



Setagaya Park,
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Exile in Transit. Austrians in Exile in South, South East and East Asia

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“The way we encounter people who have been brutally thrown off course by war and terror, have been forced to flee or have otherwise been marginalised must be such that we can look them in the eye and at ourselves in the mirror”,¹ said Austria’s Federal President at the opening of the Salzburg Festival 2015. Most refugees who have made it to Austria come today from Asia, from war-torn Syria and Afghanistan.² When Austria was violently annihilated in 1938 und integrated into National Socialist Germany, the stream of refugees flowed in the opposite direction: at least 7,500 Austrians found refuge from National Socialism and a chance to survive in Asia³ – without counting Palestine, which took in 15,200 refugees.⁴ Countries that are found at the top of Austria’s current refugee statistic then played the role of receiving countries to Austrian refugees fleeing from National Socialism: Afghanistan took in at least 20, Syria 75, Iraq 85 Jewish Austrian refugees, neighbouring Iran 80 – with new research creating a constant need for upward revision as employment contracts in the fields of technology and medicine enabled more people to gain entrance in these countries and people found refuge there who were not Jewish.⁵

¹ Heinz Fischer, Inaugural speech at the Salzburg Festival 2015. Quoted from: ORF, ZIB 1, 26 July 2015.

² Syria and Afghanistan are at the top of the Austrian list of first-time asylum applications filed between January and May 2015, with 5,233 and 3,833 refugees respectively. They are followed by refugees from Iraq in third place, with 2,305 refugees. Pakistan is in sixth place with 707 after Kosovo and Somalia. Cf. TOP 15 asylum applications listed according to nationality and month of application as of 31 May 2015. In: Republik Österreich, Bundesministerium für Inneres, *Asylstatistik Mai 2015*, p. 7. Online at: http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Asylwesen/statistik/files/Asylstatistik_Mai_2015.pdf.

³ The figure is the result of the conflation of two sources: Jonny Moser, *Demographie der jüdischen Bevölkerung Österreichs 1938–1945*, Vienna 1999 (= Schriftenreihe des Dokumentationsarchivs des Österreichischen Widerstandes zur Geschichte der NS-Gewaltverbrechen, vol. 5), p. 68; Margit Franz, *Aufnahmeland österreichischer Emigrantinnen und Emigranten 1938 bis 1945 in Asien und Afrika (mit Ausnahme von Palästina und Shanghai)*. In: Margit Franz, Heimo Halbrainer (ed.), *Going East – Going South. Österreichisches Exil in Asien und Afrika*, Graz 2014, p. 19–43, here p. 34.

Research by Franz has made an upward revision of the number Moser has cited for British India – 250 – to 500–700 necessary, a trend that is reenforced by emigration possibilities based on technology transfer.

⁴ Cf. Moser, *Demographie*, p. 69.

⁵ Numbers: Cf. Moser, *Demographie*, p. 68.

Refugee policy

“By spring 1938 something like fifty German émigrés had landed in Bombay. Among the thousands of passengers arriving on the steamers they attracted no attention whatsoever. And then suddenly things changed”,⁶ wrote the German exile Ernest Schaffer from India, who had fled to India as early as 1933. Asian destinations became attractive to people from National Socialist occupied Central Europe only when the increasingly restrictive issue of entry permits and the introduction of visa quotas for refugees in Western countries, notably after March 1938, seriously diminished the chances of Austrian and German refugees to emigrate to the United States, Great Britain or Australia. Rudolf Hans Bock, who had found refuge with his family first in Japan and later in China, wrote: “All countries refused to take us in, either because they were afraid of penniless refugees or because they were afraid of Hitler and did not wish to offend him by being nice to us.”⁷

After it had become apparent at the Évian Conference⁸ in July 1938 that the Western countries were not prepared to open their borders for Jewish refugees, a desperate search was on for alternative safe havens in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

People were queuing for days, weeks, months for visas at different consulates, having previously fought their way through a bureaucratic jungle to obtain the required forms and permissions, to pay imposts and face expropriation; the Nazi system was determined to capitalise on the flight of its opponents and persecutees.⁹ To be allowed to purchase a boat or train ticket refugees had to present entry visas for the respective destinations, which were issued only after the payment of all the – arbitrarily introduced – levies and imposts. Visas were expensive and were linked to the signature of a sponsor who was prepared to shoulder the entire financial responsibility for a specific refugee for the duration of his or her stay in the country and undertook to provide the financial means potentially required for his or her departure. In some countries this so-called affidavit was also tied to the refugee’s employment contract: the receiving countries in Asia wanted to make sure that refugees would not become a financial

⁶ Ernest N. Shaffer, *Ein Emigrant entdeckt Indien*, Munich 1971, p. 93.

⁷ Rudolf Hans Bock, *In God’s Hands. An Autobiography*, in this volume (4/2).

⁸ US-President Franklin D. Roosevelt convened a conference in Évian-les-Bains, France, lasting from 6 to 15 July 1938, which involved representatives of 32 countries to discuss the plight of German and Austrian Jews fleeing persecution by the Nazis.

⁹ Cf. Gabriele Anderl, Dirk Rupnow, *Die Zentralstelle für Jüdische Auswanderung als Beraubungsinstitution*, Vienna, etc. 2004 (= Publications of the Austrian Historical Commission, vol. 20/1).

burden on the society that took them in. A worldwide economic recession, which had generated high rates of unemployment in many countries, was only gradually being overcome. Some countries even charged exiles “landing money”, which meant that immigration was possible only for relatively well-off refugees.¹⁰ European colonial powers in Asia, especially Great Britain, wanted “to prevent the immigration of white paupers¹¹ at all costs.”¹² Their domination, which was built on the artificial exaltation of the “white race”, was not to be weakened by impoverished white individuals.

In addition to this, politically active refugees were generally considered to be undesirable in the unstable states that were struggling with internal turmoil. Refugees sometimes had to cross several battlelines in order to become active according to their political convictions. Cases in point are Richard Frey¹³ in China, which was split in two by the civil war raging at the time, and Ernst Frey¹⁴ in colonial Indochina, which was struggling for independence from Vichy France, which had occupied the region.

Routes into exile

The financial resources of exiles, international security regulations, travel regimes in transit countries, entry requirements in the respective receiving countries, the course the war took and the geopolitical situation against the backdrop of the aggressive policy of territorial conquest adopted by the Nazis and their allies were factors relevant for the Central European refugees’ routes into exile in Asia. What routes were open for the refugees?

Austrian refugees usually opted for the sea route to Asia from one of the ports in the Mediterranean – Trieste, Genoa, Naples. On board ships operated in most cases by the Italian *Lloyd Triestino*¹⁵ they passed Port Said and through the Suez Canal, heading for the Indian subcontinent via Aden, Karachi and Bombay or they sailed east via Colombo to Southeast Asia or to Shanghai, which was reached as a rule in roughly 28 days. From there there were ship connections to Japan.

¹⁰ For the entry requirements of specific Asian countries, see Franz, *Aufnahmeländer*, p. 33–43.

¹¹ Latin *pauper*: poor.

¹² Hans-Albert Walter, *Deutsche Exilliteratur. 1933–1950. Volume 2: Europäisches Appeasement und überseeische Asylpraxis*, Stuttgart 1984, p. 261.

¹³ Cf. Richard Frey, *Ein chinesischer Revolutionär mit österreichischen Wurzeln*, in this volume (4/2).

