

More than a Transit Port, but less than a Refuge: Hong Kong and Jewish Refugee
Transmigration, 1938-1941

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines and situates Hong Kong within the context of Jewish refugee transmigration between 1938 and 1941. The necessity for Austrian and German Jews to escape persecution in Europe meant that some fled across the globe to Shanghai. However, the dominant image of Shanghai as the sole Jewish refuge in East Asia downplays the role of intermediaries along the path to safety. Centering on Hong Kong, I argue that these sites facilitate the movement of refugee Jews but also acted as refuges, albeit temporarily. Furthermore, I argue that Hong Kong specifically cannot be easily categorized as either. In addition to its role as an in-between place or transit point, Hong Kong was also a temporary refuge for a small minority of escapees. Responses towards Jewish refugees emphasized either the individual's Jewish-ness or German-ness, both unstable and fluid social categories. I argue that the charity provided by local Jewish leaders to their refugee co-religionists was a way to avoid reifying older stereotypes of Jewish migrants as destitute, and to maintain the privileges held by Jewish elites. In contrast, the Hong Kong government was apathetic towards these refugees, until the outbreak of the Second World War, after which these individuals were primarily viewed as Germans or enemy aliens. The eventual Internment of such Jewish refugees at La Salle College represented a major manifestation of the perceived German threat. Despite local officials knowing that Jewish refugees were among those interned, German-ness was constructed and linked to the individual's nationality and passport. Scrutiny over characteristics of German-ness by local officials intensified in June 1940 with controversial decision to expel all enemy aliens from Hong Kong. I contend that this action can only be understood by considering larger geopolitics. In light of the rapid occupation of France and the Low Countries by Nazi Germany, as well as the Japanese

occupation of South China, Hong Kong officials panicked. I argue that Hong Kong was more than a transit point, but less than a permanent refuge.

Lay Summary

This thesis looks into the movement of German Jewish refugees through Hong Kong, and how a few refugees made Hong Kong their refuge. It argues that Hong Kong was more than a simple transit point but less than a refuge. It examines how the local Jewish community and Jewish elites helped their fellow refugee Jews by providing them with food, clothing, and sometimes, a job in Hong Kong. Yet this charity was not altruism; rather it was a way to protect the interests of Jewish leaders. The outbreak of the Second World War resulted in the internment of Germans – including Jewish refugees – as the Hong Kong government viewed these individuals as enemy aliens and needed to scrutinize their identities. However, as the situation in both Europe and China worsened in June 1940, Hong Kong officials decided it was better to expel all enemy aliens in order to protect the colony.

Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Cheuk Him Ryan Sun.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Within weeks of the notorious *Kristallnacht* pogroms throughout Nazi Germany on November 9-10, 1938, the tiny Jewish community in Hong Kong took stock of their resources. The community responded by founding of the Jewish Refugee Society of Hong Kong (JRS) on November 20, 1938.¹ A couple of weeks later on December 12, 1938, a newsletter was published and distributed to members of the JRS detailing what had been done since the Society's founding. It praises the generosity of those in the local Jewish community who responded to the appeal for funds and donations, especially those "...who are refugees themselves, but having succeeded in securing a livelihood are now actually helping their less fortunate brethren."² While the newsletter did not mention the specific value of their contribution, the very fact that any contributions from Jewish refugees were mentioned at all signified a possibility in Hong Kong for other Jewish refugees. Hong Kong could be a refuge. Beyond the community, the JRS sought and received the support of the Jewish Recreation Club (JRC), an exclusive social organization for Jewish elites. The JRC offered catering, as well as a part of their facilities as accommodations for Jewish refugees who were either hoping to secure a job in Hong Kong or awaiting transportation elsewhere.³ The colony would facilitate their movement. In this spirit of charity, the newsletter concluded optimistically: "Let us Help, and go on helping unstintingly!"⁴

¹ There is some confusion as to the actual name of the Jewish charitable organization established in Hong Kong. The newsletter used in the introduction had *Jewish Refugee Society* in its heading. Some of this society's earlier documents referred to itself as the *Jewish Benevolent Society*, while *Jewish Relief Society* and *Hongkong Jewish Refugee Relief Society* have been mentioned. While there is a possibility that all these organizations were separate entities, it does not appear plausible given Hong Kong's tiny Jewish community. For the sake of consistency, I use *Jewish Refugee Society* or *JRS* throughout this paper.

² Hong Kong Heritage Project (HKHP): SEK-8D-001 CJ1/34.

³ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/34. It notes that 12 refugees were currently using the Club.

⁴ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/34.

As a British colony located at the peripheries of the British Empire in East Asia, Hong Kong offers a unique case study for German-Jewish refugee transmigration. By 1938, Jewish refugees faced many obstacles. A strict regime of immigration controls prevented easy access into Hong Kong for many Europeans. In contrast, Chinese migrants could come and go without any restrictions.⁵ Despite these restrictions, Hong Kong did indeed temporarily house Jewish refugees during the 1930s and 1940s. Of the 215 German nationals in Hong Kong at the outbreak of the Second World War, 107 were Jewish refugees.⁶ On a practical level, this number pales in comparison to that of Shanghai, but a focus on Hong Kong contributes in a number of broad ways. Firstly, as a stopping point in refugee migrations, Hong Kong facilitated the movement of Jewish refugees. This was an extension of Hong Kong's function as a British entrepôt in the movement of commercial goods and peoples. And secondly, the reality was that for some Jewish refugees escaping persecution, Hong Kong was not just a transit station, but it became a refuge, albeit temporarily. Hong Kong was the destination for these refugees, who were able to succeed in the Colony and create homes in spite of their situations. Unlike Shanghai, which can easily fit into the

⁵ Immigration policies in Hong Kong centered on monitoring and regulating the emigration of Chinese from Hong Kong. To this end, the annual Administrative Reports recorded in detail the number of Chinese men and women emigrating from Hong Kong to other destinations (and emigrating back to Hong Kong) and whether their passage was via a British or foreign ship. The Dutch East Indies and the Straits Settlement together accounted for more than three-quarters of the destinations, but Canada and the United States also had thousands. This came as the result of exclusionary legislation and practices that restricted Chinese migration into North America. Not surprisingly, records were not kept for those who crossed the Hong Kong-China border, or those that used local junk boats. And indeed, the vast majority of refugees in Hong Kong were Chinese escaping the Japanese. See Hong Kong Government Reportss Online (HKGRO): "Report on the Social & Economic Progress of the People of the Colony of Hong Kong for the Year 1938," in *Hong Kong Administrative Report for the Year 1938*, 5-6, 28-32; "Report on the Social & Economic Progress of the People of the Colony of Hong Kong for the Year 1939," in *Hong Kong Administrative Report for the Year 1939*, 1-2, 28-32.

⁶ The National Archive (TNA): Colonial Office (CO) 323/1797/12, no 7. Children were also registered in a list but not included in the 215 German nationals. The number, 107, was reached by tallying up the entries where the internee was recorded as Jewish under the religion section. This included those who were not necessarily Jewish: one was recorded as half-Jew and another two were Protestant converts. Not included were 2 non-Jewish wives whose husbands were forced out from Europe.

category of refuge, Hong Kong does not offer a clear-cut classification. Rather, Hong Kong situates itself in-between: more than a transit point but less than a permanent refuge.

Research into the fields of movement and migration – especially those pertaining to refugees – often situates the subject as a collective or a part of a larger phenomenon. As invisible and anonymous subjects, refugees are a part of this larger subaltern grouping of peoples. The burden is then placed on government and official sources to amalgamate the various experiences into an easily digestible, clean-cut narrative. Michael Marrus's *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* is one of these top-down works that examine the connections between the convergences of refugee movements throughout Europe with the newly-established agencies that attempted to regulate them.⁷ Acceptance of Jewish refugees into Britain, and other Western European countries, was influenced by the country's experience during the First World War. Yet, this emphasis on the refugee movement conceals the refugee as an independent, autonomous actor, and obscures the multi-faceted networks in which refugees are enmeshed in.⁸ When compared to Marrus, Peter Gatrell's *The Making of the Modern Refugee* is more ambitious in its attempt to maintain a balance between a worldwide coverage of refugee movements and the agency of its refugee subject.⁹ Focusing on the individual experiences may suggest a watering-down or anecdotization that distracts and obscures the larger impact that these refugee movements have. However, writing an individual-oriented history (or microhistory) strengthens the field. In the memoir of Ernest Heppner, he notes that his escape by cruise ship included a layover

⁷ Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War Through the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 9-11.

⁸ Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11.

⁹ Peter Gatrell also discusses both the complexities and nuances in writing a refugee-oriented history in his earlier investigation of Russian refugees in the First World War. See Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking, Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005).

in Hong Kong during which he window shopped.¹⁰ Grete Appel states in her oral interview that her and her family's escape to Hong Kong was only possible because of her uncle, who was a Hong Kong resident. These individual examples reveal the paths of escape and networks of assistance which are overlooked in traditional narratives.

Hong Kong fits neatly into the growing historiography that seeks to conceptualize the Holocaust as a global or transnational event, with repercussions beyond the geographic confines of Europe. In de-centering the Holocaust as a European phenomenon, Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt's seminal work emphasizes the transnationality of Jewish refugee experiences. In charting the cross-border journeys of Jewish refugees, not only is spontaneous movement a constant theme, but so are the objects of immigration highlighted: the visa and passport.¹¹ A German-Jewish refugee family could initially flee to neighboring Holland, fail to get a visa to Britain, but end up in the United States. Acceptance of Jewish refugees into Britain, and other Western European countries, was complicated by conflicting attitudes: at times loosening immigration laws galvanized by public opinions, and at other times viewed Jews refugees as different from genuine asylum seekers and not in danger.¹² In the Americas, Marion Kaplan notes that the Dominican Republic's decision to open up the country to Jewish immigration in 1938 was in part to fix up their international image after the state-sanctioned massacre of black Dominicans a year prior but also racially motivated to attract European settlers.¹³ In Hong Kong, correspondences between Lawrence Kadoorie and

¹⁰ Ernest G. Heppner, *Shanghai Refuge: A Memoir of the World War II Jewish Ghetto*, 32-33.

¹¹ Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich, Refugee Jews, 1933-1946* (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 54-57, 142-145.

¹² Mark Levene, "The Forty Years' Crisis: The Jewish Dimension," in *Refugees in Europe, 1919-1959: A Forty Years' Crisis?* ed. by Matthew Frank and Jessica Reinisch (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 93-94.

¹³ Marion Kaplan, *Dominican Haven: The Jewish Refugee Settlement in Sosúa, 1940-1945* (New York: Museum of Jewish Heritage, 2008), 23-24. See also Daniela Gleizer, *Unwelcome Exiles: Mexico and the Jewish refugees from Nazism, 1933-1945* trans. Susan Thomae (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014).

the Chinese official T.V. Soong about a plan to lease Hainan Island for Jewish refugees gestures towards associations with colonialism and Western imperialism.¹⁴ Taking into consideration the particularities of humanitarian assistance reveals the layers underneath, problematizing the experiences of Jewish refugees.

These movements away from the dominant narratives are also present for Holocaust narratives in East Asia. As an enclave of extraterritoriality that came about through Western imperialism, Shanghai's open door policies towards Jewish refugees contrasted Hong Kong's more protectionist policies. In Holocaust narratives, the position of Shanghai is inseparable from its image as the *sole* refuge in East Asia, which is a position taken up by many historians, such as David Kranzler. These scholars emphasize the fact that despite all odds, the Jewish refugee population grew and survived the Holocaust. This group existed, and flourished, alongside Russian and Ukrainian diasporic communities, contributing to Shanghai's cosmopolitan nature.¹⁵ On the ground, Jewish refugees interacted with local Chinese as co-workers, employers, or tenants.¹⁶ Chinese (and Japanese) official policies towards the Jews saw them as another possible source of war revenue, a view influenced by the antisemitic trope of Jews as international financiers.¹⁷ Despite attempts by the Nazis to influence and implement the Final Solution in Shanghai, nothing happened. Jewish refugees

¹⁴ HKHP: SEK-8D-002 FJ1. The plan ultimately did not come to fruition as the Nationalists were currently focused on fighting the Japanese. T.V. Soong did offer vague assurances that the issue could be brought up again after the conflict was over.

¹⁵ Marcia R. Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort: Diaspora Communities of Shanghai* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 124, 144-145.

¹⁶ Pan Guang, "The Friendship and Acculturation in Adversity: On the Relationship between Jewish Refugees and Chinese," in *Exil Shanghai 1938-1947: Jüdisches Leben in der Emigration* ed. by Georg Armbrüster, Michael Kohlstruck, and Sonja Mühlberger (Teetz, Germany: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2000), 80-81.

