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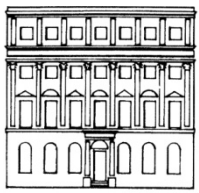

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FRAMING THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE: REFLECTIONS ON GERMAN-SPEAKING JEWS IN BRITISH INDIA, 1938–1947

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On 21 August 1938 a woman living in Bognor Regis, a seaside town on the south coast of England, wrote a letter to the Director of the Passport Control Office in London. Her brother-in-law, she explained, was 'making an application for himself and his wife Lucie for a visa for India', where he intended to practise as a dental surgeon. 'I am ready to guarantee and to keep at his disposal a sum of £300 for his expenses', she continued, 'as well as to provide the tickets necessary for the journey to India.' The following month the dentist in question, Ernst Schubert, sent a sheaf of documents, including CVs for himself and his wife, from his dental practice in Vienna to the Passport Control Office. 'In order to support my application', he wrote in the covering letter, 'I am pointing to my spotless past and I am giving the assurance that I shall fulfil all my duties towards Government and population.'[1]

His application was forwarded to the Government of India in New Delhi, who replied by telegram to the India Office in Whitehall on 6 October stating: 'Dr. E. B. Schubert is apparently Austrian refugee. Government of India therefore consider he should not be granted visa unless someone in India is responsible for finding him employment and for his support.' Alternatively, 'If he obtains German passport', he needed only to 'deposit cost of return journey or have

I would like to thank the German Historical Institute London for providing me with the opportunity and resources to conduct research on this topic between 2017 and 2019. During this time, I benefited greatly from the expertise, advice, and support of Indra Sengupta. The helpful and incisive comments from her, Tobias Becker, and Michael Schaich on an earlier draft of this article have enabled me to improve it considerably. Any remaining faults are, of course, my own.

[1] British Library (BL), India Office Records (IOR): L/PJ/7/2138: '4493; Refusal of Visas for India to Dr E Schubert and Wife, Austrian Jewish Refugees, by Imposition of Strict Conditions.'

return passage.'[2] Why was this the case? After annexing the country in March 1938, the Nazis had decreed that Austrian passports would become invalid at the end of that year. As such, anyone who left the country on an Austrian passport would not be able to return after that point. And for their part, the British government wanted to ensure that, in the event that refugees became destitute or a burden on the state, they could be returned to their countries of origin.

With no contacts in India, the only feasible option for the Schuberts was therefore to renounce their Austrian citizenship and apply for passports of the country which had, since annexing their country, begun to systematically persecute them as Jews—causing them to want to leave in the first place. After being informed of the stipulations in October 1938, the Schuberts clearly abandoned their application. 'Since the date of writing to Dr. Ernst Schubert', G. W. Berry of the British Passport Control Office in Vienna wrote in late November, 'we have not heard from him. I am afraid that the India Office have imposed conditions which really amount to a refusal. No emigrant, once out of this country, can hope (!) to be able to return.'[3]

The case of the Schuberts illustrates the complex nature of research into the topic of German-speaking Jews who sought or found refuge in British India during the Second World War. Not only were multiple actors involved, spread out over a wide geographical area, but applicants also had to deal with a shifting political situation in which the criteria for entry to India were beyond their control and frequently modified. The researcher therefore faces a significant challenge in attempting to make sense of how these various dynamics interacted, and their effects on those who applied for or who were granted refuge in British India. The topic also presents logistical challenges: primary source material is spread across archives in the United Kingdom, India, the United States, and Israel, not to mention the potential for collecting oral testimony. As such, a truly comprehensive study would probably have to be written collaboratively.

This is very much an emerging field of inquiry. At the time of writing, there are fewer than ten studies in total,[4] despite the fact that

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] The most comprehensive is Margit Franz's monograph *Gateway India: Deutschsprachiges Exil in Indien zwischen britischer Kolonialherrschaft, Maharad-*

the number of Jewish refugees in India was not insignificant: in 1943, the Jewish Relief Association in Bombay, one of several Jewish aid organizations involved in helping the refugees, calculated their number to be 1,080. A more recent 'cautious estimate' by anthropologist Shalva Weil suggests that the figure would likely also include an additional 'several hundred' refugees who arrived in India prior to 1939, unbeknownst to the Jewish aid organizations, meaning that the total would 'certainly exceed 2000 souls'.[5]

Whatever the means by which they were able to reach India, German-speaking Jews on the subcontinent, the majority of whom arrived before the outbreak of the Second World War, were comparatively fortunate. Despite a policy of internment in British India that affected all male refugees over the age of 16 (much stricter than the internment policy implemented in Britain itself), and despite many witnessing the violent aftermath of the Partition of India at the end of British colonial rule in 1947, these Jews survived the war relatively well fed and, in many cases, having been able to support themselves financially through employment that corresponded to their training and expertise. Some even managed to make contacts and establish professional networks that enriched their later careers.[6]

schas und Gandhi (Graz, 2015), which examines the experiences of Jewish as well as non-Jewish German speakers in India from the early 1930s to the late 1940s. Atina Grossmann's ongoing research into Jewish exile in non-European destinations, including India, has produced a number of outputs so far, the most recent of which include: 'Remapping Survival: Jewish Refugees and Lost Memories of Displacement, Trauma, and Rescue in Soviet Central Asia, Iran, and India', in Mark Edele, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Atina Grossmann (eds.), *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union* (Detroit, 2017), 185–218, and 'Transnational Jewish Stories: Displacement, Loss and (Non)Restitution', in Jay Geller and Leslie Morris (eds.), *Three Way Street: Jews, Germans, and the Transnational* (Ann Arbor, 2016), 362–84.

[5] Shalva Weil, 'From Persecution to Freedom: Central European Jewish Refugees and their Jewish Host Communities in India', in Anil Bhatti and Johannes H. Voigt (eds.), *Jewish Exile in India, 1933–1945* (New Delhi, 1999), 64–84, at 72.

[6] One example is the concert pianist Elise Braun Barnett, who hosted the world-famous sitar player Ravi Shankar as a guest professor at New York's City College in 1968, twenty years after she left India for the United States. See Franz, *Gateway India*, 228.

The nature of the entrance criteria set by the British colonial authorities (which will be discussed later) meant that refugees were predominantly, although not exclusively, middle class. Statistics gathered by the Jewish Relief Association in December 1939 show the 'Professions and Trades' of the 591 registered male and female refugees in India at that time: 32.5 per cent were in 'Industry, arts, instructional service', 36.5 per cent in 'Trade & Law', and 31 per cent 'Doctors, nurses, domestic services, etc.'[7] While these figures broadly reflected the professional composition of German-speaking Jews more generally, the number of medical practitioners, particularly doctors, was disproportionately high.

Recent interest in what historian Atina Grossmann calls the 'Asiatic' experience of the Holocaust is connected, first, to a broader trend in historical scholarship to 'de-Europeanize' or to place a greater global emphasis on subjects that have traditionally been considered as essentially European.[8] The Holocaust is certainly one of these. More and more frequently, scholars are looking beyond its central geographies, located in the ghettos, concentration and death camps of Eastern Europe. And in doing so, they have discovered new and intriguing avenues of inquiry.[9] Second, and more specifically, the topic of Jewish refugees in India has unique features. It incorporates other categories that intersect with the refugee experience—race and coloniality, but also a destination that was, at this time, undergoing its own political convulsions as the Indian independence movement gained momentum. For this reason it has the potential to combine Holocaust history with the history of Empire and decolonization.

