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Negotiating Resettlement in Venezuela after World War II: An Exploration

Sebastian Huhn *

Abstract: *»Die Verhandlung des Resettlements in Venezuela nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg: eine Erkundung«*. After the end of World War II, millions of people were uprooted all over Europe. After realizing that many of those people did not want to return to their former places of origin, the United Nations founded the International Refugee Organization (IRO) to repatriate those displaced persons (DPs) who wanted to return home and to resettle refugees who did not in other countries. Venezuela was neither actively involved in World War II nor (at that time) in the approaching Cold War. Nevertheless, this "third world" country became involved both in the political discussion about the international resettlement program and as the receiving country of 17,000 DPs. In this context, the paper asks who was resettled in Venezuela and in what way those people were able to influence and negotiate their resettlement in Venezuela. The paper thus focusses on the agency of DPs and the IRO's decision-making processes in their European field offices.

Keywords: Displaced persons, migration, International Refugee Organization, resettlement, Venezuela.

1. Introduction: The Resettlement as a Plan to Help the Helpless

Following the Allied victory over Nazi Germany, tens of millions of people were uprooted all over Europe and more refugees were coming from Eastern to Western Europe day by day (Marrus 1985, 297; Gatrell 2013, 89). These displaced persons (DPs) were predominantly victims of the Nazis: forced laborers, prisoners of war, inmates of the concentration camps, and victims of the Holocaust. Yet in addition to these DPs, hundreds of thousands of other war-related refugees and thousands of Spanish refugees who had escaped the Franco regime in Spain were living all over Western Europe.[1] Additionally, the number

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[1] The IRO's constitution defined refugees as "(a) victims of the Nazi or fascist regimes or of regimes which took part on their side in the second world war, or of the quisling or similar

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of refugees rose significantly in the postwar years, as more and more people fled from Eastern Europe to the West as a result of the expansion of the Soviet Union.[2]

The Allies' initial plan had been to repatriate the DPs and refugees as soon as possible after V-Day. Indeed, they had already founded the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in 1943 and tasked it with organizing DP camps in Europe and the repatriation of the DPs – first in the captured territories during the war, and later after the victory in 1945 all over Europe (Cohen 2012, 27). However, it soon became apparent that millions of (mostly Eastern-) European DPs and refugees refused to return to their places of origin, mainly for fear of the Red Army and punishment, as well as violence in the member states of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved the establishment of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) to solve the European "refugee crisis."[3] Between mid-1947 and January 1952, the IRO resettled one million DPs and refugees in Europe and all over the world (Holborn 1956, 433).

The Latin American countries played an important role in the resettlement project, as they "took a 'fair share' of nearly 100,000 DPs" (von Holleuffer 2002, 125). However, rather than making a purely altruistic gesture, they had seized the opportunity to translate the European "refugee crisis" into a valuable new workforce. Indeed, these countries had no intention of granting asylum to European refugees, but instead intended to recruit them as workers. In mid-1946, the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR) had sent four missions to Latin America to investigate the local opportunities for resettle-

regimes which assisted them against the United Nations, whether enjoying international status as refugees or not; (b) Spanish Republicans and other victims of the Falangist regime in Spain, whether enjoying international status as refugees or not; (c) persons who were considered refugees before the outbreak of the second world war, for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion." DPs were defined as follows: "The term 'displaced person' applies to a person who, as a result of the actions of the authorities of the regimes mentioned in Part I, section A, paragraph 1 (a) of this Annex has been deported from or has been obliged to leave his country of nationality or of former habitual residence, such as persons who were compelled to undertake forced labour or who were deported for racial, religious or political reasons" (Constitution of the International Refugee Organization, Anex 1: Definitions – General Principles, Section A: Definition of Refugees and Section B – Definition of Displaced Persons).

[2] Finally, many Germans (so-called *Volksdeutsche*) were uprooted, too (see for example Marrus 1985, 325-31).

[3] The UN General Assembly approved the IRO constitution on December 15, 1946. In July 1947, the Preparatory Commission of the IRO (PCIRO) started operations, and in September 1948 the Preparatory Commission was replaced by the official IRO, as by then enough governments had ratified the IRO's constitution. The first IRO General Council took place on September 15, 1948. The Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Venezuela were the Latin American states that were members of this council (Marrus 1985, 340, 342; Yundt 1988, 32; Gatrell 2013, 107).

ment. The missions returned with positive responses from the governments of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. Subsequently, Brazil and Venezuela established selection missions in Germany, Austria, and Italy, tasked with searching for suitable immigrants and campaigning for resettlement opportunities in Brazil or Venezuela. These countries started to put the resettlement plan into action even before the IRO officially started its work in July 1947 (Berglund and Hernández Calimán 1985, 44; Troconis de Veracoechea 1986, 256; Rey González 2011, 108). Before that date, more than 1,700 DPs and refugees had already been resettled in Brazil, and more than 800 in Venezuela (IRO 1951, 20-21).[4] When the Preparatory Commission for the International Refugee Organization (PCIRO) took over the resettlement project from the IGCR, they established permanent missions or resident representatives in four oversea countries: the United States, Canada, Brazil, and Venezuela (IRO 1951, 27).

Altogether, Venezuela played an especially important role in the IRO's resettlement program. The country provided new homes for roughly 17,000 European DPs and refugees, making it the tenth largest receiving country of the IRO's project and the first Latin American country to sign the IRO charter (together with Guatemala and Honduras). Moreover, it was the only Latin American country in the nine-member Executive Committee of the IRO (Cohen 2012, 201, Fn73). As Venezuela had not been involved in either World War II, or the Cold War (yet),[5] on a political level, it represents an important case study into the way in which the European refugee challenge translated into overseas labor migration. In Venezuela, the resettlement of European refugees became a matter of supply and demand, integrated into a broader history of immigration movements and policies (Huhn and Rass 2018).

In this paper, I focus on the DPs' and refugees' social profiles, biographic backgrounds, and their agency in postwar Europe. The paper aims to explore three primary (and related) questions: First, who were the DPs and refugees resettled in Venezuela? Second, why had they become DPs or refugees? Finally, in which way were they able to influence or negotiate their resettlement in Venezuela? The paper pulls focus from the more general social profiles of the migrants to the concrete biographies of certain people in order to avoid only looking, either at large and anonymous numbers, or only at individuals (Bondzio, Rass, and Tames 2016).[6]

[4] Catalina Banko (2016, 67) names June 27, 1947 as the date of arrival of the first ship with 850 refugees and DPs coming from Bremen (probably Bremerhaven) in the harbor of La Guaira in Venezuela.

