Institutions and Interactions: Shanghai Jewish Refugees and American Jewish Communities, 1930s-1940s

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INSTITUTIONS AND INTERACTIONS: SHANGHAI JEWISH REFUGEES AND
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITIES, 1930s-1940s

by

ANNA TUCKER

Under the Direction of Marni Davis, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This study looks at the community of Shanghai Jews in its diversity, 1930s-1940s, then at its interactions in 1949 with the American Jewish communities of Atlanta and New York as Shanghai Jews were transported across the United States in sealed trains. This exploration supports the argument that Shanghai Jewish refugees and American Jewish communities existed in an interdependent relationship at the close of the 1940s. Through an exploration of individual and institutional interactions in Shanghai, Atlanta, and New York, with an emphasis on media, this study questions what these interactions tell us—and do not tell us—about both the host and refugee communities.

INDEX WORDS: Immigration, Refugee, Identity formation, Transnational, Jewish diaspora, U.S.-China
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ANNA TUCKER

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AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITIES, 1930s-1940s

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJJDC. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (see also JDC)

CARE. Committee of Assistance of European Refugees

CCP. Chinese Communist Party

DP. Displaced Person(s)

HIAS. Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

HICEM. HIAS-JCA Emigration Association (see also HIAS)

IC. International Committee for European Immigrants in China

INS. U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service

IRO. International Refugee Organization

JDC. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (see also AJJDC)

KMT. Kuomintang (China)

LPC. 1924 Act’s “likely to be a public charge” policy

NGO. Non-Governmental Organization

SJS. Shanghai Jewish School

UJA. United Jewish Appeal

UNRRA. United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

USNA. United Service for New Americans

YIVO. Institute for Jewish Research (Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut)
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

On February 2, 1949, approximately five hundred Shanghai Jews left China on a steamship. Once they reached San Francisco, California, they then crossed the United States in a sealed 20-car diesel train and eventually departed New York under supervised guard, en route to destinations including Israel, Italy, and Austria. While only a few hundred in number, the Shanghai Jewish refugees’ experiences on their month-long journey brought together a panoply of events and sociopolitical forces of global magnitude.

The Chinese Civil War between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the United States-backed Kuomintang (KMT) culminated in the spring of 1949, when Mao Zedong’s CCP forces approached the international city of Shanghai. Amidst rumors and fears surrounding the arrival of the Civil War on their doorstep, thousands of foreigners fled the country to avoid being caught in the crosshairs of the conflict. A diverse community of Shanghai Jews, whose numbers had expanded with the influx of Holocaust refugees in the late 1930s, was among those seeking escape from the port city. They sought exit routes through Canada, Italy, and the United States in the early months of 1949, with the assistance of the United Nations-appointed International Refugee Organization and several Jewish welfare institutions. In May 1949, Mao’s forces reached Shanghai and Chiang Kai-shek and his forces fled, eventually settling in Taiwan.

The United States, whose strict nation-based immigration policy prevented thousands from escaping to America from Nazi-occupied Europe during World War II, remained locked in a decades-long political battle over harsh immigration legislation. Nativist fears and rapidly-shifting foreign policies barred many refugees and displaced persons from entering the United States, including those seeking to leave China. The restrictive Displaced Persons Act of 1948
locked Harry Truman’s administration and the conservative 80th and 81st Congresses in a war of words while thousands were refused immigration visas.

Many Jewish non-governmental organizations encouraged Shanghai Jews to escape the encroaching Civil War via immigration to Israel, a nation also embroiled in a series of civil wars between Arab and Jewish forces. Great Britain withdrew its colonial infrastructure in the wake of World War II, and the United Nations adopted a resolution dividing the territory and sparking a bloody territorial conflict between Jewish and Arab residents. In May 1948, David Ben-Gurion announced the establishment of Eretz-Israel, the Land of Israel. Hours after its founding, four surrounding nations declared war on Israel. The United States became the first country to recognize Israel’s provisional government, despite disagreement from within Truman’s administration. The Arab-Israeli War inflamed the region in the months that followed.

In February and March of 1949, a confluence of events took place: Israel and select Arab nations signed armistices to conclude the Arab-Israeli War; amendments to the U.S. Displaced Persons Act failed to pass in Congress; and the Chinese Communist Party advanced within striking distance of Shanghai. The Shanghai Jewish sealed train provides a track through this vast, transnational story connecting immigration policy, institutional competition, and individual agency.

I have the Shanghai Jewish community to thank for connecting my own academic and professional interests, as presented in this study. My undergraduate studies in East Asian history were supplemented by summers studying at the Beijing Language and Culture University, Bahrom Institute of Seoul Women’s University, and a scholar laureate program in China and Tibet. When I accepted a position at Kennesaw State University’s Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University, I thought my China studies would be
sidelined for the time. On the contrary, the museum’s professional network connected me to scholars and to literature on the expansive reach of Jewish diaspora, including the Shanghai Jewish community during World War II. In the years that followed, contacts in China alerted me to a preservation project of the Shanghai Jewish ghetto and the establishment of a museum dedicated to the refugees’ memory. My research track was set when Dr. Marni Davis, my advisor and associate professor of history at Georgia State University (GSU), alerted me to a series of sealed trains carrying Shanghai Jews through Atlanta in the late 1940s, and when Dr. Douglas Reynolds, GSU professor of history, provided the context and guidance through a directed reading focused on the Shanghai Jewish community.

This present study examines a series of interactions between Shanghai and American Jewish communities that took place across two continents and two decades, with the sealed transport of the Shanghai Jews through the United States as the narrative anchor. I argue that the Shanghai Jewish refugees and American Jewish communities existed in an interdependent relationship.¹ The passage of Shanghai Jews across the United States provided American Jewish leadership with a platform where they could discuss local institutional pressures alongside transnational issues like immigration. In turn, the efforts of the American Jewish communities provided resources, connections, and political support so that the plight of the Shanghai Jewish refugees became of international concern, putting pressure on the U.S. 81st Congress to amend restrictive immigration legislation.

As the Shanghai Jews crossed the Pacific Ocean and landed in San Francisco in February 1949, American Jewish communities rallied in their support. Media reports illustrate how Jewish

organizational leaders in Atlanta and New York evaluated their responsibility to these refugees and estimated the resources and connections they could provide. In many ways, we discover as much about American Jewish institutions as we do about Shanghai Jews through the narratives of front pages and the insights of handwritten memos.

By studying the Shanghai Jews and their interactions with American Jewish communities, we uncover a degree of agency and diversity often overlooked by larger refugee narratives. Through individual and institutional histories, I explore the ways select community members processed and shaped their environments through interaction with each other and in response to their own contexts. The experiences of these Shanghai Jews crack open the monolithic portrayal of Jewish refugees in World War II-era China and exhibits how communities splintered and came together at varying times and for varying reasons. Despite the restrictive circumstances, these refugees tapped into the communication networks of transnational aid organizations and even successfully negotiated for supplies and administrative support.

In order to understand the context of this transnational history and the diversity of its actors, chapter one begins with an examination of the Shanghai Jewish community before, during, and after World War II. Chapter two explores the political, economic, and institutional environment that surrounded arrangements for the sealed transports, then follows the Shanghai Jewish refugees across the Pacific Ocean.

Chapters three and four expound upon the Shanghai Jews’ experiences while in the United States. Thanks to a series of media reports and supporting institutional records, two communities provide the opportunity for case studies: Atlanta and New York. Chapter three focuses on the Shanghai Jews’ stop in Atlanta, followed by chapter four in New York. In
addition to an overview of the refugees’ experiences while in Atlanta and New York, these final two chapters examine each local community’s institutional environment in order to understand the leadershps’ responses to the Shanghai Jewish transports. I close each chapter with an analysis of the rhetoric employed by local newspapers to interpret the Shanghai Jewish refugees within the context of their own environments.

The history of post-World War II Shanghai Jews is rarely told, although their wartime experiences are becoming a subfield of academic and public history. Despite the numerous opportunities to discuss themes of immigration, nation-state formation, and transnational experiences, the Shanghai Jewish narrative is beset by challenges ranging from a dearth of primary sources to the sheer volume of actors and stages required for a story of this scope. This complication, however, also serves as an impetus for this present study. How may we transcend conventional narrative bookends, including ports, wars, and archival collections, to investigate these histories pockmarked by missing sources and conflicting forces? Can limited perspectives within a microhistory provide a compelling history and exhibit change over time? The following study is a narrow opening between larger historical epochs, but one that will hopefully inspire others to swing open the door when they encounter sources and perspectives that complicate, contradict, or concur with these findings.

1.1 Literature Review

In the past fifteen years, the field of Jewish diasporic studies in East Asia experienced a surge of interest, with particular attention paid to the plight of European Jews in

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Shanghai during World War II.\textsuperscript{3} Prior to this proliferation of academic interest, select scholars laid the foundation for the Jewish experience in Shanghai. Most notable are David Kranzler’s *Japanese, Nazis & Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945*, an expansive tome focusing on political and ideological relations between the various communities, and Jonathan Goldstein’s two-volume *The Jews in China*, born out of a 1992 conference focused on the broader topic of Judaic experience in East Asia.\textsuperscript{4} While Goldstein’s compilation emphasizes the Kaifeng Jews, select essays regarding identity and religious traditions may be laterally connected to twentieth-century diasporic experiences. Another strength of *The Jews of China* is essays by scholars who later became foundational in the field, including Irene Eber and Marcia Ristaino.

The increase of academic interest coincided with the publication of memoirs by Shanghai Jewish refugees, including those of Ernest Heppner, who also contributed an essay to Jonathan Goldstein’s volumes.\textsuperscript{5} While Heppner is not a trained historian, his carefully detailed memoir adds insight into the layout and institutional operations of the Shanghai Ghetto, as well as notes


concerning cultural life, quotidian schedules, and fluctuating relations between diverse subidentities within the Jewish community.\(^6\)

Heppner’s memoir pairs well with Irene Eber’s *Voices from Shanghai*, which brings to light significant socioeconomic divides within the Jewish community and non-Jewish community, and provides primary sources that fracture assumptions of a monolithic experience within the Shanghai Ghetto.\(^7\) Eber’s interdisciplinary work pairs testimonies, poems, and photographs of Jewish experiences in Shanghai with brief narrative analyses.

One of the most significant trends within East Asian Jewish studies is a movement away from a binary Ashkenazic-Sephardic divide and toward a more complex, nuanced, and socioeconomic treatment of the communities. Irene Eber’s greatest academic contribution, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe: Survival, Co-existence, and Identity in a Multi-Ethnic City*, underscores this historiographical development.\(^8\) Eber’s 2012 publication ties together thirty years of research while refocusing the narrative on a specific group of Central European Jews. Maisie Meyer exhibits a similar methodology with her analysis of the Sephardic (Baghdadi) experience in Shanghai, which Gao Bei, an up-and-coming scholar known for her expert handling of multilingual sources, references frequently.\(^9\)

Gao Bei’s *Shanghai Sanctuary: Chinese and Japanese Policy toward European Jewish Refugees during World War II* provides a great service by incorporating Chinese and Japanese

\(^7\) Irene Eber, *Voices from Shanghai: Jewish Exiles in Wartime China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
police records and administrative correspondence while situating the Jewish refugees’ experiences within a larger framework of international politics. Her sociopolitical analysis interweaves refugees experiences with unfulfilled plans by Japanese and Chinese officials to settle Jews in China as a means of tapping into a supposed—and anti-Semitically formulated—global wealth network. Gao’s work surpasses even Eber’s in its use of primary sources, beyond Jewish perspectives, due to her expansive inclusion of policy, identity, and languages.

Finally, Marcia Ristaino’s Port of Last Resort breaks the conventional mold by presenting a comparative study between Russian non-Jews and Jewish refugees, allowing significant linguistic, cultural, and spatial comparisons to be made in contradiction to an otherwise insularly Jewish story. Ristaino combines the memoir approach of Heppner and the analytical perspectives of Gao, Eber, and Kranzler in a powerful and compelling depiction of complex refugee experiences in Shanghai. This approach, much like Gao’s, is a compelling reminder that the experiences of Shanghai Jewish immigrants and refugees were deeply embedded within larger social, political, and economic contexts. Although Ristaino’s work is a tremendous contribution to the study of Jewish immigration and refugee experiences, it is limited to Jewish experiences while in China. Apart from a brief chapter at the end, it barely sets sail from the port of Shanghai.

Publishing houses outside Europe and North America also exhibit an increased interest in Shanghai Jewish studies, although the conversation between scholars of variant linguistic backgrounds has, unsurprisingly, been limited. Recent Chinese publications attest to academic interest in the Shanghai Jewish refugee story, and they often are tied to historic preservation or

11 Ristaino, Port of Last Resort.
public history projects, as seen in Zhang Yanhua and Wang Jian’s *Preserving the Shanghai Ghetto: Memories of Jewish Refugees in 1940’s [sic] China* and Pan Guang’s *Jews in China (Youtairen zai Zhongguo).* These works are essential to my efforts to explore interconnections and variant experiences within the Shanghai Jewish experience.

Secondary literature tracing the Jewish refugees’ departure from Shanghai and subsequent experiences is remarkably sparse, underscoring the tendency to view refugee and immigrant experiences as beginning or ending with ports of call. The Shanghai Jewish immigration trains receive a one-paragraph mention in Ristiano’s *Port of Last Resort,* and Steve Hochstadt touches on the narrative in his oral-history based, *Auf Wiedersehen, Shanghai! But Where Do We Go?* Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan Pelts also provide a one-paragraph analysis and allude to the “bittersweetness” of the Shanghai Jewish sealed train. Dalia Ofer provides a mention that a series of trains sparked media attention in 1949. However, her exposition focuses on political and institutional relationships between Israel and funding organizations rather than the refugees’ experiences while in the United States. It is within this largely silent secondary narrative that this thesis bridges an emerging interest in Shanghai Jewish refugee experiences with the broader theoretical trends exhibited in historiography today, particularly in the areas of transcending borders, flattened identities, and archival silences.

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1.2 Primary Sources and Methodology

This research emphasizes both individual experience as well as institutional and sociopolitical contexts. As such, secondary research is used alongside primary sources including Atlanta’s *Southern Israelite*, New York’s *Aufbau*, the papers of Sam Eplan and Jacob Friend at the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, and the institutional documents of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC) and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) in New York. The most relevant primary sources include the records of the New York office of the AJJDC and correspondence between its New York and Shanghai offices; the German-language newspaper *Aufbau*, published by Verlag, whose recent digitization by the Leo Baeck Institute of New York allowed my translation of select articles previously unanalyzed in relationship to the sealed trains; and the records of the *Southern Israelite*, published in Atlanta by Southern Newspaper Enterprises, Inc., and available through the Digital Library of Georgia within the University System of Georgia.\(^\text{16}\)

My selection of Shanghai, Atlanta, and New York as comparative cities was not the result of throwing darts on a map. Rather, each city’s institutional records and media reports, as yet unexamined in relationship to each other, provide a prime opportunity for a transnational, comparative study. Historical narratives about Shanghai Jews often end at 1945, with perhaps a short chapter or prologue for the subsequent years. Yet the Shanghai Jewish community experienced a critical tipping point four years after World War II, when the international city became caught between the forces of the Chinese Civil War. Atlanta and New York, meanwhile,

\(^{16}\) Dwork and Jan Pelt did briefly mention *Aufbau* coverage of 1949 sealed trains and the newspaper’s coverage of later evacuation efforts from Shanghai, however their work is focused on 1933-1946 and therefore understandably does not include an in-depth analysis of *Aufbau* articles related to the sealed trains. See Dwork and Jan Pelt, *Flight from the Reich*, 322.
provide institutional and media sources directly related to the Shanghai Jews’ sealed transports. I anticipate primary sources to emerge from other cities where the transports stopped—most hopefully San Francisco and New Orleans—that will strengthen future comparative studies on this topic and provide perspectives underrepresented in this study, including explorations on gender and intersectionality. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee’s diverse and numerous archival documents in New York were exceptionally persuasive in my selection of New York as a focal point along the Shanghai Jews’ journey. While lacking New York’s wealth of primary resources related to the sealed transport, the recent digitization of Atlanta’s *Southern Israelite* provided the opportunity to investigate Atlanta as a case study.

Atlanta and New York offer a challenging opportunity to explore the ecological differences between the cities. Both served as urban hubs for their regions, and the newspapers, federations, and leadership of each city often were perceived by their wide-spread communities as the local authoritative voices. New York’s national and international reputation as a thriving center for Jewish life in the mid-twentieth century was significantly different from the perception of Atlanta’s Jewish community as an outpost of only regional significance.

As a note on terminology, these Shanghai Jews frequently moved between several identifying terms. Refugee, immigrant, resident, and displaced person are all used to describe Shanghai Jews depending on shifting statuses and situations. As will be explored, these terms often were used based on their rhetorical impact rather than their political reality. Refugee, for instance, could denote either a refugee from Nazi Germany or a refugee from the Chinese Civil

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18 The ecological differences of New York’s international reputation and the “outpost” status of Atlanta were explored in conversation with Dr. Marni Davis, November 2017.
War; at times, the term meant both. Immigrant, on the other hand, suggests a politically authorized destination, such as the United States or Israel. This nomenclature was much desired by the Shanghai Jewish community but often remained elusive, and therefore is used far less frequently in both historical and contemporary representations. Emigration, on the other hand, only applies to a portion of the Shanghai Jewish community. Residents of China emigrated from Shanghai, however recently-arrived European refugees could hardly be said to emigrate from a country which they regarded only as a way-station. Displaced persons occupied the most salient political identity, and perhaps also the most useful for purposes of immigration. Its political meaning served as the basis for legislative disputes and newspaper headlines half a world away from the same Shanghai Jews who wished to obtain its assurances.

This research is possible only through theoretical contributions of scholars who have broken ground within the field of world history. Foundationally, Benedict Anderson’s theory of “imagined communities” resonate throughout the investigations and perspectives of this thesis.  

19 How did nation-state anxieties feed into local contexts, and how did these dynamically shifting perceptions of “self” and “other” influence Shanghai Jewish experiences in the face of political immigration battles within the United States?20 As concerns surrounding immigration increased in Shanghai and the United States, so too did bureaucratic attempts to understand and police the situation. The creation of more documentation, paperwork, policies, and studies to investigate and control these immigrant populations provide a connection to Foucauldian power-knowledge


Michel Foucault argues that knowledge is the fertile ground in which power roots and later blooms. As an idea is explored and discussed within society, more expansive and diffuse constraints are developed around the expanding boundaries of the power-driven idea.

Yet despite the proliferation of bureaucratic paperwork and policies at national borders, those borders remained porous. Inspired by Libby Garland’s investigations into illegal Jewish immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this present study takes note of the ways Shanghai Jewish refugees discovered and then slipped through policy loopholes to cross otherwise hardened nation-state boundaries. As Garland argues throughout her work, *After They Closed the Gates*, the notion of nationhood is as fluid as the ports themselves. Similarly, this research seeks to transcend geographical boundaries to follow transnational experiences beyond the nation-state.

The diasporic theory of Stuart Hall argues that many host communities “flatten” immigrant identities at ports of entry and within public memory. Diverse, dynamic individuals are melted down and reconstituted into a consumable group for the host community. That transmutation is, in turn, often internalized by the diasporic community itself. By examining the pre-refugee train experiences of the Shanghai Jewish community, this study attempts to avoid the trap of flattening refugee identities within any narrow slice of time or place. Despite this aspiration, this approach risks a historical flattening of my own making due to my evaluation of complex American Jewish communities through the narrow lenses of institutional documents.

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and media reports. To guard against this flattening and exhibit the diversity of institutional and ethnic communities, I pay careful attention to individuals who operated within these organizations and newspaper outlets.

Finally, a significant influence is the theory of Michel-Rolph Trouillot, whose work draws attention to “silences” that emerge in the course of historical scholarship. Trouillot explores how various archival collections influence assumptions about experience, and voices an imperative to explore and acknowledge these silences as they occur. Trouillot defines archival silences as the lack of primary sources; limited archival collections; myopic academic research; and popular narratives that prioritize select themes, voices, or events over others. Attention to the problem of silences within history is imperative for the exploration of immigration histories because populations who are viewed as powerless—including refugee populations—often find themselves silenced in history. Thanks to his methodological example, this study expands the narrative scope to include Shanghai Jewish experiences before their transport across the United States.

