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Changes and Continuities in Austria's Coping with Refugee Crises over Three Centuries

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Abstract | *By bringing together the most important refugee crises that struck first the Habsburg Empire and later the Republic of Austria during the last three hundred years, this paper analyzes the longue durée experiences this country has had in dealing with such situations. It explores the driving factors behind societal and governmental responses and conceives four topics that are recurrent, if in different forms: 1) the socioeconomic disruption and the ethical imperative to provide relief; 2) the legal authorities and their power to determine a legal settlement and the ultimate right to belong; 3) their quest to maintain sovereignty and control; and 4) the question of the legitimacy of refugees as perceived by authorities but also by a (fickle) public opinion.*

Keywords | *refugee crises, Habsburg and Republican Austria, longue durée, relief organizations, citizenship, borders, public opinion*

Introduction

When in 2015 approximately ninety thousand refugees applied for asylum in Austria and more than half a million refugees crossed the country in order to gain entry into Germany, plenty of positive and negative emotions came to the fore. This situation was not only challenging for the refugees themselves but also overwhelmed authorities, relief workers, politicians, and the general public. Many had the feeling of being caught in an unprecedented situation, and only a few public intellectuals and journalists made allusions to previous refugee crises, for example, to the number of refugees after the Second World



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War or later from the communist countries. Examples from the first half of the twentieth century and earlier were hardly ever mentioned. Migration historians, however, have realized quickly that nothing new per se was happening in Austria in 2015, which implied neither that the current situation was easy nor that one could draw simple conclusions from earlier periods.

By bringing together the most important refugee crises that Austria has endured during the last three hundred years, this paper analyzes the *longue durée* experiences this country has had in dealing with such situations. Analyzing similarities and differences in several showcases allows a better understanding of which features stayed the same and which have changed over time.¹

Longue durée approaches allow one to apprehend the larger picture of state, economic, and social structures in a more comprehensive way.² In the case of this specific paper, analyzing refugee crises over a long period allows us to discern recurrent features from attitudes that change with the modernizing state and society. It goes without saying that *longue durée* approaches also run the risk of placing structures that are only vaguely related to each other into one and the same timeline. Still, these risks can simultaneously turn out to be strengths because they eventually might help one in seeing the larger picture. I am, for example, certainly conscious that the Habsburg Empire was neither in size nor in structure identical with the later Republic of Austria. Yet, in both cases, we can observe a hiatus between the political will in the central power exercising institutions and the application strategies at the local level, where refugees actually sojourned.

Already the mere question of who is a refugee is more revealing if we put it in a long historical context. The 1951/54 Geneva Convention clearly defines a refugee as someone who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is out-side the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”³ Despite this clear definition enacted sixty years ago, the question of

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1. In fall 2016, I organized a symposium that explicitly wanted to dig into the *longue durée* of refugee crises in Austria. This paper draws largely on the original research of eleven contributors in the collective volume that grew out of this conference: Börries Kuzmany and Rita Garstenauer, eds, *Aufnahmeland Österreich: Über den Umgang mit Massenflucht seit dem 18. Jahrhundert* (Wien: Mandelbaum, 2017).

2. Fernand Braudel, “Histoire et sciences sociales: La longue durée,” in *Ecrits sur l'histoire*, ed. Fernand Braudel (Paris: Flammarion, 1969), 41–83.

3. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, chapter 1, article 1, §A (2).

who is a refugee and who is a migrant has come up frequently. The answer today is as blurred as it was over the last three hundred years when lexicons did not have such explicit definitions.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, there was no clear wording for a person who fled his home country. The 1738 *Allgemeines Teutsches Juristisches Lexicon* describes the term “Flüchtling, Fugitivus” as a fugitive debtor and the term “Exulant, Vertriebener” as someone who has been chased from his fatherland.⁴ The 1809 *Brockhaus Conversations-Lexikon* has no entry for “Flüchtling.” Nevertheless, it introduces the term “Emigranten” in opposition to “Exulanten.” Whereas the latter describes people who were chased away, the former are inhabitants who felt the urge to leave their country because of governmental or religious oppression.⁵ The *Brockhaus* and other German encyclopedias of the time indicate that this term most often referred to refugees who had left France after the Revolution.⁶ And at the beginning of the twentieth century, the *Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon* does not include the term “Flüchtling.” It continues to use “Emigranten” (plural) for people who had to leave their country for political or religious reasons, whereas “Emigrant” (singular) or “Auswanderer” designates a person who of his own volition seeks a permanent resettlement in another country.⁷ A mere ten years later, however, it seems to have been the

4. Thomas Haymen, *Allgemeines Teutsches Juristisches Lexicon, Worinnen alle in Teutschland übliche Rechte, nemlich Das Gemeine Bürgerliche, Lehn- Kirche- Staats- Natur- und Völcker-Recht, aus den Kayserlichen- und Päbstischen-Römischen, Longobardischen, Teutschen, Sächsischen, Schwäbischen, Lübschen, und anderen Stadt-Landes- und Reichs-Gesetzen, Gewohnheiten, Herkommen, und eingeführten Gerichts-Gebrauche ordentlich zusammen getragen, und so wohl dem Wort-Verstande als dem Inhalt nach abgehandelt werden* (Leipzig: Johann Frierich Gleditschns sel. Sohn, 1738), 167, 145, 129.

5. *Conversations-Lexikon oder kurzgefaßtes Handwörterbuch für die in der gesellschaftlichen Unterhaltung aus den Wissenschaften und Künsten vorkommenden Gegenstände mit beständiger Rücksicht auf die Ereignisse der älteren und Neueren Zeit*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: 1809), 382–87.

6. Interestingly, the more comprehensive *Conversations-Lexikon* of 18B does not make the difference between “Emigranten” and “Exulanten.” In the description of the term “Emigranten,” however, this group is at one point circumscribed as “Flüchtlinge.” See *Conversations-Lexikon oder Hand-Wörterbuch für die Gebildeten Stände über die in der gesellschaftlichen Unterhaltung und bei der Lectüre vorkommenden Gegenstände, Namen und Begriffe in Beziehung auf Völker- und Menschengeschichte; Politik und Diplomatie; Mythologie und Archäologie; Erd-, Natur-, Gewerb- und Handlung-Kunde; die Schönen Künste und Wissenschaften: mit Einschluß der in die Umgangssprache übergegangenen ausländischen Wörter und mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die älteren und neuesten merkwürdigen Zeitereignisse*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Verlag der Kunst- und Industrie-Comptoirs von Amsterdam, 18B), 406–7.

