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Aufbau-Reconstruction and the Americanization of German-Jewish immigrants 1934-1944.

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AUFBAU-RECONSTRUCTION AND THE AMERICANIZATION OF GERMAN-JEWISH IMMIGRANTS 1934-1944

A Thesis Presented

By

Dorothee Schneider

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Department of History
AUFBAU-RECONSTRUCTION AND THE AMERICANIZATION OF GERMAN-JEWISH IMMIGRANTS 1934-1944

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INTRODUCTION
THE AUFBAU AND THE GERMAN-JEWISH CLUB

The Early Years

The German-Jewish newspaper AUFBAU-RECONSTRUCTION was the largest, most long lived and influential newspaper of the German-speaking emigration to the United States in the Nazi era. From its humble origin in the 1930s as a newsletter of the German-Jewish Club of New York City, it developed remarkably into the most important emigré publication during World War II.

Unlike many papers of the German literary and political exile, the AUFBAU did not start in the mid-thirties as an antifascist paper with illustrious names on its editorial board. On the contrary the AUFBAU was not even a refugee paper when it first appeared in 1934 and for a year it remained sufficiently obscure to slip through Nazi customs. In its early years it was merely a twelve page newsletter of the German-Jewish Club in New York City, sent free of charge to all members every

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1 Another important paper edited and read by refugees was Neue Volks-Zeitung (NVZ), 1932-1948, a sequel of the Volkszeitung, a Social Democratic weekly originally published by German-American Social Democrats (1888-1928). In the thirties and forties the NVZ was edited by Gerhard Seger and other exiled Social Democrats and read by many refugees as well as by the old time German-American socialists. Volkesecho (1937-1938) and The German American (1942-1949) were the publications of the communist emigration in the United States. The main communist emigré group in America was in Mexico City and published the Freies Deutschland there (1941-1945). Other centers of exile journalism were Czechoslovakia (the Social Democrats published most of their exile writings there until 1939) and Paris, where the Pariser Tageblatt, Pariser Tageszeitung, Die Neue Weltbühne, and other publications of the literary immigration were edited until 1940. Source: Exil Literatur 1933-1945, Eine Ausstellung aus den Bestanden der deutschen Bibliothek Frankfurt am Main. Auflage Frankfurt 1967, 3rd edition.

2 AU Dec 35, p. 4.
month. After 1936 it was sold in subscription for five cents a copy and distributed free to newly arrived refugees from Germany. Until 1939 the paper almost exclusively mirrored the activities of the German-Jewish Club. This organization had been founded in 1924 by German-Jewish war veterans who had emigrated to the United States during the 1920s.

The activities of their Club centered upon the preservation and dissemination of Jewish thought. Announcements of speeches and discussions in the paper showed that topics related to Jewish culture and religion as well as subjects in the field of German literature and music dominated the cultural schedule of the Club. The announcements were conspicuous for the total absence of American topics and the pages of the AUFBAU reflected this phenomenon. Although Americanization of the immigrant became the subject of a more and more lively discussion among Club members during the mid thirties, this debate was hardly ever enlightened by any concrete description of life in America.

The Club's schedule of social and sports events was varied and offered many different leisure activities to its members. Sporting events and, in the summer, outings, hikes, and camps were especially well received. This part of the Club's activities reflects an affiliation, which indeed existed, with the principles of Zionist youth groups in


\[4\text{Sep 36, p. 1.}\]

\[5\text{The first articles explicitly on American politics appeared in 1938/39; the 1936 presidential election was only mentioned once. Sep 36, p. 4.}\]
Germany and Austria.\(^6\)

The general emphasis on sports also suggests that most members of the German-Jewish Club were rather young and came mostly from a middle class background. The latter impression is confirmed by an analysis of the early advertisements of the paper. Among the principal advertisers were members of the Club who offered their services as travel agents, real estate brokers, accountants, doctors and lawyers.\(^7\) Not too many intellectuals seem to have been among the original readers of the AUFBAU.

German-Jewish refugees whom Club members contacted in the 1930s were received with much cordiality. These early newcomers were invited to take part in the Club's activities and frequently recorded their experiences in the new country for the AUFBAU readers.\(^8\)

As the influx of refugees from Germany and Austria accelerated, Club and paper began to focus their attention on this new group of immigrants. Some branches of the Club developed into specialized agencies helping the newcomers to establish themselves. In this respect the Club assumed responsibilities similar to those of the early Jewish Landsmannschaften which had helped Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe at the turn of the century. The German-Jewish Club thus set up social service departments where refugees were given general advice and assistance, and helped financially on a small scale. A legal information service for those who wanted to secure visas for their friends and

\(^6\) Dec 34, p. 4.

\(^7\) AU Dec 26, 44, p. 19.

\(^8\) Jan 35, p. 9.
relatives was introduced and doctors of the German-Jewish Club treated needy refugees for lowered fees. Most important of all, the Club organized a job finding agency which, during the depression, had only very limited means of helping its clients. Its services expanded steadily, though, and in 1940 it found jobs for an average of eighty persons a month. The German-Jewish Club, however, regarded the flow of refugees as only temporary; consequently, the refugee aid facilities were regarded in the 1930s as emergency measures rather than as an integral part of the Club's services.

In those early years the German-Jewish Club was still primarily a social organization. The most valuable direct aid it could give to newly arrived refugees was therefore the integration of newcomers into an already half-Americanized group, where people would talk in a familiar way about familiar topics, and go for hikes together.

The Formative Years

Only in 1939 did the paper become increasingly independent of the German-Jewish Club. News about events in Europe became a regular feature of the AUFBAU and discussion about various aspects of immigration and life in the United States was started then. The AUFBAU became more and more the paper of the German refugees in the United States.

The most important formal step toward this development had been the hiring in 1937 of a regular full time editor, Rufolf Brandl. He was

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10Sep 36, p. 1.
replaced in the spring of 1939 by another refugee, Manfred Georg. Both Brandl and Georg had been professional journalists during the time of the Weimar Republic. But, in contrast to many other editors of exile papers, neither of them had gained much fame in Germany. Only under the enforced provincialism of exile did a journalist like Georg achieve a distinctive position as an editor and writer who could accommodate almost all wings of the diversified refugee movement in his paper. Georg remained editor until his death in 1966.  

In 1939 the AUFBAU became a bi-weekly paper and, after December 1939, it appeared weekly. Its circulation jumped from 3000 sold copies at the beginning of 1939 to 13,000 at the end of that year, and in 1941 it sold 30,000 copies weekly. It has remained relatively constant at that level until today.  

Its format changed to regular newspaper size in 1939 and its length increased gradually from 12 to 32 pages.  

From 1939 through 1941 the paper grew in importance and influence in three notable ways. First, instead of relying on the German-Jewish Club for practical aid to refugees, the paper itself started to assume the position of a clearinghouse for refugee self-help and political information. Second, the AUFBAU succeeded in integrating most parts of the intellectual refugee movement into its pages. At times the names of the contributors to the paper read like a list of "Who was Who in Weimar Germany." Third, the paper carried a disproportionately

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11Joachim Radkau, Die Deutsch Emigration in den USA, Dusseldorf 1971, p. 127/129

12Dec 22, 44, p. 27/28; Nov 29, 40, p. 4.

large advertising section where the readers could communicate with each other, ask for help, and offer special services. These three elements made up much of the unique profile of the AUFBAU from 1939 on.

In the early years of the paper, advertisements were an integral part of the Club life. Easily identifiable members of the German-Jewish Club advertised business services, their marriages, and the birth of their children. In 1939 a regular advertising manager was taken on and by 1940 over half of the AUFBAU consisted of advertisements and announcements. The advertisements pages featured not only businesses which mirrored the wide range of refugee enterprises and services, but they also included classified sections with at least two pages of "for rent" ads and increasing numbers of "help wanted" listings, as well as family announcements, search notices for missing relatives, and, after 1940, even marriage requests in the style of German papers.

From the AUFBAU's advertisement sections a rather accurate profile of the paper's readers emerges. Obviously, most of them lived in the greater New York area. But during the war years the paper noticeably increased its readership in other parts of the country, and by 1941 it had readers in most states, especially on the West Coast. Many readers also advertised regularly from Cuba and from most South and Central American states. By 1942, 24 countries from Palestine to Australia had AUFBAU sales representatives. The paper was not only sold by subscription but also on the streets of New York, London, and Jerusalem. 14

The majority of all AUFBAU readers were Jewish, but the paper's

14 Dec 22, 44, p. 28. The editors maintain that the paper is still read in 45 countries today, Schaber, op. cit., p. 15.
audience included the non-Jewish Hitler emigrants as well, and even some old time German-Americans. 15

Although most members of the old German-Jewish Club must have been rather young, the age level of AUFBAU readers changed as the age of the average entering refugee increased through the years. This shift was reflected in the advertisements. In the early years of the paper, marriage announcements were frequent and almost no obituaries appeared. In the 1940s deaths were announced as frequently as births, and in today's paper family announcements consist almost entirely of obituaries.

The readers' occupational classes did not change much during the 1930s and 1940s. Most seem to have been business people and skilled craftsmen. Very few signs of a sizable working class audience or of upper class readership appeared in the AUFBAU's advertisement section.

It was this decidedly middle class touch, an orientation which mirrored the middle class makeup of the refugees generally, that made the paper such an extraordinary and steady success among the emigres. While the majority of German exile papers circulated only among intellectuals, the AUFBAU merely made use of the talents of numerous intellectual refugees. Almost every well known German exile politician or writer did contribute something to the paper between 1939 and 1945. This improved the quality of the AUFBAU's writing and greatly enhanced its reputation. The majority of its readers surely appreciated being informed about Thomas Mann's life in exile or reading Franz Werfel's newest novel. But the intellectuals never dominated the paper in any

respect. They remained contributors, never becoming editors. Not even in its most successful times did the AUFBAU want to be anything but the voice of an otherwise silent majority of the refugee middle class.

Although the paper grew more and more independent of the Club, the Club, like the paper, retained its own definite middle class flavor. It came to serve as an organizational addition to the paper, rather than the other way around; but this also included a rapid adaptability of the Club to the needs of the increasingly numerous refugees. With time, the Club's social services were considerably extended; and, as the German-Jewish Club had a number of experienced old time immigrants among its members, its services always had a personal touch and were normally very flexible. Except for "Selfhelp" (a social service organization set up by German refugees in New York City during the 1930s), the German-Jewish Club proved to be the only effective emigré aid agency set up by refugees themselves. By 1941 it offered a kindergarten, free summer camps for needy refugee children, social and legal services of various sorts, an employment agency, trade union like groups called Labor Councils, a charity fund (Die Blaue Beitragskarte), and several Landsmannschaftliche Hilfsgruppen. The latter two were especially remarkable because they represented two different types of charity organizations. Die Blaue Beitragskarte was simply a charity fund to which AUFBAU readers could contribute regularly in order to help needy refugees all over the world. The Landsmannschaften were formed after the pattern of earlier Jewish organizations of the same name. They were founded by refugees from certain parts of Germany who tried to help their needy brethren who came from or were still in their old
home province. Most visible in the AUFBAU were groups from the southwestern parts of Germany, especially Baden Pfalz and Württemberg, which were areas where a considerable part of the refugee migration to the United States originated.

The Club increased its membership base considerably during the early 1940s. The organization's activities did not remain confined to members in the immediate New York area, but the Club began to cooperate with similar organizations in Newark, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Chicago. In the fall of 1941, even the German-Jewish Club in Los Angeles, and a little later a similar organization in San Francisco, started to publish their activities in the paper and participate in discussion of various issues.

The years after 1939 not only brought a definite change in the quality of the paper's writing and the size of its readership, but topics and opinions of the AUFBAU also underwent considerable alterations. Two important new tendencies stand out. First, after Georg became editor, the paper turned away from decidedly Zionist attitudes and also modified its earlier opposition to the American Jewish establishment. The AUFBAU's opinions became more liberal. Mainstream opinions in American politics were supported and no explicit anti-communist or anti-Russian tendencies were visible. The editors' antipathies focussed heavily on fascism and Nazism during the 1940s. The AUFBAU became known as the foremost liberal voice of the German-speaking emigration to the United States.

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17 Oct 17, 41, p. 4.
States. It underlined this reputation by letting all wings of the exile movement express their opinions in the paper, Catholic conservatives as well as left wing socialists. Second, this tendency to water down political differences between the various refugee organizations may be partly explained by the AUFBAU's growing concern with American domestic affairs and Americanization of the refugee. This implied rejection of involvement into exile politics. The paper saw the only chance for a satisfactory social and political future for the refugees in complete Americanization and a definite turning away from Europe. Thus by the summer of 1940 the Club had come to the conclusion, "Es gibt fur die in den Vereinigten Staaten lebenden Juden deutscher Abstammung im Augeblick keine irgendwie gearteten Bindungen an das deutsche Reich und der Name German-Jewish Club ist ein Anachronismus geworden." After six months of deliberation it then decided to change its name into New World Club in order to emphasize the American orientation of the organization.

But even if the paper was trying hard not to look backwards, it did have open eyes and ears for events in contemporary Europe. Information about refugee movements and war events on the Atlantic front formed a regular and important part of the AUFBAU. The growing repression of Jews in Germany, their deportation and, from late 1942, the news about the systematic extermination policies of the Nazis were

\[\text{18 At the moment Jews of German extraction who live in the United States have no ties whatsoever to the German Reich, therefore, the name German-Jewish Club has become an anachronism. June 7, 40, p. 3; also Sep. 27, 40, p. 2; Dec. 20, 40, p. 14.}\]

\[\text{19 A regular half to full page feature, "Wanderung und Immigration," started in 1941.}\]
accurately recorded.

The AUFBAU became one of the most extensive contemporary sources about these events. The paper had no regular correspondents in occupied Europe, but it used the services of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, had correspondents in the free European capitals, and cultivated connections with several exile governments. Above all, countless readers supplied the paper with invaluable information they had received from relatives or other personal sources. 20

AUFBAU and the Unification of the Exiles

The paper and the German-Jewish Club wanted to be more than just service organizations which would voice the political opinions of the intellectual exile and other political emigre groups. One of the most important characteristics of the German-Jewish Club was that, within the disparate landscape of the political emigration, it functioned in a unique way. Unlike many of the small and individualistic exile organizations, the paper and the Club took considerable pains to unite various groups of refugees as immigration increased from Germany. As early as 1936 the paper advocated the unification of all liberal German-speaking people in the United States in the Deutsch-Amerikanischer Kulturverband. 21 But this organization, which aimed mainly at defeating Nazi propaganda and presenting a liberal image of German culture, never really got off the ground. More successful were


21 Jan 36, p. 1.
the AUFBAU's attempts to unite the German emigrés in the American Federation of Jews from Germany (later American Federation of Jews from Central Europe). This organization, founded in 1941, became a rather verbal though only loosely organized interest group. It met considerable criticism from American Jewish organizations which accused the federation of German nationalistic tendencies. During the late war years it became mainly interested in the postwar problems of German Jewry. 22

The AUFBAU, in order to emphasize its independent political role within the refugee groups, added an advisory board to its organizational body in 1941. It consisted of a number of famous emigré personalities and well known Americans who were supporters of the refugee cause. Not all were Jews; many of them contributed articles to the paper. The advisory board was therefore more than a mere figurehead; it represented a serious attempt to integrate part of the intellectual immigration into the permanent organization of the paper. 23

The AUFBAU in the Postwar Years

Unlike any other exile paper, the AUFBAU not only survived the war years but also continues to exist today. But 30 years after the end of World War II the function and format are again close to the pattern of its early days. It no longer speaks as the journal of Germans in exile, nor has the AUFBAU become a truly American paper as it is still

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22 Feb 2, 40, p. 5; Radkau, op. cit., p. 143.

edited in German. Indeed, any edition of the AUFBAU today carries fewer articles in English than the paper did during the war. What does remain is a very faithful group of readers. These former refugees who read the paper today use the AUFBAU for finding lost and displaced persons all over the world. Its readers are also regularly informed about postwar German politics and the fate of Jews throughout the world, particularly in Israel. Some of the features and even some of the editors are still the same as during the war years.²⁴ Most likely, therefore, the AUFBAU has survived the exile period because it remained a German paper and could thus retreat again to its early position as a means of communication for one of the many immigrant groups in the United States.

²⁴Schaber, op. cit., pp. 16/17.
PART I. REFUGEES AS A GROUP
CHAPTER I

RHETORIC AND POLICIES OF ANTI-ALIEN GROUPS

General Development

German-Jewish refugees who came to the United States after 1933 were greeted by a wave of anti-alienism in America. This form of nativism, which had manifested itself repeatedly in American history, constituted one main obstacle to the assimilation of the refugees into American society. This prejudice decisively shaped their perspective on all aspects of life in America as well as their view of their own position as newcomers. Anti-alienism hampered the chances of many refugees to settle down comfortably in the United States and to find economic security and social adjustment. The following pages describe anti-alienism as it became visible in the legislative and political actions of the government. But as anti-alienism in a broader sense permeated all aspects of refugee life, its more hidden forms constitute a basic theme through most of this study.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the belief was widespread that America's strength and superiority rested on its ability to absorb large groups of ethnically diverse immigrants. This school of thought had traditionally encountered strong resistance from nativist oriented groups which contended that immigration would have detrimental effects on American society unless it was regulated and selective. The rhetoric used by restrictionist groups varied at different times, and it had different targets in the 19th and 20th centuries. At times nativists were associated with anti-semitic movements; sometimes they were also engaged in anti-radical or anti-Catholic propaganda efforts. The core of their argument remained the same, however; namely, that certain parts
of the population, especially some immigrant communities, owed their allegiance to some un-American cause or power. Alien groups constituted an uncontrollable and potentially subversive element in American society, contended the nativists.¹

The key arguments of many restrictionists in the 1930s rested on the assumption that an uncontrollable mass of immigrants was flooding the country from Germany and Austria. While proveable figures were not cited, this sentiment rested on the fact that refugees tended to concentrate heavily in certain parts of the country (especially in New York City, where nearly all of them landed, and where about half remained). Some restrictionists also suspected that many refugees were coming to this country illegally or that they were entering on visitors visas with the intention of staying.²

To refute these arguments, supporters of the refugees' cause, especially refugee aid agencies, collected data, including government statistics, which demonstrated clearly that German and Austrian refugees were entering the country at a mere trickle and that up to 1938 less than half the German and Austrian immigration quotas had been filled. As a matter of fact, the agencies could prove that migration back to Germany was larger than immigration to the United States from Germany.³

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² Deportation of Aliens, Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Immigration, United States Senate, 75. Cong. 1937, p. 88.

³ "Admission of German Refugee Children," (Wagner Rogers Bill) Joint Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Immigration, United States Senate, and a Subcommittee of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives, 76 Cong. 1st Session (Apr. 20, 21, 22, and 24, 1939, pp. 24/25, p. 43; David Wyman, Paper Walls, Amherst 1968, p. 221, AU July 15, 39, pp. 1/2.
But even if only thousands, instead of millions, of refugees came to America, the restrictionists contended, every job-seeking immigrant would still either deprive an American of employment or he would be added to the millions of Americans on public relief. The discussion about the admission of refugees centered around these two arguments. One congressman even voiced suspicion that about a million foreigners were on relief rolls in the United States. The American Legion charged Jewish-owned department stores with dismissing "100%" Americans in order to hire refugees. Physicians complained that refugee doctors who charged lowered fees were flooding the country and depriving them of their clientele.

Here again, refugee aid agencies, especially the American Friends Service Committee and the National Refugee Service, made determined efforts to counter these assertions with factual evidence.

As the strains on the job market were easing around 1940, restrictionists began to base their rhetoric on the argument that refugees would bring political insecurity and unrest to the country. They asked how the American public could know whether the immigrants were true refugees or potential fifth columnists for the Nazis. At times, not only the loyalty of the refugees to their new home country was questioned, but that of the American refugee relief agencies as well.

4Deportation of Aliens, p. 54.
5Wyman, p. 6/7.
6AU March 22, 40, p. 3; Oct. 8, 43, p. 4.
7Wagner Rogers Bill, p. 217.
These nativist attitudes, while important to the lives of those refugees already living in the United States, raised even more problems when they resulted in direct actions that regulated the admission of new immigrants from Central Europe. During the Depression, most potential immigrants to the United States, but especially the less wealthy refugees, had considerable difficulties in securing immigration visas. The main hurdle for them was the rigorous screening by American consular officers abroad who weeded out everybody who, in their eyes, was at all likely to become a public charge. 8 During the late 1930s, when the refugee problem became more pressing, President Roosevelt required his consular officers to apply a somewhat more liberal policy in issuing visas for refugees from Germany and Austria. The president also began efforts to solve the refugee question on an international basis in collaboration with Great Britain. But these long range efforts bore no tangible results. 9

Thus the executive branch of the government was only partly successful in its attempt to find a solution that would truly help the persecuted people in Central Europe and also keep restrictionism at home within bounds. Congress, meanwhile, was engaged in a series of confrontations in hearings on immigration and alien legislation. In 1939 the debate between restrictionists and liberals in the House and the Senate was intensified due to a dramatic increase in the influx of refugees after the Austrian Anschluss in early 1938 and the German

8 Wyman, pp. 4/5; Robert Divine, American Immigration Policy, Yale Univ. Press 1957, pp. 94/95.

9 Wyman, pp. 43ff.
Kristallnacht late in the same year. The height of the legislative debate about the refugee problem was reached during the spring of 1939 at the hearings on the Wagner-Rogers Bill, a proposal which would have allowed 20,000 German refugee children to immigrate outside of the regular German quota. Due to the influence of restrictionist groups in Congress, a reflection of the strong anti-alien sentiment in the population in general, the bill did not pass.

