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Emigration and Exile

Within the forced emigrations of the 20th century, the number of German-speaking refugees fleeing the Nazi dictatorships sphere of control from Germany, Austria, and the German-speaking parts of Czechoslovakia was relatively small: involving around 500,000 persons, it made up only about one-tenth of the European total between the two World Wars.[1] But this emigration during the period of Nazi rule possesses particular significance for the history and self-understanding of Germany. On the one hand, it marked the end of German-Jewish coexistence and, triggering an exodus of almost the entire intellectual elite, resulted in the loss of most of the leading figures in German literature, art, and science. On the other hand, the emigration, or alternatively as the case may have been, the escape of thousands of regime opponents enabled political ideas to be developed and practical experience gained in exile which then contributed to the political reorganization of Germany after the end of the war.

Historical research distinguishes between two or alternatively three main groups of emigrants, which can overlap in many respects. The common cause for emigration is seen in the totalitarian and terrorist character of the Nazi Party.[2]

The International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Émigrés 1933-1945 (Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933) takes as its starting-point the motives for emigration or fleeing the anti-Jewish policies of the Nazis and the persecution of their political opponents and thus focuses on Jewish emigration and political exile. Besides Nazi policy and practices, this typology also takes into consideration the emigrants own understanding of their plight as either permanent emigration coupled with the willingness to acculturate in the host country or continuing identification with the country of origin and the wish to return after the collapse of the Nazi regime.

The Handbook of German-speaking Emigration (Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration) employs a three-fold structured typology that is likewise oriented on the pressures forcing emigration; however, besides Jewish emigration, it distinguishes based on their occupations and activities the emigration of intellectuals, literary figures, and artists from political emigration and assigns political exile only to those emigrants who continued the active fight against National Socialism from abroad within political parties, trade unions, and political organizations, or any other organization with a specific Weltanschauung.[3] When based on the direct causes motivating emigration, a large portion of literary and artistic emigration is thus assigned to the

1 Werner Röder and Herbert A. Strauss: Introduction. In: Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933 = International biographical dictionary of Central European émigrés 1933-1945. Edited by the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich and the Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration, New York under the direction of Werner Röder and Herbert A. Strauss. Vols.1-3. – Munich a. o.: Saur, 1980-1983, Vol. 1, 1980, p. [XIII]-LVIII., p. XIII. –Cited as: Werner Röder (1980); Herbert A. Strauss (1980)

2 Ibid., p. XXXIII.

3 Werner Röder (1998), p. 17

category of political exile, while the emigration of scientists and scholars is seen as part of Jewish emigration.

Jewish Emigration

According to Herbert A. Strauss, the statistical figures for Jewish emigration from Germany (totaling 278,500 persons) mirror to a certain degree the progression of anti-Jewish measures in Nazi Germany.[4] In Strauss view these measures were implemented in five phases. Immediately upon seizing power, the Nazis unleashed a phase of open terror, boycotting Jewish businesses, lawyers, doctors, etc. and dismissing Jews from the civil service. This initial phase was then followed by a creeping persecution that lasted from summer 1933 to spring 1935. The third phase of persecution, ushered in by a new wave of terror in the spring of 1935, ended on September 12, 1935 with the proclamation of the Nuremberg Laws. There followed another phase of creeping persecution from 1936 to fall 1937, which in turn gave way to an intensification of anti-Jewish measures that was connected with preparations for war and culminated in the pogrom of November 9-10, 1938 initiated by Goebbels and Hitler, which is frequently referred to as Reichskristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass), a euphemistic label concealing the severity of events. Aligning these phases to a breakdown of the emigration figures, the following picture emerges: whereas 37,000 persons emigrated in the first months of 1933, among them politically prominent or personally endangered Jews, the numbers decreased over the following years (1934: 23,000, 1935: 21,000, 1936: 25,000, 1937: 23,000 persons); they rose again in the wake of the 1938 November pogrom and the concurrent incarceration of around 30,000 Jewish men in concentration camps, which was a deliberate strategy to heighten the pressure to emigrate (1938: 40,000 persons); numbers reached their peak in 1939 as 78,000 persons emigrated. Once the war began only limited emigration to a neutral country or overseas was possible: in 1940 and 1941 only 23,000 Jews were able to escape Germany. Advice and aid was provided most notably by the Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden, founded in 1904, for emigration to European countries and overseas, while a Berlin bureau of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the Palästina-Amt, helped arrange immigration to Palestine.