When we examine intersecting, transnational communities in relationship to each other and within the context of their own environments, these communities’ roles and resources emerge with more complexity and nuance than if studied in isolation. To confront limited primary sources and archival collections that so often emerge alongside these historical inquiries, we must also transcend boundaries around ports, wars, and nations. The framework I used to connect together the Shanghai and American Jewish communities does not, I hope, default exclusively to fracturing shared identities or seeking patterns in all their interactions. Rather, the

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research suggests individuals and groups both splintered and came together in shifting, ebbing waves based on external context and internal effort. By studying the motion of these ever-changing tides as they moved across oceans, decades, and groups, we may challenge tendencies to simplify refugee experiences or sidestep contradictory data. And by following the train tracks of fewer than one thousand Shanghai Jews as they crossed the United States, we may hear the deep reverberations of echoing larger narratives of immigration policy and transnational movements.
CHAPTER 2: DIVERSE DEMOGRAPHICS OF SHANGHAI JEWS, 1800s-1945

One of the most sparsely explored aspects of Shanghai Jewish wartime experiences is the demographic composition of the Jewish community prior to the European refugees’ arrival. Yet this exploration is essential to complicating and expanding refugees’ experiences, because it reveals the shifting relationships between members of the Jewish community based on origin, religious denomination, and socioeconomic status. Historians generally agree on the broad parameters of three phases of Jewish immigration into Shanghai: Baghdadi Jews following the First Opium War in the mid-nineteenth century; Russian Jews following the 1917 Russian Revolution; and European Jewish refugees in the late 1930s, fleeing from the rapidly expanding Third Reich.25 These transnational movements represented a wide array of experiences, thinly connected by a shared Jewish identity.

In this chapter, I explore the multiplicity of backgrounds, experiences, and choices of these three waves of immigration before and during World War II. By transcending the nation-state borders of the United States and China, this section provides a brief glimpse into the international communication networks that individuals and institutions used to pass around and between nation-states, religions, ethnicities, languages, and socioeconomic strata. These networks also provide insight into the ways many refugees employed creative agency to navigate channels of paperwork and bureaucracy that, at any given time, impeded or guided their movements.

2.1 Sephardic Jews in the 1800s

Sephardic Jews were first drawn to Hong Kong in the 1840s under the protection of the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, which ended the First Opium War and awarded special privileges to Westerners. The earliest official notation of Sephardic Jews in Shanghai comes from *The Chinese Recorder* in 1848, listing one unnamed Jewish resident, and “four Jewish assistants” who joined the roster the year after. In the decades that followed, new economic opportunities opened throughout East Asia, and the Sassoon family established businesses in Japan as early as 1858. The Sephardic Jewish community in Shanghai expanded with the addition of several prominent families in the 1870s, namely the Kadoories and Hardoons. It was not until the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki following the Sino-Japanese War that a sharp increase of Western presence came to Shanghai, and by 1899, the International Settlement had increased in size nearly tenfold from its 1854 configuration. Throughout their early history, this small group of Sephardic Shanghai Jews, numbering several hundred by the 1920s and over 1,000 by the 1930s, were nearly as diverse in composition as the city of Shanghai itself. While some emigrated directly from Baghdad—causing this community frequently to be referred to as “Baghdadi Jews”—others traced their routes through Bombay, Aleppo, and regions of Persia, or stitched together these ports of call by jumping city to city in search of expanding trade opportunities.

Many Sephardic Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century experienced

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27 Ibid., 12. Marcia Ristaino notes that the Sassoon family was present in Shanghai as early as 1845; see Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort*, 21.
29 Heppner, *Shanghai Refuge*, 38-39. Chiara Betta agrees with Meyer that the Sassoons expanded their influence from their residence in Hong Kong in the 1840s; see Chiara Betta, “From Orientals to Imagined Britons: Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai,” *Modern Asian Studies* 37.4 (2003), 1001. Additionally, Heppner notes on p. 39 of *Shanghai Refuge* that these wealthy families came “by way of India,” a route that likely influenced a complicated yet important relationship to
isolation from larger centers of Jewish life, leading to the establishment of strong local kinship networks. Rites of religious tradition, including Shabbat and Passover, were lavishly celebrated by the few families in Shanghai, and single Jewish men were invited to the homes of more established community members. Intermarriage and conversion were topics of intense scrutiny among this first generation of Sephardic Jews. Sephardic families were few in number but prestigious in their commercial connections, and marriage to a non-Jewish Chinese individual—even if conversion were included—compromised class status. Yet even here, the lines between Jewish identity and Chinese ethnicity were blurred; during Passover, the Sephardic community of Shanghai readily invited Kaifeng Jews, who were seen as assimilated and more Chinese than “Orthodox” Jewish, into their homes. This act was a break in etiquette, as non-Jewish Europeans in Shanghai purportedly avoided inviting Chinese residents into homes for social purposes.

Chinese residents of Shanghai often viewed the Jewish community as followers of a sect rather than a separate ethnicity. While youtai ren was the preferred nomenclature for Jews in the twenty-first century, Sephardic Jews often were described as jiao, or members of a philosophical belief system, rather than as an ethnicity or religion. Given the small number of Sephardic Jews


Betta, “From Orientals,” 1001, 1002.

Ibid. See also *Israel’s Messenger* editor N.E.B. Ezra’s reflection on the “adoption” of single Jewish men by Sephardic families (Betta, 1002, footnote 6).

Ibid., 53.

Ibid., 52.

Ibid., 43-44.

Ibid.

in Shanghai at the time, it is hardly surprising that the nuances of background rarely emerged for their Chinese neighbors.

The Sephardic community’s network experienced considerable growing pains with the arrival Russian (Ashkenazic) Jewish immigrants in the early years of the twentieth century. While not so large an influx of Jews as would arrive in Shanghai twenty years later, the Ashkenazic Jews from Russia nonetheless brought both political and religious issues to the forefront of discussions among preexisting Sephardic Shanghai Jews.

2.2 Russian Jews in the 1910s and 1920s

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War of 1918-1923 prompted over 4,500 Jews to move to Shanghai via Harbin. Among these Ashkenazic Jews were Zionists, Communists, anti-Communists, religiously Orthodox, and stateless Jews of various socio-economic means. This expansion of the Shanghai Jewish population in the 1910s and 1920s also sparked connections between the newly immigrated Jewish population and the Chinese Nationalists. Sun Yat-Sen publicly supported Jewish Zionism in Shanghai, albeit true to his diplomatic nature, never utilized the word “Zionism.” While Russian Jews and Chinese Nationalists forged these new partnerships, the Ashkenazic immigrants often experienced significant tensions with the established Sephardic Jewish community, including disagreements regarding orders of religious service and intermarriage between the two groups.

Not all disagreements were based in religion and marriage; Sephardic and Russian Jews also were divided by citizenship privileges and the educational system. Select members of the

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38 Heppner, Shanghai Refuge, 38-39. See also Jonathan Goldstein, Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia: New Perspectives on Modern Jewish History (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2012), 141.

Sephardic Jewish community, primarily those from the prominent Sassoon and Kadoorie families, possessed British citizenship despite never residing in Great Britain.\textsuperscript{40} Historian Chiara Betta argues that while not all Sephardic Jews were “wealthy, Anglicized, and thoroughly integrated into British social circles,” several prominent members of the Sephardic communities—especially those with trade ties to the Chinese and other international contacts—employed their British affiliation in order to access political and economic protections and opportunities.\textsuperscript{41} Already outnumbered by the Ashkenazi Jews by the 1920s, many Sephardic Jews felt their diplomatic privileges could be jeopardized by the recent influx of Russian or stateless Jews.

Another instance of friction among the Jewish community may be found in the educational system. Select Sephardic Jews were able to afford private tutors for their children, creating an educational inequity with Ashkenazic Jewish refugees, whose education often lapsed while fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution.\textsuperscript{42} When the Sephardic elite founded the Shanghai Jewish School (SJS) in 1904 and then expanded its services to children of lower socio-economic means in the years that followed, including those of Ashkenazic descent, a local educator criticized the SJS both for its British model and its accommodation of “an exceedingly poor class of children.”\textsuperscript{43} Linguistic divides also inhibited classroom instruction, as Arabic and English were

\textsuperscript{40} Meyer, \textit{From the Rivers}, 48.  
\textsuperscript{41} Betta, “From Orientals,” 999, 1002, 1008. Sarah Stein agrees with Betta that Maisie Meyer overemphasizes Sephardic Jews’ desire for British protection, however Meyer’s archival work is sufficiently strong to argue that there existed periodic measures to tap into the protections of British affiliation; see Stein, “Protected Persons,” 89.  
\textsuperscript{42} Meyer, \textit{From the Rivers}, 118-119.  
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 123. Meyer does not specify the exact year the school aggressively pushed for lower socio-economic attendees, though her analysis suggests that attendees increased with the Jewish population surge in the late 1910s, as 1904 predates the large influx of Ashkenazic Jews by several years. Furthermore, Meyer identifies the criticizer of the SJS as “Miss Patterson, a teacher
common among the Sephardic Jewish teachers and students, but Ashkenazic Jewish immigrants were more familiar with Polish and Russian.\textsuperscript{44}

Finally, there existed an exceptional wealth gap between Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews in Shanghai, even though some Russian Jews integrated themselves into Shanghai’s lucrative trade business.\textsuperscript{45} This translated into residential differences: Ashkenazic Jews largely occupied regions of the International Settlement, while Sephardic Jews often found themselves in wealthier sections of the French Concession. In 1937, when Hongkou was bombed, many Ashkenazic Jews’ homes were destroyed, resulting in what Shanghai resident Joe Hollzer described to a relative as “poverty [that has reduced the Russian Jews] almost [to] savagery.”\textsuperscript{46}

Even within the socioeconomic and educational divides that existed, some Jewish immigrants, like Jacob Friend, an amazing individual examined further below, navigated porous community boundaries. Friend used his mastery of English, German, Russian, Hebrew, and Yiddish to move between various Shanghai Jewish communities.\textsuperscript{47} While considered a Russian Ashkenazic Jew, Friend cut across the Ashkenazic-Sephardic divide and founded the Ashkenazi Jewish Communal Association; created a literary-musical reading group that served both Sephardic and Ashkenazic community members; produced articles in the \textit{North China Daily in the Shanghai Public School,”} which was a secular school in Shanghai (Meyer, \textit{From the Rivers}, 121). For more information on the SPS, see Meyer, \textit{From the Rivers}, 120-121.

\textsuperscript{44} Irene Eber, \textit{Wartime Shanghai}, 18-19.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. 22.
\textsuperscript{47} Application, Jacob Friend to the American Foreign Service Non-Immigrant Visa Service, September 4, 1936, box 1, folder 11, Jacob Friend Family Papers, 1915-2002, Collection 116, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum. Applications, however, can rarely be verified; Friend’s translation notes, also available in box 1, folder 11, suggest a mastery of Hebrew and Yiddish.
News and the Baghdadi-founded Israel’s Messenger; and established an Ashkenazic Zionist organization. Friend illuminates the complex, fractured Jewish communities in Shanghai, while also exemplifying the ability of some immigrants to navigate and negotiate these networks despite the nation-state, socioeconomic, and linguistic divides.

2.3 European Jews in the 1930s

The close of the 1930s represented an era of increasing tension among Shanghai’s foreign communities. Japanese forces invaded and occupied Shanghai in 1937 at the dawn of the Second Sino-Japanese War, even as British, American, and French had residents lost their dominance on the Shanghai Municipal Council to Chinese nationals. Jewish communities also found themselves waning in the interest, and therefore favor, of both the Japanese and Chinese government.

These localized politics reflected increased tensions within the larger international community: Germany’s Anschluss of Austria in 1938 preceded the invasion of Poland in 1939, ushering in a world conflict of staggering proportions. With the devastation of Kristallnacht

48 Application, Jacob Friend to the American Foreign Service Non-Immigrant Visa Service, September 4, 1936, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum; see also “Scholarly Life of Jacob Friend,” The Southern Israelite, December 15, 1972, Cuba Family Archives.

49 By the early 1930s, the wealth and prevalence of Chinese in Shanghai grew tremendously and altered the structure of the Shanghai Municipal Government, awarding additional seats to Chinese Nationals to equal the number of British seats; see Ristaino, Port of Last Resort, 14.

50 Pan Guang, “Zionism and Zionist Revisionism in Shanghai, 1937-1949” in Jews of China (Vol. 1), ed. Goldstein, 269; Marcia Ristaino, Port of Last Resort, 10-11; Gao, Shanghai Sanctuary, 30-32. Both Chinese Nationalist and Japanese officials conducted research inquiries into the viability of immigrating Jews to southwest China in an effort to tap into purportedly wealthy and influential networks. Regrettably, there are few evidence-based arguments for the why these research interests waned, though the U.S. President Roosevelt administration’s rejection of the Chinese Nationalist Party’s plan may be one impetus, as least on the part of China.

51 Eber, Wartime Shanghai, 54.
and rapidly expanding anti-Semitism throughout the Third Reich, Jewish refugees fled their homes in Europe in the face of rising uncertainty. Upwards of 20,000 Jewish refugees escaped to Shanghai from 1938 to 1943, flooding the port city with individuals who were often penniless and stateless.

2.4 Jewish Shanghai: Life During World War II

World War II Shanghai is defined by the networks and strategies its residents developed to create order in the wartime chaos. Local and international Jewish aid agencies attempted to consolidate resources and strategies to host the diverse communities designated as under their purview, including several thousand European Holocaust refugees and long-term Shanghai residents.

Japanese forces entered Shanghai in 1937 following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident that launched the seven-year-long Second Sino-Japanese War. Upon capturing the port city of Shanghai, Japanese forces showed little interest in changing immigration, settlement, or ethnic registration policies for non-Chinese concessions within Shanghai. The largest influx of European Jewish refugees to Shanghai entered the port city ironically while under the occupation.

52 Ibid., 55-56.
53 Zhang, Preserving the Shanghai Ghetto, 14.
54 Previously, aid agencies were often established based on national origin, including the Hungarian Relief Fund; see Péter Vámos, “‘Home Afar’: The Life of Central European Jewish Refugees in Shanghai,” Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae 57, no. 1 (2004), 63.
of an Axis power, even while Allied powers gathered at the Evian Conference and decided they would not allow these European Jewish refugees to enter their borders.\footnote{Gao Bei, “The Chinese Nationalist Government's Policy toward European Jewish Refugees during World War II,” \textit{Modern China} 37, no. 2 (March 2011), pp. 203.}

This notably large wave of European Jewish immigrants during the 1930s is due almost entirely to Shanghai’s status as an open port: unlike nearly every other port of call, Shanghai did not require entry visas during the 1930s. Even with this bureaucratic boon, few welfare agencies in Europe recommended Shanghai due to its unsavory reputation for harsh conditions and radical cultural differences. Following \textit{Kirstallnacht}, German Jews requesting emigration assistance from agencies including \textit{Hilfsverein der Juden in Deutschland} were encouraged by the agencies to seek another avenue of escape, even though Shanghai did not require visas for entry.\footnote{Heppner, \textit{Shanghai Refuge}, 28.}

Regardless, Shanghai became the chosen haven for approximately 20,000 European Jews. Several foreign diplomats in Europe—including Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara, stationed in Lithuania—wrote thousands of entry visas for Shanghai.\footnote{For a summary of the Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara’s rescue of approximately 5,000-6,000 Jews in Europe via transit visas to Shanghai, see Hillel Levine, “Dear Mr. Sugihara,” in \textit{Courage to Remember: Interviews on the Holocaust} (Paragon House, 1999), 109-117 and \textit{Sugihara: Conspiracy of Kindness}, directed by Robert Kirk (WGBH Educational Foundation, 2005).} Given that these visas were not required by Japanese or Chinese forces in Shanghai, it is more likely that the entry visas served as additional paperwork to assist Jews’ exit from Nazi-occupied regions and gain passage on international ships. Furthermore, Irene Eber and Avraham Altam argue it was not only Jews who considered Shanghai a solution for European Jews; Nazi \textit{Obersturmbannführer} Adolph Eichmann also encouraged mass migration of Jews to Shanghai in 1939, going so far as to
approve a chartered ship to transport European Jews to China. Whether pushed or pulled, thousands of European Jews took advantage of this seemingly far-flung port, and their arrival drastically impacted the Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jewish communities that had resided there for decades.

The Jewish immigrants who arrived in Shanghai during this final wave of immigration were the most diverse of any Jewish group yet. They originated from Germany, Poland, and Austria and ranged in socioeconomic class, although they often arrived with little to no liquid capital due to German border restrictions. Their educational levels, career skills, and languages varied widely. Even before setting foot in the port city of Shanghai, these immigrants arrived via a wide variety of bureaucratic channels and emigration loopholes.

The refugees placed significant strain on the existing Jewish communities both financially and spatially, with close to 2,500 relying entirely on international or local aid and nearly 6,000 requiring significant support. The financial situation became so dire that local Jewish authorities purportedly met with members of the Shanghai Municipal Council to discuss restricting the flood of incoming refugees. It was not until 1943, well after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, the Tripartite Act, and Nazi pressure on Japanese authorities, that entry finally trickled to a stop.

The long-established Shanghai Jewish communities met the flood of refugees with both charity and a sense of anxiety. Individuals were well aware that the new Jewish community was

60 See Heppner’s Shanghai Refuge, for an excellent overview of the various communities and conditions of European Jewish refugees who came to Shanghai in the late 1930s.
62 Eber, Wartime Shanghai, 99.
63 Ristaino, Port of Last Resort.
poor, lacked local connections, and could jeopardize the established community’s reputation as self-regulatory and non-intrusive. However, the reports of violent, anti-Semitic conditions from which these refugees fled preceded their arrival and sparked the establishment of several welfare organizations. At the beginning of the European Jewish influx, agencies, community leaders, and synagogues worked together to create spaces that encouraged a unified Jewish identity among both refugees and residents. Ernest Heppner asserts that the first refugees in 1938 “were warmly welcomed... and urged to forget their national origin, to consider themselves just as Jews.”

Several services and club membership were offered to Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews in Shanghai, including women’s benevolence societies, boy scout troops, burial services, Zionist organizations, and youth groups. The Shanghai Jewish Chronicle, assisted by Jacob Friend, published a series of *Judische Kalednane* (“Jewish Calendars”) between 1939 and 1945 with portions in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English, suggesting the authors sought to accommodate an increasingly transnational audience.

Musical organizations and religious services also provided the opportunity for shared spaces of interaction: Jacob Friend coordinated the Jewish Choir under the auspices of Beth Aharon Synagogue, a Sephardic synagogue established in 1927. The donation-funded Jewish Choir was composed entirely of German (Ashkenazic) Jewish refugees, although anyone could join. “A Lover of Choral Music” wrote to the editor of the *North China Daily News* in January

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64 Heppner, *Shanghai Refuge*, 42.
66 Ibid.
1945 to note that “it was for the benefit of those of the Jewish community who appreciate good choral religious services. What is Germany’s loss is Shanghai’s gain.”

Yet the Shanghai Jewish experience was not all shared chorales and worship services; just as many cultural opportunities aided Jews in building a unified identity, so too did differences in nation-state affiliation and class serve to drive wedges between them. While some members of the Shanghai Jewish community maintained affluence awarding such amenities as meals at cafés and private taxis, others endured the war in far less comfortable environments.

Ernest Heppner, a European refugee who disregarded the Hilfsverein’s advice not to go to Shanghai, described his move to Shanghai as “traumatic,” asserting that residents of the communal homes established by aid agencies (Heime) were “on the bottom of the social ladder.” Residents of the Heime reportedly went months without a sufficient meal, and many European Jews experienced intense, often suicidal anxiety due to their sharp downward socioeconomic turn in China. The International Committee of the Red Cross in June 1943 noted that “the worst distress exists undoubtedly amongst the German-Jewish immigrants, of whom at least 6,000 are on the point of starvation and about 9,000 more are not far better off.”

The year 1943 produced an even deeper fissure in the Jewish community when Japan forced 20,000 Jews to relocate into the so-called Hongkou Ghetto. While the Hongkou district of the International Settlement already housed thousands of Jews and featured centers of Jewish life, including the Ohel Moshe synagogue, conditions worsened with the influx of thousands

68 Ibid.
69 Eber, Voices, 87-88.
70 Heppner, Shanghai Refuge, 88.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Heppner, Shanghai Refuge, 110-111.
more into the already-crammed region of less than a square mile.\textsuperscript{74} Furthermore, not all Jews were required to move to the Hongkou Ghetto, creating a sharper divide among Shanghai Jews. The Japanese proclamation requiring the forced relocation did not provide a single reference to “Jews” or “ghetto,” but instead referred to “stateless persons” and a “designated area.”\textsuperscript{75} The vast majority of European Jews were considered stateless when they lost their citizenship due to Nazi Germany’s policies and were forced to move into the ghetto.\textsuperscript{76} Several long-time Jewish residents, including Russian Jews, managed to live outside the ghetto due to loopholes in the carefully-worded proclamation.\textsuperscript{77} Ernest Heppner is clear in the divided experiences among the Jewish communities, noting that “none of the Jewish Shanghailanders or the Russian Jews were affected.”\textsuperscript{78}

The long-term Shanghai Jewish residents’ attempts to unify the diverse cultural and religious identities of European refugees were, at times, hindered by economic and national divides and exacerbated by Japanese policy. As will be seen, efforts by local and international welfare organizations established to aid the recently-arrived European refugees also served to both unify and fracture the diverse and fluid Jewish community.