Although the outbreak of the war in 1939 curtailed immigration from Central Europe sharply, the influence of anti-alien groups in the legislature did not diminish, but merely took another shape. Refugees from Germany and Austria were now portrayed as potential spies for Hitler. The passing of the Smith Act in 1940 reflected suspicion of all foreigners. It made registration and fingerprinting of every alien mandatory and also provided for deportation of aliens who were considered to be enemies of the nation.

Internal security laws were further tightened after Pearl Harbor. Several new regulations restricted the mobility of enemy aliens to varying degrees. Refugees from Germany and Austria had to have official permits to travel and they were not allowed to possess cameras or short-wave radios or to go near military installations. Refugees were also barred from security related jobs in defense industries. During 1942 strict curfew regulations went into effect in California for enemy aliens and Japanese Americans.


11 Wyman, pp. 75ff.

12 Ibid., p. 188
The AUFBAU's Reaction to Anti-Alienism

Throughout the war the AUFBAU was very much concerned with the fact that aliens, and refugees in particular were targets of nativist verbal attacks and subject to special legal and social restrictions. Yet the paper showed an astounding inability to discuss and analyze anti-alienism openly as a sentiment that held an important place in the public mood. Anti-alienism as a common prejudice among Americans presented a problem that the paper did not dare to face directly because that would have meant questioning the much lauded American spirit of tolerance and equality. Nonetheless, the AUFBAU showed a clear awareness of how widespread anti-alienism was. This is shown in the countless rebuttals of anti-alien attitudes and the numerous defenses of the refugees' position that the paper published. Usually the refugees' cause was upheld in much the same way that most refugee aid organizations had defended it: with statistics and factual reports. In addition, numerous prominent Americans, including government officials, supported the refugees in public statements which the paper eagerly printed. Especially after 1940, such well known personalities as Eleanor Roosevelt, the President, himself, Attorneys General Robert Jackson and

\[13\] Mar. 8, 40, p. 2; Oct. 11, 40, p. 2.
\[14\] Aug. 15, 39, p. 12; May 12, 40, p. 7.
\[15\] Apr. 5, 40, p. 3; Nov. 2, 41, p. 1; May 30, 41, p. 1.
\[16\] Nov. 22, 40, p. 1; Jan 24, 41, p. 8; Oct 3, 41, p.4; Jan 9, 41, p. 4; Apr. 10, 42, p. 3; Feb. 16, 42, p. 6.
\[17\] Aug. 1, 39, p. 12.
Francis Biddle, and others warned against an outbreak of anti-alien sentiment. They called it unAmerican, unpatriotic and unChristian, and defended the refugees in many other respects. Obviously, the AUFBAU readers were the last ones who needed to be warned of anti-alienism, but the paper printed these messages to reassure its readers that something was being done about a disquieting problem.

If the AUFBAU hesitated to scold Americans for their prejudices, the paper was certainly not afraid to criticize refugees for somewhat similar attitudes. Anti-alienism among the refugees themselves was considered to be a serious problem by the paper. The editors discussed cases where aliens were falsely denounced as spies by other aliens, and they warned the refugees not to be overly suspicious of other German-speaking people in the United States.

Because the AUFBAU was unable to cope with anti-alienism as a social phenomenon, it tried to deal with the problem of the status of aliens through discussion of its legal implications. From the late thirties on, when the influx of refugees had become noticeable and had caused a number of legislative measures in regard to new immigrants, the AUFBAU had regularly carried a great deal of information about visa regulations, immigration possibilities, and alien legislation. The paper soon achieved the position of a central information and lobbying agency for

18 Nov. 22, 40, p. 1; Oct. 18, 40, p. 1; Nov. 19, 43, p. 1; Oct. 6, 42, p. 4
19 E.g., Governor Lehman (New York), July 12, 40, p. 1.
20 March 8, 40, p. 2; Sep. 11, 42, p. 40.
a more liberal refugee policy and less stringent alien legislation.  

Before the American entry into the war, the AUFBAU's reports about refugee and alien policy were very factual and hardly ever contained clear criticism or individual comment. Roosevelt's attempt to solve the refugee question on an international basis in the late 1930s did draw favorable comment and its chances of success were appraised carefully. In general, the United States policy towards refugees was accepted until, in the summer of 1941, the State Department virtually stopped the issuing of visas and began rescreening all who had already received them. This move caused serious criticism in the paper. It was seen as an unnecessary and discriminatory procedure initiated by an overzealous bureaucracy. Yet no particular individuals were cited as responsible for it.

Shortly before Pearl Harbor, the low spirits of the refugees in regard to their legal status rose briefly when the Hobbs Bill proposed a distinction between refugees and enemy aliens from Germany, Italy, and Japan. The AUFBAU promptly suggested that refugees should henceforth be called "involuntary German nationals," but the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor finished the refugees' hope in this respect.

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21 E.g., information column An Alle (For All) starts Jan. 2, 42, p.6.
22 Oct. 15, 39, p. 10.
24 Wyman, pp. 193ff.
25 June 20, 41, p. 2; June 27, 41, p.7; July 4, 41, p.4/5; July 11, 41, p.1.
26 Dec. 5, 41, p. 4; July 17, 42, p. 2; Aug 7, 42, p.1.
After the American declaration of war, refugees, more than ever before, were regarded as enemy aliens and as such were subject to legal restrictions and public suspicion. In this climate of opinion, the AUFBAU did its best to appear optimistic and confident, but its actual feelings of ambivalence were reflected in its articles about the life of the refugees in the United States. The paper assured its readers that the label "enemy alien" was merely a technicality without concrete meaning. It felt encouraged when Attorney General Francis Biddle proclaimed that loyal refugees did not need to fear any harassment by government authorities. Biddle also declared that no regulation barred refugees from working in factories, other than the few exceptions in the defense industries. Nevertheless aliens had difficulties in obtaining employment in heavy industries. In many cases, discriminatory practices against refugees increased during the war. But the AUFBAU continued to wear a relatively happy face, although, in the atmosphere of continuing anti-alienism, attacks against the American foreign language press also increased.

In Spring 1942, just when the paper was confident enough to declare "Alienfrage kurz vor der Lösung" (alien question close to solution),

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27 Jan. 23, 42, p. 1; Feb. 20, 42, p. 4.
30 Jan. 23, 42, p. 7; Apr. 13, 42, p. 16.
31 March 20, 42, p. 4; Apr. 24, 42, p. 4; Aug. 28, 42, p. 5; May 28, 43, p. 4.
controls on aliens became more comprehensive. Aliens residing in the United States were screened for possible subversive intent by the Justice Department, and those suspected of disloyal behavior towards the United States were incarcerated in camps. The AUFBAU tried to inform its readers about these events in a neutral manner, but the paper's apprehensions about reprisals against refugees obviously had not been stilled. The practical effects of most restrictions were not too harsh, but fears that refugees would be evacuated from coastal regions and interned in camps were widespread.

For West Coast refugees, these suspicions became a partial reality when in April 1942 a rather strict curfew was instituted. Enemy aliens as well as Japanese Americans were forbidden to go more than five miles from their homes and they had to observe an 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew. The AUFBAU's California readers showed considerable bitterness about these measures, which, they contended, destroyed many important parts of their newly found existence. Enforcement authorities were more or less openly attacked for their strictness; those refugees who advocated a patient attitude were a minority. The sudden protest quieted down

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32 Apr. 17, 42, p. 1; May 3, 42, p. 1.

33 May 15, 42, p. 7; Oct. 23, 42, p. 22; Oct. 23, 42, pp. 1, 3.

34 May 15, 42, p. 1.

35 Feb. 13, 42, p. 1; March 20, 42, p. 1; Apr. 3, 42, p. 17; Apr. 17, 42, p. 17; May 1, 42, p. 17.

36 May 15, 42, p. 17, p. 19; June 12, 42, p. 17.
rather quickly, however, as the measures were lifted on January 1, 1943.37

Concerning the continuing repression of Japanese Americans, the AUFBAU showed little understanding. This is quite remarkable, as, from the outset, Japanese Americans were in much the same situation as refugees. For no concrete reason, both groups were suspected of being potentially subversive, regardless of their status as political refugees or as citizens of the United States. But, somehow, Japanese Americans were another class of aliens, the AUFBAU maintained. Their loyalty remained questionable, the bonds of their race, it was declared, were more important to them than their political allegiance.38 Thus, it seems, the AUFBAU not only continued to promote the myth of the melting pot in face of direct evidence against the openness of American society, but the paper also accepted some of the nativist’s views, as they applied to non-German immigrants.

37Jan. 1, 42, p. 5.

38March 6, 42, p. 15.
CHAPTER II
REFUGEES AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Anti-Semitic Movements in the 1930s

Closely connected to anti-alienism both in formal appearance and in psychological causation was anti-Semitism. The main distinction between the two on the political level in the 1930s was that, while anti-alienism as a widespread public prejudice openly influenced concrete political action, anti-Semitism, though also rampant in American society, led only a fringe existence in terms of political impact. If involved in political action, anti-Semitism preferred to hide in the more rational and respectable costume of anti-alienism.

Groups that had a distinct anti-Semitic appeal were numerous, though most were small and shared few common characteristics. The majority came into existence between 1933 and 1938, though some had originated in the 1920s like the Ku Klux Klan offshoots in the Midwest. Most prospered only in the depression years. While an upsurge of activity occurred during the presidential campaign of 1936, the actual peak of organized anti-Semitism was reached in the mid-1940s.

The actual size and structure of the anti-Semitic organizations are very difficult to determine. They ranged from the millions of

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1 Donald Strong, Organized Anti-Semitism in America, New York, 1941, pp. 146/147.

2 Especially the Black Legion, see David Chalmers, Hooded Americanism, Chicago, 1968, pp. 309ff.

3 Strong, pp. 146/147.
passive supporters (listeners) of Father Coughlin's radio speeches to over a hundred small organizations such as the Edmondson News Service. An analysis of supporters of the more sizable and stable anti-Semitic organizations points towards largely native American, lower-middle class support. Except for Father Coughlin's National Union For Social Justice, which claimed to have five million followers in 1939 and which was the largest anti-Semitic movement, all other groups counted mainly Protestants as their members.

Organized anti-Semitism was concentrated in the Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic States, in the Midwest, and on the Pacific Coast. It was most strongest in the urban centers of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. But indications are that most supporters of these groups had a small town or rural background. Gerald Winrod's Christian Defenders, for example, had a decidedly small town Bible Belt following. William Pelley's "Silver Shirts", the other important Protestant organization, recruited many of its members from the only superficially urbanized regions of the Pacific Coast.

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7 Strong, pp. 144/145.

8 Ibid, p. 76.

9 Smith, p. 59; Lipset, p. 163.
Most anti-Semitic groups had a decidedly native-American background, with the exception of the German-American Bund which led a somewhat separate existence for that very reason. Anti-Semitic groups believed their primary task was to arouse the public about the peril posed to America's democratic and Christian order, by powerful, sinister forces, among which the Jews, together with radicals, functioned prominently.¹⁰

Anti-Semitic groups differed in their opinions as to what practical actions should be taken to halt this threat. Most of their activities remained rhetorical and most of them were unable to translate their rabble rousing propaganda into any definite political programs.¹¹ The "German-American Bund" and the "Silver Shirts" alone claimed that they would support a violent fascist takeover in the United States.¹² Public belief held, though, that in reality still other organizations advocated a Nazi-style putsch and that some were actively supported by Hitler.¹³

With the easing of the depression and the beginning of the war, the activities of most anti-Semitic organizations declined sharply. Anti-Semitism as such, though, did not decline among Americans. An increasing number of people believed, for example, that Jews were an overly powerful group, especially when economic and financial matters were concerned.¹⁴ Potential support for an anti-Semitic campaign also

¹⁰Strong, pp. 163/164.
¹¹Strong, Ch. XIV passim.
¹²Ibid.
¹³Ibid., p. 162.
¹⁴Ibid., pp. 38/39, pp. 55/56.
reached considerable intensity in the mid-forties, although Hitler's policy towards Jews was rejected by most Americans as too radical.  

The events of the war itself influenced prejudice against Jews, who were suspected of being more frequently exempted from the draft and of trying to evade combat duty. Jews were supposed to be too shrewd to risk endangering their lives; they were thus seen as a group basically disloyal to American democracy. This illustrates well the psychological pattern upon which much anti-Semitic prejudice has been founded through history. Jews were considered to be cowardly and weak; they would not stand up for something or defend it openly. Yet this belief was based upon secret admiration of the supposed Jewish shrewdness. Envy of Jews who could appear weak and yet preserve their power that way has always been a major characteristic of anti-Semitism. Refugees in the 1940s were prime targets for this kind of anti-Semitic thinking.

The AUFBAU and Anti-Semitism in America

The AUFBAU was definitely aware of the widespread anti-Semitism with which most refugees were confronted in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. In numerous articles the paper urged its readers and the American public not to take the anti-Semitic activities of some Americans too lightly; unawareness and a lax optimistic attitude had

\[15\] Charles Stember et al, Jews in the Mind of America, New York 1968, p. 120/124.

\[16\] Ibid., pp. 129, 134.

\[17\] Ibid., pp. 134-140
cost many Germans their lives or had forced them to leave their country. Yet anti-Semitism was not so much seen as a problem which hindered the refugees' social integration and acceptance, but it was considered to be a phenomenon which threatened directly the political order of the United States. In the eyes of the AUFBAU the most important and dangerous forces were represented by anti-Semitic organizations. The anti-Semitic prejudice of Americans in general was seen as less perilous. The anti-Semitism of such groups as the German-American Bund or the Silver Shirts appeared extremely threatening to the paper because it seemingly developed along the same lines as Nazism had in Germany; that is, anti-Semitism appeared originally only as a minor characteristic of movements whose ultimate aim was a violent takeover of the state.¹⁹

Around 1940 news about the activities of anti-Semitic groups looked increasingly alarming to the AUFBAU, as organized anti-Semitism seemed about to grow into a unified movement and appeared to be gaining political support.²⁰ Just as in Germany ten years before, the AUFBAU asserted, Nazi spies and right wing German-Americans were slowly infiltrating American right wing movements, and Hitler's Gestapo agents were more and more successful in using these organizations for their own ends. The German-American Bund was seen as the major vehicle of these

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 117/118.
²⁰June 21, 40, p. 3.
systematic activities. 21

But anti-Semitic organizations were not only infiltrated and supported from abroad, the AUFBAU told its readers; even some American politicians were on the side of the American Nazis. "Los Angeles Nazis Hail Wheeler," and "Anti-Semitism in the Senate - Anti-Semites and Anti-aliens Gather Around Senator Reynolds," the paper announced. 22 And Colonel Charles Lindbergh's anti-Jewish speeches received extensive coverage. 23

The discussion in the AUFBAU of anti-Semitism as a widespread prejudice that confronted the refugees in their everyday lives began only later, during the war. 24 In 1942 and 1943 the paper commenced to write about anti-Semitic prejudice in the United States as it appeared in two main forms: discrimination against Jews by employers, and physical attacks by anti-Jewish rowdies in a number of large cities. 25

In all instances the articles were mainly concerned with the illegality of such acts. With great satisfaction the paper reported the suit brought against a New York City firm that refused to employ Jews, and it advocated the establishment of a commission to set up measures to


22Apr. 3, 42, p. 3; Dec. 5, 41, p. 7; see also section on German Americans.


24General appraisals of anti-Semitism: May 1, 39, p. 5; Nov. 13, 43, p. 3.

25Nov. 6, 42, p. 3; Apr. 16, 43, p. 4; Apr. 23, 43, p. 2; Oct. 22, 43, p. 1; Nov. 12, 43, p. 4.
set up measures to "outlaw" anti-Semitic discrimination in New York state. 26

The more general patterns of anti-Semitic prejudice were only occasionally discussed from a less legalistic point of view. They were, however, correctly connected with the climate of fear and suppressed aggression that was prevalent during the late war years. The AUFBAU found it remarkable and frightening that Jews were a subject of discrimination at a time when the country was fighting a war against the world's prime oppressor of Jews. 27

Even though the paper had not been confident enough to discuss the prevailing anti-Semitic prejudice in America at an earlier time, it seems to have been cognizant of its existence in the 1930s. In order to reassure its readers of its awareness of the problem, and to show them that this concern was shared by others, AUFBAU published numerous appeals by government officials and other prominent people condemning anti-Semitism as something undemocratic, un-American, or un-Christian. 28

Besides letting others (all of them Christians!) speak in their behalf, the AUFBAU's editors sometimes fought anti-Semitic prejudices with their own methods. Did Jews control Wall Street? No, said the AUFBAU, and gave statistics about Jewish holdings in major banks. 29

26 Apr. 30, 43, p. 6; Dec 24, 43, p. 4.

27 Nov. 19, 43, p. 3.

28 Sep. 19, 41, p. 1; Feb. 21, 41, p. 1; March 7, 41, p. 3; Apr. 5, 40, p. 4; March 7, 41, p. 6; July 1, 39, p. 1.

29 Dec. 22, 39, p. 16.
Nor did Jews control the government to any extent, the AUFBAU asserted in an extensive report dealing with Jews who had reached high positions in Roosevelt's New Deal administration.\(^{30}\) The paper made Jews as a group as inconspicuous as possible as far as questions of financial and economic power were concerned. This was a strategy shared by most American Jewish organizations which had to cope with the refugee problem.\(^{31}\)

Whenever questions of active patriotism were concerned, however, the AUFBAU emphasized the outstanding role Jews played. This especially came to the forefront during the war years when the paper portrayed Jews as outstanding soldiers who received numerous awards for their excellent performance in combat duty. Jewish soldiers were in no way less active or successful than the rest of "our boys," the AUFBAU declared.\(^{32}\) Not only in this war, but throughout American history, Jews had fulfilled their patriotic duties. Stories about the Jews in the American Civil War and the first World War confirmed the paper's view of the Jew as an active American patriot.\(^{33}\) Thus in its own way the AUFBAU reacted very sensitively to the most serious anti-Semitic prejudices that confronted refugees in America.

The AUFBAU's overall perspective on American anti-Semitism was somewhat split. Up to 1942 it viewed anti-Semitic action mainly as an

\(^{30}\)Apr. 24, 41, p. 17; Apr. 17, 41, p. 3.


\(^{32}\)Aug. 21, 41, p. 1; Oct. 9, 42, p. 1.

\(^{33}\)Feb. 27, 42, p. 2; Apr. 10, 42, p. 7.
essentially foreign movement whose American actors were manipulated by the Nazis. On the other hand it was much more difficult to deal openly with the anti-Jewish prejudices and behavior that the refugees encountered in their everyday lives and which made Americanization so painful and difficult for them. Like many Jewish organizations, the paper obviously saw itself in too vulnerable a position to counter this kind of anti-Semitism with anything but defensive articles and proclamations.

This attitude changed notbaly during the late war years when, together with American Jewish organizations, the paper began to face anti-Semitism in the United States in a more open and fundamental way. Although the AUFBAU avoided questioning the basic tolerance of Americans towards minorities, it was able to view anti-Semitism as a very widely spread phenomenon. This implies that the refugee community had gained insight as well as confidence during the war years; it was able to see beyond its immediate problems as a separate group within American Jewry. And, most important of all, refugees in this instance were able to question society around them, instead of blaming themselves for most things that interfered with their Americanization.


35Apr. 16, 43, p. 4.
CHAPTER III

THE NEGATIVE SOCIAL IMAGE OF THE REFUGEE

"A lot of immigrants are coming to this country, they have a soft life and they take over, you can't deal with one and a lot of them are awful dirty, though they have money." 1 Few sources draw such a hostile portrait of the refugee as did the person interviewed in Adorno's study on anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, it was precisely this kind of image that grew out of the anti-alien and anti-Semitic attitudes and propaganda so prevalent in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. While organized anti-Semitism and anti-alien politics seldom influenced the refugees' lives as greatly as the personal hostility which they encountered daily, it must be assumed that confrontations with the ethnocentric attitudes of many Americans decisively shaped the refugees' image of their own position in American society, more so than any official anti-alien policies or discriminatory laws.

Very few printed sources give a clear portrait of the "dirty refugee," as many Americans apparently saw him. 2 Westbrook Pegler, a right wing journalist whose syndicated column ran in more than a hundred American papers, and the Hearst Press, especially the New York World Telegram, 3 did attack the refugees' attitudes and behavior in their columns at times. But these open polemics were exceptions. More characteristic of the attitude of the popular press was a LIFE magazine

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article about "royal refugees" which appeared in December 1940. It dealt with a number of crowned or formerly crowned families from Europe who had found refuge from the war in the United States or Canada. The article supplemented a picture report about British refugee children in their American foster homes and a list of eight "Rules for Refugees, Royal or Otherwise, While in America." The accounts about royalty and the British children were friendly enough. The "Rules," on the other hand, consisted of a mixture of sarcasm and admonition (see appendix). But, apparently, advice like "Refugees must not band together in little swarms, chattering and squealing in their foreign bird talk" touched directly the most sensitive spots in the relationships between refugees and Americans. At least, not many refugees or their defenders were able to see this as the joke LIFE intended it to be. The reaction of pro-refugee groups to LIFE's "Rules" was very hostile. It is noteworthy in this context that while the "Rules" were a rather crude joke, the article at large gave a grossly distorted view of the refugee problem, a fact which AUFBAU did not criticize. Inasmuch as this was the very first treatment of the refugee problem in the magazine, information which focussed on exiled kings and British middle class children (none of them Jewish) was misleading to say the least.