On October 23, 1941 a decree issued by Himmler prohibited the emigration of Jews with immediate effect; emigration henceforth gave way to deportation to the extermination camps. Shortly after the emigration prohibition of October 1941, another decree was issued on November 25, 1941 that expatriated all Jewish refugees from Germany, affecting approximately 250,000 to 280,000 persons, and confiscated their assets. Between 1942 and the end of the war, 8,500 persons managed to emigrate or flee Germany. After the annexation of Austria, in August 1938 a Central Office for Jewish Emigration (Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung) was set up in Vienna. Under the direction of Adolf Eichmann, this office employed such brutal force and terror that by the outbreak of the war some two-thirds of Austrias 190,000 Jews had hastily

4 Herbert A. Strauss (1980), p. XIX

fled the country rather than emigrate in a halfway orderly fashion. Emigration of German-speaking Jews from Czechoslovakia probably amounted to more than 4,000 persons, while the total number of Jewish emigrants from the Bohemian lands and Slovakia was 33,000.

Political and Cultural Emigration

Political emigration also occurred in waves. Unlike Jewish emigration however, a large number of regime opponents, many of whom were additionally targeted by Nazi anti-Jewish policies, had been forced to emigrate or flee already in 1933. The reason behind the first large and hasty wave immediately after the Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933 was the imminent physical danger threatening both prominent Nazi opponents during the Weimar Republic politicians, publicists, and figures from cultural life as well as scores of Communist, Social Democrat, and trade-union functionaries active on a local level. Immediately following the Reichstag fire, the Reich President issued a decree for the protection of people and state on February 28, 1933, and this formed the pseudo-legal basis for rounding up Communist Party functionaries and members; after the Reichstag elections of March 5 and the gaining of power in the Länder (states), these raids were then extended to include other opposition groups chiefly Social Democrat and trade-union functionaries and members of groups like the Reichsbanner. The dissolution of the trade unions on May 2, 1933, the book burning of May 10, 1933, the banning of the Social Democrats on June 22, and the passing of a law prohibiting the new formation of political parties on July 14, which sealed Nazi autarchy, marked further stages in the elimination of political and cultural opponents. Another law also passed on July 14, 1933 on the revocation of naturalization and annulment of citizenship was initially deployed against prominent political opponents, before from 1937 onwards it was increasingly used to pressurize Jews who had already emigrated abroad. A total of 39,006 persons were expatriated by name and had their assets confiscated between August 25, 1933 and April 7, 1945.[5]

The second phase of political emigration began in summer 1933 with the emigration this time better organized of leading functionaries who were increasingly at risk. They were to expand the party representations and bases which had been set up in neighboring countries since February and establish effective leadership structures and party executives in exile capable of directing, promoting, and journalistically supporting resistance in Germany. Utilizing a network of posts close to the border, the exile representations of the labor movement were particularly active in supplying illegal groups in the Reich with combat organs and establishing contact with resistance groups through couriers and instructors activities which were on the decline as early as 1936 due to the increasing success of Gestapo intervention.[6]

5 See Die Ausbürgerung deutscher Staatsangehöriger 1933-45 nach den im Reichsanzeiger veröffentlichten Listen = Expatriation lists as published in the "Reichsanzeiger" 1933-45. Edited by Michael Hepp, with an introduction by Hans Georg Lehmann and Michael Hepp. Bd. 1-3, (Munich, Saur Verlag, 1985-1988.

6 Tarnschriften" (camouflaged leaflets and brochures) were of particular significance in this connection. These

During a third emigration phase, which included a relatively high number of emigrants from the Saar region and lasted into the war, primarily members of resistance groups in danger of being discovered took flight. After the uprising of February 12, 1934 and the imminent threat of reprisals by the authoritarian Dollfuss regime (Ständeregime, regime of the estates), several thousand members of the workers parties and trade unionists fled Austria; in March 1938, in the wake of annexation by Nazi Germany, prominent representatives of the Ständestaat (state of the estates) were in turn forced to escape. After the Munich Agreement of September 29 1938, over 6,000 endangered Nazi opponents fled Czechoslovakia.