[5] The Cold War became more important in Venezuela with the rise of the anti-communist regime of Pérez Jiménez after 1952 (Nuñez 2006, 132–6).

[6] The historical sources that this paper is based on were searched with a specific approach. Given that I investigate the resettlement to Venezuela, all sources represent DPs and refugees who were actually resettled in Venezuela. Given the number of people who applied for

Exploring the first question, one might consider Jacques Vernant's (1953) statement from 1953 that the DPs and refugees resettled in Latin America often lied about their profession in order to be resettled: "Hence, the bank clerk or journalist, having been rejected by one or more selection boards who wanted only farm labourers or artisans, at the next interview became a cowman or a plumber, and so went to Latin America" (589). While this statement may be generally correct – Vernant referred to surveys that the IRO had taken during its operations – it is worth exploring the broader picture. Studying the DPs' and refugees' biographies helps to answer in greater detail questions such as: Who were those actually resettled in Latin America? How many DPs and refugees falsely claimed to be farmers? How many migrated with patently unsuitable occupational profiles regarding the Latin American plan to let people immigrate in order to expand the agricultural frontiers? Finally, how many used the years of waiting in German or European DP camps (or outside the camps) to learn new professions?

The second and third questions share three basic aims. First, they aim to address the fact that, while the IRO was established primarily to resettle the "last million" (Marrus 1985, 340; Cohen 2012, 11) Nazi victims, it needed to expand its mandate over time as more and more postwar refugees who were fleeing from the expanding Stalinist Soviet Union joined those already displaced (Salomon 1991, 55-91). Marrus (1985, 344) cites 1948 as a turning point, when the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia, Communist control in Hungary, and the Berlin blockade kick-started the Cold War. Second, it is assumed that, by mid-1949, the majority of the "suitable" DPs and refugees had been resettled, while those remaining became increasingly problematic: "This was the 'hard core' of unsettled refugees, people whose occupation, health, age, or some other condition made their removal extremely difficult" (Marrus 1985, 345). Thirdly, an important (ongoing) discussion regarding the resettlement is whether most of the postwar refugees were indeed political refugees, or rather "economic migrants." Salomon (1991) reconstructed the IRO's diplomatic discussions about this issue in great detail, concluding that "[a]s the IRO said, the only refugees who were not judged to be eligible were those who were naïve enough to mention economic motives or who stated palpably false motives" (91). Comparing the biographies and migration motives of the DPs and refugees diachronically helps us to explore how these narratives rooted themselves in the resettlement practice.

IRO assistance, the sources only represent one specific group. Regarding all forms of agency, it is especially important to keep in view that the DPs and refugees studied were all eventually resettled. Due to the research design, people who did not manage to be resettled until the IRO's demise in 1952 are not represented in this paper.

2. Negotiating Resettlement: The Third Dimension

The resettlement program can be considered as a negotiation process with at least three dimensions: firstly, a negotiation between the Western Allies and the UN member states; secondly, between the IRO and the receiving countries; and thirdly, between the IRO field officers and the DPs and refugees. This last negotiation process has, thus far, been largely ignored in research. The fact that the IRO's task was to resettle the "last million" does not answer the question yet of how the IRO eligibility officers and the DPs and refugees themselves acted on site against the background of that task. The DPs were certainly in need of help in the postwar years, but at the same time they were (now) free people with agency, demands and visions, strategies for their futures, and the ability to negotiate their opportunities in the IRO field offices.

Until the 1980s, the history of the IRO resettlement project had only been told through surveys and political memoirs from the postwar era. Donald Kingsley, then Director General to the General Council of the IRO, wrote down the history of the program in 1951 (IRO 1951). In the same year, the first UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart, asked the French social scientist Jacques Vernant to survey the situation of global refugees on the basis of the IRO's experience. Vernant published his results under the title *The Refugee in the Post-War World* in 1953. Three years later, the political scientist Louise Holborn (1956) published the IRO's institutional and diplomatic history in her book *The International Refugee Organization*. Today, these three works, which indeed express extensive inside knowledge and fresh memories, are the most cited references for the history of the resettlement program. While the authors agree on the fundamentally humanitarian nature of the resettlement project, for all three, the DPs and refugees were basically considered helpless beneficiaries of humanitarian aid, or simply as numbers – redistributed objects in a global project. Thus, the authors missed the opportunity to let the DPs themselves speak in their historiographies of the resettlement program.

From the late 1980s, in the context of the Cold War, the resettlement project received renewed interest. The resettlement program was re-interpreted as an important instrument of the West in its attempts to stabilize Western Europe – especially Western Germany as the border of the "Iron Curtain" (see for example Marrus 1985; Salomon 1990, 1991). This macro-political perspective was later expanded upon by studies that interpreted the resettlement program as an important step in the establishment of a global migration regime based on broader entangled geostrategic, labor-related, and diplomatic interests, as well as global learning processes in the field of "migration management" (see, for example, Jacobmeyer 1985, 1990; Marrus 1985; Cohen 2012; Gatrell 2013; Ther 2017). In these studies, the DPs and refugees were represented as rather passive objects of global governance. Their experiences and agency were not

considered, with geostrategic interests and diplomacy taking center stage instead.

Similarly, since the 1980s, the experiences and agency of the DPs and refugees in the European DP camps and in Germany started to gain increased academic attention. The Jewish survivors of the Holocaust attracted most interest in this field (see, for example, Jacobmeyer 1988; Dietrich and Schulze-Wessel 1998; Grossmann 1998; Myers Feinstein 2010; Patt and Berkowitz 2010; Fetthauer 2012; Henkel and Rahe 2014; Wolff 2014). However, studies also focused on the collective experiences of certain national and ethnic groups, such as Polish, Ukrainian, and Baltic DPs (see, for example, Kulyk 2003; Lane 2004; Pletzig and Pletzig 2007). These studies focused on the DPs' and refugees' agency in European camps and German society while waiting for repatriation, resettlement, or settlement (see also Stepien 1989; Wyman 1989; Holland 2011; Gatrell 2013; Antons 2014). Yet resettlement and questions surrounding migration play only a secondary role in such studies although the issue of resettlement itself has been extensively studied in the cases of the United States, Canada, Australia, and, to a lesser extent, Argentina (see, for example, Reimers 1981; von Holleuffer 2001; Dinnerstein and Reimers 2014; Rutland 2014; Tobias 2014; Jürgenson 2016).