Since the AUFBAU's foremost goal was to Americanize the refugee to the fullest extent in his daily life, the paper reacted with almost

4LIFE, Dec. 16, 40, pp. 89ff.
unprecedented anger to accusations, like those of LIFE, that refugees were an obnoxious and unassimilable lot. The newcomers, the paper said, were doing their best to become acquainted with the manners and customs of their new home country and the AUFBAU was doing everything it could to help them in this process. Anti-refugee polemics, however, would only undermine such efforts. 6

Assimilation and learning how to become an American was a process that should be primarily monitored by the refugees themselves, the AUFBAU indirectly contended, and consequently the paper itself often gave hints on how to behave and what to do in order to be more American. Thus the AUFBAU itself is an extremely rich source of information about the stereotypic image of the European refugee that many Americans supposedly had.

To start de-Europeانization, the paper usually advocated a change in the outer appearance of refugees. Americanization thus literally often meant an American make-up. Especially on the women's page, such suggestions appeared often and with detailed instructions. 7 The suggestions on eliminating any European appearance also included advising refugees to change their names and handwriting in order to be less conspicuous in the United States. For the paper the persistence of a range of behavior which was considered particularly European was also of much concern. It often advised its readers in rather urgent tones to abandon such habits as talking German loudly in public or sitting

7 Especially May 31, 40, p. 8.
around in coffeehouses talking in German.  

The AUFBAU seems rather superficial in putting emphasis on the Americanization of such characteristics. But the reader could soon discover that the AUFBAU’s stress on such seemingly unimportant habits such as talking loudly or sitting around in cafés was ultimately aimed at changing more fundamental non-American attitudes of the emigres. By advising the immigrant on how to appear as an inconspicuous American, the paper hoped to break up a widespread tendency of refugees to stick together, live in the same neighborhoods, go to the same coffeehouses and restaurants, and behave like any unassimilated ethnic group in New York City. Isolation on the part of certain groups of immigrants might have been possible in earlier times, but the AUFBAU insisted that in the case of these refugees the situation was fundamentally different. Unlike any other immigrant group, the refugees could not muse about the past and foster a memory about the good old home country. Speaking German for the refugees did not just mean "chattering and squealing in their foreign bird talk," but it meant using the same language the Nazis spoke.

To the AUFBAU the Nazis had taken not only property and social position from German Jews, but also large parts of their historical

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8July 19, 41, p. 8; June 27, 41, p. 9; May 31, 41, p. 2; July 19, 40, p. 10; Aug. 23, 40, p. 4; about refugees' bad behavior in a summer resort at Lake Placid: Oct. 23, 42, p. 6; Oct. 22, 43, p. 28. On refugee subculture in New York City see Jud Teller, Strangers and Natives, New York 1968, Ch. 4, passim.

9Sep. 27, 40, pp. 3/4.

10July 19, 40, p. 10; May 31, 41, p. 2.
and cultural identity. A new start in the United States could only be attempted if the refugee fully realized this fact.

This theory of radical assimilation underlay much of the discussion among AUFBAU readers about the pro's and con's of speaking German. Could a German language paper which helped to keep German culture alive on its pages legitimately ask its readers to give up speaking German? Neither readers nor editors wanted to change the AUFBAU into an English paper. And in numerous letters readers expressed the opinion that writing and talking German with each other was necessary to keep one's true cultural identity.\(^\text{11}\) The AUFBAU itself was not in favor of this kind of cultural pluralism. It saw its main function as a German language paper as a temporary help to introduce the refugees gradually to the American way of life.\(^\text{12}\)

But in other fields that had no connection with the language problem the AUFBAU chided the refugees for all kinds of non-American behavior. Most of these accusations had to do with the refugees' European perception of society, especially with concepts of class and authority that would bring them into conflict with American views.\(^\text{13}\) Men and women, for example, had equal rights and equal duties in America, the paper told its readers. It was contrary to American social behavior that husbands should demonstrate any kind of male supremacy over their wives, just as it was inappropriate for parents

\(^{11}\) May 31, 40, p. 2; June 7, 40, p. 9.

\(^{12}\) Dec. 19, 41, p. 4.

\(^{13}\) Nov. 19, 43, p. 7.
to inflict a strict and formal discipline upon their children.\textsuperscript{14}

The refugee at work, or the one who was looking for a job, was also a frequent target of the paper's Americanizers. Apparently the refugees' chances of finding jobs were often reduced by the wrong kinds of behavior at interviews with prospective employers. The AUFBAU, as well as the German-Jewish Club, took considerable pains to make the refugees aware of a few basic rules they had to observe in such situations. Thus any boisterousness, as well as timidity or shyness, was criticized. Instead of boasting about past achievements and experiences, the refugees should show a generally pleasing personality and the willingness to accept other people's advice.\textsuperscript{15} The know-it-all attitude of some who could not adapt to the differences and changes of the American system was often the subject of criticism by Americans.\textsuperscript{16}

But in many cases the immediate future looked so bleak to the refugee who wanted to gain economic independence and a better social status that the boasting about past experience was only too understandable. Many were not even able to comfort themselves with the memories of a glorious past, but instead sank into pessimistic, depressed states of mind. But the AUFBAU could not even concede that "Kaffeehauspessimismus" (coffeehouse pessimism) was a legitimate mood for the refugees. This paralyzed state of mind would never enable the refugee to make it in the New World; pessimism was essentially non-American,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14}May 17, 40, pp. 13/14.
\item \textsuperscript{15}May 17, 40, p. 13; Jan. 5, 40, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{16}Aug. 23, 40, p. 9; July 15, 39, p. 7.
\end{itemize}
even subversive ("The Fifth Column of Pessimism"), the paper scolded.¹⁷

But could a paper which carried extensive accounts of the persecution of Jews in Europe condemn pessimism and anxiety in those who had narrowly escaped from the concentration camps? Could the AUFBAU criticize the refugees for speaking German and banding together when the paper and the German-Jewish Club were parts of an extensive German emigré apparatus which served many needs of the newly immigrated? Many AUFBAU readers agreed that the paper was at times keeping an overzealous watch on the refugees' conduct. In letters to the editor they advocated that German should not be abandoned by the refugees as a group, and that it was not fair to accuse them of a variety of non-American mannerisms just because, as in any group, some of them could not stop talking about the old times and missed coffeehouses too much. There were less adaptable people in every group and there was no reason why the refugees, of all immigrant groups, should be more American than the Americans in their behavior.¹⁸ But the AUFBAU's attitude towards Americanization remained uncompromising, and the paper showed even less leniency in this respect during the war years than it had before.

What Made the Refugees a Class: the View of the AUFBAU

In the eyes of the AUFBAU, two traits characterized the refugees as a separate class of newcomers. The most important principle of

¹⁷ Aug. 23, 40, p. 4; Aug. 1, 36, p. 1.

¹⁸ Sep. 1, 39, p. 20; Sep. 19, 41, p. 3; Jan 3, 41, p. 7.
refugee life, which dominated in the AUFBAU's Americanization ideology, was the need to ban the past from one's memories. The paper, therefore, sharply criticized the desire to keep German habits alive, consciously or unconsciously. The second point, the necessity of leading a purely future-oriented life, was a logical result of this idea. American society and American customs were to form the exclusive interest of the refugees, the AUFBAU contended. These two ideas were the basis of group cohesion and solidarity.

This special way of defining one's own group was remarkable in many ways. First, it was the exact opposite of what made the refugees a group for outsiders, who judged refugees by their strange and sometimes obnoxious behavior. For the AUFBAU, on the other hand, the cohesiveness of the refugees as a group was based on the assumption that they, more than everybody else, wanted to get rid of this behavior; group solidarity was therefore founded on a negative principle. While this negative part of the refugees' self-definition remained clear at all times in the paper, Americanization, the great positive uniting goal of all refugees, was always a cloudy, undefined term. The AUFBAU's advice on how to become American hardly ever got beyond the do's and don't's in everyday situations. Beyond this pragmatic advice the nature of Americanization was not described in any substantial way. Just as the feelings of most immigrants towards their new homecountry were unclear their views of American society as a whole were fractioned as well.
CHAPTER IV

HOW DID THE REFUGEES FIT INTO THE AMERICAN CLASS SYSTEM?

The historian is confronted with an extraordinary phenomenon in the study of the Americanization of the refugees. They had neither a definite image of themselves, their cultural background, and their actual social position as a group; nor could they envisage their future as Americans in any concrete terms within the framework of American society. Their means to build up a feeling of cohesiveness were very limited and mostly based upon a shared negative experience. And yet, never before did a minority group of immigrants reach such a high degree of assimilation within one generation. In order to find out why this was so, one has to consider the social background of German-Jewish refugees and understand their conception of America's social order as shaped by their group experience.

Most historians of the refugee movement agree that the greatest difference between the Hitler refugees from Germany and Austria and most other immigrant groups in American history was the high educational and social position the former group had held in its home country.¹ The difference in occupational and social background was especially striking if one compared the refugees, as many Americans did, with Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who had come to this country in the early 20th century.

The origins of the differences between these two groups of Jewish immigrants are to be found in the different historical development in Eastern Europe and in most parts of Germany in regard to the position of Jews. Jews in Germany, unlike those in Eastern Europe, gained considerable social and economic mobility during the nineteenth century. Up to 1930 no open persecution of Jews had occurred in Germany for more than a hundred years. In the wake of the political reforms influenced by the Enlightenment and the various revolutions of the mid-nineteenth century, some German states granted Jews a legal status equal to that of Christians. A small Jewish elite was even permitted to participate actively in the cultural life of the cities. Its members attended literary and musical salons and some of them became well known artists themselves. By then, some Jews had also begun to participate in the democratization of German states; some of them on the side of the revolutionaries, some as reformers.2

It became the declared aim of the emerging Jewish middle class in Germany to attain the recognized social position of this small elite. Seemingly the most successful way to reach this goal was to get rid of all attributes that were traditionally associated with Jewishness. Thus language and religion ceased to be distinctive features of German Jewry; many families converted to Christianity.3

When the Nazis began to classify all Jews as non-Aryans after 1933, for the first time in their lives many Jews became aware that they were


3Ibid.
supposedly different from the rest of society. Being a Jew suddenly meant being a non-person without the right of a respected place in society. Under the impact of the policies of the Nazis, a conception of one's Jewishness in any positive terms was even less possible than before.

Thus, long before their arrival in the United States, most German-Jewish refugees had developed a largely negative view of themselves as a group. They had experienced an extreme and sudden uprooting of their seemingly intact cultural identity, and, by the time of their arrival in the United States, they were thoroughly disconnected from the old as well as the new world. Was complete Americanization, as the AUFBAU advocated it, possible on this shaky basis? Or were there more realistic alternatives to total assimilation?

As the history of American immigration clearly shows, the assimilation of immigrant groups usually took place within two or three generations. The starting point for Americanization was in many cases a rather self-contained social structure built up among ethnic groups. Every member of an immigrant group would find his special place within the class order in this ethnic community. Once achieved the ethnic framework also provided the immigrant with a set of cultural and social values that would gradually become more Americanized from generation to generation.  

It is obvious that this gradual approach to assimilation via ethnicity did not present a viable way of Americanization for these

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refugees. Not only were refugees unable to see themselves as an ethnic group, in any positive terms, but a paper like the AUFBAU was also largely unable to perceive the importance and value of ethnic affiliation in American society. The refugees can therefore be regarded as an essentially new group of immigrants which acquired few of the traditional characteristics of previous immigrant groups.

Nevertheless, for immediate help and adjustment the refugees, consciously or not, turned to that American ethnic group to which they felt closest and which in turn offered the most helpful assistance, the American Jews. The American Jewish community, however, was not only one of the largest, but also one of the most fractioned, ethnic groups in the United States. Only those refugees whose allegiance to a certain part of American Jewry was predetermined had no further difficulty in joining American Jewish organizations. Thus German-Jewish Zionists could readily become members of American Zionist organizations. Likewise, the religious Jews did not encounter too many obstacles in participating in the activities of Reform or Orthodox congregations in the United States.

As far as the rest of American Jewish organizational life was concerned, ready participation in their activities proved much more difficult for the refugees. In most organizations that were involved in large scale political or charitable efforts, they would encounter

5A few references to the "Melting Pot" and the idea of "Cultural Pluralism" appear in AU June 7, 40, p. 9; Nov 22, 40, p. 3; Apr 24, 41, p. 9.

the old rivalries between Eastern European Jews (relatively recent immigrants) and German Jews (who had come to the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century). The latter were mostly middle and upper middle class people who had traditionally held the leading position in the American Jewish community. But by the 1930s they had lost much of their former predominance in American Jewish organizations to Jews of Eastern European extraction.

Not only were the refugees caught in the quarrels between these two groups, but this conflict revived some of the same ethnocentric bias towards "Polish" Jews that had prevailed in Germany in the past. There, just as in the United States, Eastern European Jews had been considered an uneducated proletarian class, much looked down upon by the more middle class "Germans." Apparently some refugees warmed up their latent prejudices in the United States, even though they were dependent upon the help of this very same group.\(^7\)

One other ethnic community that could have given assistance to the refugees in their Americanization efforts were the German-Americans. This possibility did not look very attractive to the refugees, however. Although German Americans and German-Jewish refugees shared the language and much of the cultural tradition of Germany, there was more hostility than interaction between the rather conservative German-American community and the refugees. Only German socialists (old time immigrants of the Bismarck times as well as socialist emigrés of the 1930s) shared the

\(^7\)AU Apr. 15, 39, p. 5; Joachim Radkau, Die Deutsche Emigration in die USA 1933-1942, Düsseldor 1972, p. 137.
position as social and political outcasts with the Jewish refugees. For this reason the latter groups had rather close contacts with each other.\(^8\)

The only segment of society that was ready to help German-Jewish refugees, other than American Jews, was the American intellectual community. This was not an ethnic group in the basic sense in that its main forms of cohesiveness did not rest upon similar religious beliefs or a common cultural heritage. American intellectuals were the social groups that had dissented from the ethnic frames that divided the rest of society.\(^9\) Their values and their ways of life were rather close to those of many European intellectuals. As a sizable number of German Jewish refugees were teachers and scientists, or professionals and artists, they received considerable assistance from American intellectuals. But the aid of the American intellectual community was not entirely separate from the activities of other refugee aid groups, as many intellectuals were involved in assisting the refugee through various religious organizations and governmental action.

In the pages of the AUFBAU the problem of ethnicity received minimal attention in connection with assimilation of the refugees. The paper apparently did not consider ethnicity to be a vital part of the Americanization process. The reason for this was clearly the result of the refugees' inability to conceive of themselves as an ethnic group. Therefore they were also unable to see that ethnic structures made up

\(^8\)See section on German-Americans, p. 6, esp. footnote 24.

\(^9\)Gordon, pp. 224ff.
the dominant framework of American society as a whole.

The refugees, as the AUFBAU represented them, were much more concerned with the fact that most of them had suffered a loss of status, at least in terms of their European class conceptions. Most refugees in the United States were forced to start at a working class level, performing unskilled manual labor for a livelihood. The chances and opportunities to leave this humble starting position and to move up into the white collar property-owning class were the dominant concerns of the refugees. 10 Any discussion of one's social values and one's position in American society took the most concrete shape in the paper where questions of work were concerned. The refugees thus simply escaped the conflicts they would have faced had they placed themselves in an ethnically divided society. They retained their European point of view that what mattered was simply the social class one belonged to, which in turn would be determined through the work one performed. But did this seemingly simple solution really work? Did it help the refugees to face the reality of their lives as working people?

10See chapter 5.
CHAPTER V
REFUGEES AND THEIR WORKING EXPERIENCE

It was one of the most crucial and cruel coincidences that at a time when thousands of refugees wanted to come to the United States, eager to build up a new life and to obtain a new dignity working their way up the economic and social ladder, the United States was in a severe economic crisis with millions of Americans unemployed. During the depression years prospective immigrants were therefore confronted with an extremely restrictive admission policy, one which kept immigration at a minimum in order to prevent competition for jobs with unemployed Americans. The Roosevelt administration attempted to modify this policy as the plight of the refugees from Europe became more urgent. But restrictionist groups, which argued that refugees should not be admitted in any substantial numbers as they were likely to displace American workers or become public charges, gained more and more support among the population in the 1930s. ¹ Throughout the mid-thirties the government's refugee admission policy remained so restrictive that up to 1938 the German and Austrian immigration quotas had been less than 50% filled.²

Refugee aid organizations, confronted with the rising tide of anti-alien sentiment, made concentrated efforts to refute the unemployment arguments of the restrictionists. Thus Refugees at Work, a statistical study edited by Sophia Robison and sponsored by several

¹David Wyman, Paper Walls, Amherst, Massachusetts 1968, pp. 6/7.
²Ibid., p. 221.
refugee organizations, tried to prove that a considerable number of refugees were not workers but entrepreneurs who succeeded in establishing their own independent businesses within only one or two years of their arrival. These newly founded shops and small factories not only provided jobs for many Americans, but also stimulated the American economy in general and introduced new goods and manufacturing methods to the American scene. Similarly, the National Refugee Service, in its brochure _Dividends from New Americans_, argued that many refugees from central Europe brought with them very special skills as manufacturers of specialties or as highly qualified craftsmen and, far from increasing competition, would actually stimulate the American economy. Other statistical reports emphasized the fact that the number of refugees as a whole was much too small to contribute significantly to the unemployment figure, and, besides, only half of the incoming refugees were potential wage earners at all (the other half were children or older people). Of those who were employable, about 75% were completely self sufficient and only 17% received any assistance from refugee aid organizations.

The AUFBAU joined the defenders of the refugee cause and tried to prove the usefulness of the new immigrants in several ways. Kurt Grossmann in a programmatic article in 1940 discussed the main arguments summarized above, and added that, while only about half of the refugees

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were working, all of them were consumers who would stimulate the economy through their demands for goods.  

6 In several other instances the paper argued that throughout United States history immigration had always been to the nation's benefit in the long run. This thesis was emphasized by numerous biographical accounts of German Jewish businessmen who had come to this country in the 19th century and established thriving businesses in the New World.  

7 Other stories pointed out the important roles of many refugees as pioneers in business or inventors of new products or manufacturing processes.  

8 In 1939 and in 1940 the paper began to publish two regular columns entitled Wir geben Arbeit (We provide jobs) and Wir bauen auf (We are establishing ourselves), where the names of refugee employers and newly founded refugee businesses were listed.  

No way exists to determine whether the efforts of refugee agencies to defend the usefulness of the new immigrants from Europe had any impact upon the attitudes of restrictionist groups. The number of refugees admitted in 1938/39 increased considerably over the previous year, but this fact was probably due solely to the mounting pressure of the crisis in Europe.  

10 The efforts of the AUFBAU itself certainly had

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6 May 17, 40, p. 7; also Aug. 15, 40, p. 12.  
7 May 31, 40, p. 8; Dec 27, 40, p. 8; Apr 11, 41, p. 3.  
8 May 3, 30, p. 16; Nov 1, 40, p. 6; Aug 13, 43, p. 28; Sep 24, 43, p. 32.  
9 Sep 15, 39, p. 26 and following issues irregularly.  
10 Wyman, p. 221.
a minimal impact upon the direction of restrictionist policies. The paper merely reported the success of refugees as businessmen and workers in order to better the morale of its own readers. This was essential because most refugees were confronted with a twofold set of problems after their arrival: first, they had to secure some kind of job in order to be able to maintain themselves. Secondly, after they had found work, mostly in unskilled, low paid positions as domestic servants, door to door salesmen, or menial workers, they would begin to concentrate their efforts on reaching a position where they could make use of their original skills and their European experiences in some way. Both problems, finding a job immediately and working towards reaching one's former social and occupational status, were of central concern to the paper and to the Club, as they tried in many ways to help the refugees in accommodating themselves occupationally.

The most important service for the newly arrived refugees was the German-Jewish Club's employment agency. This office existed in rudimentary form as early as 1934, but it expanded so quickly in the following years that by 1940 it could offer 80 placements to about 100 job-hunting refugees each month. The paper also opened a free advertising column for sales representatives who were looking for new clients. Paper and Club gave general advice about the structure of the job market: what jobs were in demand, where to ask for work, and how

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to apply.\textsuperscript{12}

In its efforts to find jobs for newly arrived refugees, the German-Jewish Club (by then called the New World Club) also cooperated with other refugee agencies, some of which had extensive job finding and job training programs.\textsuperscript{13} The National Refugee Service (NRS), a central refugee aid agency, founded and sponsored by American Jewish organizations in 1939, played a primary role in assisting the new immigrant in this respect. It, for example, found work for almost 10,000 newcomers between 1930 and 1940 (however, almost 7000 refugees were looking for jobs in 1940 alone.\textsuperscript{14} This organization operated throughout the country, cooperating with local committees which regularly engaged in systematic job soliciting efforts.\textsuperscript{15} The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker relief organization, also located jobs for refugees and organized a "man marketing service" which advised refugees on how to go about finding a job, how to fill out applications, and how to behave at interviews.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{12} First issue of salesmen column, Dec 27, 40, p. 4; about doctors: Apr. 1, 39, p. 5; Aug. 15, 39, p. 15; Dec 5, 41, p. 10; Jan 23, 42, p. 4; March 22, 40, p. 10; nurses: Feb 9, 40, p. 5; June 20, 41, p. 12; lawyers and accountants: Feb 23, 40, p. 9; musicians: Oct 15, 39, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{13} Dec 8, 39, pp. 3/4; March 6, 40, p. 10; March 16, 40, p. 5; March 29, 40, p. 14; May 1, 39, p. 4; March 8, 40, p. 6; Nov 22, 40, p. 14; Aug 15, 39, p. 15; Apr. 29, 41, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{14} NRS Annual Report, 1939, p. 8; 1940, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{15} NRS, \textit{Community Service Releases}, I, July 25, 40, CSR; XV, May 21, 42, part 2.