2.5 Intra-and Inter-Connections: Aid Organizations in Shanghai

Beginning in the 1930s and lasting throughout World War II, the established Shanghai Jewish community faced a seemingly insurmountable task: the care of thousands of Jewish refugees whose entry altered the previously formed political, social, and economic network in Shanghai.

\textsuperscript{75} Heppner, Shanghai Refuge, 111.
\textsuperscript{76} Fiszman, “The Question for Status,” 441-460.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Heppner, Shanghai Refuge, 111-112.
Shanghai. To accommodate this shift, welfare agencies were established or expanded and worked with local community leaders, Japanese officials, and international organizations to combat the starvation and disease that continually threatened the Shanghai Jewish community. These welfare agencies provided vital access to communication networks, identification cards, and bureaucratic assistance during and after World War II.

For many European Jewish refugees, life in wartime Shanghai operated around these aid organizations, beginning with disembarkment from the transit ships, where they were met by Jewish welfare workers who ushered them into their temporary lodgings. Once registered by Jewish welfare organizations, European refugees with little to no money were resettled in Heime operated by various aid agencies. These welfare organizations also provided food kitchens, clothing, and carefully regulated stipends from donations received via neutral countries or through wealthy Shanghai Jewish residents, including the Sassoons and Hardoons. While the agencies attempted to join forces, their funding sources, organizational missions, and methods of aid often conflicted and overlapped. These aid agencies loosely fell into three groups: international governmental aid; local Jewish NGOs exclusive to Shanghai; and international Jewish NGOs with local offices in Shanghai.

The International Committee of the Red Cross was one of the most active governmental aid organizations throughout the wartime era and provided numerous services, including food supplies and medical aid. The Red Cross’ public presence was eclipsed by other Jewish non-

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80 Vámos, “Home Afar”, 64.
governmental welfare organizations by the early 1940s, save for their assistance in communications. Nonetheless, the Red Cross continued aspects of their work through local liaisons. Meyer Birman, Shanghai director of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), served as the officially appointed contact for the Red Cross when they found it too “difficult to communicate with the Jewish Refugees and Residents [sic] of the Designated Areas.”

Shanghai-based Jewish NGOs increased nearly as rapidly as the numbers of European Jewish refugees for whom they were established to serve. Wealthy, long-time residents of the Sephardic and Russian Jewish communities coordinated these local Jewish organizations, including the governing council, Judische Gemeinde. Sir Victor Sassoon funded the International Committee for European Immigrants in China (I.C.) with administrative direction from Michael Speelman and Hungarian resident Paul Komor, the latter of whom served as lead organizer for the Committee of Assistance of European Refugees in Shanghai (C.A.R.E.). The difference in social positions was significant, however, between these wealthy Shanghai Jewish residents and the European Jewish refugees for whom they provided aid.

81 Jacob Friend’s sole evidence of wartime communication with his daughter while she was in Shanghai and he in the Philippines bears the Red Cross stamp. While funds could not flow unrestricted across borders, it appears communication networks remained partially open. See Correspondence from Balfoura Friend to Jacob Friend, August 14, 1944, box 1, folder 9, Jacob Friend Family Papers, 1915-2002, Collection 116, William Breman Jewish Museum, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.
82 Letter from Le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge (CICR) to Meyer Birman, February 26, 1945, MKM 15.148, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.
83 Ristaino, Port of Last Resort, 104; other locally-administrated aid organizations included the Committee for the Assistance of European Jewish Refugees (CFA), developed by Horace Kadoorie and Michael Speelman, the Council of the Jewish Community, as well as Judische Gemeinde. For an excellent review of these other organizations, see Irene Eber’s Wartime Shanghai.
While the I.C. is perhaps best known for its assistance in procuring identification cards and navigating immigration policy, the organization also provided general aid for the refugees.\textsuperscript{84} The top-down narrative that often accompanies the rhetoric of charitable work is evident in the case of Shanghai Jewish community. One I.C. fundraising poster (figure 1) depicts a male doctor, his sleeves rolled up to reveal his well-developed muscles while he pushes away the skeleton of death, holding up a naked female with hidden face, presumably too weak to stand on her own.\textsuperscript{85} Although the I.C.’s charity provided the refugees with housing, medical treatment, and food, the visual rhetoric of these posters suggests there also emerged a clearly articulated difference between Shanghai resident benefactors and European refugees who received this much-needed aid.

\textsuperscript{84} Kranzler, \textit{Japanese, Nazis & Jews}, 109, footnote 60. Paul Komor’s “Passport Division” within the I.C., which provided I.D. cards approved by the Shanghai Municipal Council to “help deal…with the widespread sentiments of homelessness and statelessness,” came to be known as “Komorpasses” (Ristaino, \textit{Port}, 104).

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
While I.C. and other local welfare organizations contributed significant funds and administrative assistance to the refugees, two internationally-recognized aid organizations dominated the welfare program in Shanghai: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). These two organizations were essential in the survival of thousands of Jews during World War II, as well as instrumental in their emigration efforts in the latter half of the 1940s. As will be seen in the following chapters, their overlapping missions to aid all Jews, regardless of nationality or religious affiliation, were not always cordially coordinated. Rather, their shared territory in Shanghai emblazoned preexisting, transnational tensions between the two groups’ international administrations.
The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, founded in 1881 to assist Jews fleeing pogroms in Poland and Russia, opened an office in China in 1917. Meyer Birman, a Russian Jew and longtime Shanghai resident, served as director of the HIAS office for the span of World War II. He frequently derided the JDC for its purported lack of attention to the Shanghai Jews’ plight, charging that despite their “colossal resources,” the JDC refused relief loans to the Shanghai Jews, causing “thousand and thousand [sic] of refugees [to be] doomed for starvation.”

The Joint Distribution Committee was known throughout the international Jewish community well before the outbreak of World War II. Between its inception in 1914 and a post-World War II report in 1953, the JDC—or, self-referentially, the “Jewish Red Cross”—spent $500,000,000 on relief efforts, including assistance in immigration, food and medicine, and community building in Asia, South America, Europe, and Australia. During World War II, the JDC largely focused its efforts on the plight of Jewish refugees in Europe rather than in Asia, although they did provide aid overlooked by Birman.

The JDC’s first representative in Shanghai, Laura Margolis, exhibited the ability of individuals to navigate complex community networks. Margolis, an Austrian-Hungarian-Russian Jew born in Turkey in 1903, was sent to Shanghai in 1941 following the completion of her relief

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\textsuperscript{86} Primary sources often refer to HIAS as HICEM; HICEM was composed of three immigration institutions in New York: HIAS, Emigdirect, and Jewish Colonization Association (JCA). As HIAS provided sole financial support and the majority of communications coordination, actions of both HICEM and HIAS are referred to here as “HIAS”; see Valery Bazarov, “HIAS and HICEM in the system of Jewish relief organisations [sic] in Europe, 1933–41,” \textit{East European Jewish Affairs} 39, no. 1 (2009), accessed September 1, 2017.

\textsuperscript{87} Meyer Birman to W. L. Brand, General Secretary of the Australian Welfare Society, January 15, 1947, MKM 15.148, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

\textsuperscript{88} Moses Levitt, \textit{The JDC Story} (New York: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1953), Leo Baeck Institute Archives, New York.

\textsuperscript{89} Birman to Brand, 1947, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research; Heppner, \textit{Shanghai Refuge}, 44-46.
efforts in Havana, Cuba, by request of the U.S. State Department, with whom the JDC worked closely. While the JDC had been sending funds to support “a Jewish committee of local leaders [in Shanghai],” the Shanghai consulate was swamped and disorganized. The JDC charged Margolis to focus on assisting the consulate, but instead, she expanded her duties to coordinate funding and soup kitchens even though she “wasn’t supposed to get mixed up [with local refugee requests].” Margolis asserted that she “had to get to know the Jewish community structure of local residents,” and her success was largely due to her knowledge and subsequent navigation of the complicated communication networks in Shanghai that connected refugees, residents, and Japanese authorities.

When Allied funds trickled to a halt because Japan restricted Margolis from receiving aid from Allied nations or “enemy aliens,” Margolis learned through her sources that Japanese Imperial Navy Captain Koreshige Inuzuka “liked Jews.” She befriended Inuzuka at a dinner party and worked with the Japanese administrator to establish soup kitchens for thousands of Jewish refugees. She continued her work for nearly a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, when local Japanese officials received orders to intern all Allied representatives. She eventually returned to the U.S. during a prisoner of war exchange in 1944, where she continued on to Barcelona to assist the Jewish community through the end of the war.

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90 The following quotations provided by the oral history interview with Laura Margolis, July 11, 1990, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), 1990.422.1, https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn504643.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid. Margolis was required to receive permission from Inuzuka to raise money; during her oral history interview with the USHMM, Margolis attributes the success to her closing argument to Inuzuka as, “You, as an occupying power, cannot afford to have hungry people riot… I can help you.”
In 1945, a wave of welfare organizations swept into Shanghai to aid members of Jewish and non-Jewish communities who wished to leave. The International Refugee Organization (IRO), HIAS-HICEM, the United Service for New Americans, and the AJJDC worked with immigration agencies from Canada, Australia, the United States, and Argentina to coordinate the mass exit. Those with valid Allied passports found the exit easiest to manage, followed by stateless Jews who were born in Germany. The latter group received benefit from President Truman’s December 1945 directive to assign two-thirds of all displaced person (DP) quotas to German-born individuals in his efforts to accommodate these persons. The challenge, however, came with those who were born in Poland, Austria, and Russia: the Shanghai Jewish refugees shared their small quota with Jewish refugees in Europe, so that the meager 1,413 visas per year were quickly assigned to those still living in Europe’s displaced persons née concentration camps. In a tweak of terminology, Jews in Shanghai were not considered DPs; as will be seen, this proved disastrous for many Jewish refugees in China and was responsible for the series of sealed trains in 1949.

This nation-based quota system served to further divided Jewish communities already fractured by the spatial and socioeconomic layout of wartime Shanghai. Membership in a national or religious movement often proved most advantageous to securing visas. Shanghai Jews who previously were members of famous yeshivas in Europe, including Mir and Lubavitch, capitalized on their prestigious reputation among politically well-placed Americans and Europeans who pushed their visa applications to the top of the pile. This exit of 400 Orthodox Polish Jews—many of whom chose the United States as their final destination—maxed the non-

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93 Ristaino, Port of Last Resort, 255-256.
94 Ibid., 256. Margolis does not specify who these U.S. representatives were, but did note that the Polish consulate and the Polish chargé d’affairs worked together in Shanghai to secure the visas.
DP visas assigned to Polish Jews. The remaining non-“elite” Polish Jews were required to wait up to several years for departure.\textsuperscript{95}

While the local and international welfare agencies provided essential resources and bureaucratic assistance for emigrating European Jewish refugees, they were not the sole determinants in refugees’ destinations. Rather, individuals and institutions formed an interdependent network of agency. Through their communication networks, Shanghai Jewish refugees discovered that a JDC representative—Laura Margolis—had arrived in Shanghai, and against the policy of the JDC and U.S. consulate, they visited her hotel room to plead their case.\textsuperscript{96} Thanks to their initiative, Margolis issued the JDC an “ultimatum” for additional personnel and expanded her role to coordinate foundational aid for the refugees, and, as was seen, procured resources and funds through her relationship with Japanese and local officials.\textsuperscript{97}

Some of most compelling examples of refugees creatively tapping into institutional and kinship networks may be found in their efforts to transcend ports and borders. Before, during, and after the war, members of the Jewish community wrote dozens of letters requesting admittance into countries perceived as sanctuaries. Ernest Heppner met with several Jewish aid representatives and friends to determine a way to escape Europe, and managed to acquire the paperwork and finances to allow his and his mother’s transportation to Shanghai.\textsuperscript{98} Likewise, Meyer Birman, director of HIAS-Shanghai, wrote to friends in Australia, the United States, and Canada at the close of World War II, pleading for admittance based on his work with the Shanghai Jewish community and his personal connections with members of government.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{95} The “elite” reference comes from Ristaino, \textit{Port of Last Resort}, 256.
\textsuperscript{96} Oral history interview with Laura Margolis, July 1990, USHMMcuba fam.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Heppner, \textit{Shanghai Refuge}, 28.
\textsuperscript{99} Personal correspondence, MKM 15.148, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.
This deliberate, dynamic navigation of immigration channels is perhaps best represented by Jacob Friend. After numerous requests for a travel visa, Friend moved to the Philippines in 1941-1942 to work with a company, leaving his daughter and wife in Shanghai.\textsuperscript{100} While in Manila, prior to Pearl Harbor, Friend requested several letters of recommendation to various international offices for immigration, most notably the United States.\textsuperscript{101} Among those recommendation letters, Friend secured affidavits attesting to family relations in the United States; character reports from Chief Rabbi of Shanghai, M. Ashkenazi and New York’s Rabbi Abraham Edelman; and notarized records of financial savings amounting to $20,000.\textsuperscript{102} He finally managed to procure a visa to the United States by obtaining a rabbi’s permit in 1947, allowing his daughter to accompany him but requiring him to leave behind his wife, Frieda, in Shanghai.\textsuperscript{103} In 1955 his wife immigrated to the United States via Israel after nearly a decade of waiting for admittance to the U.S.\textsuperscript{104}

2.6 Conclusion

While secondary sources usually close their narratives well before the arrangement of immigration trains, planes, and steamships to accommodate these final remnants of the Shanghai Jewish community, the experiences of this small group are foundational to understanding how Shanghai Jewish refugees and American Jewish communities forged an interdependent relationship.

\textsuperscript{100} Immigration papers, box 1, folder 12, Jacob Friend Family Papers, 1915-2002, Collection 116, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} “Reunion at Last for Friends after 7 Years Separation,” \textit{Southern Israelite}, October 28, 1955, page 2, presented online by the Digital Library of Georgia.
\textsuperscript{104} “Reunion at Last,” \textit{Southern Israelite}, October 1955.
Far from a monolithic group, Shanghai Jews spoke different languages, identified as different nationalities, held widely variant positions in socioeconomic strata, and found themselves arriving in Shanghai with diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural baggage. This diverse community depended on communication networks to inform their actions, and they navigated these local and international to secure assistance and resources. Often stateless, these Shanghai Jews were, perhaps, more truly global citizens.

International organizations, individuals, and governments managed to rescue nearly 20,000 Jews from Shanghai in the years following World War II. By 1948, over 5,000 Jews still awaited emigration from Shanghai. While welfare organizations and shared cultural and religious spaces often created a sense of unity among the Shanghai Jews, the post-World War II rush to emigrate from Shanghai and the stubbornly restrictive United States immigration policies only served to widen the cracks between these complex individuals. As the uncertainty of the Chinese Civil War marched closer to Shanghai in 1948, the United States Congress remained steadfastly resolute in its nation-based immigration policy. An increased sense of urgency rippled through Shanghai Jews and Jewish welfare organizations, setting off a series of departures that brought the international drama to the American stage.
CHAPTER 3: POST-WAR UNCERTAINTIES, 1945-1949

The formal conclusion of World War II took place September 2, 1945, on board the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. This historic moment marked a bookend in the military narrative, but for millions of refugees around the world, September 2 represented no more than a hopeful unknown along an incomplete timeline running through one of history’s most dynamic diasporic eras. Refugees, stateless individuals, and displaced persons were already caught in a cycle of transnational movement, and Victory over Japan Day marked neither an end nor a beginning to their journeys.

Following World War II, thousands of Shanghai Jews built their case for immigration to the United States, Canada, and Australia. Several factors combined to hinder the refugees’ immigration to their country of choice, however. This chapter will review the role of U.S. immigration policy and the Chinese Civil War in creating a vise in which many Shanghai Jews found themselves trapped, followed by an investigation into the ways welfare institutions and individual refugees crafted and negotiated the logistics of emigration from Shanghai. The chapter concludes with the embarkment of nearly 500 Shanghai Jews on a sealed train across the United States in 1949. This passage provided the opportunity for members of American Jewish communities to address local immigration policy and community responsibility anxieties, with a goal of ameliorating their own fundraising and political situations while publicly supporting the refugees. To explore the interconnections between these American and Shanghai Jewish communities, however, we must first examine the political, social, and institutional environments that brought these two communities face to face.

3.1 Shanghai Jews and the Immigration Gamble: 1945-1948

Shanghai Jews provided a vital link between China, the United States, and Palestine-Israel in the late 1940s and, for a few brief months in 1949, they became the face of immigration policy and global migration among American Jewish communities. A narrow number of countries offered Shanghai Jews the opportunity for post-war emigration, with Canada, Australia, and, by 1948, the newly-formed state of Israel being the most feasible.\(^{106}\) Several Zionist organizations had been established in Shanghai prior to the end of World War II, yet many Jewish residents and refugees preferred immigration to the United States over Palestine. In February 1949, the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) reported that over 2,000 Shanghai Jews turned down visas to Israel in hopes of immigration to the United States or Australia.\(^{107}\)

The post-World War II preference for the United States is hardly surprising, though rarely studied. Due to a large influx of Jewish immigration to the United States in the nineteenth-century, the nation offered the opportunity to join existing kinship networks, tap into established economic institutions, and embrace a lifestyle that suggested growth, freedom, and protection.\(^{108}\) While Canada offered many of these opportunities, its Jewish population was only a small percentage of the United States’ Jewish population; Australia also featured established, yet far more modest, Jewish communities. Israel, while accepting the largest quota of Jewish immigrants, by 1948 already had earned the reputation for harsh living conditions, hostile

\(^{106}\) Survey of Present Conditions and Outlooks for Jewish Emigration in the Most Important Immigration Countries, HIAS-JCA Emigration Association (HICEM), 1938, MKM 15.148, Yivo Institute for Jewish Research.

\(^{107}\) Letter from Mr. J. Rice to Mr. M. Beckelman, Re: Analysis of our present relationship with IRO, February 11, 1949, 1933-1944 New York Collection: Selected Documents, 460255, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

neighboring countries, and a nation whose government, infrastructure, and economy operated with only a few months’ experience under its belt. While 2,767 Jews opted for immigration to Israel by the close of 1948, the preference for the United States was so high that the JDC expressed increasing concern about the Shanghai Jewish community refusing entry visas to the newly-established state. As the Chinese Civil War drew nearer to the port city of Shanghai, several thousand Jewish residents and refugees gambled with their futures in hopes of securing immigration to the United States. Thanks to American nativist pressures and a stubbornly restrictive immigration policy, however, many kept rolling snake eyes.

3.2 A Bureaucratic Vise: U.S. Immigration Policy, 1920s-1940s

The U.S. bureaucratic bottleneck faced by many hopeful Shanghai Jewish immigrants to the United States before, during, and after World War II was not a recent development. Isolationist politicians and nativist communities shaped the bottleneck’s contours through decades of increasingly restrictive policies. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which barred Chinese labor from immigration to the U.S., is emblematic of the methods by which many American communities ideologically linked Chinese stereotypes with restrictive immigration policy. While Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, the restrictive Chinese immigration policy remained embedded within public perception by the time of the Shanghai Jewish sealed trains. The Exclusion Act directly connected socioeconomic status and an ethno-national hierarchy with immigration policy.