The reason that both the biographies and agency of the DPs and refugees as well as the negotiation processes of the European IRO field offices have not been studied sufficiently in the past is not due to the fact that the above cited authors ignored or missed the importance of this aspect, but rather to the fact that they did not have access to the historical sources needed to study the DPs' and refugees' biographies and agency. The opening of the archive of the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen in late 2007 makes it possible today to take a closer and much more detailed look at the DPs and refugees as actors in the resettlement project.[7]

[7] In 1943, the Allies established a Tracing Service in Great Britain mandated to collect sources of Nazi crimes that were to be taken from the Nazis during the Allied advance. After the Allied victory, the International Tracing Service (ITS) moved to Bad Arolsen in Hesse, Germany. In late 1945, the UNRRA took over the administration of the ITS and transferred the administration to its successor, the IRO, in July 1947 (Brown-Fleming 2016, 3-4). To fulfill its duty as a Tracing Service, the ITS collected and preserved documents produced by the Nazis, but also documents that were produced after the war, such as those from the UNRRA and the IRO. It was believed that the ITS would have fulfilled its mandate within a couple of years, after which all documents could be destroyed, as they would no longer be of use. As the ITS grew its collections with documents from German companies to keep record of the Nazi system of forced labor, the deal was to keep the archive closed to the public and science alike. In the mid-2010s, the historical value of the ITS archives was reconsidered, and in late 2007, the resource was made available to science as a historical archive (Brown-Fleming 2016, 1-6). Concerning the postwar migration of DPs and refugees and the IRO's resettlement program, the archive contains three sets of previously inaccessible sources that are of particular importance: First, the UNRRA's and IRO's registration documents of the

3. The Story of Three Ships: Social Profiles

On basis of the historical sources from the IRO's field offices in Europe, we can reconstruct the biographies, social profiles, and negotiation strategies of a very large proportion, or even most, of the DPs and refugees who were resettled by the IRO in Venezuela between June 1947 and January 1952. Findings of a small sample illustrate this in the following.

3.1 The Passengers

In the following, I analyze three Embarkation Nominal Rolls documenting the resettlement of European DPs and refugees in Venezuela. The IRO compiled these lists in the ports of embarkation, documenting the DPs and refugees entering the resettlement ships. One list is from 1948, early in the resettlement program; the other from 1949 – a moment at which the resettlement not only reached its peak in statistical terms (Holborn 1956, 442), but also fundamentally changed because of the expansion of the Soviet Union (Marrus 1985, 344). The final list is from 1951, a few months before the IRO ceased its operations. Thus, the three lists allow us to reconstruct the social profiles of DPs and refugees resettled in Venezuela in general, and via diachronic comparison, who was selected, and who went to Venezuela.

SS Heintzelman: December 12, 1948

On Sunday, December 12, 1948, a few days before Christmas and two days after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly, the SS *Heintzelman* left the Italian port Genoa bound for Venezuela with 414 DPs and refugees on board. While most of those aboard were resettled from France and Germany, others came from Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg. In total the passengers were of 15 different nationalities: 212 Spaniards, 39 Hungarians, 32 Polish, 26 Latvians,

European DPs from the early postwar years, such as DP registration and identity cards. These documents contain the DPs' names, professions, religions, nationalities, etc. The second set of data comprises the IRO's "Application for Assistance" Forms (CM/1-Forms), which document the refugees' request interviews for resettlement in the IRO field offices in Europe. These documents also contain a significant amount of information about the social profiles of the DPs and refugees, but they also often tell their personal histories before, during, and after the war, and document their desires and hopes for the future. Furthermore, the CM/1-Forms document the negotiation process between the DPs and refugees on the one hand, and the IRO field officers on the other hand. As such, they represent a viable source from which to reconstruct the DPs' and refugees' agency (see also Afoumado 2014). Third, many of the IRO's shipping and flight lists are still preserved. When the IRO's chartered ships or plains left Europe with DPs and refugees who were to be resettled, Embarkation Nominal Rolls were filled out, documenting, among other things, the DPs' and refugees' names, nationalities, ages, religions, and professions.

22 Yugoslavians, 18 Russians, 14 Lithuanians, and 12 Ukrainians. Smaller groups comprised French, Romanians, Bulgarians, Estonians, and those from the Czechoslovak Republic. Twenty-five of the passengers had Nansen status, and two more were declared stateless. Thus, the passengers represented a wide range of nationalities and covered most of the DPs' and refugees' countries of origin. The vast majority of the passengers were either Roman or Orthodox Catholic, whereas only 39 were Protestant or Lutheran.

Most of those travelling were doing so in family groups. However, 51 were single men, while 25 were single women or widows. Ninety-six of the passengers were younger than 18 years old. The oldest passenger, Michael Zapolenco from Odessa in Russia, was 73 and was travelling with his wife Walentina and their 31-year-old son, Sergeij. The youngest passenger was a six-month-old baby called Ilda Cruelle Aguila – the daughter of Francisco and Antonia from Spain.

Among the adults, 43 were mechanics and electricians, or had a comparable job, training to work in the industry or craft business. Significantly in the context here, only 37 of them were farmworkers, gardeners, tractor-drivers, etc. Given that the Venezuelan authorities were especially seeking farmworkers, this seems to be quite a low number. However, the 13 carpenters also on board did fit into the Venezuelan plan to settle the DPs and refugees in the countryside along the agricultural frontier. The professions of the rest of the adult passengers were diverse: there were hat- and shoemakers, teachers, and several women were trained nurses and pharmacists.[8]

While at least some of the passengers of the SS *Heintzelmann* seem to match the Venezuelan authorities' ideas, it becomes obvious how diverse the group of resettled DPs and refugees was. The date of the passage, December 1948, can thereby be characterized as the "ideal" time for the resettlement. According to Holborn (1956, 442), 1948 was the peak of the resettlement in Venezuela with 8,980 DPs and refugees arriving.[9] Roughly one and a half years after the start of the program, there were still so many DPs and refugees in Europe that the Venezuelan authorities were able to select them according to their political ideas and labor market needs. In addition, as the DPs and refugees were still among those who were resettled quite early in the IRO's history, they may have been among those preferred immigrants from the perspective of the receiving countries.