Yet, as mentioned, writing the history of Jewish exile in India requires some considerable challenges to be overcome. First, how does one write authoritatively on a topic that comprises three distinct aspects, each of which requires its own expertise? (1) Nazi policy towards the Jews and Jews' attempts to escape the Third Reich; (2) British and British colonial refugee policy towards Jews and late colo-

[7] Wiener Library (WL): 'INDIA: Correspondence', MF Doc 27/14/68, 16.

[8] See Atina Grossmann, 'Remapping Relief and Rescue: Flight, Displacement, and International Aid for Jewish Refugees during World War II', *New German Critique*, 117 (2012), 61–79, at 61.

[9] Examples include Tim Cole's *Holocaust Landscapes* (London, 2016), and Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca (eds.), *Hitler's Geographies: The Spatialities of the Third Reich* (Chicago, 2016).

nial administrative policy in British India more generally; and (3) the history of the Indian national independence movement and refugee policy in India after Partition.

A second, more methodological problem is how to deal with a topic comprised essentially of multiple case studies without producing a fragmented history that lacks coherence? There are at least three perspectives that could profitably be brought to bear when writing on this topic: first, that of British colonial administrators working in both Britain and India; second, the Jewish aid organizations involved with helping the refugees; and, third, the perspectives of the refugees themselves, which, in turn, could be further stratified by gender, age, and so on. This article will sketch out some of the approaches historians could use when engaging with these three groups, and in doing so, aims to provide some suggestions for future research on this topic.

I. *British Colonial Administrators*

Colonial administrators are central to this topic because the fate of the refugees lay predominantly in their hands. Without realizing it, British civil servants were faced with a huge moral dilemma when, at the end of the 1930s, a growing number of Jews from Germany and Austria sought refuge in the UK and its overseas territories. Administrators were the first point of contact for prospective refugees applying for visas, and successful applicants remained under their authority and surveillance throughout their time in exile. Understanding what lay behind colonial administrators' attitudes is therefore important because these attitudes often shaped policy towards the refugees.

Historian Louise London's depiction of the relationship between Jewish refugees and the British metropolitan (that is, non-colonial) authorities in her book *Whitehall and the Jews* is exemplary.[10] London's thesis is that practical considerations overruled humanitarian motives in determining whether Jews would be granted exile in Britain. As I will explore in this section, similar considerations were also in play for India.

[10] Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 2000).

Even at an institutional level, the Indian colonial state did not function as a single unit. Authority over decision-making was split between the Government of India, based in New Delhi, and the India Office, based in Whitehall. While the Government of India enjoyed substantial autonomy over social and economic matters in India, its decisions were still held to account, and sometimes actively determined, by the India Office, which represented the views of the British Home Government in Westminster. As far as refugees were concerned, the picture that emerges is of administrators at the India Office attempting to persuade the Government of India to adopt some aspect of policy that had been adopted by the Home Government for Britain, or which had been suggested in parliament for implementation in the colonies. This became particularly apparent during discussions aimed at relaxing the criteria for refugees' admission to India in late 1938 and early 1939, and again at the beginning of the Second World War, concerning the internment of refugees.[11] Yet the Government of India could, and did, resolutely follow its own path in crucial aspects of refugee policy, thereby separating the experiences of refugees in India from those of refugees in Britain, and indeed in other parts of the British Empire.

The India Office has been described as the 'Home Government of Britain's largest and most complex overseas possession' and as 'an imperial government in miniature'.[12] It was the first port of call for refugees applying for visas to India. The records of the India Office, now held at the British Library, are thus of particular significance for understanding the ways in which these applications were dealt with. The other key source base for investigating imperial administrators' attitudes towards refugees seeking refuge in British India are the records of the Government of India, which are held at the National Archives of India in New Delhi. These are most revealing for the insights they provide into the ways refugees were dealt with once in India, including policies such as internment and the suspicions held against certain refugees, recorded in sometimes extensive case files.

[11] 'Refugees (Government Proposals)', 21 Nov. 1938, in BL, IOR: L/PJ/7/2462: '765; Settlement of Jewish Refugees in British Guiana'.

[12] The first quotation comes from A. P. Kaminsky, quoted in Anthony Kirk-Greene, *Britain's Imperial Administrators, 1858–1966* (Basingstoke, 2000), 31; the second one comes from Kirk-Greene, ibid.

Taken together, these documents present a detailed picture of two colonial institutions, their structural composition and operational remit, but also the 'mental universe'—the kinds of assumptions, values, and attitudes—in which their employees made decisions regarding refugees. As such, it is important *not* to view refugee policy as solely the product of institutions, considered as homogeneous entities, or to assume that these institutions were efficient, smoothly functioning, and harmonious, with clearly defined agendas and goals, in short, that they always 'worked'. Instead, and as is readily apparent when looking at the records of both the India Office and the Government of India, these institutions were composed of different people with different views—even if they were overwhelmingly of the same gender and from the same socio-economic and cultural milieu. The focus, therefore, should not be on colonial *institutions* but rather on the individuals who worked for them, the colonial administrators. This does not, however, imply a purely individual-level approach, since these administrators had no power without their institutional affiliation: as officers of the India Office or of the Government of India. They were, therefore, individuals performing within an institutional context.

While British civil servants held considerable power over the fates of German-speaking Jews, their attitudes towards them were not influenced, or at least not *directly* influenced, by Nazi policy and propaganda. Some were evidently sympathetic to the Jews' plight, and others considerably less so. The discrepancies in these personal attitudes, which should have been separate from policy but often did affect decisions regarding individual refugees, are therefore an important line of investigation.

In this regard, the lens or lenses through which colonial administrators viewed the refugees require scrutiny. Prospective or actual refugees could be viewed interchangeably as 'Jews', 'refugees', 'German nationals', 'enemy aliens', 'internees', separately or in combination. Most often, though, refugees were viewed through a national lens. This was because refugee policy operated, as it still does, within a national legal framework. For example, as we saw in the case of the Schuberts, the distinction between German and Austrian refugees became particularly acute *after* the Nazi annexation (*Anschluss*) of Austria in March 1938. 'German Government intends to cancel all Austrian passports and to issue German passports in their place',

stated a telegram sent the following month by the Secretary of State for India to the Government of India. 'Jews desirous of leaving Austria may be granted permission but will automatically become denationalised and not be permitted to return.'[13] This created a large technical obstacle in the government's refugee policy: a criterion for applicants was that their passports had to be 'valid for return', so that in the event that they became a burden on the state or involved in criminal activities, they could be repatriated.[14] Austrian Jews were thus treated differently from German Jews in the visa application process and, ironically, the Nazi annexation of their country made it more difficult for them to apply for refuge in British territory.