¹⁷ Gao Bei, *Shanghai Sanctuary: Chinese and Japanese Policy towards European Jewish Refugees during World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11-12, 34-36.

persevered in this foreign land in defiance of the Nazi.¹⁸ But the centrality of Shanghai as the *sole* refuge in East Asia has likewise been challenged. The presence of refugee Jews – whether momentarily or semi-permanent – in Manila, Kobe, and Harbin all demonstrate a variety of experiences and obstacles that the Shanghai (and a solely European/Western) narrative could not encompass.¹⁹

Hong Kong too exhibits characteristics that distinguish it from Shanghai and these other lesser-known refuges. Hong Kong was linked to the larger maritime and migration networks of port-cities and British imperialism. As Philip Kuhn notes, the demands of Western imperialism for cheap labour changed the dynamic of Chinese migration as trade and commerce ran in parallel to the movement of peoples into, out of, and through Hong Kong.²⁰ The colony was an *entrepôt*. Historian Elizabeth Sinn furthers this idea by suggesting that Hong Kong was an *in-between place*. This term highlights the broader external connections that Hong Kong facilitated. Sinn’s approach embraces an international, or transnational, framework whereby the place of Hong Kong is made the object of others to use. Chinese migrants, remuneration, and opium were routed through Hong Kong before continuing on towards their destination.²¹ It is this flow of goods and people that Sinn emphasizes are crucial to the prosperity of Hong Kong. For most Jewish refugees, they were

¹⁸ David Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis and Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1976), 174, 231-233; Gao Bei, *Shanghai Sanctuary: Chinese and Japanese Policy towards European Jewish Refugees during World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 11-12, 34-36.

¹⁹ Jonathan Goldstein, “The Sorokin and Golab Theses and Their Applicability to South, Southeast, and East Asian Port Jewry,” in *Port Jews, Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950* ed. by David Cesarani (London, UK: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 188-190. See also Frank Ephraim, *Escape to Manila: From Nazi Tyranny to Japanese Terror* (Baltimore: University of Illinois Press, 2014) or Pamela Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1998).

²⁰ Philip Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham, Maryland: 2008), Chapter 3. EPub.

²¹ Elizabeth Sinn, *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), 8-10.

a part of the flow described by Sinn. Their presence in Hong Kong was fleeting as the colony was merely a stopping point on their way on their way to Shanghai.

Yet, decentralizing Hong Kong risking ignoring the reality that Hong Kong was also a colonial port city and a site of multiethnic and multicultural interactions and exchanges.²² For a few Jewish refugees, Hong Kong was the destination. The colony was the endpoint of their migration. Once Hong Kong was incorporated within the British Empire in 1841, the new colony was integrated into the migrational networks stemming from British imperialism. In the 1850s, Hong Kong's early Jewish community was composed mainly of wealthy Sephardic (also known as Baghdadi) Jewish merchants from Bombay or Calcutta.²³ By the 1880s, the demographics of the Jewish community began to change as eastern European (also known as Ashkenazi) Jews came to Hong Kong as refugees and settled in the colony.²⁴ In the early 1900s, the construction of the Ohel Leah Synagogue and the Jewish Recreation Club gave the Jewish community in Hong Kong a proper site for religious devotion and community making.²⁵ However, divisions within the community persisted as the wealthy Jewish merchants sought membership into the British social world. This process of Anglicization has been written about by many historians such as Chiatta Betta. And so too were its limitations discussed. Despite dressing in Western-styled clothing and embracing the

²² Desmond Hok-Man Sham, "Hong Kong as a Port City," in *Hong Kong Culture and Society in the New Millennium: Hong Kong as Method* ed. by Yiu-Wai Shu (Singapore: Springer Singapore Imprint, 2017), 94-95. Ebook.

²³ Dennis A. Leventhal, "Environmental Interactions of the Jews of Hong Kong," in *The Jews of China, Volume One: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* ed. by Jonathan Goldstein (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 171-172.

²⁴ Debra Maynard, *A Vision Fulfilled: A History of the Jewish Community in Hong Kong, 1843-1995* (Hong Kong: Jewish Community Centre, 1995), 15-18; Xun Zhou, "'Cosmopolitan from above': a Jewish experience in Hong Kong," *European Review of History; Revue européenne d'histoire* 23, no. 5-6 (2016): 898-900.

²⁵ Leventhal, "Environmental Interactions of the Jews of Hong Kong," 172, 176-177.

English language, complete social integration was difficult and rarely possible.²⁶ While Jewish elites in Hong Kong may have been barred from exclusive, British-only social clubs, their economic function did allow for some degree of acceptance. The Port Jew/ry concept forwarded by Lois Dubin and David Sorkin argues that Jewish international mercantile trade allowed for the establishment of permanent Jewish communities in early-modern Europe port-cities with legal rights afford to them.²⁷ It was through their utility that Jewish merchants were able to attain greater social and political privileges vis-à-vis other Jewish communities across Europe. But this concept is only partially applicable to Hong Kong's existing Jewish community (ignoring the obvious differences between the 17th/18th centuries and the 20th century). Jonathan Goldstein argues that Jewish elites in these colonial settings pursued a public life not as Jews; rather their identities were acculturated to conform to dominant British norms.²⁸ The privileges associated with local communal participation remained hidden away from those Jews migrants transiting Hong Kong, whom Goldstein contends should be understood as “persons of Jewish origins temporarily living or working in ports’.”²⁹ It would be the visibility of Jewish refugees, whom embodied colonial/societal fears of foreignness and destitution, coupled with the fear of the spread of these stereotypes that motivated local Jewish humanitarian assistance. Despite consisting of 129 individuals in

²⁶ Ruth Cernea, *Almost Englishmen: Baghdadi Jews in British Burma* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007), 42-46; Zhou, “Cosmopolitan from above,” 902-903; Chiara Betta, “From Orientals to Imagined Britons: Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai,” *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 4 (2003): 1015-1016.

²⁷ Luis Dubin, “Researching Port Jews and Port Jewries: Trieste and Beyond,” in *Port Jews, Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950* ed. by David Cesarani (London; Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 47-48; see also David Sorkin, “The Port Jew: Notes toward a social type (Understanding the experience of the merchant Jewish class in early modern western and central Europe),” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 50, no. 1 (1997): 87-97.

²⁸ Jonathan Goldstein, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia: Singapore, Manila, Taipei, Harbin, Shanghai, Rangoon, and Surabaya* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 147; Bonnie M. Harris, “Port Jews of the Orient: Asia’s Jewish Diaspora,” *Journal of Jewish Identities* 5, no. 2 (2012): 53-54.

²⁹ By migrant, I borrow from Goldstein’s incorporation of immigration historian Caroline Golab’s distinction between *migrant* and *immigrant*: the former lacking any interest in being permanent residents in their immediate locations in contrast to the latter’s desire to get permanent residency. Goldstein, “The Sorkin and Golab Thesis,” 181.

1931 (and at least one hundred by 1936) the number of Jewish refugees that the local Jewish community assisted was far greater.³⁰ And for some Jewish refugees whom the community assisted, they would stay in Hong Kong and give back by helping their fellow refugee co-religionists.

Archival materials make up a large portion of this thesis. Government documents are examined alongside oral histories and testimonies – the personal accounts of refugees – within a larger narrative structure of enmeshed networks. For my investigation, the interview with Grete Appel exists as the only detailed source about the Jewish refugee experience in Hong Kong.³¹ Research into the transmigration of Jewish refugees through Hong Kong was hampered by a relative lack of archival materials. The Hong Kong Heritage Project, a corporate archive which housed materials relating to the Kadoorie family, was only opened in 2007. It included documents pertaining to the activities of the Jewish Refugee Society as well as personal letters of Lawrence and Horace Kadoorie, revealing a network of personal connections throughout the South China Sea. Whereas the local, non-governmental perspective is accessible, government documents pertaining to the internment of Germans in Hong Kong remained classified until 2016. Had I began this project any earlier, its trajectory would have been completely different.³²

Within Hong Kong is the story of Jewish refugee transmigration. As the Jewish Refugee Society's newsletter indicated, Jewish refugees did indeed establish a presence in

³⁰ HKGRO: "Report on the Census of the Colony of Hong Kong, 1931" in *Hong Kong Legislative Council Sessional Papers 1931*, 112. The 1931 Census was organized along the vague category of race and was the last official census compiled prior to Hong Kong's occupation. It does not explicitly account for individual distinctions such as being ethnically or culturally Jewish. Germans in Hong Kong numbered 179, but the same issues are present. Cf. Leventhal, "Environmental Interactions of the Jews of Hong Kong," 172.

³¹ Grete Appel, Interview 19293, *Visual History Archives*, 1996.

³² Most documents in the Colonial Office files pertaining to German internment during the Second World War in places such as Ceylon, Singapore, Malta etc. were opened between 1970 and 1990. Only the files regarding internment in Hong Kong remained closed until 2016.

Hong Kong. They actively contributed to Hong Kong society through work as accountants or mechanics. But how should this moment be understood? Where, and how, should Hong Kong be situated? Calling Hong Kong a migration hub for Jewish refugees ignores those refugee Jews that saw Hong Kong as their intended destination; conversely, declaring that Hong Kong was a Jewish refuge risks exaggerating and overstressing a historical reality out of reach for the majority of Jewish transmigrants. In approaching this dichotomy, this thesis suggests that Hong Kong occupied the roles of both facilitator and host in its relationship to Jewish refugees. Hong Kong should be situated in the middle. Following a chronological timeline, this thesis presents Jewish-ness and German-ness as fluid categories of identification applied onto Jewish refugees by both the local Jewish elites and Hong Kong authorities. The discourse surrounding Jewish refugees only intensified as Hong Kong was drawn into the war in China and Europe.

In chapter 1, Hong Kong is discussed as a site of temporary and permanent refuge. It focuses on the role of the Jewish Refugee Society and how negative associations between Jewish-ness and destitution motivated Jewish elites to help refugee Jews who transited Hong Kong. In chapter 2, I employ a microhistorical approach in exploring the agency of Jewish internees: how they navigated internment as both an unwilling subject and as an enterprising actor. As well, I examine how the Hong Kong government conceptualized enemy aliens, and the processes behind determine who were genuine enemy aliens – or Germans – and who were refugees. Chapter 3 explores the expulsion of enemy aliens from Hong Kong as a process of rhetorical convergence whereby the Hong Kong government emphasized German-ness while public opinion noted the Jewish-ness. It also examines the contradictions and exceptions that came out of the government's hastily expulsion order. Ultimately, this thesis

attempts to tell a story about the temporary haven that is Hong Kong, and those Jewish refugees who were helped and briefly made it a home.

Chapter 2: Charity and the Perception of Jewish-ness

On October 1938, the steamer *Conte Rosso*, bound for Shanghai, docked in Hong Kong. Then, ten Jewish refugees jumped ship. All were caught and brought back by members of the Hong Kong police. This incident threatened the arrangements made by Moses Talan, a prominent member in Hong Kong's Jewish community and a representative of the local Jewish refugee organization, with Hong Kong authorities. Special permission had been given for Jewish refugees with transfer tickets to Shanghai (or other destinations) to land in Hong Kong while awaiting their steamers.³³ In light of the incident, the Hong Kong police were unimpressed with this blatant abuse of generosity. Talan was told unequivocally that should such actions occur again “[the colonial authorities] will enforce stricter rules and forbid the [disembarking] of refugees with through tickets.”³⁴ This should not have happened again, yet incidents of stowaways would continue to occur.³⁵ With few belongings and no home to call their own, these desperate Jewish refugees perhaps saw a possibility in Hong Kong.

Few chose to escape this far. The sea journey from Europe to East Asia took between 30 and 50 days, depending on the route the refugees took. As the persecution of Jews within Nazi Germany intensified, many Jews sought sanctuaries across and outside Europe. But Hong Kong was not one of these places. The Immigration and Passport Ordinance enacted in 1934 restricted the entry into Hong Kong only to persons holding valid travel documents and a Hong Kong visa. However, the ordinance did stipulate that the visa requirement would be

³³ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/10.

³⁴ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/10.

³⁵ South China Morning Post (SCMP) “Trip to Hongkong,” *South China Morning Post*, Sept. 3, 1939; “Refugees Stow Away,” *South China Morning Post*, Dec. 19, 1939; “Jewish Stowaway,” *South China Morning Post*, Feb. 6, 1940.

waived for citizens of countries with visa-exemption agreements with Britain.³⁶ Although Britain held tremendous constitutional powers over Hong Kong – especially in matters relating to defence and foreign relations – in general, local issues were not interfered with.³⁷ Hence, even after Britain relaxed its immigration restrictions after the *Kristallnacht* pogroms in 1938, the visa requirement remained enforced in Hong Kong. It was a local issue. This contrasted with Shanghai, a refuge that required no visa. There one simply showed up and was allowed entry, and 17,000 Jewish refugees seized the opportunity.³⁸

But this does not mean that Hong Kong played no part in the movement of Jewish refugees. The Jewish Refugee Society of Hong Kong (JRS) aided these refugees who transited through the colony, providing for their basic needs and connected them to possible job opportunities. However, most of these refugees were destitute and few could speak English. These characteristics stoked the fears of Hong Kong’s Jewish leadership, especially the fear that the visibility of these destitute refugees would create divisions between the local Jewish community and the wider British Hong Kong society. Therefore, the decision to help, on the part of the JRS and local Jewish elites, was generally ambivalent. The JRS exemplified what historian Peter Gatrell calls the “contours of assistance:”³⁹ that the JRS’ offer of humanitarian aid was accompanied by hidden agendas. They helped, to help themselves. In order to better understand the dynamics of Jewish refugees *in and through* Hong Kong, it is this discrepancy that will be examined.