¹⁴ Cf. Ernst Frey, *Vietnam, mon amour*, in this volume (4/3).

¹⁵ Shipping company with its head offices in Trieste, Italy. In March 2006 the company's name was changed to *Italia Marittima*.

After Italy's entry into the war in June 1940 the Mediterranean Sea was declared to be a maritime war zone and the ports were closed for international shipping. An alternative route remained, which circumnavigated the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa. Refugees increasingly attempted to reach Southeast Asia on the Transsiberian Railway via Poland, the Soviet Union (Siberia), Manchukuo, Japan and Shanghai. After Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 this route was also blocked and it became impossible to reach East Asia by land. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the invasion of Southeast Asia in December 1941 brought the war to East and Southeast Asia and spelled the end to the flight to these countries. The increase in torpedo attacks dealt a severe blow to the remaining transport possibilities to Southern Asia. From November 1941 Jews were no longer permitted to emigrate from the German Reich.

Asia amid decolonisation, state formation, civil wars and the Japanese wars of conquest in East and Southeast Asia

In today's parlance those Asian states where Austrians sought refuge from National Socialism in the 1930s and 1940s would be called *fragile states*; they were weak polities without a stable political, economic or juridical infrastructure.¹⁶ Before, during and after World War II the largest continent in terms of surface area, extending from tropical to polar climate zones, was in the grip of changes that would affect the rest of the world, such as the first attempts to shake off colonial rule (India, the Philippines, French Indochina comprising the territory of today's Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam), the birth of new states (Iraq, Iran, the Soviet Union), domestic conflicts that took the form of outright civil war (China) or came close to civil war (Japan) and an aggressively expansionist policy leading to war and occupation (Japan). Living conditions for Austrian refugees to Asia varied according to the size of the continent and the bewildering variety of its cultures, vegetation, fauna and climate.

The Chinese port city of Shanghai was the most sought after destination in Asia, providing shelter for around 6,000 Austrian refugees. In the 1930s, "East Asia's most important market place", the "Paris of the East", as the trading metropolis located in

¹⁶ In 2015 the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) adopted the following criteria for its definition of "weak states": 1) violence, 2) no access to justice for all, 3) no effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, 4) no economic foundations and 5) no capacity to adapt to social, economic and environmental shocks and disasters. Cf.: OECD (ed.), *States of Fragility 2015. Meeting Post-2015 Ambition*, Paris 2015, p. 15. Online at: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/states-of-fragility-2015_9789264227699-en

the Yangtze River Delta off the East China Sea was called, was the fifth largest city in the world, where almost 100,000 foreigners lived in the mid-1930s, most of them in the French Concession and the Shanghai International Settlement.¹⁷ In November 1937 Japanese troops occupied the city with the exception of the two exterritorial zones. When the Nazis' aggressive expulsion policy in Central Europe caused a significant rise in the stream of refugees in 1938 and the international community proved unable to offer viable solutions, Shanghai's two exterritorial zones were among the few flight destinations that did not require visas until December 1941. Therefore the East Asian metropolis held out the last hope for many refugees to be able to leave Nazi Germany. 18,000 German-speaking refugees, including around 1,000 children under the age of fifteen, are said to have found refuge in Shanghai. Local and international Jewish aid organisations assisted the refugees in the arduous task of setting up some sort of home. Flight, however, meant in most cases ending up in primitive mass accommodation with a tremendous loss of status, characterized by food banks, a low standard of living, insufficient hygiene, poor accommodation and an inadequate diet. Josefine Schwach recalls "misery, want, rats, dirt, diseases ..., anything you care to mention but nothing that was beautiful. If you were very rich, you could live in one of the nicer parts of the city. Everything was to be had for money but we were not rich, we were penniless refugees."¹⁸

The onset of the war in the Pacific put an end to the initial small-trade prosperity of the Central European refugees; the impossibility to make a living, impoverishment and hunger were the order of the day during the ensuing years. The Japanese occupation of the International Settlement in late 1941 was a "radical turning point in the history of the Far Eastern emigration centre"¹⁹. In February 1943 the refugees were relocated to the Hongkew district which had been badly damaged during the Japanese invasion. Maria Marbach writes: "In Shanghai, we were able to settle down, but after war broke out we were interned by the Japanese, who were allies of the Germans. Because we were Jewish we were forced to live in the Jewish internment ghetto of Hongkew. Conditions were brutal, difficult and not healthy. The Japanese were cruel and harsh and imprisoned us in the Jewish ghetto."²⁰

¹⁷ Cf. Astrid Freyeisen, *Shanghai. Rettung am "schlechtest möglichen Ort" der Welt?* In: Claus-Dieter Krohn (ed.), *Metropolen des Exils*, Munich 2002 (= Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch, vol. 20), p. 269–293.

¹⁸ Josefine Schwach, *Alles, alles, nur nicht schön*, in this volume (4/2).

¹⁹ Patrik von zur Mühlen, *Ostasien*. In: Claus-Dieter Krohn, Patrik von zur Mühlen, Gerhard Paul, Lutz Winckler (ed.), *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933–1945*, Darmstadt 21998, col. 336–349, here col. 342.

²⁰ Maria Marbach, *Being refugees from 1938 to 1953*, in this volume (4/2).

All contemporary witnesses have something to say about the brutality and the completely arbitrary treatment the Japanese occupying force accorded both the Chinese civilian population and the Jewish refugees. “On no account was it advisable to meddle with the Japanese because they were prone to kill you straightaway.”²¹

Against all odds, a programme of cultural events, magazines and educational activities was set up. While this was severely curtailed during the Japanese occupation of the Shanghai International Settlement,²² it survived at least in a reduced form in the everyday life of the ghetto, serving as an important source of information and inspiration.²³

Japan’s policy of expansion and its regime, together with Germany one of the most brutal at that time, which was based on a theocratic brand of Fascism with a god-like emperor as its figurehead, were predicated in a racist manner on the alleged ideological and racial superiority of the Japanese. After the conquest of Korea in 1910 and the Chinese province Manchuria, with the subsequent proclamation of Manchukuo as a Japanese satellite state seven times the size of Japan itself, Japan had risen to the rank of the first Asian colonial power in 1932. The Japanese aimed to liberate Asia from the European colonial powers, the British in Malaya, Hong Kong, North Borneo, India and Burma, the French in Indochina, the Dutch in the Dutch East Indies and South Borneo, the US Americans in the Philippines and the Portuguese in East Timor, only to win control themselves over these territories, which were rich in raw materials and agriculturally extremely productive. For military and ideological matters the Japanese nationalists – the Left and the pacifists had been deprived of their parliamentary influence in a furious propaganda war – took a page out of the Nazis’ book. Following in the footsteps of the Nazis’ “Lebensraum” ideology, they proclaimed the “Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” and signed a three-power pact with Italy and Germany in September 1940, with the ostensible aim of carving up world dominion: Japan was assigned East Asia as its sphere of interest, with the option of an extension

²¹ Josefina Schwach, *Alles, alles, nur nicht schön*, in this volume (4/2).

²² Term for Shanghai’s international zone which was under British and American administration until late 1941.