\textsuperscript{16} American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) \textit{Bulletin on Refugees Abroad and at Home}, No. 13, Dec 9, 42.
The publications of these refugee aid agencies provide considerable insight into factors influencing unemployment among refugees. The main problem lay in the fact that about two thirds of all adult male refugees from Europe had formerly worked in some kind of white collar position. Among German and Austrian refugees, the percentage of people whose skills were usually of little use to them in the United States was likely to be even higher. Only the few skilled workers, and especially the craftsmen, had no difficulties in finding jobs and accommodated to the economic situation rather quickly. Women also generally had a much better chance of immediate employment than men. In many cases they were the only supporters of their families for a while, working as domestic servants, governesses, or cooks. Age was another important factor influencing the chances of employment. Male refugees over 45 years were among the most disadvantaged job seekers. As the average age of refugees increased steadily from 1939 throughout the war, this became a serious problem for all refugee aid agencies, a problem which was only temporarily solved through the war boom.

The AUFBAU's columns only very indirectly reflect these facts about the structure of unemployment among refugees. It is therefore difficult to derive much of a picture of the employment conditions of most readers from the paper itself. But, from the Club activities and the advertisements and announcements in the paper, one can conclude that

17 NRS Annual Report, 1939, p. 6.
19 NRS Annual Report, 1940, p. 12; 1941, p. 7; 1942, p. 10.
many of its readers must have been professionals, semi-professionals, and small business-people. Few teachers and intellectuals seem to have joined the German-Jewish Club.

As most of these occupational groups had a relatively low transferability of skills, they needed considerable and systematic assistance by refugee aid organizations to readjust themselves occupationally. The AUFBAU tried to share this burden with the major agencies. The paper printed numerous articles, letters, and analyses concerning (1) the adjustment and assimilation of professionals; (2) the establishment of independent refugee businesses; and (3) the retraining and resettlement of refugees. Each of these three categories merits careful analysis.

(1) Professionals and semi-professionals usually had a good chance to secure employment in their former kind of position once institutional obstacles were overcome and the refugees had acquired some knowledge of their field in the United States. The paper therefore saw no need for complete retraining for a different occupation. The AUFBAU envisioned its main task as providing information about the general situation in professional fields, specifically the legal restrictions concerning practicing doctors, nurses, lawyers, and public accountants.20

The German-Jewish Club organized a number of special subsections which were specifically concerned with the occupational readjustment of several groups of professionals. By 1941 there was a doctor's group, as well as groups for lawyers, teachers, and laboratory assistants;

20 See Footnote 12.
all of these published their activities regularly in the paper.  

Paper and Club devoted more space and interest to professionals than to any other occupational group, although the majority of the AUFBAU readers definitely did not belong to this category. Furthermore, although professionals comprised only a minority among refugees as a whole, other refugee aid organizations centered many of their activities around this group as well. The National Refugee Service, for example, organized special committees to aid emigré rabbis, musicians, and physicians. Affiliated organizations existed for displaced scholars and social workers. The American Friends Service Committee made special efforts to help intellectuals, especially teachers and research scientists.

There are a number of reasons why the various institutions cared so much about intellectuals and professionals. First of all, this group definitely needed special assistance to adjust occupationally; and, as most refugee professionals were highly specialized, a complete retraining would have been a waste of their skills. On the other hand, these refugees obviously represented a very desirable class of immigrants. Many refugees clearly came from the intellectual elites of their home countries, and many supporters of refugees, as well as United States officials, felt that every possible move should be made

21 Weekly (doctors) or monthly or irregularly (others) in the advertisement section of the paper.

22 Davie, pp. 134/135. For a survey on professional organizations see Lyman White, 300,000 New Americans, New York, 1957, p. 400.

23 AFSC, Bulletin No. 4, Jan 20, 42; No. 13, Dec 9, 42;
to integrate them into American academic and professional life.

(2) The establishment of independent businesses was also an important part of the paper's educational efforts to promote refugee adjustment. Sophia Robison's *Refugees at Work* indicates that most of the businesses founded and operated by refugees in the New York City area were small scale enterprises. Many were small retail stores in the Midtown and upper West Side sections of Manhattan. Some refugees had succeeded in transferring larger amounts of money before they had left Germany, and had started manufacturing on a larger scale. Others used international connections they had established in Europe to help build import or export businesses. A great number of enterprises catered mostly to refugees: specialty stores, groceries, restaurants, and even some hotels. Others introduced goods into the American market that had previously been unknown or had to be imported from Europe, like leather products or harmonicas and other musical instruments. Other businesses, such as those in the garment industry, faced few difficulties adjusting to American market conditions.

The AUFBAU reflected the rapid development of an ethnic group of refugee businesses in its announcements and advertisements of newly opened refugee ventures that were, for the most part catering mainly to other refugees.

(3) Yet for countless new immigrants who had formerly been employed as managers, bank clerks, or marketing experts, no easy way existed for

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24 Robison, p. 40, p. 50; *Dividends from New Americans*, pp. 4/5.

25 Ibid., pp. 41-52.
fitting into the American economic system. Because many of them were still working in low paid menial jobs in 1941, the National Refugee Service decided to retrain some of them completely for jobs as skilled laborers or craftsmen in job categories that were badly needed by some industries. Retraining courses were first held in New York; but soon afterwards similar programs were started in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and many other cities. The schooling, which was free, was usually held at local trade schools. It lasted from four weeks (for retraining as domestics) up to six months and longer (for dental technicians and upholstering, for example). Most successful were the courses held in power sewing machine operating, like earlier generations of Jewish immigrants, refugees were thus often employed in the garment industry. The courses in furniture finishing and upholstering promised a stable and rather high income.  

The AUFBAU greatly approved of the NRS retraining program and it sponsored similar courses in 1943. Both the paper and the Club put strong emphasis on the permanent employment that retraining in such skills as upholstery, jewelry, or furniture finishing promised. They emphasized these kinds of courses in their information about retraining and were less attracted by the get-rich-quick philosophy that apparently underlay the NRS sewing machine or welding courses.  

Much more enthusiastically welcomed by the paper were the efforts of the National Refugee Service and many other aid agencies to relocate

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26 NRS, CSR, Nos. 7, 9, 12, 15, 17, 22.

27 AU May 8, 42, p. 5; Jan 22, 43, p. 20.
refugees from New York City into other parts of the country. In numerous success stories by and about resettlers the paper conveyed to its readers that through relocation the refugee gained the chance to find a job where his European skills and experience would be of some use and where he would consequently soon find himself in a permanent and secure position.28

This impression stood in some contrast to the results of the resettlement process of most refugees. As the publications of the various agencies engaged in resettlement work point out, more than a mere geographical relocation of the refugees and their families was needed to make resettlement a success. In most cases the chosen communities had to be matched carefully with the refugees' wishes, and in many cases it was not easy to secure jobs for resettled refugees. Thus the critical situation of many refugees was not alleviated merely by relocation. As the success of the NRS retraining courses in many cities outside New York shows, retraining was something many refugees had to go through in addition to resettlement.

Indirectly, the paper reflected these complications in numerous stories about refugees who had (re)settled on the West Coast. The reader learned how they earned their living as taxi-cab drivers, dog groomers, van movers, or restaurant cooks. In these stories about life on the Pacific Coast it never became entirely clear for what reason former middle class people would turn to such unusual occupations.29

28July 21, 44, p. 14; Oct 13, 44, p. 15; Oct 20, 41, p. 27; Feb 20, 42, p. 15; Dec 11, 42, p. 15.

29July 2, 43, p. 13; March 5, 43, p. 14; Oct 2, 43, p. 15.
Was it the lack of alternatives that made an actor into a cab driver, or was it on the contrary the promise of a high salary and the challenge to do something different that made former lawyers work in the shipyards and housewives into professional cooks? The reports from West Coast refugees in the AUFBAU give the impression that almost all readers liked their new jobs but none of them expected a permanent new position from it.

The only instance in which retraining and resettlement were definitely and systematically used for attaining some permanency for the refugees was through the introduction of some newcomers to farming. The Jewish Agricultural Society of the United States took a decided interest in resettling refugees from central Europe to the American countryside, in training them in farming, and in helping them establish their own farms. The AUFBAU began to publicize the activities of this organization as early as 1938, consistently showing them in a very favorable light. In 1940 the paper even published a regular column, *der Landwirt* (the farmer), for some time. The paper pointed out to its almost exclusively urban readers how formerly depressed, unemployed, and isolated urban businessmen had found material and spiritual independence in farming, thus fulfilling a part of the American dream from which Jews had usually been excluded. As a whole, however, the idea of resettling on farms was not too attractive to most refugees; only 2500 of them had

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30 Oct. 13, 44, p. 44; May 6, 43, p. 12.

31 Feb 22, 40, p. 11; Aug 9, 40, p. 3.

32 Sep. 1, 39, p. 9; Feb 9, 40, p. 1; July 26, 40, p. 2; Apr. 11, 41, p. 3.
chosen to live on farms by 1941.  

Refugees who became farmers, the AUFBAU suggested, truly conquered their new home country through hard work and literally succeeded in building up a new existence and future with their own hands. Whether this was true also for the many other immigrants who had to perform less dignifying work is highly doubtful. The refugees' own stories about their experiences do not tell much about their relationship to their work. Most of these stories reflected the thoughts of inexperienced newcomers who were more excited by the strengeeness of Americans and the American way of life than with the job itself, which usually offered few original experiences. Identification with their work as a fulfilling and dignifying experience was voiced only by refugees who had gone through retraining courses or by those who worked in the defense industries.

Rather striking was the lack in all these accounts of any information or opinions about American fellow workers. Apparently, for most refugees working was an isolated rather than a socializing (or Americanizing) experience, a fact underlined by the publications of the American Friends Service Committee. Language difficulties were an important part of this deplorable isolation. In many cases American

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33White, p. 55.

34Column Crosstown starts May 1, 39, and appears regularly for 6 months; also Feb 9, 40, p. 10; March 22, 40, p. 5; June 28, 40, p. 11; Jan 3, 41, p. 18; March 22, 40, p. 16.

35Aug 8, 41, p. 19; Oct. 2, 42, p. 15; Nov. 21, 41, p. 8; March 20, 42, p. 32.

36Esp. AFSC, Bulletin, No. 14, May 12, 43.
trade unions refused to admit refugees, which prohibited not only occupational adjustment but probably social contacts as well.\textsuperscript{37}

The AUFBAU made conscious attempts to alleviate this situation for the working refugees. In spring 1940 Siegfried Aufhäuser, notable German emigré labor expert and member of the Social Democratic party, began to write a regular column, \textit{Review of Labor}, where the peculiarities of the American trade union system and labor legislation as it applied to the refugees were discussed. Aufhäuser also published encouraging reports about refugees who had joined or organized union locals successfully.\textsuperscript{38}

But these signs of emancipation and structural assimilation of the refugees as workers were apparently rare. Many middle class refugees who had to work in blue collar jobs before and during the war were probably not interested in labor organization at all. They did not wish to give their working class positions the look of permanency. Many refugees also felt a genuine frustration as dependency on institutional aid and a general economic and psychological insecurity prevailed in their lives. Even the optimistic AUFBAU had to face these somber realities from time to time. Especially in the 1930s and the early 40s the paper had frequently to discuss the generally depressed state of mind of the immigrants. A number of refugees who felt that

\textsuperscript{37}Feb 9, 40, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{38}March 7, 41, p. 5; Nov 1, 40, p. 8; Nov 22, 40, p. 14; Feb 9, 40, p. 2 are some early examples.
they were able no longer to face the hardships of social readjustment 
even committed suicide, the paper reported.39

39The most realistic accounts about the individual psychological 
difficulties most refugees had in readjusting to America are given in 
the AFSC Bulletins, esp. Nos. 7 (March 10, 42), 8 (May 18, 42), 13 
(Dec 9, 42), 14 (May 12, 43), 15 (June 9, 43); also AU Aug 22, 41, p. 7; 
Nov 29, 41, p. 18; Feb 9, 40. p. 2.
CHAPTER VI

PATTERNS OF REFUGEE SETTLEMENT: CITIES AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

A very real dilemma that faced the AUFBAU and most refugee organizations arose from the fact that about half of the refugees chose to stay in New York, their port of entry. The city attracted them mainly because of its European way of life. Numerous ethnic groups that lived there offered a halfway station to Americanization for immigrants from many parts of Europe. On the other hand, employment possibilities and the general outlook for assimilation to the American social system were in many ways extremely unfavorable in New York City. Still, many refugees stubbornly refused to move for fear of being completely isolated elsewhere and deprived of any possibility of maintaining contacts with fellow immi;

The AUFBAU itself reflected this dilemma very acutely, as the vast majority of its readers lived in New York City. Extensive parts of the paper were devoted to life in New York, its enjoyments and problems.

Newly arrived refugees from Germany were usually pleasantly overwhelmed by New York's glittering facade and its seemingly unlimited possibilities for the newcomer. Suddenly the depressed and dreary life in the urban centers of Europe were only bad memories and America's shiny cities were the overwhelming reality. As one refugee child said: "There are so many lights, like a birthday cake, red, blue, yellow, and

1Maurice Davie, Refugees in America, New York, 1947, p. 80.


3Feb 7, 41, p. 7; Jan 35, p. 5.
white, and they burn all night and nobody is afraid the airplane will come.4

As the AUFBAU was steadily read by more and more immigrants who established themselves in New York permanently, the paper and also the German Jewish Club developed an almost scientific interest in the ways the city functioned: its political system, its history, and its hidden beauties. In articles about important local politicians such as Fiorello LaGuardia, Robert F. Wagner, and Stanley Isaacs (borough president of Manhattan). The AUFBAU tried to evoke some political identification with New York among its readers.5 In regular columns entitled "New Yorker Notizbuch" (New Yorker Notebook), "Crosstown," and "Girl about Town," AUFBAU journalists perceptively recorded their observations about the varied ways of life in the city.6

From summer 1941 on throughout the war, AUFBAU readers received suggestions for exploring the city and its surroundings on their own in trips to New York's different neighborhoods and landmarks.7 The history of New York was the topic of an extensive lecture program that the German-Jewish Club started in 1941 and which remained a big success throughout the war. It offered lectures and guided tours through the

5Dec 29, 40, p. 1; Oct 32, 41, p. 6; Dec 27, 40, p. 5.
6"Crosstown": Summer and Fall 1939; "New Yorker Notizbuch," throughout the paper, starting 1938; "Girl about Town," irregularly after Dec 1941.
7"Within 20 miles" (Hans Hacker) appears regularly except during the Winter.
city to all Club members. 8

The AUFBAU certainly did its best to create among the refugees a sense of conscious identification with this rather untypical American city. This was of special importance to the many refugees in New York who lived a rather isolated existence. By 1939 refugees from Austria and Germany had settled in such large numbers in the city that they formed something like an autonomous ethnic subculture there. In certain sections of the city, especially in Washington Heights, they established gathering points (the cafes on the upper West side) and they had their own newspaper (the AUFBAU). 9 But the paper looked on these special forms of New Yorkization with mixed feelings. The development of a little Berlin or Vienna did not seem to promote the much heralded Americanization of the refugee. The paper therefore either consistently ignored many parts of this refugee ethnicity or explicitly discouraged its readers from becoming part of it. 10

But much of the city's glamour and diversity was not accessible at all to the refugees. For many of them the city as a whole was too large, too complicated, and too fast moving and competitive. As several stories in the paper testify, many refugees found it almost impossible to develop permanency and security in New York City. But worst of all, in the AUFBAU's opinion, was the conviction that staying there prevented assimilation to the American way of life for many

8 "This is your city" starts in Nov. 1940.
10 Dec 27, 40, pp. 3/4; Nov 15, 39, p. 20.
refugees. This reasoning clearly points towards a somewhat schizophrenic attitude on the part of the paper. On the one hand, most of its readers lived in New York and apparently appreciated this in many ways and succeeded in developing personal ties to the city. On the other hand, the paper saw its efforts to Americanize the refugees imperiled by the segregation and isolation that many refugees experienced there.

The magic pull of New York was a problem not only for the AUFBAU, but almost all refugee agencies were confronted with it as well. In 1939 the National Refugee Service began to organize a large scale systematic resettlement program. It was based on the idea that, although many refugees lived in New York and wanted to settle there, the chances of achieving any degree of social and economic stability there were minimal for many of them, as were their general prospects for becoming Americanized. The National Refugee Service wanted to offer the new immigrants from Europe an alternative way of settlement which would bring them better prospects of integration. More than 800 local resettlement centers in cities throughout the country were therefore developed by the NRS. These groups consisted mainly of representatives of the local Jewish communities. Each of them pledged to take care of a certain number of newly arrived refugees each year; find jobs for them and provide housing and financial assistance if necessary. The central agency tried to match the wishes and needs of each community carefully with those of the refugees.

Resettlement centers were distributed

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11 July 37, p. 6; March 8, 40, p. 6.

12 White, op. cit., Ch. XII passim.
rather evenly throughout the country; most of them were located in smaller towns or middle sized cities. The Southern states were slightly underrepresented; the North Eastern and North Central States were somewhat favored as resettlement areas. 

But the program met considerable resistance from refugees who, once settled in New York, were unwilling to move again to places they had never heard of. During the peak years of immigration, from 1939 to 1941, the National Refugee Service made participation in the resettlement program mandatory for all immigrants who wanted to use the migration services of the NRS. Still, only about 11% of all refugees from Europe who came at that time were resettled outside New York City.

For most of those who did participate, the program seemed to work rather well in opening viable alternatives to life in New York City. Eventual difficulties arose mainly from the contradictory ideology on which the NRS based its activities. The agency's foremost goal was to provide the refugee with a chance to assimilate to American society. Yet it also wanted to make every effort to preserve the immigrant's ties to his Jewish heritage. This led to conflicts with some Jewish communities. Many refugees did not fit into the often overly narrow restrictions that the local committees set for selecting immigrants; older people or orthodox Jews were especially unlikely to be welcomed by many communities. Sometimes resettlement committees even refused to take any more resettlers. In theory, the National Refugee Service also wanted to

\[\text{\textsuperscript{13}}\text{NRS, Annual Report 1939, p. 18.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{14}}\text{White, op. cit., pp. 315-317, p. 332.}\]
grant the immigrant a genuine choice of where to go; in practice, however, it had to resort to rather coercive measures to make the resettlement program work at all.  

One major problem, which was probably unavoidable in such a large scale enterprise, was the often impersonal nature of the National Refugee Service's assistance. This becomes clear by contrasting NRS efficiency with the more personalized, small scale efforts of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) to resettle refugees throughout the country. The AFSC had very limited financial means and operated on a small and rather selective basis. For the few refugees it could take care of, it was nevertheless very helpful. In general its activities were not geared towards any systematic relocation or retraining plan. Instead, personalized services and counseling were emphasized. Most effective and appreciated by AUFB AU readers seemed to have been the AFSC Americanization hostels for newly arrived immigrants and the summer vacation programs organized for tired refugee New Yorkers. In New York and Philadelphia the Friends also made decided efforts to bring refugees and Americans together for social events. In some cases American host families took care of refugees on an individual basis until the newcomers had adjusted themselves fully.

In its own way the AUFB AU too tried to play an active part in the resettlement activities. Besides propagandizing the resettlement idea

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17 AFSC Bulletins, Nos. 1, 4, 7, 13, 14, 16, 18.
and informing readers about the activities of NRS and AFSC, it published a resettlement column "Soll ich in den Westen gehen?" (shall I go West?). Here a reader from Oregon, himself a resettled refugee answered frequently asked questions about resettlement on the West Coast.18 Many individual articles, most of them printed in the Westkuste (West Coast) pages, provided AUFBAU readers with general information about life at the other end of the United States.19 But neither paper nor Club ever attempted to initiate any organized resettlement activities on their own. Difficult questions or requests for further aid were usually referred to the local NRS committees, Jewish organizations, or local Chambers of Commerce.

At least as important as factual accounts of resettlement were the enthusiastic reports of refugees who had resettled successfully. Compared to the sophisticated articles about life in New York, these stories read like naive tales from a far away wonderland, even though they came from places only a few hours from the city. Usually these accounts were too rose-tinted to give any clear picture of what the American hinterland was really like. Resettlers preferred to stress the general impression that anybody could find a better life almost anywhere in the country outside New York. For most of these happy immigrants better job opportunities and more social contacts with Americans had almost automatically resulted from resettlement. Only after moving away from New York City could the refugee face the real

18 Starts in Sep 1940s and continues irregularly every 2 to 4 weeks.

19 "West Coast": Feb 20, 42, p. 15; Dec 11, 42, p. 15; Aug 7, 42, p. 15; July 7, 43, p. 15; July 7, 43, p. 14; other places: Nov 19, 23, p. 26; Nov. 26, p. 25 (Chicago); Dec 3, 43, p. 29 (Wisconsin); Jan 28, 44, p. 24; Feb. 4, 44, p. 30 (Philadelphia).
challenges of life in America and make a total break with his European past, these readers stated.

Some characteristics of American small town life stood out particularly in all these enthusiastic articles. Newly arrived refugees were often helped on a very personal basis by local Jewish organizations. They were not treated as charity recipients, but as newcomers who were given a chance to help themselves to a certain extent. For many immigrants, socialization and the establishment of personal relationships with other Americans became possible for the first time since they had arrived in America.

The great physical comfort of most refugees who had moved away from the urban areas was also discernable from these reports. The whole pace of life was more modest in the country, and the physical and social structure of the new environment easily became familiar and remained unchanged. This gave life in the hinterland the look of permanency, a look which was enhanced through a general feeling of closeness to nature.