³⁶ Peter Wesley-Smith, “Anti-Chinese Legislation in Hong Kong,” in *Precairous Balance: Hong Kong between China and Britain, 1842-1992* ed. by Ming K. Chan and John D. Young (New York: Routledge, 2015), 95. Ebook; HKGRO: R.A.C. North, “Immigration and Passports Ordinance, 1934,” *Hong Kong Government Gazette*, No.8/1934, May 18, 1934, 382. This Ordinance also exempted Chinese from these requirements.

³⁷ Li Pang-Kwong, *Hong Kong from Britain to China Political cleavages, electoral dynamics and institutional changes* (London, UK: Routledge, 2018), 20. Ebook.

³⁸ Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich*, 140.

³⁹ Gatrell, *Modern Refugee*, 283.

2.1 Responses and Reactions to Jewish Refugees

It was with the annexation of Austria (*Anschluss*) into Nazi Germany on March 12, 1938 that Austrian Jews realized that there was no longer a future for them in the country. The outwards flight of refugees was stonewalled, however, by bureaucratic red-tape and resistance. Governments of Western Europe acted quickly to restrict immigration. Jewish refugees with Austrian or German passports soon found their plans shattered as countries retreated behind their quota for legal Jewish immigration. Britain protected itself by resurrecting visa requirements, a policy that was influenced by the possibility of an influx of Austrian Jews, combined with the decision by local Jewish organizations not to financially support new refugees.⁴⁰ This restricted another path of escape. In Hong Kong, amendments were made to the Immigration Ordinance but nothing that made barriers disappear. For Austrians and Germans wishing to enter Hong Kong, a visa was still necessary.

Despite this restriction, steamers carrying passengers who were Jewish refugees, continued to dock in Hong Kong. Of the three groups of German-Jewish refugees who stopped in Hong Kong prior to *Kristallnacht* (or the November pogroms) in Nazi Germany in 1938, many were former professionals. Doctors, engineers, lawyers – all young men with middle-class occupations – dominated the first wave of refugees coming from Europe.⁴¹ Many had brought with them money as well as suitable clothing for the journey. Most were not prepared for life in East Asia. In one case on November 2, 1938, the *South China Morning Post* (*SCMP*), as well as other local newspapers reported that of the almost 200 German-Jewish refugees, “only three or four succeeded [in finding work] and they joyfully

⁴⁰ Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948 - British immigration policy, Jewish refugees and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 58-60; Pamela Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue: Impotent or Indifferent? Anglo-Jewry 1938-1945* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 27-28, 48.

⁴¹ Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich*, 18.

disembarked.”⁴² The harsh reality was that finding a job in Hong Kong was extremely difficult. All the more difficult considering that these refugees often had less than a weekend to search as their ship resupplied. Their strategy was simply to set out. It was easier – and possibly safer – to board a steamer bound for the East, and figure out what to do when they arrived. But once in Hong Kong, who could these refugees turn to?

Consisting of less than 200 locals, the members of the local Jewish community were the obvious choice for refugees to make first contact. Moses Talan, the future honorary secretary of the Jewish Refugee Society, was a manager at American Lloyd, a local shipping and transport company. Talan himself was connected to even more prominent members: Lawrence and Horace Kadoorie, brothers and business partners in Sir Elly Kadoorie and Sons, and shareholders in the electricity company China Light and Power. Descended from a philanthropic Baghdadi Jewish family and leaders of the Hong Kong’s Jewish community, the Kadoorie brothers were keenly interested in the activities of Jewish organizations and in helping their community.⁴³ Lawrence based his activities in Hong Kong while Horace was heavily involved with Shanghai’s Jewish community and its rapidly growing Jewish refugee population. This transnational, familial network oriented both ports towards the goal of providing for refugees. The activities of these prominent community members included organizing accommodations and food, providing clothing and small stipends, and simply conversing with refugees who could not disembark. These services were later centralized under the umbrella of the Jewish Refugee Society.

⁴² SCMP “Refugees Arrive,” *South China Morning Post*, Nov. 2, 1938. See also: OHKNC “Guopo jia hezai de ao guo gang youtairen tong shu wangguo bei xue kun zhu zhujingguo [The country is broken; where are its people? German and Austrian Jews crossing Hong Kong recount their painful experiences of being expelled from their countries],” *Ta Kung Pao*, Nov. 2, 1938; “200 Jewish Refugees Seek Hongkong Haven,” *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, Nov. 1, 1938.

⁴³ Lawrence Kadoorie, “The Kadoorie Memoir,” in *Sino-Judaic Studies: Whence and Where* ed. Denis A. Leventhal (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Jewish Historical Society, 1985), 88-89.

Once in Hong Kong, making connections was crucial. The refugees had to introduce themselves, establish contacts in Hong Kong and expand their networks. Ideally the refugees would use their networks to find work in Hong Kong. Even if a job failed to materialize, these connections remained valuable. After their sojourn in Hong Kong, Jewish refugees made sure to follow up with their contacts when they arrived in Shanghai. Hans Toepfer, a 28 year-old Austrian refugee, was a former electrical engineer with eight years of technical and practical experience. In addition to working in various capacities (at multiple companies as a technician or designer), Hans was fluent in English, French, and German.⁴⁴ These networks were not simply limited to East Asia, but were integrated into the global networks of Jewish refugee organizations. A French refugee organization forwarded an application from a Dr. Jacques Sgalitzer to the JRS because he mentioned his willingness to work anywhere.⁴⁵ Jacques had graduated with a degree in law, had published books, and worked as a stockbroker and secretary. These applications all repeat a similar trend: refugees, well qualified, and often very experienced. A desire to keep from becoming destitute could be felt from these letters. Sadly, these correspondences are often the sole surviving record of their lives and achievements.

As was the case for many refugees, the difficulty of finding work was compounded with the dreaded silence – a lack of response from the contact. Karl Glaser, an Austrian-Jewish refugee, had arrived in Hong Kong in August 1938. He was one of the few sponsored by a member of the local Jewish community. But the same challenges still persisted. Still in Hong Kong, Karl sent a letter to Lawrence Kadoorie dated October 3, 1938. He wrote that five-weeks had passed since their last contact and that: “You have kindly promised me to

⁴⁴ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/11A.

⁴⁵ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/11A.

look whether you can find out any situation for me.... While my own efforts have failed so far, your kind assistance, I feel sure, in view of your importance and influence will be most valuable help for me.”⁴⁶ The tone was desperate. Despite Karl having been a partner in a well-known grain importing firm, he was willing to “start on a small salary-basis.”⁴⁷ Karl wanted to work, and perhaps preferred to have a job in Hong Kong. Yet, there was no record that Lawrence responded.

In order to stay in Hong Kong, refugees had to overcome the barrier posed by the visa requirement. It was difficult, but not impossible. The Immigration and Passport Ordinance 1934 does suggest that the period of stays for non-British citizens could be adjusted, but the necessity of a passport and visa remained.⁴⁸ A real olive branch came in late December 1938, when the colonial government permitted Hong Kong residents to sponsor a Hong Kong visa for family members.⁴⁹ Grete Appel and her family were among the select few who benefitted from familial connections. Grete had a relative living in Hong Kong: her maternal uncle, Herman Korczyn. In December 1938 she unexpectedly received a letter from Herman stating he had prepared visas for her and her family. In fact, he had applied for the visas before even writing the letter. A small complication arose as Grete was scheduled to marry Karl Appel in May 1939, and therefore had to wait for his visa; but everything proceeded smoothly and they departed for Hong Kong in July.⁵⁰ Herman likely capitalized on this opportunity. Members of his family (his ex-wife, his mother, Grete’s parents, his brother and his wife etc.)

⁴⁶ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/11A.

⁴⁷ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/11A.

⁴⁸ HKGRO: R.A.C. North, “Immigration and Passports Ordinance, 1934,” *Hong Kong Government Gazette*, No.8/1934, May 18, 1934, 382.

⁴⁹ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/39.

⁵⁰ Grete Appel, Interview 19293, *Visual History Archives*, 1996.

totalling to at least ten people were able to get visas to Hong Kong.⁵¹ Having secured a refuge, the Appels (and Herman's other relatives) faced the same difficulties as any refugee in Hong Kong – housing and work. Again, familial networks helped ease their troubles. In a fortunate set of events, Herman helped her family with accommodations and connected Karl to possible job opportunities. Indeed, Karl would join a local syndicate building a Canning factory in Kowloon.⁵² Grete likely assumed responsibility for the household, either taking care of her parents, or applying for jobs.

2.2 Perceiving Jewish-ness and Communal Anxieties

In early-November 1938, Moses Talan hosted, in Hong Kong, representatives of Jewish refugee organizations in East Asia. The goal was to coordinate refugee relief and to keep one another informed. During a discussion about Jewish refugee families, the Philippines representative Philip Frieder notes that in addition to housing, “[the refugees] had to be well dressed and fed so as to make it easier for them to find suitable employment.”⁵³ Frieder recognized the necessity of this charity, as “the [Jewish] community did not want them to go around like tramps.”⁵⁴ His statement reflected colonial realities. In a heavily racialized space such as in Manila – or Hong Kong – the influx of destitute Jewish refugees could damage the social status of local Jewish elites. These concerns stemmed from economic considerations, but also the possible social damage that the Jewish community in

⁵¹ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-2 Herman Korczyn entry.

⁵² TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-2 Karl Appel entry.

⁵³ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/10.

⁵⁴ HKHP: SEK-8D-001, CJ1/10. At the meeting, the cost of maintaining one refugee per month was reportedly US\$ 27.50. Historian Bonnie Harris noted that “subsistence for a single person for a seventy-five day period amounted to about \$50.00; \$75.00 for a family of two; and about \$90.00 for a family of three. 272.

the Philippines could suffer.⁵⁵ Neither did local Jews want to raise the ire of American – or British – elites, who could perceive the refugees as a social menace.

Although the Hong Kong government took a hands-off approach towards Jewish refugee trans-migration prior to the Second World War, because Hong Kong was a migration hub, the influx of destitute Jewish refugees could raise their visibility. The fear that Hong Kong authorities would notice was not too farfetched. As early as 1923, the Legislative Council of Hong Kong raised the issue of destitute White Russian refugees, whom were often Jews.⁵⁶ And indeed, local newspapers generally included one or two columns that mentioned Jewish refugees transiting Hong Kong, or gave updates as the situation of refugee Jews in Shanghai. Stowaways from Shanghai were a common occurrence and regularly mentioned.⁵⁷ The fears elicited by Jewish refugees within these East Asian Jewish communities also allude to old-world stereotypes regarding late 19th century Jewish migration. A stereotypical Jewish immigrant of this time was perceived by British and French elites as poor, destitute and a social burden.⁵⁸ Societal fears towards foreign-looking immigrants and the antisemitic rhetoric of Jews as parasites spread as more of these Eastern European Jews – or Ashkenazi – sought better futures by immigrating to the West.⁵⁹ These fears and concerns were only amplified in the colonies.

⁵⁵ Bonnie M. Harris, “Refugee Rescue in the Philippines, 1937-1941,” in »*Wer bleibt, opfert seine Jahre, vielleicht sein Leben*« *Deutsche Juden 1938-1941*, ed. Susanne Heim et. al. (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 271-272.

⁵⁶ John Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 58; HKGRO: *Hong Kong Legislative Council Hansard*, 30 August 1923, 70.

⁵⁷ SCMP “Trip to Hong Kong – Jewish Stowaway Returns to Shanghai – Austrian Student,” *South China Morning Post*, Sept. 3, 1939; “Bound for Manila – Party of Ten German Jewish Refugees,” *South China Morning Post*, Dec. 13, 1938.

⁵⁸ Klaus Weber, “Transmigrants Between Legal Restrictions and Private Charity – The Jews’ Temporary Shelter in London, 1885-1939,” in *Points of Passage Jewish Transmigrants from Eastern Europe in Scandinavia, Germany and Britain 1880-1914* ed. by Tobias Brinkmann (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 88.

⁵⁹ Susan L. Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants in London, 1880-1939* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 56, 131.

To combat this fear and the image of destitution, Jewish elites were motivated to provide humanitarian aid. Klaus Weber argues that this generosity stemmed from “the Anglo-Jewish tradition of resolving all problems related to Jewish immigration and transmigration on its own.”⁶⁰ This tradition, which Susan Tananbaum explains as an expression of *Tzedakah*, is the Jewish obligation to help those in need.⁶¹ In Hong Kong, this not only amounted to a material investment – donated clothes or catering – but also a moral investment. Local Jewish leaders, notably Talan (and later Lawrence), negotiated with colonial authorities for informal agreements regarding transiting Jewish refugees, or to advocate for refugees affected by the notices of expulsion. This charity was to be voluntary. However, the altruistic nature of this *Tzedakah* is difficult to separate from the idea of self-preservation. In late 19th century London, assistance provided to poorer Jews was a way for elite British Jews to enhance their own social standing within British society. Jewish elites hoped that solving this social issue would allow them to better integrate with British elites – who often distrusted foreigners or held antisemitic beliefs – as these Anglican elites held a positive outlook towards charity.⁶² To prevent the tarnishing of the Jewish community’s reputation, Jewish philanthropists established charities to help their Ashkenazi brethren and other disadvantaged Jews, sometimes concealing (quite literally at times) the presence of destitute Jews.⁶³ But the fear of merely the association of destitution resulted in a regulating

⁶⁰ Weber, “The Jews’ Temporary Shelter in London, 1885-1939,” 98.