²³ On exile in Shanghai cf. *inter alia*: von zur Mühlen, *Ostasien*, col. 338–344; Jüdisches Museum Berlin (ed.), *Leben im Wartesaal. Exil in Shanghai 1938–1947*, Berlin 1997; Georg Armbrüster, Michael Kohlstruck, Sonja Mühlberger (ed.), *Exil Shanghai 1938–1947. Jüdisches Leben in der Emigration*, Berlin 2000; Alfred W. Kneucker, *Zuflucht in Shanghai. Aus den Erlebnissen eines österreichischen Arztes in der Emigration 1938–1945*. Revised and edited by Felix Gamillscheg, Vienna etc. 1984; Franziska Tausig, *Shanghai-Passage. Emigration ins Ghetto*, Vienna 2007; Helmut Spielmann, *Shanghai. Eine Jugend im Exil*. Edited by Gerald Lamprecht, Ingeborg Radimsky, Graz 2015.

later on to include India; Italy's sphere of influence was to be the Mediterranean, and the German Reich was given Eastern Europe as its primary stomping ground.

Japan's occupation of parts of China in 1937 and the Nanking (Nanjing) Massacre,²⁴ which took a toll of around 300,000 civilian lives, and the attack on US American ships offering assistance already came close to propelling the United States into war with Japan. Launching another attack in December 1941 not backed up by a declaration of war, the Japanese ambushed part of the United States Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor on Hawaii and destroyed it. Almost simultaneously the Imperial Japanese forces attacked British bases in Southeast Asia and on 8 December the Japanese air-force conducted bombing raids on Singapore, British Malaya, Hong Kong and on United States bases, including bases in the Philippines.

The same day saw the mutual declaration of war of the United States and Japan. Four days after the Japanese attack on the United States, on 11 December 1941, Adolf Hitler as an ally of the Japanese Empire declared war on the United States. This brought World War II to the Pacific, and the Austrian refugees from National Socialism were now trapped in countries at the mercy of their tormentor: the Japanese were on the advance everywhere in Southeast Asia.

From spring 1940 under the rule of the Vichy regime, French Indochina gave permission to Japan to transport troops across its territory and to build supply facilities and military bases. The populations of the British colony Hong Kong, Singapore and the British colonies Malaya and British Borneo were exposed to the inhuman occupation regime of the Japanese troops from 1942 to 1945. The same occupation terror at the hands of the Japanese army was experienced by the Dutch East Indies, which had formally joined the Allies after the occupation of the mother country, Holland, in 1940, and the US-dominated Philippines. Murders, torture and rapes were rife. After the invasion of the independent kingdom of Thailand on 8 December 1941 Japanese troops used the territory for their deployment in Southeast Asia. Under Japanese pressure Thailand was forced in January 1942 to declare war on the United States and Great Britain.²⁵ Southeast and East Asia were liberated from

²⁴ War crimes committed by troops of the Imperial Japanese Army in the Chinese capital Nanking (Nanjing) during the Second Sino-Japanese War (7 July 1937 to 9 September 1945). Hundreds of thousands of civilians and prisoners of war were killed and more than 20,000 women and girls were raped.

²⁵ On World War II and Asia: cf. Rheinisches JournalistInnenbüro/Recherche International e.V. (ed.), "*Unsere Opfer zählen nicht*". *Die Dritte Welt im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Berlin 2005; *Die Dritte Welt im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Unterrichtsmaterialien etc). Online at: <http://www.3www2.de/>.

the tyranny of the Japanese only in the course of 1945 and some regions had to wait for the withdrawal of the Japanese troops after Japan's surrender in August 1945.

According to the most recent research, 50 Austrian refugees found refuge from National Socialism in Japan itself.²⁶ The number of transit refugees was much higher²⁷ – largely owing to a courageous Japanese official committed to humane ideals. More than 3,500 transit refugees from Lithuania owe their salvation to the Japanese vice consul active in Kaunas, Chiune Sempo Sugihara, who issued transit visas in 1940/41 to predominantly Jewish refugees in contravention of the explicit order of Japan's Foreign Ministry. Until shortly after Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in summer 1941 these visas enabled the refugees to travel to Vladivostok by Transsiberian Railway and by boat to the Japanese island Honshu, where they were given temporary asylum in Kobe. In 1984 Chiune Sempo Sugihara was recognized by Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous Among the Nations.²⁸

In 1938 visas for Germans were again made compulsory in Japan. In a development that climaxed after the attack on Pearl Harbor a change was taking place in the Japanese policy toward Jewish refugees, who had previously been left in peace by the authorities. Arrests were made, some arrestees were tortured and 1,500 German speaking refugees were deported to Shanghai. None, however, were extradited to Germany, even though German authorities were stepping up pressure on Japan. In the wake of the installation of dreaded Gestapo Colonel Josef Meisinger²⁹ as police attaché at the German embassy in Tokyo discrimination measures and the persecution of Jews were monitored increasingly closely by Japan's ally, Germany.³⁰

Ten Austrians apparently found refuge in the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo.³¹ It was above all the long and arduous journey to the North East of China, to Manchuria,

²⁶ Cf. Moser, *Demographie*, p. 68.

²⁷ Cf. Stiftung Jüdisches Museum Berlin/Stiftung Haus der Geschichte des Bundesrepublik Deutschland (ed.), *Heimat und Exil. Emigration der deutschen Juden nach 1933*, Frankfurt am Main 2006, p. 124.

²⁸ Cf. The Righteous Among the Nations, Visas for Japan. Chiune Sempo Sugihara. Online at: <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/stories/sugihara.asp>;

Der Mut zum Ungehorsam. Chiune Sugihara, japanischer Konsul in Kowno. Online at: <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/de/exhibitions/righteous/sugihara.asp>.

²⁹ Josef Meisinger (1899–1947) was a German SS colonel in the Gestapo (SS-Standartenführer) also known as the "Butcher of Warsaw"; he was active from April 1941 to May 1945 as the SD liaison officer to the Japanese Secret Intelligence Service at the German Embassy in Tokyo.

³⁰ Cf. Thomas Pekar, *Jüdisches Exil in Ostasien, vor allem in Japan (1933–1945)*. In: Johannes F. Evekein (ed.), *Exiles Traveling: Exploring Displacement, Crossing Boundaries in German Exile Arts and Writings 1933–1945*, Amsterdam/New York 2009 (= Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik, volume 68), p. 51–72; Thomas Pekar (ed.), *Flucht und Rettung: Exil im japanischen Herrschaftsbereich (1933–1945)*, Berlin 2011 (= Dokumente, Texte, Materialien / Zentrum für Antisemitismustorschung der Technischen Universität Berlin, volume 8); von zur Mühlen, *Ostasien*, col. 344–346.

³¹ Cf. Moser, *Demographie*, p. 68.

for which transit visas had to be secured, which prevented their numbers growing, despite the efforts of the local Jewish community. Border posts issued a Manchurian transit visa “that entitles to a twenty-day stay in Manchukuo. Provided immigrants gain some sort of foothold within that time, that is, find employment or gain a living in some other way, they are granted permission to stay permanently. [...] In addition to the transit visa the border post Manchuria also issues an entry visa that entitles bearers to an unlimited stay provided they can prove they are in possession of a capital of 200 yen (roughly 138 reichsmark).”³²

According to the most recent estimates, the Crown Colony British India, comprising the modern states India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, took in between 500 and 700 refugees from annexed Austria. In India a powerful independence movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi engaged in confrontations with British colonial rule, which, sensing that its end was near, clung in grim determination to a system of governance based on economic exploitation and the arbitrary exaltation of the white race. “Among the things I witnessed was the revulsion the population felt at the sight of British uniforms. The independence movement was rapidly gaining ground and British soldiers had every reason to feel threatened at all times. I saw how some of them were attacked and set on fire”,³³ writes an Austrian exile. Feudal maharaja courts, political enclaves linked to the British Empire as part of a military defence strategy, offered lucrative and prestigious jobs to a few exiles, while the majority was left to fend for themselves in cities like Bombay and Calcutta with their cosmopolitan populations, often relying for survival on support by the Jewish Relief Association, a benevolent society founded by early migrants from Nazi Germany. In pursuit of their policy toward “enemy aliens”, citizens of countries with which Great Britain was at war, the British interned all male exiles between 16 and 65 years of age in British India and all other British colonies such as British Malaya and Hong Kong on 3 September 1939. A commission set up to monitor the internment process attempted to tell “genuine refugees” loyal to Britain apart from German Nazi sympathisers and spies. By March 1940 580 internees in British India had been released again – a development that came to an end when the conquests of the German army

³² *Mandschukuo. Mitteilungen der Auswanderungsabteilung der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Vienna*. In: Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt, Vienna edition, no. 12 (10 February 1939), p. 5.