The 'national' categorization of Jewish refugees manifested itself most acutely for those who successfully managed to escape to India but were then, upon the outbreak of war, suspected either of being Nazis or of having Nazi sympathies. A case in point is the doctor Hans Hahndel, who arrived in India from Germany in 1936 and set up a practice in Calcutta. Like all male German and Austrian nationals over the age of 16, Hahndel was interned in September 1939, a policy that was much stricter than in Britain, where internment was not introduced until May 1940, implemented hesitantly, and even then applied only to a minority of refugees.[15] Initially, Jewish refugees in India were held, together with their compatriots, in makeshift internment camps—a policy that generated strong criticism from the Jewish aid agencies involved with the refugees. Consequently, the British authorities set up an Aliens Advisory Committee, also known as the Darling Commission after its leader Sir Malcolm Darling, to investigate the political backgrounds and affiliations of internees on a case-by-case basis. The commission resulted in the release of most, but not all, Jewish refugees. Hahndel was one of the unlucky ones. The records of the Aliens Advisory Committee, now held at the National Archives of India, show that Hahndel generated an extremely large case file, based on his having been a member of the German Club in Calcutta. German Clubs were networking associations for German nationals that existed around the world. However,

[13] BL, IOR: L/PJ/8/750: 'Coll. 123/4F; Anglo-German and Anglo-Austrian Passport and Visa Arrangements.'
[14] BL, IOR: L/PJ/7/2138.
[15] London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 170.

some of the members of the Calcutta club were suspected of having Nazi sympathies. Worse still, Hahndel had treated a patient for appendicitis who later turned out to be a Nazi. For these two reasons his release from detention was delayed until July 1942.[16]

The seemingly illogical internment policy for German-speaking Jews in India, and the very real and deleterious effects it could have on them, requires explanation. Why did the British colonial authorities not simply, and from the outset, differentiate between Jews and non-Jews, since the former were only in India as a result of being persecuted by the Nazis, and thus surely would not in any way support them? First of all, in the eyes of civil servants working for the Government of India at the outbreak of hostilities with Nazi Germany, the fear of Nazi infiltration was very real. A number of articles which appeared in the *Bombay Sentinel*, an English-language daily, in July 1938 claimed to expose the activities of a Nazi spy ring operating out of Bombay, led by a Dr Oswald Urchs (who allegedly styled himself as 'Landesgruppen-Führer' for South Asia). In addition to conducting espionage, they were alleged to be spreading pro-Nazi propaganda, including placing pressure on German-owned firms in India to dismiss their Jewish staff and appealing to Indians that they were also members of the Aryan race. These reports clearly reached the attention of British politicians, resulting in a question raised in parliament in November 1938, asking the Under-Secretary of State for India 'whether he is aware of the activities of foreign political parties in India; and what steps he is taking to counteract this propaganda'. The reply, drafted by Aubrey Dibdin of the India Office, indicated that they had recently heard 'of the printing in India of a paper entitled "Der Deutsche in Indien"', which was 'almost certainly the official organ of the Nazi Ausland Organisation'. However, the reply concluded: 'Hitherto we have had no reason to suppose that Nazi activities in India are achieving any great measure of success.'[17]

The wider picture was that India was a vulnerable outpost of the British Empire. Territorially it was massive, and it was governed by

[16] National Archives of India (NAI), Home Political: EW/1939/NA/F-21-54-XLIX (PR_000003011002): 'Exemption from Internment of Dr. Hans Fritz Hahndel'; E/1940/NA/F-17-298 (PR_000003010072): 'Application for Grant of a Visa for India to Mrs. Gertrud Hahndel.'

[17] BL, IOR: L/PJ/7/2286: '5539; Nazi Propaganda in India.'

a relatively tiny number of colonial administrators. There were almost certainly some pro-Nazi Germans residing in India, and it seems likely that at least a small number were active agents. At any rate, the fear of the Nazi infiltrator was very much set in the mind of the British colonial administrator and it determined, to a large extent, the draconian internment policy instituted for all German and Austrian nationals in September 1939. The final factor in this matrix, and one that is often overlooked with hindsight, is that German-speaking Jews were indistinguishable from non-Jewish Germans in appearance, behaviour, and cultural habits. Their political opinions, legal status, and reasons for residing in India may have been different, but to the eyes of the British administrator they were in every way as 'German' as their supposedly 'Aryan' counterparts.

That said, there are a number of instances where British colonial personnel clearly viewed and, in turn treated, Jewish refugees *as Jews*. In a heavily annotated document from February 1939 outlining the Government of India's new visa policy for 'foreign refugee applicants', one India Office administrator inserted an asterisk after the line 'As regards the admission of Jewish refugees', writing in the margin: 'I don't follow why they are treated separately—and apparently better—("moral considerations" not excluded!) than others. Surely the policy should be the same to all, except that Woburn House [the headquarters of the Council for German Jewry] will not guarantee the Aryans?' A full seven years later, in a correspondence between the India Office, the Government of India, the Jewish Relief Association, and the World Jewish Congress concerning proposals forcibly to repatriate Jewish refugees still interned in India, R. N. Gilchrist of the India Office wrote in what appears to be an internal memo:

> The plain truth is that the majority of Jews [still interned] are persons with 'records'—suspected German spies, forgers and petty international crooks . . . They are of a class of person who normally would be deported by any country, whatever their race. Mr. Easterman [the World Jewish Congress representative] must be misinformed about the character of these people, otherwise he could hardly have used the phrase . . . that they are persons who <u>have a right</u> to determine the place where they may find peace and security. It would, however, be neither kind nor politic to tell him the real truth. Hence I have

> suggested that if he wishes to pursue the matter he may arrange for a discussion with me when I can convey the necessary hints about the character of these people.[18]

Such comments provide only the merest glimpse—the tip, one imagines, of a veritable iceberg—of British colonial administrators' attitudes towards Jews. Yet in order to better understand the patterns of thought that lay behind such comments, it would be necessary to situate them within a broader cultural context (a task that cannot be achieved in the space of this article). What sorts of ideas and beliefs about Jews would these administrators have grown up with and, later, encountered in their social and professional lives? These can be deduced, at least in part, from the existing literature on the relationship between Jews and modern Britain.[19]

Easier to discern are the ways in which geo-political concerns influenced administrators' attitudes towards Jewish refugees. Colonial personnel would almost certainly have been trained in this area, particularly regarding the significance of, and indigenous opposition towards, Jews and Jewish settlement in the British protectorate of Palestine. This was only a minor issue in the case of British India, although, as Margit Franz has pointed out, both of the major political parties in late colonial India—the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League—adopted an anti-Zionist stance.[20] However, in some of the territorial outposts of British India, such as the Protectorate of Aden on the Arabian Peninsula, the issue was far more pertinent.

Although Aden was detached from British India and became a separate colony in 1937, documents surrounding the settlement of Jewish refugees there were still being handled by the India Office in 1939. This particularly concerned the island of Socotra, a province of the Aden Protectorate, which had been mooted by Conservative politician and former Colonial Secretary Leo Amery as a possible destination for Jewish refugees. A letter sent by John Evelyn Shuckburgh

[18] BL, IOR: L/PJ/7/12081: '6179; Entry into Palestine: Jewish Refugees Interned in India and Afghan Jewish Refugees in India.'

[19] Examples include David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840–1914* (New Haven, 1994), and Susanne Terwey, *Moderner Antisemitismus in Großbritannien, 1899–1919: Über die Funktion von Vorurteilen sowie Einwanderung und nationale Identität* (Würzburg, 2006).