⁶¹ Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants in London*, 56.

⁶² Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants in London*, 55-56.

⁶³ Weber, “The Jews’ Temporary Shelter in London, 1885-1939,” 87; Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants in London*, 55. During the immediate postwar period, Jewish refugees in Shanghai were desperate to leave the city and immigrate to the United States, Canada, Australia, and Palestine – anywhere that was not Shanghai. In late-July 1946, a group of 283 Jewish refugees bound for Australia arrived in Hong Kong. They were expected to stay for a couple of days before continuing their journey on the Australian steamer *Duntroon*. However, the Australian government requisitioned the steamer, stranding almost 300 Jewish refugees in Hong Kong for an uncertain amount of time. The concern of being a social burden was again visible. From August 1946 to January 1947, this group was provided room and board at the luxurious Peninsula Hotel by Lawrence Kadoorie. On the

of accommodations. Klaus Weber notes that certain managers of the Jew's Temporary Shelter would refuse lodging for destitute or almost penniless Jewish migrants on sanitary grounds, directing them to other lodging-houses.⁶⁴ Perhaps a similar concern was raised by members of the Jewish Recreation Club, the social club of Jewish elites that opened up some temporary accommodations. The JRS newsletter noted that the club hosted 12 refugees. But lacking reliable documentation, one can only speculate as to the process of being accommodated in the club. What was certain was that Jewish elites assisted their poorer co-religionists, in part to safeguard their privileges within British society, but also out of genuine care.

In these colonial cosmopolitan centres, Jewish elites adopted white British culture, education, and mannerisms. In Shanghai this process of Anglicization included: membership into social clubs, drinking whiskey, and equestrianism.⁶⁵ The Jewish Recreation Club in Hong Kong, with its large, well designed rooms and a fully-stocked service bar, was one physical manifestation of this attempt at mimicking the tastes of the white British expatriate community.⁶⁶ These Jewish elites began shedding their traditional clothing for more Western-styled attire and a more Western lifestyle. This was an “imagined British identity,” writes historian Chiara Betta – a deliberate attempt at reshaping their lives to conform to societal desires and realities.⁶⁷ This restructuring of elite Jewish social identity was also present in Hong Kong. Lawrence Kadoorie grew up in an Anglicized household and had an

surface, the fact that they were refugees was concealed by where they were staying and by participating in picnics and outings; the least well-off given a monthly stipend. See HKHP: SEK-8D-003 J1/43, 46, 71.

⁶⁴ Weber, “The Jews’ Temporary Shelter in London, 1885-1939,” 90.

⁶⁵ Betta, “From Orientals to Imagined Britons,” 1015.

⁶⁶ Felicia Yap, “At the Edge of Empire: The Eurasian, Portuguese, and Baghdadi Jewish Community in Hong Kong,” in *From a British to a Chinese Colony? Hong Kong before and after the 1997 Handover*, ed. Gary Chi-hung Luk (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2017), 220; Leventhal, “Environmental Interactions of the Jews of Hong Kong,” 172; John Carroll, *Concise History of Hong Kong*, 222.

⁶⁷ Betta, “From Orientals to Imagined Britons,” 1013.

English education. He owned property throughout Hong Kong including the iconic Peninsula Hotel. Although he did not particularly excel at Victorian sports, he was an avid photographer. As these Jewish elites moved more towards the British, they began to refer to their community as Sephardi: both to construct a closer association to their European roots and to court the British, but also to distinguish them from the poorer Ashkenazi Jews.⁶⁸ Felicia Yap notes that in Hong Kong during the interwar period, the Sephardis generally avoided the Ashkenazi as the latter would bring unwanted associations. Contrasting the Sephardic elites, Ashkenazi – and some poorer Sephardic Jews – embraced the cultural markers of Judaism. They maintained the use of Judeo-Arabic in religious ceremonies and daily conversations, and wore traditional clothing.⁶⁹ The divisions within the Jewish community and social segregation between elite Jewish and British communities are indicative of colonial society in Hong Kong and the broader British world. Despite acculturation or achievements, Jewish elites would remain barred from certain venues.

In late 1938, Jewish elites in Hong Kong face one of its major challenges. On December 19, the steamer *Conte Biancamano* and its 528 German-Jewish refugees arrived. It was one of the largest single groups of refugees to transit through Hong Kong.⁷⁰ Their ages ranged from three months to 68 years old. Few had any belongings besides their clothes, which were likely unwashed and, as reported by the *South China Morning Post*, clearly insufficient for Shanghai's colder climate.⁷¹ Hardly any spoke English. The arrival of this group risked highlighting all the stereotypes that British parliamentarians, Hong Kong

⁶⁸ Betta, "From Orientals to Imagined Britons," 1013.

⁶⁹ Yap, "Eurasian, Portuguese, and Baghdadi Jewish Community," 220-222; Felicia Yip, "Sex and Stereotypes: Eurasians, Jews and the Politics of Race and Religion in British Asia during the Second World War," *Social Scientist* 38, no. 3 (2010): 77-78.

⁷⁰ SCMP "Jewish Refugees for Shanghai," *South China Morning Post*, Dec. 19, 1938.

⁷¹ SCMP "Jewish Refugees for Shanghai," *South China Morning Post*, Dec. 19, 1938.

officials, and the local Jewish community feared: a visible economic and social burden combined with the antisemitic trope of Jews as unclean and destitute.⁷² Unsurprisingly, members of the Jewish Refugee Society moved quickly to assist their fellow Jews, providing blankets and food to the most needy.⁷³ While the exemption that Talan negotiated for transiting Jewish refugees was most likely kept, it was unlikely that any of the refugees aboard the *Conte Biancamano* got off the ship.

The demographics of Jewish refugees transiting Hong Kong changed in the wake of the November pogroms. But without the proper visa, or sponsorship, it was difficult – if not impossible – to actually stay. These refugees who came and went were transmigrants: the *trans-* signifying a constant state of movement while *-migrant* denotes a lack of interest, or inability, to attain permanent residency in their immediate locations.⁷⁴ They were banished from Europe and forced out. They would go on to arrive in the strange metropolis of Shanghai and attempt to recreate a semblance of life. For a lucky few, like Grete and Karl Appel, Hong Kong provided for a safe and stable haven. Despite the divergences between staying and going, what remained a constant was the humanitarian aid offered by the Jewish Refugee Society and local Jewish elites. The Jewish community in Hong Kong pooled their resources together to help these Jewish transmigrants, providing them with food and accommodations. The charity offered by Jewish elites in Hong Kong should be recognized as the community's contribution to their disadvantaged cousins. But it must also be viewed critically. The charity of Jewish elites also partially stemmed from the fears that perceptions of destitution would threaten their social positions and privileges in Hong Kong, a British colony. Jewish elites in Hong Kong imitated their British counterparts, and distanced

⁷² Dwork and van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich*, 152.

⁷³ SCMP “Jewish Refugees for Shanghai,” *South China Morning Post*, Dec. 19, 1938.

⁷⁴ Goldstein, “The Sorkin and Golab Thesis,” 181.

themselves socially from non-Anglicized Jews. This is not to suggest that the overarching reason for charity was elite self-preservation. Rather, that Jewish charitable engagement in Hong Kong must take into consideration older stereotypes of Jewish migrants and the colonial context in which the charity was given. To this end, Hong Kong was both a facilitator of Jewish refugee transmigration, but also a host nation that became a refuge for some Jewish refugees.

Chapter 3: Internment at La Salle

With the outbreak of the Second World War, German nationals outside Nazi Germany were put on notice. In Britain, no order for a general internment was issued. The reason for this was not based on humanitarian grounds but rather as a cost-saving means intended to avoid the mass internments of the First World War. Putting the initiative onto the German – now categorized as an *enemy alien* –, both the Home Office and the War Office advocated for their voluntary expulsion as a means to avoid administrative and logistical headaches.⁷⁵ Instead of mass internment, a tribunal system was implemented. Enemy aliens who chose to remain in Britain were interviewed and given a classification: from genuine refugee to requiring immediate internment.⁷⁶ But what was done in the metropole was often not the same in the peripheries. A general internment of most enemy aliens was enforced in the colonies, with the tribunals occurring after. And Hong Kong was no different. Housing a large pre-war German population it actively participated in the internment of enemy aliens.⁷⁷ 140 German nationals were given restrictions on movement while another 99 Germans nationals were interned at La Salle College. Outside this Roman Catholic boys' school, barbed wires ran along the perimeter while the entrance was guarded by soldiers from the local garrison. Inside, life was heavily regimented. This site of learning was physically transformed into one of confinement. However, in spite of the supposed strictness of internment, a jovial atmosphere reportedly existed within the walls of La Salle Internment

⁷⁵ Tony Kushner and David Cesarani, "Alien Internment in Britain During the Twentieth Century: An Introduction," in *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* edited by David Cesarani and Tony Kushner (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3-4; David Cesarani, "An Alien Concept? The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society before 1940," in *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* edited by David Cesarani and Tony Kushner (New York: Routledge, 1993), 40-41.

⁷⁶ Rachel Pistol, *Internment during the Second World War: A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA* (London; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 17-18.

⁷⁷ HKGRO: "Report on the Census of the Colony of Hong Kong, 1931" in *Hong Kong Legislative Council Sessional Papers 1931*, 112. As the last Colony-wide census before Hong Kong's occupation, it recorded 179 individuals who identified as German racially and 4 Austrians.

Camp. In addition to reading and other recreational activities, beer was available for purchase, albeit restricted to certain hours.

On the surface, internment was simple; German nationality was established through the internee's *Reisepass*, or passport. Underneath this laid a more complex reality that conflated individual identities with group identities under the umbrella term of German. The passports belied an apparent clarity as German-Jewish refugees, Hong Kong-born Germans, and ethnic Czechs were interned in the face of shifting geopolitics. However, the colonial authorities were not complacent. The Hong Kong government desired to know and, more importantly, to justify internment by systematically determining and isolating the *real* enemies. The facts were gathered – birthplace, religion, age – and the decisions standardized into a compilation of mini-biographies. It was through this intrusive process that the colonial government would know, in detail, its enemy aliens.

These biographies likewise provide a glimpse into the life-stories of Jewish refugees, including: the problem of being interned and viewed as Germans. This chapter seeks to draw out the voices of the internees and integrate them into the larger narrative of internment. Likewise, it brings to the forefront the entangled identities during this period of internment in Hong Kong starting in September 1939.

3.1 Determining Identities: the Passports

The processes behind internment began as early as April 1939, although the actual rounding up of enemy aliens started on September 3. A list of potential enemy aliens was created and divided into two categories: men of military age (between 18 and 45 years-old),

and men over 45 years-old (including wives and daughters).⁷⁸ This preparation was noted in a secret dispatch sent to the Colonial Office by the Hong Kong government in January 1940. It mentions little about who, or what, authorized the action.⁷⁹ The dispatch did mention a *Registration of Aliens Office*, which was perhaps a branch within the colonial government or Hong Kong police force responsible for border/customs control in Hong Kong. Whether this office was the one that prepared the lists is unknown, but it was responsible for doing a final check of all potential enemy aliens on July 7, 1939. The dispatch shows that Hong Kong housed “478 German males and females, 22 Austrians and 73 Czecho-Slovakians.”⁸⁰ While it is interesting that the report breaks down the list of potential enemy aliens, it is not surprising given that the latter two categories consisted of citizens of former states incorporated into Nazi Germany. By all accounts, the Hong Kong authorities established a person’s nationality, or citizenship, through their passports. Hence the lack of a specific count for Jews could be attributed to the fact that there Jewish nationality was not a category at that time.

The idea of creating a method of identification was not new. As Adam McKeown states, white settler countries were adamant in deploying different methods of border and immigration controls in order to exclude Asian migrants.⁸¹ But within the context of Europe, the need for a convenient document of identification was born in response to the refugee crisis in the aftermath of the First World War. With millions of displaced persons, states needed a mechanism to both surveil this suspect population and to ensure the state’s

⁷⁸ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 7. Children were also recorded but included in a separate list. The only instance of a child’s name appearing in the internment records was if they were aged 17 and would turn 18 during the period of mandatory internment, as was the case for one German-Jewish internee.

⁷⁹ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 7.

⁸⁰ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 7. Contrasting the number of Germans with the 1931 Census suggests that the new number perhaps included everyone of German nationality – Jewish refugees included. The numbers could have been different had the compliers focused on race, but this would have opened up a different series of concerns.

⁸¹ Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008), 2-3.

continued sovereignty: and determining who could remain and who had to leave was crucial.⁸² The League of Nations envisioned the passport as a document for travel within and across borders, promoting communication and transit.⁸³ Uniformity and standardization were discussed. Biometrics – hair colour, eye colour, face; occupation, and “other remarks” –, in addition to a photograph became the agreed modes of identification for passports.⁸⁴ The German passports, which these internees in Hong Kong held, had all these categories and something extra. German Jews had a *J* stamped on their passports to clearly denote their Jewish heritage, a continuation of Nazi antisemitic policies isolating German Jews.⁸⁵ But as evident from the previous secret dispatch sent in January 1940, this classification was not noted in the count of potential enemy aliens. Naturally then, this racial distinction was not considered by Hong Kong authorities when internment was implemented. Jews were viewed as Germans in Hong Kong. This wholesale internment would create unnecessary awkwardness and discomfort.