³³ Rudolf Kauders, ... endlich gegen Hitler kämpfen, in this volume (4/3).

in Western Europe generated a wave of uncertainty, leading, among other things, to a second round of internments in India. Now it was the turn of women and children to be interned, too, at a later stage together with their husbands and fathers, in family camps, the so-called Parole Centers, put up in isolated locations. Due to the lack of employment prospects many refugees remained in these camps until the end of the war.³⁴

The British colony Burma, which in terms of administration had only been separated from British India in 1937, was occupied by Japan in 1942, allegedly in order to free it from British colonial rule. The civilian population was divided into those who were hoping the Japanese would in fact help them cast off the British yoke and others who regarded Japanese imperialism as no less burdensome. “The atrocities committed by the Japanese occupation army had made the nationalist-minded Burmese realise that they could not count on Japanese support in their anticolonial struggle with the British”³⁵, noted the Austrian exile Rudolf Kauders, who fought for Britain as a soldier in an “autonomous unit” in the guerilla war behind the Japanese frontlines in conditions that defy the imagination. The supply of the British units was in the hands of the United States Air Force, which had installed supply depots in North East India and airlifted food and water to Burma.

“Why was the supply with drinking water not working? The daily requirement of the brigade including the mules was around 20 to 30 tonnes or as many cubic metres, which had to be dropped by parachute. Yet the supply planes did not come every day; they usually came once a week. I would estimate that at least a quarter of the deaths of soldiers was due to lack of water and of food. The losses to dysentery, cholera and typhus were at least equally as high. Our single file had in the end shrunk to about one third of its original length. I had measured the length of the file every day in steps, which allowed me to calculate the number of soldiers, and kept notes in my war diary. It was quite obvious: the actual fighting took a less heavy toll than the dreadful conditions in Burma.”³⁶

³⁴ Cf. Margit Franz, *Gateway India. Deutschsprachiges Exil in Indien zwischen britischer Kolonialherrschaft, Maharadschas und Gandhi*, Graz 2015; Margit Franz, “Passage to India”: *Österreichisches Exil in Britisch-Indien 1938–45*. In: Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Jahrbuch 2007*, Münster/Vienna 2007, p. 196–224. Online at: www.doew.at/cms/download/870t5/jb07_franz.pdf; Anil Bhatti, Johannes H. Voigt (ed.), *Jewish Exile in India 1933–1945*, New Delhi 1999; Johannes H. Voigt, *Indien*. In: Krohn et al. (ed.), *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration*, col. 270–275.

³⁵ Rudolf Kauders, ... *endlich gegen Hitler kämpfen*, in this volume (4/3).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

In Burma's jungle, the Japanese Army, supported by the Indian National Army under the revolutionary leader Subhas Chandra Bose,³⁷ fought the British and its attacks extending into North East India as far as Imphal kept the fear of a Japanese invasion alive in British India between 1942 and 1944. At the same time 1.6 million Indians fought on the side of the Allies. The colonial army and the so-called liberation army – each recruited from India – fought each other in the woods of North East India.

Despite their partial autonomy from the United States after 1935, their interim government and their own army the Philippines, an archipelago consisting of 7,107 islands in the Western Pacific, were an important United States military basis and generally understood to be part of the United States sphere of influence. This meant that immigrants needed an American visa and an affidavit. The Jewish Refugee Committee in Manila played an important role by compiling a catalogue of entry conditions, such as desired trades and professions, age and state of health for potential immigrants and by acting as the decisive reviewing body for immigration applications. In spite of the Committee's tendency to take a rather negative view of individual immigration on the whole, 180 Austrians managed to find refuge on the tropical archipelago.³⁸ The largest local liberation movement against the Japanese invasion came into being in the partly independent Philippines. Given that the island state had been promised full independence in 1945 by the United States, the Japanese decolonisation propaganda sounded hollow. Austrian exiles such as Herbert Zipper took part in the resistance movement: "Usually they hid the radio transmitter under vegetables or other foodstuff and kept moving it on an ox- or hand-drawn cart. They were in almost daily contact with MacArthur's³⁹ headquarters, first in Australia and then in New Guinea. The Japanese knew about this transmission cart and tried frantically to track it down. A Japanese lorry with a huge aerial crossed and recrossed the city in all directions, searching in vain for the clandestine radio transmitter."⁴⁰

³⁷ Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945) was the twice-elected President of the Indian National Congress and one of the leaders of the movement for India's independence. Originally a follower of Gandhi, he parted ways with him over his advocacy of the use of military force in the struggle for India's independence from Britain and founded the Indian Legion, which was part of the German *Waffen-SS*, and later the Indian National Army, which fought for India's decolonisation in Asia side by side with the Japanese armed forces.

³⁸ Cf. Moser, *Demographie*, p. 68; Christine Kanzler, *Exilerfahrungen deutschsprachiger Emigranten auf den Philippinen. Die Philippinen als Zielland der jüdischen Emigration aus dem nationalsozialistischen Deutschland*. In: Daniel Azuélos (ed.), *Alltag im Exil*, Würzburg 2011, p. 95–108; Christine Kanzler, *Exil in den Tropen. Das Schicksal der Flüchtlinge aus dem Deutschen Reich auf den Philippinen*. In: Pekar (ed.), *Flucht und Rettung*, p. 100–114; Christine Kanzler, *Transitstation Manila. Zum österreichischen Exil auf den Philippinen*. In: Franz/Halbrainer (ed.), *Going East – Going South*, p. 635–648; Christine Kanzler, *Zuflucht in den Tropen. Österreichische Emigranten auf den Philippinen*. Online at: <http://www.doew.at/erinnern/fotos-und-dokumente/1938-1945/zufucht-in-den-tropen>.

³⁹ Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964), Chief of Staff of the Allied troops in the Pacific theatre during World War II.

⁴⁰ Herbert Zipper, *Die Universalität der Kunst*, in this volume (4/1).

The Dutch East Indies, today's Indonesia, enabled 120 Austrian refugees to survive.⁴¹ The Dutch colony, which had declared war on Japan in support of the Allies in December 1941, was forced to surrender to the Japanese on Java in March 1942. The national Indonesian independence movement was tolerated by the Japanese and declared Indonesia's independence of the Netherlands immediately after the withdrawal of the Japanese in 1945. The Netherlands gave their consent only after a long struggle in 1949.