This perception of a paradise-like physical environment was especially stressed by those refugees who had settled on the California coast. But until 1942 California resettlers were confronted with the sharp contrast between the abundance of nature and the depressed economic circumstances in which most of them found themselves. Life in California, the AUFBAU reader could learn, was an odd mixture of

20 Dec 5, 41, p. 40; Dec 11, 42, p. 15.

21 March 38, pp. 6/7; Feb 20, 42, p. 15.
some of the worst evils of urban life and the best advantages of the countryside.

Readers from California, therefore, usually did not show the usual enthusiasm for resettlement. The somewhat gloomy tone of most articles from the West Coast became even stronger during 1942 when stringent curfew laws were imposed on most refugees who lived there. Enemy aliens (and Japanese Americans) had to stay in their homes from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. every day and were not allowed to go more than five miles beyond their homes at all. This measure heightened the isolation of many refugees from each other, a problem that had plagued some of the new immigrants there before.

But by 1943, when the curfew was abolished, the West Coast quickly acquired the golden colored image of the land of opportunity in the pages of the AUFB AU. The war boom on the Pacific created plenty of well paid jobs for the refugees and from 1943 on, West Coast readers definitely urged easterners to move west. Only a few readers wondered what would happen to them when the war boom was over and their jobs gone. Would a new depression haunt the golden west, or would the refugees soon acquire a stable middle class position that would shelter them from a new uprooting experience?

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22 Sep 4, 40, p. 21; Nov 14, 41, p. 114; Nov 28, 41, p. 15 May 17, 42, p. 17

23 Dec 19, 41, p. 7; Jan 9, 42, p. 16; Feb 6, 42, p. 15; Feb 13, 42, p. 1; Mar 13, 42, p. 3; Apr 3, 42, p. 17; Apr 17, 42, p. 17, Radkau, p. 109

24 Jan 1, 43, p. 5.


26 Apr 14, 44, p. 19.
CHAPTER VII
WOMEN, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND THE CHANGE IN FAMILY STRUCTURE

Among the refugees as a group, women and children held a special position. In absolute numbers they constituted a majority, but as a rule they were confronted with more than the usual amount of changes and conflicting images about their social positions.\(^1\) The paper reflected an awareness of these special problems in that it allocated definite space to the discussion of issues facing women and children.

Women, as the AUFBAU portrayed them, could clearly be divided into three different groups which appeared in different parts of the paper and seemingly had nothing to do with each other. In the first pages the reader found articles about women who were nationally known because of their political positions or their fame as movie-stars, artists, or musicians. In the back pages of the AUFBAU, problems in the lives of refugee women formed the subject of discussion in many articles. Finally, a synthetic portrait of "the American woman" was attempted on the special page "Für die Frau" (for women).

The celebrities among American women usually appeared as distant stars whose lives had no direct impact upon the everyday routine of the female AUFBAU reader. They served as far off, idolized models. Women engaged in political activities were also seen as spokespersons for an otherwise silent majority. Many of them were representatives or at least active supporters of the refugees. In this role they appealed

to the general public as crusaders for the refugees' plight. Eleanor Roosevelt and Dorothy Thompson were among the most active political women portrayed in the AUFBAU. Thomas Mann's daughter, Erika, played an important role as a representative of the intellectual migration.  

A number of women were presented by the AUFBAU as foremost representatives of the American Jewish community, including Lillian Wald, Bella Spewack, and Rachel Vixmann.  

Usually these women were described and discussed no differently than men. The assessment of their achievements and importance rested exclusively on political factors. Movie-stars and female artists were even more out of touch with the life of the average AUFBAU reader than the professional women. Their appeal usually had no political flavor (emigré actresses like Marlene Dietrich and Louise Rainer were exceptions).  

They were mostly admired as glamorous inhabitants of the far away fairy-tale world in Hollywood. The glorification of these beauty queens should not have been new to most AUFBAU readers. In this respect the culture of the Weimar Republic had already been thoroughly Americanized.

In the back pages of the AUFBAU a distinctly different image of women emerged from stories about the everyday life of female refugees. These narratives showed that in many ways their process of adjustment was harder than that of most men. Many women had only known relatively

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2 Aug. 30, 40, p. 20; July 5, 40, p. 3; May 31, 40, p. 20; Dec 18, 43, p. 24.

3 July 5, 40, p. 3; May 31, 40, p. 20; Oct 17, 41, p. 24.

4 March 1, 40, p. 4.
carefree lives as middle-class housewives in Europe. They had never held paid jobs, nor had they received any practical training. While the husband supported the family, housekeeping and child rearing were considered to be the only appropriate tasks for married women; most of them even had domestic servants to help with this.

The critical financial situation facing the refugees upon their arrival in the United States forced most families to change this order in basic ways. In a majority of cases both husband and wife had to find jobs in order to be able to support the family. Often enough women found work as domestic servants much sooner than their over qualified husbands.\(^5\) Other women became saleswomen, typists, or factory-workers.\(^6\) Those who had learned trades usually found jobs rather easily as tailors, milliners, or hairdressers.\(^7\) Others made use of the opportunities to acquire skills as seamstresses, bakers, or beauticians, with the help of the National Refugee Service.\(^8\) A few even found chances to open businesses of their own.\(^9\) The new importance of women as supporters of the family created difficult problems for refugee husbands and fathers because of the resulting decline in their own position. The AUFBAU, however, did not discuss this issue, but focused


\(^6\) Apr. 18, 41, p. 12; Sep. 26, 41, p. 12.

\(^7\) Nov 22, 40, p. 14.

\(^8\) National Refugee Service, Community Service Releases: Employment and Retraining, Nos. 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 22 (February-November 1941).

\(^9\) This can be learned from the numerous advertisements in the AUFBAU for beauty parlors, tailors, and other businesses run by refugee women.
on the difficulties women had in adapting to their changed roles.

The pages of the AUFBAU do not make it entirely clear how well women adjusted to their new position as wage earners. In the pre-war years most of them looked upon themselves as overworked housewives and mothers engaged in an heroic struggle to keep the family financially independent and emotionally stable. A positive relationship to the paid work they did was hardly possible under such overwhelming pressures. 10

Secondary sources place a somewhat different emphasis on the refugee women's changed role. Compared to the difficulties most male refugees had in adjusting to a status loss, their wives showed outstanding social mobility. Women usually had much more willpower in overcoming initial difficulties and they held low status jobs without fear of losing their personal dignity. Most of them also showed considerable inventiveness and talent for improvisation in changing from the ways the family had functioned traditionally. 11

But these changing attitudes were reflected in a limited way in the innumerable articles that appeared on household organization and fashion matters in the AUFBAU's women's pages. These parts of the paper suggested that Americanization for the refugee woman meant, primarily, a reorganization of the household, a change of the family's


eating habits, and a different way of dressing. What made the American woman different from the refugee housewife, in these pages, was not so much her different position as a wage earner, but merely her appearance as a perfect hostess, up to date in fashion matters, and a competent manager of household and family.

The AUFBAU's idea of American womanhood changed decisively during the war years. Then women, as well as children and men, were all equally engaged in the war effort. The anti-fascist fight reached even the last country kitchen. For the AUFBAU this meant that women, like everyone else, were seen in a larger social and political context, rather than as something special and separate. Refugee housewives in particular were encouraged to find a job or to volunteer for the Civil Defense or the Red Cross. If they wanted to stay with their families, they were advised by the paper to take care of children of mothers who were working. Even the food and fashion columns took on a new shape. Like all American women, AUFBAU readers received extensive advice concerning the saving of food and other materials; every empty can was a bullet against Hitler, the paper reminded its readers. Fashion was not abolished, but it expressed the spirit of the times. Women wore

12 Women's page starts in Nov. 1940, and contains regular columns about fashion and household organization. Table manners in U.S. are discussed in Dec. 4, 42, p. 11.

13 May 17, 40, p. 10.

14 July 14, 42, p. 17; Jan. 8, 42, p.16; Jan 22, 43, p. 9.


16 Oct 9, 42, p. 21; Oct. 23, 42, p. 21; Nov. 6, 42, p. 11.
uniform-like garments and the AUFBAU appropriately discussed the question of how to dress for war bond drives.  

During the war, women workers became the focus of attention, as suddenly they were a badly needed addition to the work force; a host of well paid factory jobs opened to them. Women began to unionize and demand equal pay for equal work. Some women, the AUFBAU reported, even took over the businesses of their husbands while the latter went into the Army. Others did not want to confine themselves to work on the homefront and joined the Women's Army Corps. The achievements and new roles of these women were generally understood to be patriotic contributions to the war effort of the Nations.

Occasionally, however, the AUFBAU's women editors celebrated the basic changes in attitudes and roles of American as well as refugee women. They admitted that, in their view, refugee women especially had encountered a fundamentally new view of their own femininity that was shaped by the changing position of women in the United States during the Depression and war years. The beautiful but idle housewife was no longer a desirable image for women, the paper stated with satisfaction; instead, the uncomplicated, practical, hard working "girl" was what every woman wanted to be. Every woman held a job; even housewives

17 May 1, 42, p. 16, p. 22; Aug 7, 42, p. 18.


19 Aug. 4, 44, p. 18; Lingeman, p. 155/156.

20 Jan 29, 43, p. 22; Aug 22, 43, p. 17.
considered themselves as having a regular profession.\(^{21}\)

The recognition of basic changes in the role of women in America was signalled even more clearly in the increasing prominence of women professionals in the paper. In 1943 the AUFBAU portrayed a number of important women journalists in a regular series. Helen Gahagan, Claire Boothe Luce, and Bette Davis were other prominent women whose achievements were discussed in the paper.\(^{22}\) The notable difference between these articles and the traditional coverage of female politicians was that women were no longer seen as sexless political figures, but as foremost representatives of their own sex.

This development of an independent position for most women was a clear danger to true American womanhood, warned Professor Eric Mosse in comments made in the late 1943 to the students of Hunter College. Without adverse comment, the AUFBAU recorded his opinions on the dangers of an increasing masculinity of women in wartime America.\(^{23}\) But any such fears were decidedly premature, as the wartime change in the position of refugee women turned out to be rather temporary in nature. The AUFBAU observed accurately that in 1944 a considerable number of women were among the first workers to be dismissed as the war boom slowed; the differences between men's and women's wages also increased as the economy eased.\(^{24}\)

\(^{21}\) Nov. 21, 41, p. 3; Feb. 19, 43, p. 17.

\(^{22}\) Aug. 6, 43, p. 19; July 28, 44, p. 19; Journalist series starts July 43 and ends in Oct 43.

\(^{23}\) Nov. 19, 43, p. 17.

\(^{24}\) Aug. 25, 44, p. 19.
What was the overall perspective of the women refugees then? Women's page editor Vera Craener offered a rather pragmatic assessment of the situation in December 1944. She contended that refugee women were probably the class of refugees for whom life had changed most radically through the emigration experience. But, although their self-reliance and their self-confidence had increased in most cases, they saw no need to reassess their position as women in any fundamental way. They were busy enough balancing their basic needs with the demands of their families, while trying to fit into the somewhat different role of the American woman.\(^{25}\)

If the changes that affected women were only partly of a basic nature, the different position of children in this country certainly affected the whole structure of refugee families in a fundamental way. Differences between the old and the new world in the upbringing of children touched on many fundamental issues of assimilation and acculturation of refugee families.

Children who had reached the United States together with their parents (this became more and more rare during the war years) were usually a heavy burden on their families. As many youngsters had gone through rather traumatic experiences in Europe, many needed special care in being introduced to the different ways of life in the new homecountry.\(^{26}\) Yet professional help was generally not available to them, and even the parents themselves were usually unable to devote


\(^{26}\)Sep. 19, 41, p. 19; July 10, 42, p. 32.
much time to their children. They had to earn a living and often enough they were forced to place their children in institutions or with foster parents, at least for some time after their arrival. 27

Financial need was among the main problems of families with children. The German-Jewish Club's social worker therefore often received requests for advice from refugee youths who did not know how to deal with the social isolation that stemmed from the fact that most of them did not have enough money to associate freely with their American peers. They could not go out to the movies, invite girls out for dates, or go to summer camp like their friends did. 28

Often the desire to achieve a more independent financial position, as well as the pressing economic problems of the parents, caused refugee teenagers to leave school prematurely and take work as unskilled laborers. Especially during the war years, when such jobs were easily available and well paid, the AUFBAU repeatedly urged refugee parents to do everything possible to provide their children with a good education. 29

News about the increasing lack of discipline in schools and the rapid rise of juvenile delinquency throughout the country were alarming signs to the paper that pointed to a lack of parental supervision and a decaying family order in general. 30

27 May 24, 40, p. 9.
28 May 16, 40, p. 5; Apr. 19, 40, p. 17.
29 Dec 8, 39, p. 11; Oct 25, 40, p. 10; Feb 38, p. 11; Feb 37, p. 2; Apr. 11, 41, p. 5; Sep. 22, 43, p. 16.
30 Jan. 2, 43, p. 4; Dec 14, 43, p. 21; Dec. 25, 43, p. 4; Lingeman, pp. 87-89; Polenberg, pp. 149/150.
The most significant problem in relation to the role of refugee children, however, seems to have originated from different trends. In most cases the children proved to be more quickly and easily Americanized than their parents. They established a basis for the future cultural and structural assimilation of the refugees. Thus the AUFBAU, as well as secondary sources, portrayed refugee children as the most generally successful group of refugees. They were thankful recipients of all charitable efforts; they did not criticize much or complain about their new country. They did not shut themselves off, but learned the language quickly and associated freely with other American children. Obviously they also did not take jobs away from Americans and consequently it hurt nobody to point out the achievements of these young future Americans. The AUFBAU published innumerable patriotic hymns, speeches, and articles by and about refugee children. Children were symbols of a better future.

But the exemplary adjustment and the near-perfect assimilation of their children posed serious problems for most refugee parents. Many of the difficulties with overly independent children and teenagers thus attained a larger social dimension. Was it acceptable for half grown youths to go out on their own, or to find their own jobs? Could children really be sent away alone to go to summer camp? The social worker who discussed these problems in the paper tried to point out that such independence of children was a natural thing, since in America young

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31 Feb 38, p. 11; Oct 25, 40, p. 10; Davie Ch. XIII passim.
32 Dec. 13, 40, p. 3; Dec 29, 39, pp. 1/2; Sep. 6, 40, p. 2.
people enjoyed considerable freedom from parental authority from an early age on. Moreover, the special situation of most refugee families forced many youths to stand on their own feet. Often they turned out to be the main help for the parent's adjustment, thus changing the pattern of responsibility and authority in the family.\footnote{Oct 25, 41, p. 10; Dec. 8, 39, p. 11.}

This was seen as such a serious problem to many AUFBAU readers that the German-Jewish Club organized a conference on the problems and position of young refugees. The problems of course were more those of the parents than those of the youngsters themselves.\footnote{May 23, 41, p. 4; May 30, 41, p. 4.} The AUFBAU does not discuss the results of this meeting, but one can presume that the refugees took the opportunity to compare some of the basically different patterns that shaped family life in Germany and in the United States. While the European middle class family was a tightly knit unit that provided not only protection and emotional warmth for the children, but also a great part of their education, the refugees found a largely professionalized educational system in the United States. Public schools and other institutions took care of all school-age children from morning to night. And youngsters were encouraged to spend their leisure time with people their own age, joining various clubs for sports or social activities. The idea that children were educated mainly by a professional class of educators and their own peers must have been difficult to accept for many European parents since it diminished their role as the major authorities in the education of
their children. 35

In an intriguing effort to cope with these very problems, the Club founded its own youth group within the German-Jewish Club. Presumably this presented an answer in a twofold way. Young people had their own independent organization, and the idea of American peer education was followed in principle. All activities of this youth group, however remained under the auspices of the adult organization with its rather solid European outlook on education and culture. 36

The family situation of the refugees reflected the overall dilemma of the new immigrants. They tried to avoid all conspicuousness and, rejecting the slow path of Americanization that previous generations of immigrants had taken, they tried to appear American from their first day on. But this deliberate attempt to look and behave as American as possible led to a distortion of the refugees' image of themselves. In actuality, the new immigrants quite often showed signs of definite ethnic behavior in their manners and in their employment and settlement patterns. But they themselves did not recognize the fact that in many ways they were not so different from previous groups of immigrants. In some instances the AUFBAU openly criticized the behavior of many refugees as non-American. Problems relating to the different understanding of social and family life among refugees were also frankly discussed at times. But other factors pointing toward an ethnic pattern of assimila-

35 Davie, pp. 147/8.

36 Oct. 31, 42, p. 5 (group is founded); Feb 20, 42, p. 13 (first issues of youth page); June 2, 42, p. 15.
tion, such as the preferences for certain professions and settlement regions, were largely ignored or only brought up in connection with general economic questions. Such limited perspectives and distortions determined not only the perception refugees had of themselves, but also their view of America and American society.
PART II.  THE REFUGEES LOOK AT AMERICA
CHAPTER VIII
AUFBAU AND THE AMERICAN POLITICAL ORDER

For most refugees the encounter with America as a new home country was individual and deeply emotional. In story after story about the initial impressions of newly arrived refugees, the smiling face of America's social and political order was the dominant theme. Friendly contacts with bureaucracies and the general "take-it easy" attitudes of the population impressed the newcomers from authoritarian Europe. All these experiences were invariably connected with the refugees' understanding of the meaning of democracy and freedom in the New World. ¹ "America is Different" was appropriately the title of an AUFBAU column which talked about everyday encounters with Americans and their society. The author of this series tried to prove that a democratic political order as established in the United States produced better individual citizens, especially friendlier ones, and a more humane environment. ²

The paper approached most events in American history from the same emotion-based and personalized perspective. Washington, and especially Lincoln, were literally held as saints. ³ Such national celebrations as the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Labor Day were regarded as opportunities for every immigrant to show his strong emotional dedication to the American system. The AUFBAU's articles for the national holidays made it look as though the immigrants identified with the American past

¹ Jan. 35, p. 5; Feb. 7, 41, p. 3; March 14, 41, p. 20.
² Dec. 27, 39, p. 3.
because they themselves had taken part in creating it.\(^4\) This use of American history as an emotional homestead which gave the immigrants the possibility of identifying closely with basic American patriotism was of course in the best American tradition. The idea of being in line with previous historical events was also of special importance during the war years when the refugees were in particular need of a reassuring ideological identity.

Not only the American past, but also the present political system became one of the very centers of the unquestionable goodness of the United States as a homeland. The refugees voiced criticisms of various aspects of American life, its mass culture or its social structure, for example. But they never doubted that the American political system was the embodiment of the American democratic ideal. They therefore believed unconditionally that all actions of the elected government were serving the interest of the people at all times.

In the discussion of everyday politics such a position was hard for any openminded newspaper to adhere to. If all actions of the government were in the people's interest, was the elected majority then automatically the representative of the absolute good in politics? Initially the AUFBAU tried to solve the problems arising from the obvious discrepancy of democracy in theory and practice in a very simple fashion: the paper declared that it would remain aloof from all politics whatsoever. As late as December 1939 and February 1940, the editors expressed as a statement of policy: "We will hold up freedom and democracy, we will

\(^4\)July 5, 40, p. 7; Sep. 6, 40, p. 2; Nov. 22, 40, p. 3; Sep. 4, 42, pp. 1-3
avoid politics and all quarrels about political questions of the day.⁵

Needless to say, by the time the declaration was made many important political questions of the day, including the position of American Judaism, the refugee problem, and anti-Semitism, had already been discussed extensively in the paper.

But in fact, the apolitical line of the AUFBAU had remained consistent throughout the thirties insofar as the domestic political scene was concerned. The two main topics of the times, the Depression and the New Deal, were only mentioned in indirect ways. The Depression formed the background of many discouraging stories about refugees looking for work. But the New Deal was only described once, very briefly, in 1939. Otherwise, domestic politics remained rather obscure until 1940.⁶

The AUFBAU's concern with foreign affairs, on the other hand, had become strong by 1938/1939. The increasing danger of war during the multiplying crises in Europe and Asia was frequently discussed, and especially those events connected with the refugee question were recorded quite regularly in the paper. Clearly the AUFBAU had broken its general "no politics" vow long before 1940.⁷

But discussion of American domestic politics clearly required a more direct political commitment than did expression of views on world events. A careful and sometimes successful way out of the paper's obvious fear of being caught up in quarrels about politics was to offer

⁵ Dec. 8, 39, p. 16; Feb. 16, 40, p. 6; (also Dec. 34, p. 3).
⁶ Aug. 1, 39, p. 3.
⁷ June 36, p. 4; July 15, 39, pp. 1/2; Sep. 15, 39, pp. 1/2.
purely descriptive reports about the American political system. Thus an article "Unpolitisches über die Amerikanische Verfassung" ("Non-political Comments about the American Constitution") that appeared in early 1935 conformed to the political abstinence principle, yet it also provided the refugee with some basic information about his new home country. Following the same descriptive fashion, numerous articles about the government and the political system appeared throughout the war years. They were mostly aimed at teaching the ignorant newcomer some basics about the form and meaning of democracy. In 1944, for example, the paper printed a series aimed at preparing the refugee for his citizenship test. Part of the information dealt with the form and function of the judiciary system. The F.B.I. and other law enforcement agencies that were concerned with investigation of spies and enemy aliens were described in another instance. The machinery of politics in New York state was the subject of a whole series of articles.