The decision to intern first, and ask questions later suggests an uncertainty on the part of the state. The passports were useful in rapidly identifying Hong Kong’s suspect population, but by themselves passports are not conclusive, hence the subsequent move towards investigating and interrogating individual internees. The tribunal records were an attempt at gathering knowledge and surveying the Germans of La Salle for characteristics deemed harmful for Hong Kong. But read from a different perspective, the colonial authorities were not only determining the allegiance of the internee, but also their finances and social

⁸² Markus Marrus, *The Unwanted*, 94-96.

⁸³ Susan F. Martin, *International Migration: Evolving Trends from the Early Twentieth Century to the Present* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 45.

⁸⁴ Martin, *International Migration*, 27, 45-46.

⁸⁵ Leo Baeck Institute (LBI): Reisepass – Deutsches Reich, 1938; Edmund H. Immergut Collection; AR 11058; Box 1; Folder 3.

backgrounds. Hovering above the internee's head was their utility: would they contribute to Hong Kong? As the product of the colonial state's wartime agenda, these tribunal records offer valuable information on both non-internees and internees.

3.2 Internment at La Salle and the Tribunal Process

The Roman Catholic boys' school La Salle College had been requisitioned and transformed into an internment camp some days prior to the outbreak of war. Once war between Britain and Germany broke out, the Hong Kong government acted quickly. The Hong Kong police were mobilized and, armed with their lists, began arresting all Germans that met the requirements for internment. Altogether, 99 German men were rounded up and sent to La Salle as internees.⁸⁶ Those who fell outside this category were ordered to remain inside their homes, and were later subjected to restrictions on movement. In the coming weeks, colonial authorities would begin the process of determining who belonged: who the genuine refugees were, and which of the internees were Nazis.

During this time, German internment was the talk of the colony and widely reported on by local newspapers. Headlines such as *Germans Interned – Police Move Follows the War Declaration* and *Hongkong Camp for Internees, La Salle College Taken Over* dominated the front pages.⁸⁷ Soon, the demographics of the internees were reported on, including the issue of Czech internees. As Czechoslovakia no longer existed and was formally incorporated within Nazi Germany, former Czech nationals posed an interesting

⁸⁶ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40. The discrepancy in numbers was the result of the local German consulate's interference. A couple of days prior to the official declaration of war, the consulate urged German nationals to leave for neighbouring Macau. How many escaped is not certain, but subtracting the number of enemy aliens at the outbreak of war with the numbers record in July 1939 gives at least 270 Germans who left before internment. This hastily escape was mentioned in local newspapers.

⁸⁷ SCMP "Germans Interned: Police Move Follows The War Declaration," *South China Morning Post*, Sept. 4, 1939; OHKNC "Hongkong Camp For Internees, La Salle College Taken Over," *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, Sept. 2, 1939.

problem. A secret cipher sent on August 24, 1939 suggested the former Czechoslovakian nationals be restricted, but made internment a possibility.⁸⁸ The outcome was that Czechs holding Czechoslovak passports would not be interned, but ethnic Czechs who held German passports would be interned.⁸⁹ Hence, although no Czech national was interned, two German nationals of Czech descent appeared in the internment records.⁹⁰ Jewish internees were also reported on. The *South China Morning Post* emphasized that “those interned included a number of Austrian Jews and many China-born men of German or Austrian parentage.”⁹¹ The presence of Jewish refugees who were internees was apparent to local officials. Major I. D. S. Gordon, the commandant of La Salle Internment Camp, stated to the *Hong Kong Daily Press*: “Jewish refugees from Germany will be included in the camp, because so far as the British Government is concerned they are still officially German subjects.”⁹² In harsher tones, the *SCMP* reported – quoting the acting Colonial Secretary Roland North – that despite the fact that these Jewish refugees fled persecution in Germany, “the official view is that such Jews are still German nationals.”⁹³ Indeed, the same secret cipher suggested that “German refugees will be treated in [the] same way as other enemy aliens. This decision is based on

⁸⁸ TNA: CO 323/1657/58, 3.

⁸⁹ OHKNC “At the Interment “Camp,”” *The China Mail*, Sept. 4, 1939; SCMP “Czechs Not Interned - Stringent Anti-Propaganda Regulations Issued - Colony's Food Supply Position,” *South China Morning Post*, Sept. 5, 1939.

⁹⁰ Alois Pospisil and Valentive Krems were ethnic Czechs interned because they held German passports. Pospisil was sponsored by the Czech Legion in India and eventually issued a Czechoslovakian passport, which allowed him to leave La Salle. Krems was also eventually released and left Hong Kong to reunite with his parents in Shanghai. See TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-1 for Pospisil and no 40-3 for Krems.

⁹¹ SCMP “Germans Interned - Police Move Follows the War Declaration - For La Salle College,” *South China Morning Post*, Sept. 4, 1939.

⁹² OHKNC “Exclusive Interview with New Commandant of Internment Camp at La Salle College,” *Hong Kong Daily Press*, Sept. 4, 1939.

⁹³ SCMP “Czechs Not Interned - Stringent Anti-Propaganda Regulations Issued - Colony's Food Supply Position,” *South China Morning Post*, Sept. 5, 1939.

probability that internment would be necessary in view of public opinion and that many will be rendered destitute in war.”⁹⁴

As internees were brought to La Salle, local officials began the process of interviewing them. Unfortunately, there are no records of how these tribunals in Hong Kong actually functioned.⁹⁵ In general, the process should have followed what was done in Britain. Individuals considered *enemy aliens* were required to show up at tribunals to be interviewed. Historian Rachel Pistol described the interview portion of the tribunals in Britain as “short.”⁹⁶ She notes one interview whereby the interviewee, a member of the Communist Party and known to the local police, was interned when he could not produce his passport when questioned.⁹⁷ Individual family members were sometimes given different classifications based on the interviewer’s attitude, the interviewee’s English-language abilities or a myriad of other minor discrepancies. The issues arising from the interviewer’s biases resulted in enemy aliens being categorized haphazardly and inconsistently into three categories: A (immediate internment), B (travel and property restrictions), and C (genuine refugee).⁹⁸

In Hong Kong, the enemy aliens were either released and restricted, or remained in internment. Those who were beyond the scope of mandatory internment were automatically

⁹⁴ TNA: CO 323/1657/58, 3.

⁹⁵ However, a later Advisory Committee – established in April 1940 to review appeals to tribunal decisions – does shed light into the make-up of the tribunal and the investigative process. The main body of the tribunal committee likely consisted of at least five men, one of whom being the chairman. They were supported by a team of assistants who were possibly responsible for organizing the notes for each individual internee and compiling the tribunal records. A legal representative was assigned for those appealing their cases. Whether this was also done during the tribunals at La Salle is unknown. Perhaps one was assigned to maintain the legality of the tribunals, but given the number of enemy aliens, legal representation may have been forgone to expedite the tribunal process. Each enemy alien (interned or not) was then interviewed by either a member of the committee or one of the assistants. While there are no records about what specific questions were asked to the internee, it is safe to assume that their backgrounds and political affiliations were closely interrogated. And their answers cross-referenced with local records or with the internee’s sponsor.

⁹⁶ Pistol, *A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA*, 18.

⁹⁷ Pistol, *A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA*, 18.

⁹⁸ Pistol, *A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA*, 17-18.

restricted. The restrictions included the loss of freedom of movement and a weekly meeting/roll-call with the Hong Kong police.⁹⁹ The classification system employed in Britain was not used in Hong Kong, but if one had to qualify Hong Kong's enemy aliens, those who were released were the B's and those who were not released were the A's. Only a very small minority were C's.¹⁰⁰ While the colonial authorities knew that some internees did not exactly fit the imagined description of enemy alien, wholesale internment was more convenient. It gave the government an opportunity to determine and isolate those it considered security risks, and to justify their decision to the broader public. To the Hong Kong government they were orders from London. The nationality of these Jewish refugees (and former Czechs) was derived from their passports, the document of legal identification. They were German because of their German passports.

Other curiosities existed within the internment records. But before these stories can be revealed, the processes behind the compilation of these documents must be examined – what agenda the tribunal was pursuing, the categories of identification, and how it determined whether an internee was a Nazi or anti-Nazi.

3.3 The Internment Records

Stored in the National Archives in London is a large folder titled *Internment of Enemy Aliens, Hong Kong*. It houses the names and personal details of all enemy aliens who had gone through the tribunals. Included in each entry were two important headings: Leading Facts and Reasons for Internment. The tribunal records divided the enemy aliens into four categories: 1) interned and deported to Ceylon, 2) interned and released with permission to stay but restricted, 3) interned but released with permission to leave, 4) not interned with

⁹⁹ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no 46.

¹⁰⁰ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40.

permission to stay but restricted.¹⁰¹ Because the tribunal proceedings are predicated on the assumption that the internee is an enemy alien, what can the tribunal records tell us about the process of finding and reporting genuine enemies? Centering on the first category, which consisted of ten men (and four women), commonalities that existed between these deportees include: holding a German passport, being a member of the Nazi party and/or the German Club¹⁰², had previous military experience, and held pro-Nazi sympathies. These were to be the characteristics of the genuine enemy – a genuine Nazi.

Hans Heinrich Harms-Emdem was born in Hong Kong in July 1892. He remained in the colony until the age of 10, when his parents brought him back to Germany to be raised there. In 1914, he worked as an engineer for a German firm in Tsingtao, before being conscripted into the Germany Navy. After the First World War, he worked at various engineering firms before joining the firm *Kunst and Albers* and transferring to Hong Kong in 1937. Despite Harms-Emdem's very international life, he could be considered the archetypical enemy alien. Suspicions were raised by local officials when an application form for the Nazi Party was discovered among his belongings, although he denied being a member of the local Nazi Party.¹⁰³ Suspicions of pro-Nazi sentiments were strengthened when his name appeared on a member roll for *Zelle 3*, a Nazi group in Hong Kong. All these evidence pointed to a reasonable conclusion that Harms-Emdem was a genuine enemy alien – a threat

¹⁰¹ TNA: CO 323/1797/12.

¹⁰² The German Club (also known as Club Germania or Germania Club) was a German-only elite social organization that had its origins in 1859. It would play host to a number of high-ranking German officials and nobles, including the visit of Prussian Prince Henry and Princess Irene. Unsurprisingly, the Club was closed by the Hong Kong government because of the First and Second World Wars. See Carl T. Smith, "The German Speaking Community in Hong Kong 1846-1918," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 34 (1994): 1-55.

¹⁰³ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-1, Hans Heinrich Harms-Emdem entry.

to the colony if released from internment. Therefore it was unsurprising that he remained interned.

Another figure found in the internment records is Rudolf Kulp. He was born to German parents in Baku, Russia and was educated in Germany. Kulp had some military training and was active in the paramilitary Stormtroopers (SA) before moving to Hong Kong in 1934. During Kulp's internment, his military background and membership in the Nazi party contributed to the tribunal's decision not to release him. However, Kulp distinguished himself by being an "open and unabashed supporter of Hitler and Nazi principles."¹⁰⁴ Both of Kulp's guarantors emphasized that he was "a Strong Nazi."¹⁰⁵ The underline is striking in a document that emphasizes standards. It hints at what was not recorded: both of the people that Kulp used as references must have stressed his fanaticism. In recording it as such, perhaps it was an editorial choice to amalgamate the references' feelings towards Kulp? Maybe it was Kulp's intention to be perceived as *real* Nazi, hence the previous quote's unsubtle qualification. One similarity between Kulp and Harms-Emdem is their relatively international upbringing and trajectory. Whether this factor contributed to their personal beliefs can only be speculated on, but suffice to say, being well-travelled and worldly does not prohibit one from exhibiting characteristics of the Nazis.

Both Kulp and Harms-Emdem fit within the stereotypes of the *enemy alien*, however one deportee generated considerable discussion. Herman Stehr was a Sudeten-German born in Czechoslovakia. During the 1930s, he moved to Hong Kong to take up a managerial position at *Siemssen & Co*. Despite having no military training or technical knowledge, nor being a member of the local Nazi party (he did join the German Club), the tribunal decided to

¹⁰⁴ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-1, Rudolf Kulp entry.

¹⁰⁵ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-1, Rudolf Kulp entry.

continue his internment “on account of his business dealings and reported pro-Nazi leanings.”¹⁰⁶ During his subsequent appeal, opinions from the members of the Advisory Committee revealed some concerns surrounding Stehr. Although the committee agreed to his continued internment on the basis of his “frank admission that as a Sudeten German he rejoices in his absorption into the Reich is sufficient evidence of hostile association,” it was not unanimous.¹⁰⁷ Both the Chairman of the Committee and committee member S.H. Dodwell disagreed with the majority’s decision. They argued that Stehr’s pleasure in seeing the Sudetenland returned to Germany were “racially natural” or “mere racial pride.”¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the two opined that to intern someone for being proud of their ethnicity would open up internment for any German who held such views. Disregarding the irony present in the current internment, perhaps there was some cause for hesitation. Anti-alienism – and especially anti-German attitudes – was present in Hong Kong society. One community contributor wrote to the *South China Morning Post* that a German Jewish acquaintance, whom the contributor knew was a refugee and vehemently disliked Hitler, reportedly grew to admire the recovery that Germany was experiencing prior to the war.¹⁰⁹ It was this attitude of distrust which colonial authorities possibly wanted to downplay as they released vetted internees. Although there were no reports of individuals assaulting released internees, suspicion - especially if they were directed towards German/Austrian Jewish refugees – could cause unnecessary headaches. The matter of race and identity was a constant if subtle factor during the tribunal and appeals processes.