7. *Meyers Großes Konversations-Lexikon*, vol. 5 (Leipzig: 1906), 755 for “Emigranten,” vol. 2 (Leipzig: 1905), 177 for “Auswanderung.”

most natural thing to use the word “Flüchtling” for those people fleeing from the battlefields of the First World War and its aftermath. Thereby, the word “Flüchtling” designated internally displaced Austrian citizens as well as refugees in the narrower sense of the term, that is, noncitizens seeking refuge in Austria. What unites all these different kinds of people was the fear of violence or the direct threat of force.⁸

Hence, I think analyzing refugee crises from the last three centuries is rewarding because it allows us to perceive, if in different forms, four main recurrent issues: 1) the ethical imperative to help and the question of who should provide for relief; 2) the legal authorities and their power to determine a legal settlement and the ultimate right to belong; 3) their quest to maintain sovereignty and control over territory and borders; and 4) the question of the legitimacy of refugees as perceived by authorities but also by a (fickle) public opinion.

The present paper considers these four features in turn by using the following refugee crises as the primary examples for its exploration: refugees and migrants from the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century; French revolutionary emigrants in the Habsburg monarchy during the last decade of the eighteenth century; Polish refugees after the uprising in the Russian Empire in 1830/31; Jewish pogrom refugees in Austria-Hungary in 1881/2; the internally displaced Habsburg citizens during the First World War; former Jewish Austrian citizens in the Republic of Austria; forced laborers, displaced people on the territory of the Republic of Austria after the Second World War; and refugees from the communist bloc. I will not analyze these events in a chronological order, but I will refer to them recurrently in order to tackle the above-mentioned recurrent topics.

1. The Imperative to Help: Private and Public Relief for Refugees

Individual help for refugees is as old as the fact that people flee, and many religions know the idea of a sanctuary. Hence, the impetus to provide somebody who had to leave everything behind with shelter and food seems to be a universal moral duty. Yet, concerted relief actions developed only in the course of the nineteenth century and are closely linked to the development of humanitarianism in general. The latter was rooted in the Enlightenment's belief in progress

8. In his introduction, Zolberg gives a valuable overview not only of the centuries-long history of cases when people fled their home, but also of the difficulties of defining common features of this group of people. Cf. Aristide R. Zolberg, Astri Suhrke, and Sergio Aguayo, *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 29–33.

colluding with transcendental conceptions of salvation, if in a secularized form. Adding to the often paternalizing conviction that Western societies must go beyond the call of mere duty, the availability of new media technologies helped in raising the awareness of larger elements of the public.⁹ In order to exemplify these developments and the changing attitudes in the case of Austria, I will refer to Jewish pogrom refugees in the 1880s, to refugees during and after the First World War, and to post-1945 international relief activities.

The pogrom refugee crisis in the 1880s exemplifies these changing attitudes very well in the case of Austria.¹⁰ When anti-Jewish riots started in the south of the Russian Empire in spring 1881, many Jews sought refuge in the Austrian borderlands of Galicia and Bukovina. Even more arrived a year later, when a new wave of pogroms savaged Russia. The Austrian government and public acknowledged the humanitarian catastrophe and even tried via diplomatic channels to push St. Petersburg to restore peace and security in the regions affected by the pogroms. However, the Austrian government did not feel responsible for the refugees, neither in terms of financial aid nor of organization. It considered the care for the stranded migrants as an internal Jewish affair.

Eventually, the crisis of 1881/2 was handled by private hands and money. The Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle took over the main coordination of the numerous local and regional partners, the most important ones being the Anglo Jewish Association and its Mansion House Committee, the New York Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society, and the German relief committees in Leipzig and Berlin. Actually, at the peak of the refugee crisis in 1882, relief committees could be found in every major city in the Habsburg and German Empire.¹¹ Even though there is a long tradition in Jewish history of Jews helping other Jews and Jewish communities in need and also of the mobilization of the public, I argue that the European and transatlantic relief action to help the pogrom victims was something new in the Jewish arena. We see a concerted relief action that provided helping hands, raised money, and considered a long-term

9. Michael N. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 9–30. Myles has correctly indicated that the age of humanitarianism was by no means only a Western phenomenon; cf. Eric Myles, “‘Humanity,’ ‘Civilization,’ and the ‘International Community’ in the Late Imperial Russian Mirror: The Ideas ‘Topical for Our Days,’” *Journal of the History of International Law*, no. 4 (2002), 310–31.

10. The following considerations are developed in depth in my own contribution: Börries Kuzmany, “Jüdische Pogromflüchtlinge in Österreich 1881/2 und die Professionalisierung der internationalen Hilfe,” in Kuzmany and Garstener, *Aufnahmeland Österreich*, 94–125.

11. Many of these organizations later became most active in facilitating the economic migration of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe. See Barbara Lambauer, “Migration de masse – pauvreté en partance: L’œuvre philanthropique face à l’émigration de Juifs «de l’est», 1880–1914,” *Revue d’histoire de la protection sociale* 2018(11): 2–44.

solution for the exiled. This fits the general development of humanitarianism in the nineteenth century, which went beyond mere short-term compassion and philanthropy and sought to remedy the reasons of the misery.¹²

During the First World War, private relief initiatives continued to play an important role. Strikingly similar to the 2015 refugee crisis in Austria, stories of disruption and relief from ninety-nine years earlier also started at Viennese railway stations when a certain Anitta Müller, like many others, spontaneously received thousands of “Travelers from L'viv” at the Vienna Northern Railway Station.¹³ “Travelers from L'viv” was of course a euphemism propagated by the authorities in order to disguise the catastrophic defeats the Austro-Hungarian Army endured during the first months of the First World War at the Galician front line.¹⁴

Anitta Müller shortly after initiated the “Wohlfahrtsorganisation” (welfare organization), which started a wide variety of activities, ranging from relief for



Figure 1 | Galician refugees at Vienna's Northern Railway Station in 1914. ÖStA/KA,229, Bilderslg. WK I, Kilophot, Wien, Fronten Österreich 877; Sig: 3029b577f8.



Figure 2 | Portrait of Anitta Müller. *Illustrierte Zeitschrift für die vornehme Welt*, 1917.

12. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 19–20.

13. Beatrix Hoffmann-Holter, “Abreisendmachung”: *Jüdische Flüchtlinge in Wien 1914–1923* (Wien: Böhlau, 1995).

14. Archiv der Landespolizeidirektion Wien (Archive of the Viennese Police Headquarter), Wien 1914, Kriegstageereignisse (August–Dezember), September 5, 1914.

single mothers and babies, food distribution, medical care, and also job service. Her work continued after the war and set new standards in social welfare activities in Austria and in the United States.¹⁵ Müller's relief organization was certainly one of the more important ones; some others were criticized as being mere charity events. Yet, all these various relief actions suffered from having no overarching structure, as different ethnoconfessional and social groups created their own helping societies in different cities and hardly coordinated their work with each other. Accordingly, it is almost impossible to get a comprehensive overview of the number and activities of private relief organizations during the First World War.¹⁶

Still, all these hundreds of committees and initiatives helped where the state failed. The state even deliberately counted on the support of private relief organization and was willing to accept ethnonational organizations as partners in order to cope with the huge number of refugees. Thus, and by organizing its own refugee camps on an ethnoconfessional basis, the state unwittingly spurred the nationalizing processes within wider circles of the population. The ethnonational solidarity experienced by many refugees during the war let many believe in 1918 that independent nation states would provide also the solution to their fundamental needs.¹⁷

Yet, in principal, the state acknowledged its responsibility in taking care of the refugees, not least because they were its citizens. Thus, it would be more correct to call them internally displaced people, not least because they were not threatened to be expelled from the country. Nevertheless, neither the authorities nor public opinion distinguished between these terms, and they tried hard not to allow any resettlement of these destitute citizens in the Austrian hinterland.