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109 Ristaino, Port of Last Resort, 258-259, 263.
111 As argued by Erika Lee, this Exclusion Act ensured that “anti-immigrant politics, immigration regulation, and border enforcement ceased to be the exception and instead became the rule” (pg. 10).
components of the Act, however the exclusionary policy also reflected intersectional discrimination based on class and gender. The Act excluded Chinese laborers without exception during its first ten years, while Congress declared Chinese academics and merchants “exempt.”\footnote{Ibid., 4. The racial politics of the Exclusion Act are evident, even in its repeal in 1943. The quota assigned to China grants 105 annual visas to “persons of the Chinese race,” meaning Chinese born in any nation would be attributed to this total; see Daniel Rodgers, “Immigration Policy in a Time of War: The United States, 1939-1945,” \textit{Journal of American Ethnic History} 25, no. 2/3 (Winter-Spring, 2006): 109. Catherine Lee, however, argues that the gendered aspect of sexualized norms is often overlooked within this discussion; see Lee, “‘Where the Danger Lies’: Race, Gender, and Chinese and Japanese Exclusion in the United States, 1870-1924, \textit{Sociological Forum} 25, no. 2 (June 2010): 248-271.}

American proponents of restrictive immigration policy did not only target Chinese laborers, however. Since well before the turn of the century, non-Western immigrants to the United States often served as “scapegoats for the nation’s insecurity.”\footnote{Susan Martin, \textit{A Nation of Immigrants} (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2011), 147, 149-150.} During and after World War II, U.S. Congress continued to uphold the nation-based immigration policy established by the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924. Riding the coattails of the Immigration Act of 1921, itself born of post-World War I isolationist policy and decades of conservative calls for literacy-based immigration exams, the Immigration Act of 1924 hardened nation-state boundaries and severely restricted immigration. For every nation outside the Americas, this policy dictated that the United States annually admit only 2% of that nation’s population already living within the United States. These national quota numbers were based on the 1890 U.S. census, which reflected a higher percentage of Western European immigrants. The 1924 Act throttled immigration from countries including Poland and Russia, and just twenty-five years later, prevented many Shanghai Jews from finding refuge in America.
As restrictive as the nation-based quotas appear, conservative pressures to define socioeconomic status made their execution even more restrictive. In 1930, President Hoover increased the restrictive nature of the 1924 Act’s “likely to be a public charge” (LPC) policy, purportedly in order to decrease unemployment by decreasing immigration rates during the Great Depression.\textsuperscript{114} Because the LPC policy required numerous stipulations for admittance, many of the already-restrictive 1924 immigration quotas remained unfilled. The Roosevelt Administration eventually eased the LPC requirements in 1938, but conservative and nativist pressures did not relent, and Congress debated immigration policy with renewed vigor amidst the rise of Nazi Germany and its anti-Semitic ideology. The Evian Conference of 1938, during which U.S. officials expressed their refusal to lift the nation-based quotas for Jews attempting to escape Nazi-occupied Europe, codified the Roosevelt Administration’s determination to maintain the strict policy of 1924.\textsuperscript{115} The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization’s LPC requirements of economic and “moral” assets further stymied immigration efforts of European Jews, whose property and financial assets were confiscated by the Third Reich.\textsuperscript{116}

Nativist support for these restrictive immigration laws was not left unchecked, however. A notable example is the 1939 Wagner-Rogers Bill, a bipartisan plan scripted by Senator Robert Wagner (D-NY) and Representative Edith Rogers (R-MA) to temporarily lift U.S. quota

\textsuperscript{114} Gary Mitchel analyzes the immigration rates of Austrian emigres in the 1930s. In 1937, only 42.1\% of the German-Austrian quota was filled. He argues that the “limiting factor” was not the restrictive quotas themselves, but the LPC requirements written into those quotas that inhibited immigration (941). Gary Mitchell, “The Impact of U.S. Immigration Policy on the Economic ‘Quality’ of German and Austrian Immigrants in the 1930s,” The International Migration Review 26, no. 3 (Fall 1992), 940-967.


\textsuperscript{116} Martin, A Nation of Immigrants, 158.
restrictions in order to rescue 20,000 Jewish children from Nazi-occupied regions.\textsuperscript{117} Unsupported by the Roosevelt Administration, however, the bill died in committee. Laura Delano Doughteling, wife of the U.S. Commissioner of Immigration and cousin to President Roosevelt, reportedly quipped of the Wagner-Rogers bill: “20,000 charming children would all too soon grow into 20,000 ugly adults.”\textsuperscript{118} Not all communities and institutions in the United States reflected these nativist sentiments, however, and their efforts led to the rescue of thousands of Shanghai Jews.

\section*{3.3 Jewish Emigration Agencies in Post-War Shanghai}

Even before the end of the war, Allied forces began preparations for what would become one of the largest transnational migrations in history. In 1943, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was established and, with considerable international assistance, qualified approximately six million as “displaced persons” (DPs) in the months following V-E Day.\textsuperscript{119} The applications of those who qualified as DPs were prioritized within the nation-based quotas, and with hundreds of thousands competing for only a few thousand—and in many cases, a few hundred—immigration visas to the United States, this designation was of vital importance to securing passage to America. Yet by 1946, there still remained 1.2 million DPs caught in a bureaucratic web that Hannah Arendt deemed “essentially political.”\textsuperscript{120}

In the post-war years, several international governmental and non-governmental organizations stepped in to assist refugees stranded in their wartime bunkers. For Shanghai Jews,

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\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 297.
\textsuperscript{120} See ibid., 4-5, for Cohen’s review of Arendt’s commentary on the displaced persons situation.
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three organizations dominated the immigration shuffle: the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and the International Refugee Organization (IRO), which had overtaken many of UNRRA’s operations by 1948. For immigrants who secured visas to the United States, the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) worked closely with the United Service for New Americans (USNA) and local federations to settle newly immigrated Jews throughout America, whose names and arrival information they secured through a vast logistical labyrinth composed of IRO, JDC, HIAS, and other NGO and governmental sources. For immigrants who secured visas to the United States, the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) worked closely with the United Service for New Americans (USNA) and local federations to settle newly immigrated Jews throughout America, whose names and arrival information they secured through a vast logistical labyrinth composed of IRO, JDC, HIAS, and other NGO and governmental sources.121 Once the USNA received information regarding the new immigrants, whom they often referred to as “units” to maintain familial connections, the USNA requested Jewish federations throughout the United States to oversee the work, housing, and social logistics of these immigrants’ settlement.122 In an attempt to avoid one city receiving too many “units” at a time, the USNA negotiated with local federations to establish each city’s quota of immigrants based on an annual and monthly allotment. While the UJA and USNA provided vital resources and networks for immigrants within the United States, HIAS, JDC, and IRO provided the most direct connections between hopeful Shanghai Jewish immigrants and American policy makers.

HIAS, JDC, and IRO’s efforts to assist Shanghai Jews were severely limited by the Displaced Persons Act of 1948. At first glance, the U.S. Displaced Persons Act of 1948 offered an expansive opportunity for Jews displaced by the Holocaust through its provision of 200,000

122 Beth Cohen points out that psychological needs were often overlooked in this resettlement program, although Kahn’s records delineate careful attention to anticipated needs of the DPs. See Beth Cohen, Case Closed: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar America (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007).
immigration visas to any “displaced person or refugee.” The Act, however, narrowed this eligibility to include only those who lived in Germany and Austria between September 1939 and December 1945, as well as for those who lived in Germany or Austria as of January 1948. This excluded many Jews who escaped Nazi-occupied Germany and Austria, and those who fled to Shanghai before September 1939 and remained there in 1948—as thousands did—were ineligible for DP designation. The 1948 Displaced Persons designation prioritized DPs born in Germany and Austria, thereby precluding those of Eastern European and North African descent.

The Act further underscored nation-state divisions among the Shanghai Jewish community by rendering ineligible thousands of Polish, Russian, and Lithuanian Jews. As observed by one Shanghai Jew, “in 1947/1948, this dream [to immigrate to the United States] came true for about 7,000 of our fellow-sufferers… in fact, the German quota-group could proceed to the States without the [help] of the Organizations, while nothing [emphasis added] was done for the Shanghai-stranded DP group.” Those ineligible for DP-status were required either to find creative solutions within their communication networks, as in the case of the 400 Polish rabbis and rabbinical students, or be forced to wait years to immigrate, as in the case of the Shanghai Jews aboard the sealed trains.

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124 A Statement by the Joint Distribution Committee on IRO Reimbursement for Passage of Displaced Persons to Israel, from Moses Leavitt, April 4, 1949, Immigration to U.S., 630434, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
125 Ibid.
126 Letter from Karl Redisch to Adolph Glassgold, September 20, 1948, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
The DP Act’s discriminatory measures enraged many reporters covering the post-World War II immigration crisis in Jewish newspapers, and *The Council News* ran an article featuring a statement by the Shanghai-based “Citizens Committee” that paralleled the 1948 Act with Adolph Hitler’s philosophy.\(^\text{128}\) The Jewish community was not alone in criticizing the Act. U.S. President Harry S. Truman vocally opposed the measures, although he “reluctantly” signed it as a stop-gap, stating, “this bill excludes Jewish displaced persons (and) [sic] also excludes many… of the Catholic faith… There is no explanation for Congress’s choosing the 1945 date except upon the abhorrent ground of intolerance.”\(^\text{129}\) Truman estimated that ninety percent of Jews were rendered ineligible based on the Displaced Persons Act of 1948.

The establishment of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948, provided an alternative option for Jews refused entry to the United States. The establishment of Israel, however, did not provide a simple solution to the stranded Shanghai Jews. As previously noted, many refugees within the Shanghai Jewish community preferred the opportunities and networks of the United States to the harsh conditions of Israel. To add to the pressure of the situation, those who escaped to Israel as an interim stop feared this move might delay or disqualify them from future immigration to the United States. Karl Redisch, president of the Shanghai-based Council of European Refugee Organizations, made it clear that his journey’s desired end lay in America, not Palestine:

“Shanghai was but a milestone on our way to the United States, where we desired to rejoin our families.”\(^\text{130}\) Adolph Glassgold, the JDC’s representative in Shanghai, expressed the challenges


\(^{130}\) Redisch to Glassgold, 1948, JDC Archives.
he faced convincing the refugees to accept visas to Israel, noting that “so far as the DP Community is concerned, the majority still cling feverishly, desperately to the hope of a revised DP bill, which would admit them, so they believe, within the next few months to the United States.”\footnote{Letter from AJDC - Shanghai to Robert Pilpel, Re: The Situation in Shanghai, February 25, 1949, China: Administration, General, 1949, ID 457409, JDC Archives.}

Despite the restrictive situations, many Shanghai Jews played a large role in determining their future destinations through their persistent refusal to apply for visas to Israel. Their decision to wait required Jewish welfare institutions to maintain offices in Shanghai longer than expected, and with the looming cloud of the Chinese Civil War, prompted the JDC, IRO, and HIAS to develop a series of last-minute extractions in the spring of 1949.

3.4 The Chinese Civil War

Prior to World War II, British, French, and Japanese individuals and governments were more influential in China than the United States, the latter of whom were composed largely of missionaries, select commodity traders, and isolated diplomats.\footnote{S.C.M. Paine, The Wars for Asia, 1911-1949 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 171-172.} The “Rape of Nanking” drew the attention of U.S. media outlets and the public to China in December 1937.\footnote{Takashi Yoshida, The Making of the ‘Rape of Nanking’ History and Memory in Japan, China, and the United States (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 5. Yoshida argues that “the history and memories of [the Nanjing Massacre] have influenced the national consciousness of [Japan, China, and the United States] more than they affected the public awareness of any other nation,” although he argues the interplay between the event and these countries’ “national consciousness” are a “recent construction” (pg. 5, 40).} Thanks to the eyewitness reports of American news correspondents who chose to remain in Nanking during the attack, the New York Times, Chicago Daily News, and Washington Post published gory details of “mass executions… of streets scattered with the dead bodies of women, elderly men, and
children.” Media served a fundamental role in bringing China into clearer focus for 1940s-era Americans, and the lens was shaded with the rhetoric of violence and Japanese aggression. These themes of violence and aggression appeared again in American newspapers with the increase of hostilities during the Chinese Civil War a decade later, and served as foundational context for the ways in which American Jewish communities framed the experiences of Shanghai Jews.

Contentions between the Nationalist and Communist forces in China had two decades of history before the Chinese Civil War of 1945-1949. The Chinese Civil War of the 1940s, often framed by international observers as a conflict between two massive personalities—Nationalist China’s (KMT) Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) Mao Zedong—involved decades of social, economic, and geographic underpinnings and millions of individuals ranging from rural peasants to Beijing’s intelligentsia. Tensions between the KMT and CCP, generated during their concurrent battles with northern warlords during the 1920s and 1940s, ebbed and flowed throughout the interwar period and into World War II; as S.C.M. Paine notes, the conflict was “a civil war within a regional war within a global war.” Even during Japanese occupation, the CCP continued to amass soldiers and arms, and the KMT successfully petitioned the United States for financial aid.

With the surrender of Japan at the September 1945 signing of the Instrument of Surrender, the KMT and CCP shifted gears and again prioritized their aggressions toward each other.

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134 Ibid., 38.
Between 1946 and 1948, favorable tides turned swiftly from the KMT to the CCP. By the early months of 1948, Mao and his CCP forces conquered Manchuria and were headed toward Nanjing and Shanghai.\(^{138}\) As the conflict neared Shanghai, the United States administration and media took closer notice. Shanghai was situated at the center of international media attention. As China’s most modern port, with an established history of British and French traders and as the haven for thousands of still-stranded Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jews, Shanghai dominated American headlines that reported the Chinese Civil War.

The post-World War II United States, under President Truman’s administration, favored the KMT for reasons ranging from ideological rejection of Communism to protection of American interests supported by KMT’s socioeconomic elite.\(^{139}\) Following the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, the United States communicated almost exclusively with the KMT; there were few formal exchanges between the United States government and the CCP from 1937 to 1944, and the post-war communication hardly flourished.\(^{140}\)

KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek on the other hand, like his predecessor Sun Yat-sen, engaged the international community and sought and received substantial aid from the United States. Given that Chiang Kai-shek worked hard to project himself as Sun Yat-sen’s successor, he also inherited Sun’s support for the Jewish community in Shanghai.\(^{141}\) While it may not be


\(^{139}\) John Garver, *Sino-American Alliance: Nationalist China and American Cold War Strategy in Asia* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2015), 5. The reasons for American support for KMT are well researched and outside the scope of this brief study.


\(^{141}\) This refers to the published Sun Yat Sen support of Jews in 1920s Shanghai. Scrapbook, June 4, 1920, box 1, folder 20, Jacob Friend Family Papers, 1915-2002, Collection 116, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.
assumed that China’s general population was aware of plans to settle thousands of Jews in southwest China, plans by Maurice William and Jakob Berglas plans were presented and briefly supported by the KMT, further aligning many Jews’ support with the KMT.¹⁴²

As the CCP forces neared the international port of Shanghai, Mao’s anti-imperialist rhetoric collided with some U.S.-based media outlets’ anti-Communist agendas, unleashing a flood of headlines that raised alarm among the international Jewish community.¹⁴³ By the fall of 1948, Jewish refugees, residents, and welfare organizations significantly increased their efforts to emigrate the remaining 5,000 Shanghai Jews.

Media coverage of the CCP’s march toward Shanghai attracted the attention of powerful American politicians who saw the opportunity to place the plight of Shanghai Jews within the context of U.S. immigration policy. The grandson of German Jewish immigrants, New York Representative Emanuel Celler took special note of the situation.¹⁴⁴ In April 1948, Representative Celler wrote to the JDC to request information about the Shanghai Jewish community, adding, “this information is necessary to me as a basis for legislation concerning these refugees, and should cover the number of refugees, what countries they came from, when they left the countries of their origin, and how long they have been in Shanghai.”¹⁴⁵ While the JDC’s response to Emanuel Celler is lost, its contents must have proven persuasive to the New

¹⁴² Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 49.
¹⁴⁴ Celler would became well-known for his contribution in overturning nation-based immigration quotas through the 1965 Hart-Celler Act.
¹⁴⁵ Letter from Emanuel Celler to Joint Distribution Committee, April 4, 1948, China: Administration, General, 457112, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
York Democrat. He proceeded to draft a house bill to argue for inclusion of Shanghai refugees in the Displaced Persons quota, and his proposed bill later contributed the New York-based Aufbau’s political interpretation of the Shanghai Jewish refugees.

3.5 Organizational Love Triangle: JDC, HIAS, and IRO

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), and International Refugee Organization (IRO) coordinated the majority of the Shanghai Jews’ evacuation at the close of the 1940s, with the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) serving as a fundraising institution and the United Service for New Americans (USNA) coordinating the settlement of Shanghai Jewish refugees with local U.S. Jewish federations.146 The situation often became heated with so many proverbial cooks in the kitchen, and the Shanghai Jewish evacuation reveals the competition between the JDC and HIAS for institutional affiliations and donation funds.

The JDC’s internationally-recognized reputation as the dominant Jewish welfare society, its established connections with the U.S. State Department, and its considerably larger funding sources all contributed to situate the JDC at the crossroads of the Shanghai Jewish relief efforts, often to the disadvantage of the HIAS. Even though JDC and HIAS joined administrative forces on campaigns such as the Shanghai Jewish evacuation, institutional tensions had rippled from the upper administrative echelon down to the local field reporters during and after World War II.147 One such HIAS representative expressed frustration about the JDC in 1948, reporting that the “JDC does not make many friends in Paris. They ride around in big automobiles with ‘JDC New

147 While largely outside the scope of this research paper, these complex, transnational institutional relationships—and their origins—deserve an in-depth study of their own.
York’ marked all over them. It has gotten to a point where when you leave a car belonging to an American they cut your tires.”

JDC and HIAS operated almost entirely on individual and non-governmental contributions, and the competition for contributions became increasingly fierce post-World War II. The United Jewish Appeal (UJA), in particular, disseminated its funds to several beneficiaries and was a key financial supporter of the JDC. In 1949, the UJA pledged 45% of its initial $100,000,000 fundraising income to the JDC; when the UJA fell short of its 1949 campaign goals, however, and the JDC felt the financial bite. The JDC publicly reported a “sharp” downward trend in fundraising contributions, heightening tensions with institutions like HIAS whose missions—and potential funders—overlapped considerably.

In order to remain fiscally viable and retain support of institutions like the UJA, each institution needed to convince current and potential contributors that its organization was the most capable institution to channel individual donations to their intended cause. This proof could take the form of alliances with powerful partners, including governmental agencies like the International Refugee Organization.

The JDC and HIAS’s competition for affiliation with the IRO often centered around the arrangement of Jewish refugee immigration to Israel. The JDC, which possessed an established network of governmental contacts as exhibited by Laura Margolis’ work with the

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148 Hugo Rogers to the Board of Directors, February 17, 1948, Minutes of Board of Directors, 1944-1952, MKM 25.2, Yivo Institute for Jewish Research.
150 Ibid, 176.
U.S. consulate in Shanghai, was the primary Jewish welfare organizational partner of the IRO. HIAS, however, wished to enter into the arrangement. Previous attempts to merge immigration programs met with only partial success throughout the 1940s. HIAS and JDC engaged in ongoing negotiations to divide rescue efforts with the JDC throughout the 1940s, but by the 1948, HIAS reported that JDC would “not sit down with our [people] and work out a procedure.”\(^{152}\) While HIAS, USNA, and the immigration branch of the JDC would eventually merge to form HIAS-HICEM in 1954, tensions between the individual institutions are vividly described in their competition for press attention regarding the Shanghai Jewish transports, as will be seen.

### 3.6 The Shanghai Jewish Refugee Trains

As Representative Celler argued on behalf of the Shanghai Jewish refugees in January and February of 1949, the JDC, HIAS, and IRO worked to organize seven flights—four to Israel, one to Australia, and one to England—and five steamships to evacuate 1,470 Jews from Shanghai.\(^{153}\) Three factors determined the method of transport: speed of travel, number of passengers, and perhaps most contentiously, cost of transport. While the JDC often put forth the

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\(^{152}\) Rogers to Board of Directors, October 1948. The JDC’s administrative minutes of October 1948 refer to discussions between the JDC, HIAS, and USNA to sort the immigration responsibilities, noting that “a merger of the migration services, both here [United States] and abroad, cannot be achieved for the time being,” adding that the HIAS may assist individual-sponsored versus group-sponsored immigration cases. However, HIAS was not to “undertake resettlement work.” See Minutes Meeting of the Administration Committee of the Joint Distribution Committee, October 12, 1948, China: Administration, 457296, Joint Distribution Committee Archives. It was not until 1954 that the JDC’s migration services, HIAS, and UNRA combined to form one consolidated federation.