3.4 Jewish Internees and the JRS

¹⁰⁶ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-1, Herman Stehr entry.

¹⁰⁷ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40, Advisory Committee page.

¹⁰⁸ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40, Advisory Committee page.

¹⁰⁹ SCMP Safety First, “Expulsion of Exiles,” *South China Morning Post*, June 12, 1940.

Of the 99 German *enemy aliens* interned at La Salle at the outbreak of the Second World War, 49 were Jews.¹¹⁰ Jewish refugees (of which, there were more Austrians than Germans) thus accounted for almost half the interned population in La Salle. The Jewish plurality was an open secret, one that was known to local officials and presumably mentioned during the tribunals. It was also reflected in the internment documents. In addition to explicitly mentioning their statuses as refugees, multiple entries stressed at or hinted at the reason for their emigration – namely persecution. Most Austrian Jewish refugees in Hong Kong came to the colony after the *Anschluss*, and some after *Kristallnacht*. Their departures from Austria were not immediately after either event, but occurred some months after. This delay stated in the entries point to obstacles that hindered the escape of Austrian Jews, namely: immigration barriers, family considerations, or the exorbitant Nazi tax on Jewish emigrants.¹¹¹ For the entries on German Jewish refugees, their migration trajectories were reportedly more varied. Herbert Becher, was one such double-migrant. Originally fleeing to the Netherlands in April 1933 after the Jewish boycotts, he returned to Germany in 1936 only to be threatened by German authorities to leave the country; he immigrated to Hong Kong in August 1936.¹¹² Collectively, both Austrian and German Jews exemplify the intricacies of Jewish refugee migration and the meandering networks and paths to safety.

Another commonality shared by Jewish refugees was the prefix *former-* that was included within the internment records. The prefix stemmed from the Nazi State's denaturalization and denationalization of German Jews. Through the discriminatory policies

¹¹⁰ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-2.

¹¹¹ Wolfgang Benz, "Exclusion, Persecution, Expulsion: National Socialist Policy against Undesirables," in *European Immigrants in Britain 1933-1950* eds. Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth (Munich, Germany: K. G. Saur Verlag, 2003), 63, 68.

¹¹² TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-2, Herbert Becher entry. Other German Jews like Herbert Ruff and Israel Elkan, stayed in Austria before leaving the country in 1938. Ruff himself was born in Poland but educated in Berlin and held a German passport.

of the Reich Citizenship Law of November 1935 (a component of the broader Nuremberg Laws), they effectively inscribed a legal distinction between the German (or Aryan) citizen, and the Jewish subject.¹¹³ But as internment in Hong Kong – and as the policies suggested by the Colonial Office – demonstrated, this legal distinction was not initially taken into consideration.¹¹⁴ Its inclusion into the entries for most Jewish internees could suggest their agency in the sense that this distinction should be noted and that Austrian (and German) Jewish internees should not be viewed as German nationals. On November 20, 1941 the complete rendering of all German Jews of their German nationality was enforced by the 11th Decree.¹¹⁵ This meant that any German Jew with a passing presence (whether physically or materially) outside Nazi Germany was stripped of their citizenship and made effectively stateless, and outside the legal responsibilities of any state.¹¹⁶

For Jewish internees, daily life at La Salle was apparently fine, if regimented. Neither newspapers nor internment documents mentioned any conflicts or tensions between Jews and non-Jews, or the few pro-Nazi sympathizers. Grete Appel, whose husband Karl was interned, recounted that Karl had an excellent stay at La Salle. He apparently ate good food and was able to use the camp's facilities.¹¹⁷ This degree of independence given to internees was also observed in the British-run internment camps on the Isle of Man, which Rachel Pistol notes was the British government's attempt to not operate the camps as prisons.¹¹⁸ In addition to the limited freedom, this positive recollection of internment may also be attributed to the

¹¹³ Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), Chapter 3. Epub; David Fraser and Frank Caestecker, "Jews or Germans? Nationality Legislation and the Restoration of Liberal Democracy in Western Europe after the Holocaust", *Law and History Review* 31 (2), (2013), 394-395.

¹¹⁴ TNA: CO 323/1657/58, no 3.

¹¹⁵ Fraser and Caestecker, "Jews or Germans?," 395.

¹¹⁶ Benz, "Exclusion, Persecution, Expulsion: National Socialist Policy against Undesirables," 68-69.

¹¹⁷ Grete Appel, Interview 19293, *Visual History Archives*, 1996.

¹¹⁸ Pistol, *A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA*, 38.

relative haste in which local authorities sorted out and released the internees. Although some internees were released as early as September 14, in practice, the majority of internees were released between late-September and early-October.¹¹⁹ Neither was the timing of their release predicted on their race as the release of Jewish and non-Jewish internees occurred simultaneously. Yet, the lack of complaints should not suggest complacency on the part of the internees. Their situation was precarious and depended entirely on the whims of the camp officials. Pistol notes that the experiences of internees were largely dependent on the attitude and personality of the camp commandant. Although a couple of commandants were known to be authoritarian and harsh to their internees, in general, Pistol reports that commandants were respectful, allowing for religious practices and avoiding unnecessary burdens on weekends.¹²⁰ Although there is little information that portrays the commandant for La Salle in a negative light, the unbalanced power dynamic between the internee and the camp official must be taken into consideration when discussing internment. As refugees, the assumption was that they should be grateful for refuge in Hong Kong. To complain was discouraged; they had to bear with the discomfort. But the men of La Salle were impatient to be released, and to be with their family and the jobs they were forced to leave behind.

The consequences of internment were not lost on *British*, a reader who wrote to the *South China Morning Post*: “are [the women] to be left to beg or starve while their husbands are kept in comparative comfort and plenty?”¹²¹ How these women (whether German or refugee Jews) maintained their families without their husbands is difficult to say. But a gendered approach to our topic, one that gestures specifically towards refugee women, does offer some insight into their agency and contributions, and their relationship with local non-

¹¹⁹ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-3.

¹²⁰ Pistol, *A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA*, 38-41.

¹²¹ SCMP *British*, “Internees' Families,” *South China Morning Post*, Sept. 14, 1939.

/governmental authorities.¹²² Although they were excluded from formal internment, in the absence of the husband (or father), most women had to assume the role of breadwinner – if they were not already working – in addition to being the homemaker. This was met with varying degrees of success. The internment records noted that some women held occupations like hairdresser or housekeeper; some worked in the textile industry.¹²³ A few could have survived on their savings: Grete Appel noted briefly that her economic situation was “not bad.”¹²⁴ Others could have managed if the entire family also worked. However, many more women held no occupation. For these refugee women, they either scrambled in search for work, or sought out the Jewish Refugee Society for support. It was possible that the JRS established a fund to support these women by giving out packaged goods and food. A financial account of the JRS covering the period between November 20, 1938 and December 31, 1939 includes expenditures for *Feeding* and *Payment & Expenses for Refugees*: the former totalling to \$4,203.60 and the latter to \$532.64.¹²⁵ While this is not definitive proof, there were cases where the JRS did offer financial relief or pocket money to struggling Jewish families.¹²⁶ One can reasonable speculate that some of these expenses may have been used to help the wives of internees. Regardless, it is safe to say that during this period of internment, women actively sought out ways to survive in Hong Kong.

Within the global context of Jewish refugee organization, assuming responsibility was not unexpected. In East Asia, the Jewish Refugee Committee in the Philippines actively gave Jewish refugee individuals and families pocket money; a similar expense was expected

¹²² Gatrell, *Modern Refugee*, 286.

¹²³ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-4.

¹²⁴ Grete Appel, Interview 19293, *Visual History Archives*, 1996.

¹²⁵ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/8.

¹²⁶ HKHP: SEK-8D-002, CJ1/10.

by Shanghai's refugee organizations in order to maintain Jewish refugees.¹²⁷ In fact, the JRS would regularly contribute or remit funds to Jewish organizations in Shanghai.¹²⁸ In Britain, various Jewish relief societies assumed financial responsibility for the upkeep of refugee to both appease and reassure Whitehall that maintaining these refugees would not be a government problem, and to save as many Jewish refugees as possible.¹²⁹ For refugee Jews in La Salle, the Jewish Refugee Society worked to assume financial and legal responsibility. A few internees, such as Friedrich Israel Leib, had the distinction of being guaranteed by Lawrence Kadoorie, the leader of *China Light & Power*, the company that Leib worked for.¹³⁰ Although the internment documents only note a few entries in which the JRS was explicitly mentioned as the guarantor, an internal JRS document notes that at least 50 Jewish refugees (both men and women) had been sponsored by the Society.¹³¹ Assuming responsibility also included unexpected costs. On September 3, 1939, fifteen Jewish refugees onboard the French steamer *Jean Laboarde* and enroute to Shanghai, were interned in Hong Kong when their ship experienced mechanical problems and returned to Hong Kong. The internment records indicated that the JRS took on the extraordinary expense as to the costs of passage.¹³² The group departed for Shanghai on September 10; their expedited removal perhaps due to a combination of their reported destitution and desire to be in Shanghai.

3.5 The Curious Case of Arthur Israel Machol

It is hardly an understatement to say that the desires of all of La Salle's internees converged on the hope of release. Despite the comforts of entertainment, camaraderie, and

¹²⁷ HKHP: SEK-8D-002, CJ1/10.

¹²⁸ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/8.

¹²⁹ Weber, "The Jews' Temporary Shelter in London, 1885-1939," 96-97.

¹³⁰ TNA: CO 323-1797-12, no 40-2, Friedrich Israel Leib entry.

¹³¹ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/32.

¹³² TNA: CO 323-1797-12, no 40-3; HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/8. An expense of \$1,470.23 for *Passages* was recorded in the JRS's financial account although the specifics were not included.

guaranteed meals, internment itself was neither enjoyable nor exciting. Operated by the military, the La Salle experience was a regimented one: roll calls, set meal times, and curfews. It did not help that internees were separated from their families and jobs. Mentally and physically exhausting, the reportedly “jovial atmosphere” and “good behaviour” was perhaps more about internees just wanting to leave and be done with La Salle.¹³³ But what if someone wanted to return?

Arthur Israel Machol was a veteran of the First World War. He worked as a goldsmith in Germany before being forced to flee to Shanghai as a refugee. In July 1939, he arrived in Hong Kong and worked as a jeweller for *Messrs. Sennet Freres* until his internment at La Salle. He was released on September 21, 1939. On October 14, he was re-interned after writing a letter “for the information of the censors” announcing his intentions of leaving the Hong Kong to join the German army.¹³⁴ He remained in La Salle until April 13, 1940 and departed for Shanghai on April 22.¹³⁵ The circumstances surrounding his return raised eyebrows amongst the members of the Advisory Committee. They noted that “as he is the only inmate of the camp in that contented condition we thought it better to investigate his case.”¹³⁶ What made it all the more perplexing was that the Advisory Committee noted that Machol had reportedly spent two years in a concentration camp before his release and journey to Shanghai. It is reasonable to assume that Machol would want to avoid dragging up uncomfortable memories, unless something motivated him to return. However, Arthur’s story, as recorded by colonial officials, was itself inconsistent. Who was to bear the responsibility of an inconvenient truth?

¹³³ SCMP “Tender Reunions: First Visitors’ Day at Internment Camp Details of Routine,” *South China Morning Post*, Sept. 7, 1939.

¹³⁴ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40, Advisory Committee page.

¹³⁵ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-3, Arthur Israel Machol entry.

¹³⁶ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40, Advisory Committee page.

In the documents relating to Arthur Machol’s internment and later appeal, there was a subtle inconsistency centering on his employment – specifically the timeline of his dismissal. In the tribunal record, Machol held his job prior to and after internment. He was later fired for “unsatisfactory work”.¹³⁷ Without a source of employment, he became destitute, leading him to alert the authorities of his supposed defection. The other document was a report from the Advisory Committee. Here, Machol “lost his employment and was then interned,” and upon his release, was left without any means to support himself.¹³⁸ The fact that he became penniless and was ultimately re-interned remained unchallenged. What was obscured was the timing of his unemployment. This leads to the larger question of who should have been held responsible for Machol? The timeline in the internment records shifted the blame squarely onto Machol, who was apparently “a source of trouble” for colonial officials.¹³⁹ The fact that the records mentioned his “subpar work ethic” – the only entry to include so – suggests some form of concealment, if not justification for his removal from Hong Kong, by colonial authorities.¹⁴⁰ In contrast, the advisory report suggests an association between Machol’s first internment and his destitution. This dissonance stemmed from the tribunal records themselves as they presented a narrow and specific picture of Machol. It does not help that Machol’s entry is located in the section titled: *List of Released Enemy Alien Internees Permitted to Leave the Colony*. For the hypothetical Colonial Office official reading this document, Machol contributed little of value and was better off removed from the colony. The objective was to justify their decision to deport Machol. To this end, Machol’s entry was

¹³⁷ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-3, Arthur Israel Machol entry.

