

## Chapter One

# A New Deal For Refugees?

## American Exile and Welfare Relief in the Nazi Era

Stephen R. Porter

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On a stormy Saturday in September 1938 many of America's leading advocates for refugees from Nazi persecution gathered in a midtown Manhattan auditorium to confront a chilling dilemma. An executive of their private refugee aid federation, the National Coordinating Committee, asked those in attendance to choose which groups of victimized Jews they should divert their limited resources toward protecting, and which refugees would remain vulnerable. Recent events in Europe left little doubt for those assembled that their decision could very well mean survival for some and death for others.<sup>1</sup> Germany's annexation of Austria in March had ratcheted the persecution of Central Europe's Jews to hostile new levels. The next two months would witness Germany's occupation of the Sudetenland and the violent programs of *Kristalnacht*.<sup>2</sup> Amidst this climate of crisis the lives of different groups of refugees became

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<sup>1</sup> "Report of Proceedings of Conference Called by the National Coordinating Committee for Aid to Refugees and Emigrants Coming from Germany" Sep 17, 1938, YIVO Archives, Records of the National Coordinating Committee, RG 247, F 2 (Hereafter NCC). Weather conditions as reported in: "Rain Delays Field Events until Today," and "First Australian Woman in U.S. Title Round -- Rain Drenches 13,500," both in *New York Times*, Sep 18, 1938, 79; "Nation is Warned of Foreign 'Isms,'" *New York Times*, Sep 18, 1938, 26.

<sup>2</sup> For accounts of how organized refugee advocates in the U.S. responded to this expansion of Nazi persecution, see, "Freedom's Lifelines: Fourteen Years, 1933-'47," International Rescue Committee Records, Hoover Institution Archives, Acc. # 82033-73.01, B 2408, F "Early Publications, 1940s" (Hereafter IRC); "Selfhelp in Action: Report on the Activities of the Selfhelp for German Émigrés, Inc., 1938-1939," Records of Selfhelp for Immigrants from Central Europe, YIVO Archives, RG 245.8, 10.4, F 339 (Hereafter Selfhelp).

commodified in the handsome Art Deco hall, weighed against one another across the frigid waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

The issue forcing this painful choice upon the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) officials was informed as much by a climate of social welfare politics and law within the Depression-era United States as by the reign of Nazi terror spreading in Europe. Briefly following the meeting's developments opens a window onto the central themes and tensions of this chapter. A group of destitute refugees who had been admitted to the United States in recent years had become chronically hospitalized on New York City's "Welfare Island." NCC leadership had to determine whether to continue paying their exorbitant medical bills through its already overstretched budget, or to allow the city's recently expanded public relief bureau to begin picking up the tab.<sup>3</sup> Their decision concerned a much broader and more financially burdensome issue for the burgeoning field of American refugee aid than only the particular refugees in question. During the previous two years nearly twice as many Jewish refugees had secured exile in the United States as in the preceding four years of Nazi rule combined. That number would double once again over the next two year period. Beyond the mere increase in numbers, the recent arrivals were more likely to suffer from debilitating physical and emotional ailments than their predecessors, and less likely to have family or employers in the United States willing and able to support them. This charge had been increasingly falling to the Jewish refugee aid agencies, mainly around New York City, and at considerable cost. A dollar spent supporting a Jewish refugee already in the United States came from the same, already over-taxed pool of donations used to provide increasingly crucial material and legal relief to persecutees of Nazism

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<sup>3</sup> "Report of Proceedings," Sep 17, 1938, NCC. Since the 19th century, hospitals, asylums, and prisons on Welfare Island kept patients and inmates segregated from the rest of New York's population. The land mass sits on 150 acres in the middle of the East River. It was known as Blackwell's Island during the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries, and was renamed Roosevelt Island in 1973.

overseas.<sup>4</sup> By shedding the responsibility of supporting such admitted refugees as the ones hospitalized on Welfare Island, privately-raised funds could potentially be diverted toward helping more persecutees overseas secure sustenance and sanctuary away from their oppressors.

It was tempting for the NCC leadership to change its established policy and allow admitted refugees to receive public relief, but this approach had significant problems of its own. On the one hand, public relief was indeed available to the alien patients at Welfare Island, as well as to tens of thousands of other Jewish refugees living in New York City. Unprecedented public “poor relief” funds had been flowing from both federal relief bureaus and New York’s state welfare department into Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia’s City Hall over the course of the New Deal. Many came with legal prohibitions on withholding publicly-funded medical care and “home relief” based on citizenship status. Furthermore, New York City and state public welfare caseworkers had a reputation for being sympathetic to newly arrived immigrants.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, NCC officials feared the political risks of allowing tax dollars to support the sick refugees, as well as the legal threat of deportation. The potential public specter

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<sup>4</sup> The affiliated agencies of the National Coordinating Committee (NCC), and the umbrella organization that succeeded it in 1939, the National Refugee Service (NRS), were generally responsible for helping refugees to immigrate to the U.S. and providing them with “adjustment” assistance after arrival. During their most active years in aiding Nazi persecutees, their budget derived from a pool of funds shared with two other organizations that had more of an international focus: the American Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) and the United Palestinian Appeal (UPA). Even for those years when the organizations did not share a formally combined budget, there was still only so much money that American Jews were willing and able donate to the refugee cause, and those donations would be split between domestic and international relief efforts. The AJDC and UPA concentrated on providing overseas material relief and legal protection to Nazi victims, and on helping them migrate to places other than the U.S. Officials from each organization regularly complained that America’s Jewish philanthropic dollar was overstretched, and that they had insufficient funds to execute their operations, both in the U.S. and abroad. “Proceedings: President’s War Relief Control Board,” April 26, 1945, RG 469, Entry 671, B 13, National Archives at College Park, MD (Hereafter WRCB); “3 Jewish Groups Unite for Refugees,” *New York Times*, Jan 13, 1939; Lyman Cromwell White, *300,000 New Americans: The Epic of a Modern Immigrant-Aid Service* (New York: United HIAS Service, 1957), 161, 279-80; Sir John Hope Simpson, *The Refugee Problem: Report of a Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 186-7, 348; Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 14, 33, 73-4.

<sup>5</sup> As discussed later in the chapter, such federal relief programs as the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Works Progress Administration (until mid 1937), and New York State’s Temporary Emergency Relief Administration forbade discrimination based on race, color, religion, political affiliation or activities, and citizenship status.

of indigent Jewish aliens living off the government dole might poison an already tenuous political environment for securing liberalized refugee admissions policies in the future, especially at a time when thousands of American citizens had been recently dropped from public relief rolls. The refugee aid workers attending the New York meeting also worried about the hospitalized refugees being deported back to Germany for violating the “public charge” clause of U.S. immigration law. Even though the country’s immigration bureaucracy had been concentrating most of its recent deportation efforts on removing Mexican and other non-European aliens refugee advocates remained vigilantly aware that even a slight change in the political winds could put newly arrived European Jews in jeopardy also.<sup>6</sup> As a legal expert warned a private refugee aid worker, “we all know that from time to time Congress gets stirred up about aliens . . . and there is likely some time or other . . . to be a general round-up and a good many depurations.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Report of Proceedings of Conference Called by the National Coordinating Committee,” Sep 17, 1938, NCC, F 2. For concerns over political reactions to the prospects of refugees accepting public relief, “Preliminary Plan for the Conduct of Public Relations for the National Refugee Service, Inc., Feb 24, 1941, Joseph Chamberlain Perkins Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 278, F 43 (Hereafter Chamberlain Papers); Harry Greenstein, “Experience with Refugee Services,” *Public Welfare News* 7 (July 1939): 7-11. Aliens were subject to deportation if they became a charge on publicly raised funds (local, state, or federal taxes) within five years of arriving in the U.S. for reasons existing before admission. The most common public charge violations included receiving public “home relief” funds and receiving medical care at public expense. Public schooling, imprisonment, and government work programs were typically not deemed deportable on public charge grounds. Sections 3 and 19 of the Immigration Act of February 5, 1917; U.S. Code Title 8, Seciton 155 (a) and 136 (i); Jane Perry Clark, *Deportation of Aliens from the United States to Europe*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931); Stephen H. Legomsky, *Immigration and Refugee Law and Policy*, 2nd ed., (Westbury, NY: Foundation Press, 1997), 321-7. The burden of proof was on the alien to show that the cause of his illness or depency on public resources did not exist prior to entry. Section 221 of the Immigration Act of 1917 and title 8 of the U.S. code. Historian Mae Ngai has shown that European aliens remained largely exempt from deportation through a bureaucratic mechanism known as “pre-examination.” Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 84-87. On pre-examination, also see Robert A Divine, *American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 103. This chapter argues that admitted Jewish refugees and their American advocates nonetheless felt perpetually threatened by the prospects of deportation throughout the Nazi era. Deportation cases are discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Philip C. Jessup to Cecilia Razovsky, Nov 9, 1939, Records of the National Refugee Service, YIVO Archives, RG 248, F 519 (Hereafter NRS). Public Charge as defined in Jane Clark’s 1931 *Deportation of Aliens* meant “a financial liability on, or expense to, the public for support and care; such support, however, must be received from funds raised by taxation and not by private or voluntary subscription. . . Receiving aid from a private social agency alone does not constitute receiving public support.” In 1900 *People of the State of New York ex rel State Board of*

After deliberating, some of the NCC leaders were still willing to risk both public relations backlash and alien deportation if it meant diverting resources to other pressing needs. They were hopeful that any refugee deported back to Germany might be able to receive appropriate medical care there. The debate changed course, however, when NCC Executive Director, Cecilia Razovsky, relayed some news which she had recently learned from a contact of hers in the U.S. State Department. The U.S. official had acted as a liaison between the NCC -- a nongovernmental Jewish-American aid federation -- and authorities in the German government. Razovsky was told that if deported, the sick refugees would *not* be admitted to German hospitals after all. Instead they “would be sent to concentration camps,” where, presumably unable to work and follow orders, “they would be killed.” The costly medical fees, the meeting’s participants agreed, would ultimately be paid by private, not public sources.<sup>8</sup> It was, however, a close call. What made this and thousands of similar decisions so tricky to make?

This chapter explores how the politics of social welfare animated American refugee affairs from the Great Depression through World War II, also referred to as the Nazi era. The above vignette provides one glimpse of this phenomenon. Particularly important to refugee advocates, and ultimately, those whom they sought to help, were struggles over whether the sources of institutional poor relief came from public or private agencies. The participants of the 1938 meeting were forced to ask a question that was perpetually posed to those involved in refugee matters from 1933 through 1945. Who would assume ultimate responsibility for the indigent victims of Nazi aggression who had little hope for protection elsewhere: the American state, American civil society’s enormous reservoir of philanthropies, or neither?

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*Charities via N.Y.S.P.C.C.*, 162 NY 430 (also 42 NY App. Div. 83) established that “where a hospital is paid the full amount of its charge, even though such hospital is a public one receiving any or all of its support from public fund, the patient who pays such charges is not a public charge.”

<sup>8</sup> Razovsky quote, interpreting the information she’d received from her contact. “Report of Proceedings,” Sep 17, 1938, NCC.

This chapter elaborates on this question to ask how the parameters of public responsibility for both America's and the world's most vulnerable people were drawn at a time when economic depression, New Deal statism, large-scale refugee admissions, mass warfare, the explosion of American international authority, and a fundamentally reordering of the relations between American government and civil society collided, and with what consequences? It explores how this question was answered for those refugees who eventually found exile in the United States; that is, the endeavor of "domestic refugee aid." The next chapter concerns a closely related development, "international refugee aid" during World War II. It demonstrates that this question was answered in a very different fashion for those refugees overseas who came under the gambit of American philanthropy, the U.S. government, and an exploding field of intergovernmental organizations in the midst of mass war and its immediate aftermath. The project of *international* refugee aid betrayed a far greater and more overt commitment from the American government than did domestic refugee aid initiatives. Taken together, these chapters demonstrate how two policy fields of American "humanitarian relief" -- one domestic, one international -- emerged from similar political, institutional, and ideological sources, but forged dramatically different paths of implementation that would endure throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. One was born as a part of the New Deal for the poor residing in the United States, and the other emerged, in Franklin Roosevelt's words, as "a New Deal for the world."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This is not to overlook the different trajectories that New Deal domestic welfare programs took from one another as well (e.g., Social Security "entitlements" and A(F)DC "welfare"). It is rather an attempt bring another major field of public-private welfare relief -- international "humanitarian" relief -- into a common frame with domestic welfare initiatives. On the formative role that the United States government and nongovernmental organizations played in creating a nascent international regime of human rights during World War II, see Elizabeth Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005). On the importance of disaster relief initiatives fostering state growth in the field of social welfare see, Michele Landis Dauber, "The Sympathetic State," *Law and History Review* Summer 2005; Dauber, "Helping Ourselves: Disaster Relief and the Origins of the American Welfare State," Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2003.