\(^{153}\) For a discussion of how the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 impacted the emigration of Jews from Shanghai, including a brief mention of the sealed transports, see Marcia, *Port of Last Resort*, 258.
initial loan for passage and received reimbursement from the IRO, there also is indication that the passengers themselves directly refunded the JDC.\textsuperscript{154} Although air travel was the fastest and most comfortable of all transportation methods, chartered airplanes carried between eight and 52 passengers each, whereas steamships accommodated upwards of 430 passengers. Furthermore, air flight was cost-prohibitive. The IRO refunded the JDC $15,600 for the transport of 52 Shanghai Jews via plane. At a rate of $300 per person, it is likely this was only partial reimbursement for one leg of travel.\textsuperscript{155}

Transportation around South America or South Africa via steamship took considerably longer to complete, with the latter trip lasting approximately six weeks.\textsuperscript{156} Furthermore, the American President Lines steamship company with whom the JDC coordinated transport often were unable to secure a chartered vessel exclusively for Shanghai Jews bound for Israel.\textsuperscript{157} The JDC and IRO therefore investigated a third option: purchasing berths on regularly-scheduled trans-Pacific ships, followed by a transcontinental train across the United States. The Shanghai Jews would then board the American Explore Lines steamship from New York to eventually disembark in Haifa, Israel.\textsuperscript{158} Cost of transport amounted to approximately $550 per person,

\textsuperscript{154} Letter from AJDC - Shanghai to AJDC - New York, Re: Passage Refunds Collected August and September 1949, October 31, 1949, China: Administration, General, 457474, Joint Distribution Committee Archives. An accounting note from a “W. Tag” of the JDC notes that $17,477 was collected from an unstated number of individuals “as passage refunds from our clients who left on the SS. ‘General Gordon’ [sic].”

\textsuperscript{155} Letter from AJDC - EHQ - Accounting Department to AJJDC - New York - Accounting Department IRO Remittances to New York, February 25, 1949, China: Administration, General, 457416, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

\textsuperscript{156} Press Release, “900 Shanghai Jews on Final Leg of Journey to Israel,” February 2, 1949, China: Administration, General, 460274, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

\textsuperscript{157} Letter from E. S. Wise to Mr. Adolph Glassgold, November 24, 1948, China: Subject Matter, Emigration, 460095, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

\textsuperscript{158} Dalia Ofer discusses the role of the Israeli government in the emigration efforts of Shanghai Jews, including an aside to the sealed transports; see Ofer, “The Israeli Government,” 67-80.
$351.79 of which the IRO reimbursed to the JDC, and included a 3rd class ship berth, a coach seat on the transcontinental sealed train, and $28.81 worth of meals.\(^{159}\) The steamship companies convinced the JDC of this third option, stating that sealed trains were considered a potentially faster and “more interesting” form of transport than the steamship-only method of transportation, and far less expensive than a chartered vessel.\(^{160}\)

While the JDC succeeded in arranging the transhemispheric travel, they encountered considerable difficulty in persuading Shanghai Jewish refugees to agree to transport via the sealed refugee trains across the United States. The passengers were required to remain on the train and under the “surveillance of railroad guards,” and the Southern Pacific Transportation Company placed a $500 per passenger bond with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).\(^{161}\) While it is unknown whether the Shanghai Jews were made fully aware of the nature of their transport, there did exist the potential that their exit from the United States would be considered a deportation, rendering them ineligible for future immigration to America. Once the JDC managed to secure assurance from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) that the passengers on the sealed train were not to be defined as “deported,” nearly 600 Shanghai Jews joined the rosters for the SS General Gordon and SS General Meigs, bound for San Francisco in February and March 1949.\(^{162}\)

One of the most challenging logistical obstacles for the JDC and IRO was the

\(^{159}\) Letter from E. S. Wise to Mr. Jennings Wong, January 5, 1949, China: Subject Matter, Emigration, 460351, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

\(^{160}\) E.S. Wise to Adolph Glassgold, 1948, JDC Archives.


\(^{162}\) Letter from AJDC Shanghai to Robert Pilpel, 1949, JDC Archives.
determination of legal liability for the Shanghai Jews while they were in the United States. The JDC and IRO assured the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service that the Shanghai Jews would remain on the sealed train and under the surveillance of railroad guards throughout the entirety of their transit, and the Southern Pacific placed a $500 bond per passenger. To share the burden of liability among several parties, the IRO, JDC, and the USNA arranged the transport according to the Immigration Act of 1917, which placed responsibility on the transportation companies for the “detention and removal” of “[undocumented] aliens” should any of the refugees choose to flee the transport.163 This rendered the Shanghai Jewish refugees ineligible for a transit visa from Section 3(3) of the Immigration Act of 1924, which would have allowed them free travel across the United States, but proved considerably more challenging to arrange in terms of liability.164 While the IRO accepted public responsibility for the Shanghai Jewish refugees, numerous organizations behind the scenes—including the JDC, IRO, and steamship and rail companies—assumed partial financial and legal responsibility remittable to the INS should any Shanghai Jews attempt to jump train.

By the time the S.S. General Gordon set sail in early February 1949, the Shanghai Jewish transport was supported by four major welfare organizations. The IRO funded the majority of the refugees, the JDC advanced the payment and served as the project manager for the logistics of sea and train travel, and HIAS provided an interpreter for the refugees. Finally, the USNA supplied medical aid and on-board care packages for the refugees while in the United States, and

163 Letter from Mrs. S. Smick and G. Grossman to Edward Philips, February 17, 1949, International Refugee Organization, 602159, Joint Distribution Committee Archives. 164 It is not specified whether the Presidential Lines steamship company would be liable for the Shanghai Jews under the 1924 Act, perhaps pointing to why the JDC and IRO preferred the 1917 Act as a measure of shared liability in the case of a runaway, or as an additional buffer to any later immigration obstacles. See letter from AJDC Shanghai to Robert Pilpel, 1949, JDC Archives.
helped circulate information and schedules between the contributory institutions.\textsuperscript{165}

On February 21, 1949, the \textit{S.S. General Gordon} docked in San Francisco, carrying over 500 Shanghai Jewish refugees.\textsuperscript{166} The United Service for New Americans (USNA) coordinated visitation from relatives in the United States, and the President Lines shipping company permitted U.S. relatives to visit their family members aboard the \textit{S.S. General Gordon} in San Francisco from 12:00 to 10:00 p.m. on February 21, with a special dinner hosted by the shipping company that evening. To gain access to their family members aboard the \textit{S.S. General Gordon}, U.S. relatives applied for passes from the President Lines, which were then validated by San Francisco’s U.S. Custom House.\textsuperscript{167} By noon on February 22, 1949, the Shanghai Jewish refugees were transferred from the \textit{S.S. General Gordon} to the sealed train via a series of guarded busses, under supervision of U.S. transportation authorities.\textsuperscript{168}

The passengers aboard the \textit{S.S. General Gordon} were nearly as diverse as the larger Jewish community in Shanghai. Of the 467 Shanghai Jews who later boarded the sealed train, 229 were European displaced persons and 238 were “Shanghai residents.”\textsuperscript{169} The latter group, defined by the JDC as “[o]ld time Jewish residents, mostly Russian and living principally in French Town,” presumably were Jews who resided in Shanghai prior to the influx of European refugees in 1938.\textsuperscript{170} The 467 Shanghai Jews who were to board the 20-car sealed diesel train

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\textsuperscript{165} Letter from Bernard B. Miran to Miss Rabinowitz, et al., February 15, 1949, China, Subject Matter, Emigration, 460248, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.  
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{167} An unnamed media organization purportedly filmed the refugees’ departure, however my attempts to find this film failed.  
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid. It is not stated whether the guards were representatives from the steamship line, the train line, or U.S. immigration.  
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid. Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan Pelt confirm that 467 Israel-bound were on the train, noting the total number of passengers on board \textit{SS General Gordon} numbered 648 individuals. Dwork and Jan Pelt, \textit{Flight from the Reich}, 322.  
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
included 216 women, 230 men, and 34 children under the age of twelve.\footnote{479 Israel-Bound Passengers,” Southern Israelite, March 7, 1949, page 1.}

In addition to the 476 train-bound passengers, there were 135 “regular immigrants” on the \textit{S.S. General Gordon} who were not required to board the sealed train.\footnote{Letter from Smick to Edward Philips, 1949, JDC Archives. There were also 44 “repatriates” who joined the Shanghai Jews on the sealed train, although their destination was not Israel. The demographics of these 44 “repatriates” are presently unknown.} Of these regular immigrants, 96 held U.S. visas and were approved for immigration as part of the nation-based immigration quota, and the 39 others continued to their next destinations, including Canada and nations in South America.\footnote{Ibid.} The remaining 476 passengers were required to traverse the territory in sealed trains, with a $500 bond placed on each person’s head and a destination where many did not wish to permanently reside. As the refugees boarded the sealed train in San Francisco at the Third and Townsend Depot station, Israeli consul Reuven Dafni announced to them, “you are finally going home… never again will any power drive you from your homes.”\footnote{JTA bulletin, Shanghai Refugees Arrive in San Francisco on Way to Israel, February 24, 1949, China: Shanghai, 752991, Joint Distribution Committee Archives, New York; also letter from Bernard Miran to Rabinowitz, 1949, JDC Archives. Deborah Dwork notes that Reuven Dafni added, “You are now going where you are wanted and where we wait for you,” interpreting his proclamation as “bittersweet.” See Dwork, \textit{Flight from the Reich}, 322.} For the sealed refugees who witnessed nearly 100 of their fellow passengers depart to live in the United States—the nation which many Shanghai Jews waited years to lawfully enter—this announcement might have seemed tone-deaf.

Following the sealed transport’s departure from San Francisco, the train took a southerly route, stopping in Yuma and Tucson, Arizona; El Paso, Texas; Avondale, Louisiana; New Orleans, Louisiana; Montgomery, Alabama; Atlanta, Georgia; Washington, D.C.; and Jersey City.\footnote{Letter from Bernard Miran to Rabinowitz, 1949, JDC Archives.} While the reasons for this southern route are not explicated in the archives, it may have
been a matter of comfort: the weather in southern states during February and March would be considerably more temperate than the climate of a northerly route.  

3.7 Conclusion

Once the Shanghai Jews boarded the sealed transport in San Francisco, the passage continued without any significant disturbances for the next several days, save for an incident in New Orleans where immigration officials allowed a woman and her husband to leave the train for admittance to a hospital. The Shanghai Jews also welcomed Julian Steinman as a new passenger, born during the transcontinental journey.

The Shanghai Jewish passengers were joined by a doctor and two nurses, funded by

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176 This possibility was explored in conversation with Dr. Douglas Reynolds, August 2017.
177 The cause is unknown, though her husband was allowed to accompany her. “479 Israel Bound,” 1949, Southern Israelite, presented online by the Digital Library of Georgia.
178 Ibid.; it is unknown which day he was born, although it was before the stop in Atlanta.
USNA, and an interpreter, funded by HIAS. The dining car did not serve pork to the refugees, however train personnel could consume non-kosher meats in the rear of the train.

Communities along the sealed train’s route contributed small gifts, mostly in the form of produce. The refugees purportedly were allowed to buy fruit in San Francisco, and local communities in El Paso and New Orleans donated fruit to the Shanghai Jewish residents. Yet “Atlanta’s welcome,” the *Southern Israelite* boasted, “was the only one of its type along the way…. The cordiality displayed [to] the passengers and handy gift bag [sic] set Atlanta’s welcome apart.”

Although the JDC, IRO, and HIAS organized several steamships and flights carrying Shanghai Jews to Italy and Israel throughout the spring of 1949, their passage rarely received media attention. The physical presence of these Shanghai Jews aboard the trains on American soil, sealed though they were, brought an international immigration crisis to the doorsteps of American Jewish communities. The American Jewish media and institutional responses, however, illustrated the complexities and context of their own local anxieties as well as the complexities and context of the Shanghai Jewish refugees themselves.

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179 Letter from Bernard B. Miran to Miss Rabinowitz, et al., February 15, 1949, China, Subject Matter, Emigration, 460248, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
180 “479 Israel-Bound,” *Southern Israelite*, presented online by the Digital Library of Georgia.
CHAPTER 4: THE SEALED TRAINS OF 1949: ATLANTA

As the Shanghai Jewish transport rumbled across the American South in February 1949, Atlanta stood ready to meet its brief visitors thanks to a last-minute call-to-action. The preparation for, engagement with, and coverage of the Shanghai Jewish transport provide an opportunity to investigate an often-overlooked post-World War II narrative not only about the Shanghai Jews, but also local American Jewish communities. While this time period often slips between the historical narratives of World War II and the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s, the late 1940s were neither a period of sociopolitical stasis for Atlanta Jews, nor a withdrawal from national and international issues. Rather, the Shanghai Jewish stop in Atlanta exhibits the high level of interdependent involvement by select Atlanta Jewish leadership in local, national, and international issues.

Unlike the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in New York, Atlanta’s institutions and individuals retain almost no archives of the Shanghai Jewish visits apart from media reports. Atlanta’s welcome of the Shanghai Jewish refugees provides a case study opportunity of how we may investigate experiences despite the dearth of primary sources. In order to contextualize the Southern Israelite’s accounts, we may partially reconstruct the Atlanta Jewish institutions’ social, political, and economic pressures through an investigation of its leadership. Three Atlanta Jewish leaders provide this opportunity: Adolph Rosenberg, Edward Kahn, and Sam Eplan. Their ties to various institutions and each other illustrate the intersecting pressures within Atlanta’s Jewish community. Additionally, these three individuals provide a glimpse into the multiple influences and decisions that also constructed the rhetorical approach presented by the media coverage.

The series of newspaper articles published by Southern Israelite articulated many Atlanta
Jews’ responses to the Shanghai Jews. Nonetheless, it represented only a few perspectives within the Atlanta and Shanghai Jewish communities. The tone and rhetoric of the Atlanta media coverage nonetheless reveals internal and external pressures experienced by select members of the local Jewish community, and provides insight into how Atlanta’s institutional leadership perceived of their roles and resources. By examining individuals within an institution as well as the public perception of an institution, we may investigate the personalities, whims, and shifting perspectives of the diverse individuals who composed their records.

Before examining the refugees’ arrival in Georgia’s capital, we first must explore the social, economic, and institutional environment that awaited the Shanghai Jewish refugees in Atlanta through the experiences and affiliations of three Atlanta Jewish leaders. With the stage set and the actors on cue, this chapter arrives at the Terminal Station platform and investigates the Shanghai and Atlanta Jews’ brief meeting on February 26, 1949. The analysis then shifts to the rhetoric used by *Southern Israelite* to interpret and present the Shanghai Jewish refugees, as contextualized by the social, economic, and institutional experiences of Adolph Rosenberg, Edward Kahn, and Sam Eplan.

### 4.1 The Atlanta Jewish Context: Institutions and Individuals

The Jewish community in Atlanta expanded considerably in the one hundred years leading up to the arrival of the sealed transport. Within a decade of Sephardic Jews’ arrival in Shanghai, Atlanta’s first Jewish resident, Jacob Haas, settled in the yet-unincorporated city of Atlanta in 1845.\(^{183}\) This marked the beginning of an influx of Jewish and non-Jewish residents

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\(^{183}\) Accession detail for Jacob Haas Family Manuscript, 93-093 V/F H, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.
attracted by the “Gate City,” strategically located at a railroad terminus. By the 1940s, approximately 10,000 Jews lived in the Atlanta and formed interconnected and diverse subcommunities of Ashkenazic, Sephardic, reform, and Orthodox affiliation. Jews in Atlanta lived within a complex sociocultural, ethnic, and economic landscape that, by the turn of the century, served as a hub of Jewish life for the region. Although only a fraction of the Jewish population in New York, Atlanta’s response to the Shanghai Jewish refugee train reflected a desire by some members of the community to appear responsive, philanthropic, and engaged with the local and international Jewish community.

Three Atlanta Jewish leaders took the lead in their city’s dealings related to the Shanghai Jewish episode: Adolf Rosenberg, editor of the *Southern Israelite*, which provided media coverage of the sealed Shanghai Jewish train; Edward Kahn, executive administrator of several Atlanta Jewish federations and key liaison to the United Service of New Americans (USNA); and Sam Eplan, Georgia Chairperson for the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and public face of the Atlanta Jewish community’s response to the Shanghai Jews. These pressures and contexts come together at the nexus of the Shanghai Jewish and Atlanta Jewish communities’ meeting on February 26, 1949.

Born in Albany, Georgia, on August 14, 1911, Adolph Rosenberg was a graduate of the University of Georgia. The *Southern Israelite* hired him as a staffer in 1940 following his tenure with the *Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution* and as a Washington D.C.-based

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Rosenberg served as founding member of the Atlanta Press Club and rose to national recognition when the American Jewish Press Association elected him president three consecutive terms in the late 1960s. In 1946, the *Southern Israelite* promoted Arthur Rosenberg to the position of editor, a role he occupied until his death in 1977, and which provided him the opportunity to run several articles related to the Shanghai Jewish sealed trains in March 1949.

Rosenberg’s Atlanta-based interests expanded beyond media to include sociopolitical activism, including serving as a trustee for the Gate City Lodge of B’nai B’rith, a board member of the Atlanta Zionist District, and a member of the Jewish War Veterans. Rosenberg also was active in the Atlanta chapter of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), a national institution that stressed an international mindset. The AJC charter emphasized its mission “to prevent the infraction of the civil and religious rights of Jews in any part of the world…[and] to secure for Jews equality of economic, social and educational opportunity.” Both Edward Kahn and Sam Eplan also were members of the AJC.

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188 Ibid.; Rosenberg briefly served as inadvertent war correspondent during the Six-Day War when he found himself stranded while attempting to return home from a journalism conference he led in Israel.
191 American Jewish Committee oral history interview with Sam Eplan, February 1976, and Ed Kahn, unknown date, Collection 596, Emory University Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library.
Rosenberg’s numerous social and political connections likely were of considerable assistance in remaining engaged and informed in the Atlanta Jewish community as editor of one of the most influential Jewish newspapers in the American South, the *Southern Israelite*. The weekly newspaper, supplemented by a monthly magazine, focused on local matters ranging from synagogue civic programs to births, family visits, and marriages, and served as a key connection...
to national and international events. The newspaper grew out of a dearth of Jewish publications in the 1920s South, and by 1949, those in the Southeast who wished for local and international news with an emphasis on Jewish life depended almost entirely on the *Southern Israelite*. While the *Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution* periodically published articles related to the Atlanta Jewish community, including local Jewish leaders’ roles in a DP summit, neither newspaper covered the sealed refugee train with in-depth features as did the *Southern Israelite*. Rosenberg’s social and political affiliations beyond *Southern Israelite* suggest he was motivated to represent the Atlanta Jewish community as engaged, invested, and active within a larger social network, and his coverage of the Shanghai Jewish trains in March 1949 provided the opportunity to do so.

While Adolph Rosenberg served as the editorial leader of *Southern Israelite* and Sam Eplan served as the public face for the United Jewish Appeal and the Shanghai Jewish hospitality committee, Edward Kahn was a behind-the-scenes powerhouse of Atlanta Jewish welfare

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193 An Atlanta successor, *The American Jewish Review*, took up the torch and published for twenty years until its move to Buffalo, New York, in 1921. One of the more popular weekly publications, *The Jewish South* of Richmond, Virginia, went out of circulation in 1899 with *Jewish Sentiment* following its demise in 1901. Other turn-of-the-century, short-lived Jewish newspapers include *Jewish Tribune* and the more localized *Savannah Jewish News*, whose non-digitized collection is held by the University of California, Los Angeles.

194 “Jewish Leaders from 3 States Plan DP Forum,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 6, 1949, 17A.

195 Under Rosenberg’s leadership, the *Southern Israelite* aspired to represent the definitive southern Jewish voice. Hardly coy in its ambitions, a January 7, 1949, issue announced, “Every Jewish home in the South should be on the subscription list of the *Southern Israelite*… It enlarges the fund of knowledge of Jewish affairs… it widens one’s Jewish horizon and viewpoint… it deepens one’s understanding of Judaism… it affords a medium wherein the Jewish people can give expression to their charitable, social and culture enterprises.”
administration. For several years leading up to the Shanghai Jewish refugee arrival, the Atlanta community possessed an active system of Jewish federations and welfare institutions. The AJC’s 1950 American Jewish Year Book lists Jewish federations for 343 cities and two state chapters, and ranks Atlanta as having the most number of Jewish social institutions, tied with five other major cities. Kahn served as executive director or executive secretary for all three Atlanta-based organizations listed in the American Jewish Yearbook, including the Federation for Jewish Social Services, the Jewish Welfare Fund, and the Jewish Community Council. Through these three local organizations, Kahn maintained active communication with the national offices of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and United Service for New Americans (USNA).