Already a month after the war had begun, the Austrian and Hungarian authorities had to deal with poor people fleeing the Galician front. There were three categories of people who were displaced from their former residence within the Habsburg Empire. First, there were thousands of people who left the war zone of their own initiative, not only from Galicia and Bukovina but, after 1915, also from the Austrian Littoral. Second, the military authorities deported Austrian citizens whom they considered disloyal to the empire; many Ruthenians and Serbs were detained as alleged spies and traitors without any legal procedures in the interior provinces, for example, in the infamous camp

15. On Anitta Müller's multifaceted transnational biography, cf. Dieter Hecht, *Zwischen Feminismus und Zionismus: Die Biografie einer Wiener Jüdin. Anitta Müller-Cohen (1890–1962)* (Wien: Böhlau, 2008).

16. Walter Mentzel, "Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Habsburgermonarchie während des Ersten Weltkriegs," in Kuzmany and Garstenauer, *Aufnahmeland Österreich*, 140–44.

17. Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands. 1900–1948*, 1. publ. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), chapter 3, 79–105.

at Graz Thalerhof.¹⁸ Finally, the Austro-Hungarian Army evacuated civilians from the regions close to the front line and provided basic relief in camps scattered around in the Bohemian lands, Upper and Lower Austria, Styria, and Carinthia. Initially, the state did not consider itself responsible for the first category of “volunteer” refugees. However, in the course of the war the authorities realized that private relief actions were not able to halt their pauperization, and they included them in programs designed for the evacuated. Even though the care provided for these people was limited, the principal acknowledgment of state responsibility for its citizens contributed to the long-term development of a state-sponsored welfare system in the twentieth century.¹⁹

However, this does not imply that the state also recognized responsibility for noncitizens who sought shelter in Austria in the aftermath of the war. For these refugees proper, only the newly installed international regime of the League of Nations started to play a certain role, although very few of the refugees in Austria qualified for the league's direct support. Its relief activities were meant for both former citizens of the Russian Empire who had fled the revolution and the many persecuted Christians of the former Ottoman Empire, but not for the many thousand old-Austrian citizens of Jewish descent from Galicia. In addition to bringing to light all the deficiencies of international refugee regulations, these refugees heightened the awareness that the responsibility of relief for refugees could not be left solely to private institutions but actually needed state interference and even international coordination; Austria joined the 1928 refugee arrangement of the High Commissariat for Refugees.²⁰

Public relief for refugees became an even more exigent issue after World War II, when millions of displaced persons of different sorts—among them expelled Germans, people uprooted by the war, former concentration camp detainees, and forced laborers—became stranded in the ruins of the Third Reich. Around 1,650,000 of them found themselves in reestablished Austria in 1945.²¹ Based on the experiences of the interwar period, the Allied powers started already before the end of the war to support uprooted refugees on an international level;

18. On the Thalerhof camp, see Nicole-Melanie Goll, “Verdächtigt – Verschleppt – Vergessen: Die Ruthenen und das ‘Russophilen’-Zivilinterniertenlager Thalerhof bei Graz 1914–1917,” *Zeitgeschichte* 5 (2010), 269–85.

19. Mentzel, “Flüchtlingspolitik,” 135–40. Barnett also stresses the First World War as the period when states became more involved in organizing help for their populations; cf. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 87.

20. Claudena M. Skran, *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergence of a Regime* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 101–12.

21. Dieter Bacher and Niklas Perzi, “Die Chance auf eine neue Heimat. Zwangsarbeiter, DPs und Vertriebene auf dem Gebiet der Republik Österreich 1944–1950,” in Kuzmany and Garstenaier, *Aufnahmeland Österreich*, 176–77.

in November 1943, they initiated the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). After the foundation of the United Nations Organization, the International Refugee Organization (IRO) replaced the UNRRA in 1946. Eventually, in late December 1950, the General Assembly of the UN created the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The primary task of these international organizations was to assist in the return of displaced persons, the Soviet Union insisting particularly in repatriating former forced laborers. Only in later years, in the light of the emerging Cold War, did the UNHCR also assist in the resettlement of persons uprooted by the war.²²

It is important to remark that although the UNRRA/IRO played an important role in reducing the number of displaced persons in Europe, and thereby eased the overall situation, it reflected the power relations between the victorious allies and the defeated German Reich. Ethnic Germans expelled from their countries of origin, were explicitly not included into the international relief action of the UN.²³ Yet, in later years, Austria profited from the international structures established in order to handle refugee crises. During the Cold War, the Austrian government could rely not only on the broad readiness to help within the country but also on the support of international organizations, most importantly the UNHCR, in managing the long-term resettlement of refugees.



Figure 3 | Hungarian refugees willing to immigrate to the USA cueing in front of the building of the United States Information Service. ÖNB/Bildarchiv, 665522– US 12.955/48.

22. Gil Loescher, “UNHCR’s Origins and Early History: Agency, Influence, and Power in Global Refugee Policy,” *Refugee*, no. 33/1 (2017), 77–86.

23. Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 109–11.

This was particularly the case in 1956, when approximately 180,000 Hungarians crossed the border within a couple of months (of whom 40,000 each were admitted to the United States and Canada).²⁴

2. Legal Authorities and the Right to Belong

Helping refugees upon their arrival might be a human imperative, but how to deal with refugees in the long run is in the hands of those institutions that legally exercise authority. Only they can provide a setting where a refugee can resettle and integrate in the receiving country's society. Using the term "institutions of legally exercising power" is sensible, because in the eighteenth century the authority of the state was still in negotiation with local patrimonial authorities. Only with the modernization and juridification of the state during the nineteenth century did the government gain the monopoly to set the legal frameworks of belonging. As Hannah Arendt put it, "Sovereignty is nowhere more absolute than in matters of emigration, naturalization, nationality, and expulsion."²⁵In order to demonstrate for the Austrian case the importance of providing long-term settlements, this section touches on French refugees in the 1790s, Polish refugees from Russia in the 1830s, Jewish pogrom refugees in the 1880s, stateless people in the interwar period, and the various groups of refugees after the Second World War.