This chapter argues that the project of *domestic* refugee relief would materialize as a largely private and parochial endeavor -- implemented mainly by Jewish aid agencies around New York City -- but one nonetheless thoroughly shaped in response to broader developments of public governance, political culture, and law.<sup>10</sup> The private and “voluntary” National Coordinating Committee, for example, traced its institutional genealogy to the federal government. It was forged at the request of the U.S. State Department, initially designed as a private bureaucracy to buffer federal officials from a slew of individual appeals on behalf of Nazi victims. As the NCC and similar organizations began helping increasing numbers of deprived refugees secure residency in the United States debates ensued -- like the one above -- over how the admitted refugees might fit into “mainstream” American society generally, and New Deal relief schemes in particular. These clashes help to illuminate the political and legal boundaries that were drawn amongst different groups of people during America’s first serious flirtation with a robust federal welfare state. They show how new public welfare politics and policies offered mechanisms for both community inclusion and exclusion. These issues were not only motivated by differences of culture, occupation, race, or gender, but by citizenship status and the exigencies of foreign affairs. The New Deal turned social welfare into a *national* political issue as never before, discursively, and at times legally, turning access to public relief into an exclusive privilege of American citizenship. The fields of private domestic refugee aid and New Deal relief politics forged particularly organic connections with one another, made all

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<sup>10</sup> [The unabridged version of this chapter engages more elaborately with the rich stream of “hidden,” “divided,” or “public-private” American welfare state literature. This chapter, and in fact, this dissertation as a whole seeks to build upon its empirical and paradigmatic insights. It also extends them to American welfare policies that are more internationally focused, and explores a field of hybrid governing matrices that are not primarily articulated through fiscal policies.] See, Christopher Howard, *The Hidden Welfare State: Tax Expenditures and Social Policy in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Michael B. Katz, *The Price of Citizenship: Redefining the American Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001); Jacob Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Jennifer Klein, *For all these Right: Business, Labor, and the Shaping of America’s Public-Private Welfare State* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003).

the more intimate by the fact that many of the country's leading refugee advocates were also key players in the New Deal's most progressive social welfare initiatives.

This chapter begins with a political, legal, and institutional overview of the field of domestic refugee aid in the United States during the Nazi era. The remainder of the chapter follows a more chronological and narrative arc, presenting the terrain that gradually emerged on which refugee advocates would need to operate as the relative trickle of refugee admissions grew into a flood by the late 1930s. This chronological component of the chapter weaves between the specific concerns of refugee advocates and the broader field of New Deal relief politics. It begins by showing how leading refugee advocates tried but failed to make refugee aid a broad project embraced by a wide spectrum of the American public and government. It concludes by showing how a group of refugee case workers -- seasoned by a decade of gritty experience in the field of "refugee welfare" -- took up that fight again, this time claiming that admitted refugees had a "right" to the country's public resources as "new Americans."<sup>11</sup>

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### **The Contours of Domestic Refugee Aid during the Nazi Era**

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The political and legal terrain of the United States during the 1930s and World War II offered a sterile ground for the scattered seeds of American refugee policies to take root. The emergence of the Nazi-inspired refugee crisis coincided with a period marked by powerful anti-immigration and anti-Semitic forces in the United States. The formidable U.S. legal barriers that had been created during the 1910s and '20s to curtail European immigration were fortified by

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<sup>11</sup> On the importance that the concept of "New Americans" would have for the field of refugee admissions policies during the Cold War, see, Carl Bon Tempo, "Americans at the Gate: The Politics of American Refugee Policy, 1952-1980" Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2004 (Publication Forthcoming with Princeton University Press, 2007). Although not a central issue for this chapter, some of the developments presented here reveal an earlier genealogy for the concept in American refugee affairs.



Great Depression-era fears that an influx of aliens -- especially the poor, Jewish, and desperate -- would steal scarce American jobs, draw on the country's limited public resources, and infect its fragile political culture with leftist radicalism.<sup>12</sup> In the summer of 1938, at about the same time that the National Coordinating Committee wrestled over the hospitalized refugees, a public opinion poll showed that 67% of Americans were opposed to admitting refugees from Nazism to the United States. By April of the following year, the vicious anti-Semitic programs in Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland had made headlines in American newspapers, yet that number had grown to 83%.<sup>13</sup>

During Hitler's reign, documented immigration to the United States was lower than any other twelve-year period since such records began being kept in the 1830s. Under 20% of the of the nation's available immigration quotas -- already considered appallingly low by immigration liberals -- were filled over this period.<sup>14</sup> No special exception for the particular needs of political refugees found it's way into legislation,<sup>15</sup> and American administrative and legislated law would

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<sup>12</sup> David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), 3-26, 67-115; Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue*; Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Claus-Dieter Krohn, *Intellectuals in exile : refugee scholars and the New School for Social Research* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), trans. Rita and Robert Kimber, 21-4, 79-91; Bat-Ami Zucker, *In search of Refuge : Jews and US consuls in Nazi Germany, 1933-1941* (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001); Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1-8. Accounts appearing in the early Cold War period were generally less critical of American policies and social climates than later ones, preferring instead to lionize the heroism of rescue efforts and condemn the postwar expansion of international Communism. See, Mark Wischnitzer, *To Dwell in Safety: The Story of Jewish Migration Since 1800* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1948), 235-8; White, *300,000 New Americans*, 29-76; Jacques Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-War World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953), 473-480. For an examination of American political, economic, and cultural climates affecting immigration and alien issues for non-Europeans, see Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 56-90, 129-38, 228.

<sup>13</sup> Divine, *American Immigration Policy*, 97-9; Legomsky, *Immigration and Refugee Law*, 753-4.

<sup>14</sup> For note on immigration numbers, quota fulfillment, and naturalization rates see, Maurice R. Davie, *Refugees in America: Report of the Committee for the Study of Recent Immigration from Europe* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), xvi-ii, 8, 20-9.

<sup>15</sup> E.P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1956* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 229-68.

not begin recognizing an alien's "right to asylum" for several decades.<sup>16</sup> New Deal liberalism thus seldom translated into liberalized immigration initiatives, and the ethnic and racial pluralism that helped to forge the New Deal political coalition rarely fostered a widespread sympathy for Nazism's chief victims: Jews.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, 300,000 thousand victims of European totalitarian persecution *did* manage to scale America's formidable "paper walls" and secure refuge in the United States from 1933 through 1945.<sup>18</sup> Most were Jewish, poor, needed some form of institutional support, and eventually became American citizens.<sup>19</sup> The United States accepted more European refugees during this period than all other countries except for France and its colonial holdings in North Africa.<sup>20</sup> Disparate relief efforts on behalf of the persecuted in the early 1930s gradually developed into a

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<sup>16</sup> Although the U.S. Constitution referenced asylum among "certain rights" to be protected, this had not been typically construed to mean a positive legal protection that individuals could claim against governmental authorities in court. Asylum claims were collapsed into the general field of immigrant admissions, over which the executive and legislative branches enjoyed plenary authority. Neither the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees nor the 1967 UN Refugee Protocol obligated participating nation-states (the U.S. among them) to grant asylum. The Justice Department instituted the country's first specialized standards and procedures for granting asylum in 1974 (39 Fed.Reg. 28439). Exceptional asylum protections first appeared in federal legislation in 1980 with the country's first-ever comprehensive refugee law (Pub.L. 96-212, 201(b), 94 Stat. 102, 103, 105). Legomsky, *Immigration and Refugee Law and Policy*, 769-71; Divine, *American Immigration*, 9, 18, 93, 96, 100, 104, 105, 116; Atle Grahl-Madsen, *The Status of Refugees in International Law* (Netherlands: A.W. Sijthoff-Leyden, 1966), 24, 326-8; Paul Weis, "The Development of Refugee Law," in *Transnational Legal Problems of Refugees*, Michigan Yearbook of International Legal Studies (New York: Clark Boardman Co., 1982), 27-42; Deborah E. Anker, *The Law of Asylum in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Refugee Law Center, 1999); Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *The Refugee in International Law*, 2nd ed. (New York: Clarendon Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Once war began, anti-alien sentiment in the United States intensified throughout much of the country, as witnessed by the widespread internment of both citizens and aliens of Japanese descent, and the much more limited and less publicized internment of hundreds of European "enemy aliens" (including Jews). Foreign nationals from America's European enemies also faced mandatory registration with the federal government, job discrimination (both legally required and otherwise), and prohibitions on movement.

<sup>18</sup> Maurice Davies, *Refugees in America: Report of the Committee for the Study of Recent Immigration from Europe* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), xvi, 24, 27; NRS, *Annual Report, 1943*, (New York: National Refugee Service, Inc., 1944), 3-4; White, *300,000 New Americans*, 76.

<sup>19</sup> As will be elaborated on below, although considerable scholarly attention has been paid to the European "intellectuals in exile," this chapter concentrates on the less examined but far larger population of "ordinary" refugees who found refuge in the United States. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, eds., *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930-1960*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1969); Krohn, *Intellectuals in exile*.

<sup>20</sup> Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, 474-5; Malcom J. Proudfoot, *European Refugees: A Study in Forced Population Movement* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1956), 73-5. Unless otherwise stated, this dissertation employs the terms "immigration," "admission," "accept" to mean documented, or "legal" immigration.

nascent refugee policy by the end of World War II. This was neither a legislated policy, nor even consisting of a single executive directive. Rather, a series of arcane administrative changes were instituted from the mid 1930s to the mid 1940s in the federal government's immigration bureaucracy with an eye toward giving the persecuted at least a marginally better chance of securing a U.S. visa. These changes were then carefully manipulated by a newly organized network of private groups of refugee advocates to bring many thousands of Nazi victims to the U.S. who would otherwise have been excluded from the country.

European immigration to the U.S. during the Great Depression and World War II was largely a story about refugees. Different studies suggest that political refugees represented between 60% and 87% of all documented immigrants to the U.S. from Europe, and between 46% and 66% of all quota immigrants during this period of historically low alien admissions.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the most highly regarded scholarship on American Nazi era refugee affairs has asked one overriding question: how could the United States, with its considerable resources and traditions of asylum, have prevented millions of victims of persecution from securing haven within its borders during this dark hour? Justifiable as this question is, the above evidence suggests that addressing the issue from the other direction is also in order if we are to come to a fuller historical understanding of both this period's refugee affairs and broader political developments. That is, how did so many people manage to secure refuge against such an unwelcoming environment in the United States?<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Davies, *Refugees in America*, xvii, 14, 24, 27.