Edward Kahn had been an established pillar of Atlanta Jewish welfare administration since the late 1920s. Born in 1895, Kahn immigrated as a child to the United States from Bialystok, Poland. After receiving a degree in law from the Brooklyn Law School of St. Lawrence University and passing New York’s bar, the Jewish People’s Institute of Chicago hired Kahn as its Educational Director in 1920. In 1928, Kahn moved to Atlanta to serve as the

197 "Jewish Federations, Welfare Funds, Community Councils," The American Jewish Year Book 51 (1950). The five other cities with three organizations included Akron, Boston, Cincinnati, Columbus, and New York City. None, however, possessed more than Atlanta, which supports Mark Bauman’s claim that “Atlanta’s Jews were incorrigible joiners.” See Bauman, “Transformation,” 94.
198 The Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds served as Atlanta’s UJA-affiliation, and the Federation for Jewish Social Services in Atlanta received support from the Community Chest. Of the hundreds of administrators listed in the 1950 Jewish Year Book, only Nathan Pinsky of Akron, Ohio, sat on as many boards as Edward Kahn.
199 Edward Kahn, Collection 007, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.
executive director of the Atlanta Federation for Jewish Social Service, the first of many administrative positions he held—often concurrently—until his retirement in 1964.

Kahn represented a trend in American Jewish welfare funds toward centralization of community initiatives, an initiative that took place well before the Shanghai Jewish sealed trains neared Atlanta. Kahn served as one of four Atlanta representatives at the 1936 General Assembly of the National Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds (NCJFWF), an assembly that pressured national organizations—including the JDC—to combine fundraising initiatives while it encouraged local communities to establish Jewish federations in support of European Jewish refugees.

Through his federation work, Kahn balanced the ongoing influx of Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs) with the pressures of a politically nativist environment and the challenges of fundraising. Atlanta Jewish institutions expended considerable financial and administrative overhead to assimilate international Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs) often perceived of as potential public charges. Immigration policy in 1949, bearing echoes of the Evian Conference and the failure of the Wagner-Rogers bill, was “so restrictive in nature and so impractical” that it

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200 Bauman, “Transformation,” 89. While Bauman notes that the period from 1944 to 1948 is typified by a “decline in the need for charity and Americanization at home, with the exception of the small number of Holocaust refugees,” the records of Edward Kahn report USNA’s request for an increase of immigration resettlement in Atlanta from 1948 to 1949 (95).
202 Ibid., 89.
took the Atlanta Jewish federations nearly nine months to restructure their immigration programs to fit the dictates of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948.\textsuperscript{204}

In addition to the Act’s requirement of “job and housing assurances” for each DP, numerous organizations within the Atlanta Jewish community provided additional services to equip the immigrants with skills they perceived as necessary for the immigrants to thrive in their new environment.\textsuperscript{205} A local USNA-affiliated institution organized classes with the Atlanta Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, including courses in “Americanization,” in order to ease the immigrants’ transition to life in Atlanta and so “that not one of the newcomers become a public charge.”\textsuperscript{206}

Local pressures to accommodate the influx of post-World War II immigrants, including Shanghai Jewish refugees, were not the only influences in the Atlanta Jewish federations’ operations.\textsuperscript{207} International Jewish welfare agencies also pressured and motivated the Atlanta

\textsuperscript{204} Minutes from the Committee on Family Service within the Atlanta Federation for Jewish Social Service, Minutes of Directors, container 35, folder 10, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.

\textsuperscript{205} Letter from Eudice Tontak to unnamed recipient, c. 1949, Minutes of Atlanta Federation Directors, container 35, folder 10, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid. See also letter to Mr. Earl C. Harrison, May 30, 1947, Atlanta Jewish Federation Records, Resettlement, 1947-1958, container 46, folder 9, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum. Throughout his tenure as Jewish Educational Alliance director, Ed Kahn encouraged the establishment of English classes and vocational night schools while discouraging restrictive nativist legislation. Atlanta Jewish women’s association also had contributed to this decades-long tradition of resettling new immigrants, and The Council of Jewish Women provided cooking classes in their own homes so that the new immigrants would be able to create nutritious meals using local produce, with the added benefit of balancing their food budget and providing meals that would allow their children to “feel less self-conscious.” See Arnold Shankman, “Atlanta Jewry-1900 to 1930,” \textit{American Jewish Archives Journal} 73 no. 2 (1973), 136.

\textsuperscript{207} Handwritten memo by “EMK” (assumed Edward Kahn), June 6, 1950, Atlanta Jewish Federation Records, Resettlement, 1947-1958, container 46, folder 9, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.
Jewish community. The national offices of the USNA coordinated the resettlement of Jewish immigrations in cooperation with local federation administrators, including Atlanta’s Ed Kahn. The USNA wrote Ed Kahn in September 1948 thanking him for a quick response to their quota commitment for Atlanta, but stated that the USNA was “disappointed […] to learn that your resettlement committee has not, at this time, accepted the quota which was established for your community.” The USNA goes on to assert that “small communities like Rutland, Vermont […] and Bangor, Maine, with 265 families, [have] also accepted a monthly quota.” The interlinear argument is clear: Atlanta, with a far larger Jewish community than Rutland and Bangor, needed to contribute more financially and administratively to the larger Jewish community. Yet in the years leading up to the Shanghai Jewish refugees’ passage through Atlanta, the local Jewish community struggled to meet USNA demands while also providing programmatic support they considered necessary for the well-being of new immigrants. This included the services to “hard core cases” which the Atlanta federations had “no real experience” handling, including two Shanghai Jews who possessed little to no work experience or English skills upon their resettlement in Atlanta.209

Programmatic expenses and pressures further intensified in spring 1949—within months of the sealed refugee trains—when USNA requested that Jewish Federation’s Atlanta chapter

208 Letter from USNA Field Service Director Milton Krochmal to Atlanta Federation Executive Director Edward Kahn, September 17, 1948, Atlanta Jewish Federation Records, Resettlement, 1947-1958, container 46, folder 9, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.
209 Handwritten memo, June 1950, Atlanta Jewish Federation Records, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum. “Hard core” referred to immigrants whose adjustment required additional administrative and financial support, most frequently referencing elderly refugees and those with mental and physical disabilities.
increase the number of Jewish DPs settled locally.\textsuperscript{210} The immigrants’ arrival created an anticipated deficit of $3,362.25 in the Atlanta Federation for Jewish Social Services, and the Federation’s board nominated Kahn, who also served on the administrative board of the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund, to request that the Atlanta Welfare Fund supplement this deficit.\textsuperscript{211} To further strain matters, the amount due proved difficult to meet. In a letter to Arthur Rosichlan in 1950, Kahn mentioned “the major problem of a decline in fundraising which complicates yet more this [DP] situation.”\textsuperscript{212} Ed Kahn’s experiences balancing the requests of the USNA with the financial and administrative requirements of immigration programs expose the ever-shifting social and economic pressures of the Atlanta’s institutional dynamics. The Atlanta-based federations led by Kahn needed positive press to demonstrate to the USNA their community’s participation in supporting these Jewish DPs.

Edward Kahn was not the only Atlanta Jewish leader to feel the pressures of fundraising and institutional requests. Sam Eplan, the chairman of the Shanghai Jewish welcoming committee, found himself in both public and private conversations regarding the Atlanta Jewish community’s roles and responsibilities to larger Jewish affiliations.

Samuel Leon Eplan was born to Russian immigrants in 1896, and his father, Leon Eplan, held several influential positions in the Atlanta Jewish community. A successful businessman, Leon Eplan helped establish the Young Men’s Hebrew Association, Ahavath Achim, Beth Israel,

\textsuperscript{210} Letter from USNA to Cooperating Resettlement Agencies in Local Communities, May 3, 1949, Atlanta Jewish Federation Records, Resettlement, 1947-1958, container 46, folder 9, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.

\textsuperscript{211} Minutes from the Committee on Family Service within the Atlanta Federation for Jewish Social Service, Minutes of Directors, container 35, folder 10, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.

\textsuperscript{212} Letter to Arthur Rosichlan from Edward Kahn, June 21, 1950, Atlanta Jewish Federation Records, Resettlement, container 46, folder 9, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.
and the Jewish Educational Alliance, the latter of which Edward Kahn periodically served as executive director. Additionally, Leon Eplan served as vice president of the Federation of Jewish Charities and reportedly held political sway among Atlanta’s Russian Jewish community at the turn of the century.

While Samuel Leon Eplan did not inherit his father’s business, he did inherit numerous social and political connections which he also passed on to his son, Leon Samuel Eplan. After graduating from Emory University and starting his successful career as a lawyer, Sam Eplan became active in numerous institutions, including the Jewish War Veterans and Ahavath Achim, two institutions in which Adolph Rosenberg also held membership. Eplan’s numerous social club and institutional affiliations led to personal friendships with several notable leaders among the Atlanta Jewish community, including Ed Kahn.

Figure 5  Eplan (second from left) and Edward Kahn (first on right) on a lake outing. EMK 6.022, Edward M. Kahn Family Papers, courtesy of the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.

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213 Hertzberg, 116, 134, 159, 296.
Among Eplan’s memberships, two of his most well-known institutional affiliations directly tie him to the Shanghai Jewish refugees: the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and the Jewish Progressive Club.

As previously discussed, the UJA experienced significant fundraising challenges in 1949, in large part due to what they considered to be “local community campaigns [falling] short of their 1948 performance.” 216 In December 1948, Edward Kahn received a letter from the United Jewish Appeal’s national office alerting the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund to a $10,000 discrepancy in the local chapter’s balance owed to the UJA, totaling an unpaid balance of $47,000. 217 With limited local funds and increasing criticism from the national office of the United Jewish Appeal, local leadership desperately needed positive public relations highlighting the Atlanta Jews’ financial and administrative contributions to the broader Jewish community.

217 Letter from Harry Monter, Executive Vice Chairman of the United Jewish Appeal, to Edward Kahn, December 23, 1948, Atlanta Jewish Federation Records, United Jewish Appeal-New York, container 179, folder 2, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.
In March 1949, the *Southern Israelite* published a front-page article by editor Adolph Rosenberg highlighting the UJA’s fundraising campaign. The article’s photograph, pictured above, features Sam Eplan with a group of UJA affiliates, including Mrs. I. M. Weinstein, Executive of the UJA Women’s Division in Atlanta. The caption reads, “Viewing the telegram received from National U.J.A. headquarters asking for all the possible cash which Southern Communities [sic] can raise by March 10.” The image sits directly below another article whose headline reads, “Second Shanghai Refugee Train Welcomed in Atlanta.”

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218 “UJA’s Challenge for ’49 Described at Southern Conference in Atlanta,” *Southern Israelite*, March 18, 1949, page 1, presented online by the Digital Library of Georgia.
As Georgia Chairman for the UJA, the responsibility for resolving this local fundraising drought rested squarely on Sam Eplan’s shoulders. As demonstrated by his expansive network of social, political, and business contacts in Atlanta, Eplan had just the right connections to raise the philanthropic charge on behalf of the Shanghai Jewish refugees.

![Dinner at the Jewish Progressive Club](image)

*Figure 7* A dinner hosted at the Jewish Progressive Club for war bonds during World War II. Sam Eplan is seated at the head table, and Rabbi David Marx of The Temple, Atlanta, Ga., is visible on the front row. 1939-1945, SLE 15.035, Samuel Leon Eplan Family, courtesy of the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.

By the time of the Shanghai Jewish transits in 1949, Sam Eplan was a well-established member of the Jewish Progressive Club, founded by Russian Jews in 1914 as a more budget-friendly option to the Jewish Standard Club.²¹⁹ The Progressive Club offered recreational spaces where dances and dinners were hosted by Atlanta Jewish leadership for a variety of different philanthropic and social purposes. The club also held regular board meetings to discuss financial solvency, outreach efforts, and both local and international affairs they considered of importance.

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to the Atlanta Jewish community. It was at one such meeting that members of the Atlanta Jewish institutional leadership first encountered news of the Shanghai Jewish sealed transports.

With only 48 hours to prepare a welcoming party for the Shanghai Jews on the sealed train, Sam Eplan provided the first call to action during the Progressive Club’s Board of Governors meeting on Thursday, February 24.\textsuperscript{220} Eplan requested that Progressive Club members donate funds for a “special caravan train which was passing through Atlanta.”\textsuperscript{221} The Progressive Club members met Eplan’s request for “hospitality” on behalf of the Atlanta Jews with “a spontaneous burst of generosity.”\textsuperscript{222} This late-night plea by Eplan at the Progressive Club generated $1,000 in donations, and Eplan agreed to serve as chairman for the Shanghai Jewish hospitality committee.

4.2 Atlanta Prepares its Welcome: Responses to the Refugees

Eplan quickly engaged his expansive communication network in the Atlanta Jewish community to solicit both institutional and individual volunteers for the hospitality committee. Eplan’s committee rapidly expanded to include the Tel Chai group of Hadassah, Atlanta Jewish War Veterans, and several women from various social clubs, including Mrs. Edwin Zaban, whose husband also served on Eplan’s hospitality committee and who would later become an administrator at the Atlanta Jewish Community Center.\textsuperscript{223} Eplan also attracted the attention of

\textsuperscript{220} Special Meeting of the Board of Governors, February 24, 1949, Jewish Progressive Club Records, Collection 006, box 1, folder 6, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{223} “Balser Renominated for Fifth Term as A.J.C.C. President,” \textit{Southern Israelite}, April 30, 1954, page 1, presented online by the Digital Library of Georgia.
Adolph Rosenberg, who threw in the support of the *Southern Israelite* by reporting on minutiae of the hospitality committee’s actions, members, and aspirations.

The primary outcome of the hospitality committee took the form of care packages for each Shanghai Jewish refugee on the sealed transport. Men received cigarettes, razors and shaving cream, brushes, washcloths, stationary, socks; women received safety pins, stationary, nylons, fruit, brushes, and a cosmetic kit including compact, powder, rouge, and lipstick; and children’s packets included toys and games. All three groups received candy, gum, and soap. The hospitality committee prepared the packages despite the uncertainty of whether the sealed train’s guards would even allow the Atlanta Jewish community to interact with the Shanghai Jewish refugees or have their care packages delivered to the intended recipients.

When the Shanghai Jewish transit finally pulled into Atlanta’s Terminal station at 8:37 p.m., four groups gathered to greet the passengers aboard the sealed train. They included the “silent and somber guards,” purportedly ordered by the F.B.I. to supervise the train stop; prominent Atlanta Jewish leadership, including hospitality committee members Sam Eplan, Erwin Zaban, and Alfred Weinstein; Atlanta Jews who successfully immigrated to the United States from Shanghai, including the Jacobsons family; and train attendants who would accompany the Shanghai Jews north. The “sealed” nature of the train prohibited the Shanghai Jews from disembarking beyond the train steps, however Jews who recently immigrated to Atlanta from Shanghai were allowed to stand on the train platform to greet friends, including an unnamed refugee who had “not yet found his social niche [sic] in Atlanta.”

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225 “479 Israel Bound,” *Southern Israelite*.
226 Ibid.
227 Ibid., page 2.
part of the “literary set” while in Shanghai, located “more than a dozen of his former friends on the train,” and the as-yet-unadjusted Shanghai-Atlanta immigrant “talked long and fast to gulf the intervening time.” Meanwhile, Eplan and his committee confirmed the Shanghai Jews could receive their care packages, and the hospitality committee loaded them onto the train.

With less than an hour scheduled at Terminal Station, members of the Atlanta Jewish community communicated through open windows, doors, and through written messages relayed to the back of the train. The Shanghai and Atlanta Jews spoke in numerous languages, including English, German, Russian, and Polish, exchanging information about relatives’ fates in the Holocaust and the refugees’ plans in Israel. “Iss gut bie dir in Atlanta?” asked Mr. and Mrs. Solly Gumpert, aunt and uncle to the Jacobsons, who had arrived in Atlanta just the year before. The Atlanta couple responded with a list of Atlanta’s abundance, including butter, cheese, and water.

The exchange in Atlanta revealed a kaleidoscope of experiences aboard the sealed train. Shanghai refugee Willie Klinksburg found his cousin, Mrs. Sam Schwartz, whom he had last seen in Austria ten years prior. Klinksburg had lost his mother and sisters in the Holocaust, but he had briefly seen his father during their San Francisco stop. Schwartz gave him her address and the address of another cousin he could find in Tel Aviv. Meanwhile, Alex Nahimo explained to a few strangers standing around his window that he had escaped the increasing anti-Semitism in Europe by fleeing to Shanghai via Russia in the early 1930s. Nahimo worked as a barber in Shanghai, and his two children, Eric and Ella, joined him on the transport. Nahimo bore a tattoo on his arm, but it was a tattoo of his wife’s name rather than the textual marks of a concentration camp. Macky Gavernman had never lived in Europe. Born in Shanghai, he worked as a chief

228 Ibid.
229 Ibid. It is unknown whether the Gumperts were related to Mr. or Mrs. Jacobsons.
clerk with the U.S. Naval Port Facilities and served as the “man in charge of the refugees” on the sealed train.\footnote{Ibid.} Another unnamed Shanghai Jewish refugee managed to find his cousin, Herman Kramarski, in the Atlanta Jewish crowds. Years earlier, Kramarski fled his position as a banker in Germany to reside in Shanghai during the war, and had managed to secure immigration before his cousin. Kramarski’s obituary in the March 18, 1949, issue of the \textit{Southern Israelite} closed its summary of Kramarski’s life by noting, “only a few weeks ago, [Kramarski] was in the Atlanta group which met the first train of Shanghai refugees to pass through Atlanta. He was able to talk with a cousin on the train who was bound for Israel.”\footnote{“Herman Kramarski,” \textit{Southern Israelite}, March 18, 1949, page 2.}

With the care packages loaded into the storage car at the train’s rear, the transport pulled away from Atlanta’s Terminal Station shortly after 9:00 p.m. Though the exchange lasted less than an hour, the brief meeting reverberated across the pages of the \textit{Southern Israelite} in the days that followed. The train platform transformed into a rhetorical platform, and the reporters’ rhetoric proclaimed the experiences and concerns of the Shanghai Jews framed within the experiences and concerns of Atlanta’s Jewish institutions.

4.3 Atlanta’s Media Response to the Shanghai Jewish Transport

The \textit{Southern Israelite} offers the best insight into Atlanta Jews’ responses to the Shanghai Jewish sealed trains, albeit an insight presented from the perspectives of the \textit{Southern Israelite} reporting staff and their editor, Adolph Rosenberg, who authored the first front-page article on March 4, 1949.\footnote{Overview of the \textit{Southern Israelite} Archive, Digital Library of Georgia, accessed Nov. 6, 2016.} Throughout the three issues that featured the Shanghai Jewish transit, published on March 4, March 11, and March 18, the newspaper’s rhetoric emphasized
three aspects of the Atlanta community: its welcoming, participatory nature; the need for contributions to the UJA; and Atlantans’ expansive local and international connections to national and international Jewry.

Rosenberg placed the most resounding rhetorical emphasis on the engaged, invested nature of the Atlanta Jewish community, emphasizing the warmth of the so-called Gate City. Headlines announcing “How Atlanta Prepared Her Welcome for the Shanghai Refugee Train” and “479 Israel-Bound Passengers Welcomed as Refugee-Laden Train Halts in Atlanta” both crowded the front page of The Southern Israelite’s March 4 issue.\textsuperscript{233} Rosenberg details the contents and logistics involved in the Atlanta Jewish community’s preparation of “500 bundles of gifts” and lists by name dozens of hospitality committee members, relatives, and institutional leaders who gathered to greet the refugees.\textsuperscript{234}

The articles published on March 4 lauded the Atlanta Jewish community’s efforts to come together through a last-minute, word-of-mouth call to action. “We [at the Southern Israelite] were quite impressed, as reports elsewhere in this issue indicate, by the Atlanta episode in the movement of the Shanghai refugee train,” read one unattributed report on March 4, going on to praise the “generosity and responsibility [of] Jewry in the South and elsewhere in this blessed country.”\textsuperscript{235}

Although the second sealed train of 228 Shanghai Jewish refugees that crossed the United States in March 1949 generated fewer articles than the February 1949 train, however the


\textsuperscript{234} “479 Israel Bound,” Southern Israelite.

Southern Israelite once again emphasized the engaging nature of the local community. “As with the first train, the Atlanta Jewish community, through Chairman Sam Eplan, had arranged a welcoming committee and gifts for each person aboard,” and several Atlanta women who originally gathered for a bridge party “surrendered their pleasure in order to pack the gift bags.”