SS Charlton Sovereign: November 8, 1949

On November 8, 1949, the SS *Charlton Sovereign* left the Italian port of Naples bound for the Dominican Republic, French Guiana, and Venezuela. On

[8] IRO, Resettlement Group sailing on S/S Heintzelman from Genoa on December 12, 1948, 3.1.3.2 / 81727941/ ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[9] In 1947, 2798 DPs and refugees were resettled in Venezuela. In 1949, the number was 1498; in 1950, 2719; and in 1951, 1282 (Holborn 1956, 442).

board were 449 DPs and refugees who were about to be resettled in Venezuela. Except for three Spanish passengers and three children of German nationality, all of the passengers came from Eastern Europe: they were comprised of 122 Hungarians; 93 Yugoslavians; 55 Russians; 51 Ukrainians; 50 were from Czechoslovakia; and 25 from Poland. Additionally, 39 of them had a Nansen passport and 5 were considered stateless.

Again, most of those on board were families and married couples. The oldest passenger, a Polish gardener called Hawrilo Bondarenko, was 67 years old. He was travelling with his daughter Olena, his son-in-law Pawlo Olchowski, and their son Georg. The family, who had originally refused to return to Poland for "political and religious reasons," did not want to stay in Germany and had applied for resettlement in Canada in April 1948.[10] The youngest passenger was a six-month-old baby, Klara Oeze, who was travelling with her parents and her two siblings, Ferenc and Maria.

Nearly all Venezuela-bound passengers aboard the *Charlton Sovereign* were either Roman, Orthodox, or Greek Catholics (whereby they may not have considered themselves to be members of the same religious group), except for 29 Protestants, 1 Lutheran family, and 7 Muslims.

The clear majority of the DPs and refugees had professions either in the industrial sector, in manual skills, such as mechanics, electricians, tailors, or shoemakers, or in the service sector, such as painters, nurses, auto-mechanics, butchers, bakers, or cooks. The number who had working experience in agriculture and farming was smaller; only 21 of them were farmers, tractor drivers, gardeners, or forestry workers. The several carpenters on the ship were probably also intended to move to the Venezuelan periphery to help build new agricultural settlements.

Given that in 1949 only approximately 1,500 DPs and refugees were resettled in Venezuela by the IRO, the 449 passengers aboard the *Charlton Sovereign* represented one third of the total. Thus, the social profiles of these DPs and refugees may have some statistical significance for the overall resettlement in Venezuela in 1949.

SS Vespucci: July 1, 1951

In the summer of 1951, on Sunday, July 1, the SS *Vespucci* departed from Genoa towards South America. On board were 111 DPs and refugees to be resettled by the IRO in Venezuela, as well as smaller numbers of passengers who were to be resettled in Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile. The passengers intended for resettlement in Venezuela came from several sites in Germany and Austria, and all had originally been born in Eastern Europe. Twenty-five were Hungarian, 21 were Yugoslavian, 18 were Bulgarian, and 16 were from Czech-

[10] IRO, Application for Assistance, Pawlo Olchowski, April 29, 1948 3.2.1.1 / 79544116, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

oslovakia. The nationalities of those remaining were Rumanian, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Lithuanian, and Latvian. Nearly one third of the Venezuela group was single men, the rest were couples, and there were only two children among them. Maxim Gricajenko from Makewka in Russia was the oldest passenger to be resettled in Venezuela. The 64-year-old worker had originally applied for resettlement in the United States, was then found eligible for IRO legal and political protection, care and maintenance, and subsequently selected for resettlement in Australia, and finally for resettlement in Venezuela – "because of son," as his CM/3-Form, filled in on May 4, 1951, states.[11] The youngest passenger was a six-month-old Hungarian called Antal Czaszar. Born in a refugee camp in Eisenerz, Austria, Antal travelled with his parents and his two older sisters, Ilona and Marta. Antal's father was originally selected as a mine worker in Canada in November 1950, however, in February 1951, he changed his plan and applied for resettlement in Venezuela.[12]

Most of the travellers heading for Venezuela on the SS *Vespucci* were Roman, Orthodox, or Greek Catholics (94 in total), but among them were also 12 Protestants and 1 Calvinist – a 55-year-old Hungarian man called Sandor Komonyi, who was sponsored by his nephew, Alexander Nyisztor, who was already living in Caracas, Venezuela. Twenty-three of the DPs and refugees heading to Venezuela had professions in the industry or craft business, such as mechanics, electricians, and locksmiths. Nine of them were farmworkers and gardeners, three were indicated as "workers" on the nominal roll, eleven were craftsmen specialized in textile work, such as hat makers, and the rest had quite different professions, including two chemists, one jeweler, and two photographers.[13]

Again, it becomes obvious that while some individuals did fit the Venezuelan "ideal" for immigrant European DPs and refugees, the actual group of people who migrated was quite diverse. The date of the passage, however, July 1951, indicates that the travelers were among the last refugees and DPs resettled in Venezuela by the IRO. Catalina Banko (2016, 67) names December 1951 as the date of the last DPs and refugees coming to Venezuela with the IRO's help. The passengers of the *Vespucci* had not been among those selected for resettlement early. They may not have been among the preferred immigrants from the perspective of the receiving countries, or perhaps they had not been refugees until the late 1940s or early 1950s at all. In any case, their per-

[11] IRO, Chance of IRO Status (CM/3-Form), Maxim Gricajenko, May 4, 1951, 3.2.1.1 / 79136297, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[12] PCIRO, D.P. Statistical Card, Antal Czaszar, n.d., 3.1.1.1 / 69512291, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[13] IRO, Nominal Roll of Emigrants Departing from Genoa per SS. "Vespucci" on July 1, 1951 to C.W. & South America, 3.1.3.2 / 81729691/ ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

sonal histories and experiences of being DPs and refugees differ considerably from those of the passengers of the 1948 resettlement passage to Venezuela.