By the outbreak of the war, approximately 30,000 persons had left the Nazi sphere of control for political reasons, the majority of whom were involved in leftwing parties, groups, and organizations. But significant numbers from other political groupings were also forced to leave, including representatives of middle-class parties the Catholic Center Party, the Liberals, and the National Conservatives, left-leaning nationalists, extending to oppositional National Socialists, as well as members of the Christian churches. Amongst the political emigrants were former Reich Chancellors Philipp Scheidemann, Joseph Wirth, and Heinrich Brüning , 27 former members of Reich and Länder governments, and 267 Reich and Landtag deputies. The scale of cultural and intellectual emigration was far in excess of 10,000 persons, and included some 2,500 writers, publicists, and journalists, 2,000 scientists and academics, and 6,320 persons from the areas of theater (4,000), film (2,000), photography (200), and dance (120).

Host Countries

Up until 1938 the adjacent states of the Third Reich were the preferred escape destinations of the political as well as most of the cultural emigrants, who wanted to live and work as close as possible to the border (Bertolt Brecht) so as to keep in touch with what was happening in Germany and perhaps even to exert an influence: France, until 1934-35 the Saargebiet (under French administration as part of a League of Nations mandate), Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Switzerland.

There are detailed studies on asylum practices and living conditions for a number of host countries. Here we can only briefly mention a few points: until 1938-39 the most important European centers of exile were France and Czechoslovakia. In Paris, the emigration capital until 1939, exile publishing houses were founded and periodicals brought out, including the daily Pariser Tageblatt (as of June 1936 the Pariser Tageszeitung). Paris was also the headquarters of

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were publications with uncontroversial jackets, title pages, and in some instances even fictitious imprint details but whose contents were in opposition to the the Nazi regime; they were printed abroad especially for illegal distribution throughout Germany. Up to now, over 1,000 different “Tarnschriften” have been identified. See Heinz Gittig, Bibliographie der Tarnschriften 1933 bis 1945, (Munich, Saur Verlag, 1996); Tarnschriften 1933-1945, edited in collaboration with the Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv, (Munich, Saur Verlag, 1997) (microfiche edition of 1024 “Tarnschriften”)

the German Communist Party (KPD) until 1935 and domicile for half of the émigré German Communists in the 1930s. Czechoslovakia became the center of Social Democrat emigration: in June 1933 the party executive relocated to Prague and stayed there until early summer 1938, when imminent Reich expansion forced them to move to Paris; from June 1933 to December 1937 the party organ Vorwärts was published in Carlsbad as Neuer Vorwärts (subsequently in Paris until May 12, 1940). The two most important exile literary publishers Querido and Allert de Lange were located in Amsterdam. In Switzerland, which imposed severe restrictions on German emigration, numerous exile writings were also published, most notably in the publishing houses of Emil Oprecht; émigré German actors and directors contributed to establishing a first-class theater at the Zurich Schauspielhaus. Aside from leading Communist functionaries, the Soviet Union admitted solely intellectuals and artists who sympathized with the Soviet system and ideology, only for many of them to become victims of the Stalinist purges and the Moscow show trials. Turkey specifically took in persecuted scientists and academics to help reform the university system.

Like political exile, Jewish emigration was concentrated on continental Europe in the first three years of the Nazi regime. The main host countries for Jewish emigrants were, however, the British mandated territory of Palestine and, particularly after the start of the Arab uprisings in 1936, the United States of America, which with 132,000 emigrants between 1933 and 1945 was at the forefront of all host countries. After the November pogrom of 1938 and the annexation of the rest of Czechoslovakia, Britain, forced to admit the failure of its appeasement policy, changed its restrictive stance and took in around 75,000 refugees from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia until the outbreak of the war. As of 1938-39 Sweden also gained in importance as an asylum country. The international enclave of Shanghai, the only remaining place worldwide permitting entry without a visa, was the last resort for some 13,000 Jewish refugees.