The Southern Israelite also featured the importance of supporting the United Jewish Appeal, and emphasized that the Atlanta Jewish community’s response to the Shanghai Jews represented their local community’s financial commitment to national and international Jewish welfare institutions. One writer noted that, “until this year, Atlanta and the south have been far removed from actual contact with the bulk of Jewry’s United Jewish Appeal...another refugee-packed train passed through Atlanta last Wednesday... there will be more... they illustrate why the UJA needs our continued support.” The front-page coverage of the assembled care packages sat two columns over from another Southern Israelite article announcing the fundraising leadership of the UJA’s 1949 Campaign, which emphasized its partnership with the JDC and USNA.

The Southern Israelite emphasized not only the Atlanta Jewish community’s warm welcome of the refugees and its financial support of the UJA, but also the community’s role in reconnecting communication networks. Many Atlanta Jews transcended the sealed aspect of the train and exchanged addresses, family news, and letters via open windows and guarded platforms. The Southern Israelite’s detailed reports of conversations between the refugees and

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237 “The Job Ahead for this Year,” Southern Israelite, March 18, 1949, presented online by the Digital Library of Georgia.
Atlanta residents served the purpose of highlighting how the Atlanta Jews were connected both financially and familially with the larger Jewish community.

4.4 Conclusion

The spring 1949 passage of Shanghai Jews through Atlanta provided the opportunity for Atlanta Jewish institutions to explore their philanthropic and social responsibilities and resources. This is not to say the Southern Israelite ignored the harsh political conditions these refugees endured. One article printed an exchange between a refugee and a friend, separated by bars on the train: “we’re like birds in a cage [...] and you, you have your liberty.” And in July the Southern Israelite republished an article out of New York featuring a politically-toned analysis of the United States’ potential revocation of 200-300 visas for Shanghai Jews temporarily living in the U.S. But beyond vague references to “diplomatic red tape,” and an aside from a train attendant that noted “they’d make such good Americans... it’s a shame they have to leave us,” The Southern Israelite did not mention Representative Celler, the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, or provide a call to political action in relation to the sealed refugee trains. Instead, the restrictive immigration policy provided a backdrop by which the Atlanta Jewish community could emphasize its progressive, philanthropic efforts to combat the restrictive bureaucracy, thereby highlighting their own interest in and connection to the broader Jewish community.

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238 Tucker, “Traveling Rhetoric.”
240 “U.S. Refuses to Extend Visas of Refugees from Shanghai,” Southern Israelite, July 22, 1949, pg. 1, presented online by the Digital Library of Georgia.
241 Ibid., and “479 Israel bound,” Southern Israelite.
Eplan’s evaluation of their own resources and responsibilities in the blurred, transient reflection of the sealed refugee trains that passed in the night.

The refugees shared a Jewish identity with the Jewish Atlantans, yet the Shanghai Jews’ temporary presence in Atlanta provided the local community with a platform on which to explore their own connection to and contributions toward a larger Jewish community. Articles in *Southern Israelite* argue that Jewish residents of Atlanta fulfilled their responsibility to the Shanghai Jews on the train, and in combining their resources to aid these refugees, illustrated their commitment to supporting Jewish well-being regardless of background and nation-state origin. These arguments, in turn, served as a response on behalf of Atlanta’s institutional leadership, arguing that despite national welfare pressures to provide additional resources, Atlanta’s Jewish community already was going above and beyond in their philanthropic efforts.

Just as U.S. media reports of the Shanghai Jewish transits prompt us to explore the experiences and histories of Jews while in Shanghai, so too do the Shanghai Jewish refugees provide an opportunity to explore the experiences and histories of their all-too-brief Atlanta Jewish hosts. Through an emphasis on the welcome of and connection to refugees aboard the sealed transports, the *Southern Israelite* articulated local leaderships’ desires for Atlanta Jews to appear affiliated, contributory, and active in the broader Jewish community. Furthermore, institutional fundraising and philanthropic efforts reveal a high level of engagement in matters concerning refugees and international affairs well past the narrative bookend of World War II. Media coverage of the Shanghai Jews illustrated the complexities and concerns of the Atlanta Jewish community through their attempts to present the diverse, ongoing experiences of the

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Shanghai Jews themselves. As will be seen through an analysis of the Aufbau’s coverage in New York, this reflection shifted based on the local institutions’ context, concerns, and resources.
CHAPTER 5: THE SEALED TRAINS OF 1949: NEW YORK

As the Shanghai Jewish refugees left Atlanta’s Terminal Station destined for New York, they headed toward the most publicized welcome of their journey across the United States.\(^{244}\) The *Southern Israelite* surpassed the amount of coverage provided by most other cities along the first sealed transit’s route, however New York’s *Aufbau* prepared for the culmination of several months of articles going back to Shanghai Jewish refugee crisis and the Chinese Civil War in 1948. *Aufbau* presented a more political interpretation of the sealed refugee train than did *Southern Israelite*, but a closer look at the Big Apple’s welfare institutions reflect similar inter-organizational tensions to those of the Gate City.

Following a review of New York’s competitive institutional environment, this chapter investigates the Shanghai Jews’ Ellis Island and trans-Atlantic experiences through the eyewitness report of Julias Kaim. Next, the political rhetoric of *Aufbau* is examined in comparison to the *Southern Israelite*, exhibiting how each city’s institutional leadership interpreted the presence of the Shanghai Jewish refugees based on their own sociopolitical contexts. Finally, a brief epilogue is provided recounting legal and institutional changes in relation to the Shanghai Jewish community. As in the case of their previous stops, the Shanghai Jewish refugees’ presence on the front doorsteps of New York’s welfare institutions sparked public conversations about the responsibilities and resources of the local Jewish community to their international relations.

\(^{244}\) For a brief note on the “episode that engaged the sympathy of American Jewry,” see Ofer, “The Israeli Government,” 67.
5.1 The New York Jewish Context: Institutions and Tensions

As the Shanghai Jewish transports journeyed across the United States in spring 1949, JDC-HIAS tensions in New York boiled over into a heated competition for publicity related to the Shanghai Jewish rescue. The Shanghai Jewish rescue brought HIAS-JDC’s competition for institutional affiliation and publicity that came to a head in February and March 1949. The International Refugee Organization (IRO) had engaged in a conversation with HIAS exploring whether IRO should transfer categories of Jewish refugees from the Joint Distribution Committee to HIAS, and the JDC had caught wind of it. Because the IRO reimbursed transportation expenses of approved Displaced Persons, it was in its interest to work with the lowest bidder, be it JDC or IRO. HIAS attributed the IRO’s recent interest in their institution to HIAS’ supposed frugality in comparison to the JDC as demonstrated during JDC’s and HIAS’ bidding war for chartered planes in 1948.

In March 1949, the Jewish Agency in Israel responded to HIAS in a series of harshly toned wires, noting that “this cooperation of the two most responsible bodies dealing [with] immigration and resettlement has brought constructive results…your [HIAS] interference in this delicate important situation [has brought] incalculable harm…we request you immediately withdraw your offers to IRO.” HIAS administrators were infuriated by this, as they believed

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246 Who instigated these discussions was a matter of (inconclusive) debate. HIAS asserted that the IRO approached it, though institutional memos suggest otherwise.

247 Hugo Rogers report to Board of Directors, February 17, 1948, MKM 25.2, (Minutes of Board of Directors, 1944-1952), Yivo Institute for Jewish Research.

248 Cable to HIAS from Jewish Agency in Israel, in Minutes of Board of Directors, March 1949, MKM 25.2, RG 245.1: Volume 10, Yivo Institute for Jewish Research. HIAS, JDC, and Jewish Agency “tensions” are also noted by Fred Lazin nearly four decades later, regarding Israeli-
HIAS should be allowed participation in Jews’ immigration to Israel and were “against a monopoly of work by any Jewish organization.”

In the area of public relations, select members of the JDC grew increasingly frustrated with HIAS’ domination of media coverage, particularly in relation to Shanghai Jewish rescue efforts. Herbert Katzki, who served as the JDC’s Assistant Director General for Overseas Operations, reported that “HIAS rushing in to secure publicity is a problem we have had with us for a long period of time… the most flagrant cases about which we can do nothing either is where HIAS gives out publicity on matters on which they do not have even so much of a toe hold as they do [with the sealed refugee train].”

Despite JDC’s dissatisfaction, HIAS continued to receive press recognition regarding the Shanghai Jewish rescue, often at the cost of JDC. In 1949, the JDC’s public relations manager, Raphael Levy, wrote to the well-respected New York-based Seven Arts Feature Syndicate to correct points in writer Nathan Ziprin’s May 20 article. Levy found the article “equally misleading and irritating,” taking special offense at HIAS’s Shanghai director Meyer Birman’s claim in the article that HIAS was the only Jewish organization representative that assisted the refugees in the Shanghai ghetto during the Japanese occupation. “I am sure you will recall,” Levy wrote Ziprin, “that it was the JDC and not Hias [sic] which maintained a program

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Minutes of Board of Directors, March 1949, MKM 25.2, RG 245.1: Volume 10, Yivo Institute for Jewish Research.

Letter from Herbert Katzki to AJDC Geneva, Re: HIAS Publicity on Shanghai Transport, February 28, 1949, China, Shanghai, 752985, Joint Distribution Committee Archives. Though not specific, it is likely that HIAS’s role related to the transits’ HIAS-funded translator or tertiary arrangements with USNA for additional care during the sealed transports.

Letter from Raphael Levy to Mr. Nathan Ziprin and Mr. Boris Smolar, May 31, 1949, China: Administration: Publicity, 458977, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
throughout the Japanese occupation in Shanghai. “252 It is unclear whether HIAS’ successful publicity prompted an increase of press releases sent by Raphael Levy in the months to come, but there appears to be a slight uptick in JDC media alerts related to China following this incident.253

Aufbau, for its part, handled the publicity competition between HIAS and JDC by listing all the contributing organizations, including the IRO, HIAS, UJA, JDC, and USNA, among the institutions connected with the transport, situating the IRO as the central institution.254 Aufbau’s initial report, however, cites HIAS instead of the JDC on its front page report in relation to the sealed trains. As further proof of HIAS’s successful publicity push, Aufbau listed HIAS as the contact center for information regarding the second sealed transport, although the mention is brief.255 The JDC-affiliated USNA also managed frequent mention in Aufbau writer Richard Dyck’s March 1949 coverage of sealed transport, where Dyck reports USNA held a small press conference for the first transport in San Francisco.256 USNA acted as affiliates of the JDC rather than direct subordinates, however the JDC administration likely preferred media credit attributed to USNA than HIAS.257

252 Ibid.
257 Letter from Adolph C. Glassgold to the American Consulate General, Re: Schlesinger, Arthur Lucia Kurt Case No. 8223, January 10, 1949, 460283, JDC Archives. This memo provides assurance from Adolph Glassgold that USNA serves as the “agent in these cases” of transport across the United States.
The competition between JDC and HIAS for media reflected a much larger pattern that became of pressing concern to other institutions. The American Association of English-Jewish Newspapers, the leading media consortium that celebrated its 100th anniversary with a reception by President Truman, issued a scathing admonishment during its 1949 convention.258 "[We] view with alarm the tendency in Jewish communities of pursuing exaggerated programs of public relations and publicity-seeking…funds presently used for publicity purposes are excessive [and] there is an extreme amount of overlapping [news]."259

While institutional tensions most commonly erupted internally between Jewish aid organizations, the JDC also experienced significant organizational strain with the International Refugee Organization. JDC representative James Rice addressed the increasingly tense relationship between IRO and JDC in 1949, highlighting points of contention related to the Shanghai transports.260 After listing numerous challenges in their relationship with the IRO – including the ever-present matter of reimbursements—Rice shifts to the issue of the IRO’s negative attitude toward the JDC. Rice’s insightful evaluation places responsibility for the tensions not on the organizations as monolithic entities, but on select members of the organizations and the complexity of their contexts:

I am inclined to believe that it would be an over-simplification to blame all of our troubles with IRO on those who are unfriendly to JDC, even though they are

258 Press release of 100th Anniversary and Truman Audience by Philip Slomovitz, February 21, 1949, American Jewish Press Association records; I-62; box 2; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.
259 Resolution on National Organizations and Publicity, 1949, American Jewish Press Association records; I-62; box 2; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY.
260 Letter from Mr. J. Rice to Mr. M. Beckelman, February 11, 1949, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
unfortunately at top level. Why they are unfriendly is perhaps worth figuring out.

Immediately, one needs to recognize the existence of a conscious or unconscious prejudice, but perhaps our own approach with the best of intentions at times may have contributed to this negative attitude, by not taking into consideration all of the factors involved in our relationship.²⁶¹

Rice’s reflections are a poignant reminder of the individual composition of institutional identities and the complicated, contextual pressures these individuals faced. When possible, it is imperative to consider the personalities and identities of the individuals who represented these organizations in an effort to avoid dehumanizing institutional histories.

5.2 Shanghai Jews in New York: Ellis Island and Departure

The first sealed train arrived in Jersey City on February 27, 1949.²⁶² Upon arrival, immigration officials transported the refugees via ferry to New York in groups of twenty, arriving on Ellis Island past midnight.²⁶³ Julius Kaim, a Shanghai Jew aboard the sealed train, wrote a report of the transit after landing in Italy in 1949.²⁶⁴ While neither the author’s intention nor intended audience are known, the eight-page review, which he entitled “The White Outcasts See America,” paints a traumatic picture of his time on Ellis Island.

After the refugees disembarked from the ferry, immigration guards on Ellis Island divided the Shanghai Jewish refugees by gender and housed them in large dormitories with

²⁶¹ Ibid.
²⁶⁴ Ibid.
locked doors and barred windows. The refugees were required to leave the dormitories during the day and wait in two large rooms for mealtimes or visitations, and could only purchase supplies from a small canteen. Until the day before departure on March 2, the refugees reportedly had no access to phones. Visits from U.S.-based friends and family were limited to 45 minutes, and the refugees were counted several times to ensure none left the holding area.

While refugees were unable to leave Ellis Island, they received visits from relatives, institutional leaders, and even the New York Metropolitan Opera, who held a special performance for the refugees at Ellis Island. The UNSA sent representatives to meet with the Shanghai Jews, and Israeli Vice Consul Moshe Krone stopped by the train station for a publicized visit as the refugees were transferred to Ellis Island. Gerhard Pechner of the Metropolitan Opera Company provided a report for Aufbau, covering their brief interaction with the refugees and the program. After starting the concert with “Star-Spangled Banner,” Pechner and his fellow performers provided solo- and group-performances of “Carmen,” “Barber of Seville,” “Old Man River,” and an assortment of Verdi and Puccini. Everyone joined in to sing “HaTikvah” (The Hope), Israel’s newly-established national anthem.

While the refugees’ stay in New York lasted considerably longer than their stop in Atlanta, there were similarities, primarily related to the opportunity for brief family reunions. As the Shanghai Jews transferred from their last train stop to Ellis Island, Bernard Rubinstein of New York waited hours to meet with his brother and sister-in-law, Moritz and Sarah Rubinstein, whom he had not seen in 25 years. Moritz Rubinstein lost his 19-year-old son to typhus while in

265 “Shanghai-Refugees auf der Durchreise,” Aufbau, March 4, 1949, page 32, Leo Beach Institute Archives. The leadership visited while the Shanghai Jews were transferred from the train to Ellis Island.
266 “Konzert in Ellis Island,” Aufbau, March 11, 1949, page 32.
267 Ibid.
China, and Bernard Rubinstein was unable to bring their 86-year-old father to the reunion due to sickness. It is unknown whether Moritz Rubinstein and his father were ever reunited. Fred Kochman and his two brothers also attempted to see their father. Because the brothers were born in Worms and not Upper Silesia, they were able to immigrate to the United States earlier than their father, who was restricted due to the immigration quota. Despite having no friends or family in Israel, their 63-year-old father was required to leave his sons behind in New York and continue across the Atlantic Ocean as part of the sealed transport.

On March 2, 1949, the refugees were transferred to the S.S. General Stewart, bound for Naples, Italy, where the refugees would then travel their separate ways to Israel and scattered locations in Europe. As they rode on the ferryboat to the General Stewart, Kaim reports that the refugees glimpsed the Statue of Liberty en route to the steamship. One refugee purportedly quipped, “Look at an out-of-fashion lady.”

As the refugees walked from the ferry to S.S. General Stewart, they passed by two rows of armed soldiers and several WAC representatives. Once on board, they again were separated by gender. Kaim presented the trans-Atlantic journey as far more challenging than the transcontinental sealed train. The S.S. General Stewart purportedly did not have a full working crew due to the IRO’s attempt to fit as many refugees as possible on board. Because of the short-staff crew, the IRO required refugees under the age of 60 to pick up ship duties, ranging from cooking and cleaning to painting the decks. The tasks were supervised by designated members of the refugee community, whom Kaim claimed were “[mostly] bearers of USSR passports.”

Just days after departure, the U.S. Army liaison on board assembled a meeting in response to

269 Ibid., 5.
many refugee protests, following which couples could have meals in their room together and painting duties were taken off the task list. Several days later, the refugees landed in Naples to continue their journeys, some stayed in Italy, others went to Israel and elsewhere in Europe. 270

Kaim’s eyewitness account of the sealed transit remained largely ignored by the general public. The IRO sent JDC-Shanghai director Adolph Glassgold a copy of Kaim’s manuscript, likely intended for publication, and Glassgold passed it on to the JDC office in New York, calling it “literary bile.”271 Glassgold seemed significantly concerned by Kaim’s depiction of the refugees’ treatment, circling Kaim’s description of train stops as “cattle stations” and the organization of the refugees in Ellis Island as “cattle counting.”272 While Kaim’s report does not contradict Aufbau’s articles, a quick glance reveals that the newspaper’s rhetorical intentions were quite different from those of Kaim. Aufbau had a different story to tell, based on their own evaluation of what symbolic role the Shanghai Jewish refugees played in the New York community’s sociopolitical environment, and what resources Aufbau could generate in support of the refugees and in service to the larger political debates taking place on the floors of Congress.

5.3 New York, New York: Spreading the News about the Shanghai Jews

The German-language, New York-based newspaper Aufbau, founded in 1934, boasted an international circulation that peaked at 50,000 weekly.273 Notable political and academic authors—including Hannah Arendt and Albert Einstein, the latter of whom periodically served

270 Kaim does not list a specific landing date in Naples, Italy.
271 Letter from Adolph Glassgold (JDC-Shanghai) to Robert Pilpel, Re: Letter of Complaint, April 8, 1949, China: Administration, Publicity, 458988, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
on Aufbau’s advisory board—lent the Aufbau influence in select policy circles, and editor Manford George engaged U.S. politicians through open letters, as in the case of the Shanghai Jewish evacuation. While Aufbau’s German language restricted its readership, its large circulation reflected its wide influence and underscores a population boom in New York City during the late 1940s and early 1950s, during which time an estimated 2,000,000 Jews lived in New York. The breadth of Aufbau’s coverage, including the economy, culture, sports, international news, and a semi-regular feature, “Die Westküste” (West Coast), indicates the newspaper’s interest in appealing to a transnational, eclectic Jewish community.

Growing from a small German-Jewish Club newsletter, Aufbau became a primary source of Europe-focused news in the years preceding and during the war, running dozens of articles listing Holocaust survivors and personals seeking news about family members. Aufbau provided a space of connection where its large readership engaged with preexisting communication networks and reinforced kinship relations.

Far from the near-monopoly the Southern Israelite possessed in Atlanta, Aufbau’s circulation competed with dozens of Jewish newspapers in the New England region. Similar media outlets included Forverts (Forward) and Der Tog (The Day), both Yiddish-language newspapers, and the German-language Jewish Way. Yet Aufbau’s world-renowned contributors and politically-active premise, as well as its established track record of covering

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276 Steven Lowenstein provides an excellent, albeit dated, review of Aufbau and Jewish Way’s rivalry; see Lowenstein, Frankfurt on the Hudson, 126-128.
news of the Holocaust and of Jewish refugees, prepared it to be at the center of New York’s media coverage of the Shanghai Jewish refugee crisis.

*Aufbau* reporters portrayed the Shanghai Jewish refugees in a highly political framework, reflecting the news source’s administration and its influence in previous political debates. Emanuel Celler, the Jewish New York congressman who inquired about the plight of the Shanghai Jews in spring 1948, served on *Aufbau*’s advisory board for several years prior to the sealed transit.\(^{277}\) The newspaper’s bipartisan advisory board grew with the addition of Republican Congressman Jacob Javits, who appeared on the advisory board in the months leading up to the Shanghai Jews’ arrival in New York.\(^{278}\) Though Celler and Javitz belonged to different political parties, they voiced their joint concern regarding the plight of the 5,000 Jews stranded in Shanghai and pushed for a political solution to the refugee situation.\(^{279}\) Beginning, presumably, with the JDC’s response to Celler’s request for information on the Shanghai Jewish situation, *Aufbau* detailed the political three-ring circus between Celler’s H.R. 6760, the 80th Congress, and the stubbornly restrictive DP Act of 1948.