3.2 On the Value of Analyzing Social Profiles of DPs

While the social profiles of the DPs and refugees resettled on the three ships mentioned above have limited statistical significance compared to the 17,000 people resettled by the IRO in Venezuela, they do indicate the complexity of the resettlement. Venezuela – like all Latin American countries – was indeed looking for farmers and craftsmen who would help to colonize the country's periphery and to expand the agricultural frontier (Berglund and Hernández Calimán 1985, 44; Pellegrino 1989, 207). Following this logic, young farmworkers and craftsmen, as well as young families with only one or two children, may have been the preferred immigrant demographic.

The social profiles of the above-mentioned DPs and refugees, however, demonstrate the great variety of the DPs and refugees who were resettled in Venezuela within the IRO program. According to Banko (2016, 66), Venezuela immigration policies expected 40% of the refugees and DPs resettled in Venezuela to be agriculturists, with the rest being mainly craftsmen and professionals in different sectors. Looking at the social profiles of the immigrants who were selected by the Venezuelan selection committee in Europe demonstrates that those expectations were partly fulfilled. However, the significant number of DPs and refugees who did not meet these expectations yet were nonetheless still selected should not be overlooked.

On the resettlement ship SS *Vespucci* of 1951, for example, one passenger was 23-year-old Uzir Kadric from Yugoslavia – a farmworker.[14] Yet on the same ship, a Hungarian, Georges Rosembersky, who was a professional photographer and had previously worked as an actor, was also resettled in Venezuela.[15] Rosembersky had not claimed to be a farmworker to be resettled in Venezuela, and as a photographer he was surely not the best choice for the Venezuelan idea of expanding the agricultural frontier. To overcome simplified and stereotypical ideas about those resettled in Venezuela, it is therefore important to reconstruct the diversity of the refugees, beyond which the question of what happened to the migrants after their arrival in Venezuela also remains open.

[14] PCIRO, D.P. Statistical Card, Uzir Kadric, n.d., 3.1.1.1 / 67548782, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[15] Organisation Internationale Pour Les Réfugiés, Demande D'Assistance, Georges Rosembersky, October 12, 1948, 3.2.1.1 / 79682226, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

4. Histories and Agency of the Resettled

The biographies of the DPs and refugees who travelled to Venezuela on the three ships considered in this paper confirm the hypothesis that, while those initially involved were the non-repatriated "last million" Nazi victims, more and more Eastern European postwar refugees were among those resettled in 1948 (Marrus 1985, 344-5; Salomon 1991, 55-91). By 1951, the IRO's main task was to campaign for those who had not yet made it out of Europe and thus risked becoming a remaining "hard core."[16] The fear was that those remaining would be impossible to resettle when the IRO ended its work.[17]

In the following, I investigate and analyze this variety. I argue that studying the DPs' and refugees' biographies and the negotiation processes they entered into with the IRO sheds light on whether the IRO primarily helped former Nazi victims or other groups of refugees and, if the latter is true, at which point their approach changed to helping Eastern European refugees who feared persecution by the Stalinist regime. We know that the IRO placed more and more emphasis on the latter group of people after 1948. Studying the DPs' and refugees' biographies and negotiation processes discloses how this broad change of political focus manifested itself at the local level. Furthermore, I will show that there was (at the very least) a third group of people receiving help from the IRO, which up until now has not been sufficiently taken into account, namely, well-educated and smart young people (probably mainly men) who were neither Nazi victims nor risked persecution in Eastern Europe, but who were basically able to translate the IRO's offers into a window of opportunity for their own future plans.

4.1 The Refugees and DPs of 1948

The SS *Heintzelman*, leaving Italy bound for Venezuela in December 1948, carried many Nazi victims. For example, José Ferrer, who was born in Catalonia in 1906, had been an inmate of the concentration camps Mauthausen, Steyr, and Gusen between January 1941 and May 1945 as a political prisoner. As a farmer, he perfectly matched the Venezuelan selection criteria. When the Ger-

[16] The term "hard core" was coined by the Allied forces to mark those DPs and refugees who no country wanted to receive because they were unable to be economically independent or even in direct need of help. Very old people, ill people, or war-disabled persons were among the "hard core" and they were expected to remain in Europe after the ending of the IRO mission (see for example Jacobmeyer 1985).

[17] According to Salomon (1991, 192), in 1950, IRO Director General Kingsley suggested that the receiving countries should liberalize their acceptance policies, should accept a "fair share" of handicapped people, single mothers, etc., and generally should extend their resettlement schemes. This may not have impressed the receiving countries, but it reveals the discussions and concerns of the IRO in its last year.

man lawyer Erich Cohn-Bendit asked the International Tracing Service (ITS) in 1958 to provide information on Ferrer's imprisonment history, Ferrer was still living in Venezuela.[18] However, Ferrer's fellow traveler and countryman Vincente Parra had been arrested in Toulouse in March 1943. Parra had been imprisoned in the concentration camp of Dachau and was liberated by the US Army in May 1945.[19] The 61-year-old physician did not meet Venezuela's immigration criteria as well as Ferrer.[20]

The stories of some passengers reveal a significant amount of agency. As an example, a 22-year-old Russian, Michael Young, had been brought from Minsk to Berlin in 1944 to work. After the war, he was supposed to be repatriated to Russia, but he escaped from the repatriation camp near Kassel and flew to Frankfurt. In June 1947, he applied for resettlement at one of the IRO field offices. [21] After being rejected in that field office, he tried again at another office in February 1948, stating: "I like to life [sic] in the state of freedom and democracy."[22] This time, he was successful.

Already in 1948 there were Eastern European refugees aboard the ship to Venezuela who had been neither DPs nor direct Nazi victims, an example being Leo Lipomanis, who was born in the capital of Latvia, Riga, in November 1922. During the war, he had studied electrotechnology at the University of Riga and, in 1944, he had voluntarily moved to Weimar in Germany for work. He spoke fluent Latvian, English, German, Russian, and Italian, as well as some Spanish. After the war, he worked for the UNRRA for some time. He did not want to return to Latvia because, in his own words, "my country Latvia is occupied by Russians."[23] In 1947, the PCIRO declared Lipomanis eligible for resettlement, even if he did not claim concrete personal persecution or fear of persecution as was necessary at that time in order to be considered eligible (Salomon 1991, 65).[24] One explanation for his success may be that he was able to present himself as a suitable candidate by meeting the Venezuelan immigration criteria and after building a relationship with the UNRRA staff while employed there.