<sup>22</sup> Critics of the country's response to Holocaust victims, in particular, have not only targeted the actions of government officials and anti-Semites, but the insufficient reaction of America's Jewish community, as well. For a piercing analysis of this phenomenon, see, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). While this chapter does not directly engage with one of Novick's main arguments -- that the Holocaust only became a defining feature of American Jewish identity only years after it occurred -- it does explore an important exception to this claim. That is, the activities of groups of Jewish (and non-Jewish) refugee advocates whose waking hours were regularly saturated with issues related to the Nazi abuse of Jews. Neither is this chapter not entering the vibrant and long-running scholarly debate over whether the American government and the country's

The answer to this question requires an exploration of the emergence and development of a large field of organizational activity designed to help bring Nazi victims to the United States, and once here to help them become self-supporting. When “successful adjustment” to American society proved impossible, the goal became to alleviate the dependent refugee’s suffering, while attracting as little public attention as possible. One agency described its project of “mutual aid” as an effort to “keep our conscience clean in this vast sea of human calamity.”<sup>23</sup> Organized assistance to refugees during this period represented a new chapter in the long history of both immigrant aid activities in the U.S. and American humanitarian relief abroad. A network of dozens of private immigrant aid and welfare organizations -- mostly Jewish-based and centered around New York City -- was forged to address the specific needs of the politically, religiously, and racially persecuted during the Nazi era.<sup>24</sup> At the beginning of Hitler’s rise to power in early 1933 refugee advocates primarily focused on helping Nazi victims abroad. Increasingly however, they also began concentrating on both bringing refugees to the United States, and once here, spending millions of dollars to provide refugees with a wide array of institutional assistance that included cash disbursements for food, clothing, rent, transportation and medical bills, lodging, English lessons, job training and placement, business start-up loans, legal aid, immigration support, and help with “resettlement” away from the Northeastern Seaboard.

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Jewish community did enough on behalf of Nazi victims, or where blame should be laid, if any. See especially, Wyman, *Paper Walls* and *The Abandonment of the Jews*; Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy*; Bat-Ami Zucker, *In search of Refuge*; and Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue*. Rather, it explores the constraining and complex political environment in which those most committed to forging an American immigration and domestic adjustment component to the project of refugee aid had to operate, and shows how they subsequently chose to act within that environment.

<sup>23</sup> “Selfhelp in Action,” Selfhelp, F 339.

<sup>24</sup> Easily the most important and active embodiments of this network were the two umbrella organizations that represented a conglomeration of mostly Jewish agencies: National Coordinating Committee (1934-1939) and its successor, the National Refugee Service (1939-1946). The relative lack of an organized Protestant and Catholic response to Nazi persecution of both Jews and Christians has become a source of shame for some beginning after World War II (see Chapter 2). The response was often more hostile to Jews, than it was sympathetic. Genizi, *America’s Fair Share*, 1-14.

Approximately twenty, mostly Jewish-based agencies dispensed the vast majority of this domestic aid. They were concentrated on the Northeastern Seaboard, predominantly in New York City. Gradually, they developed close working ties with private local agencies across the country in an effort to resettle refugees away from their conspicuous urban enclaves in such neighborhoods as Manhattan's Lower East Side. This cluster of agencies merged their operations under two umbrella networks: the aforementioned National Coordinating Committee (1934-1939) and its successor, the National Refugee Service (1939-1946).<sup>25</sup> The NCC and NRS held a near monopoly on domestic refugee aid activities in the United States. Only a small proportion of refugees who were admitted to the United States during the Nazi era did *not* receive some form of assistance from these two federations.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Because such a preponderance of refugees settled around New York City, the NCC and NRS performed its New York operations under a different organizational banner: the Greater New York Committee for Refugees, founded by Joseph Chamberlain in 1934. Effectively, however, coordinated refugee aid operations both in New York and around the country were directed by the same group of people in New York. For reasons of simplicity, then, this chapter will refer to all of these affiliated aid operations under the banners of the NCC or NRS. "Historical Biography of Joseph P. Chamberlain," Finding Aid for the Joseph P. Chamberlain Papers, 1933-1951, RG 278, YIVO Archives, Center for Jewish History.

<sup>26</sup> While a fluctuating handful of Christian-based and non-sectarian agencies belonged to the NCC, they were never a very active presence. The most active non-Jewish NCC affiliates were nowhere near as active in providing domestic refugee welfare and immigration support as many of the Jewish agencies. Originally, they took advantage of the fact that the Jewish agencies were far more sophisticated and highly coordinated than the Christian groups, an enduring fact throughout the period. They grew increasingly independent of the Jewish agencies, however, as their own operations matured. Among the non-Jewish member organizations were the American Friends Service Committee, American Committee for Christian German Refugees, and the Committee for Catholic Refugees from Germany. All performed most of their operations independently of the NCC, although the Quaker "Friends" engaged in several important projects with the Jewish agencies, including organized "resettlement" away from the northeastern seaboard. Once the NCC reorganized as the NRS, no Christian agencies were represented at all. The International Rescue and Relief Committee and Selfhelp for German Immigrants represented two important non-sectarian agencies involved in refugee aid. Both had working ties with the NCC and NRS. "Freedom's Lifelines," IRC, Acc. # 82033-73.01, B 2408, F "Early Publications, 1940s"; "Selfhelp in Action," Selfhelp, F 339; "Report of Proceedings of Conference Called by the National Coordinating Committee," Sep 17, 1938, NCC, F 2; "For a Discussion of Possible Coordination of the Work of Various Organizations in the U.S. in Connection with the German Refugees," Meeting Minutes, Mar 9, 1934, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 26.

This private refugee welfare network represented more than a traditionally-conceived “voluntary” sphere of organized philanthropy.<sup>27</sup> President Roosevelt praised the National Refugee Service for “providing for an orderly adjustment of the refugee” to American society. To Roosevelt, the Service’s highly organized, comprehensive, and systematic approach to aiding virtually every new Jewish arrival “may provide a model of constructive absorption of immigrants into our economic and social life” for future U.S. immigration policies.<sup>28</sup> The President had reason to laud the welfare efforts of NRS. Without them, many admitted refugees would have grown destitute, ill, likely to turn to the country’s public welfare programs, and ultimately become subject to deportation. The resulting bad publicity would have given the opponents of refugee admissions political ammunition to attack the limited but critical bureaucratic directives that the FDR administration had been cautiously instituting to ease immigration restrictions for victims of Nazism abroad.<sup>29</sup>

Through this chain of motivating factors organized refugee “adjustment” emerged as a necessary corollary to the project of refugee admissions. Although not officially required by law, organized private refugee welfare aid became politically and operationally bound to the highly legal and more overtly official component of refugee admissions. This link that was forged between admissions and adjustment assistance during the Nazi era was thus a blend of *de jure* and *de facto* adhesives. While a uniform legal definition that differentiated a “mainstream” alien from a “refugee” would not be legislated until 1980, this admissions-adjustment bond emerged as a defining feature of American refugee policies in the 1930s. It endured throughout

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<sup>27</sup> Although this chapter questions how “voluntary” and “private” the nongovernmental sphere of refugee aid actually was, for reasons of practicality it will use the two terms interchangeably, as contemporaries of the period commonly did.

<sup>28</sup> NRS, *Annual Report, 1940* (New York: NRS, 1940), ii.

<sup>29</sup> “Preliminary Plan for the Conduct of Public Relations for the National Refugee Service, Inc.,” Feb 24, 1941, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278,F 43.

the rest of the twentieth century, helping to distinguish refugee policies from conventional immigration law. Neither project was feasible without the other. Roosevelt's hopeful prediction that the "orderly adjustment" of aliens would become a constitutive element of immigration policy would be proven half-right. While it did not become a constitutive part of mainstream immigration policy after World War II, it did come to mark the new subset of immigration policy that emerged during the Nazi era to address the particular issues of political refugees. That is, it came to define an emerging field of refugee policies, even before such a field had a name.

The network of refugee "adjustment" agencies developed a parallel system of private social assistance in the U.S., operating in the looming shadow of the publicly funded New Deal welfare state.<sup>30</sup> This network required not only an unprecedented degree of coordination between the participating voluntary agencies, but also with various levels of government. Refugee advocates forged their strategies for providing relief with a constant awareness of what was happening with publicly-funded relief programs. They maintained regular contacts with federal immigration officials as well as state and local public welfare personnel. Private refugee aid workers commonly transferred from jobs in voluntary agencies to public welfare bureaus, and occasionally in the other direction as well. Some regularly explored the possibility of moving admitted refugees from private to public rolls, thereby easing some of their agencies' financial burdens, and in the opinion of some aid workers, giving the refugees a more legitimate claim to their new homeland.<sup>31</sup> Although the dispensation of private relief to refugees would predominate in voluntary agency welfare policies throughout the period, the question of whether

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<sup>30</sup> The fact many of the people in charge of directing aid activities for refugees already in the United States felt it politically wise to keep their activities conspicuous helps to explain why the topic has attracted relatively little attention from recent scholars.

<sup>31</sup> In the early New Deal years, there was a marked trend amongst the broad swath of social workers moving from private to public agencies. By late in the decade, however, that tendency had begun to reverse itself. Andrew Morris, "The Limits of Voluntarism: Private Social Service and the Expansion of the Welfare State," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2003, 30-1.

private philanthropy or the government was ultimately responsible for the welfare of the newcomer remained a live issue.

Officials of the leading refugee aid agencies regularly boasted that not one of the refugee “clients” whom they had helped bring to the U.S. had become a “public charge.”<sup>32</sup> A more precise claim would have been that there was no readily available record of a Jewish refugee from Nazism having been deported from the United States for violating the public charge clause. As World War II got underway in Europe, voluntary agency personnel did begin allowing certain classes of refugees to be hospitalized at public expense -- making them public charges according to the law -- but only for those whom no other country would accept, or whose homeland no longer existed. Refugee advocates calculated that the INS would not likely initiate deportation proceedings against either the elderly or people who had recently become stateless because of Nazi and Soviet conquests (e.g., Balts).<sup>33</sup> The numbers of people who were hospitalized at public expense was never very large, however, remaining at or below several dozen.<sup>34</sup>

Refugee advocates had ample reason to remain vigilant about keeping most relief aid to refugees privately-funded and dispensed. Politically influential critics of refugee admissions in New York and around the country engaged in perpetual campaigns to increase deportation proceedings for a wide variety of aliens. Deportations were carried out not only federal authorities, but by the states as well. New York state was particularly active in deporting aliens

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Joseph Chamberlain to Edward F. Pritchard (INS), Mar 19, 1941, Papers of Joseph P. Chamberlain, YIVO, RG 278, F 47.

<sup>33</sup> “Stateless” in this context did not apply to all of the Jews whose national citizenship had been revoked by their governments, but instead only to those whose nation-state had ceased to exist because of military and political conquest. Most of these cases were first admitted to New York City’s Bellevue Hospital, and then transferred to state hospitals around New York. Hanna Ziegler to Mr. A. [Arthur] Greenleigh, Oct 12, 1939, NRS, RG 248, F 519.

<sup>34</sup> “Considerations in the Use of Public Assistance for Jewish Aliens Residing in U.S. over Five Years,” 1944 (exact date unclear), NRS, RG 248, F 519; Hanna Ziegler to Mr. A. [Arthur] Greenleigh, Oct 12, 1939, NRS, RG 248, F 519.



during the 1930s.<sup>35</sup> Refugee advocates attempted to thwart such efforts by keeping nearly all refugees out of the public welfare system. The comprehensive care that scores of thousands of refugees received from the country's private aid network was embraced as a matter of great pride by affiliated agency personnel, even though that burden often caused considerable stress on available institutional resources. This became a significant problem as the number of arriving refugees began increasing exponentially after 1937.