Thailand, one of Japan's most important allies in Southeast Asia from late 1941, gave shelter to at least 80 Austrian refugees⁴² and was an important transit station for refugees, as it did not – for a time – require a visa, which enabled refugees such as Eva Scherer and Imre Ungár to leave Nazi Germany and to apply successfully from there for an entry visa to India.⁴³

Settlement plans

Between 1938 and 1941 a strong commitment on the part of international Jewish organisations for the foundation of settlements for large numbers of Jewish exiles is in evidence. These plans were doomed for a number of reasons. Planning was extremely short-term and there were other obstacles, including local rivalries, insufficient funding, budding anti-Semitism and the outbreak of war. Several Asian governments sought to draw the attention of investors and colonisers to projects aiming to make thinly populated and largely undeveloped regions attractive for immigrants. The refugees, however, were mostly impoverished and had, as a rule, none of the skills required for agriculture, forestry or the reclamation of wasteland. This is why the Jewish Autonomous Oblast⁴⁴ in the far east of the Soviet Union with its administrative centre Birobidzhan was irrelevant for Central European Jews looking for a way out. “We have been contacted by 500 German lawyers and 1,000 dentists. What are we supposed to do with them?”, a “Jewish Robinson” wrote to the Austrian Socialist Lili Körber in Birobidzhan.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Cf. Moser, *Demographie*, p. 68.

⁴² Cf. *ibid.*

⁴³ Cf. Eva Ungár, *Ten Years in India*, in this volume (4/1).

⁴⁴ Founded in 1928, the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, with Yiddish as its official language, is a federal subject of Russia located on the Chinese border in the Far Eastern Federal District. Its capital is Birobidzhan.

⁴⁵ Cf. the article by Lili Körber, *Von jüdischen Robinsonen*. In: Lili Körber, *Reise in den Fernen Osten*, Budapest 1936, p. 313 f.

What was left in most cases was blueprints for settlements, such as Japanese dominated Manchukuo in Manchuria with its imperial trappings, which the Japanese were thinking of turning into an Asian multiethnic state that would also include Jews. This plan, the so-called Fugu Plan, was not realised. In February 1939 the following information was published in Vienna's *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt*:

“The problems that confront an immigrant to Manchukuo are to be found elsewhere, namely in the way how to get there. The land route takes him via Poland, Russia and Siberia on the Transsiberian express train to the Russian-Manchurian border station Manchuria. As the Manchurian diplomatic missions in Europe (the Manchurian Consulate General in Hamburg and the Manchurian Embassy in Berlin) do not at present issue visas to Jews and as the Russian railway company only issues train tickets to persons with a Manchurian visa in their passports this road is blocked at present.

The Committee in Harbin has contacted the authorities asking them to instruct the European missions to issue visas. No decision has as yet been made.

The sea route to Manchukuo takes travellers via Shanghai to Dairen; in Dairen they board a train for the 20-hour journey to Harbin.”⁴⁶

Plans by Jewish settlers to create Jewish settlements in the Southern Chinese province Yunnan met with equally little success.⁴⁷ The collective settlement of Jewish refugees came closest to realisation on Mindanao, one of the islands of the Philippines, where a large scale reclamation project was being planned. Linked to the conditions that the refugees would work exclusively in agriculture and cause no bureaucratic expenses, the reclamation project was to have provided homes for at least 10,000 individuals. Its failure was due to local rivalries, nationalistic policies and the rapid deterioration of transport to Southeast Asia owing to the course the war was taking. The outbreak of war in the Pacific in December 1941 and the occupation of the Philippines by Japan spelled the end for this settlement project.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Mandschukuo. *Mitteilungen der Auswanderungsabteilung der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Wien*. In: *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt*, no. 12, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Cf. Siegfried Mehler, *Bietet China Chancen?* In: *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt*, Vienna edition, no. 38 (12 May 1939), p. 2.

⁴⁸ Cf. Kanzler, *Exilerfahrungen*, p. 95 f.; Kanzler, *Transitstation*, p. 635–637; Kanzler, *Mindanao – Hoffnung für Zehntausend*.

Online at: <http://www.doew.at/erinnern/fotos-und-dokumente/1938-1945/zuflucht-in-den-tropen/mindanao-hoffnung-fuer-zehntausend>.

Climate, hygiene, health and culture as challenges to be overcome

“The four legs of the wooden work desk were each buried in a tin can filled with kerosine. This was to keep ants away. Water was not suitable for this purpose because ants avail themselves of the surface tension of water to form a bridge”,⁴⁹ remembers the Austrian exile Stephen J. Tauber, who fled as a child with his parents to the Indian desert state Bikaner.

On their arrival in South, East and Southeast Asia refugees were confronted with a new, usually completely unknown world that had first to be explored and whose control for the purposes of everyday life had first to be learnt. Cultural assimilation, coping with the climate and the environment and protecting one’s health against noxious animals, the weather and diseases required as much practice as did social norms and rules. “There were poisonous snakes in Bikaner. How to react to snakes was as much part of the safety education of children as the crossing of streets in Vienna.”⁵⁰

Many traumatic experiences are in store for exiles, even after their successful flight. Having lost their home country, friends and relatives and having experienced the formation of new dependencies, psychological and emotional stress and social and economic decline, they have to adapt to a new and strange environment and learn how to find a place for themselves and their families in the receiving society.

What must be borne in mind in assessing Asia as a host region is the fact that refugees were facing a “hardship exile”: harsh weather conditions; unfamiliar diseases that were difficult to treat or immune to treatment and fatal; difficult living conditions; being exposed to wild animals, insects, snakes and vermin; living in a politically and economically unstable society dominated by multiple hierarchies.

“The climate: tropical, very hot, humid, damp, moist. Everything became moldy. Everything took on a bad odor. Especially leather goods, shoes etc. Even the bedding got a moldy smell. One of the very bad things are the insects – cockroaches, mosquitos, ants, which one finds in all sizes from very tiny, till the ones with wings

⁴⁹ Stephen J. Tauber, *Von der Ungargasse nach Bikaner*, in this volume (4/3).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

which fly. Then the spiders, they came from tiny till the ones which are as big as the palm of your hand. The big ones sometimes carry an egg along as big as a fifty cent piece and if one kills one, there are hundreds of little ones crawling everywhere. [...] Rats, mice and snakes were no rarity either. All the furniture had legs. It was absolutely necessary to put small containers with water and kerosene under the legs so that the ants could not climb up on them. The water had to be changed daily otherwise the ants would crawl over the dust. No food could be left standing outside. Flour got wormy and so did rice. You did not throw out this stuff because of worms, one just sifted it”.⁵¹ These are some of the things Margarethe Welisch remembers of her time in Manila.

Water had to be boiled for quite some time and was then filtered. “All fruit was peeled with the exception of grapes. These were left overnight in a dilute solution of potassium permanganate and were then rinsed with (boiled) water. The grapes were then covered in a layer of manganese dioxide, but you took that in your stride and ate it with the grapes”,⁵² reports Stephen J. Tauber from India.

Vaccines were available against cholera, pocks and typhus. No vaccine was – and indeed still is – available against malaria. All you could do was to stay out of the reach of a great number of insects and of mosquitoes, which are capable of transmitting serious diseases. Malaria was treated with doses of liquid quinine, which caused a great number of side effects. Dengue fever, aptly nicknamed “break bone fever”, cholera, typhus, diphtheria and viral pneumonia were common as were internal infections with hookworms or amoebas and the usual diarrhoeal disorders. Rudolf Kauders, an Austrian fighting the Japanese in a British uniform, mentions jungle rot, an infection of the feet caused by the permanent humidity in Burma’s tropical jungle.⁵³ Ernst Frey, serving first as a legionnaire in the Foreign Legion in Indochina and later as a fighter for Vietnam’s freedom against the French colonial power, suffered several serious bouts of malaria in the Vietnamese jungle.⁵⁴ Many exiles suffered from inflammations of the neck and throat in the tropical climate.