The best example for such a case might be the approximately 150,000 people who sought refuge from the French Revolution in the Habsburg Empire, mainly in the territories adjacent to France, that is, the Austrian Netherlands and Further Austria. The power monopoly was not entirely clear. The central government tried to restrict the movement and settlement of the refugees with a number of legal norms. However, there were frequent exceptions from general guidelines and a large margin of discretion. The high prestige of the French language and culture certainly accounted for the noncompliance with ordinances from Vienna on the local level. Local power holders could provide a living for French émigrés by housing them as conversation partners, employing them as house teachers, or,

24. Philipp Ther, *Die Außenseiter: Flucht, Flüchtlinge und Integration im modernen Europa* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017), 237–40. Carl Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees during the Cold War*, *Politics and Society in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 60, 67, 85. The case of the Czechoslovaks who sought refuge in Austria in 1968/69 is more difficult to compare because most of them actually had not escaped from the ČSSR but were already abroad, mostly for touristic reasons. They were surprised by the Soviet intervention in August 1968 and observed the further developments from the Austrian safe haven; yet, legally it was difficult to consider them refugees.

25. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951), 265.

in the case of fled clerics, by integrating them in local ecclesial structures. Such opportunities allowed many French refugees to integrate in the local society, even though most of them eventually returned to their homelands in later years.²⁶

We can understand the 1830/31 Polish Uprising in the Russian Empire as maybe the last flare of a situation where local authorities tried to offer a different long-term perspective than the Habsburg central state government. Sympathies for the Polish cause were high all over Europe, but they were particularly strong in Galicia, a former Polish province that the Habsburg Empire had acquired only during the First Partition of Poland in 1772. Several Austro-Galician subjects even joined the insurgents. When the tide turned in favor of the Russians, defeated Polish troops were allowed to enter Austrian territory and to surrender safely to the Austrian army. In addition, twenty thousand of the approximately fifty thousand Polish civilian refugees were quite solidaristically supplied with necessary goods in Galicia. The imperial governor of the province, Prince Lobkowitz, openly received noble refugees in his home and voiced his sympathies for a Polish buffer state. The Austrian government, however, did not share these pro-Polish feelings and did not wish to resettle the refugees in Galicia. After the situation had stabilized in the Russian Empire and the tsar had proclaimed amnesty for former insurgents, most of the refugees returned home and only a small (but important) number of émigrés continued their journey, mostly to France. The local power holder Lobkowitz, however, had clearly overstretched his political scope of action on the regional level, and therefore he had to resign in 1832.²⁷

In the late eighteenth century, private, religious, or local power holders had the possibility to integrate French refugees to a certain degree on their own behalf. Whereas in the early nineteenth century local authorities like the Galician governor still, if unsuccessfully, tried to provide alternative visions for the integration of refugees, in the second half of the century government decisions would and could not be circumvented any longer. As we will see in the case of the refugees from the anti-Jewish pogroms of the 1880s, the state had become the unique power-exercising institution to decide on the long-term perspectives and legal status of refugees.

26. Matthias Winkler, "Exil als wechselseitige Herausforderung: Französische Revolutionsemigranten in der Habsburgermonarchie," in Kuzmany and Garstenauer, *Aufnahmeland Österreich*, 74–83.

27. Svjatoslav Pacholkiv, "Das Werden einer Grenze: Galizien 1772–1867," in *Grenze und Staat: Paßwesen, Staatsbürgerschaft, Heimatrecht und Fremden gesetzgebung in der Österreichischen Monarchie 1750–1867*, ed. Waltraud Heindl and Edith Saurer (Wien: Böhlau, 2000), 519–618, esp. 605–5. Friedrich Klar, "Der Novemberaufstand des Jahres 1830, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Einflusses auf Galizien" (PhD diss., Vienna, 1921). Iryna Vushko, *The Politics of Cultural Retreat: Imperial Bureaucracy in Austrian Galicia, 1772–1867* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2015), 104–26.

In 1881 and 1882, the Austrian and Hungarian governments left no doubt that a resettlement of the pogrom victims in the Habsburg Empire was undesired. They even set an ultimatum to the Jewish relief organizations that by the end of 1882, all refugees had to have left the Galician borderlands. The long-term solution initially envisioned by the international relief action was to resettle the refugees in the New World. This was, however, very difficult to realize because the American partners perceived the refugees first of all through the lens of potential immigrants. Therefore, they accepted only those who were considered capable of working—eventually not more than nine thousand people. As the European Jewish communities likewise refused to integrate destitute Jews from Eastern Europe, not least because they feared a rise of anti-Semitism in their respective countries, the resettlement plan could not be realized. Eventually, more than half of the approximately twenty-five thousand Jews gathered in the Austrian borderlands had no alternative other than that of returning to Russia.²⁸



Figure 4 | Austro-Russian Border. Camp for interned Jews in Brody waiting for their repatriation. Drawing M. de Maenen after a sketch by M. Paul Merwart. *Le monde illustré*, 18 November 1882, p. 320.

28. Kuzmany, “Jüdische Pogromflüchtlinge,” 14–18. Less detailed but in English, cf. Kuzmany, *Brody: A Galician Border City in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 220–30. There are a couple of revisionist studies that prove in general that the decades-long mass migration of Jews from the Russian Empire was not directly linked to

The Jewish relief action of 1881/2 correctly understood that the issue of resettlement is key in resolving refugee crises in the long term. Whether this right to belong was realized via the migration to a new country or via the return to the country of origin was of secondary importance. The severe consequences of the state's denial of the right to belong can be strikingly observed in those World War I refugees who found themselves in the territory of the Republic of Austria, newly created in 1918, and in particular in those refugees who were former Habsburg Austrian citizens of the Jewish faith.

During the interwar period, the governments of the republic tried hard to exclude former Habsburg Jewish citizens of non-Alpine crownlands from becoming new Austrian citizens. The Paris Peace Treaty allowed former citizens—whose legal place of residence was now in a nation state that was different from his or her own *language and race*—to opt for the citizenship of one of the successor states. Although the legal place of residence of these Jewish refugees was outside of the Republic of Austria, many of them could have qualified as German speakers. Nevertheless, the Austrian government and administration denied them citizenship on racial grounds. The long-term consequences of the exclusion of Jewish refugees from the citizenship of the republic proved to be fatal for these individuals. Not only was the economic situation of stateless Jews who continued to live in Austria very difficult, they also were the first to fall victim to the Nazi extermination policy that started with the beginning of the Second World War. The fact that the First Republic of Austria had denied citizenship to former Habsburg Jewish citizens during the interwar period continued to show its bitter consequences even after World War II. The citizenship laws of the Second Austrian Republic accorded citizenship to all people who were Austrian citizens at the day of Austria's annexation to Nazi Germany in 1938. Thereby, they excluded once again the few surviving Jews, who had lived as stateless persons in interwar Austria.²⁹

the 1881/2 pogroms. Cf. Simon Kuznets, "Immigration of Russian Jews to the United States: Background and Structure," *Perspectives in American History*, no. 9 (1975), 35–124; John D. Klier, "Emigration Mania in Late-Imperial-Russia," in *Patterns of Migration 1850–1914: Proceedings of the International Academic Conference of the Jewish Historical Society of England and the Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London*, ed. Aubrey Newman and Stephen W. Massil (London: Jewish Historical Society of England, 1996), 21–29; Shaul Stampfer, "The Geographical Background of East European Jewish Migration to the United States before World War I," in *Migration across Time and Nations: Population Mobility in Historical Contexts*, ed. Ira A. Glazier and Luigi De Rosa (New York: Lynne Rienner Pub., 1986), 220–30; Yannay Spitzer, "Pogroms, Networks, and Migration: The Jewish Migration from the Russian Empire to the United States 1881–1914," working paper, (2015), https://yannayspitzer.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/spitzer_pogromsnetworksmigration_150529.pdf.