[20] Franz, *Gateway India*, 56–7.

of the Colonial Office in Downing Street to Sir Bernard Reilly, the Governor of Aden, in March 1939 outlined some of the objections to this plan. The first, that the climate 'would not suit people accustomed to European conditions' seems improbable given that, earlier in the letter, Shuckburgh had raised India and Northern Rhodesia as feasible destinations for 'small groups' of refugees. The second had to do with objections from the local population: the island, Shuckburgh pointed out, 'was ruled by an Arab Sultan, who had enjoyed our protection for some fifty years', and 'any talk of introducing Jewish refugees in large numbers into his territory would at once raise the cry that yet another Arab country was being handed over to the Jews'. Yet, Shuckburgh concluded, 'the situation has become so desperate' that a 'limited settlement' of Jews in Socotra—of around 1,000 families or 5,000 individuals—should be considered.[21]

Reilly's initial response stated that 'The introduction of Jews into the Island would be very unwelcome to the inhabitants' and 'would be certain to rouse violent protests' since it would be seen 'as an attempt to reproduce in Southern Arabia the policy that has already caused such bitter controversy in Palestine'. The official response, sent by W. H. Ingrams, British Resident Advisor for the Aden Protectorate, on 15 April, put a definitive kibosh on the proposal. 'Soqotra on top of Palestine would about finish us with the rest of the Arabs', Ingrams wrote. He related to Shuckburgh that he had attended lunch with 'H.H.' (presumably the Sultan) the previous day and had 'raised the question of the Jews'. 'I think he had a genuine sympathy with their plight', Ingrams wrote. 'He said if only they were Christians and not Jews there would be no real trouble.'[22]

The matter might have ended there, but what followed was a quite remarkable exchange, in which the British authorities' (largely strategic) concerns about Jewish settlement took on a different dimension. On 22 April the India Office's Political Secretary sent an encrypted telegram to the Residency at Mukalla (the administrative centre of Aden's Eastern Protectorate), fervently denying a rumour that the British authorities were planning to settle 70,000 Jews in the Protectorate. Three days later Reilly wrote to Shuckburgh stating that they were 'taking steps to deny it categorically' and also 'trying to

[21] BL, IOR: R/20/C/1341: 'File 139/39; Settlement of Jewish Refugees from Germany.'
[22] Ibid.

discover how it can have originated', with the implication that it was a 'calculated . . . form of anti-British propaganda'.[23]

But the matter was clearly now beyond their control. On 6 May the Residency received a letter, handwritten in Arabic, from Sultan Ja'far bin Mansur, one of the regional rulers in the Protectorate. 'I have been informed', the attached translation read, 'that rumours have been circulating about the possibility of settling 70,000 Jews between Seiyun and Tarim' (two cities in Aden). 'It hardly seems necessary to deny such a ridiculous story', the letter continued, 'but I shall be glad if you will let it be known that H.M.G. has no intention whatsoever of bringing Jewish immigrants.' At this point, British administrators went silent on the issue, neglecting to mention that the rumour was essentially a numerical exaggeration of a quite serious proposal that had originated in Downing Street the previous month. On 18 May Sultan Ja'far published a notice officially denying the 'false rumours'. The covering note to the draft copy, written by a British official, now described them as 'Jewish propaganda'.[24]

After war broke out in September 1939 the British colonial authorities in London and New Delhi tended increasingly to categorize German-speaking Jewish refugees in ways other than their nationality or religious background. They became, like all other German nationals in India, 'enemy aliens'. Males over the age of 16 additionally became 'internees'. In 1940, following an India Office policy in which the details of all German nationals still interned would be passed on to the Nazi government, the Jews among them unofficially became 'internees unwilling to have their names communicated to the German government'.[25] As one, Muhammad Asad, a convert to Islam born Leopold Weiss, explained sardonically in a note to the authorities, 'I herewith declare that I do not wish any further particulars about me to be sent to the German Government. I was Austrian till 1938, and I do not recognise the Nazi Government nor, by the way, any German Government whatever. I will have nothing to do with Germany now or in future.'[26]

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] BL, IOR: L/PJ/8/30A: 'Coll. 101/10A; Treatment of Aliens, Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees in India.'

[26] Handwritten note signed 'M. Asad-Weiss' dated 24 Apr. 1940, in BL, IOR:

Colonial officials also developed a sliding scale, ranging from XXXX ('strong and still convinced Nazis') to X ('anti-Nazi'), although it appears only to have been used sporadically, appearing as an additional 'security note' on some of the nominal rolls for internees and parolees.[27] It was, in effect, another way of distinguishing between Jewish and non-Jewish inmates, since, while there were a handful of 'anti-Nazi' non-Jewish Germans in India, as India Office official Gilchrist pointed out in a memo from 1944, 'The non-Nazis of course are practically all Jews'.[28]

Yet the colonial authorities not only used political terminology to categorize internees; they routinely used Nazi racial terminology—'Aryan' and 'non-Aryan'—specifically to differentiate between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans. While undoubtedly an affront to present-day sensibilities, in the early 1940s, when these terms had not yet been fully contaminated by the horrors of the Holocaust, adopting the categorization used by the polity of which these individuals were subjects seemed to make sense, especially when communicating with that polity. Furthermore, Britain had not gone to war with Germany on the basis of its government's ideas about race, and colonial administrators were also used to working with such ethnic categorizations in their dealings with the populations they governed. As such, instances of the term 'German Aryan', which appear frequently on the nominal rolls,[29] or, to take an individual example, that Hans Hahndel's continued detention was based on his association with 'Germans (Aryans)', should not be seen as evidence that the British authorities *agreed* with Nazi ideology, but rather that they were willing to use Nazi terminology in their dealings with Jews.[30]

L/PJ/8/32: 'Coll. 101/10AA/I; Nominal Rolls and Monthly Returns of Internees and Parolees in India.'

[27] BL, IOR: L/PJ/8/31: 'Coll. 101/10AA; Nominal Rolls of Internees and Parolees in India.'

[28] BL, IOR: L/PJ/8/30B: 'Coll. 101/10A/I; Treatment of Aliens, Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees of India.'

[29] BL, IOR: L/PJ/8/31.

[30] NAI, Home Political: E/1940/NA/F-17-298.

II. *Jewish Aid Organizations*

Jewish aid organizations played an important role in determining both refugee policy and how refugees were treated once in India. Like the colonial authorities, they were also institutional bodies, but there the similarity ends. They were much smaller, had been created more recently, and had no larger political body sitting behind them to bestow legitimacy on them. They were looser, more informal arrangements, often built around the initiative of a single individual or group of individuals. And their remit was, of course, much more limited: to help European Jews fleeing Nazi persecution to find refuge, and to protect and support them in their place of refuge.

This section has two objectives. First, it aims to show how the two main Jewish relief organizations involved with refugees in India positioned themselves within the political and administrative framework created by the colonial authorities, and the strategies they used within this framework to exert pressure on the authorities. Second, it explores the goals these aid organizations pursued that went beyond purely humanitarian aid.

The two main aid organizations involved in helping Jewish refugees in India were the Council for German Jewry, based in London, and the Jewish Relief Association, based in Bombay (and later with branches in Calcutta and Madras). The Council for German Jewry was created in 1936 by senior Anglo-Jewish leaders to help German Jews find refuge in various destinations around the world.[31] The Jewish Relief Association was set up two years earlier in Bombay by eleven mostly European Jews as a 'purely charitable association to assist European Jews who found their way to hospitable India but had no means of livelihood'.[32] Initially its role was limited, but from 1938, as the refugee crisis deepened, it became increasingly connected with the Council for German Jewry.