The direct legal fear of deportation, however, was not the only factor motivating private aid workers to "care for their own." Although the risk of public charge deportation was always a daunting possibility for anyone in the country for less than five years, voluntary agency personnel received regular signs that some refugees might be able to receive public support without much likelihood of deportation. A National Refugee Service (NRS) policy statement on public charge issues explained that "the interpretation of this law is elastic," often resulting in leniency for violators.<sup>36</sup> Private agency personnel had friendly contacts in state and local public welfare bureaus who were sympathetic with the refugee cause. An administrator with the New York State Department of Public Welfare, for instance, "unofficially" suggested to an NRS administrator that public case workers who came across a recently admitted refugee on public aid would not likely report the case to immigration authorities. She explained that "the State Department [of Public Welfare] has many social workers who are interested in the adjustment of aliens," and would not be opposed to them accepting public relief when necessary. He therefore

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<sup>35</sup> "New Bills Aimed at Criminal Alien," *New York Times*, Apr 30, 1934; "140 Here to be Deported," *New York Times*, Jul 24, 1934; "Anti-Nazi Appeals for Asylum Here," *New York Times*, Mar 30, 1935; "4,604 'Deported' by State in Year," *New York Times*, Aug 30, 1936; "Deportation Plan Fought," *New York Times*, Apr 6, 1937; "Immigration Task Now One of Policing," *New York Times*, May 3, 1937; "

<sup>36</sup> NRS policy statement on public charge issues (illegible title) dated Mar 14, 1940, NRS, 13.25, F 519.

left it to the “discretion” of NRS personnel as to whether their organization would cover the expenses of needy refugees or let state and city funds cover the costs of support.<sup>37</sup>

Additionally, in the limited number of deportation court cases that made it to the appellate level during this period judges betrayed a sympathy for European aliens in their opinions. In a number of cases judges warned INS officials that they had both the authority and inclination to overrule certain INS deportation proceedings if it could be proven that “deportation to the country named in the order would almost certainly mean death to the alien.”<sup>38</sup> In the 1938 case of *Ex parte Orzechowska*, a judge stayed a rather clear-cut public charge deportation order by the INS to Poland for a mentally ill Jewish woman. After offering a fairly thin line of legal precedents the judge suggested that his personal sympathies made him believe that any other ruling than a stay of deportation would have been morally indefensible. Since world events indicated that Poland would soon face a “Nordic Purge” of the sort lately visited on Austria,” the judge shuddered to consider the “inhumanity of returning this demented girl to a land at present so inhospitable to those of her blood and faith.”<sup>39</sup> Although the U.S. immigration code would not contain a provision protecting aliens from being deported to their homeland if they had a legitimate fear of “physical persecution” until 1950, this case joined a handful of others during the Nazi era that foreshadowed this development by evoking judicial sympathies for potential persecutees.<sup>40</sup> NCC and NRS personnel were well aware of these

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<sup>37</sup> Hanna Ziegler to Mr. A. [Arthur] Greenleigh, Oct 12, 1939, NRS, RG 248, 13.25, F 519. Clark, *Deportation of Aliens*.

<sup>38</sup> The reasons for persecution had to be “political,” not for common crimes. For quote, *U.S. ex rel. Hudak v. Uhl*, 20 F. Supp. 928, D.C.N.Y. 1937; *U.S. ex rel. Fortmueller v. Commissioner of Immigration*, Ellis Island, New York Harbor, 14 F.Supp.484 S.D.N.Y., 1936; *U.S. ex rel. Mazur v. Commissioner of Immigration*, 101 F.2d 707, C.A.2 1939; “Anti-Nazi Appeals for Asylum Here,” *New York Times*, Mar 29.

<sup>39</sup> *Ex parte Orzechowska*, No. 13047 District Court, D. Oregon 23 F. Supp. 428; 1938 U.S. Dist.

<sup>40</sup> This policy of non-return, known in international law as *nonrefoulement*, has lived a shifting and unstable legal life in the U.S. Although the U.S. adopted the United Nations’ definition of *nonrefoulement* in 1968, and reiterated its commitment to the concept in the 1980 Refugee Act, immigration authorities have frequently deported would-be asylees to countries where it was reasonably understood they would be targets of political persecution. ; Paul Weis,

cases, and occasionally considered changing their policy of keeping refugees only on private relief with them in mind.<sup>41</sup>

Why, then, did the practice of keeping admitted refugees on private relief become and remain so prevalent throughout the Nazi era? This question is more perplexing when one considers that the Nazi era coincided with the unprecedented availability of public sources of relief for both citizens *and* aliens. In New York City, where most of the new arrivals lived, residency, not citizenship status, determined access to both home relief and medical care throughout the 1930s. A person was eligible for most forms of home and work relief if they had resided in the city for one year and the state for two, so long as they met the means tests. Temporary forms of relief were available even to those who did not meet the residency requirements, and as the comments of the state welfare administrator above indicate, public caseworkers had a reputation for being lenient with aliens anyway. WPA work relief was available to nearly all needy aliens in the New York City area through mid 1937, and to some even thereafter.<sup>42</sup>

It was not until the last few years of the 1930s, however, that public welfare became an extremely pressing option to refugee advocates. From 1933 to 1937, an average of under 10,000

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“The Development of Refugee Law,” and David A. Martin, “The Refugee Act of 1980: Its Past and Future,” both in *Transnational Legal Problems of Refugees*, Michigan Yearbook of International Legal Studies (New York: Clark Boardman Co., 1982), 27-42; Deborah E. Anker, *The Law of Asylum in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Refugee Law Center, 1999); Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *The Refugee in International Law*, 2nd ed. (New York: Clarendon Press, 1996). [cite Legomsky, etc.]

<sup>41</sup> “Problems Arising Out of Policy Regarding Referrals for Public Assistance,” Oct 20, 1943, NRS, F 519; Hanna Zeigler to Arthur Greenleigh, Nov 11, 1940, NRS F 519; Philip C. Jessup to Cecilia Razovsky, Nov 9, 1939, NRS, F 519; “Statement of Suggested Practices and Procedures Regarding the Referral of Aliens to Public Agencies,” undated, but written in late 1943 or early 1944, NRS, F 519. There was a notable, if only partial exception to the practice of keeping all admitted refugees from becoming public charges. In early 1940, when NRS funds completely overburdened, NRS officials determined that the INS would not initiate deportation proceedings against the elderly who were chronically ill since no other country would likely receive them. Thus, NRS staff were directed to allow tax dollars to pay for these patients’ treatment at public hospitals when family proved unable to do so. While I have not been able to determine exactly how many people this affected, the numbers don’t seem to be very large. They certainly were not large enough to worry NRS officials about a potential public relations flare-up. See, NRS policy statement on public charge issues (illegible title) dated Mar 14, 1940, NRS, F 519.

<sup>42</sup> Full citations are included in the “alien-welfare debates” section below.

refugees per year arrived in the United States. From 1938 to 1941 that annual average had leaped to nearly 40,000.<sup>43</sup> This new population of arrivals was far more physically and emotionally brutalized than its predecessors, requiring -- as with the hospitalized refugees at the beginning of this chapter -- far more sustained assistance. With rising pressure on the country's Jewish philanthropic dollar for both overseas and domestic relief, the motivation to begin moving the most costly refugees onto the government dole was profound in the period just prior to and during World War II. In order to discover why this did not occur requires looking backwards several years from the zenith of refugee aid activities. In the first five years of Hitler's Third Reich and Roosevelt's New Deal a political, legal, and institutional terrain emerged that made, on balance, the prospect of refugees receiving public relief seem too risky an option for the country's domestic aid network.

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### **1933: *Gemeinschaft* or *Gesellschaft* for the German Refugees in America?**

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The vigor that came to mark the American regime of refugee aid by the late 1930s was only slowly awakened in the first year and a half of Hitler's reign. A picture of the political environment in which refugee aid workers would have to operate, however, and the available pathways in which they could proceed began to crystallize in these early months. Those interested in how the refugee issue might be addressed in the U.S. were confronted with two looming questions: 1) would the response to the refugee crisis comprise a wide swath of the American public, or would it be more circumscribed by cultural affiliation? and 2) What needed to happen to make immigration to the U.S. a significant component of the larger project of

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<sup>43</sup> NRS, *Annual Report, 1942* (New York: National Refugee Service, Inc., 1943), 8.

refugee relief? The answers to these questions would become considerably clarified well before either Hitler or Roosevelt had completed their second year in power.

*[This section begins by exploring the activities of private American organizations traveling to Nazi Germany to assess the situation of Jews and other oppressed groups there. Upon returning to the U.S. they attempted to marshal support for the refugee cause from a wide and diverse swath of the American public. Such broad support, however, was generally limited to large rallies and boycott's protesting the Nazi government, but not to providing immigration support and material relief aid to Nazi persecutees. This charge would be far more circumscribed to a particular group: predominantly, America's Jewish community. This section also begins to show how immigration reforms in the U.S. Congress were a political impossibility during the Nazi era, so refugee advocates worked to convince sympathetic federal officials in the Executive Branch (State Dep't and INS) to implement a series of arcane, but ultimately critical administrative reforms that would ultimately create enough bureaucratic wiggle room for one quarter of a million refugees from Nazism to enter the U.S. The admission of these mostly destitute and often sick groups of refugees, however, came with an informal, but very serious caveat: if admitted, they would be cared for by private, not public institutions in the U.S. The section concludes with . . .]*

. . . Admissions and adjustment: this was the dual charge of what became the country's first major national network of domestic aid for political refugees. The leading refugee aid agencies consequently soon began developing sophisticated and extensively coordinated programs to help admit and then "successfully adjust" refugees to American life. When the increasingly battered population of refugees proved incapable of becoming self-supporting members of American society, the private agencies worked diligently to keep them from public view.

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### **Building Bridges between Government, Civil Society, and Refugees**

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As the second year of Nazi rule in Germany dawned the political terrain on which the most committed refugee aid workers would need to operate was becoming clear. On the one hand, it appeared doubtful that the bulk of the privately-dispensed American assistance for victims of Nazism would come from a culturally diverse coalition of contributors. Instead, the

country's organized Jewish community would constitute the overwhelming core of activity. On the other hand, a slowly increasing number of refugees had been able to enter the United States with the assistance of immigration aid agencies over the previous year.<sup>44</sup> The numbers were modest: fewer than 2,500 arriving as permanent residents, and less more 2,000 residing in the country with temporary visas.<sup>45</sup> The established Jewish agencies around New York City had been able to handle the increased welfare load without significantly changing their operations. They had cared for far greater influxes of immigrants in the not-so-distant past, before the restrictive legislation of the 1910s and '20s was implemented, and before President Hoover's directives closed the Golden Gate even further.<sup>46</sup> Yet, those gates appeared poised to open further once again. Refugee advocates had witnessed an emerging political discourse on liberalized admissions procedures for refugees which held the promise that, with enough organizational assistance, many more might gain admission in the future. Still unclear, however, was the type of relationship that private refugee advocates would have with public officials, and perhaps even more importantly, what public resources admitted refugees would be able to claim once in the United States.

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<sup>44</sup> "Jewish Immigrants Aided," *New York Times*, Feb 11, 1934.

<sup>45</sup> Students and tourists, for instance, were issued temporary visas. About one fifth of the European Jews who secured exile in the United States during the Nazi era held temporary visas. Some stayed beyond the term of their visa, and remained in the country illegally, while others managed to get their visas extended indefinitely through private legislation and administrative rulings. With the help of the refugee aid agencies, some people in both of these groups gained legal permanent resident status through a process known as pre-examination. The pre-examination procedure allowed aliens -- fleeing persecution and otherwise -- to travel across the Canadian border and then re-enter the U.S. with permanent resident visas. Pre-examination was a temporary and exceptional procedure that U.S. immigration officials predominantly permitted for Europeans only, not aliens from Mexico and other country's south of the U.S. border. Unless otherwise stated, this chapter will refer to both permant resident and temporary visa holders as "refugees." On visa figures see, *NRS, Annual Report, 1940*, 25; *NRS, Annual Report, 1942*, 8. On pre-examination see, Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 84-87.

<sup>46</sup> Kathleen Andersen, Morris Ardoyn, and Mararita Zilberman, eds., *120 HIAS Stories* (New York: HIAS, 2002); Wischnitzer, *To Dwell in Safety*, 125-130; Arieh Tartakower and Kurt R. Grossman, *The Jewish Refugee* (New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1944), 478-9; Gabriel Davidson, "The Jews in Agriculture in the United States," in *American Jewish Yearbook* v. 37, (1935): 99-134.