Elections and the election process played a central role in the AUFBAU's perspective on the American political system. The principle of remaining apolitical was broken, temporarily, in a 1936 report on the presidential elections entitled "War Clouds Overshadow the Election Campaign"(!). In this, and in later reports about upcoming elections,

8 Jan. 35, p. 10.
9 July 5, 40, p. 7; Nov. 22, 40, p. 5; June 9, 41, p. 10; Oct. 27 41, p. 21.
10 June 9, 44, p. 10; Oct. 27, 44, p. 21; Apr. 7, 44, p. 3.
11 June 5, 42, p. 5; "Politics and Politicians in New York State" starts Sep. 42, p. 9.
campaigns were usually seen as potentially disruptive events at a time when continuity and definite leadership were needed most. The basic misunderstanding of the function of elections came out most clearly in the elections of 1940, a year which the AUFBAU considered as particularly critical. Yet the paper never specified what was so disturbing about election campaigns and the confrontations of candidates and issues.

Because the election process as such looked so problematic to the AUFBAU, parties, candidates, and controversial issues of the campaign were of secondary importance. The AUFBAU also shied away from discussing the role of political parties in elections and as a basis for governmental power. Before the election of 1944 (when a large number of refugees were allowed to vote for the first time) the paper made some attempts to explain to its readers the differences between the two major political parties in two articles on the national conventions of the Republicans and the Democrats. The writer of these articles did not offer any analytical insights in the problems facing the two parties; his description of events was superficial and showed a rather undisguised pro-Democratic view.

Conflicts and debates between the parties, as they usually took place in Congress and other branches of the government, met the decided

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12 Jan. 19, 40, p. 8; Oct. 4, 40, p. 2; Dec. 14, 40, p. 5.

13 This had to do with the fact that refugee could apply for citizenship (second papers) only after five years of residence in the United States. Only by 1944 were a sizable number able to do that; namely, those who had immigrated during the great rush years of 1938/39.

14 July 7, 44, p. 7; July 28, 44, p. 4; Oct. 6, 44, p. 42; Nov. 33, 44, p. 32.
Disapproval of the AUFBAU, especially during the war. The reason for this fear of opposition was usually similar to the paper's uneasiness about elections. In 1942 its advocacy of "National Unity" concerning all domestic and foreign issues went so far as to suggest an abandonment of party affiliations for all legislators for the duration of the war. With great satisfaction did the paper register in 1943 that the traditional blocs in congress (the farm bloc, the business supporters, etc.) were disintegrating and that everyone had started working together in the national interest instead of catering only to one particular lobbying group. Only the isolationists in Congress continued to draw the AUFBAU's fire; throughout the war the paper never really trusted their disappearance. AUFBAU's inadequate portrait of the functioning of political parties was dominated by the paper's skewed perspective which saw different interests and conflicts in American politics merely as potential disturbance factors rather than as the basic principle of democratic institutions.

A potential third force on the American political landscape, the trade unions, received similarly unrealistic treatment. From the outset, however, the AUFBAU's attitude appeared to be different in one respect: labor problems received rather prominent space in the paper, especially in Siegfrid Aufhäuser's "Review of Labor" column which appeared each week from 1940 until 1944. Aufhäuser's contributions were usually

15 March 6, 42, p. 2; June 12, 42, p. 9; Oct. 2, 42, p. 2.
17 Jan. 29, 42, p. 4.
informative and descriptive, rather than analytical. And he avoided taking sides in the major debate of organized labor in the pre-war years, the conflict between the AFL and the CIO.

In the war years the AUFBAU welcomed the unified stance of the trade unions; the increasing cooperation between unions, government, and big business; and such measures as wage ceilings, price controls, and anti-strike laws. The AUFBAU saw the development of comprehensive governmental war regulations, which made it impossible for trade unions to constitute an independent third force in domestic policies, as a positive sign that national unity was a reality.

In the paper's view, the presidency and its occupant, Franklin D. Roosevelt, comprised the most decisive and probably the only truly relevant power in the American governmental setup. Yet the constitutional and political nature of the office of the President was never discussed in any basic form. Presidential policies meant Roosevelt's policies; his personality overshadowed the constitutional basis of his power.

Presidential actions were usually judged from the standpoint of foreign affairs. And, as Roosevelt was considered to be a firm supporter of the refugee cause, the AUFBAU's support of everything he did was unconditional. Roosevelt's speeches and proclamations in favor of refugees thus dominated the headlines of the paper; likewise, his

18 Apr. 5, 40, p. 8, first article of the "Review of Labor" series; also Jan 2, 42, p. 14; Aug. 21, 42, p. 8.


20 July 23, 43, p. 15; Sep. 3, 43, p. 18.
attempts to prepare America for entering the war were widely hailed.  
Not only did the paper refrain from criticizing any of Roosevelt's 
actions, but even such failures as the St. Louis refugee ship affair of 
1939, the Bermuda Conference on refugees in 1943, and the ominous 
silence of Roosevelt about plans for postwar Germany were interpreted 
as positive achievements of the President.  
The focus on Roosevelt's personal actions soon developed into an 
idolization of the President. He emerged as the national father figure, 
especially after elections and on national holidays. After 1942 the 
paper regularly printed birthday messages to Roosevelt (and he did not 
neglect to send the paper a greeting on its tenth anniversary). 
In an editorial in 1941 Roosevelt was extolled in the following way:

"Dieses mächtige Gesicht ist wie eine Landschaft, 
vertraut, anheimelnd, voll eines unverdeckten Lebens, 
Gute und natürliche Kraft atmend. Und wenn man es dann 
im Kreise seiner Familiengesichter sieht, so verstärkt 
sich der Eindruck, nirgends wird die Harmonie gestört. 
Eine klare und gute Ahnenrasse hat hier ihre Fortsetzung 
gefunden." 

21 July 5, 40, p. 1; Jan. 24, 41, p. 8; Feb. 6, 42, p. 6; Sep. 13, 
40, p. 4; Sep. 27, 40, p. 7 are early examples. 
22 June 15, 39, pp. 15/16; July 1, 39, p. 5; Oct. 15, 39, p. 10; 
Sep. 17, 43, p. 4. 
23 Dec 22, 44, p. 2. 
24 Feb. 28, 41, p. 4. "This mighty face is like a landscape, familiar, 
homey, full of undisguised life, breathing kindliness and natural power. 
And if seen admist its family faces the impression is confirmed; nowhere 
is the harmony disturbed. A good and clear stock has found its continuation 
here." The German text is as awkward as the translation! The editorial 
in which Roosevelt was celebrated with such imagery dealt with the signific-
cance of the facial expressions of the good and evil leaders of the war. 
Hitler's face was seen as incorporating all the elements of a gangster-
character; a Japanese general's physique was likewise that of a low race 
(!) of human beings.
Eleanor Roosevelt figured almost as prominently as her husband in the headlines of the AUFBAU. This was probably justified, as the first lady made refugees one of her special "pet" concerns. The AUFBAU printed her statements on every relevant issue, especially those on anti-alienism and anti-Semitism.  

In view of the paper's beliefs concerning the royal functions of the President, it was not surprising that major and minor figures in the government appeared mostly as only delegates of Roosevelt. At no point could the AUFBAU reader obtain a clear view of who actually comprised Roosevelt's wartime Cabinet and who were his personal advisers. Numerous spokesmen of the wartime administration did appear regularly in the AUFBAU's pages. Attorney General Francis Biddle and Vice President Henry Wallace were often quoted on issues concerning alien and refugee policies, as well as on fundamental matters such as war aims and wartime economic regulations. Other Cabinet members, including such important people as Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, virtually never appeared in the AUFBAU's pages. Here the paper was reflecting not only its own one-sidedness toward Roosevelt, but the general trend of a war administration centralized that only the President himself appeared to speak authoritatively in many matters.  


26On wartime bureaucracy and on the legislature, see Richard Polenberg, War and Society, New York 1972, pp. 193, 194; about the economy, pp. 154 ff.
CHAPTER IX

AUFB AU AND THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

Although identification with America's political order was very important for the refugees who sought a new social and political identity, direct participation in American politics was restricted to the few refugees who were citizens. For many new immigrants, involvement in the activities of the American Jewish community offered a helpful substitute. All Jewish refugees could join American Jewish organizations. Resettled immigrants who were grateful recipients of aid offered by American Jewish communities frequently identified with and rediscovered Judaism as a spiritual home. For many, Judaism probably became even more important than the emotional bonds they developed to the political system of their new homeland.

The AUFB AU reflected this tendency in that it promoted an "aufrecht und selbstbewusstes Judentum" (upright and self-confident Jewishness), a characteristic to which it assigned importance equal to the fostering of a patriotic spirit among its readers. The paper often contrasted the relative timelessness and political independence of Judaism with the time bound course of general politics. A Jewish consciousness was considered to be a useful means to create cohesiveness among Jews who had lost their material possessions and their immediate cultural and social identity due to sudden changes on the political scene.

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1 June 8, 40, p. 3; Feb. 23, 40, p. 5; Nov. 40, p. 9.
2 Dec. 34, p.1.
3 In articles on High Holidays throughout the paper, and supplement "die jüdische Welt" (The Jewish World) starting Oct. 10, 41, every two weeks.
In most instances, though, Jews were pictured as an integral part of American society which had contributed to America's fame and importance in the past and continued to do so in the present. The historical commitment of Jews to America was emphasized in numerous articles such as "Lincoln und die Juden" (Lincoln and the Jews), "Theodore Roosevelt und die Juden," and "Juden in der Kolonialzeit" (Jews in the colonial age). In other instances the achievements of famous contemporary Jews like Bernard Baruch and Felix Frankfurter were praised.

The AUFBAU's discussion of American Jews in the context of American history displayed two peculiarities. For one thing, what the Jewishness of the famous businessmen and scholars described in the paper consisted in was never entirely clear. Secondly, only the achievements of individual Jews were celebrated. The successes of the Jews as an ethnic group in American society received no emphasis, with the exception of Jewish participation in wars.

These blind spots were founded in the AUFBAU's and the refugees' inability to assess the peculiar social and historical situation of American Jewry. So diverse were the American Jews' cultural backgrounds that even they had trouble visualizing themselves as a cohesive group. For a number of reasons the refugees found themselves in a particularly complicated situation at the end of the 1930s. Up to then, two large waves of Jewish immigrants had come to the United States. German Jews

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4 Feb. 16, 40, p. 2; July 18, 41, p. 7; Jan. 19, 40, p.11.

5 Apr. 19, 40, p. 11; June 14, 40, p. 13.
had immigrated from Southern and Southwestern Germany in numbers at the middle of the 19th century. Most of them worked their way up from humble starting positions as small shopkeepers and peddlers in the United States. By the end of the century a considerable proportion of them had accumulated wealth and reached a comfortable middle class position.  

German Jews in America established a number of charitable and political organizations, the most important of which was the American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906.  

For a long time Jews of German extraction dominated Jewish social and political organizations in the United States. By the 1930s, however, the other large Jewish immigrant group in this country had reached at least equal political significance in the American Jewish community. Immigrants from Poland, Russia, and other eastern European countries who had come to the United States in great numbers around the turn of the century had swiftly formed their own organizational bodies, including Jewish labor unions, the American Jewish Congress, and a number of Zionist organizations.

Usually the relationships between the two main segments were not without tensions. Eastern European Jews were much less westernized in many ways than their brethren of German extraction; they usually clung to their old ways of life and their religious beliefs much more.

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8 Karpf, pp. 63 ff.
rigorously. Often enough, German-Jewish entrepreneurs had exploited eastern European Jews as cheap laborers when they had first come to the United States.  

Refugees were caught between the two groups in a special way. In most respects they resembled the old German-Jewish immigrants, especially in their middle class background and their assimilated culture. On the other hand, most refugees were not too readily accepted by the status conscious "German American" Jews but depended mostly on the help of the largely eastern European Jewish charities. The efforts of these agencies to help the refugees were often accompanied by frictions which were rooted in the deeply seated prejudices of many German Jews against "Russian" Jews and vice versa. Refugees from Germany also had difficulties in accepting the segregated way of life and the religious orthodoxy of many of the Eastern European Jews in America.

The AUFBAU avoided open discussion of these differences between eastern and western Jews, at least in the pre-war years, and only occasionally indicated that such frictions actually existed. At times the editors emphasized that a harmonious relationship between the two groups was possible through articles about personal encounters with

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10 Joachim Radkau, Die Deutsche Emigration in den USA, 1933-1945, Dusseldorf, 1971, p. 139.

11 March 8, 40, p. 3; Apr. 1, 39, p. 8; Apr. 15, 39, p. 5.
helpful and understanding eastern European Jews. In another instance, when the paper tried to inform its readers about the Yiddish press, the tone of the writing only highlighted the distance between the two communities.

In the war years the paper undertook more open discussion of problems related to the acculturation of refugees within American Jewry. The best analysis in this respect was offered by a refugee, Rabbi Max Nussbaum, in a speech before the Jewish Club of Los Angeles in 1943. Nussbaum emphasized that refugees were in a difficult social position as new Jewish immigrants. They were looked upon with suspicion by both German Jews and eastern European Jews. But refugees, Nussbaum concluded, were themselves partly to blame for the slow pace of their integration into American Jewry, because few newcomers made decided efforts to join American Jewish organizations. Indirectly the paper confirmed this impression in a series of articles entitled "Jewish Congregations in New York City." The series portrayed only refugee congregations, most of which counted no Americans among their members. Some were almost exactly modeled after specific congregations in Germany.

Although the paper was able to talk openly about the ethnic

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12 May 3, 41, p. 12; Nov. 7, 41, p. 3.

13 July 25, 41, p. 4.


15 Series starts Sep. 11, 42, p. 22; see also Alexander Carlebach, "The German Jewish Immigration and Its Influence on Synagogue Life in the USA (1933-1942)," in Leo Baeck Yearbook 1964, pp. 351-372.
diversity among Americans by 1943, it could offer no analytical insights into the issues, but continued to urge American Jewish organizations to show more cooperation and solidarity in view of the crisis of world Jewry. This lack of interest in the historical and sociological foundations of the differences within American Jewry was founded in the AUFBAU's predominant concern with the fate of European Jewry at that time. The concern with European affairs was so overwhelming that from the beginning the AUFBAU had judged the actions of American Jewish organizations almost exclusively on the basis of their efforts to fight Nazism and anti-Semitism. In the early years of the paper, when the most active members were former German Zionists, American Jewish organizations were most often violently attacked from a Zionist standpoint.\textsuperscript{16} The activities of American Jewish organizations were, as a whole, deemed insufficient, although the AUFBAU supported their boycotts and mass meetings. The early AUFBAU particularly condemned the American Jewish Committee, which preferred appeals to national and international political figures and organizations to mass actions. American Jewish organizations were accused of forming an upper class establishment that was alienated from the real needs of suffering Jews. The paper also observed, correctly, that the hesitant attitude of some American Jewish organizations in regard to the refugee problem was rooted in the fear that too vigorous action in behalf of Jews abroad would endanger the status of American Jews at home.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Apr. 35, pp. 5/6; Apr. 36, pp. 1/2.

\textsuperscript{17} Apr. 35, pp. 6/7; June 35, p. 5; Sep. 36, p. 2; Oct. 36, p. 1; Feb. 37, p. 2; Szajkowski, pp. 103-112.
The determination with which the small German-Jewish Club attacked the powerful American Jewish organizations, including the Zionist groups, stood in stark contrast to the negligible influence the Club had within the American Jewish community. But, as paper and Club became the representative voices of the newly arriving refugees of the late thirties, their attitude towards American Jewish organizations softened perceptively. And by the beginning of the war the AUFBAU agreed with most American organizations that the fate of European Jewry was being decided mainly on the battlefields of Europe. Although events in Palestine continued to be of great interest in the paper, its main concern shifted to helping those Jews who were caught in Europe. The AUFBAU and the German-Jewish Club launched a number of charity activities. Several refugee organizations like the American Federation of German Jews and the German-American Congress for Democracy emphasized the special concerns of the European Jews who had escaped the Nazi onslaught. 18

The nearly complete cutoff of escape routes for refugees after Pearl Harbor, and especially the knowledge from November 1942 of the systematic extermination of Jews by the Nazis, increased American Jewry's concern about the fate of European Jews. The AUFBAU joined the bulk of American Jewish organizations in 1942 in calling for immediate and unified actions by all Jews in America. Mass rallies, protest strikes, and nation-wide prayers prompted by the news about the extermination program were seen as manifestations of this emerging solidarity. 19

18 Feb. 2, 40, p. 5; Feb. 28, 41, p. 4; July 4, 41, p. 3.
19 July 17, 41, p. 1; March 5, 43, p. 1; July 16, 43, p. 13.
An important event designed to unite American Jewry was the American Jewish Conference, initiated in early 1943 by the B'nai B'rith. After a year of preparations and maneuvering, the conference finally took place in September 1943 in New York City. The 501 delegates who had been elected by Jewish communities and organizations all over the country were supposedly representative of all parts of American Jewry. Even the American Federation of Jews from Central Europe was allowed to send three delegates to the conference, as the AUFBAU recorded with pride.

American Zionist organizations, however, had arranged to use this conference as a means of committing American Jewry to an independent Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. Until then, many Jewish organizations had not espoused this aim. But Zionist groups had secured a majority of the delegate seats and, under the pressure of the worldwide political situation, the Palestine statehood resolutions went through nearly unanimously. But, a month later, the American Jewish Committee declared its open dissent against the outcome of the conference and a number of other Jewish groups that had joined the conference decided to remain neutral on the issue. 21

The AUFBAU recorded the unfolding of the American Jewish Conference extensively, but avoided any comment about the Zionist's efforts to use the convention for their own ends. Although the results of the conference brought no help whatever to the persecuted Jews in Europe, the

20 June 18, 43, p. 7; July 9, 43, p. 1.

AUFBAU had its own reasons for thinking that the meeting had been valuable. For one thing, the paper believed that such a conference had finally achieved at least a temporary unity of action among American Jews. This was considered to be a vital basis upon which to build any further actions. In addition, the unity of American Jews would also facilitate the participation and acceptance of refugees in American Jewish organizations. Consequently, the AUFBAU joined in the widespread condemnation of the American Jewish Committee's dissent from the results of the conference.

It was only too evident, though, that the conference and most other actions of American Jewish organizations had brought no change in the situation of European Jews. The AUFBAU expressed its frustration about this fact only in a very subdued way. For the most part, through 1944, it simply avoided the extermination issue. The paper continued to declare that the most effective way for the refugees to fight the Nazis was through active participation in the war on the side of the Allies.

To be sure, though, the concentration on problems of foreign policy did not solve the everyday problems of refugees who had to find some way of accommodating themselves within the different groups and sections of American Jewry. This issue remained particularly crucial for those

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22 May 15, 42, p. 3; July 23, 43, p. 1; Sep. 3, 43, p. 1; Sep. 10, 43, p. 1.

23 Oct. 29, 43, p. 1; Nov. 5, 43, p. 4.

24 Nov. 5, 43, p. 12.

refugees who had no explicit religious or political affiliations to American Jewry. To what ethnic group in American society could they look for help?
German Americans and the Refugees

Non-Jewish German Americans, with their tightly knit Vereinsleben (club life) and their family and food centered culture, seemingly offered much of what the German refugees were missing in the United States. Indeed, German Americans and German Jewish refugees had many interests in common; both formed a wide variety of clubs where they fulfilled their love for music and discussed cultural and political topics. Sports activities also were important in the life of both communities.

Yet association between the old and the new immigrants from Germany was rare, and hostile feelings, especially on the side of the refugees towards the German Americans, seem to have prevailed. The tensions very likely originated in the different circumstances under which German-Americans and German Jewish refugees had come to the United States. While most of the older German American immigrants had left Germany for economic reasons and still identified with German culture, refugees were more ambiguous about their German past because of their experiences under the Nazis. The closeness of German American ethnic culture to some of the things the refugees wanted to leave behind increased their reservations toward German ethnic groups in this country.

The AUFBAU expressed these feelings rather clearly. Though refugees had contacts with German Americans in many ways, especially in New York City, they generally denounced German Americans as Nazis or old fashioned, unpoltical wurst eaters and Kaiser admirers. The AUFBAU was never entirely able to overcome such stereotyped views of German immigrants.
German immigration to the United States began around 1800. Before the Civil War, most of these settlers, who were mainly farmers and craftsmen, struck roots in Pennsylvania and Ohio. The first wave of political immigrants, actually the earliest group of German refugees, came in the wake of the 1848 revolution in Germany. Among those who immigrated to the United States to escape political persecution were many well known radicals of the 48 movement.

A third large group of German immigrants followed in the 1870s and 1880s. Most of these newcomers were industrial or agricultural workers; some were socialists and labor organizers who fled the country during Bismarck's suppression of the socialist party in Germany. The 48ers as well as the later immigrants quickly developed into a well organized ethnic group. The extensive German language press and the numerous Gesangs- and Turnvereine (glee clubs and gymnastic societies) brought German Americans together in their leisure time and kept alive the ideas of German liberalism and socialism.

By the beginning of the 20th century, when immigration from Germany had levelled off, German Americans, by then most heavily settled in the Midwest, were one of the most vocal and best organized ethnic groups

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1 Carl Wittke, We Who Built America, Cleveland, 1967, p. 188.
2 Ibid., pp. 189-195.
3 Ibid., pp. 238-241.
in the United States. Although most of their organizations had by then lost their political flavor and were purely social clubs,\(^5\) German Americans tended to act in a unified way where politics were concerned. They voted strongly against prohibition candidates, the prohibition laws, and women’s suffrage (because of its connection with prohibition), and they supported Wilson and his isolationist policies in the 1914 and 1916 elections.\(^6\)

But World War I saw an unprecedented outbreak of anti-German feeling in the United States which manifested itself in open attacks on German Americans, judicial persecution of many who were supposedly disloyal, and a ban on everything associated with German culture. The German American community had openly favored the German cause at the beginning of the war, but it remained loyal to the United States after American entry into the war. Nevertheless, the German Americans and their organized life as an ethnic community never really recovered from the fears and suppressions of World War I.