29. Hannelore Burger, "Heimat- und staatenlos: Zum Ausschluss (ost-)jüdischer Flüchtlinge aus der österreichischen Staatsbürgerschaft in der Ersten und Zweiten Republik," in Kuzmany and Garstenauer, *Aufnahmeland Österreich*, 162–64, 167–68, 170.

The phenomenon of statelessness was a huge problem not only in interwar Austria but throughout Europe. Yet, the 1920s and 1930s mark the period when the true internationalization and juridification of questions of the legal status and relief for refugees and forced migrants took its first steps. In 1921, the League of Nations appointed the polar scientist Fridtjof Nansen as high commissioner for refugees of the Russian Civil War and later for the displaced Greeks, Turks, and Christian refugees of the former Ottoman Empire. Most of them were stateless and therefore forced to live in a legal and social limbo because rights were closely linked with citizenship. In 1922, Nansen's office therefore initiated the so-called Nansen passports (actually merely identity cards), which allowed its holders to apply for visas. A visa was the first precondition to travel and to seek employment elsewhere, which ultimately could then lead to resettlement. Eventually more than fifty countries recognized the Nansen passport, although neither the United States nor Canada did. Of the approximately twenty-five hundred stateless Russian refugees in Austria, 40% possessed a Nansen passport; but the much larger group of stranded Jews from former Habsburg provinces had no access to it because it was reserved for Russian, Armenian, and Assyrian stateless refugees.³⁰

Immediately after the Second World War, a reestablished Austria confronted on its territories over 1,600,000 refugees who could not claim former Austrian citizenship. The government and public was eager to get rid of all four groups of displaced persons in the country: the first three groups—former concentration camp inmates, forced laborers, and other non-German refugees uprooted by the war—should return to their home country or resettle overseas as quickly as possible, and the fourth group, that is, ethnic German expellees from Central and Southeastern Europe, were deported as far as possible to Allied-occupied Germany. During the first years after the war, exceptions from this general rule were sometimes made for economic reasons—for example, if a displaced person was needed at a particular workplace. In the case of the displaced ethnic Germans, only those could expect a more friendly integration into the Austrian postwar society who had lived close to the Austrian borderlands before, for example, people from Southern Moravia or Southern Bohemia, from western Hungarian cities like Sopron (German *Ödenburg*), from Lower Styria (Slovenian *Štajerska*, German *Untersteiermark*) in Yugoslavia, or from Italian regions like South Tyrol (Italian *Alto Adige*, German *Südtirol*) or the Canale Valley (German *Kanaltal*; Slovenian *Kanalska dolina*). In the early 1950s, however, the integration of ethnic Germans who still resided in Austria became easier, not least because the economic recovery demanded a workforce. With regard to non-German

30. Elizabeth White, "The Legal Status of Russian Refugees, 1921–1936," *Comparativ*, no. 1/2017 (2017), cited from the working paper version downloadable at <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/33611/1/WhiteRussianRefugees.pdf>, 8–14.; Ther, *Außenseiter*, 207–8; Skran, *Refugees*, 121.

displaced persons, only a few of them ended up resettling in Austria. Most of them were former forced laborers from the Soviet Union who had had to work on farms and thereby had partly integrated into family structures.³¹

As mentioned above, there was a relatively wide consensus within Austrian society that granting temporary asylum to people fleeing communist countries was a political and moral obligation, whereas the permanent resettlement should happen elsewhere. There were several reasons for this. First, it was with regard to the sheer number of people arriving that Austria, a country of only around seven and a half million inhabitants in the 1960s and 1970s, considered itself only a place of transit for the refugees. Second, unlike American countries, Austria did not perceive itself as a country of immigrants, although, since the second half of the nineteenth century, the lands of the later Republic of Austria had seen more immigration than emigration.³² Third and adding to this, as a neighboring country, Austria neither had a way to influence who was crossing the border, nor had it established mechanisms of how and whom to resettle, whereas the US Refugee Relief Program always included a strict political screening and an economic pre-selection before admitting refugees to resettle in the United States.³³ The several hundred “boat people” fleeing Vietnam, whom Austria accepted to resettle in the late 1970s and early 1980s, were clear exceptions to the general rule.³⁴

Even though Austria considered itself only a transitory asylum, a considerable number of refugees from the Eastern bloc eventually stayed and started a new life in the country—approximately twenty-five thousand Hungarians and twelve thousand Czechs and Slovaks. As they could claim refugee status under the Geneva Convention, they enjoyed a clear legal status. Most of them quickly integrated into the labor market and adapted to the German language. As intermarriage was high, the second generation was hardly distinguishable from the refugee generation.³⁵

31. Bacher and Perzi, “Chance auf eine neue Heimat,” 190–93. Concerning former forced laborers, cf. Dieter Bacher, “Eine neue Heimat: Eine Motivanalyse in Österreich verbliebener Zwangsarbeiter anhand des Aktenbestandes des ‘Österreichischen Versöhnungsfonds,’” in *Zwangsarbeiter in Österreich 1939–1945 und ihr Nachkriegsschicksal: Ergebnisse der Auswertung des Aktenbestandes des ‘Österreichischen Versöhnungsfonds.’ Ein Zwischenbericht*, ed. Dieter Bacher and Stefan Karner, Veröffentlichungen des Ludwig Boltzmann-Instituts für Kriegsfolgen-Forschung, Graz, 21 (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2013), 271–323.

32. Maximilian Graf and Sarah Knoll, “Das Ende eines Mythos? Österreich und die Kommunismusflüchtlinge,” in Kuzmany and Garstenauer, *Aufnahmeland Österreich*, 226–27.

33. Bon Tempo, *Americans*, 34–59.

34. There is hardly any research literature on refugees from Vietnam in Austria. For a brief study, see Martina Vuong, “The Impact of the Anti-Chinese Páihuá Policy in Vietnam after Reunification: The Refugees’ Perspective,” *Vienna Graduate Journal of East Asian Studies*, no. 2 (2011), 16–67.

35. Ondřej Haváč, “Czech Refugees in Austria 1968–1985,” *Prague Papers on the History of International Relations*, no. 1/2006 (2016), 88–96. Graf and Knoll, “Ende eines Mythos?” 212–B.