It is even more important to investigate the backgrounds, attitudes, and motives of the individuals who comprised the Jewish aid organizations than it is for colonial authorities. This is because indi-

[31] London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 40.

[32] Quoted in Joan G. Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India: Identity in a Colonial Era* (2nd edn. New Brunswick, NJ, 1998), 177.

viduals had much greater power and autonomy within the (much smaller) aid organizations than they did within governmental institutions. Understanding who these men were, in a social sense, in terms of their nationality and class status, helps to explain not only *why* they acted as they did, but also how *effectively* they were able to act; in other words, the extent to which they could successfully place pressure on state or colonial authorities.

The personnel of both aid organizations under discussion are illustrative in this regard. Despite being based in India, the Jewish Relief Association was, as mentioned, set up primarily by European Jews. Out of India's three Jewish communities—the Cochin Jews, the Bene Israel, and the so-called 'Baghdadi' Jews—two were not represented at all. The small Cochin Jewish community, as their name suggests, was based almost exclusively on the Malabar coast in south-western India, and therefore unlikely to come into contact with the Jewish Relief Association, which operated out of India's major port cities. However, the Bene Israel, India's largest Jewish community, was also not represented; the most probable reason for this was their low socio-economic status and consequent lack of cultural capital.[33] By contrast, the 'Baghdadi' Jews, who arrived in India from Iraq, Iran, and Syria in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were often wealthy, based in urban centres, and connected to the British colonial elites.[34] It is unsurprising therefore that the Jewish Relief Association's two figurehead leaders, Sir David and Sir Alwyn Ezra, came from a prominent Calcutta-based, Baghdadi-Jewish family. They were chosen, according to historian Joan Roland, to bestow 'prestige' on the fledgling organization.[35]

For its part, the Council for German Jewry (renamed the Central Council for Jewish Refugees during wartime) was an entirely English affair. Its board members were drawn from the upper echelons of Anglo-Jewry, and its key player, Norman Bentwich, was a prominent barrister who had himself held senior positions in British colonial administration, including as Attorney-General of Palestine. Crucially, therefore, he had close relationships with high-ranking govern-

[33] Weil, 'From Persecution to Freedom', 69–70.
[34] Roland, *Jewish Communities*, 178.
[35] Ibid.

ment personnel, including in the India Office.[36] At a time before non-governmental organizations and an established international legal framework for dealing with refugees, such connections, and the 'back-room diplomacy' they entailed, were crucial. Files from the India Office Records reveal Bentwich's instrumental role in pressuring the colonial authorities to relax the criteria for Jewish refugees wishing to obtain visas for India. How he was able to do this requires a brief explanation of the historical context.

Following the Visa Abolition Agreement in 1927, German and Austrian nationals did not require a visa to enter Britain or its overseas territories. However, the Nazi annexation of Austria in March 1938, which resulted in a steep rise in the number of Austrian Jews entering the UK, caused the British government to cancel the agreement almost immediately. This necessitated new admission criteria to regulate the influx of German and Austrian nationals to Britain and its colonies. The Government of India in New Delhi was responsible for determining the criteria for obtaining a visa for India, which they announced in May 1938. Initially, these were extremely restrictive, more so than for Britain itself: applicants had to provide a financial guarantee, an offer of employment, character references, and some form of evidence to suggest that they were 'not politically undesirable' (usually this came in the form of a statement to the effect that they were 'not interested in politics').[37] Inevitably, this meant that many applications were rejected on the basis of small technicalities and the majority of those who *were* able to secure visas were well-educated and financially secure individuals with pre-existing contacts in India. Indeed, as historian Joachim Oesterheld has shown, between January 1938 and February 1939 (when the criteria were modified), the Government of India sanctioned just 269 visas for Jewish refugees.[38]

Several months elapsed before it became clear to the Council for German Jewry just how many potential refugees the entrance criteria were excluding. Following the state-orchestrated pogrom (*Reichskristallnacht*) on 9 November 1938, and a subsequent surge in appli-

[36] London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 286.

[37] BL, IOR: L/PJ/8/750.

[38] Joachim Oesterheld, 'British Policy towards German-speaking Emigrants in India, 1939–1945', in Bhatti and Voigt, *Jewish Exile in India*, 25–44, at 26.

cations for refuge from both German and Austrian Jews, the Council for German Jewry started to exert pressure on the colonial authorities. It is unclear how this process began, but it appears that, soon after the pogrom, the Council's leader, Norman Bentwich, made an appeal to the India League (the UK branch of the Indian National Congress) asking them to look into ways of alleviating the restrictions for entry to India.[39] Congress leaders Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had already expressed their desire for India to take in more persecuted Jews, not least because of the technical skills they could offer to the developing country.[40] When the India Office heard about this appeal, and the positive response Bentwich had received, they became concerned that the refugee issue would be used by Congress as a means of discrediting the British. As a result, they swiftly invited Norman Bentwich to discuss the situation.[41] Aubrey Dibdin explained the situation in a letter to the Government of India in December 1938 as follows:

> Distinguished members of the Jewish community in London approached the India Office with particular reference to a Committee in London run by the India League. We advised them that this Committee was not of the kind we should advise them to deal with and as a necessary corollary offered to see the representatives of the Council. It seems inadvisable in present conditions to give any ground for allegations that our visa conditions are acting as a bar against chances in India for individual refugees which Congress and the [Indian Princely] States are otherwise prepared to favour.[42]

[39] Johannes H. Voigt, 'Die Emigration von Juden aus Mitteleuropa nach Indien während der Verfolgung durch das NS-Regime', in Christa Feifel (ed.), *Wechselwirkungen, Jahrbuch 1991: Aus Lehre und Forschung der Universität Stuttgart* (Stuttgart, 1991), 83–95, at 90.

[40] Margit Franz, '"Passage to India": Österreichisches Exil in Britisch-Indien 1938–1945', in Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Jahrbuch 2007* (Vienna, 2007), 196–223, at 200; ead., *Gateway India*, 56.

[41] Voigt, 'Die Emigration von Juden', 92.

[42] BL, IOR: L/PS/13/957: 'Coll. 13/85; Settlement of German-Jewish Refugees in Cochin and Other States.'

Bentwich's solution was that the Council for German Jewry should act as an affidavit agency. Prospective refugees would send their visa applications direct to the Council and, if deemed suitable, the Council would agree to support them financially. Meanwhile, the Jewish Relief Association in India would search for employment opportunities for the incoming refugees. While the India Office quickly agreed to the proposals, the Government of India was at first unwilling to drop its stipulation that refugees obtain an offer of employment before they arrived in India. After several weeks of negotiations, in which the India Office clearly placed pressure on the Government of India, the latter dropped this requirement, and on 13 January the India Office informed Bentwich of the new criteria: the Council for German Jewry would henceforth provide affidavits and a financial guarantee for all refugees. The only concession to the Government of India's reservations was that this guarantee would last for a maximum of five years. If, at this point, a refugee had not found employment, he or she would be sent back—to Britain, at least, and not their country of origin—at the Council's expense.[43]

Without question, the new and less restrictive procedure for refugees' entry into India would not have come about had it not been for the intervention of the Council for German Jewry and, in particular, its influential leader, Norman Bentwich. While the responsibility for refugees switched to the Jewish Relief Association upon arrival in India, this organization still relied on its more powerful London counterpart to place pressure on the British authorities when needed. For instance, in July 1940 the Jewish Relief Association's Calcutta branch sent a telegram direct to Norman Bentwich, informing him that Jewish refugees in Calcutta were about to be re-interned. 'Suggest immediate representations be made either to the Secretary for India or by parliamentary questions for Indian government to be directed to follow English policy', it stated.[44] The telegram had its intended effect as, two weeks later, the League of Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees, Herbert Emerson, wrote to the Government of India, with reference to the telegram, advising them to adopt, or at least be cognizant of, the policy towards internees in Great Britain.