*Aufbau* dedicated its entire front page on November 18, 1948, to the plight of Shanghai Jews. Both Celler and Javits contributed English-language letters to the editor, with Celler thanking the *Aufbau* for its coverage and adding that, “You are doing a good job, I think, to get

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\(^{277}\) Advisory Board, *Aufbau*, January 16, 1948, page 4, Leo Baeck Institute Archives. The earliest mention of Congressman Emanuel Celler as a member of *Aufbau*’s advisory board is in the January 18, 1946 issue; prior to this, *Aufbau* only printed its Board of Directors, therefore it is likely Celler served on the board even before *Aufbau* began its weekly listing.

\(^{278}\) Advisory Board, *Aufbau*, October 1, 1948, page 4, Leo Baeck Institute Archives.

Congress to act in this matter of life and death.” Javits, meanwhile, made a direct appeal to the Truman administration for its support in pushing an expanded DP bill through the 80th Congress. Other smaller German-language articles decorate the front page, including soundbites from the JDC and World Jewish Congress concerning the matter. An unnamed female contributor describing hellacious conditions in Shanghai in the face of approaching Japanese force; and a map depicts the position of the CCP in relation to Shanghai, noting a site of potential evacuation. All are arranged around the bold header: “Rettet die Shanghai-Refugees” (Save the Shanghai Refugees).

The contributors who described the plight of these Shanghai Jews tailored their presentation of the Shanghai Jewish community to fit the political language of the DP bill. Despite the diversity of the remaining 5,000 Shanghai Jews—including Russians who had lived in Shanghai years prior to the Holocaust and thereby fell outside the DP parameters—Aufbau largely depicted the Shanghai Jews as European refugees, a tactic more evident in its English

Figure 8  Courtesy of “Aufbau,” Leo Baeck Institute Archives

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280 Emanuel Celler, “[Letter to the] Editor, Aufbau,” Aufbau, November 18, 1948, page 1, Leo Baeck Institute Archives.
281 “Appeal to Truman,” Aufbau.
articles than the German-language reports. If the Shanghai Jews were framed as Holocaust survivors, rather than a complex mix of nation-states, experiences, and identities, the tragedies of the Holocaust would lend pathos to the political plea, increasing its chance of success.

Both *Southern Israelite* and *Aufbau* provided calls to action, *Aufbau*’s call was far more political in nature. The New York media outlet requested that organizations and individuals sign their names on a blanket petition in support of *Aufbau*’s political campaign on behalf of the Shanghai Jews. As 1948 came to a close and Celler’s bill struggled for support, *Aufbau*’s political emphasis of the Shanghai Jewish community increased, culminating in a series of articles and photo essays surrounding the first sealed train’s arrival in New York in February 1949.

*Aufbau* tracked the initial sealed transport beginning with a February 25 front-page report of the from S.S. *General Gordon* in San Francisco. Each stop along the journey provided a platform for *Aufbau* to reiterate its editorial criticism of U.S. immigration laws and place pressure on politicians to generate policy change, and they ran feature articles on February 25, March 4, and March 11.

*Aufbau* employed pathos in its political rhetoric, listing each transport passenger’s name, age, and nation of origin in the February 25 article. This served to notify family members of the refugees’ stop in Ellis Island, but also aligned the identities of the Shanghai Jews with the

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283 “Rettet die Shanghai-Refugees,” *Aufbau*, November 18, 1948, page 1, Leo Baeck Institute Archives.


experiences of Holocaust survivors who were listed in *Aufbau* articles following World War II.\textsuperscript{286}

\textit{Figure 9} Courtesy of “*Aufbau,*” Leo Baeck Institute Archives

\textit{Figure 10} Courtesy of “*Aufbau,*” Leo Baeck Institute Archives

The rhetoric in *Aufbau* is evident in both text and visuals. In one image, the photographer captures a scene of relatives waiting to visit their Shanghai Jewish transit relations, featuring the

\textsuperscript{286} “Der zweite DP-Transport aus Shanghai,” *Aufbau,* March 18, 1949.
bars of the holding room centrally in the shot.\textsuperscript{287} The photographer’s caption under the image reads, “Hinter den Gittern” (behind bars).\textsuperscript{288} With descriptions of the Holocaust startlingly recent in many \textit{Aufbau} readers’ minds, the visual rhetoric serves two purposes. It both aligns the tragic journey of the Shanghai Jews with the tragic circumstances of the Holocaust, and it places responsibility for the criminalization of these refugees on discriminatory legislation. As quoted by the \textit{Aufbau}, one onlooker refers to the Shanghai Jews’ brief time in America as “einer legalen Fiktion” (a legal fiction).\textsuperscript{289}

Along with Aufbau’s political message, the newspaper highlighted the importance of fundraising, although not to the extent of \textit{Southern Israelite}. As an institution, \textit{Aufbau} regularly contributed to the United Jewish Appeal and featured the media outlet’s fundraising successes. In January 1948, \textit{Aufbau} reported that it raised more funds for an emergency Hanukkah fund for children than any other listed society, including the Theodor Herzl Society, the Leo Baeck Youth Group, and synagogues across the country.\textsuperscript{290}

Whereas the Atlanta Jewish media emphasized fundraising over politics, so too did \textit{Aufbau} emphasize political calls to action over fundraising. This strategy is largely due to the influence of its advisory board’s political members and in response to threats presented by nativist immigration laws. Through a careful evaluation of its own local context, \textit{Aufbau}

\textsuperscript{288} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{290} “United Jewish Appeal: Chanukka-Spende für die hungernden jüdischen Kinder in Europa,” \textit{Aufbau}, January 16, 1948, page 6, Leo Baeck Institute Archives.
leveraged its political resources to connect the story of a few hundred Shanghai Jews to a larger political story of restrictive political legislation.

5.4 Across the Atlantic: Post-Transit Experiences

In June 1950, the 81st Congress passed H.R. 4567 and fulfilled the long-awaited hopes of thousands of Shanghai Jews waiting for immigration to the United States. The house bill amended the restrictive Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and authorized 25,000 non-quota immigration visas, including 4,000 visas eligible to Shanghai Jews. The amendment came at a point when Adolph Glassgold reported to the JDC office in New York that the remaining Jews in Shanghai were “rather hysterical” due to ongoing air raids and JDC’s plans to liquidate its Shanghai office.

The Shanghai Jewish community was not alone in its celebration of this amendment. President Harry Truman expressed “very great pleasure” at the act brought about “by the combined efforts of both political parties, supported by groups and organizations broadly represented by all parts of our country.” While the law impacted over 400,000 visas total, Truman nonetheless made special mention in his public statement of the “4,000 European

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291 Ristaino, 264.
293 Letter from Adolph Glassgold (AJDC – Shanghai) to Mr. Robert Pilpel, Re: Council of Jewish Community and Liquidation Far East AJDC, February 17, 1950, China: Administration, 457770, Joint Distribution Committee Archives. Even within a letter that is otherwise somber in tone—a fact for which Glassgold apologizes to Pilpel—the flexibility and humor Glassgold exhibits throughout his correspondence peeks through: of the electricity restrictions, he remarks that “the poor women who have leaned heavily for charm upon the electric hair-curler are really going to be in a bad fix.”
refugees who fled to the Far East to escape one form of totalitarianism and must now flee before a new tyranny." The JDC, HIAS, and IRO, tasked with exploring the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 for cracks and holes in its legislative walls, now had a slightly larger crevice through which to assist the passage of hundreds of Jewish refugees.

While a tremendous legislative victory, the immigration process nonetheless took months, if not years, for many Shanghai Jews. Hopeful Jewish immigrants to the United States also faced additional complications, especially those who did not hold residence in one of the 24 nations listed in H.R. 4567 amendment. In February 1951, 63 Baghdadi Jews remained in Shanghai, with 44 awaiting immigration to the United States, and only four listing Israel as their site of desired resettlement. JDC experienced challenges in determining how to categorize these resident Shanghai Jews for U.S. visa applications. Because the only listed options on one JDC fact sheet included “Chinese White Race quota” and “Iraqian [sic] quota,” it is likely they were ineligible for the recently expanded Displaced Persons quotas of 1950. Russian Jews also faced similar delays in comparison to the European displaced persons community, and Jacob Friend’s wife waited several years in Israel before joining her husband and step-daughter in the United States in 1955.

Between January 1949 and the time of the sealed trains in February and March 1949, the JDC and IRO evacuated 1,470 Jews from Shanghai, leaving a core group of 2,387 still in

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295 Ibid.
297 Analysis of the Migration Status of Iraqi and Iranian Jews in Shanghai, February 21, 1951, Geneva Collection, 752725, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
298 Ibid. The Council of the Jewish Community in Shanghai speculated that many of those awaiting U.S. immigration were ineligible “since it was clear that they would become financial burdens to USNA after their arrival in the States.” Letter from A. A. Goldberg to Mr. James P. Rice, February 20, 1951, Geneva Collection, 752728, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
Shanghai, purportedly divided in demographics between European DPs and long-time residents.²⁹⁹ By 1950, just shy of 2,000 hopeful emigrants remained in Shanghai.³⁰⁰ JDC and IRO wished to avoid another series of sealed trains, stating in February 28, 1949, that there would “be no further transports of this kind as both IRO and JDC are opposed to this arduous way of travel.”³⁰¹ A later report notes that “a few blundering army officers and a lack of sympathetic consideration by New York immigration officers turned many of these refugees into bitter critics of America…the reaction to American treatment was so bad, and the difficulties encountered so great, the IRO has abandoned plans to send other refugees to Europe via the United States.”³⁰² The institutions organized and funded a third sealed transport in June 1950.³⁰³

This final train, as in the case of its predecessors, generated a wave of national media coverage, enhanced by an immigration appeal made by refugees aboard the sealed transport.³⁰⁴ The train arrived in New York on May 23, 1950, just weeks prior to President Truman’s signing of the expanded DP legislation. The USNA, likely aware of the legislation’s impending passage, successfully argued on behalf of the 106 refugees aboard this third transport to delay deportation.

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²⁹⁹ See Shanghai DP Population Registered with AJDC, February 24, 1949, China: Administration, 457410, JDC Archives. Press Release, “JDC. IRO Press Efforts to Evacuate 4,000 Jews Trapped in Shanghai,” April 29, 1949, China: Subject Matter, Emigration, 460451, Joint Distribution Committee Archives. The figures in the press release do not align with those of the internal memos. Given the closer tabulation of the internal memos—and their more conservative estimate—those may be safely assumed to be the most accurate.

³⁰⁰ JDC Executive Committee Minutes, October 31, 1950, China: Administration, General, 457605, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

³⁰¹ Notes of New York JDC Staff Meeting No. 7-49, February 28, 1949, China: Subject Matter, Emigration, 460224, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

³⁰² “Shanghai,” author unidentified, China: Administration, Publicity, April 4, 1949 [incorrectly dated by archives as February 2, 1949], 458990, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

³⁰³ Notes of New York JDC Staff Meeting No. 7-49, February 28, 1949, China: Subject Matter, Emigration, 460224, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

³⁰⁴ “Shanghai DPs Ask Third Stay of Deportation,” Herald Tribune, June 20, 1950, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
from Ellis Island on the grounds that “most of them would be eligible for admission to the United States.”

Even after the amendment’s passage, however, these stranded refugees’ cases were left unprocessed and therefore visa-less. Twelve of the refugees came forward to hold a press conference on Ellis Island and “expressed horror [at] going back to Germany, where many among them had been in concentration camps or where members of their families had been slain.”

To their disappointment, U.S. Attorney General J. Howard McGrath determined the refugees could not await their immigration visa processing in the United States, and the refugees set sail from New York to Germany on June 21, 1950, nonetheless “confident of admission to [the] U.S. soon.”

The passing of HR 4567 also did not grant reprieve to many of the “hard-core” cases of the remaining Shanghai Jews, including elderly residents and those with tuberculosis and mental challenges.

At the close of 1949, 500 “hard core” cases, including elderly and those with mental and physical disabilities, still remained in Shanghai. Their disputed fates, unresolved due to ineligible national origin and cost of care, sparked some of the most tragically-toned conversations among institutional staff of the JDC. The hard core cases attracted attention beyond the JDC, including the Jewish Agency in Israel as well as the IRO, thanks to the personal prodding of James Rice. While Israel accepted admittance for the hard-core cases just weeks shy of the U.S. amendment to the DP Act, by 1953 there remained several hard core Shanghai

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305 Ibid.
306 Ibid.
308 Letter from Adolph C. Glassgold to Mr. Moses A. Leavitt, February 21, 1949, China, Administration, 457418, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
309 Letter from S. Adler Rudel to Mr. James P. Rice, December 9, 1949, China: Administration, 457501, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
310 Letter from James P. Rice to Mr. S. Adler – Rudel, September 9, 1949, China: Administration, 457500, JDC Archives.
Jews whose destinations were parsed among various countries with the assistance of the JDC.\textsuperscript{311} Their stories are perhaps the most underrepresented of all Shanghai Jewish experiences in both archives and academic narrative, and while outside the scope of this research, warrant a full investigation.

\textbf{5.5 Conclusion}

The JDC closed its Shanghai office in the summer of 1950 and transferred administration, and a monthly stipend, to the locally-based Council of the Jewish Community.\textsuperscript{312} HIAS’s director, Meyer Birman, successfully emigrated from China in 1949, and the remaining Shanghai Jews looked to the Council in the departing wake of the JDC and HIAS. After the \textit{S.S. Anna Salen} departed Shanghai in late summer 1950 with approximately 1,200 Shanghai Jews—a trip with considerable negative ramifications, as the steamship was designed to accommodate only 800-900 passengers—the Shanghai Jewish community stood fewer than 500 members, “consisting of [those] who are non-emigrable and who will probably have to remain there for the rest of their days.”\textsuperscript{313} The expenditure of resources and administration to assist such a small population compelled JDC to dissolve its Shanghai branch, though the decision to do so sent ripples of fear and frustration through the remaining Shanghai Jewish community.\textsuperscript{314} The closure also frustrated IRO representatives in China, who presumably served as administrative contacts.

\textsuperscript{311} Press Release, “265 Jewish Refugees Among Group Evacuated from Shanghai, Says JDC,” April 28, 1950, China: Administration, General, 457704, Joint Distribution Committee Archives. Letter from AJDC - Oslo to Mr. Charles Jordan, Re: Hard Core Shanghai, March 7, 1953, Geneva Collection, 751952, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.\textsuperscript{312} Letter from JDC New York to Mr. A. C. Glassgold, Re: Judische Gemeinde and the Relief Situation, March 1, 1950, China: Subject Matter, Christian Refugees, 459418, JDC Archives.\textsuperscript{313} JDC Executive Committee Minutes, October 31, 1950, China: Administration, General, 457605, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.\textsuperscript{314} Glassgold to Leavitt, February 21, 1949, JDC Archives.
upon the dissolution of the JDC’s local chapter.\textsuperscript{315}

Although the JDC closed its Shanghai branch, the remaining Jewish community was not wholly without representation in China. A local JDC program, conducted in Hong Kong by Mr. Kadoorie and Mr. Citrin, assisted with remaining immigration requests.\textsuperscript{316} The closure of the JDC nonetheless was unsettling to many directly involved in the Shanghai operations, and Adolph Glassgold, the JDC’s final director in Shanghai, continued to push back his departure until the summer of 1950 despite the encouragement of the JDC to leave his post in the face of potential transportation blackouts and air raids. Upon his eventual departure, Glassgold conducted his return to New York in the opposite direction of thousands of Jews whose passage he facilitated during his time in Shanghai. He planned to travel westward, visiting Israel and Italy along the way, the reverse order of the refugees sealed aboard the 1949 transports.

\textsuperscript{315} Letter from Adolph Glassgold (AJDC – Shanghai) to Mr. Robert Pilpel, Re: Shanghai Problems - Your Letter No. 219, March 14, 1950, China: Administration, 457749, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

\textsuperscript{316} JDC Program in China, October 1, 1952, China, Statistical Report, 751477, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The stories of the Shanghai Jews who crossed the United States aboard sealed trains in 1949 are fragmented, discordant, and incomplete. Their experiences while in the United States come to us through newspapers, institutional records, and brief quotations, and all are presented in the timbre and tone of American Jewish communities who related their journeys. These numerous slivers of life may appear to be too isolated to resonate with anyone but those with the most specialized of interests. After all, how can the passage of fewer than 1,000 Jews from Shanghai in 1949 tell us anything about changes over time, about alternative perspectives of this era? Why burden ourselves with the challenges of a transnational history that could, more concisely, be told as a local story of Shanghai, Atlanta, or New York?

The transnational Jewish communities of this brief study address these questions in more than one way. Their experiences teach us to challenge monolithic representations of refugees. Rather than framing the Shanghai Jewish community solely through the perspectives of European Jews escaping the Third Reich, investigations of the Shanghai Jewish community through memoirs and visual culture reveal a diversity of ethnicities, nation-states, languages, religious denominations, and socioeconomic statuses. The members of this community did not default to a simplistic Jewish identity, but responded to their ever-shifting context based on the resources and networks specific to each individual, calling upon similarities or differences as the situation warranted.

This study also attempts to fracture assumptions that refugees were simply buffeted by external conditions. Rather, in the face of few choices and restricted rights, Shanghai Jews expressed their wishes and explored their emigration options in such a way that international institutions, including the IRO and JDC, were forced to react to the refugees’ decisions. In a
story that would, at first glance, suggest that institutions and environments dictated the outcome and that refugees acquiesced to their demands, this case study suggests, at times, the reverse. In this transnational, complex story, the refugees “[knew] they [were] taking a chance and [were] ready to take the risk.”  

The Shanghai Jewish sealed transports also exhibit the interdependence of transnational communities. While the Shanghai refugees were largely kept silent by the sealed nature of the immigration trains, their physical presence on the doorsteps of Atlanta and New York’s Jewish communities provided a platform by which American Jewish institutional leaders could discuss their own roles and responsibilities. The Shanghai Jewish refugees provided American Jewish institutions with the opportunity to publicly discuss their own environments and questions, and the American Jewish media, in turn, provided representation and resources for the Shanghai Jews.

The ecological differences between Atlanta’s tightly-knit institutional network stands in sharp contrast to the notable tensions between the New York offices of the JDC and HIAS. The rhetorical differences in each city’s media coverage also reflects differences in available resources. The high-profile nature of New York Jewish leadership, including Emmanuel Celler, and the Aufbau’s large circulation and internationally-celebrated contributors all combined to create the means and resources to make a political call to action on behalf of the Shanghai Jews. Atlanta’s Jewish community, more modest in both population and reputation, based their call to action in local fundraising efforts. While the environments, institutions, and media responses varied between New York and Atlanta institutions, they both expressed a responsibility to the

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317 Notes of New York JDC Staff Meeting No. 7-49, February 28, 1949, China: Subject Matter, Emigration, 460224, Joint Distribution Committee Archives.

318 See also Bauman, *The Southerner As American*, 21.
Shanghai Jewish refugees, and they both found that the interaction with the refugees provided a platform by which the American Jewish communities could express their own contexts and concerns.319

Perhaps the greatest lesson of this brief study is methodological in nature. Wars, ports, and nation-states erect real and conceptual barriers, but their construction is also permeable. By moving beyond the end of World War II, and beyond the ports of both China and the United States, we discover the extensive, transnational nature of these communities and communication networks that illuminate the decisions and contexts of refugees and residents alike. The communication networks, furthermore, highlight individual experiences within institutions and exhibit the differences of personality and approach inside each organization. Media, memos, and memoirs combine to remind us of the humor and humanity of those tasked with navigating challenging, and often tragic, circumstances.

Just as these Shanghai Jewish refugees operated within a far larger, more complex environment of choices and resources than the sealed nature of their transport suggests, so too does this modest case study connect with far larger narratives of immigration policy, modern Jewish history, and transnational communication networks. The ways in which many individuals within this era approached their environments instruct me, in turn, of how to approach my own historical practice: to explore cracks in the narrative walls of policy and perception, and to follow the echoes of experiences beyond the scope of ports and wars.

319 For commentary on pan-Jewish solidarity, see Lederhendler, *American Jewry*, 196.
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