⁵¹ Margarethe Welisch, *I remember*, in this volume (4/1).

⁵² Stephen J. Tauber, *Von der Ungargasse nach Bikaner*, in this volume (4/3).

⁵³ Cf. Rudolf Kauders, *... endlich gegen Hitler kämpfen*, in this volume (4/3).

⁵⁴ Cf. Ernst Frey, *Vietnam, mon amour*, in this volume (4/3).

In addition to negotiating the challenges of the local culture, which in most cases was completely unknown to the newly arrived exiles, they were expected as “whites” to take up their place in a colonial society in many of the Asian receiving countries. What the Western colonial powers in Asia had in common was a Eurocentric racism and the drive to lord it over the “developing” world. According to this “racial doctrine”, “white” exiles were on a par with the colonial overlords, with “white” exiled women at the side as wives, daughters or mothers – and not as independent autonomous individuals with an income of their own.

India in particular was a deeply divided nation, segregated according to skin colour, class and gender. Exiles swapped their social status of persecutee within minutes of their arrival to that of “white sahib”. Margarethe Welisch reports something similar from the Philippines: “The people themselves were very nice to us. The Filipinos see in every white person an ‘Americano’ and so they respected us as such. In this way we found our self-respect again and that was so important. For a few Pesos I got a houseboy who brought his whole family along, who did all my chores.”⁵⁵

Exiles in comfortable financial circumstances employed household staff and nannies and were committed to maintaining their place in the colonial hierarchy by holding down well-paid jobs and exhibiting all the outward trappings indicative of an upscale standard of living. Low-qualified exiles were in for a rough ride in hierarchically structured Asian colonial societies awash with cheap labour. In addition, local and regional caste and class demarcation lines regulated access to certain types of jobs. European “paupers” were definitely unwelcome in colonial societies, a fact that increased the pressure and the competition for economic success within the exile community where this was already an issue.

Western music, medicine and technology as “export hits” in Asia

Artistic networks established between Asia and Central Europe flourished in the interwar years. There was a great demand for Western classical music, and swing and jazz were also rapidly gaining favour in Asia’s metropolises. The taste Asian elites developed for Western entertainment culture in the late 1920s and in the 1930s opened up an escape route for several Austrian artists. This was due above all to “the universa-

⁵⁵ Margarethe Welisch, *I remember*, in this volume (4/1).

lity of art”⁵⁶ and the “aesthetic universality”⁵⁷ of music and to its global networks consisting of agencies, sponsors and music enthusiasts. The Zippers are a case in point. Trudl Dubsky, who was to marry Herbert Zipper later on, had moved to Manila as early as 1937, where she established the Department of Dance at the University of the Philippines. An outstanding dance teacher herself, she and another dancer from Vienna, Käthe Hauser, popularised European expressive dance in the Philippines.⁵⁸ Her fiancé of several years, Herbert Zipper, followed the call of the Manila Symphony Orchestra in 1939 as conductor and composer.⁵⁹

Another Central European “export hit” in the interwar years was medicine. After World War I there was a steadily increasing influx of students from Asia to Central Europe. They were attracted by the reputation that universities in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia enjoyed in the fields of technology, science and above all medicine. Well-to-do members of Asian elites and of regional independence movements went to Central Europe for the treatment of difficult health problems. They had operations done in Vienna or Berlin or stayed in health resorts in Austria, Germany or in Switzerland. Former fellow students formed academic networks for the exchange of views and expertise. Former patients, who had contact with state institutions and clinics or had in the meanwhile taken control of a state themselves, helped their former doctors escape from Europe.

Medical staff exiled from Austria contributed to safeguarding health care in remote areas and to modernising medical care by introducing and refining scientific methods, analysis methods and administrative know-how. In these remote areas modern medicine was a major factor in regional development. Surgical interventions took place despite the lack of the most basic infrastructure. The Austrian-Hungarian medical couple Eva and Imré Ungár performed lung operations in a mission hospital located in a remote region in India. Their specialist training as radiologists in Vienna had enabled them “to acquire the skills of pulmonary surgeons at their own initiative”.⁶⁰ Julius Tandler’s

⁵⁶ Herbert Zipper, *Die Universalität der Kunst*, in this volume (4/1).

⁵⁷ Cf. Claus-Dieter Krohn et al. (ed.), *Kulturelle Räume und ästhetische Universalität. Musik und Musiker im Exil*, Munich 2008 (= Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch, vol. 26).

⁵⁸ Cf. Trudl Dubsky Zipper. Online at: <http://www.doew.at/erinnern/fotos-und-dokumente/1938-1945/zufucht-in-den-tropen/trudl-dubsky-zipper>; Herbert Zipper, *Die Universalität der Kunst*, in this volume (4/1).

⁵⁹ Cf. Herbert Zipper, *Die Universalität der Kunst*, in this volume (4/1).

⁶⁰ Interview with Prof. Dr. Tamás Ungár conducted by Margit Franz, Vienna, 22 November 2012.

“*Lehrbuch der systematischen Anatomie*” (Textbook of systematic anatomy), which had come with them all the way from Austria, had to make do as a manual for difficult operations in a basic clinic in the foothills of the Himalayas.

On top of performing all kinds of operations and caring for tuberculosis patients the Ungárs found time to provide advice and on-the-job training to local medical doctors and midwives. Using the mission hospital’s car, Imre Ungár embarked on trips further inland to regularly hold council with health workers and to use his expertise for the improvement of the standard of medical care in the Himalaya region.⁶¹ By applying their medical expertise and passing it on to health workers in marginalised areas, physicians such as the Ungárs made an important contribution to the development of the subcontinent.

In the Indian princely state of Bikaner the appointment of four medical doctors from National-Socialist occupied Austria boosted the overall modernisation scheme conceived by the progressively-minded ruling maharajah. It concerned the medical disciplines of Radiology (Dr. Fritz Donath), Surgery/Internal Medicine (Dr. Josef Tauber),⁶² Orthopaedic Surgery (Dr. Max Scheck) and Dental Surgery (Dr. Alfred Holloszytz).⁶³

“Practically all we could take along was a suitcase and what we had in our head”,⁶⁴ writes Rudolf Hans Bock. Initiatives to foster development and the construction of a Western-style infrastructure created a climate favourable to the exile of technological and medical experts in many Asian countries. An aspect that has already been investigated in detail with reference to Turkey⁶⁵ is no less valid for South, Southeast and East Asian countries:⁶⁶ modernisation drives in the fields of economic, social and cultural life were beneficial to the acceptance of highly educated individuals expelled from Germany and Austria.

⁶¹ Cf. Franz, *Gateway India*, p. 230 ff; Cf. Eva Ungár, *Ten Years in India*, in this volume (4/1).

⁶² Cf. the memoir of his son: Stephen J. Tauber, *Von der Ungargasse nach Bikaner*, in this volume (4/3).