Political Journalism and Literature in Exile

According to Heinrich Mann, émigrés were to be the voice of a people that has been rendered mute [...] before the whole world.[7] Understanding themselves as the representatives of a different, better Germany, the political emigrants, like the politically committed cultural emigrants, viewed informing foreign countries about the crimes of the Nazi regime as one of their most important tasks. The exile press was a crucial instrument in this undertaking. In addition to thousands of books and brochures, more than 450 journals, newspapers, and newsletters of varying size and issue runs were published in exile, whereby this figure does not include the Austrian exile press. These publications represented the entire spectrum of exile, which for its part reflected all strata and groups of the Weimar Republic, if to varying degrees. The exile press remained practically the only forum where the uprooted émigrés could gather. Most notably they used the press to address the causes of Nazism and observe and analyze the prevailing

7 Heinrich Mann und ein junger Deutscher, Der Sinn dieser Emigration., (Paris, Europäischer Merkur, 1934), p. 33

conditions in Germany. New programs and tactics were discussed and, towards the end of the war, possible political forms for a German state and reorganization of society within a future postwar order in Europe were formulated and debated. For exiled writers established authors and novices alike working for exile periodicals meant recovering a communicative context, which gave them a sense of belonging and prevented them from losing the expressive power of their mother tongue. By the time war broke out, the heyday of the large exile periodicals was over. The periodicals published at the new places of exile were now mostly only newsletters and information sheets for smaller circles of like-minded persons. The major exception was the German-language Jewish weekly Aufbau / Reconstruction, which was first published in New York in December 1934. It contributed significantly to acculturation in the host country without denying ties to German culture.

Authors also embraced this role of giving the muted German people a voice, overcoming the enormous difficulties associated with writing texts and works in exile and having them published. The experience of exile itself was depicted, while recent German history and, above all, the Germany occupied and terrorized by their Nazi adversaries were other favored themes, using a variety of literary forms, ranging from eyewitness accounts and reportage novels through to general epochal overviews. The historical novel was also used as a medium for examining and interpreting the present. A number of works were also written which did not stem directly from the political concerns of the time, but could nevertheless set and preserve the highest literary standards. As a rule though, the exiles were somewhat reserved towards the innovative forms introduced by contemporary literature and other art forms.

Emigrants in the Second World War

By the outbreak of war in September 1939, most emigrants had to flee not only the countries of their residence but move to a different continent. After the war began, between 18,000 and 20,000 German-speaking emigrants in France were incarcerated in internment camps. In 1940 internment became the practice in Britain and many emigrants were forcibly sent to Canada and Australia. The capitulation of France in June 1940 triggered a new wave of flight to the unoccupied part of France, from there over the Pyrenees to Spain and Portugal, and then overseas.

The United States now became the preferred country of exile. Artists and academics willing to adapt to American cultural and academic life were able to achieve considerable professional success and, in addition, introduce new directions in the arts, for instance in architecture and design, or new research approaches for their disciplines, such as in art history, economics, and psychiatry.[8]

8 See Ulrike Wendland, Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil: Leben u. Werk der unter dem Nationalsozialismus verfolgten u. vertriebenen Wissenschaftler. Bd. 1-2, (Munich, Saur Verlag, 1999); Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Emigration nach 1933. Bd. 1-2. Edited by Harald Hagemann and Claus-Dieter Krohn with the assistance of Hans Ulrich Esslinger, (Munich, Saur

Mexico and a few South American states also took in refugees from Hitlers Europe.

An estimated 30,000 Jewish emigrants in Western Europe were prevented from furthering their escape. After German forces occupied their asylum countries, they were deported to the extermination camps in the East and murdered there.

The emigrants claim to represent a different Germany failed to gain any official recognition, at least from the British and Americans. Attempts in the US to form a government in exile came to nothing. As a consequence, there remained only the individual fight against Hitler, many joining the US and British armies or the French resistance, while others became active in Allied war propaganda.

As democratic patriots, emigrants fought for the chance to found a new German republic within a Europe of free nations which was albeit fighting a lost cause given the plans to partition Germany that were well-known since the Teheran Conference.