3. Sovereignty over Borders and Territory: The State's Desire to Control Refugee Crises

The question of which institutions can provide the framework for a long-term integration has changed from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries; we can observe a strong continuity in the desire of the (central) state to keep or gain control over what happens in the country during a refugee crisis. The foremost need was to (re)establish sovereignty over the state borders. The central authorities wanted to know who was coming, where refugees entered the country, and where they actually resided. Thus, most important for states was to control the movement of people—an issue that states increasingly and successfully monopolized during the modern period for internal and external movement.³⁶In the case of Austria, I will demonstrate this desire for sovereignty by scrutinizing people's movement in the Ottoman-Habsburg borderlands in the eighteenth century, at the Galician-Russian border after the pogroms in 1881 and 1882, as well as the mechanisms along the Iron Curtain.

Let us first turn to the Habsburg Military Border (German *Militärgrenze*) during the eighteenth century, in particular to the Banat region. The Military Border was a delineated zone, initially created in the sixteenth century, with specific legal provisions to secure the frontier of the Habsburg Empire with its Ottoman neighbor. This zone shifted over time and was divided into different sections. After the Habsburg Empire had seized the Banat territory in the 1716–1718 Ottoman War, its southern part became part of the military border. Neither the military border nor the Banat were historical lands of the Habsburg composite monarchy; therefore, they did not have an estate-based structure but were directly administered by the imperial bureaucracy and its representatives on the spot. Because of decades of war between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires, the Banat was largely depopulated. In order to repopulate the region and to increase tax revenues in the long run, the central authorities pursued an active immigration policy, often with the help of special recruiters. On the one hand, they invited colonists from the German lands, and on the other hand, they allowed Ottoman subjects to resettle in the Banat.³⁷

36. On passports in general, cf. John C. Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4; and William O'Reilly, "Migration, Recruitment and the Law: Europe Responds to the Atlantic World," in *Atlantic History: History of the Atlantic System, 1580–1800*, ed. Horst Pietschmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 2002), 19–37.

37. For more general information on the Banat and the military border in English, cf. Irina Marin, *Contested Frontiers in the Balkans: Ottoman and Habsburg Rivalries in Eastern Europe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012). In German, there is a rich literature on the Banat and its resettlement. Two rather recent studies are, for Habsburg settlement policies, Márta Fata, *Migration im kameralistischen Staat Josephs II: Theorie und Praxis der Ansiedlungspolitik in Ungarn, Siebenbürgen, Galizien und der Bukowina von 1768 bis 1790* (Münster: Aschendorff 2014);

At the same time, the border between the two empires was vigorously safeguarded. The Habsburg administration installed posts along the entire borderline. Everybody who wanted to cross the border had to pass through a so-called Contumaz, that is, a quarantine station, where he was registered and retained for several days in order to check his health. Bypassing the Contumaz was severely punished by the border authorities. Though this rigorous border regime foremost had military and sanitary reasons, the



Figure 5 | The Contumaz (ellipse) station next to Pančevo in the Banat on the Josephinian Cadaster of 1769, ÖStA/KA, Banat, p. 151.



Figure 6 | The island in the Danube River is called even in the present day “Forkontumac,” literally “in front of the Contumaz.” Wikipedia.

and for concrete resettlement strategies, William O’Reilly, “Agenten, Werbung und Reisemodalitäten: Die Auswanderung ins Temescher Banat im 18. Jahrhundert,” in *Migration nach Ost- und Südosteuropa vom 18. bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts: Ursachen, Formen, Verlauf, Ergebnis*, ed. Mathias Beer and Dittmar Dahlmann, Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Donauschwäbische Geschichte Iv (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke, 1999), 109–20.

bureaucratization of cross-border movements also demonstrates the state's desire to install sovereignty and control in the eighteenth century.³⁸

For the nineteenth century, the 1881/2 pogrom refugee crisis demonstrates very well how the state tried to regain control over its borders. As the Habsburg authorities acknowledged the humanitarian emergency, they did not hinder any Jews from entering Austrian territory, neither those who did so legally with passports nor those who, with or without the help of traffickers, crossed the border clandestinely. In order to prevent refugees from roaming in the borderlands, police offices received arriving refugees at the border stations or railway stations in the Galician and Bukovinian border towns, and border patrollers tried to intercept illegal border crossers. In order to concentrate the refugees in one place, the police escorted them to Brody, the largest city in the Austro-Russian borderlands. The further treatment of the refugees, however, was left to the international Jewish relief action centered in this very city, which registered the newcomers and provided shelter and food.³⁹

When refugees from the communist countries arrived in the second half of the twentieth century, the state also tried to control the influx. Ironically, the repressive border regimes of the communist bloc facilitated the Austrian authorities' job to ensure its sovereignty. However, during periods of acute crisis, larger groups of people were able to come to Austria. When the Hungarian regime decided to dismantle the Iron Curtain in spring 1956, illegal border crossings became easier and turned into a mass flight after the abatement of the Hungarian Uprising at the end of the year. Besides emergency care in the border region, most of the refugees were placed in provisional camps—most famous until the present day is the former cadet school in Traiskirchen that was adapted into a refugee camp.⁴⁰

38. Timothy Olin, "Flüchtlinge oder Auswanderer? Migration aus dem Osmanischen Reich in das Banat im 18. Jahrhundert," in Kuzmany and Garstenauer, *Aufnahmeland Österreich*, in particular 47–51, 65–66.

39. Börries Kuzmany, "Jüdische Pogromflüchtlinge in Österreich 1881/2 und die Professionalisierung der internationalen Hilfe," in Kuzmany and Garstenauer, *Aufnahmeland Österreich*, 98, 102–4. See also the rich documentation in Benyamin Lukin and Olga Shraberman, "Documents on the Emigration of Russian Jews Via Galicia, 1881–2," in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem," *Gal-Ed. On the History of the Jews in Poland*, no. 21 (2007), 111–7.

40. Bettina Hofmann, "Grenze zu Ungarn 1956: Der Stacheldraht fällt," in *Das Burgenland als internationale Grenzregion im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert*, ed. Maximilian Graf, Alexander Lass, and Karlo Ruzicic-Kessler (Vienna: Neue Welt-Verlag 2012), 86–97; Brigitta Zierer, "Willkommen Ungarnflüchtlinge 1956?" in *Asylland wider Willen: Flüchtlinge in Österreich im europäischen Kontext seit 1914*, ed. Gernot Heiss and Oliver Rathkolb (Vienna: J & V, 1995), 157–71.