The project of refugee aid took a major, though quiet, step forward on this front in early 1934, eventually resulting in the creation of an unprecedentedly coordinated network of immigrant aid societies working on behalf of Nazi victims. This network, formed under the banner of the National Coordinating Committee, did not simply spring forth as a result of its own “voluntary” efforts. It was in fact coaxed into existence by the federal government as a shadow bureaucracy, inconspicuously performing functions that many public officials supported, but were unwilling or unable to perform themselves. Although the vast bulk of welfare support that refugees would eventually receive in the United States from the Nazi era through the 1950s would be funded and dispensed by a network of voluntary agencies, it is interesting to note that this network was partially the child of the American government. The process began in early 1934 when immigration officials within U.S. State Department called a meeting in Washington D.C. with the recently appointed League of Nations’ High Commissioner for German Refugees, James McDonald. Although McDonald’s periodic trips to the U.S. capital were typically covered in the American press with considerable interest, this particular meeting remained below the radar. The matter at hand was politically sensitive and needed to remain inconspicuous.<sup>47</sup>

Over the previous year government officials had been bombarded by a slew of appeals from American relatives, friends, colleagues, and philanthropies interested in helping Nazi victims receive aid in Europe or emigrate to the United States. Public criticism of the U.S. government’s unresponsiveness to the situation continued to mount with little sign of dissipating. The field of refugee affairs had proven politically messy and time consuming. It had intruded

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<sup>47</sup> “For a Discussion of Possible Coordination of the Work of Various Organizations in the U.S. in Connection with the German Refugees,” Meeting Minutes, Mar 9, 1934, YIVO, Papers of Joseph Chamberlain, RG 278, F 26. Also, in same folder, see the minutes of many more meetings over the course of 1934 concerning meetings between the State Department, High Commissioner for Refugees, and Chamberlain regarding the foundation of the NCC. *NRS, Annual Report, 1943*, (New York: National Refugee Service, 1944), 2; Albert Abrahamson, “National Refugee Service,” *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia in 10 Volumes* v. 8 (New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Inc., c1939-1943); White 34-5.

forcefully into the U.S. immigration bureaucracy, and federal officials wanted to escort it back out by creating a nongovernmental institution to manage the task: a private liaison agency over which immigration officials could still exert a considerable degree of influence. They pressed McDonald, an American, to persuade the country's private immigrant and ethnic aid societies most interested in the issue to consolidate their refugee-related activities nationally under one roof, and to forge a liaison relationship with the federal government over matters of refugee immigration and adjustment support. The private New York agencies had already taken some initial steps toward combining their operations with one another, but this new prospect of forging a working relationship with federal officials offered an added incentive to take the process to a new level.<sup>48</sup>

McDonald discussed the matter with President Roosevelt's U.S. representative to the High Commissioner for German Refugees office, Joseph Chamberlain, who had several key contacts in New York City's burgeoning private refugee aid field.<sup>49</sup> While Chamberlain had only recently begun dedicating much time to the field of refugee advocacy, over the next fifteen years, this prominent Columbia University professor of international law and legislative drafting

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<sup>48</sup> "For a Discussion of Possible Coordination of the Work of Various Organizations in the U.S. in Connection with the German Refugees," Meeting Minutes, Mar 9, 1934, YIVO, Papers of Joseph Chamberlain, RG 278, F 26. *NRS, Annual Report, 1943*, (New York: National Refugee Service, 1944), 2; Albert Abrahamson, "National Refugee Service," *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia in 10 Volumes* v. 8 (New York: Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Inc., c1939-1943); White 34-5. While much has been made of the connection between the American government's failure to join the League of Nations and the eventual causes of the Second World War, the field of refugee affairs provides a partial exception to this phenomenon. Insufficient as their efforts frequently were, American officials nevertheless took the lead on some of the major international initiatives to assist Nazi-era refugees, including sponsoring international conferences and creating an Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. President Roosevelt, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr. and Labor Secretary Frances Perkins were the most prominent of this group. As the above meeting demonstrates the involvement of public officials and private citizens with League of Nations refugee efforts was also occasionally important. See, for example, James G. McDonald to Joseph Chamberlain, Oct 3, 1935; Joseph Chamberlain to James Clement Dunn (Chief Division of Western European Affairs, Department of State), Nov 26, 1935; James Clement Dunn to Joseph Chamberlain, Dec 7, 1935, all from Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, 4.4, F 25. Initial steps at consolidating refugee aid had subsequently been carried out under the Joint Clearing Bureau.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*; 12/29/38 Press release, Records of the National Coordinating Committee, RG 247, 3.1 Folder 5 (hereafter referred to as NCC Records).



would emerge as a giant of the field. The even-tempered Chamberlain served as the chief liaison between government officials and private refugee aid agencies, often helping to stabilize turbulent and contentious working environments amidst competing interests.<sup>50</sup> Chamberlain and several leading Jewish refugee advocates called a meeting of the eighteen major American organizations that had recently become involved with refugee affairs to discuss the government's request to form a nationally coordinated liaison organization. Meeting several times between March and June of 1934 this group of mostly Jewish immigrant aid and social welfare established the National Coordinating Committee.<sup>51</sup> Officials from the NCC and its successor organization, the National Refugee Agency, were frequently reminded over the next decade that refugee-related appeals to the government should be channeled through a select few agency representatives. Typically, these were Chamberlain and Cecilia Razovsky.<sup>52</sup>

Over time the "Information and Liaison Office" of the National Coordinating Committee and the National Refugee Service (NRS), became quite deft at the often politically sensitive task

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<sup>50</sup> Perhaps no other American of the era possessed the sweeping erudition on refugee matters, both legal and political, domestic and international, as Chamberlain. He maximized his utility by strategically straddling the space between private and governmental refugee-related institutions, holding prominent positions in both, and often providing the main line of communications between them. A gentle, his tireless, sober, and seemingly selfless devotion to addressing the plight of European refugees garnered the adoration of many in the Jewish-dominated refugee advocacy field, as well as the respect of well-placed immigration officials. No biography or even substantive account of him has yet been published.

<sup>51</sup> The largest of these agencies were the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). As the agencies began to consolidate their efforts and focus on the specific needs of the refugee crisis, only the NCJW had been providing a full range of care for admitted refugees, from pier reception to self-sufficiency. The Jewish Social Service Association of New York City (JSSA) and the Jewish Family Welfare Society of Brooklyn provided refugees with some temporary financial relief, medical care, and case work assistance, but this was quite limited at first. The volume of aid given to admitted refugees remained fairly limited for the first several years of Nazi rule simply because the number of refugees in the U.S. was under 20,000. The JSSA, for example, had only one case worker on staff to help refugees. "For a Discussion of Possible Coordination of the Work of Various Organizations in the U.S. in Connection with the German Refugees," Meeting Minutes, Mar 9, 1934, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 26; Andersen, et. al., *120 HIAS Stories*; White, *300,000 Americans*, 29-31; Wischnitzer, *To Dwell in Safety*; Abrahamson, "National Refugee Service." For a history of American Jewish immigrant aid societies (including the refugee agencies that evolved from the NCC), see, Ronald Sanders, *Shores of Refuge: A Hundred Years of Jewish Emigration* (New York: Holt, 1988); White. YIVO archivist, Gunnar M. Berg has also written excellent summary histories of some of the most important of these organizations, which can be found in the two finding aids marked, "Inventory," at the YIVO Archives, New York, NY.

<sup>52</sup> For example, see, "Meetings of the NRS with Representatives of the Émigré Group," Feb 18, 1941, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 43.

of determining how to approach government officials with immigration requests, when to delay action pending more favorable circumstances, and when to remain silent. Chamberlain and Razovsky traveled regularly to Washington D.C. to meet with federal immigration officials. These meetings helped to prompt some of the aforementioned bureaucratic reforms that gradually eased refugee admissions procedures over the next decade. On a less official level, sympathetic federal bureaucrats also kept the private agencies apprised about the best ways to assist individuals in filling out the daunting immigration applications.<sup>53</sup>

The connections that the NCC and NRS forged with the federal government extended far beyond lobbying efforts, however. Over time, federal officials ceded significant degrees of public authority to the voluntary agencies in the areas of refugee admissions, and less directly, adjustment support. Issues concerning prospective immigrants' "affidavits of support" and "surety bonds" proved particularly critical for the mission of refugee advocates.

Virtually all prospective refugees were required to have an "affidavit of support" filed on their behalf by a "sponsor" in the U.S. A successful affidavit would convince immigration officials that the refugee's sponsor was both capable and willing to care for the refugee after admission so that they would not become a public charge.<sup>54</sup> Chamberlain and Razovsky systematically received "off-the-record" advice on the constantly shifting criteria that U.S. consuls applied when judging the merits of an affidavit, using this knowledge to help would-be

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<sup>53</sup> See, for example, "Minutes of Meeting of Private Agencies with Representatives of INS Regarding, 'European Project,'" Feb 6, 1946, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 53; "Minutes from a Meeting at the Home of William Rosenwald," Jun 26, 1938, NCC Records, RG 247, 3.1, F 2; Memo "To all Cooperating Committees" from William Haber and Cecilia Razovsky, Aug 2, 1939, NCC Records, RG 247, 3.1, F 16; "Meetings of the NRS with Representatives of the Émigré Group," Feb 18, 1941, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 43; *NRS, Annual Report*, 1943, p. 2-3; White, 34-39.

<sup>54</sup> Since the vast majority of Visa applicants from Nazi-controlled country's were both materially and legally incapable of emigrating with many valuables or capital, U.S. consuls required virtually all of them to have an affidavit filed on their behalf before even considering issuing a visa. This practice became more ubiquitous as the decade wore on, and refugees became not only less able to emigrate with valuables and capital, but were in increasingly bad physical and emotional condition.

sponsors complete the highly legalistic affidavit form.<sup>55</sup> The State Department's George L. Warren, for example, advised Chamberlain to limit affidavit applications only to close family members, since overseas consuls believed they possessed "natural, moral, and legal obligations [that] do not exist in the case of a distant relative or friend."<sup>56</sup> Relatedly, immigration law only permitted individuals, not institutions, to file affidavits, but in mid 1938 the State Department took half a step toward accepting what would become known officially as the "corporate affidavit" immediately following World War II. The State Department instituted a new procedure that required all affidavits to be approved by a "local welfare organization." With this order, the private NCC and NRS-affiliated agencies began conducting "audits" of affidavits on behalf of the federal government.<sup>57</sup> The voluntary agencies were not paid for these services, but instead performed them to facilitate the implementation of a government policy (refugee admissions) of which they were keenly supportive.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> These meetings occurred primarily with officials of the State Department's Visa Division and the INS, housed in the Labor Department until 1940, when it was moved to the Justice Department. Federal officials also provided advice regarding how the private agencies might respond to issues with refugees already in the country. One such meeting had in fact occurred shortly before the New York gathering of NCC personnel that introduced this chapter. The information that Razovsky had received from her State Department contacts regarding the possible political ramifications if the hospitalized refugees received publicly-subsidized medical care significantly shaped the terms of the debate in which NCC officials engaged at their meeting in New York. The federal officials had also served as a liaison between the NCC and the German government regarding what would likely happen to the sick refugees if they were deported back to Germany (concentration camps).

<sup>56</sup> "Statements Attesting the Sincerity of Affidavits of Support," Memo from George L. Warren to Joseph Chamberlain, Chamberlain Papers, F 67.

6/22/38 statements attesting the sincerity of affidavits of support

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Chamberlain to Cecilia Razovsky, Jun 24, 1938, NCC Records, RG 247, 3.1, F 5; F 47; "Joseph Chamberlain to Edward F. Pritchard (INS)," Mar 19, 1941, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 47; Harry Greenstein, "Experience with Refugee Services," *Public Welfare News* 7 (July 1939): 7-11.

<sup>58</sup> Scholars of American public policy have tended to pay less attention to these types of *non-fiscal* relationships between government and nonprofit organizations, than those involving tax-incentives or government contracts. This emphasis on the fiscal construction of "hybrid" governance, while productive of some path-breaking scholarship on the "hidden," "divided," or "public-private" welfare state, hasn't systematically addressed the wider array of public-private implementation of public policies in both 19th and 20th century America. Christopher Howard, *The Hidden Welfare State: Tax Expenditures and Social Policy in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Jacob Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Jennifer Klein, *For all these Right: Business, Labor, and the Shaping of America's Public-Private Welfare State* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003); Katz, *The Price of Citizenship*.