Return

After the Nazi regime collapsed, political continuity seemed to be restored. Former emigrants the return rate amongst political exiles was almost 70% took leading positions in both German states, and prior to this in the zones of occupation. This was especially the case in the Soviet zone of occupation, to where Walter Ulbricht and Wilhelm Pieck returned immediately after the end of the war as party and state functionaries wielding enormous influence. In the West zones, later to become the Federal Republic, it was mainly leading Social Democrat politicians who were to exert a crucial influence on postwar politics, most prominently Erich Ollenhauer, Ernst Reuter, Herbert Wehner, and Willy Brandt. The International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Émigrés 1933-1945 (Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933)) demonstrates that at certain times after 1945 over 50% of the seats in the SPD party executive were occupied by returned exiles; 28 former emigrants were appointed to ministerial posts. Moreover, many who remained abroad were able to use their influence to promote the integration of their countries of origin into the international community.

Scores of persons willing to return were first able to do so with the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949 however, because the Americans and British had regarded them as political awkward and denied them entry clearances. However, soon after many found themselves again excluded. The Cold War and the economic boom, which generated a new sense of self-confidence in West Germany, were not conducive to probing recent history and criticism. Well into the second half of the 1960s, politicians were even stigmatized during election campaigns for having once emigrated.

Verlag, 1999); Uwe Henrik Peters, Psychiatrie im Exil: die Emigration der dynamischen Psychiatrie aus Deutschland 1933-1939, (Düsseldorf, Kupka, 1992)

Exile Research

Under such conditions systematic research into exile and its achievements was inconceivable directly after 1945. In the 1950s and 1960s only a few libraries and archives in the Federal Republic took on the task of collecting the legacy left behind by emigration, amongst them the newly founded Deutsche Bibliothek (1947) in Frankfurt am Main, the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich, the Deutsche Literaturarchiv in Marbach (1955), the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, and the Akademie der Künste in West Berlin.[9] Only through the change in the political and intellectual climate of the Federal Republic burgeoning in the mid-1960s and the student movement of 1968 were conditions created which were more favorable for an intensive study of emigration and exile. A unique, interdisciplinary research branch emerged, Exilforschung, which from 1969 enjoyed the support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. In the GDR this upsurge in researching the experience of exile in the Federal Republic prompted a heightened interest in antifascist literature written in exile. Today, research into German-speaking emigration between 1933 and 1945 is a task being tackled by an international community of scholars from a number of disciplines, mainly cultural studies, contemporary history, and sociology, many of whom are from former host countries, above all the United States, France, and Britain. Researchers from all over the world are represented in the Gesellschaft für Exilforschung founded in 1984.

The most thoroughly researched areas so far are those of political and literary exile. There are also numerous studies dedicated to Jewish emigration. However, there are still a number of areas such as photography, music, and the visual arts and themes the experience of return, issues of acculturation, changes in the roles of women in exile, etc. which need more detailed attention. Other examples of emigration in the 20th century and the present are becoming the focus of attention and demanding comparative analysis. Nevertheless, it will remain a continual task to keep alive the memory of the intellectual elite forced into exodus, the countless unknown emigrants, and the resistance against dictatorship and inhumanity from a position of exile and foster it as a binding tradition of our society.

Frankfurt am Main, April 2006

9 See Inventar zu den Nachlässen emigrierter deutschsprachiger Wissenschaftler in Archiven und Bibliotheken der Bundesrepublik Deutschland / Die Deutsche Bibliothek. Bearb. im Deutschen Exilarchiv 1933-1945 der Deutschen Bibliothek Frankfurt am Main. Edited by Gabriele von Glasenapp and Barbara Brunn under the direction of Brita Eckert, (Munich, Saur Verlag, 1993); Quellen zur deutschen politischen Emigration 1933-1945: Inventar von Nachlässen, nichtstaatlichen Akten und Sammlungen in Archiven und Bibliotheken der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Commissioned by the Herbert und Elsbeth Weichmann-Stiftung and edited by Heinz Boberach with the assistance of Ingrid Schulze-Bidlingmaier and Ursula Adam, (Munich, Saur Verlag, 1994)

Notes:

Most relevant literature:

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Therein particulary:
Wolfgang Benz: Die jüdische Emigration, column 1-10;
Werner Röder: Die politische Emigration, Column 16-30. Cited as: Werner Röder (1998);
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