[43] Ibid.

[44] BL, IOR: L/PJ/8/66: 'Coll. 101/12B; Enemy Aliens in India: Reciprocal Release and Repatriation.'

'The measures of internment adopted by the British Government', Emerson explained, 'were precautionary in the interests of public security, and they were not intended to reflect on the reliability or loyalty to this country of the great majority.' Even the India Office now distanced itself from the Government of India's hardening approach towards refugees (which was in part informed by the fear of a Japanese invasion), explaining in a telegram to the League of Nations some days later that they had 'urged on the G/I the importance . . . of bringing their policy into line with policy here' and agreed that the Government of India would now have to 'justify why its policy differs from that of the British Government'.[45]

While government authorities were their most important stakeholders, the Jewish aid organizations also operated within a multinodal, international network of Jewish relief. As the above example illustrates, close co-operation within this network was an essential component of driving change at policy level. However, this was not the aid agencies' sole remit. The maintenance of Jewish religious life in exile destinations, for example, which was a matter of no concern to state authorities, was a priority for at least some of the individuals who worked for the agencies. The spatial concentration of a specific number of Jews, often, as in the case of India, confined primarily to major cities, whose details were all on record and who were, moreover, reliant to a large degree on the aid agencies, provided the opportunity—something of a 'captive audience'—for functionaries of these agencies to impose, or at least try to impose, their vision of a Jewish life on the refugees. Establishing their motivations for doing this would require one to look at individual biographies. However, one supposes that their work for these agencies, being voluntary in nature, was informed by a sense of mission that went beyond a merely philanthropic desire to help fellow Jews in distress.

A case in point is that of Hanns Reissner, a Berlin-born historian who emigrated to India in October 1939 as a refugee but also, it appears, to work for the Jewish Relief Association, since he immediately became its secretary. (This also highlights the importance of pre-existing connections in the formation of and interactions between the different aid agencies.) On 29 December he wrote to Neville Laski, a prominent leader of Anglo-Jewry and Chairman of the Board

[45] Ibid.

of Deputies of British Jews, informing him of the activities of the Jewish Relief Association in India. But Reissner also wanted Laski's advice and assistance. He was concerned about the low level of religious observance, not only amongst the refugees but also within the two local Jewish communities, the Bene Israel and the Baghdadi Jews. 'I know that both the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association did much for the upkeep of Judaism as a religious and social community of self-esteem . . . in remote quarters of the British Empire', he wrote to Laski. 'I wonder whether your friends would be inclined to contemplate the sending out of a young rabbi to Bombay as except lower ministers like hasanim, shohtim etc., there is nothing at all to be found in Bombay at present.' Such a rabbi, Reissner noted, would 'unfortunately' have to be paid for by the London authorities 'as the Bombay trustees might be of the opinion that they could not afford to pay his salary'. Nonetheless, the Jewish community of Bombay, comprising a total of around 9,210 persons, including 480 refugees, 'deserves a spiritual shepherd'. 'I am sorry to say', Reissner concluded, that the refugees 'are very bad Jews to a certain percentage, full of self-deception and lacking decency to a large extent.' However, what Reissner meant by this is unclear, and the comment seems particularly unusual given that the majority of the refugees were drawn from Reissner's own milieu of acculturated German-speaking Jews. If these Jews were lacking religiously, as they might have appeared to a Jew from Eastern Europe, for example, then surely this would not have come as a surprise to him. Reissner noted revealingly that he was making the request 'not in my official capacity as a secretary of the Jewish Relief Association but in my private capacity of a Jew and contemporary'.[46] What he meant by the word 'Jew' was clearly imbued with a particular content, one that he felt was lacking in the Jews living in India.

The two major press outlets for Indian Jewry, the *Jewish Tribune* and the *Jewish Advocate*, both had close relationships with the Jewish Relief Association and served as mouthpieces for its activities. In particular, the two newspapers were instrumental in publicizing funding drives for the refugees, reminding their readers that responsibility for the refugees' welfare fell primarily on their shoulders.[47] As much as these appeals were philanthropically motivated, the news-

[46] WL: 'INDIA: Correspondence', 25.

[47] Roland, *Jewish Communities*, 221–2.

papers also had political agendas, and these could be used to add an additional layer of meaning to requests for donations.[48] For instance, in July 1939 the *Advocate* reported on a meeting held at Calcutta's Judean Club, 'with the object of inaugurating a drive to collect funds for the Jewish Refugees in Calcutta'. The audience were first given a 'harrowing account of the treatment the refugees received' prior to leaving their homes (the principal reason to donate). This was followed by an address by an E. J. Samuel, who explained that 'In the early days of Zionism . . . there were many of our race who did not care to give the movement a thought, feeling that as they were well-off in the countries of their birth and domicile, there was no occasion for their troubling themselves over this movement', an attitude which Samuel described as 'selfish'. 'The Jews in Germany and Central Europe, particularly', he continued, 'were indifferent to this movement, in fact, antagonistic to it, while today, they, more than anybody else, are the ones who are in direct need of the protection and assistance of Zionism.' As such, Samuel concluded, the refugees were 'potential ambassadors for a great cause'.[49] A secondary reason for donating therefore becomes clear—by helping the refugees, Indian Jews were also helping the Zionist cause. The subtext of this, however, was that the refugees, in their vulnerable state, could be refashioned from outside. Their arrival in India was therefore considered, by some, as a political opportunity, and it is difficult not to get the impression from Samuel's statement that they were being instrumentalized.

The above examples serve to illustrate that, for the Jewish aid organizations, the boundaries between institutional and personal action were always liminal, and that institutional authority had a strong basis in the personal authority of the individuals who comprised them. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, this means that a biographical focus is even more important for understanding the motives of the agencies than of the colonial authorities, which had a more developed, complex, and rigid organizational structure that limited the extent to which their agents could act inde-

[48] For instance, the *Jewish Tribune* was set up in Jan. 1933 as the result of a dispute over the relationship between the *Jewish Advocate* and the Bombay Zionist Association. See Joe I. Sargon, 'Notice to All Concerned', *Jewish Advocate*, 31 Jan. 1933, 2.

[49] 'The Calcutta Refugees', *Jewish Advocate*, 28 July 1939, 15.

pendently. Ultimately, though, this disparity meant that the (informally organized and individually driven) aid organizations could exert at least some pressure on the (much larger and more powerful) state authorities, since they were not bound by convention and bureaucratic procedure. The aid agencies could thus make decisions and take action quickly, in response to changes in the political climate or the situation of the refugees for whom they took responsibility.