¹³⁸ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40, Advisory Committee page.

¹³⁹ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-3, Arthur Israel Machol entry.

¹⁴⁰ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40-3, Arthur Israel Machol entry.

recorded to reflect one of social burden and destitution. But it was also to hide that local authorities were duped into supporting a refugee.

In writing a refugee-centered history, Gatrell notes that one must “take seriously the way in which refugees engaged with displacement.”¹⁴¹ From Arthur Machol’s perspective, it was an ingenious plan to be re-interned. It secured him a daily guarantee of food and shelter. And for six months, he lived a contented and safe life. This survival strategy also brought to the forefront the possible reality that he had neither contacts nor further opportunities in Hong Kong.¹⁴² The entry for Machol made no mention of any support from the Jewish Refugee Society. It would be surprisingly if the JRS was not at least aware of Machol’s situation – either during his first or second internments; or both. However, this textual silence does reinforce the narrative of Machol as troublesome, – even to the JRS – and therefore strengthens the justification for his deportation. It also reinforces the possibility that he had no connections in Hong Kong. One minor question that eluded a clear answer is the passage: who paid for his ticket to Shanghai? The JRS and the Hong Kong government are potential sponsors, as was the possibility that his former employer were “legally liable” for him.¹⁴³ In any case, Arthur Machol’s internment presents a clear example of refugee agency in turning an unjust imprisonment into a (relatively) pleasant refuge. The example of Machol also reveals the multilayered realities of individual refugees: as an internee expelled because he was deemed useless, but also as an internee that fooled local authorities. Machol

¹⁴¹ Gatrell, *Modern Refugee*, 286.

¹⁴² Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking*, 5.

¹⁴³ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no 40, Advisory Committee page.

demonstrates how historical records could be deployed as tools for removing the presence of individuals and for “blocking out inconvenient truths.”¹⁴⁴

At the outbreak of the Second World War, all German male residents of Hong Kong were rounded-up and sent to La Salle Internment Camp. The colonial authorities were determined to investigate the legitimacy of each individual internee in order to find the *real* enemy alien. But in this desire to know everything about the internees, the colonial authorities were obscuring their ignorance of the situation, namely that a majority of the internees were in fact Jewish refugees. It was a reality that local officials knew, but the internment of Jewish refugees was justified as a necessary evil: that regardless of the internees’ personal feelings, they were still German nationals and therefore a member of the suspect population. But the process of internment itself was not clear-cut. The passport, which acted as a mode of identification, only complicated and brought out larger uncertainties for both internees and the general public. The Holm brothers, raised in Hong Kong, were interned partially because of their deceased German father. While internees such as Hans Heinrich Harms-Emdem would remain interned, Jewish refugees like Karl Appel and Karl Glaser were allowed to leave the camp quickly. Outside of internment, women (and others whom were not interned) took the initiative to maintain the household either by finding jobs or supplemented their incomes with assistance from the Jewish Refugee Society. The JRS remained firm in their support of local Jewish refugees, many of whom were interned. Although the power dynamics of internment were clearly in favour of the local authorities, cases such as Arthur Machol exemplify individual agency and demonstrates a moment in which this relationship was reversed. Overall, the internment records reveal a

¹⁴⁴ Gatrell, *Modern Refugee*, 291.

suspect population that was diverse in occupation, birthplace, religion, and ethnicity despite being classified as broadly German. It was also through these mini-biographies that the voices of refugee Jewish internees were brought to the forefront.

Chapter 4: Expulsion and Exceptions: Re-Perceiving German-ness

In Europe, the Phoney War had ended. From the occupation and division of Poland between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1939, to the invasion of Norway in April 1940, the Western Front sat quiet.¹⁴⁵ British forces were sent to France. French forces were positioned along the Maginot Line, a set of ostensibly impenetrable fortifications along the Franco-German border. However, Belgium's declaration of neutrality ruined the original plan of having the Maginot Line extend up along the Belgium-German border.¹⁴⁶ France remained exposed. And on May 10, 1940, German forces crossed the borders and invaded the Low Countries. A string of rapid, military victories ensued and, along with the entrance of Italy as an ally of Nazi Germany, pushed the Allies into a prolonged retreat, culminating with the surrender of France on June 21, 1940.¹⁴⁷

With its vast empire, the various administrators of France's colonial territories reacted slowly. In French Indochina, Japan swiftly occupied the northern portion – an area critical in Japan's war against China – while entering into a power-sharing agreement with the local French authorities. As a result, Indochina became *de facto* Japanese.¹⁴⁸ The war against China had been going on for two years longer than the one in Europe. Japan had occupied the coastal regions of China, along with its strategically important ports. For the British colony of Hong Kong, the first turning point came in October 1938 when nearby Canton (modern-day Guangzhou) was captured.¹⁴⁹ Refugees fled to Hong Kong, a traditional place of refuge and neutral in Japan's conflict. But with the fall of France and the occupation of French

¹⁴⁵ R.A.C. Parker, *The Second World War: A Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 22-25.

¹⁴⁶ Parker, *The Second World War*, 27-28.

¹⁴⁷ Parker, *The Second World War*, 27, 40-42.

¹⁴⁸ Parker, *The Second World War*, 78-79; Philip Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong: Britain, China and the Japanese Occupation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 35.

¹⁴⁹ Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945* (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013), 201; Snow, *Fall of Hong Kong*, 27.

Indochina, the noose was tightening around Hong Kong. As a wave of panic paralyzed Whitehall, so too were Hong Kong officials alarmed: what would they do now?

In the midst of these sudden military defeats, the Colonial Office (CO) in London received a telegram from Hong Kong addressed to the Secretary of State, Lord Lloyd.¹⁵⁰ Dated June 10, 1940 – the sender was the Bishop of Victoria, Ronald Hall.¹⁵¹ This was highly unusual and ignored proper procedures. Instead of sending the telegram directly to the Secretary of State, Bishop Hall should have sent it to the Governor of Hong Kong, Geoffrey Northcote, who would then forward it to the intended recipient. The break in protocol was also noted by CO officials, who questioned rhetorically that the Bishop “must surely know” proper procedures.¹⁵² What was so important that the Bishop had to bypass protocol? Expulsion. Specifically, it was the mass deportation of Austrians and Germans nationals in Hong Kong that drove Bishop Hall to directly request an “immediate stay [of] execution.”¹⁵³ Its brevity underlined the sense of desperation and duty that the Bishop must have felt for those escapees of Nazi persecution now being deported.¹⁵⁴ These supposed *enemy aliens* had all been inspected and scrutinized during the internment and/or the tribunals. They were released and had restrictions enforced. The colonial authorities knew most were Jewish refugees. So why the sudden change? Why were Jewish refugees, under the guise of enemy aliens, suddenly ordered to leave Hong Kong? This question also swirled within the Colonial Office. But CO officials here were cautious. Although the proper procedure was for the

¹⁵⁰ Norman Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule, 1912-1941* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987), 31.

¹⁵¹ Victoria (modern-day Central) was an urban settlement on the northern shore of Hong Kong Island facing Kowloon Peninsula. Because all government buildings were located here, it was considered the colony’s *de facto* capital.

¹⁵² TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no 44, table of contents commentary.

¹⁵³ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no 44, table of contents commentary.

¹⁵⁴ Dr. Karl Harth, an Austrian-Jewish refugee Bishop Hall had sponsored, was among those ordered to leave Hong Kong. See TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no. 40-2, Karl Harth entry; HKHP SEK-8D-042, EJ1/32.

Governor to recommend certain actions to the Colonial Office to be approved, local conditions often necessitated a mentality of: do first; ask permission later. It was these local conditions, that the Bishop hoped, would spur the Colonial Office into demanding an explanation from Hong Kong.

This chapter charts the prolonged expulsion of German-Jewish refugees from Hong Kong. It situates expulsion beyond the colony and within larger geopolitics. The opinion that Hong Kong was not a suitable site for internment had been raised before by some local officials, but little was made of it. As one Colonial Office official wrote: “deportation is very much more severe than internment, but of course in [Hong Kong,] it is much more convenient to deport than to intern.”¹⁵⁵ But the expulsion order was not without its detractors. The Jewish Refugee Society was, naturally, one of the staunchest objectors of expulsion, and was quick to point out its contradictions. The expulsion order also divided public opinion. Unlike the wave of support for internment in September 1939, newspaper and community editorials noted that those affected by the expulsions in June 1940 were themselves fleeing Nazi persecution and vehemently anti-Nazi. Situating the expulsion of German nationals within broader geopolitics, the reason for deportation was born out of the rapid collapse of France and the isolation of Britain (and Hong Kong) and the resulting fear of fifth columns. Were these refugees *genuine* refugees? Could they not be traitors? Local newspapers in Hong Kong provide important clues into how the expulsion was reported on. More specifically, the community correspondence section of the *South China Morning Post* offers a curated view of the general attitudes surrounding expulsion.¹⁵⁶ However, the expulsions in 1940 were not

¹⁵⁵ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no 44, table of contents commentary.

¹⁵⁶ Although newspapers provide a glimpse into past attitudes, as historical sources they must be critically analyzed and not taken at face-value. It must be remembered that censorship was implemented and active in wartime Hong Kong. Chinese-language newspapers experienced heavy censorship and redactions. For English-

without its contradictions. Exceptions could be granted on the basis of the usefulness of the enemy alien – their contribution to Hong Kong’s colonial society. But this process was often beyond the reach of the average refugee, who lacked both the necessary qualifications and the network of support.

4.1 Panic in Hong Kong: Giving the Order

Hidden away in the corner of page eight of the June 6 edition of the *South China Morning Post* was a short article titled: *Enemy Aliens to Go – Must Leave Colony by Next Tuesday*. The article reported the indiscriminate nature of the expulsion order: “all German and Austrian subjects... including refugees from the Nazi regime” had to leave.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, those affected by the expulsion order were forbidden from departing to nearby Canton and Macau. Their deadline: June 11, 1940. In the next day’s issue, there was a correction. Enemy aliens were still required to leave, but the hard deadline was rescinded in favour of a vague notice implying an unknown future date.¹⁵⁸ Despite the ambiguity the underlying message was clear: colonial authorities wanted these enemy aliens gone. They were *personae non gratae* in Hong Kong. But why at this specific moment? To answer this, we must examine the events in Britain immediately after the fall of France, and see how their responses towards Britain’s enemy aliens influenced Hong Kong’s expulsion order.

By June 1940, France had fallen and Norway was occupied. In less than six weeks, Western Europe had surrendered to Nazi Germany. British officials found themselves

language newspapers, the same perhaps occurred, but rarely to the extent of their Chinese-language counterparts. See Michael Ng, “When Silence Speaks: Press Censorship and Rule of Law in British Hong Kong, 1850s–1940s” *Law & Literature* 29: 425-456. Additionally, although the *SCMP* is one of the more trusted newspapers in Hong Kong, there is the possibility that these correspondences were faked or an amalgamation of similar letter. However, the themes that they invoke – utility, fifth columns – remain constant, and the context in which they were published.

¹⁵⁷ SCMP “Enemy Aliens To Go – Must Leave Colony By Next Tuesday,” *South China Morning Post*, June 6, 1940.

¹⁵⁸ SCMP “Enemy Aliens,” *South China Morning Post*, June 7, 1940.

isolated and paralyzed, and they panicked. Francois Lafitte, a British intellectual and contemporary living through these events in London, asserted that the belief amongst British General Staff was that the rapid victories could not have happened without “...the powerful aid of Nazi Fifth Columnists in all these countries.”¹⁵⁹ And refugees in Britain – mainly German Jews – fitted nicely as the imagined traitors. The idea of fifth columnists complemented the anti-foreign attitudes and prejudice that prevailed amongst the higher-ups. For the British Establishment the mentality towards these Jewish refugees was “‘once a German, always a German’.”¹⁶⁰ Even Winston Churchill, recently appointed Prime Minister, was affected by the panic, and was “strongly in favour of removing all internees out of the United Kingdom.”¹⁶¹ Fearing a supposed fifth column threat in Britain, Churchill embarked on a policy of mass internment in late-May 1940.¹⁶²

In Hong Kong, the colonial authorities went beyond internment by ordering the expulsion of all *enemy aliens* – who were mainly Austrian and German Jewish refugees – from the colony. The move shocked officials from the Colonial Office, who were only informed through Bishop Hall’s telegram. While the Colonial Office had no intention of directly governing the various colonies under its jurisdiction, it did expect to be regularly updated and kept informed.¹⁶³

The response from the Officer Administering the Government (OAG) of Hong Kong, Colonial Secretary N.L. Smith, came on June 17, 1940.¹⁶⁴ The OAG confirmed that the cases

¹⁵⁹ Francois Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens* (London, UK: Libris, 1988), xvi.

¹⁶⁰ Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens*, 178-179.

¹⁶¹ Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens*, xiv; Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 170.

¹⁶² Pistol, *A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA*, 19; Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 170.

¹⁶³ Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule*, 38-39.