The NCC and NRS also deposited “surety bonds” with the federal government on behalf of sponsors to strengthen affidavits.<sup>59</sup> Although the fact that institutions, not individuals, were placing the bonds might have been construed as a violation of the admission application, government officials encouraged the practice. From 1939 to 1941, in fact, Chamberlain held a series of negotiations with two of his liaisons in the State Department and INS that eventually led to the nongovernmental NRS claiming an even greater degree of authority over the government’s admissions process. The bonds were tying up significant agency funds that the NRS needed to support the tens of thousands of refugees who had been recently arriving in the U.S. in increasingly bad condition. Chamberlain suggested that the government allow the NRS to create one “blanket surety bond of around \$5,000,” in lieu of the many individual bonds.<sup>60</sup> He asserted that the government should have no doubts about “the responsibility of the National Refugee Service” since “none of the immigrants who have entered this country from Europe and have come under its [NRS] supervision has become a public charge.” Federal officials eventually acquiesced, granting the private agencies another technology of governance through which to exert public authority as a surrogate limb of the country’s immigration bureaucracy.<sup>61</sup>

The authority that the State Department delegated to the voluntary agencies over the sponsorship process not only represented an important point of public-private collaboration in the governance of refugee affairs, but also forged a new link between admissions and “adjustment” procedures that helped to distinguish refugee immigration from “mainstream” immigration. Officially, American immigration law did not contain provisions for the

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<sup>59</sup> The bonds were actually placed in bank accounts that the government could access if a refugee became a public charge.

<sup>60</sup> Most bonds cost approximately \$500.

<sup>61</sup> For quotes, Joseph Chamberlain to Edward F. Pritchard (INS), Mar 19, 1941, Chamberlain Papers, F 47. This folder also contains records of numerous communications between Chamberlain and the federal government (esp. State Department official, A. M. Warren ).

adjustment of aliens. Instead, helping immigrants become self-supporting and acclimated to American society had been traditionally left to the discretion of aliens' family members, employers, and local public and private welfare agencies. It was not directly mandated by federal law, but the response to the crisis in Europe helped to create the set of circumstances whereby institutional adjustment support became virtually mandatory for refugee admissions. By the late 1930s, almost no refugees were admitted to the U.S. without a strong affidavit, and many also required bonds to be filed on their behalf. Federal immigration officials came to expect that these promises of adjustment support would be buttressed by the institutional work of the country's leading private refugee aid agencies. In the process the field of refugee affairs developed into a new and, public-private policy field that straddled the divide between admissions and adjustment matters.<sup>62</sup>

The meetings that governmental and private agency officials held with one another over affidavits, bonds, and a range of other issues were typically kept out of the public spotlight. While the leaders of some Jewish organizations, such as Rabbi Stephen Wise and his American Jewish Congress, purposefully sought publicity in their criticisms of Nazism and the U.S. government's diplomatic responses to it, those involved in the immigration side of things kept a much lower profile. Both voluntary agency personnel and their governmental liaisons believed that they had little to gain and much to lose by broadcasting news of their activities within a largely unfriendly legal and political environment.<sup>63</sup> Joseph Chamberlain explained to his colleagues that INS Commissioner, Earl Harrison, and "other high ranking members of the

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<sup>62</sup> This public-private collaboration also extended to the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from Germany. In 1937 and '38, for example, Chamberlain was joined by officials in both the State and Labor Departments to collect information on the organized adjustment of refugees in the U.S. for a world-wide refugee study being conducted for the League. Harold Fields to Julius J. Dukas, Dec 29, 1937.

<sup>63</sup> "Preliminary Plan for the Conduct of Public Relations for the National Refugee Service, Inc.," Feb 24, 1941, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278,F 43.

Justice Department” were “very anxious not to disturb” the country’s delicate political atmosphere regarding refugees in the country.<sup>64</sup> Cecilia Razovsky summarized her organization’s guiding policy in its relations with government officials when she explained to her colleagues in 1938, “We want to do our work as quietly as possible and always with the full knowledge and approval of the State and Labor departments.”<sup>65</sup> As was common with similar gatherings of private refugee aid workers, the meeting’s participants were reminded that “unorganized and unsupervised publicity could lead to very disastrous results.”<sup>66</sup>

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### **Public or Private Relief?: The Alien-Welfare Debates**

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What most often drew such admonitions to keep things quiet were issues that threatened to expose the fact that many of the refugees being admitted to the United States would not be capable of immediately supporting themselves. This grew into a matter of considerable concern as greater numbers of refugees began arriving in worse shape. Beyond the liaison aspect of the National Coordinating Committee’s relationship with the federal government lay a more profound question about where admitted refugees would fit within the emerging public welfare state. Government officials originally urged the creation of the NCC primarily as a way to field questions about persecutees overseas and prospects for their migration to the U.S. Soon, however, this private refugee aid network also came to serve as a surrogate welfare bureaucracy

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<sup>64</sup> “Meetings of the NRS with Representatives of the Émigré Group,” Feb 18, 1941, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 43.

<sup>65</sup> Quote is from, “Report of Proceedings of Conference Called by the National Coordinating Committee,” Sep 17, 1938, NCC, F 2. Also see, International Committee on Refugees: Report of the 4th Plenary Session, London,” Aug 15-17, 1944; and International Committee on Refugees: Report of the 5th Plenary Session, Paris, Nov 20-22, 1945, both in Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 22; “James G. McDonald to Joseph Chamberlain,” Oct 10, 1935, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 25; “Joseph Chamberlain to Cecilia Razovsky,” Jun 25, 1938, NCC, RG 247, 3.1, F 5.

<sup>66</sup> “Report of Proceedings of Conference Called by the National Coordinating Committee,” Sep 17, 1938, NCC, F 2.

in place of the official state. As the decade progressed, a growing number of refugees would require institutional assistance of some type for an extended period of time, categorized by the voluntary agencies as their “residual cases.” Almost by definition, the majority of refugees from Nazism arriving in the United States were poor, many increasingly also arriving physically and emotionally traumatized. By the time the Nuremberg laws had stripped all German Jews of their citizenship in September 1935, and thus what little actually remained of their civil rights, most had already been robbed of the means to earn a sustainable livelihood. Making matters worse, the German government progressively limited the amount of capital and valuables with which emigrants were allowed to leave, until by 1937, that amount had dwindled to 10 Deutch Marks, equaling about \$4 U.S.<sup>67</sup> Amidst the explosion of public spending on poor relief during the New Deal era, the question of whether these refugees should seek aid from publicly or privately funded welfare programs became an important and contentious matter. American welfare historian Walter Trattner observed that the Great Depression seemed to answer “once and for all, the vexing question of whether private or public agencies should be responsible for relief-giving.”

*[This section investigates a series of highly conspicuous and contentious debates in New York City and nationally in the middle to late 1930s over whether aliens should have access to the new suite of New Deal relief programs, or if they should be reserved only for American citizens. The debates resulted in a poisonous political and legal climate for refugee advocates to consider the possibility of relieving their over-stretched operating budgets by placing ever-growing, ever-more needy waves of arriving refugees on public relief rolls. It concludes with . . .]*

. . . Indeed, the public attention that the alien-welfare debates received and the legal changes they wrought prompted a sharp increase in naturalization rates among America’s documented alien population.<sup>68</sup> Immigration officials had begun noticing an increase in naturalization rates,

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<sup>67</sup> “Selfhelp in Action,” Selfhelp, F 339; Davies, *Refugees in America*, 7, 10, 87; Wyman, *Paper Walls*, 28-9.

<sup>68</sup> [cite #s from Thatcher]

especially among those from Nazi-controlled countries earlier in the decade. INS Commissioner Daniel W. MacCormack had suggested to a meeting of immigrant aid workers in New York that this increase was a result of immigrants wanting access to the “honey pot,” referring to the fact that many states’ old age and blind assistance limited benefits to American citizens.<sup>69</sup> As these types of restrictions were applied on a national scale in the later 1930s, however, the rates of naturalization applications rose sharply. File clerks on Ellis Island could not keep up the sudden influx of requests by immigrants for their ship registers as a part of the naturalization application process. They were sent digging through the countless brittle old pieces of faded yellow paper, some of which hadn’t been touched for over twenty years old. This was done at the urging of tens of thousands of aliens who were scrambling to keep up with a political climate that increasingly defined people’s access to the nation’s public resources by their legal status to the nation-state.<sup>70</sup>

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### **The Limits of Private Relief and the Embrace of Refugee’s Public Welfare “Rights”**

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These indictment of aliens’ claim to public relief came just as refugee admissions to the U.S. were ballooning, soon stretching the private refugee aid agencies’ budgets to the breaking point. The affiliated agencies of the National Coordinating Committee and National Refugee Service became victims of their own success in creating a political and legal environment in which significant numbers of Jewish refugees could enter the United States.<sup>71</sup> In the twelve

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<sup>69</sup> New York state applied this restriction until the early 1940s. “Considerations in the Use of Public Assistance for Jewish Aliens residing in the U.S. over Five Years,” NRS, RG 248, F 519. “Change Opposed in Alien Quotas,” *New York Times*, Mar 4, 1934.

<sup>70</sup> [cite divine, legomsky and articles]

<sup>71</sup> *NRS, Annual Report, 1943*, 25, Table 1. While the State Department’s Visa Division and its corps of Central European consuls continued to harbor some deadly strains of anti-Semitism and general callousness toward the



month period before New York City's aliens began getting dropped from the public relief rolls in mid 1937 the number of Jewish refugees migrating to the U.S. with permanent resident visas had nearly doubled, from approximately 6,000 to over 11,000. It continued to double over each of the next two years. Over 51,000 Jewish refugees from Nazism entered the U.S. with permanent resident and temporary visas from mid 1938 to mid 1939, most settling in and around the New York City area. 71,000 more arrived over the next two years. The beginning of this accelerated immigration, in fact, prompted the National Coordinating Committee meeting of September 1938 that introduced this chapter over whether refugees' hospital bills should be paid by the government or private agencies.<sup>72</sup>

Since the verdict in that and many similar agency decisions was to keep the vast majority of admitted Jewish refugees on private agency relief rolls, the victims of Nazi persecution were initially largely spared the direct repercussions of the New Deal relief cuts. The same cannot be said, however, for the voluntary agencies themselves. The NCC and NRS became responsible for supporting much larger numbers of dependent refugees than in the past, and the alien-welfare debates made the prospects for shifting some of those refugees over to public relief bureaus seem less viable than ever. Demands of the new refugees on NCC and NRS continued to grow as the war and Holocaust deepened. When war began in late 1939, the NRS' New York offices alone fielded over 1,000 requests for assistance per day, including for welfare relief, affidavit assistance, job placement, and language and job training.<sup>73</sup> That was twice the load of three years earlier, despite the marked growth of a resettlement program that had begun systematically

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refugees' plight throughout the period of Nazi conquest and Holocaust -- as stinging documented by historians, David Wyman and Bat-Ami Zucker -- the obstinate mood that prevailed earlier in the decade had begun to soften, if only a little.

<sup>72</sup> *NRS, Annual Report, 1939*, 1, 6, 8; *NRS, Annual Report, 1940*, 1, 3, 25, Table; *NRS, Annual Report, 1942*, 8. Fiscal Year 1939 was the first and only year that the immigration quota from Nazi controlled countries was filled, although it was considerably exhausted during the next two years as well.

<sup>73</sup> *NRS, Annual Report, 1939*, 3-4. White, *300,000 New Americans*, 56.

moving limited numbers of refugees away from the overburdened New York City area, and northeastern seaboard more generally.<sup>74</sup> In the beginning of 1939, 1,100 refugee families were receiving regular agency welfare relief (in the form of cash for food, clothing, lodging, etc.). By the end of the year, three times that number were on the rolls, and the case load only continued to swell into the early 1940s.<sup>75</sup> The month before war began (October, 1939) the average length of time for a refugee family to remain on NRS relief was less than six months. The average had doubled to a year by the start of 1941. Not only were refugees arriving in the United States with fewer material resources, but increasing numbers were too old to work productively and more susceptible of needing expensive medical care. Only one out of six refugees arriving in the United States in 1938 was over 44 years old, whereas almost one in three represented that age group by 1940.<sup>76</sup>

NRS faced an untenable financial situation in 1940 that required its leadership to rethink its earlier policy of “doing what needed to be done” to prevent refugees from going on public relief and being treated at hospitals at public expense. At the beginning of 1940 NRS had amassed approximately 1,500 “residual load of relief cases” -- that is, those cases (representing both individuals and families) which had no foreseeable likelihood of becoming independent of outside support. In the past, agency personnel had only been prepared to assume a small handful of such cases, perhaps several score.<sup>77</sup> As before, agency officials were loathe to force refugees onto public home relief rolls.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> White, *300,000 New Americans*, 44.