III. *The Refugee Experience*

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the pitfalls of writing on this topic is a lack of analytical cohesion. This is most pronounced when taking the perspective of the refugees themselves, since they were often connected to each other only by the fact that they defined themselves (or had been defined by the Nazis) as Jewish, and had been persecuted and forced into exile for that reason. Consequently, it can be difficult for scholars studying this group of refugees to find a unifying framework to bring them together without resorting to the state authorities and/or Jewish aid organizations that dealt with them. Here I will sketch a few possible approaches that could be applied.

The refugees were, as mentioned, connected by the experience of being persecuted by the Nazis and subsequently having to escape their home countries, leading to the experience of being refugees. Yet a third and more unusual factor connecting them was that they had ended up in a particular geographic location: India. While some of the early wave of refugees (until late 1938), had pre-existing contacts in India, for the majority, their encounter with India would have been unthinkable even a few years before. It would therefore be fruitful to consider what position India (or perhaps 'the Orient') occupied in the minds of German-speaking Jews by examining the kinds of cultural products about India—including literature, art, and music—that were available in Germany and Austria in the 1920s and 1930s. These would provide an impression of the 'imaginary' about India these refugees took with them, and from there, one might be able to deduce, by examining their later writings and artistic works, how these understandings were altered as a result of their lived experiences in India.

While this is undoubtedly rich terrain, it does lead to the problem, common in refugee studies, of over representing intellectuals and creative types. Individuals drawn from creative milieux were proportionately well-represented in the Indian refugee cohort, but they were still numerically insignificant compared to the doctors, engineers, and other technical professionals who comprised the majority. These groups were much less likely to produce creative material of artistic value—whether writings, visual art, or music—for the historian to analyse. So, while such work can provide a fascinating insight into the ways a particular subset of refugees perceived and then represented India, one must also bear in mind that they were a minority, and that the British and Indian authorities preferred technical professionals to come to India over artists and creative types. The fact that this latter group was so well represented, despite there being relatively few opportunities in the creative fields in India, appears to have been due, in many cases, to their having independent means.

That said, the experiences and perceptions of India of the non-artistic majority of the refugees are by no means impenetrable. Many would have written letters to family members and friends in Europe and other exile destinations. These, however, may not have survived, and tracking them down requires one to find their families. If such contact has been made, then there is also the possibility to conduct oral history: speaking to the children of the refugees in order to gain an impression, less perhaps of how India was experienced by the refugees, but of how it was remembered, post-exile, in that particular family.

Jewish refugees occupied a unique position within colonial India. Although they were visibly white and European, Indians are unlikely to have confused them with British colonial personnel because of linguistic and cultural differences. This does, however, raise the question of how Indians *did* perceive them, and more broadly, how the refugees 'fit' into the constellation of colonialism and racism that existed in India at the time. Aside from the pronouncements of leading Indian nationalist politicians, the only Indian voices that can be brought to bear in this regard are the letters sent to Jewish and metropolitan newspapers (the latter often reprinted in the former) which expressed, almost without exception, sympathy for the refugees' plight, and called on India (that is, the British authorities) to do more

to help them.[50] Yet this brings us back to the problem that only well-educated Indians were able to write to such newspapers. The opinions of the vast majority of Indians are more difficult to ascertain, since, at this time, 83.9 per cent of Indians (75.1 per cent of males and 92.7 per cent of females) were illiterate and, as such, could produce no written documents of their own.[51]

As Shalva Weil remarks, 'most Indians were simply ignorant of the arrival of hundreds of Jews to India before and during the Second World War'.[52] This, combined with a relative absence of documentation illustrating Indians' attitudes towards Jewish refugees, raises the risk of substituting the opinions of a few vocal and high-profile Indians for that of the entire population. One example is the Indian nationalist politician Subhas Chandra Bose, a Germanophile who had at least some sympathy for the Nazis' revanchist nationalism. In 1939 he claimed that his Congress party colleague Jawaharlal Nehru was 'seeking to make India an asylum for the Jews'.[53] Yet even Bose ultimately became disenchanted with the Nazi movement because of its crass racism.[54] In a different way, the opposition of some Indian doctors towards the right of German-educated doctors to practise in India (the so-called 'Doctors Problem' of the mid 1930s) can more realistically be attributed to concern for their professional livelihood than to any fear of a 'Jewish threat'.[55]

Conversely, evidence of Jewish refugees' attitudes towards Indians are also difficult to come by. If refugees held racist attitudes, for

[50] Examples of these include H. G. Mudgal, 'Bring Over German Jews to Industrialize India', letter to the *Bombay Chronicle*, reprinted in the *Jewish Tribune*, Jan. 1939, 17; M. B. Sant, 'An Indian Urges Help for Persecuted Jews', letter to the *Jewish Tribune*, Mar. 1939, 26; K. F. Nariman, 'A Plea for Refugees', letter to the *Bombay Sentinel*, reprinted in the *Jewish Advocate*, 24 Feb. 1939, 4.

[51] See Government of India, 'State of Literacy', *Census 2011*, 97–136, at 103. <http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/Final_PPT_2011_chapter6.pdf> accessed 22 July 2019.

[52] Weil, 'From Persecution to Freedom', 75.

[53] Quoted in Yulia Egorova, *Jews and India: Perceptions and Image* (Abingdon, 2006), 45.

[54] Johannes H. Voigt, 'Hitler und Indien', *Vierteljahrshefte fuïr Zeitgeschichte*, 19/1 (1971), 33–63, at 47.

[55] See Roland, *Jewish Communities*, 179.

instance, they were usually too astute to express them publicly, perhaps because they had just fled an environment of rampant racism and had witnessed its consequences. However, private correspondence, a form of communication much more readily available to refugees than to Indians, reveals a more complex picture.[56] For different reasons, it is also difficult to determine how refugees perceived British rule in India. First of all, they were a heterogeneous group, and presumably held a range of political opinions. But more importantly, applicants for Indian visas had to be able to provide evidence that they were 'not politically undesirable'. As such, refugees tended not to criticize British colonialism publicly until after they had left India. In her memoirs, Viennese physician Eva Ungár, who lived in India between 1938 and 1949, wrote of India 'throw[ing] off the English yoke without the use of arms'.[57] She attributed the bloody aftermath of Partition to 'the English' employing 'the old and dreadful, but tried and tested method of "*Divide et impera*"'.[58] It is unclear, however, whether Ungár already opposed British rule in India prior to her emigration, or whether it developed as a result of her experiences there.

Sentiments expressed whilst in exile tended in the opposite direction (that is, in favour of British rule), although ulterior motives frequently lay behind declarations of support for the British Empire. Rudolf Cohn (later Cole), a young dentist in Bombay, offered to join

[56] For instance, Atina Grossmann is currently writing about the difficulty she faced in reading letters written by her father—a refugee who travelled to India via a circuitous route—at the end of the war. In one he recounted that he had 'enjoyed very much' the sight of 'almost 400 white people' assembled in Bombay's Fort Synagogue, having by this point not resided in Europe for almost eight years. Yet Hans Grossmann went on to indicate that his warm feelings emanated in part from a nostalgia for his lost home: the congregation reminded him of his last encounter—a Yom Kippur service—at Berlin's Fasanenstrasse synagogue. (It is therefore curious that he chose to describe the congregants as 'white people' and not as Jews.) Email correspondence with Atina Grossmann, July 2019. My thanks to her for allowing me to share this insight.