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[18] ITS correspondence, José Ferrer, n.d., 6.3.3.2 / 103955835, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[19] ITS correspondence, Vincente Parra, n.d., 6.3.3.2 / 104120283, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[20] Registration Card, Konzentrationslager Dachau, Vincente Parra, n.d., 1.1.6.2 / 10233213, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[21] PCIRO, Application for Assistance and Correspondence, Michael Young, June 25, 1947, 3.2.1.1 / 79231491, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[22] PCIRO, Application for Assistance and Correspondence, Michael Young, February 24, 1948, 3.2.1.1 / 79231491, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[23] PCIRO, Application for Assistance, Leo Lipomanis, December 16, 1947, 3.2.1.1 / 79411458, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[24] PCIRO, Application for Assistance, Leo Lipomanis, December 16, 1947, 3.2.1.1 / 79411458, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

4.2 Eastern Europe Refugees and Labor Migrants in Late 1949

The SS *Charlton Sovereign*, which brought DPs and refugees to Venezuela in November 1949, carried many Eastern European postwar refugees. Among them was Jozef Gazdag, who had worked for a shoe factory in Mako, Hungary. Gazdag had been in trouble with the company's workers' association. Therefore, he migrated to Austria in September 1948. In February 1949, he applied for resettlement, stating "My situation was getting worse, the ground under my feet getting hotter, I was rightly fearing the arrest, so I decided to escape with the consent of my parents."[25] In March 1949, the eligibility officer declared Gazdag's case to be within the mandate of the IRO.

Also among the passengers were DPs and refugees whose cases had occupied the IRO for some time. Jenó Opitz had owned a workshop as a precision mechanic in Hungary until 1948, when he was forced to hand over his machines to a larger state combine. When Opitz refused, he was accused of sabotaging the three-year plan. As a result, he fled "over the border" with his wife and two children, applying for IRO assistance. Initially, in February 1949, he was rejected as an "economic migrant," however, in September 1949, the IRO review board in Salzburg reversed this decision and declared Opitz' case to be within the mandate of the IRO:

> His desire to emigrate is of secondary importance compared with the motive which led to his flight and his abandoning of his possessions. Petitioner must be accepted from the detailed information elicited on interview by the Board as a refugee under Part 1, Section a., para 2.[26]

Opitz' fellow traveler, Sandor Baja, who wanted to emigrate with his wife and their two children "over the ocean," as he stated, had experienced the exact same history as Opitz. [27] He had refused expropriation and, declaring that he felt persecuted after this decision, had fled to Austria. Even though he stated that he feared persecution (and thus argued in line with the IRO's mandate in his interview in December 1948), the eligibility officer at that time rejected Baja's request with the comment "[n]ot concern of IRO wants to emigrate for economic reasons."[28] Opitz' and Baja's cases reflect the gradual change in the IRO's policy from helping war victims to helping postwar refugees. It also

[25] Translation by the author. "Meine Lage wurde immer schlimmer, der Boden unter meinen Fuessen immer heisser, ich befuerchtete mit Recht die Verhaftung, und so entschloss ich mich mit Einwilligung meiner Eltern zur Flucht." PCIRO, Application for Assistance, Jozef Gazdag, February 5, 1949, 3.2.1.3 / 80629810, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[26] IRO, Decision of the Review Board, Janó Opitz, September 6, 1949, 3.2.1.5 / 81276826, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[27] PCIRO, Application for Assistance, Sandor Baja, December 13, 1948, 3.2.1.3 / 80560680, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[28] PCIRO, Application for Assistance, Sandor Baja, December 13, 1948, 3.2.1.3 / 80560680, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

demonstrates that in 1949, IRO officers struggled with their evaluations and felt the need to justify their decisions in greater detail. The question of whether applicants were refugees or economic migrants became crucial here and making such decisions was clearly not easy.

Unlike Opitz and Baja, Janos Magasrevy, a pharmacist, wrote his personal history like a job application when he applied for resettlement assistance – an approach that obviously worked, as he was accepted. He had studied at the universities of Budapest in Hungary and Dresden in Germany during the war where, as he states, he

> obtained [his] diploma with distinction as Qualified Engineer of Chemistry. In 1945 [he had] been appointed by the Rector of the University of Dresden as an Assistant-lecturer of that University. In [the] winter [of] 1945 [his] University was moved back to Budapest.[29]

Magasrevy had not been a forced laborer, but rather had made a career in Dresden between May 1944 and October 1945. After the war, he returned to the University of Budapest, but because of his "anti-communistic behaviours [he] had to discontinue [his] activities as Assistant and therefore [he] was forced to accept a private job."[30] He started working for a company in Budapest and, as the Hungarian government did not accept his German diploma, even graduated with distinction a second time. According to his own story, although he made a career in that firm, in 1949, he moved from Hungary to Austria, "owing to [his] anti-communist behaviours."[31] He concludes his application with the following: "I would appreciate to take over an employment as lecturer for Pharmacy as well as to get a job with a private firm or enterprise. Speaking fair also Spanish I should be very glad to resettle to Venezuela."[32] Magasrevy was neither a DP nor a refugee, was not in personal danger or need, and did not claim concrete personal persecution of fear of persecution. He had not spent time explaining why he had studied in Nazi Germany, and he was even naïve enough to state economic reasons for his migration from Hungary to Austria and his wish to resettle in Venezuela. His story was contrary to all IRO rules and customs. Nevertheless, six months after his application, he was resettled in Venezuela together with his wife Ilona and their eight-year-old son Rudolf. In this case, the IRO acted rather more like an international academic exchange service and in doing so ignored its own "laws of the game." Magasrevy's case illustrates the subjectivity of the decisions made by IRO eligibility officers as mentioned

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[29] IRO, Special Resettlement Service, Individual Record, Janos Magasrevy, n.d., 3.2.1.4 / 81084717, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[30] IRO, Special Resettlement Service, Individual Record, Janos Magasrevy, n.d., 3.2.1.4 / 81084717, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[31] IRO, Special Resettlement Service, Individual Record, Janos Magasrevy, n.d., 3.2.1.4 / 81084717, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[32] IRO, Special Resettlement Service, Individual Record, Janos Magasrevy, n.d., 3.2.1.4 / 81084717, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

by Salomon (1991). In the case of Magasrevy, it was not even the difficult "evaluation of fear of persecution" (Salomon 1991, 65) that was at stake. The margin of subjective decision-making may even have been much wider than assumed today, and depended on the applicant's agency to a great extent. Magasrevy knew what he wanted, he argued in a sophisticated manner, and even had his CV and certificates translated into Spanish prior to his application. Magasrevy was assertive and this led to the success of his application. In 1949, being classified as eligible or ineligible became largely a game of luck. The IRO's own rules and criteria had become so broad, the variety of DPs' and refugees' personal stories so large, and the historical context between postwar and Cold War so complex, that the selections made in the European field offices depended to a large degree on the subjective interpretations and political attitude of the on-site eligibility officers.