<sup>75</sup> *NRS, Annual Report, 1939*, 7, *NRS, Annual Report, 1942*, 8-12, 15.

<sup>76</sup> *NRS, Annual Report, 1940*, 3-4

<sup>77</sup> *NRS, Annual Report, 1940*, 3-4, 21

<sup>78</sup> Agency officials came to this decision more from concerns over public relations than law. It should be recalled that the legal restrictions placed on aliens from 1937 to 1939 applied to WPA *work* relief, not home relief or medical payments, which in New York City and state remained open to anyone who could pass a means test. Additionally, many aliens were able to remain legally eligible to receive WPA jobs if they had filed their first papers by June 21, 1938. Finally, Harry Hopkins eventually made it relatively easy for aliens to prove that they had filed first papers in

1940 marked a sea change, however, in the previous relief policies of the NRS and NCC. For the first time in its or the NCC's history, the Jewish refugee aid agencies decided to cut the amount of relief that refugees would receive. They felt that this was a more desirable option rather than dropping some refugees from their rolls, . Since the late nineteenth century America's Jewish social service agencies had been the envy of other welfare organizations, both private and public. They commonly offered their clientele a more generous suite of welfare support than other agencies, whether public or private. It was one of the chief ways that Jewish leadership had managed to limit negative publicity and contain excessive anti-Semitism over the years. Now, NRS clients began to receive provisions *below* what most would have received had they gone on public support.<sup>79</sup>

America's entrance into the war provided no relief for NRS' overtaxed welfare division until late 1942. Although the war meant that markedly fewer refugees were able to make it into the United States -- thus alleviating part of the pressure on NRS domestic relief operations -- many refugees became unemployed as a result of government-sanctioned directives that forbade "enemy aliens" from working in many war and government-related jobs. Exacerbating the situation, a piqued climate of xenophobia prompted many employers to refuse jobs to enemy aliens even for positions at which they could have legally worked. President Roosevelt began calming the situation by making a series of speeches urging Americans not to blindly discriminate against loyal aliens. By the beginning of 1943, the alien unemployment situation had improved considerably as a result of Roosevelt's efforts and a humming war-time economy.

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time to be eligible for WPA jobs, only requiring that they file a personal affidavit to that effect. See Thatcher, *Immigrants and the 1930s* [get pp.] [cite articles] This all said, aliens would continue to be the first group cut from WPA rolls when federal funds proved insufficient to meet need.

<sup>79</sup> NRS, *Annual Report, 1940*, 21-22.

With the growth of the labor market, and with some legal restrictions on alien employment lifted, many refugees found solid work to keep them off of either NRS or government welfare rolls.<sup>80</sup>

What should have been a time of financial relief for NRS' domestic welfare operations, however, soon witnessed new challenges to the agency's budget. From mid 1943 and early 1944, a major debate erupted from budgetary concerns between agency officials over who was ultimately responsible for the well-being of destitute refugees, the private Jewish agency or the government. Whereas in the past, those who favored private relief for refugees generally held sway within the Jewish refugee aid community, the tide changed direction during this war-time row. The debate's outcome and the ways in which it was argued were heavily informed by a decade of lessons that refugee aid workers had learned from the fields of New Deal relief and alienage politics. They were also informed by a new wartime political climate that held the promise of being more receptive to the needs of admitted refugees.

The budgetary crisis was not caused by a marked increase in relief demands, but rather the constriction of available funds for domestic welfare operations. As the war intensified increasing proportions of the Jewish philanthropic dollar were allocated to helping Jews overseas escape the grip of Nazi authorities and secure temporary refuge and material relief until the war was over. These internationally-based activities were largely outside of the direct ambit of the NRS, which concentrated on American immigration assistance and domestic adjustment support.<sup>81</sup> As the war cut off shipping channels for refugees to come to the United States and the political climate became less welcoming of "alien enemies," the attention of the organized Jewish community in America was directed increasingly abroad. In 1939 the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) became the sole fund-raising and allocating conduit for major Jewish-based

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<sup>80</sup> *NRS, Annual Report, 1940* [get pages. cite White and Davies.]

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

refugee aid activities in the United States, and UJA leadership prioritized international efforts over providing aid to refugees already in the United States.<sup>82</sup> With fewer refugees likely to make it into the United States during the remainder of the war, and with the international situation looking increasingly dire, less money would be available for NRS' already overtaxed welfare programs, and more would be directed to the country's two primary Jewish agencies dedicated to providing overseas relief to refugees, the American Joint Distribution Committee and United Palestinian Appeal.<sup>83</sup>

NRS leadership focused increasingly on the international situation as well. NRS director Joseph Chamberlain sat on the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, which was the liaison body between Franklin Roosevelt and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR), the organization created at the behest of Roosevelt in 1938 to find resettlement opportunities around the world for refugees.<sup>84</sup> The IGCR received no funding from member governments. As was the case with the League of Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees, it was funded and administered primarily by private refugee aid agencies, particularly Jewish-based agencies from the United States and Great Britain.<sup>85</sup> NRS executive director Cecilia Razovsky made regular trips to Latin American countries to persuade governments to accept refugee émigrés, either on a permanent or temporary basis. These agreements could be especially taxing on NRS funds, often requiring the agency to put up expensive "bonds" for each

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<sup>82</sup> [explanation of NCC/NRS funding previously, inc. the NCC Fund.]

<sup>83</sup> "Proceedings: President's War Relief Control Board," April 26, 1945, RG 469, Entry 671, B 13, National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>84</sup> Minutes of the First Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Political Refugees," May 16, 1938, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 58; Cecilia Razovsky to Mr. Baerwald and Prof. Chamberlain of the International Conference in Evian, Jun 1, 1938; NCC, RG 247, F 5. [give explanation of Evian, IGCR, PACPR, etc., and the general ineptitude of these efforts.]

<sup>85</sup> United Nations Department of Public Information, Research Section, "Refugees," Background Paper No. 78, Dec 29, 1953, United Service for New Americans Records, YIVO, RG 246, F 597; Franklin Roosevelt, "First Report to Congress on U.S. Operations in UNRRA," Mar 28, 1944, (Washington D.C.: GPO), 1944; "Displaced persons in Germany," *Department of State Bulletin*, Jul 5, 1945, n. 317, v. 8, 127-128; "Proceedings: President's War Relief Control Board," April 26, 1945, RG 469, Entry 671, B 13, National Archives at College Park, MD.

admitted refugee to protect the governments against refugees becoming charges on public resources. Sometimes, government officials demanded bribe money as well.<sup>86</sup>

The growth of governmental and intergovernmental initiatives on behalf of refugees beginning in late 1943 taxed America's Jewish philanthropic resources considerably. Although governmental and intergovernmental efforts on behalf of refugees had been notoriously feeble through most of the Nazi era, the end of 1943 and beginning of 1944 witnessed a change. As allied armies made advances on the European battlefield, their governments began making substantially accelerated efforts to alleviate the refugee crisis. In November 1943, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was established at the prompting of American and British authorities to provide aid to liberated war-torn populations, especially refugees. America's private refugee aid agencies would soon be asked to provide considerable support to UNRRA, both directly, and through a rejuvenated IGCR. The War Refugee Board, established as an independent federal agency in January 1944 to rescue and find safe havens for tens of thousands of victims of persecution, also relied upon considerable assistance from private Jewish agencies.<sup>87</sup> These major international rescue and relief efforts have attracted considerable scholarly attention over the past half century, yet their impact on the domestic side of American refugee aid activities has been largely ignored. Particularly overlooked have been the ways in which war-time challenges to domestic relief efforts affected the wider plan to reform immigration laws after the war was over.

These financial connections between international and domestic refugee aid prompted NRS officials to re-evaluate its established position on public relief referrals. The NRS'

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<sup>86</sup> "'Urgent Cable'" to the President of Cuba, Jun 7, 1939, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 100.

<sup>87</sup> Minutes of the Technical Sub-Committee of the Intergovernmental Committee of Refugees, Evian, France, Jul 13, 1938; "International Committee on Refugees: Report of the 4th Plenary Session, London" Aug 15 to 17, 1944; "International Committee on Refugees: Report of the 5th Plenary Session, Paris" Nov 20, 1920 to 22, 1945, all in Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 22.

Subcommittee on Public Charge and Deportation conducted a study on the issue in summer of 1943. In previous years, most refugees who had resided in the country over five years, and thus legally exempt from public charge deportation, had nonetheless been kept on the private relief rolls of NCC and NRS for reasons of public relations.<sup>88</sup> Although costly, the agencies had been able to sustain the practice since the numbers had remained relatively small. Yet, the number of refugees requiring long-term relief -- the so-called "residual cases" -- was about to skyrocket. November 1943 marked the fifth anniversary of the programs of Kristalnacht. Five years had now passed since the arrival of the first large numbers of refugees who would require sustained institutional support. The subcommittee report found that over one third of NRS' relief case load would have been in the United States by the end of 1944. By changing agency policy and referring them to public agencies, NRS could divert approximately 10% of its operating budget to other pressing needs, possibly more. The subcommittee argued that these facts justified NRS changing its previous policy and begin dropping refugees from its rolls who had resided in the U.S. for five years, and thus were no longer deportable as public charges.<sup>89</sup>

After receiving the recommendation NRS Chairman Joseph Beck held meetings over the possible policy change with INS Commissioner Earl Harrison, and officers of several other leading Jewish organizations and alien advocacy groups, including the American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, and the Common Council for American Unity. The general consensus that emerged from these consultations held that "in the light of existing pressure in Washington for the curtailment of immigration, such referral would constitute a

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<sup>88</sup> Agency personnel made occasional exceptions to this policy, especially for those who had illnesses that made them unacceptable to any other potential countries of exile.

<sup>89</sup> "Preliminary Report of Study of N.R.S. Relief Cases to Determine Public Charge Risks," Jul 9, 1943; "Problems Arising out of Policy Regarding Referrals for Public Assistance," Oct 20, 1943; Minutes of Meeting of the Migration and Alien Status Committee," Oct 26, 1943, all in Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 57.

potential threat to continued immigration in the post-war period.”<sup>90</sup> That is, virtually all refugees should remain on private, not public relief rolls, even those no longer deportable on public charge grounds. Immigration restrictionists in Congress had been threatening to curtail immigration throughout the Nazi era, and war-time anxieties over the presence of “enemy aliens” in the United States seemed to give them the type of political capital they would need to be successful. Beck and the people with whom he had met not only hoped to avoid giving these forces another political issue to use, but began to set their sites on lobbying for liberalized immigration reform after the war. They felt that such a campaign had a much better chance of succeeding if Jewish leaders could continue to boast that America’s organized Jewish community had proven its ability to successfully adjust poor and sick Jewish immigrants to American society during the Nazi era without relying on public resources. The non-Zionist component of America’s Jewish community, in particular, began seeing such legislative changes as one of the few panaceas for the lot of world Jewry after the war.<sup>91</sup>

There was another reason why Beck and the other Jewish leaders with whom he met hoped to avoid a public relations fallout of an NRS policy change regarding refugee referrals to public agencies. They were prominent Jewish lawyers, businessmen, and rabbis who had grown concerned that the large recent influx of indigent, and seemingly “inassimilable” refugees might reflect badly on America’s more established Jewish community. Allowing so many to go on public doles would only exacerbate this threat. Members of the NRS Executive Committee and other Jewish leaders affiliated with them had long labored to earn a degree of “mainstream”

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<sup>90</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Migration and Alien Status Committee,” Oct 26, 1943.