[57] Eva Ungár, 'Ten Years in India', in Renate S. Meissner (ed.), *Erinnerungen: Lebensgeschichten von Opfern des Nationalsozialismus*, 5 vols. (Vienna, 2015), iv. 314–34, at 332.

[58] Ibid. 333.

the British armed forces in November 1940, writing 'I am a Jewish Refugee from Germany and I make this offer entirely voluntarily from a desire to give practical proof of my gratitude to the British Empire and my wish to assist it in the present struggle'. Yet this has to be read in the context of his being placed under suspicion by the Aliens Advisory Committee for his contacts with two alleged Nazis.[59] Kurt Larisch was another refugee whose continued detention in a parole centre had been recommended for the simple reason that the story of his escape from Nazi Germany via Holland and Palestine '[did] not ring true' to the British authorities. He wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Police in Calcutta in October 1940 that: 'I have always been . . . with the entire British Empire', although he immediately qualified this with, 'in its aim to completely destroy and annihilate perhaps the greatest evil force the world has ever known'.[60]

However different the refugees may have been from each other, one thing they all shared in common was that they had moved from an environment marked by stark class distinctions into one in which their social class status was less significant, but other categories of difference—as Jews, as German speakers, as Europeans, white people, or as refugees—became more visible. This 'everyday otherness', an otherness that was both visible *and* invisible and composed of multiple factors, profoundly affected how refugees related to their environment and, of course, also how people within that environment related to them.[61] Anita Desai's 1988 novel *Baumgartner's Bombay*, about a German-Jewish refugee in wartime India, perfectly captures this sense of dislocation, alienation, and cultural estrangement, as the protagonist Hugo Baumgartner attempts to deal with his loss of wealth and status whilst coming to terms with his new, ascribed status as an 'enemy alien' (by the British) and as a *firanghi*, a term

[59] NAI, Home Political: EW/1940/NA/F-72-1-24/Part-1 (PR_000003011452): 'Recommendation of the Aliens Advisory Committee: Decision that Rudolf Cohn, alias Cole, German Jew, should be Allowed to Continue at Liberty.'
[60] NAI, Home Political: EW/1940/NA/F-72-3-51 (PR_000003011133): 'Recommendation of the A.A.C. Bengal: Case No. 51 Larisch Mr. K. and Wife.'
[61] The term was coined by David Radford. See id.: '"Everyday Otherness": Intercultural Refugee Encounters and Everyday Multiculturalism in a South Australian Rural Town', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42/13 (2016), 2128–45.

used in both Hindi and Urdu to mean a white-skinned foreigner, by his Indian neighbours.[62]

Yet the experience of an identity unmoored and in flux may have provided an opportunity for some refugees to 'escape' the backgrounds from which they came and to forge new lives for themselves. This appears to have been the case particularly for women, to whom Franz devotes a chapter of her book *Gateway India*.[63] The picture is a mixed one: on the one hand, the percentage of professional women in the refugee cohort was higher than it was for Jewish women in Germany and Austria. (This discrepancy was most likely caused by their relative youth, combined with the criteria needed to obtain an Indian visa.) Yet it is unclear how many of these women were able to find jobs corresponding to their training and expertise, and studies have shown that refugee women are more likely to take employment below their level of education, skills, and experience than their male counterparts.[64]

Gender also appears to have played a role in the ways the authorities responded to certain forms of activity refugees engaged in, even if these were explicitly in support of the British war effort. Elisabeth Dank, an Austrian anthroposophist and writer, was placed under surveillance by the Political Department in Simla (where she was residing) as a result of a letter she wrote to them on 4 August 1939 in which she offered to 'help . . . in case of war . . . by lecturing and broadcasting on England [or] by doing social work'. Her case file also contains a rare documented case of antisemitism from a British colonial official: 'She is an extremely verbose person', the official wrote in a memo after meeting her, 'and her appearance is most unprepossessing. She is undoubtedly a Jewess by race, if not by religion, and seems to belong more to the Baghdadi than to the European type of Jew.'[65] Similar offers of help from male refugees, such as the exam-

[62] Anita Desai, *Baumgartner's Bombay* (London, 1988).

[63] Franz, *Gateway India*, 209–37.

[64] See e.g. Melinda Suto, 'Compromised Careers: The Occupational Transition of Immigration and Resettlement', *Work: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment and Rehabilitation*, 32/4 (2009), 417–29. This finding has also been borne out in my own research on Jewish 'quota refugees' in Germany in the 1990s and 2000s.

[65] BL, IOR: R/2/765/220: 'File 104/39; Mrs. Elisabeth Dank an Austrian Subject.'

ples of Rudolf Cohn and Kurt Larisch mentioned above, resulted in no such investigations.

A final approach, and one that might at first appear counter-intuitive, is to investigate the fates of applicants who were *not* successful in securing a visa for India. The existing literature has focused, understandably, on those who *were* able to reach India, either by securing a visa or by other means. However, as was demonstrated in section II, the initial visa requirements (in force from May 1938 to January 1939) excluded all but a small minority of wealthy and/or well-connected applicants. What happened to the remainder? The names and biographical details of a large number of these unsuccessful applicants are known to us through the records of the India Office. By cross-referencing these names against databases for victims and survivors of the Holocaust, it might be possible to determine how many of them were ultimately able to escape the Nazi onslaught.[66]

IV. *Conclusion*

To return to the question posed in the introduction: how does one create a cohesive analysis from a topic comprised of multiple case studies, spread across at least two continents? One must take into account not only the various perspectives of the actors involved, but also their differing levels of power and agency; in other words, their ability to determine the administrative framework in which the refugees were enmeshed from the moment they applied for exile, to the moment they left India. Yet, as I hope I have demonstrated, despite its logistical, methodological, and conceptual challenges, research on this topic has the potential to provide important new insights into the relationship between modern Jewish, German, and Indian history, and to elucidate further the extra-European dimensions of the Holocaust.

This article has proposed a number of possible approaches that could be employed to this end, categorized according to the three

[66] Such databases include the International Tracing Service, Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and country-specific records held in the German Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv, Koblenz) and the University of Vienna.

main groups involved. Ultimately, however, it is difficult, and probably not advisable, to study any of these groups in isolation, since, as the foregoing discussion has shown, they interacted with each other in significant ways. All should therefore be taken into consideration when researching this topic, even if the focus is on one group in particular. Ideally, the historian should employ a different 'lens' to bring them together: the backdrop of the Indian independence movement, for example, which incorporates anti-colonial politics, activism and violence, waning colonial authority, and, finally, Partition, which many refugees witnessed. Or one could take gender and consider how the (overwhelmingly male) British colonial and Jewish relief institutions interacted with both male and female refugees, for instance, in the process of applying for visas, in finding employment, and in relation to what was considered 'proper' comportment in a colonial society. Examining these three groups has also revealed a surprising array of emotions—suspicion, sympathy, indifference, frustration, indignation, alienation, fear, anxiety, trauma, and grief, to name a few—felt and expressed by all sides. How did these shape and determine refugees' experiences? Answers to some of these questions will, I hope, start to appear as research on this topic progresses over the coming years.

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