In 1968/69, the situation was easier to control for the Austrian authorities because the Iron Curtain made the illegal transgression of the border outside of the official crossing points almost impossible. Those who wanted to leave Czechoslovakia had to have applied for an Austrian visa before, albeit in the very first weeks of the Soviet intervention, Austria handled its visa regime very loosely. At the end of October around ninety-six thousand Czechoslovaks had crossed into Austria. Another sixty-six thousand Czechoslovaks who had spent their holidays in Yugoslavia and were surprised by the events in their home country remained in Austria in order to observe the further developments. Only very few opted to apply for asylum, and most eventually returned, not least because the government of the ČSSR encouraged people to come back. Still, approximately fifty thousand of them decided not to return home, and in October 1969 the communist government decided to close the border hermetically.⁴¹

Only vaguely comparable was the situation in the early 1980s. When Poles started arriving in 1980, they were hardly perceived as refugees, neither by the Austrian public nor by the international arena. This perception changed only after the declaration of martial law in December 1981. Yet at that point, much fewer people arrived because Poland had closed its borders for its citizens.⁴²

Only in late summer 1989, when more than fifty thousand citizens of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) fled the communist bloc via Hungary, did the Austrian authorities seem not to be interested in really controlling the border and registering the refugees. It was obvious that almost all of them would continue their journey immediately to the Federal Republic of Germany. Yet even in these days the formalities were kept up, and the border guards issued visas to the incoming GDR citizens right at the border.⁴³

Maybe with the sole exception of the GDR refugees in transit, for over three centuries the Habsburg and Austrian authorities have tried to control and police refugee movements. While the military border along the Ottoman Empire was one of Europe's most close-meshed borderlines in the eighteenth century and illegal trespassing was difficult, the sudden increase of Jews crossing into Habsburg Galicia after the pogroms of 1881 and 1882 was hardly controllable. The same holds true for most of the refugee crises in the twentieth century, when too many people amassed in the borderlands. In order to manage the

41. Masta Valeš, "Die tschechoslowakischen Flüchtlinge 1968–1989," in Heiss and Rathkolb, *Asylland wider Willen*, 175–77.

42. Graf and Knoll, "Ende eines Mythos?" 209–11, 23–24.

43. Michael Gehler, "Bonn – Budapest – Wien: Das deutsch-österreichisch-ungarische Zusammenspiel als Katalysator für die Erosion des SED-Regimes 1989/90," in *Grenzöffnung 1989: Innen- und Außenperspektiven und die Folgen für Österreich*, ed. Michael Gehler and Andrea Braith (Vienna: Böhlau 2014), 135–62.

sudden influx, the authorities turned toward concentrating refugees in camps. The latter would not only provide for the primary needs but would also allow regaining sovereignty over the uncontrolled movement of people.

4. Refugee or Migrant, and the Legitimacy to Have Left One's Country

Throughout the last three hundred years, the question of who is a refugee and who is a migrant recurred frequently during refugee crises—and not surprisingly, a clear answer was never found.⁴⁴ Still, this issue was always an important moment in the public opinion; interestingly, relief organizations and, later on, international organizations were eager to make this distinction, too. The former wanted to make sure that their limited funds would benefit the right people, and the latter tried to make states accept that refugees are a distinct category of migrants who require special protection and need not meet the same requirements as people seeking better living conditions.⁴⁵ In this fourth section, I will refer to the cases of Ottoman subjects in Habsburg Banat, Jewish pogrom victims in the 1880s, internally displaced Habsburg-Austrian citizens during the First World War, and the refugees from communist countries.

We can hardly speak of a public opinion in the early eighteenth century when refugees from the Ottoman Empire arrived and there was not even a standardized vocabulary to distinguish different groups of migrants. Still, the authorities distinguished between the desirability of various ethnoconfessional groups and had a notion of differentiating between refugees and migrants. Catholic Bulgarians fleeing Ottoman persecution were most generously supported by the Habsburg authorities, whereas Orthodox Rascian (Serb) migrants/refugees who could be of use as frontier peasants (German *Wehrbauern*) still received some support. At the end of the list figured Orthodox Valachians (Romanians) and Gypsies who crisscrossed the Transylvanian and Banat borders. The latter two groups were least welcome, mainly because the authorities doubted that Valachians and Gypsies really intended to permanently resettle in the Banat, which, however, was the major goal of the authorities in a period when the Habsburg Empire tried to increase its population in the region.⁴⁶

A century later, with pogrom refugees arriving in Austrian Galicia in 1881, the simple existence of an international Jewish relief action in the border region also attracted Jews who sought a cheap ticket to emigrate to the United

44. For the search for definitions in the course of history, cf. Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo, *Escape from Violence*, 3–33.

45. White, "Legal Status," 31.

46. Olin, "Flüchtlinge oder Auswanderer?," 61–65.

States. The relief committees were conscious of these free riders and repeatedly underlined that their funds must be used only for “real” pogrom victims. In order to prevent Galician Jews from pretending to be refugees from Russia, the local committees even introduced language tests to detect them.⁴⁷ Even though Austrian public opinion principally recognized the legitimacy of the Jewish pogrom victims to seek refuge in Austria, conservative voices raised the concern that these Jews might stay in the country or that they might put a burden on the state budget. They played with anti-Jewish stereotypes and frequently accused Jews of a joint guilt for the pogroms in Russia. However, the pogrom refugees seem to have functioned rather as a proxy projection of conservatives toward general liberal tendencies and against complacent humanitarianism.⁴⁸ The emblem of the liberal public sphere was the Viennese daily *Neue Freie Presse*, which openly supported the relief activities for the refugees and used a highly moralizing vocabulary including buzzwords like “humanity” and “nineteenth century.” Whereas openly anti-Semitic statements like the parliamentary petitions placed by the pan-German Georg von Schönerer were rather the exception in the Austrian part of the empire, in Hungary the refugee crisis was aggressively discussed in parallel with the blood-libel accusations of Tiszaeszlár.⁴⁹

Despite huge individual support and the wide activities of private relief organizations, public opinion toward the fellow Austrian citizens who fled or were evacuated from the frontlines of the First World War was deteriorating almost in parallel to the rise of economic hardship caused by the war economy. Refugees were hassled in the streets, evacuated students were harassed by their classmates, and flat owners refused to let their apartments to refugees. In so-called *Stimmungsberichten* (mood reports), the Austrian police recorded the general spirit of the population during the war and, among others, also toward the internally displaced Austrian citizens. Most frequently people accused refugees of being profiteers, carriers of diseases, or simply being the reason for housing shortages and rising prices. Poles and Ruthenians from Galicia, just as Slovenian and Italian refugees from

47. See for instance the public announcement of the German Central Committee for the Russian-Jewish Refugees, Berlin, May 15, 1882, in Österreichisches Staatsarchiv / Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Ministerium d. Äußeren, PA X, Russland, K. 141, Liase I, fol. 44. Or for a report of a relief worker in the borderlands, see Moritz Friedländer, *Fünf Wochen in Brody unter jüdisch-russischen Emigranten* (Vienna: M. Waizner 1882), 22–25.

48. On the development of humanitarianism during the nineteenth century, cf. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, part 1, 49–95.