<sup>91</sup> “Preliminary Report of Study of N.R.S. Relief Cases to Determine Public Charge Risks,” Jul 9, 1943; “Problems Arising out of Policy Regarding Referrals for Public Assistance,” Oct 20, 1943; Minutes of Meeting of the Migration and Alien Status Committee,” Oct 26, 1943; Divine, *American Immigration Policy*, 124-8; Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy*, 280-1; Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, Wyman, *Paper Walls*, Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy* [get pp.]



respect and acceptance. Their close and central involvement with Democratic politics during the Roosevelt and LaGuardia administrations, and their recent commercial and professional advances convinced some of them that this goal was within reach. They feared that the public stigma of thousands of Jewish refugees going on the public dole would become attached to America's Jewish community as a whole.<sup>92</sup>

The leaders of NRS' Family Services Department, NRS' primary welfare relief division, did not receive the news well upon learning that the NRS' Executive Committee had refused to accept the policy change. The reaction from these on-the-ground relief workers was swift and unequivocal, and revealed that there existed in America's Jewish refugee aid field two profoundly different perspectives on the right of Jewish aliens to partake in the public resources of the country. The Executive Committee's refusal to refer long-time resident refugees to public welfare bureaus was not only practically infeasible, they insisted, but ethically and politically backward. NRS' leading case workers -- mostly women -- boasted long experience with such venerable NRS-affiliated immigrant aid societies as the Jewish Social Service Association of New York City, the Jewish Family Welfare Society of Brooklyn, and the National Council of Jewish Women. They had markedly divergent experiences in the field of immigrant and refugee aid than those sitting on the Executive Committee. The relief case workers labored in the trenches of alien destitution, getting their images of "how the other half lives" daily and first-hand. Their sympathies for the refugees tended to be more intense and intimately felt as a result. Although the "community leaders" of the NRS' Executive Committee and the other Jewish leaders with whom they commonly worked betrayed considerable dedication to the refugee cause, they typically fought their battles on a higher plane of public and government relations.

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<sup>92</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Migration and Alien Status Committee," Oct 26, 1943, Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 57; Divine, *American Immigration Policy*, Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, Wyman, *Paper Walls*, Breitman and Kraut, *American Refugee Policy*. [get pp.]

Their eyes were fixed on a wider field of public policy initiatives, especially post-war immigration reform and the overall reputation of American Jewry. As such, they were not as primarily concerned with the immediate needs of the poorest, least healthy, and most dependent classes of Jewish aliens.<sup>93</sup>

The Family Services Division painstakingly articulated their opposition to the new policy in two extensive memos. Their arguments eventually convinced NRS leadership to reverse its directive and return to its old practice of public agency referrals. The reports outlined how continuing the old policy in the face of the new challenges would be both logistically difficult and financially devastating to the NRS amidst war-time budget cut-backs.<sup>94</sup> More revealing of the philosophical divide between the Family Services Department and Executive Committee, however, were the reports' ruminations about the nature of public assistance in a pluralist democratic society, and more broadly, the increasingly intertwined roles between philanthropy and government in modern America. Rather than viewing public assistance as an impediment to dependent refugees' inclusion in the American political and social communities -- as NCC and NRS leadership had overwhelmingly perceived it to be over the previous ten years -- the caseworkers saw it as a constitutive element in their "Americanization." Furthermore, only the "integration" of public and private aid would properly foster a needy refugee's full integration into American democracy. The assistance of *both* the aliens' immediate and larger community were required. Collapsing public and private welfare aid onto the field of public policy, one of the reports asserted that "assistance when needed has been established as a right in our

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<sup>93</sup> "Preliminary Report of Study of N.R.S. Relief Cases to Determine Public Charge Risks," Jul 9, 1943; "Problems Arising out of Policy Regarding Referrals for Public Assistance," Oct 20, 1943; Minutes of Meeting of the Migration and Alien Status Committee," Oct 26, 1943, all in Chamberlain Papers, RG 278, F 57.

<sup>93</sup> Minutes of Meeting of the Migration and Alien Status Committee," Oct 26, 1943.

<sup>94</sup> "Considerations in the Use of Public Assistance for Jewish Aliens Residing in U.S. over Five Years," 1944 (exact date unclear), NRS, RG 248, F 519; "Statement of Suggested Practices and Procedures Regarding the Referral of Aliens to Public Agencies," undated, but written in late 1943 or early 1944, NRS, F 519.

democracy,” whether provided by government or voluntary sources. The report attacked the Executive Committee’s reasoning as representative of an “earlier and professionally undeveloped method of work” with immigrants, whereby needy aliens were kept away from government resources for fear of public reprisals.<sup>95</sup>

Rather than seeing the acceptance of public relief as an impediment to the process of assimilating to American society, the case workers argued that their experience over the previous ten years had convinced them that when legal, public assistance could be “an essentially positive resource for the individual refugee in his process of Americanization.” Relying solely on the Jewish community retarded the alien’s assimilation to mainstream society and full membership in the political community. The report asserted that having the refugees avoid public assistance, especially when they were legally entitled to it, stigmatized them as permanently foreign, unworthy, and un-American. In an immigrant’s first years it was logical that his particular community should be responsible for caring for him. Yet, over time that responsibility should fall increasingly to the broader community represented by the government and its programs of social assistance. Directly refuting the Executive Committee claims that continuing the traditional policy was in the best interest of future prospects for liberalized immigration reforms, the relief workers responded that when the NRS says that “we do not think it is safe for the refugee group to make use of public assistance . . . we are suggesting to the refugee that in effect he forego certain of his democratic privileges because certain sections of the Jewish community have fears about the future of the alien in the United States.” The case workers suggested that

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<sup>95</sup> “Considerations in the Use of Public Assistance.”

the Jewish community had taken care of its own for long enough. It was now time for the broader American community to begin accepting its fair share.<sup>96</sup>

Written, as the reports were, on the heels of the New Deal, one might reasonably have expected them to support their arguments with references to the fact that government relief programs supported millions of Americans during the Great Depression. After all, the very ethos behind the explosion of public welfare programs during the 1930s implied that government had a responsibility to care for those in need when private sources of support were inadequate. Applying these broader developments to refugee needs might have been tempting to the case workers. Jews comprised a stalwart component of the New Deal political coalition, and deportation concerns aside, access to most forms of public relief during most of the 1930s -- be they municipal, state, or federal -- had been available for legal aliens.<sup>97</sup> Yet, the NRS case workers did *not* reference the New Deal to buttress their arguments, and likely, for good reason. As shown above a prominent discourse surrounding New Deal relief programs linked entitlement to *citizenship*, not a *universal* charge to help all categories of people in need. National Coordinating Committee and National Refugee Service case workers had learned this unpleasant fact from the alien-welfare debates of the middle and late 1930s that occurred in New York, and had extended onto the national scene. If the experience of the New Deal failed to provide the NRS case workers with a strategic reference point from which to make their argument, then what did?

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<sup>96</sup> "Considerations in the Use of Public Assistance;" "Statement of Suggested Practices and Procedures."

<sup>97</sup> There was some discrimination, however. Until the early 1940s, for instance, only U.S. citizens were eligible to receive state-funded old age and blind assistance in the alien-rich state of New York. White ethnic aliens, including Jews, were treated significantly better with regards to New Deal era public relief than Mexican aliens. Historian Mae Ngai has demonstrated that Mexican migrant workers, unlike European aliens, were regularly deported for public charge abuses, their names having been reported to INS officials by local relief bureaus. See Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 71-5, 228. Additionally and as previously mentioned, public welfare personnel -- especially in New York City and state -- were commonly sympathetic to European aliens, often having worked for private ethnically-affiliated aid agencies before moving to public welfare departments.

War was the answer. The New Deal may have made the specter of receiving public aid a constitutive part of belonging to the national body for citizens, but U.S. involvement in World War II, NRS case workers hoped, provided lessons that public relief was a “right” that aliens should be able to claim as well. The report explained that America’s battle against totalitarianism was essentially a fight against discrimination and a commitment to forging a national culture that embraced pluralism. It asserted that “the impact of America’s participation in the war has undoubtedly facilitated . . . the integration of the refugee into American democracy.” The report pointed to “the government’s new commitment to anti-discrimination at home,” the creation of the Fair Employment Practices Committee, repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, expediting the naturalization of military personnel as proof of a more generous public posture toward aliens. Heavy emphasis was placed on the degree to which the war had “increased public concern over unifying various parts of the nation.” National unity had to be achieved by peacefully embracing difference.<sup>98</sup>

Although INS Commissioner Earl Harrison had been one of the people urging the NRS Executive Committee to keep long-time resident refugees off of public rolls, the NRS case workers invoked his own words from a recent speech to buttress their position. In March 1943 Harrison had explained to a crowd that the United States “has faced a number of acid tests both on the battle front and on the home front.” Among these were the “prayers” of America’s enemies that the arrival of poor, needy, and culturally foreign refugees would cause the country to collapse from “waves of prejudice and racial dissension.” Instead, Harrison contended, “we are stronger in our unity than we were in peacetime, when we were less aware of our alien population.” Helping this process along, the INS Commissioner explained were the “established

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<sup>98</sup> “Considerations in the Use of Public Assistance;” “Statement of Suggested Practices and Procedures.” Mae Ngai has asserted that during World War II “liberals envisioned domestic group conflict as a national weak point that fascism could potentially exploit.” Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 232.

democratic rights of aliens.” Among these, NRS relief case workers insisted, were the *social* right to public welfare assistance.<sup>99</sup> They co-opted Harrison’s message of inclusive pluralism and applied it to their own version of social democracy that did not discriminate on the basis of citizenship and alienage.

Harrison also sounded a cautious note in his speech, however, that likely made NRS personnel on both sides of the public assistance argument reflect soberly on the future. He warned that the United States still boasted an abundance of “anti-alien” and “anti-Semitic groups” who would work “toward the restriction of post-war migration.” Although NRS leadership ultimately did decide to refer the expanding group of long-time resident refugees to public welfare departments, they probably did so with a degree of trepidation.<sup>100</sup> Refugees from Nazism had largely escaped the focus of the alien-welfare debates of the 1930s, likely attributable to the fact that the Jewish aid agencies had managed to keep all but a relative handful off of public relief. By moving a new larger group of refugees in need of long-term institutional support moving onto public rolls, refugee advocates were rolling the dice. Another conspicuous row over public resources could destroy future prospects for immigration reform, increasingly seen by leaders of America’s Jewish community as one of the few panaceas for the lot of world Jewry after the war.

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Domestic refugee aid during the Nazi era bequeathed several enduring legacies to the nascent field of American refugee policy that it conceived. It carved out a novel and distinctive space for refugee policies within traditional immigration law by making institutional “adjustment” services a de facto corollary to refugee admissions. It created a pattern whereby

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<sup>99</sup> “Considerations in the Use of Public Assistance.”

<sup>100</sup> “Change in Refugee Aid,” *New York Times*, Jun 22, 1944; “Considerations in the Use of Public Assistance.”

the vast majority of that adjustment aid would derive from private, not governmental sources. This was especially noteworthy considering that *publicly*-funded American welfare support ballooned during this period, dispensed to unprecedented numbers of people. Voluntary agencies and the state would forge close operational ties with one another in this process, forging a “hybrid” field of governance where nongovernmental organizations exercised remarkable degrees of public authority. Events of this period proved that American aid to political refugees could embrace a significant immigration component. That is, destitute refugees could indeed squeeze through the country’s recently narrowed “Golden Gate,” albeit with considerable qualifications.

Domestic refugee relief initiatives also fostered the development of another major American policy field that the next chapter explores: policies of *international* humanitarianism. Although the National Coordinating Committee and National Refugee Service concentrated on immigration and domestic adjustment support, they worked intimately with other agencies that provided international relief to the victims of persecution and war. These other agencies, Chapter Two demonstrates, formed a seminal core of what emerged as a massive and diversified field of international humanitarian relief during and after World War II. Although domestic and international refugee relief activities experienced a conjoined birth they nonetheless charted very different paths of implementation from one another. While the aid that refugees who were admitted to the United States during the Nazi era and for years thereafter would come predominantly from private sources, American policies of *international* refugee relief boasted a far more robust contribution from the federal government and the intergovernmental organizations that it was so active in spawning.