is unlikely that they would have any better luck. The reception process itself did not lend itself to easy definition, and steps that seemed justifiable at the time – for example, the attempts to convince refugees in no personal danger to return home to East Germany – are much more difficult to explain in retrospect. Fundamentally, this situation, nearly fifty years after the construction of the Berlin Wall and twenty since its destruction, is a product of the ambivalence that surrounded the refugee question in the 1950s: full acceptance of the refugees required overcoming a historical context that equated emigration with

abandonment, a political context that painted nearly all refugees as potential saboteurs and spies, and an economic context in which newcomers represented idle hands and mouths to feed.

Yet, as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has argued, “in a democracy politics is about something more than the struggle for power or the manipulation of image. It is above all about the search for remedy.”<sup>2</sup> In this vein, the establishment of a bureaucracy for refugee reception was intended as a remedy to a difficult problem, that of shaping and controlling the migration of refugees, and as such was a defining moment in the early years of the Federal Republic. The need to take care of the East German refugees, to provide food, shelter and medical care, and eventually jobs and homes, was a task that invited criticism from across the political spectrum and raised more questions than it answered. The Federal Republic’s response was inefficient at best, and often slow to react to changes in the rates of arrivals, but the refugees were not forced to fend for themselves, nor were the *Länder* and (especially) West Berlin left to find their own ways out of the crisis. Even when assistance was provided by charitable groups like the German Red Cross and American Friends Service Committee, the organizations generally stayed within the framework of the reception process, operating individual camps and limited resettlement programs rather than establishing parallel structures.

It is also crucial to remember that this bureaucracy was not created as an imposition on the *Länder*; rather, its growth tended to be more organic, based on the transfer of techniques and personnel from the *Länder* to the Federal level, a process that was most clearly seen in West Berlin. Indeed, “Bonn,” as a stand-in for either the federal ministries or the West German parliament, was occasionally criticized for taking too much of an interest in refugee issues, and diverting attention away from the efforts of other levels of government. As late as May 1958, Eduard Bernoth, West

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “The Liberal Opportunity,” *The American Prospect*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (Mar. 21, 1990), 14.

Berlin's Senator for Labor and Social Issues could send a telex to his colleague Günter Klein, the Senator for Federal Affairs, complaining about the rates of acceptance and rejection in the Federal Emergency Reception Procedure, leading to a backlog of refugees awaiting transport and dependent on municipal welfare assistance.<sup>3</sup> The government in Bonn, however, was also a source of hope for individual refugees. Frustrated with the delays and inefficiencies of the official reception process, many wrote to Konrad Adenauer, Theodor Heuss, or various cabinet ministers requesting personal intervention in their cases. It is unclear whether these individuals could do much to help, or whether they even attempted to intervene, but the letters were circulated to the proper offices and ministries, where their arrivals were recorded, handwritten notes were transcribed, and the letters archived for posterity.

Early in the decade, it is clear that the status quo was the problem, that West Germany and West Berlin could not handle the numbers of refugees arriving from the east. In February 1953, when the refugee influx in West Berlin was exceeding all expectations, swamping the established registration procedures and threatening to overwhelm the already-crowded city, Ernst Reuter, then the city's Governing Mayor, rejected calls to close off the border, arguing that it was "out of the question to build a wall in Berlin against the refugees."<sup>4</sup> However, over the course of the decade, the ongoing West German response to its refugee problem effectively shifted the burden of enduring the status quo onto the East Germans, forcing them to consider emigration as a significant threat. Thus, from the perspective of the West Germans and their allies, by 1961, the migration of refugees

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<sup>3</sup> Eduard Bernoth to Günter Klein, Betr. Sitzung des Ausschusses für Gesamtdeutsche und Berliner Fragen am 7. Mai 1958, May 3, 1958, LAB B Rep 008 Nr. 608/1.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in "Refugee Burden of Berlin: Aid from 'Länder'," *The Times (London)*, Feb. 9, 1953, p. 6. See also Ernst Reuter, "A Sanctuary Behind the Iron Curtain: Berlin Faces Refugee Problem," *The Times (London)*, Feb. 12, 1953, p. 9.