4.3 1951: When the IRO Cleaned Up the Mess and Forgot About Its Mission

As was to be expected, in 1951 the variety of cases became even more diverse and complicated. The efforts of the IRO to "advertise" the refugees increased, as the termination date of the resettlement program moved closer and avoiding a "hard core" of those that could not be resettled became the main task. The case of Michail Gerov, born in 1927 in Bulgaria, is an interesting example of the DPs' and refugees' need of agency. He was still in Austria in 1951, presumably because he was not really able to "manage" his own resettlement. He had been classified as eligible several times and as a young electrical engineer, he even was within the scope of what several receiving countries were looking for. However, in October 1950, when he was supposed to take a resettlement ship to Canada, he did not present himself at the port of embarkation.[33] It is unknown if his failure to embark was simply because he did not want to immigrate to Canada or if he missed embarkation for some other reason.

Wladimir Lenskij, a Russian-Ukrainian locksmith, together with his wife and their three children, shared Gerov's misfortune and lack of agency. He had been a forced laborer in Austria from 1939 until 1944. In November 1948, he had applied for IRO assistance; however, as he had been sentenced to three months of prison for theft, he was rejected. Even though he was a Nazi victim, his criminal record had made him ineligible for resettlement in 1948. However, in January 1949, the IRO Review Board reviewed Lenskij's case, concluding that, as

> new evidence [had] subsequently proven him innocent, the Eligibility Officer concerned now recommends a reversal of his decision, and the Board is con-

[33] IRO, Statistical Card, Michail Gerov, n.d., 3.1.1.1 / 67152578, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen; IRO, Statistical Card, Michail Gerov, 3.1.1.1 / 67152577, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

> vinced that [the] petitioner is a bona fide refugee who is not excluded under Part II of the Constitution. Within the mandate of the Organisation.[34]

Yet despite the above, Lenskij's fortune did not improve after the Review Board's correction of the IRO's earlier decision. Even though the IRO now tried to find a resettlement opportunity for him and his family, no country's selection mission wanted him. He "cannot be presented to Mass Resettlement schemes on account of his uneconomic family,"[35] the IRO in Salzburg wrote to the headquarters in Geneva in 1950. The World Council of Churches decided to sponsor him in October 1950. However, his former criminal record got in the way again, even though his sentencing had already been proven wrong. Finally, in July 1951, six years of waiting in Austria for the opportunity of resettlement came to an end, and the Lenskij family immigrated to Venezuela. However, Lenskij's struggles may not have ended with his successful resettlement. Even if he was a "good type of workman," as the IRO stated, with his limited seven-year school education, and without any knowledge of the Spanish language, both his and his family's lives may not have become much easier after the resettlement.[36]

Lenskij was not the only passenger on the SS *Vespucci* in the summer of 1951 who had previously experienced problems with the resettlement program because of a lack of education, agency, and/or an "uneconomic family," to quote from the IRO documents. Michael Heckler was an untrained farmworker who had been a prisoner of war in Russia between 1944 and 1947. He fled to Austria in 1947 through fear of persecution. Oddly, he had been resettled in England in 1949, but had returned to Austria because he "could not stand the climate over in England."[37] However, his return and subsequent (second) application should not be interpreted as a sign of agency or cunningness in Heckler's case, but of naivety and his inability to understand the resettlement program. Following his return, he worked as an unpaid laborer in the garden of the DP camp in Treffling, and now risked becoming a member of the "hard core." With his lack of education and the fact that he needed to provide for his wife and their two children, as an unskilled worker, none of the national selection teams would consider Heckler for resettlement. The IRO Austria wrote him a recommendation letter, stating that

[34] IRO, Decision of the Review Board, Wladimir Lenskij, January 19, 1949, 3.2.1.4 / 81072804, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.
[35] IRO, Correspondence, Wladimir Lenskij, n.d., 3.2.1.4 / 81072804, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen. By "uneconomic family," the IRO referred to the fact that the family would probably barely be able to achieve enough income to build up a new life without help or at least problems.
[36] IRO, Correspondence, Wladimir Lenskij, n.d., 3.2.1.4 / 81072804, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.
[37] IRO, Correspondence, Wladimir Lenskij, n.d., 3.2.1.4 / 81072804, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

> Mr. HECKLER and his wife are a very simple family who have both worked on farms and in the fields and have experience of cattle, pigs, poultry and general cultivation […] He is also employable as a general labourer in factories where no specific trade experience is required.[38]

Both the Lenskij and Hecker families represent hard-to-place persons who risked becoming members of the "hard core" following the termination of the IRO program.