The 1920s saw yet another wave of German immigrants trying their luck in the New World. This time it was an economic and only indirectly politically influenced movement of almost half a million Germans.\(^7\) Most of them were craftsmen, skilled industrial workers, or farm laborers

\(^5\) Wittke, pp. 212-217.


\(^7\) Marschalck/Köllermann, p. 546; Furer, p. 74.
who had left a troubled Germany. Their discontent with political and economic conditions in postwar Germany may have been related to their generally more conservative attitudes. These new German Americans did not have any significant impact on the surviving German American organizations. The only new German American organization of any importance that emerged in the twenties was the Steuben Society, founded in 1919. Under its leader, New York school commissioner Theodore Huebener, it wanted to revive interest in German high culture and the German liberal tradition.

The only organizations in which the recent German immigrants played a notable role were a number of German American fascist groups which sprang up in the 1930s; particularly The Friends of the New Germany and the Amerikadeutscher Volksbund (German-American Bund). These groups propagandized for the Third Reich, portraying it as a rebirth of Germany's glorious cultural tradition and political power. The most notorious of them was undoubtedly the German-American Bund, founded in 1936 and led by Fritz Kuhn. At its high point, the Bund probably had 25,000 members (most of them in the New York City area). The Bund claimed, and the public believed, that the National Socialists in Germany supported it as a sister organization and regarded it as the spearhead of the National Socialist revolution in the United States.

The German government, however, considered Kuhn's imitation storm troopers merely an embarrassment which threatened its policy of detente.

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8 Marschalck/Kollermann, p. 546.

9 Furer, p. 75.
towards the United States. It supported the Bund only hesitantly in its early years with some propaganda material. And in the late thirties all connections to Kuhn were cut off. The Bund eventually dissolved when Kuhn was jailed in 1940; its political position had become virtually untenable after the war had started.

Even though the Bund never counted a large number of the German Americans among its followers, the American public as well as the AUFBAU believed some of the propaganda of this organization. They suspected that a systematic subversion of the United States by the National Socialists was underway and that the Bund and similar establishments were the harbingers of this movement. These fears were intensified after 1939 by suspicions that Germany had a complex and sophisticated network of agents and spies operating in the United States in order to prepare the country for a Nazi takeover.

Postwar historical research on the subject has proved that an organized fifth column did not exist in the form suspected by American public opinion. All in all, the propaganda attempts of the Nazis in the United States were restricted to the dissemination of literature. These efforts involved such official agencies as the German consulate


12 The 5th column was first shown to have been largely a myth by Louis DeJong, The German 5th Column in the Second World War, New York 1956.
in New York City and the German railroad information bureau. The activities of these organizations were coordinated by World War I propaganda veteran George Sylvester Viereck and German diplomatic officials. 13 At times, Viereck and his co-workers even managed to contact some isolationist congressmen. Whether their efforts left any impact on these politicians or the rest of the American public is not known. 14

For the first five years of its existence, AUFBAU consistently depicted German Americans as fascists, Nazis, or Jew haters. Although only a small number of German Americans were active supporters of Hitler or any fascist movements at all, the AUFBAU felt threatened by every sneeze from right wing German Americans. The AUFBAU's apprehensions, unsubstantiated though they look today, did constitute a prime example of a distortion in the AUFBAU's perspective on American society, a distortion caused by the exigencies of the refugees in this country.

One of the main attacks of the AUFBAU against German Americans was directed at the New Yorker Staatszeitung, a German language newspaper dating back to 1834. In the 1930s the Staatszeitung was the largest German language publication in the country, and one of only twelve remaining German dailies. 15 It had the reputation of being restrained

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14 Niel M. Johnson, George Sylvester Viereck, German-American Propagandist, Urbana, Illinois 1972, ch. VII.

in its general opinions and political views. The AUFBAU, however, constantly attacked the paper for its alleged anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi attitudes.\(^\text{16}\) The AUFBAU's examples of the Staatszeitung's supposed anti-Semitism at most show the Staatszeitung's hesitant and ambivalent attitude towards Hitler's Germany and the refugees in the United States. For the AUFBAU, this was enough to show that the Staatszeitung lent itself to Nazi propaganda. Although the AUFBAU continuously warned its readers not to touch the Staatszeitung, it was read by refugees and subscribed to by refugee organizations.\(^\text{17}\)

The same attitudes of the AUFBAU prevailed towards most people and businesses in Yorkville, the most heavily German American section of Manhattan. Yorkville, the paper contended, was infested with Nazi activities.\(^\text{18}\) Not only did its German inhabitants openly express their sympathies for the Nazi cause, but German Americans there were also systematically used by Nazi agents in the United States for their destructive ends.\(^\text{19}\) In the impending Nazi takeover which the AUFBAU feared in the thirties, German Americans, with the help of the fatherland, would play the dominant role. Native American fascism was only seen as

\(^{16}\) AU Sep. 35, pp. 8/9; Dec. 35, pp. 5/6; Apr. 36, p. 1; June 37, pp. 1/2; Dec. 22, 39, p. 20; Apr. 19, 40, p. 2; June, 14, 40, p. 4.

\(^{17}\) July 3, 42, p. 5.

\(^{18}\) Refugees at Work, by Sophia Robison et al. (see Chapter 5, p. ) found that Yorkville was one of the favorite locations for refugees who set up businesses of their own. Of all parts of Manhattan, only the upper West side had more (96) refugee businesses than Yorkville (70). Ibid., p. 40.

\(^{19}\) May 17, 40, p. 2; Dec. 27, 40, p. 4; Jan 23, 41, p. 4.
a minute force in this context.

These attitudes closely resembled the anti-German attitudes in the United States during World War I. Interestingly enough, the AUFBAU modified its stand towards German Americans when anti-German feelings in general became more manifest in the United States. With the outbreak of World War II, refugees became aware of the fact that they too were considered Germans and consequently were classified as "enemy aliens" by the government and by a suspicious public. Clearly, a witch hunt for German Americans was not in the interest of any group of German immigrants.

During the war, then, the AUFBAU printed articles that depicted German Americans as a loyal but largely unpolitical group. German Americans were not too dangerous anymore, but even their non-political attitude drew critical and patronizing remarks from the AUFBAU. The paper reckoned that German Americans, in their isolated existence as a separate ethnic group, had lost touch with German as well as with American political realities. Time had stood still for them since sometime before World War I. This idea of the provincial, politically retarded, petit bourgeois German American was not a flattering portrait. But it seems to have been partly true, even though the basis of this provincialism was more complex than the AUFBAU suspected. The paper did not recognize, for example, that the anti-German hysteria of World War I

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21 Sep. 11, 42, p. 40; the paper warned its readers to suspect a spy in every foreign looking or sounding person.

was reason enough for many German Americans to avoid any political involvement as an ethnic group.

But there were German Americans of whom the AUFBAU was very proud, because they had attained important positions in American politics in the 1930's. People like Wendell Willkie and Robert F. Wagner were hailed and portrayed in much the same manner as famous American Jews. These prominent German Americans deserved admiration not only for their power and their capabilities as public figures, but also because they had succeeded in shedding their ethnicity and had become successful Americans. In other words, for the AUFBAU the best German American was the one who could no longer be identified as a German American.

Only at one point, for the AUFBAU, did identification with one's national origin become important, even necessary, for German Americans; that was in the fight against fascism and Nazism. In the AUFBAU's view, German Americans, just like Jews, had a special stake in fighting against Hitler and for the preservation of democracy. But up to the late war years, the paper contended that German Americans largely failed to rise to that responsibility. Few German Americans, other than recent immigrants, had joined anti-fascist organizations in the United States. Of all German American groups, the AUFBAU maintained connections only with old time German socialist movements. And even those groups were

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23 Dec. 15, 39, p. 8; Jan. 30, 42, p. 5.

24 Nov. 1, 41, p.1; Jan. 30, 42, p. 5.
by then largely dominated by recent immigrants. Some liberal minded
German Americans might have read the AUFBAU, the paper freely admitted
at one point, and a number of them might have joined the small, anti-Nazi Loyal Americans of German Descent. But actually nothing came of the AUFBAU's idea that German Americans should fight together in the front ranks against fascism.

The AUFBAU's views on German Americans show a contradictory position toward an ethnic group which was very similar to the refugees. On the one hand, German Americans were criticized for their lack of assimilation and their clanishness; on the other hand, they were scolded when they were not able to show the cohesiveness of an ethnic group in the fight against fascism. This split consciousness reflected the situation of the refugees themselves in many respects. After all, most refugees had a cultural heritage similar to that of the German Americans. They spoke the same language and showed the same love for literature and music. How much of this could they sacrifice for the sake of Americanization? Had America enough to offer to make up for this loss?

\[25\] Gerhard Seger, editor of the social democratic weekly Neue Volkszeitung, sometimes wrote articles for the AUFBAU (e.g., Nov. 1, 41, p. 9), his paper was advertised frequently in the AUFBAU, and some members of the social democratic exile wrote for the AUFBAU regularly (Weichmann and Aufhauser).

\[26\] June 14, 41, p. 4.

\[27\] Aug. 1, 41, p. 5; Dec. 11, 42, p. 4; Jan. 11, 43, p. 4.

\[28\] Kipphan, pp. 195-199.

\[29\] Concerning the preservation of German culture and language: March 27, 42, p. 32; Apr. 11, 41, p. 7; Apr. 18, 41, p. 7.
CHAPTER XI

AMERICAN CULTURE IN THE AUFBAU--PROPAGANDA OR ART?

Although the AUFBAU was published through the 1930s, it provided no real coverage of American cultural life until early 1939. And only at the end of that year did regular features on art and literature appear in the paper. Consequently, the AUFBAU's assessments of American culture emerged in the war years, a time of relatively stagnant development. Despite this limitation, the AUFBAU's treatment of popular and high culture does offer valuable insight into the refugees' perspective on America's cultural life.

The earliest regular arts features in the AUFBAU dealt with movies and how and where they were made. Throughout the war years, extensive articles about films continued as a regular feature of the paper. By 1940 the AUFBAU printed a bi-monthly column of news from Hollywood ("Hollywood Calling..") and two to four movie reviews each week. The critiques and columns were usually written by such competent authors as Hans Kafka and Ernst Lubitsch. Many reports in the AUFBAU explained how the Hollywood dream factories functioned; sometimes the paper discussed the social lives of actors and producers as well as the artistic and political aspects of moviemaking.

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1 Apr. 15, 39, p. 2; May 1, 39, p. 16; May 15, 39, p. 14.
2 Emigré film experts are discussed by Kafka, Dec. 22, 44, pp. 40ff.
3 May 1, 39, p. 16 (Hollywood's political position); July 1, 39, p. 4; Nov. 1, 39, p. 15; June 6, 41, p. 15; May 29, 42, p. 17.
Theatre events were reported from early in the paper’s existence. But, for the most part, the AUFBAU's theatre news focused on the special interests of the refugee community. Reports told of a refugee actor or actress starting a new career on Broadway, the WPA theatre staging a German language play, the initial presentation in English translation of a refugee writer's play, or a Yiddish drama on the fate of refugees. Of all stage events, only Yiddish theatre and musicals received regular coverage. Other plays were only irregularly reviewed, and those discussed usually did not reveal a representative picture of the American theatre.

Musicals. Much the same selectivity occurred in regard to musicals. This child of the European operette had grown mostly in American cultural soil. The 1930s had been a fruitful time for musical comedies, and by the end of that decade the musical had won a prominent place on the American stage. Yet the AUFBAU never really paid much attention to the popular American musical. Only Yiddish productions were reviewed extensively. The few German light operas tried on this side of the Atlantic, though, were much celebrated by the paper.

Classical Music. The same dominant concern with the more European forms of the arts showed in the AUFBAU's coverage of classical music.

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4 Dec. 11, 42, p. 11; Dec. 15, 39, p. 9.

5 May 36, p. 5; June 5, 42, p. 4; Nov. 5, 42, p. 11; Oct. 15, 43, p. 12.

6 Nov. 14, 41, p. 11; Sep. 4, 42, p. 10.

7 June 14, 43, p. 9; Nov. 6, 42, p. 10.
By the end of 1939 frequent reviews of concerts and operas began to appear, and soon the paper had a musical editor (Arthur Holde) who regularly filled a page with reviews and articles about musical events.

As many European musicians were performing mainly in the United States by 1940, the AUFBAU's music pages read almost like those in any German paper before 1933. Indeed, the great number of European artists provided such excellent performances of classical and contemporary music (including opera) that the sparse American musical life led only a negligible existence, hardly noticed by the AUFBAU. Only black American performers of European classical music appeared worthy of notice for the paper. American popular music (including jazz) received practically no recognition. All in all, the AUFBAU published a music page that catered to the tastes of middle class refugees from Germany and Austria. New York's role as the provisional world capital of the arts during World War II made it possible for the AUFBAU to preserve the central European perspective of its readers.

Literature. Literary pages which did not become a regular feature of the AUFBAU until 1940, retained an uneven quality throughout the war years. American literature was discussed only in summary articles that dealt with one literary epoch or style--rarely more than 100 lines at a time. Reviews of American books were extremely rare,

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8 This topic is surveyed in Dec. 22, 44, pp. 49ff.; June 26, 42, p. 11.


10 Oct. 2, 42, p. 8, first article of "Gestalten Amerikanischer Literatur," it continues irregularly throughout 1943/44; also Oct. 1, 39, p. 6.
and background information about literary trends and the reading public
did not appear at all until 1944.\textsuperscript{11}

The paper's discussion of German literature more than compensated
for its negligence concerning American writing. As the AUFBAU became
more and more the voice of the intellectual immigration, it commenced
to serve as a forum for emigré writers, poets, and journalists. The
literary scene of the German exile was reflected not only in book
reviews, portraits, and news about writers; but much original emigré
writing first appeared in the AUFBAU. Thus the literature pages, along
with the music pages, were among the best features of the AUFBAU,
features upon which much of its enduring fame as an exile paper was
founded.\textsuperscript{12}

The AUFBAU's curious neglect of American literature very likely
had its origin in the new immigrants' limited access to the English
language. Language problems always posed problems to the refugees in
everyday life. Furthermore, many Europeans looked on American writing
as of secondary importance.

\textbf{Journalism.} The paper knew very well that American culture
consisted of more than Hollywood movies. Yet, instead of studying
American literature or music, it recommended that refugees become
acquainted with the more typical products of American popular culture.
They should read comic strips and the syndicated columns, and listen

\textsuperscript{11}"Bucher und Leser in Amerika" (Books and the Reading Public in
America) starts in the Summer of 1944.

\textsuperscript{12}A survey of this topic is in Dec. 22, 44, p. 47; Dec 29, 44, pp. 2/3;
Aug 7, 42, p. 1/5.
to the popular radio shows, and thus get to know the cultural elements that were part of every American's life. For the AUFBAU, American journalism and radio entertainment were important not only because of their didactic function for the newcomer, but also because their formal perfection made them equal to traditional kinds of art. Discussion about comic strips, and highly enthusiastic comments about columnists and radio entertainers, made clear to the European reader that in the New World journalism was a highly sophisticated expression of social and cultural life, even though it appealed not to an intellectual elite but to a mass audience. Despite the fact that in European terms this was a negative characteristic, for the AUFBAU these types of mass culture provided most useful instruments for Americanization of the refugee. 13 Meanwhile, the more traditional forms of the arts, classical music, and literature remained in the non-judgmental area of l'art pour l'art.

But what kind of values should American culture teach the new immigrant? A close analysis shows that the most frequently used terms that supposedly expressed American virtues for the AUFBAU coincided with the vocabulary of American war propaganda: Freedom and Democracy, the preservation of individual liberties, and the voluntary solidarity of a nation preserving these traditions. Of particular importance for the immigrant was the emphasis on an egalitarian society which allowed everybody, regardless of his background, race, or creed, to participate

13 Feb 28, 40, p. 9; Oct 18, 40, p. 3; Apr 15, 39, p. 2; July 4, 40, p. 7; July 11, 40. p. 24.
in this comprehensive effort.

The worth of most American literary and artistic products was measured by how well they seemed to disseminate these American virtues. The paper's treatment of American literature offers a prime example of this ideological viewpoint. "Gestalten Amerikanischer Literatur," a regular feature throughout 1943 and 1944, reviewed the American literary scene from Thomas Paine to John Steinbeck, William Saroyan, and John Dos Passos. The writer of this series revealed a rather one-dimensional understanding of American literature. Writers of the 19th century were judged mainly on the strength of their social commitments as expressed through their books. Thus Harriet Beecher Stowe, though generally considered naive, was highly praised for her abolitionist stand; but James Fenimore Cooper's pioneer stories were discredited because they celebrated Rousseau's ideal of the innocent individual who defies collective action. Likewise, the popular contemporary writers Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner, and William Saroyan, were disqualified as individualistic romantics. Steinbeck, Dos Passos, and especially Hemingway, on the other hand, were celebrated for their humanistic and masculine (!) portraits of American society.

Many of the AUFBAU's film reviews followed much the same course. The most American movie, one every immigrant ought to see, was The Grapes of Wrath. Early film critiques supported the notion that Hollywood should not simply be a dream factory, but should also offer an outlet

\[14\text{Dec 10, 43, p. 15; Dec 24, 43, p. 15.}\]
\[15\text{March 19, 43, p. 10; Oct. 16, 42, p. 7.}\]
for social criticism in its films. But as the war approached, movies became less perceptive of social reality and conflict, and most of them either retreated into individual romance or proclaimed a blunt patriotism. In parallel fashion, AUFBAU film reviews became less critical. Most extensively reviewed were war movies. Considering the usual low quality of these Hollywood products, the paper's criticism was sparse and without perspective. Occasionally, the film critic would take issue with a too mellow portrait of the Nazis or the glamorous view of the war in general. The melodramatic accounts of solidarity and the glorification of group life were what made these movies so valuable to the AUFBAU. These pictures, it was thought, would give the spectator on the homefront a clearer view of what the nation was fighting for and how well it did its job. In line with most of the American public, the paper maintained that Hollywood did its best to convey wartime reality to the masses. Entertainment movies were usually judged much more severely by the AUFBAU, and the reviews had a tendency to condemn lightweight features as unrealistic in time of an international crisis.

A number of background reports analyzed and approved the influence of Hollywood in mobilizing the public spirit for the war effort. The difference between the cooperation of Hollywood's moviemakers and the centralized propaganda machines of the fascist powers was seen to lie

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16 Jan 24, 41, p.11; May 2, 41, p. 9; Nov. 14, 42, p. 9; March 26, 43, p. 11.

17 Feb 12, 43, p. 9; Dec 3, 43,p. 12; Jan 14, 44, p. 21.

18 July 24, 42, p. 22; March 26, 43,p. 11.
mainly in the voluntary nature of Hollywood's contribution as well as in the inherently good aims for which the Allies were fighting. What these aims were, precisely, is not found in either the movies or the reviews. ¹⁹ Not only the concerted yet voluntary effort of the media and the arts, but also the diversity of artistic expression impressed the AUFBAU. Unlike oppressed Europe, America prescribed no mold into which all forms of art had to fit. Throughout the country, but especially in metropolitan New York, many ethnic groups had been able to retain their special form of artistic expression. The AUFBAU's interest in New York's ethnically diverse cultural scene shows clearly in articles about Chinese theatre, Indian art, and Negro music. ²⁰

Most prominent among the different ethnic arts were Yiddish theatre and musical comedy. The AUFBAU reviewed almost every Yiddish stage event in town and published numerous portraits of the stars of the Yiddish stage. ²¹ This is surprising since German Jews were traditionally unfamiliar with this form of folkloristic art preserved by Eastern European Jews. The majority of the refugees did not even understand Yiddish. Probably the AUFBAU editors had reason to believe that Yiddish theatre was nevertheless attractive to German speaking refugees because this was the closest thing to German language theater that was

¹⁹ Ken Jones and Arthur McClure, Hollywood at War, New York 1973, pp. 15-24, esp. p. 22, confirms this impression, one that one could also gather from the AUFBAU's film reviews.

²⁰ July 26, 40, p. 3; Sep. 27, 40, p. 3; Feb 27, 41, p. 10; Sep 4, 42, p. 10.

²¹ Sep 4, 42, p. 12; Jan 15, 43, p. 12; Jan 22, 43, p. 12; Oct 1, 43, p. 16; Nov 19, 43, p. 13.
available.\(^{22}\)

When the AUFBAU looked beyond the melting pot situation of the urban centers, it saw most forms of the popular arts as mass fabricated products. This was considered to be an inherently positive characteristic of the popular arts in America. A mass audience for such products as movies, radio shows, syndicated newspaper columns, and comic strips could serve a massive educational effort. Moreover, the infinite reproductibility of popular culture also meant infinite accessibility of cultural values and expressions to everybody, including the refugees. The egalitarianism of popular culture was therefore seen as a value built into the American democratic system which made solidarity, heightened public consciousness, and maturity possible for everybody, immigrant and native American alike.

During the war years the uniformity of cultural products increased. Lack of critical consciousness became clearly noticeable in the AUFBAU, as in the American press generally. But, unlike the American press, the AUFBAU kept a special refugee where the immigrants' critical and speculative minds could survive. European art, far away, yet utterly familiar, continued to be the subject of subtle reflection and heated discussion on the paper's pages. Here values and forms of the arts could be criticized and questioned openly. These debates were meaningful to their readers because the relationships they had to music, theatre, and literature still defined much of their middle class consciousness.