⁶³ Cf. Margit Franz, *German-Speaking Medical Exile to British India*. In: Helmut Konrad, Stefan Benedik (ed.), *Mapping Contemporary History II. Exemplary fields of research in 25 years of Contemporary History Studies at Graz University. Exemplarische Forschungsfelder aus 25 Jahren Zeitgeschichte an der Universität Graz*, Vienna etc. 2010, p. 61–86.

⁶⁴ Rudolf Hans Bock, *In God’s Hands. An Autobiography*, in this volume (4/2).

⁶⁵ Cf. *inter alia*: Christopher Kubaseck, Günter Seufert (ed.), *Deutsche Wissenschaftler im türkischen Exil. Die Wissenschaftsmigration in die Türkei 1933–1945*, Würzburg 2008; Burcu Dogramaci, *Kulturtransfer und nationale Identität. Deutschsprachige Architekten, Stadtplaner und Bildhauer in der Türkei nach 1927*, Berlin 2008; Michael Egger, *Österreichische WissenschaftlerInnen in der Emigration in der Türkei von 1933 bis 1946*, Diploma thesis, University of Graz 2010.

⁶⁶ Literature on India: Margit Franz, *Technologie transfer und Regionalentwicklung: Exil in Britisch-Indien*. In: Ursula Seeber, Veronika Zwerger (ed.), *Kometen des Geldes. Exil und Ökonomie*. Munich 2015 (= Internationales Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Exilforschung, vol. 33) (forthcoming); Margit Franz, *Gateway India*, p. 141 ff.

“An old friend of Paul’s called him on 1 April 1938 to tell him that while sitting in a coffee house browsing through a Jewish newspaper, he had seen an ad from Japan for a forging engineer. Paul thought at first it was an April Fool’s joke, but it wasn’t. Telegrams went back and forth to Japan (Who had ever heard of that country except through “Madame Butterfly”?) and by the middle of April, Paul had received a contract as an engineer for three years with a good salary and paid transportation”,⁶⁷ Bock remembers about the departure of his uncle whom he was to follow as a medical student with “a fake contract... as a plant physician at the factory where Paul was working”.⁶⁸

Dozens of engineers and highly skilled technical workers from Austria found employment in Asia: advertisements were placed in the *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt* by local relief organisations or, alternatively, the vacancies had been generated by relief organisations or by private initiatives and were disseminated by international networks. Bock: “As we found out later, the ad had been placed at the instigation of a German Jewish engineer, Mr. Rosenberg, who was living in Japan and had connections to a Japanese factory that needed a forging engineer. He realized what was going on in Europe and saw an opportunity to help.”⁶⁹

The arrival of the highly qualified exiles meant a brain-gain for the Asian receiving countries. Their economies received a boost from these academics, skilled workers, entrepreneurs and artists, without having had to finance their education and professional training with taxpayers’ money.

Exile under Japanese occupation

In the Southeast Asian countries occupied by Japan in December 1941 Britons, US Americans and others who were “enemy aliens” in the eyes of the Japanese were interned. Most refugees from Austria had German passports and were therefore treated as citizens of a state allied to Japan. This is why most refugees were spared internment. If, however, they were suspected of collaborating with the United States or Great Britain, of nurturing a mindset hostile to Japan or of spying, exiles were

⁶⁷ Rudolf Hans Bock, *In God’s Hands. An Autobiography*, in this volume (4/2).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

also imprisoned, subjected to weeks of interrogation and exposed to inhuman conditions.

Japan's declaration of war spelled the end to the University of Manila and to all other US American organisations in the Japanese sphere of influence, such as the US American universities in Beijing. A war-induced bout of inflation led to a drastic overnight devaluation of the currency, parts of the economy collapsed and both the local civilian population and the Central European refugees were reduced to living from hand to mouth. Many exiles survived thanks to barter deals or the sale of valuables they had managed to take with them from Europe. "You had to devote a great deal of time to simply procure enough food to survive on a daily basis. Hans was out a lot to get hold of provisions"⁷⁰ – this is how Mona Lisa Steiner remembers surviving Japanese rule in Manila. A few refugees were actually able to enter into a war-related business relationship with the Japanese, such as Josefine Schwach's family, who manufactured safari suits for Japanese soldiers in Shanghai.⁷¹

Unlike other Japanese occupation areas Shanghai eventually had its own ghetto for Jewish refugees, a so-called "designated area" in Hongkew, a heavily war-damaged district of the city. As the war ground on, conditions there underwent significant deterioration: the hygienic and sanitary problems were compounded by poor food supplies, the increasingly intolerable arbitrariness of the Japanese occupiers and more and more bombing raids flown by the United States Air Force. In mid-July 1945 the ghetto was hit: 31 refugees were killed, 250 were wounded.⁷²

Exile in war areas

In 2015 Europe commemorates its liberation from National Socialism 70 years ago. In Southeast and East Asia similar ceremonies are staged to celebrate the liberation from Japanese occupation, which was paid for with the lives of tens of thousands of soldiers and millions of civilian casualties. The Battle of Manila alone, in February and March 1945, took a toll of around one hundred thousand civilian lives, including refugees from Austria. Liberated Manila was reduced to rubble and was one of the most war-ravaged cities of World War II. According to government data, the war in

⁷⁰ Mona Lisa Steiner, *Die Philippinen – das war mein Traumland, dort wollte ich hin*, in this volume (4/3).

⁷¹ Cf. Josefine Schwach, *Alles, alles, nur nicht schön*, in this volume (4/2).

⁷² Cf. David Kranzler, "The Miracle of Shanghai". An Overview. In: Armbrüster et al. (ed.), *Exil Shanghai 1938–1947*, p. 35–45, here p. 43 f.

the Philippines killed 1.1 million people. One out of sixteen Filipinos did not survive the Japanese occupation.⁷³ Herbert Zipper remembers:

“The liberation of Manila began on 3 February 1945. In the thirty days of fighting that followed the arrival of American troops Manila was literally razed to the ground. [...] Hundreds of people were caught in the crossfire between Americans and Japanese and their artillery. The smell of death was everywhere. Monuments were destroyed, the beautiful old district Intramuros was totally destroyed. From many spots in the city centre you could see all the way to the Bay – nothing was left of the buildings, everything was reduced to debris. [...] Everywhere the stench of thousands of corpses decaying in the tropical heat.”⁷⁴ Many civilians were killed in revenge acts perpetrated by the Japanese, who left behind a strip of “burnt earth” as they withdrew from Southeast Asia. Every piece of infrastructure was destroyed, burnt. Mines were laid, the water supply was poisoned. From the days after the end of the war, Margarethe Welisch remembers that “to have water we had to dig until we got to groundwater. To be sure that the water was not poisoned we had a fish swimming in it, as long as he survived it was safe for us to drink”.⁷⁵ Her husband, Albert, her two little daughters, their Filipino “boy” and she survived the inferno of Manila by digging a hole in the ground and hiding in it underneath a layer of bedsheets: “No one who has not experienced this can imagine what it means to stay alive for ten days like this. We lived on rice and sardines. Shooting, bombing, heavy artillery, anti-aircraft defense that was going on for 24 hours. Dying wounded people, screaming, we were just in the middle of all this. Albert had a nervous breakdown and went out of the shelter and started to scream and hold speeches. I knew if any Japanese had heard him he would have been shot.”⁷⁶

After the war – the continuation of the journey

In Manila it took a long time for life to return to normal after the end of the war. The refugees lived among the ruined houses, initially without gas and electricity. Food that had to be obtained by barter from less war-ravaged parts of the city was prepared under the open sky. The only medical supplies that were available were provided by the United States Army, which had liberated the city. There were neither any civilian hospitals left

⁷³ Cf. Rheinisches JournalistInnenbüro/Recherche International e.V. (ed.), “Unsere Opfer zählen nicht”, p. 285.