49. Kuzmany, “Jüdische Pogromflüchtlinge,” 99–100, 118–22.

the Isonzo/Soča area, were confronted with such anti-refugee stereotypes.⁵⁰ The least welcoming attitudes prevailed against Jewish refugees. When censorship eased in spring 1917 and parliamentarianism was reintroduced, organizations, newspapers, and politicians, in particular *Christlichsoziale* and *Deutschnationale*, openly polemicized against Jewish refugees. Yet, the Austrian public was no monolithic bloc, and the return to parliamentarianism also spurred those forces who defended the civic rights of the refugees and underlined state responsibility for their social needs.⁵¹ Still, as mentioned above, these strong anti-Semitic manifestations had long-term consequences. It seems that public opinion hardly differentiated between internally displaced Habsburg-Austrian citizens during the war and stateless Jewish refugees after 1918. Jews who had ended up in the Republic of Austria were sweepingly accused of not belonging to the new Austrian nation and were denied Austrian citizenship.⁵²

During the Cold War, Austria experienced five waves of refugees arriving from Hungary (1956/57), Czechoslovakia (1968/69), Poland (1981/82), the German Democratic Republic (1989), and Romania (1989/90). As the second Austrian Republic was firmly anchored in an anticommunist consensus, public opinion welcomed these refugees as a confirmation of its own political orientation. Hence, the principal legitimacy of the refugees was not challenged, even though not only actively persecuted people left their country; besides refugees from embattled Budapest, we can observe a disproportionately high number of Hungarians arriving from the country's western regions closer to Austria. The solidarity came to an end quite quickly if refugees from the Eastern bloc did not travel further west fast enough. When in winter 1956/57 the international commitment to accept Hungarian refugees started stuttering, resentment among the population grew accordingly.⁵³

Although in Hungary and later Czechoslovakia the brutal military crackdown and spectacular pictures of refugees crossing the border more or less silenced upcoming discontent among the wider population, the declaration of martial law in Poland in 1981 only very briefly improved the image of Poles who had come to Austria. As Poles did not need visas to visit Austria, migration workers had come to Austria more frequently already before, in particular after Poland's

50. For a recent study on Polish-Galician refugees during the First World War, cf. Kamil Ruszała, "Galicyjscy Uchodźcy W Austro-Węgrzech W Trakcie Pierwszej Wojny Światowej," in *Wielki Przełom: Konflikty Zbrojne I Przemiany Wojskowości 1912–1923*, ed. Michał Baczkowski (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2018), 107–21.

51. Mentzel, "Flüchtlingspolitik," 146–49.

52. Hoffmann-Holter, "Abreisendmachung."

53. Ther, *Außenseiter*, 237–40.



Figure 7 | Cutting from Stimmungsbericht of the Graz Police, 1915. Karlau is the name of Styria's largest prison. Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv. Courtesy of Kamil Ruszala.

economic and political crisis became increasingly manifest in 1980. As was so often the case, the difference between refugee and economic migrant was indeed blurred. Judging from tabloids and anonymous letters addressed to Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, large parts of the Austrian population, however, remained very reluctant toward Polish refugees. Despite the rather negative reception, in comparison to Hungarians and Czechoslovaks, relatively many Poles eventually started a new life in Austria, not least because other countries were hesitant about accepting them for resettlement as refugees from the communist bloc.⁵⁴

During the year 1989, Austrian public opinion was confronted with two refugee crises, and its reaction could not have been more contrasting. The approximately fifty thousand German refugees from the GDR, who in fall 1989 simply passed through Austria in order to gain access to the Federal Republic, became the Austrians' all-time favorite refugees. The opposite sentiments surged when, during and after the chaotic days of the downfall of Ceaușescu's regime, fifteen to twenty thousand Romanians sought political

54. Graf and Knoll, "Ende eines Mythos?" 211–12, 15–18.



Figure 8 | Demonstration against housing 800 Romanian refugees in the military barracks of the village Kaisersteinbruch in 1990. ÖNB/Bildarchiv, 1368136 – E24/742.

asylum in Austria in 1989/1990. The media quite quickly generally denounced them as people migrating for economic and not for political reasons—the term *Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge* (economic refugees) resounded throughout the land.⁵⁵

Conclusions

Guided by these four topics, this paper sketched the continuities and ruptures in the handling of refugee crises in Austria during the last three hundred years. Although the human imperative to help people who had to flee their homes endures, the ways in which relief is provided has changed over time. Certainly, helpful individuals and humanitarian and, in particular, confessional institutions have played an important role in the management of refugee crises at all time; and relief organizations have been continuously professionalizing and internationalizing themselves over time. Yet, the direct involvement of the state in the funding and management of relief activities started only with hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Austrian citizens during the First World War. The state's involvement in providing relief for its citizens had a lasting impact on the state's self-understanding of being responsible for its citizens' social needs, and therefore contributed to the institution building for

55. *Ibid.*, 220–25.

the future welfare state. In the very wide perspective, the massive population uprooting during and after the First World War eventually led the international community, and thereby also Austria, to acknowledge state responsibility for refugees.

Whereas the key to resolving a refugee crisis has always been to find a permanent solution for those who had left—that is, either resettlement or return—the way in which this aim could be realized has changed over time. These changes are closely linked to the development of the modern state in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. In the early modern Habsburg Empire, central state prescription could be counterbalanced by local authorities, in particular when it came to the economic and social reconstruction of refugees. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the Austrian state has gained the legal monopoly to decide about the right to belong or not belong to the country.

With regard to controlling the influx of refugees, we can observe a striking continuity during the last three centuries. Although in cases of acute emergency the state was not always able to maintain the control over its borders, the authorities nevertheless aimed at restricting the mobility of refugees and at containing them to specific places. They tried to register the new arrivals themselves or have them registered by relief organizations in order to understand who was entering the country, where a refugee crossed the border, and where he or she resided in the country. As much as the authorities worried about the financial burden of refugee crises, they were eager to maintain sovereignty over the state borders and its territory.

Concerning the question of legitimate reasons for a person leaving his or her home country, we can observe an equally long discussion within the authorities but also within public opinion. And here this paper comes full circle. Even though the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not know a stable vocabulary for distinguishing between refugees and economic migrants, authorities very early developed a notion of this distinction when they had to deal with new arrivals. However, the authorities, relief organizations, and public opinion had to realize that in many cases this distinction was impossible to make because the legitimacy of the flight could overlap with economic motives. Over the last three centuries, Austria saw both groups arriving during refugee crises—both forced migrants and economic migrants—and sometimes both elements played a role within one and the same person.

Analyzing refugee crises in Austria in the long historical perspective is thus also rewarding in order to gain a better understanding of more recent refugee movements. Many phenomena that we can observe in various refugee crises in the past are actually quite recurrent in different forms. This allows us not only

to analytically sharpen the scholarly study of forced migration but also to put today's events in a more sober perspective.

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