\(^{22}\)Joachim Radkau, Die Deutsche Emigration in den USA, Düsseldorf 1972, p. 137.
Their exile situation and the small audiences many emigré artists had did provide some positive effects. Artists and intellectuals enjoyed liberties and experienced new influences they could not have had in the Europe of the 1930s. Yet they also missed the massive acclamation of the European middle class. The comparatively small audience of refugees, on the other hand, was privileged by this situation. They could participate in most cultural events of the exile as their paper, the AUFBAU, successfully played the role of active mediator of the free European arts. The paper thus offered a special means of survival in an inherently alien, mass produced cultural forest of Hollywood movies and syndicated columns. For the refugees it provided a buffer to the harshest forms of the cultural shock.

The culture pages of the AUFBAU, though not so different in appearance from those of the New York Times, had a very special function. In no way did they ever wish to reflect the American cultural scene as observed by American contemporaries or historians. To the AUFBAU, art in America was only noteworthy if it fulfilled its primary task of Americanizing the refugee. Accordingly, many parts of the American cultural scene were overlooked because they were not useful for this purpose. American literature, theatre, and popular music, as well as such pursuits as architecture and dance, did not appear. In the more European "Kultur" part of the paper the refugee could foster his love for largely non-didactic and complex forms of cultural life.
CHAPTER XII
AUFBAU FIGHTS THE WAR

After 1939, not only the cultural pages, but most features of the AUFBAU were overshadowed by the events of the war. For the German refugees the Second World War began with Hitler's invasion of Poland. An existential fear for the survival of the free world shaped the refugees' perspective on foreign and domestic news long before official American involvement in the war.

This anxiety also lay behind the paper's strong internationalist and interventionist position in foreign affairs. The official neutrality of the United States between 1939 and 1941 was only a label without much meaning for the AUFBAU. Throughout the pre-war years the editors professed their approval of what they considered to be Roosevelt's open support of the Allied powers. In the elections of 1940 the President was hailed as the saviour of the free world, while the activities of the isolationist politicians were condemned as subversive. Their "America First" policies were only disguised support for the Axis, the AUFBAU proclaimed.¹

The paper observed with great satisfaction the government's early attempts to reorganize the American economy for the production of war materials. Frequent reports on the Lend Lease Bill and the increasing production of war material for the Allies underscored the AUFBAU's approval of the United States support of the Western powers. The resulting improvement in the American economic situation received only

¹Feb. 2, 40, p. 4; Dec. 2, 40, pp. 1/2.
secondary emphasis in the paper.\(^2\)

As early as 1940 the AUFBAU began to take part in building up a strong homefront commitment against Hitler. Refugees were advised to register for defense work, or, if possible to enlist in the army. Civilian defense preparations also became a focus of attention well before Pearl Harbor. (Unlike the army, civilian defense did allow foreigners to participate.) This was considered to be a particularly useful activity for refugees who wanted to prove their willingness to fight the fascist threat.\(^3\)

So AUFBAU readers were well prepared when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States fully into the war. The AUFBAU's coverage of war events increased in amount and in quality, but no change of opinion occurred on any fundamental question. The paper remained predominately concerned with events on the Atlantic front, but the situation on the homefront received rather accurate and extensive attention during the war. But the influence the war showed on American domestic affairs was seen not so much from a political perspective as from the viewpoint of the worker, the consumer, the soldier, and the urban dweller.

The AUFBAU did not provide coverage of the basic functioning of the war administration agencies, a fact which made it particularly difficult to get a coherent picture of the changed interplay between legislature

\(^2\)May 17, 40, pp. 1/2; May 24, 40, pp. 1&3; July 5, 40, p. 4; Sep. 27, 40, p. 2; Jan. 17, 41, p. 1, Jan. 31, 41, p. 1; Apr. 18, 41, p. 2.

\(^3\)Apr. 25, 41, pp. 1&3.
and executive during the war. The paper had never held Congress in particular esteem anyway, but its struggles with burgeoning Roosevelt administration were even more unclear after 1939 than in the previous years. And, although the government's measures in regard to military priorities for war production became more and more noticeable to the average citizen, the AUFBAU did not print sufficient information about even the major war agencies. The war administration appeared as a hydra-headed monster that talked in many tongues and took many shapes. The AUFBAU therefore relied mainly on messages from President Roosevelt himself and some of his major cabinet members to distinguish political tendencies from administrative detail.

Just as in the pre-war years, then, the dominating forces of the government were represented by President Roosevelt and those Cabinet members who functioned as his personal aides. The AUFBAU's nearly absolute belief in the inherent righteousness of all presidential decisions made most measures of the war administration immune to criticism for the paper (except for the government's inclusion of refugees in the "enemy alien" category). But basic questions of world politics did start lively discussions in the paper about such things as the position of refugees and aliens in the United States, Roosevelt's war strategy, and the policies of the American government toward postwar Europe.  

The AUFBAU approved participation of political parties, unions,

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and other interest groups in the decisionmaking process of the war government, if it took place without dissent from general administrative policies. All forces which could potentially oppose the government were seen as disturbing elements. The AUFBAU's fears of internal disruption by these rivals of governmental power definitely surpassed those of most Americans. This fact was partly due to the higher tension under which the refugees lived during the war. But it also points toward a basic insecurity that had its roots in the experiences of the Weimar Republic.

Less narrowed by fears and ideological blindness than the paper's perspectives on domestic politics was its reporting about the war economy and wartime society, especially as they reflected the refugees' everyday life. Three topics that had a major impact on changing the economic and social structure of the country held primary interest for the AUFBAU and its readers: (1) the shortage of labor, (2) the shortage of raw materials and goods for civilian production, (3) rising wages and the resulting inflation. The paper dwelt on all these factors and their interconnections at great length, along with their probable effects on the postwar economy.

The change in the workingman's position during the war was a development that affected the lives and perspectives of the refugees most decisively. "Enemy aliens" had constituted a class of workers that was strongly discriminated against until late 1942. But by that time even older, untrained refugees no longer had difficulties in finding jobs outside New York City. The AUFBAU, however, urged its readers not to respond to the new situation by taking any kind of job,
but to look specifically for work in the defense industry. Yet many war plants, in accordance with restrictive legislation, refused to hire "enemy aliens" for fear that spies might be among them. Throughout the war, the paper continually criticized this situation.  

But even when a refugee did join the ranks of the well paid defense workers he faced new kinds of hardships. He was joining a huge migration of Americans, most of them formerly unemployed. These newly recruited workers flocked into the boom towns throughout the country where hastily erected temporary housing and often hostile townspeople awaited them. These circumstances, as well as the prospect of being unemployed after the war boom was over, did not offer the refugees the stability which they greatly needed. For the most part, the AUFBAU failed to mention these more somber aspects of work in defense industry, but instead stressed the emotionally rewarding quality of such work. The paper argued that in times of national emergency sacrifices were necessary in order to maintain a high standard of war production.  

Inflation was a problem that mainly hit those refugees who worked in the lower paid white collar jobs. The paper reassured its readers that the government was doing everything possible to curb inflation. Wage ceilings in labor contracts, price freezes imposed by the war administration on most consumer goods, and rationing of some essential

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5 Jan. 2, 42, p. 2; Jan. 30, 42, p. 1; Feb. 27, 41, p. 1; Sep. 25, 43, p. 4; Sep. 11, 43, p. 2.

products were approved and considered effective by the AUFBAU. War bonds, as the paper explained at one point, formed a useful device to drain off excess consumer power, the root of many problems in the wartime economy.

Problems relating to shortages of goods were of interest to the readers. Because the women were seen as the main shoppers, most advice relating to economical budget management appeared on the women's page. Usually these features about what to buy and when, how to save scarce materials and goods, and how to become more self sufficient even in an urban environment were informative and precise. They paint an excellent picture of the everyday lifestyle of many refugee households during the war. The sudden consumer orientation of the AUFBAU was not very different from what happened in American women's magazines at the same time.

In the spotlight of the reports on refugees in the war effort were those immigrants who most directly contributed to defeating the fascists, refugees in the American armed forces. After Pearl Harbor, statements in the AUFBAU gave the impression of a sudden rush of recent immigrants from Germany to enlist in the armed forces. The accuracy of this observation is hard to check. A special desire to take an active part in the war against the Nazis, as well as the benefits that army enlistment brought for the refugees (they automatically became citizens after serving three months) could have been strong forces motivating enlistment.

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7 May 22, 42, p. 24; May 29, 42, p. 16; July 31, 42, p. 31; Oct 9, 42, p.

8Oct. 9, 42, p. 21; Oct. 23, 42, p. 21; Nov. 6, 42, p. 21; March 16, 43, p. 12; Sep. 11, 42, p. 4; Dec. 11, 42, p. 16.
In any event, the paper was extremely proud of the new GI's and published the names and photographs of the newly enlisted in every issue. Later, notable events and observations about and by refugee soldiers were regularly printed on a special page ("This is the Army").

Life as a soldier was usually seen as a highly rewarding and very Americanizing experience. Mothers were assured many times that their sons were well taken care of in the armed forces, and emphasis was placed on the fact that life in the United States army had little in common with the repressive rule under which German soldiers had traditionally lived. Comradeship, a friendly atmosphere, and a sober attitude towards the war were stressed as the special qualities of the American armed forces. Some of the articles written by refugee soldiers themselves clearly showed not so much sobriety as vengeful emotions towards the enemy, especially the Germans.

The refugee boys in the army were pampered by a special organization founded by some New World Club women, the "Our Boys Club". Its activities consisted mainly of sending letters and packages to refugee GI's, many of whom had no family in the United States. On holidays and free weekends, the New World Club entertained those who were stationed in the New York area. However marginal these activities seem today, they were widely reported in the paper; the "Our Boys Club" even had its own page

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9 March 27, 42, p. 1; Jan. 9, 42, j. 4; Aug. 6, 43, p. 16.

10 Sep. 25, 43, p. 3; Jan. 30, 42, p. 1 & p. 15; Jan. 2, 42, p. 3; May 15, 42, p. 5; May 29, 42, p. 9; June 5, 42, p. 9; June 18, 42, p. 4; Aug. 20, 43, p. 1.
in the AUFBAU for most of the war years.  

But not every refugee could join the armed forces. Women soon wanted to become members of the WACS or WAVES, which some were allowed to do late in the war. Refugees living in the New York area were urged to join the Civil Defense; but this was not always easy to do. The roster of alien specialized personnel, a central clearing house for the registration of alien professionals, encouraged AUFBAU readers to apply for government service. Doctors, only reluctantly taken by the armed forces, were advised to move to the countryside in order to offset the shortage of doctors there.

As far as volunteer work was concerned, the refugees made considerable effort to prove that they were well aware of their special responsibility to help win the war. The New World Club's "Victory Volunteers" sold war bonds, the women's group knitted and sewed for the army, special blood donation campaigns were organized, and, in April 1942, a fundraising campaign was started to purchase a fighter plane for the Air Force. Within a year the AUFBAU and other refugee organizations succeeded in raising the necessary amount, the plane was purchased, named "Loyalty," and dedicated in March 1943.

The refugees' financial support of the war was also expressed in

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11 Starts July 31, 43, p. 10.
12 June 26, 42, p. 3; July 10, 43, p. 3; Jan. 27, 44, p. 5; Aug. 13, 43, p. 28; Sep. 24, 43, p. 32.
13 Dec. 12, 41, p. 21; March 13, 42, p. 9; July 24, 42, p. 7.
14 Apr. 3, 42, p. 2; Apr. 10, 42, p. 1; Oct. 9, 42, p. 5; March 19, 43, p. 1; March 26, 43, pp. 15/16.
war bond purchases which the paper promoted with considerable thunder. Active participation in war bond campaigns as minutemen or minutewomen was considered not only a patriotic duty but also an Americanizing experience which would transmit the American patriotic spirit to the refugees.

For the refugees, the war on the homefront was not experienced very differently than it was by most Americans. But in some ways the AUFBAU's perception of wartime reality was definitely influenced, even distorted, by the special situation of the refugees in this war. Thus the AUFBAU's consciousness of what happened in Europe was extremely high and showed in the overly frenzied attitude of many refugees who wanted to be more patriotic than most Americans. The AUFBAU's portrait of war events was so gripping, and the fears of most refugees about a possible Nazi victory so suffocating, that almost no quiet or private life seemed permissible or realizable for refugees who wanted to settle down and establish a new permanent existence. The desire to organize one's own life first had to be suspended for the duration of the war. The paper felt that if, for this one last time, everybody would forget about his individual needs and would invest his energies in winning the war, then America's future and that of the refugees would be secure.

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15 June 12, 42, pp. 3/4; June 26, 42, p. 7; Nov. 13, 42, p. 20.
CONCLUSION

The German-Jewish refugees of the 1930s were certainly among the most successful of all immigrant groups to come to America. Within one generation they entered the American middle class, hardly distinguishable as a separate immigrant group. One might ask: why this success story? After all, the refugees, as others before them, had to begin completely anew. Indeed, reports in the AUFBAU as well as from various refugee agencies suggest that, as a rule, the refugees had to start from the very bottom of the social and economic ladder and work their way up only gradually. Yet, this impression is only part of the truth. In actuality, the refugees can be considered to have been one of the most privileged immigrant groups in American history. Almost all of the newcomers were middle class and well educated. Coming from Germany, they had lived in a country which was in many ways similar to the American social and economic system. Moreover, it can safely be assumed that only the more flexible people, and those with foresight, personal connections, and financial means, could effectively make use of the limited ways to enter the United States. Many had friends, relatives, or sponsors in the new country; and they had to pass the rigid screening of United States consular officers abroad. Thus a highly selected group entered the country between 1933 and 1945.

The major difficulties the refugees encountered after their arrival in the United States were the result of their privileged past. As most of them had a highly qualified educational background, language barriers and specialized skills were obstacles for their assimilation that would
have been less had the new immigrants come from a working class background. But, even if the period of initial adjustment was longer and more painful for middle class immigrants, once they had learned English and added American know-how to their original skills they could join the American middle class almost without difficulty.

Only the rather numerous intellectuals (teachers, scholars of the humanities, scientists, and artists) followed a somewhat different route from the main road of refugee assimilation. Much of their success and influence had rested on their earlier reputations. They were internationally known as members of a certain school of philosophy, or of a field of the sciences, or simply as representatives of the German intellectual community. They were so deeply rooted in German cultural soil that any Americanization was impossible. More than for any other refugees, their stay in America was merely an exile; and in fact many of them returned to Germany or another European country after the war.

Middle class background alone is not sufficient explanation for the swift and rather steady assimilation of the refugees. Why, for example, did they never form a cohesive ethnic community among themselves, as had practically all immigrant groups before them? As suggested earlier, the specific historical background of the Jews in Germany and the circumstances of their emigration made it impossible for them to perceive themselves as Germans and as Jews in any positive terms. They looked upon themselves much more as middle class immigrants than in any ethnic terms. Adherence to the language of their old home-country, and strong religious affiliation, factors which could have impelled the refugees into close association with other ethnic groups in
American society, were of minor importance.

An accelerating factor in the integration of the refugees into American society was the onset of World War II. As with any boom, the war economy integrated disadvantaged minorities at least temporarily into the labor force. Poor whites, and Blacks, along with many refugees, could easily find jobs and move onto the first step toward a respectable place in society. Unlike some other groups, refugees were able to turn this initial chance into a starting point from which they would attain more permanent positions as wage earners. Because of their social and educational background they succeeded during the war in changing their status from a needed group of workers to a wanted class of immigrants.

The social integration of the refugees was expedited by the psychological climate of the war. The ideology of national unity, and the abandonment of the individual approach to the "pursuit of happiness" in favor of a patriotic collectivism, created a favorable situation for the immigrants. Anti-Semitism and anti-alienism were officially denounced as un-patriotic. And cooperation with anti-fascist foreigners was approved, providing the refugees with ample opportunity to prove their loyalty to their new homecountry.

Last but not least, the fact that the refugees were considered to be a special group of immigrants helped them in many ways. The refugees were the first immigrants in American history who received comprehensive and systematic assistance by special refugee aid agencies. Newcomers were given financial assistance, were trained for new professions, and were resettled into different parts of the country. The refugees
approved the assimilation efforts of these agencies; and the success of resettlement and retraining was considerable, although it varied depending on the age, the sex, and the social background of the immigrants.

Refugee allegiance to the social and economic system of their new country was unconditional. The immigrants from Germany believed that America's social order provided everybody, most notably the new immigrant, with an equal chance to reach a respected and secure position in society. If one was willing to start a new life, the American dream could become a reality. Not only was the rise from dishwasher to millionaire possible; but, even more important, the menial worker had equal rights and an equal dignity with the millionaire. Thus the vision of an almost classless society in the United States emerged on the pages of the AUFBAU, especially during the war years.

The war also made evident that the refugees' decided approval of the American social order was not accompanied by an understanding of the American political scene. The system was looked at, but never looked into. But from what perspective could the refugees analyze the American system? Certainly their experiences in the Third Reich and in the Weimar Republic provided no background on which to base their political judgement. Nor did the refugees want to criticize a country which offered them a haven from persecution. A basic fear and a nagging inferiority complex, caused by their uncertain emotional and political position in the new land, largely accounted for their one dimensional view and lack of criticism. Refugees had been an unwanted group of immigrants throughout the thirties, and for some time their loud proclamations of allegiance to the United States could barely drown
the noise of anti-Semites and nativists.

Some of the refugees' blurred perspectives of American society had their roots in misunderstanding of the American social system from the viewpoint of middle class Germans. Thus the fact that ethnic divisions cut deeply into American society, more so than class lines, was frequently overlooked by the AUFBAU.

In other instances the European attitudes of the AUFBAU's readers produced feelings of superiority toward some aspects of American life. The German immigrants were often critical of American culture, the American family order, life in small towns, and American education. Many refugees could not reconcile themselves to such aspects of American life as married women holding jobs, children staying in school for the whole day, or old and young Americans considering comic strips as part of their daily newspaper reading. Could they ever get used to this lifestyle, they asked themselves in the AUFBAU. One famous refugee, Theodor W. Adorno, expressed his feelings about this situation in an anecdote: I still remember the shock that a housemaid, an emigrant like ourselves, gave me during our first days in New York when she, the daughter of a so-called good home, explained: "people in my town used to go to the symphony, now they go to Radio City." In no way did I want to be like her.¹ The conflict between the ideals of the upwardly mobile German bourgeois and their desire to be like the Joneses remained largely unresolved within the first generation of new

In this dilemma the AUFBAU played an important role for the new immigrants. The paper reflected the refugees' perspectives on American life and reassured them that the problems they had were common to many other newcomers. When difficulties seemed to be insurmountable to the individual refugees, the paper, and especially the New World Club, proved helpful in many practical ways, giving information and assistance concerning immigration, retraining, resettlement, and assimilation. The AUFBAU also tried to lift the morale of its readers by printing success stories of Americanized refugees, in order to reassure less fortunate immigrants that the American dream was realizable.

An important function of the AUFBAU, then, was to provide reassurance and stability. It tried to soften the cultural shock of the immigrants from Germany and help in concrete ways with their economic readjustment. For the refugees the AUFBAU was the surrogate for a cohesive ethnic community which they could not build in a more complete sense. This fact did not prevent the paper from truly serving the Americanization of the immigrant. But it did this only in a very indirect way. Neither the thunderous war patriotism nor the editorial debates about Americanization helped the reader much. But numerous smaller, neutral looking features in the paper, such as the "Wall Street Telegram" the "Review of Labor," and "Frau Marianne's" advice about careful shopping, accurately reflected the facts of daily life in the United States. Through these minor features, the AUFBAU conveyed the essential raw materials of acculturation. In reality, Americanization of the refugee occurred mostly in the background of the paper, behind the
official efforts toward that goal. The AUFBAU did succeed remarkably well in its primary goal of Americanization, but the greatest part of this success came through inadvertence.
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APPENDIX

RULES FOR REFUGEES, ROYAL OR OTHERWISE, WHILE IN AMERICA

Refugees in America are on a spot. So are Americans who have volunteered to take them in during their exile. Hence to promote international goodwill LIFE offers a few simple rules of behavior for visiting foreigners, royal or otherwise, who don't bother about becoming a part of the U.S. scene:

1. Refugees should remember that they are nothing special. Broadly speaking, all U. S. citizens except Indians, who do not count, are either refugees or descendants of refugees. Newcomers must take their proper place.

2. Refugees should not write articles about the Collapse of France or My Escape from Europe, cash checks on non-existent bank accounts, get drunk in public until they know English, or insult U. S. girls. Some American girls, unfortunately, are still susceptible to foreign accents.

3. Refugee youngsters, like those of the domestic variety, should be seen and not heard. Small fry should work hard in school and not bother their elders.

4. Celebrated refugees must learn U. S. manners and customs. They should not suggest to natives that civilized people take three hours for lunch, that what the U. S. needs is art and culture such as only Europeans can contribute, and that Americans do not really know how to live. They should also hold their public lecturing down to a subsistence minimum.
5. Rich refugees should not demand maid service, special cooking and personal automobiles from hosts who feel they are doing handsomely to provide their guests with room and board. There are already along the eastern seaboard of this country many refugees from refugees.

6. Refugees should remember that Americans' nerves are on edge. They must not band together in little swarms, chattering and squealing in their foreign bird-talk. They must mingle, calmly and happily, with all and sundry, staying outdoors as much as possible.

7. At all costs, let those refugees and imitation refugees who insist on sliding in the snow in Tyrolean costume stop yodeling.

8. Above all, refugees should be aware that Americans feel friendly toward them and in their own way are trying to give them a decent break.

LIFE magazine, December 16, 1940, p. 91.