Emblematic of another group of refugees facing severe resettlement difficulties is the case of Dobrivoj Mutavdzic. He had been selected in March 1949 according to the criteria defined by the IRO because of his fear of persecution in Yugoslavia. However, the 42-year-old architect became seriously unwell and, while he was within the mandate of the IRO, he was unable to leave Austria until mid-1951 because of his need to recover from his lung illness in Austrian hospitals.[39] Mutavdzic shared this fate with fellow traveller Slobodan Veljović. He had been registered as a DP in November 1946, and was determined eligible in March 1949. The Australian selection committee chose Veljović as suitable for resettlement in Australia, yet during his final medical check before resettlement in April 1949, physicians identified an illness. Like Mutavdzic, he was subsequently forced to spend months in hospital recovering.[40]

Finally, the case of Stefan Zonew represents the same group of resettled persons as the above-mentioned Janos Magasrevy, namely, a group of people who had benefit from the National Socialist regime, made up especially of people who then knew very well how to negotiate the resettlement process and who, up until now, have not received much academic interest. Zonew was born in Bulgaria in 1922. Between 1940 and 1944, he had studied engineering at the Technical University in Munich. In 1941, he was employed by Dyckerhoff & Widmann – a construction firm that also used forced laborers at that time.[41] Then, from 1945 until 1949, he studied architecture at the Technical University of Vienna, after which he was employed both in construction, and as a university lecturer. Zonew had made a career in Nazi Germany and in Austria after the war. He had not been a Nazi victim, was not persecuted after the war, and had not fled from the east. He was not even an economic migrant, but actually had quite a successful career. At some point in 1950, he must have decided that

[38] IRO, Recommendation for Employment, Michael Heckler, n.d., 3.2.1.4 / 81002139, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.
[39] IRO, Application for Assistance and Correspondence, Dobrivoj Mutavdzic, March 11, 1949, 3.2.1.3 / 80757959, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.
[40] IRO, Application for Assistance and Correspondence, Slobodan Veljović, n.d., 3.2.1.3 / 80869583, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.
[41] See JewishGen 2013.

he would like to emigrate.[42] The IRO welfare consultant Mary Schoeffler interviewed Zonew in November 1950, summarizing her impression of him as follows:

> I found Mr. Zonew to be a pleasant quiet and intelligent young man with enough knowledge of [the] English language to carry on a normal conversation. His fiancée is Spanish and worked in Vienna for a time as tutor to the Spanish Consul's children. I think he should do well in the Argentine in his profession.[43]

In the Argentine consulate in Vienna, Zonew left a good impression on October 25, 1950: "he enjoys a high repute, socially as well as professionally," a letter from the consulate states.[44] In February 1951, however, the IRO office in Salzburg informed the Geneva headquarters "This is to inform you that the a/n [above named] has been accepted for Venezuela and CGIM Salzburg have been advised accordingly. Please close your file."[45] Zonew's case is representative of a group of people who, while not the DPs and refugees the IRO was supposed to help, were perfectly able to use the historical opportunity to their own advantage.

6. Concluding Remarks: The Resettlement as a Story of Exceptions

This paper focused on the experiences of DPs and refugees, their agency, and the negotiation processes between them and the IRO eligibility officers in order to gain a different perspective on the (in this case specifically Venezuelan) resettlement project between 1947 and 1952. Who were the DPs and refugees resettled? Why had they become DPs or refugees? Why were they chosen as eligible for resettlement? In which way were they able to influence or to negotiate their resettlement in Venezuela?

I argued that so far, we have not paid enough attention to the biographies and agency of DPs and refugees or to the negotiation processes of IRO resettlement as conducted in the European field offices. The ITS, which opened its archive to the public in late 2007, holds thousands of documents that were produced by the IRO and the DPs and refugees during the resettlement negotiation

[42] His documents in the IST archive do not contain information about him applying for assistance by the IRO, but from 1950 onwards, the IRO did what they could to help him emigrate.

[43] IRO, Refugee Center Vienna, Personal Interview Summary and Language Test, Stefan Zonew, November 8, 1950, 3.2.1.4 / 81248081, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[44] Colsulado General de la República Argentina, Letter, October 25, 1950, 3.2.1.4 / 81248081, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

[45] IRO, Letter, February 20, 1951, 3.2.1.4 / 81248081, ITS Digital Archive, Bad Arolsen.

process in the European field offices. Those documents reveal a third (previously little noticed) dimension of the negotiation process of the postwar resettlement project: not the negotiation and re-negotiation between the IRO constitution's signatory states during the creation of the institution nor the negotiation and re-negotiation between the IRO and the receiving countries of the DPs and refugees all over the world, but rather the negotiation and re-negotiation of individual resettlements on site in the European IRO field offices.

Based on these historical sources, we can add this new dimension to the story. First, we can specify who the DPs and refugees were in terms of their social profiles. Second, we can study them as active players within the resettlement process. Until now, research has relied on surveys that were written during, or shortly after, the resettlement project in the 1950s. While those surveys did not misrepresent the social profiles of DPs and refugees, they did simplify the story they told. Vernant wrote in 1953 that Latin American countries were (only) looking for farmworkers and craftsmen, and that many DPs and refugees therefore lied about their professions. Although I do not contest this analysis, in this paper, I argued that the story was more multifaceted, and that historical research should unfold this complexity. Most of the DPs and refugees resettled in Latin America were probably not farmworkers and craftsmen, but it is likely that most of them did not lie about this fact and were chosen by the Latin American selection missions anyway. Even a superficial look at the social profiles of the nearly 1,000 DPs and refugees resettled on the three ships I studied reveals the hitherto unknown complexity of who the DPs and refugees were very clearly.

The second aim of this paper was to explore the agency that the DPs and refugees had in the process of negotiating their resettlement. Janos Magasrevy and Stefan Zonew were anything but the helpless DPs or refugees described in the early texts by Kingsley, Vernant, and Holborn. Their stories are surely exceptions, but as I argued in this paper, the IRO's resettlement program can be seen as an untold story of exceptions. If we look at both the DPs' or refugees' agency and the decision-making processes of the IRO staff, the history of the resettlement project reveals forgotten elements. When we study the negotiation process in the European field offices, certain assumptions that exist regarding the history of the resettlement program cannot be upheld. The resettlement program was less a set plan to resettle the "last million" war victims with either humanist or geostrategic intentions, but rather a system in which people moved with more or less agency. Some people managed very well to use the resettlement project, while others had severe difficulty finding a way to a new life post-World War II in the early years of the Cold War.

The stories I studied in this paper reveal a great variety of reasons, arguments, and IRO decision-making. The cases of Janos Magasrevy and Stefan Zonew, who literally used the IRO as a travel agency, surely stand out. Their stories did not need to contain victimhood, in either a war or postwar context.

Of course, every DP's and refugee's story is unique, but studying the negotiation processes in the European field offices reveals patterns of how it was possible to move within the system of the resettlement project. The IRO's story is revealed in a different light when we read the negotiation process as it took place in the field offices, and if we read the resettlement project as a process of human action within a system with constantly changing rules and contexts, instead of a defined, predetermined plan.

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