seemed to be a greater problem for the East Germans: as noted by the US Department of State's Office of German Affairs a few months before the border was sealed, "West Berlin's role as a channel for the flow of refugees, as a center of Western propaganda and intelligence activities, and as a show window which daily and dramatically highlights the relative lack of success in the East, is such that the Soviets may feel that they cannot tolerate it for the indefinite future."<sup>5</sup> This was likely true, but by the summer of 1961, it was clearly the East Germans who had de facto control over border issues in Berlin, not the Soviets, and it was Walter Ulbricht's decision, as First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party and effective leader of East Germany, to completely seal off surface access to West Berlin starting that August.<sup>6</sup>

In erecting the Berlin Wall, the East German government was able to eliminate the mass migration of refugees, the single variable that separated the unstable status quo of the 1950s from an unpopular and resented, yet much more stable situation after 1961. If the goal was to limit emigration, the Wall was largely successful by East German standards. However, it also helped to eliminate many of the problems faced by West Berlin and West Germany. Refugees who had arrived during the summer of 1961 could still apply for entry into the reception process, but there was no longer any need for the West Berlin or West German authorities to anticipate future fluctuations in the numbers of arriving refugees. New refugees could be recast as heroic escapees who had arrived by jumping over, driving through, or tunneling under the nascent Wall. This helped to ease questions

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<sup>5</sup> "The Problem of Berlin," Negotiations on Berlin and Germany (History), Office of German Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs, U.S. Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

<sup>6</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; Corey Ross, "East Germans and the Berlin Wall: Popular Opinion and Social Change before and after the Border Closure of August 1961," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 39 No. 1 (Jan. 2004), 32.

about acceptance and rejection rates, and given the few numbers of those newcomers, the question of integration into West German society quickly became moot. After 1961, most of the reception and transit camps were closed, and ongoing building projects continued to provide new permanent housing for many former refugees, reducing their visibility to the wider West German population. In any case, the cessation of mass migration made it clear that there was no longer any danger of East German depopulation, even in the apparently permanent absence of reunification.

In addition, this migration itself seemed less problematic. As early as 1957, Kurt Sieveking, the CDU mayor of Hamburg and president of the Bundesrat, publicly acknowledged that, even under reunification, the territorial status of Germany in the 1930s was unlikely to be restored. Citing the prewar migration of Germans out of rural areas, Sieveking also argued that agricultural labor shortages would have been likely regardless of the expulsions, and that any post-reunification return migration would probably not meet the specific needs of these areas.<sup>7</sup> Sieveking's party leadership disavowed his statements, but after 1961, it was likely that no one would be shocked by a similar admission.

Once the memory of the debates and conflicts over refugee migration had faded in the 1960s, it was much easier to recall the entire previous decade as a period of settlement and stability. In retrospect, the 1950s were viewed as the decade of the "Economic Miracle," with little thought given to the inexpensive and highly mobile labor force provided by refugees, or the extensive construction projects that employed – and later housed – them and their families. Refugees, if considered, symbolized anti-communism; the refugee crisis of February and March 1953 was

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<sup>7</sup> Kurt Sieveking, "The European Task for German Foreign Policy", *Aussenpolitik*, Feb. 1957 (translation by Atlantik-Brücke, e.V.), included in Stahl to Lyon, Berlin Numerical Files 2.2, Office of German Affairs, Bureau of European Affairs, U.S. Department of State, RG 59, NARA.

conflated with the uprising of June 17th, three months later, both events representing the East German population's rejection of its government. There was little consideration given to the debate over how many of these refugees had, in fact, fled for political reasons, and whether the Federal Government was right to pass judgment on which refugees deserved recognition. Indeed, West German fears that the refugees would be a destabilizing presence were also forgotten, or at least overlooked until the arrival of the next group of newcomers. Then, the cycle of registration, detention and examination could begin again; some longstanding attitudes toward migration can be very difficult to overcome.



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