⁷⁴ Herbert Zipper, *Die Universalität der Kunst*, in this volume (4/1).

⁷⁵ Margarethe Welisch, *I remember*, in this volume (4/1).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

nor any dispensaries. Some Austrian refugees, the sick and elderly were evacuated on American or Australian warships after the end of hostilities in Southeast Asia. Many needed medical help in their new home countries. A case in point is Mina Ruth Deitz. The awful internment conditions in the Dutch East Indies had wrought such havoc among her teeth that she had to have all her upper teeth pulled out in Australia.⁷⁷

After the liberation of Shanghai on 22 August 1945 by the United States Army the ghetto was abolished on 3 September 1945.⁷⁸ UNRRA⁷⁹ took charge of provisioning, repatriation and continued emigration of the refugees. Of the 16,300 refugees registered in Shanghai – 7,380 from Germany, 4,298 from Austria, 1,265 from Poland, 639 from Italy, 298 from Czechoslovakia and 291 nationals from other countries – together with 1,340 stateless and German and Austrian “displaced persons” (DPs) from the Chinese regions around Tientsin, Beijing, Tsingtao and Manchuria, only one fifth decided to return to their old country. Four fifths opted for continued emigration and an uncertain quest for a new home where they proposed to rebuild their lives.⁸⁰

This ‘zero hour’, however, “had hardly any possibilities in store for the great majority of refugees to continue their migration to specific destinations.”⁸¹ Most exiles wanted to leave Shanghai as quickly as possible on their way to the United States, Great Britain, Australia or Palestine. But the United States refused to relax its entry requirements for Central European refugees from Shanghai and other South East Asian warzones. Palestine was still under the British Mandate and restrictions to immigration were removed only after the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948. Between 1945 and 1950 Great Britain granted entry to only roughly 3,000 Jewish displaced persons. Around 250,000 DPs or Holocaust survivors from Eastern Europe and refugees who had fled to the Soviet Union waited for years in DP camps in Germany, Austria and Italy for permission to move on.⁸²

⁷⁷ Cf. Mina Ruth Deitz, *Flight to Indonesia*, in this volume (4/1).

⁷⁸ Cf. Petra Löber, *Leben im Wartesaal. Exil in Shanghai 1938–1947*. In: Jüdisches Museum Berlin (ed.), *Leben im Wartesaal*, p. 10–41, here p. 17.

⁷⁹ United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, founded in 1943. One of UNRRA's chief tasks was assisting in the repatriation of refugees after the war.

⁸⁰ Cf. Wiebke Lohfeld, Steve Hochstadt, *Die Emigration jüdischer Deutscher und Österreicher nach Shanghai als Verfolgte im Nationalsozialismus*, p. 25. Online at: <http://www.exil-archiv.de/grafik/themen/exilstationen/shanghai.pdf>.

⁸¹ Georg Armbrüster, *Das Ende des Exils in Shanghai. Rück- und Weiterwanderung nach 1945*. In: Armbrüster et al. (ed.), *Exil Shanghai 1938–1947*, p. 184–200, here Cf. Atina Grossmann, *Juden, Deutsche, Alliierte. Begegnungen im besetzten Deutschland*, Göttingen 2012; Atina Grossmann, *Wege in der Fremde. Deutsch-jüdische Begegnungsgeschichte zwischen Feldafing, New York und Teheran*, Göttingen 2012.

⁸² Cf. Atina Grossmann, *Juden, Deutsche, Alliierte. Begegnungen im besetzten Deutschland*, Göttingen 2012; Atina Grossmann, *Wege in der Fremde. Deutsch-jüdische Begegnungsgeschichte zwischen Feldafing, New York und Teheran*, Göttingen 2012.

Refugees in Asia were confined to their war-ravaged, temporary places of exile and most of them had to wait for years until they were allowed to leave and move on. In 1946 there were around 5,000 immigration applications in the US American consulate in Shanghai alone, which were being processed one by one.⁸³ The UNRRA or the “Joint”⁸⁴ did organise several emigration programmes from Shanghai, otherwise the departure from South and Southeast Asia mostly took place individually.

In India, too, many exiles often waited for up to two years for entry visas to Western countries. The nascent post-war order put bureaucratic and ideological obstacles in the way of Austrian refugees who had to “cross” ideological borders and structures for the last leg of their emigration. This is drastically illustrated by the case of Felix Kohn, an Austrian who had survived World War II in Harbin in the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo. It took him and a group of other Austrian refugees more than five years to obtain the permission to leave the Chinese city Harbin, which had formerly been under Japanese rule and was now occupied by the Soviets, and return to Austria, now under four-power occupation.⁸⁵

What hampered the refugees’ travel plans most, in addition to the political, administrative and ideological obstacles that have already been mentioned, was the simple fact that the communication and transport infrastructure in Southeast and East Asia had been completely destroyed in the war, a fact that was compounded by the excessive strain put on the same infrastructure in South Asia by the decolonisation of British India. Until 1947 there were practically no passenger ships. During the first few post-war years battleships and freighters were really the predominant option for refugees in South, Southeast and East Asia who wanted to make their way to their final exile destinations.

Transit stations in transitional societies

Because an exile in Asia was for many Austrian refugees an exile in a transit station, a sort of way station in societies that, while still colonial or feudal in character, began in the 1940s at the latest to demand fundamental changes in governance. These political changes

⁸³ Cf. Armbrüster, *Das Ende des Exils in Shanghai*, p. 188.

⁸⁴ American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a relief organisation active since 1914, which assisted Jews in emigrating after the Nazis seized power in Germany and subsequently also in Austria. During and after World War II, the Joint, as it is also called, provided food and money for survivors of the Holocaust and became the most important relief organisation.

⁸⁵ Cf. Gabriele Anderl, *Gestrandet in Harbin: Dr. Felix Kohn und seine jahrelangen Bemühungen um Repatriierung*. In: Franz/Halbrainer, *Going East – Going South*, p. 655–659.

in turn caused economic, professional, financial, civic and social uncertainties, which, in conjunction with other adversities, made exiles want to continue their migration to some other country, usually a Western country such as Australia, the United States, Great Britain and, after 1948, newly founded Israel. Many had lost all their belongings a second time, this time, after expropriation and expulsion at the hands of the Nazis, in the war in the Pacific. “We always kept our passports and our most important papers tied to our waist and these were the only things we were able to save, nothing else”.⁸⁶ The livelihoods of exiles were destroyed by war or political turmoil; nascent nationalist resentments put an end to professional or business careers; others saw little educational and career opportunities for their children. Wars of independence against new and old colonial powers in East and Southeast Asia, the fratricidal war between India and Pakistan in the year the two countries gained their independence from Great Britain and the resumption of the civil war in China between the conservative and the communist sides caused Asia to be visited by new violent conflicts immediately after the end of World War II. The end of World War II coincided with the outbreak of new wars.

This meant that Asia’s transitional societies themselves turned out to be transit stations for many Austrian exiles fleeing National Socialism – but they were transit stations that saved the lives of several thousand Austrians at a time when other countries had closed their borders to refugees from Nazi Germany.



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⁸⁶ Mona Lisa Steiner, *Die Philippinen – das war mein Traumland, dort wollte ich hin*, in this volume (4/3).