¹⁶⁴ Starting in May 1940, Governor Northcote was absent from Hong Kong. On the advice of his doctors, he decided to recuperate from his sickness in Britain before returning in March 1941. During this period, line of succession went to the Officer Administering the Government (OAG), who was the Colonial Secretary, N.L.

of all enemy aliens were being re-scrutinized. And predictably, "...all cases where [the] smallest doubt exists will, unless I am otherwise instructed, be expelled..."¹⁶⁵ However, it was "erroneously interpreted in local press as universal expulsion,"¹⁶⁶ as the procedure was just for the Hong Kong police to inform only those most likely to be expelled. Smith's response emphasized the prerogatives of the Governor, as well as the actions he authorized in order to qualify the expulsion order.¹⁶⁷ He notes an Advisory Committee that operated akin to a tribunal to overlook appeals. Likewise, Smith reported that exceptions had already been granted to fourteen people due to their old age or anti-Nazi sentiments, before concluding that this number may change should more reconsideration be given.¹⁶⁸ Smith was clearly laying out his procedure to justify the actions he took. And he was asking for approval, albeit belatedly. Hong Kong Historian Norman Miners noted that in matters of budget and finances, Governors frequently proceeded with their plans and ask for permission later, and the Colonial Office would be powerless to do anything but give their assent.¹⁶⁹

Therefore, the Colonial Office approved. Or rather, they had few compelling reasons not to approve. Despite the growing backlash against the harshness of Churchill's decision to intern German Jews in Britain, CO officials viewed it was politically safer to "toe the line."¹⁷⁰ Expulsion was clearly worse than internment, but the OAG noted that the expulsion order was authorized within the context of London's decision to intern all enemy aliens.

Smith, an experienced government official serving since 1936. Official correspondences and documents use a variety of titles: Acting-Governor, Governor, and Officer Administering the Government. It was under his administration that the order of expulsion was given. While Governor Northcote was likely consulted by the Colonial Office, the fact that he was *not* in Hong Kong limited his authority. See Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule*, 144-145.

¹⁶⁵ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 46.

¹⁶⁶ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 46.

¹⁶⁷ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 46.

¹⁶⁸ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 46.

¹⁶⁹ Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule*, 49.

¹⁷⁰ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 46 table of content commentary; Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 170-171.

Would CO officials risk exacerbating an already sensitive issue in Britain by demanding a stop to Hong Kong's actions? And even if the Colonial Office decided to question the OAG's decision, it could have crossed beyond their jurisdiction and became a question of colonial defence. That issue would have fallen under the purview of the War Office, whom many of CO officials felt would have agreed with the OAG's actions.¹⁷¹ Beyond that, CO officials acknowledged that the autonomy of local authorities often superseded the wishes of the Colonial Office. Internment of, and the enacting of restrictions on, enemy aliens were considered a local prerogative and completely within Smith's legal purview.¹⁷² And from reading Smith's response, CO officials were satisfied that the OAG was "[reducing] to the smallest possible number[,] the number of useless mouths in the Colony."¹⁷³ Deportation was extreme, but rationalized within this broader concern of social burden and suspected fifth column elements, it became a valid decision. Nonetheless, the OAG's decision to expel all enemy aliens was not without political fallout. The relative clumsiness surrounding the process of expulsion – notably its reveal, and later retraction, in the press – reflected negatively on Smith and was cause to question his effectiveness. Smith was perceived as lacking "decision and drive and things are muddling along."¹⁷⁴ Indeed, British military officials argued that due to Hong Kong's proximity to the conflict in China, it was better to appoint a military governor.

For the time being, the Colonial Office was satisfied with Smith's order of expulsion. Hong Kong had won its approval. Hence the Secretary of State rejected Bishop Hall's plead for interference, telegraphing to Hong Kong: "I am not prepared to intervene in regard to [the

¹⁷¹ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 46 table of content commentary; Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule*, 28.

¹⁷² Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong 1841-1997* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), 19.

¹⁷³ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 46 table of content commentary.

¹⁷⁴ Miners, *Hong Kong under Imperial Rule*, 145.

expulsion,] which you [the OAG] consider necessary in the interests of security of Colony.”¹⁷⁵ Despite the fact that many of these enemy aliens had already been vetted by Hong Kong officials, and that most were known to be Jewish refugees, they were still a suspect population. Questions about their usefulness to the Colony, along with the hysteria surrounding fifth columns, ultimately contributed to their deportation.

4.2 Comprehending Deportation: Public Perception of *Aliens*

This section employs a number of *SCMP* correspondences in order to get a sense of how the public perceived the expulsion order and their general attitudes towards German-Jewish refugees. Although press censorship was a prerogative of the colonial government, its deployment against English-language newspapers is difficult to know. Against Chinese-language newspapers, “the laws for controlling unwanted opinion were in fact by no means an empty threat” and indeed, they were heavily censored.¹⁷⁶ However, from the correspondences that spoke about expulsion, it was clear that opinions were mixed.

In the correspondence page of the June 10 edition of the *South China Morning Post*, one contributor, *Brutus*, wrote: “...We were relieved to learn last Wednesday that all enemy subjects were to be banished... imagine the consternation therefore ... [when it was learnt the order] was to be modified.”¹⁷⁷ The concern was “the menace of 5th Column activity,” a ubiquitous entity that was supposedly everywhere and heard everything.¹⁷⁸ And in hearkening back to the Brutus of Roman history, the contributor’s intention was clear: these *enemy aliens* were untrustworthy a security risk. Whether intentional or not, the contributor

¹⁷⁵ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 47.

¹⁷⁶ Michael Ng, *When Silence Speaks: Press Censorship and Rule of Law in British Hong Kong, 1850s–1940s*, Law & Literature, 433.

¹⁷⁷ *SCMP Brutus*, “Enemy Subject,” *South China Morning Post*, June 10 1940.

¹⁷⁸ *SCMP Brutus*, “Enemy Subject,” *South China Morning Post*, June 10 1940.

may have also alluded to the antisemitic stab-in-the-back myth – that German Jews were responsible for Germany’s defeat during the First World War. Brutus’s letter set the stage for other pro-expulsion contributors to agree with the decision and functioned as a template. Anger towards the Hong Kong government’s lack of initiative was a constant theme. There would be a mention of the German occupation in Western Europe. An attempt would be made at offering compassion towards those affected by expulsion and “...sincerely wish to sever themselves from their native Germany.”¹⁷⁹ But it was a feint, often qualified by generalizing a fear of fifth columns or their foreign-ness as Germans. A contributor known as *Fairplay* even pushed for the expulsion of naturalized enemy aliens, claiming that it was time to “...clear out these undesirables who have been taking the bread out of the mouths of the struggling Britishers for many a long year.”¹⁸⁰ Clearly those who were in favour of expulsion saw these Germans as a social burden and threat to Hong Kong. The evidence employed were always anecdotes of their supposed German friends. One correspondent, *Safety First*, gave an anecdote about a German-Jewish refugee doctor, who escaped persecution and was firmly “anti-Hitlerite”, reminiscing about Germany.¹⁸¹ These newspaper contributors positioned their arguments as appeals: they were not against these refugees nor were they challenging their anti-Hitler views. Rather, these contributors preyed on the fears elicited from the idea of an *Other*. Although these refugees were against Hitler, were they pro-German? Would they turn on the generosity of Hong Kong and Britain? The rhetoric being reinforced was: “once a German, always a German.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ SCMP Safety First, “Expulsion of Exiles,” *South China Morning Post*, June 12 1940.

¹⁸⁰ SCMP Fairplay, “Expulsion of Refugees,” *South China Morning Post*, June 11, 1940.

¹⁸¹ SCMP Safety First, “Expulsion of Exiles,” *South China Morning Post*, June 12 1940.

¹⁸² SCMP Democracy 1940, “Progress 1940,” *South China Morning Post*, June 14 1940.

Whereas *Brutus* and *Safety First* emphasized the German-ness of these enemy aliens, correspondents against the deportation pointed to their persecution in Germany and refugee statuses. In short, that the majority of those affected were Jewish refugees. Bishop Hall, the *Hong Kong Sunday Herald* reported, had taken an active part to petition the authorities to forgo deportation.¹⁸³ In a jointly signed column in the *South China Morning Post*, Bishop Hall emphasized how these enemy aliens were orderly and cultured, and that none of them were penniless. None of them were wards of the state. All were actively working jobs and contributing to Hong Kong, and their usefulness should be obvious. It concluded by noting the propaganda value to Nazi Germany should the Governor continue with his action.¹⁸⁴ Some contributors approached expulsion from a moral ground: that around half of the refugees were women and children.¹⁸⁵ Deportation also backed the authorities into an awkward position. One contributor, *British Justice*, saw it as a Hitler-esque move to uproot the lives of refugees, forcing upon them destitution and homelessness.¹⁸⁶ But in general, what was striking was that anti-expulsion contributors were not wholly opposed to local authorities taking action against enemy aliens. Internment was still a favoured option. Other proposed having these refugees remain under supervision or put to work on public works projects.¹⁸⁷ This was similar to the Home Office's policy of conferring release with the requirement of

¹⁸³ OHKNC: "Colony's Actions Against Refugee Enemy Aliens – Efforts to Secure Modification of Expulsion Order," *Hong Kong Sunday Telegraph*, June 9, 1940.

¹⁸⁴ SCMP Ronald Hong Kong, "Expulsion of Refugees," *South China Morning Post*, June 11, 1940. The other signatories are: Frank Short, J.L. Wilson, J.R. Higgs, David Rosenthal, J.A. Sandbach, K. MacKenzie Dow, E. Moreton, and A.P. Rose.

¹⁸⁵ SCMP Independent, "Refugees from Nazi Rule," *South China Morning Post*, June 14 1940.

¹⁸⁶ SCMP British Justice, "Expulsion of Exiles," *South China Morning Post*, June 12, 1940.

¹⁸⁷ SCMP Fish Face "Expulsion of Exiles," *South China Morning Post*, June 12, 1940; SCMP O. Thorpe, "Jewish Refugees," *South China Morning Post*, June 13, 1940.

contributing to the war effort in labour/construction corps.¹⁸⁸ Individual differences aside, all anti-expulsion contributors emphasized a desire to allow the refugees to stay.

Correspondents who were against the expulsion of Jewish refugees drew on the idea of British humanitarian exceptionalism. Deportation, in the words of Bishop Hall, was “...the first time in the history of our country... that we have ever denied shelter to the victims of our common enemy in their time of need.”¹⁸⁹ Liberal Britain was historically a sanctuary, the argument went. The British people benefited from the influx of talent and expertise of these refugees, who surely would be forever grateful to Britain’s kindness in their time of need. And Hong Kong should be no different. To refuse shelter was seen by some as a “forgetting of traditional British policy;” to deport, a “flattering [of] our enemies by imitating their methods.”¹⁹⁰ The implications were clear: this was “not British.”¹⁹¹

However, context is needed in order to understand the role of British humanitarianism and its influence amongst the correspondents in Hong Kong. The idea of British humanitarian exceptionalism does not necessarily mean that refugees who entered the country (or colony) were liked or welcomed. Indeed, as David Cesarani suggests, while Britain may have been concerned with the plight of refugees, it did not “...necessarily entail offering them homes and jobs.”¹⁹² In the 1930s with the mass exodus of German-Jewish refugees, Britain did take in 80,000 Jews – a fact that some correspondents did reference.¹⁹³ But this obscures the nature of Britain’s assistance. As Louise London argues, these lucky few had to fit within a narrow set of criteria that complemented the self-interests of Britain;

¹⁸⁸ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 171.

¹⁸⁹ SCMP Ronald Hong Kong, “Expulsion of Refugees,” *South China Morning Post*, June 11, 1940.

¹⁹⁰ SCMP History, “Expulsion of Refugees,” *South China Morning Post*, June 11, 1940.

¹⁹¹ SCMP Independent, “Refugees from Nazi Rule,” *South China Morning Post*, June 14 1940.

¹⁹² Cesarani, “An Alien Concept,” 26-27.

¹⁹³ SCMP J. Scott Harston, “Expulsion of Exiles,” *South China Morning Post*, June 12, 1940; Louise London, “Whitehall and the Refugees: The 1930s and the 1990s,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 34, no. 3 (2000): 18.

many more were rejected.¹⁹⁴ They were to be the best. This meant Jewish refugees with desirable qualifications or brought with them cultural institutions were swiftly granted asylum.¹⁹⁵ A chief concern for British officials was on what to do with these refugees. Therefore, those accepted by Britain were also those “...it could conveniently dispose of.”¹⁹⁶ Their refuge was on the basis of short-term temporary stays or in-transit.¹⁹⁷ German-Jewish refugees were paradoxically the best in their contributions (or value) to Britain, and in their ease of emigration. In Hong Kong, Jewish refugees generally did not bring with them the cultural or financial capital that could categorize them as desirable. And since Hong Kong’s immigration policies were partially dictated by London – in addition to the visa requirement – the barriers faced by refugees were similar. However, as evident from both internment documents and newspaper correspondences, most refugee Jews were working and contributing to Hong Kong. They were able to make Hong Kong their refuge. The myth perpetrated by this idealized perception of assistance was employed by correspondents to justify further charity. It also indicated a clear objection to the order of expulsion.

4.3 The Role of the JRS

As the public discourse surround interment raged on, one contributor, *A British Chinese*, raised a poignant question: what were the “wealthy and influential Jews in Shanghai and Hongkong” doing for Jewish refugees affected by expulsion.¹⁹⁸ In fact, the question of

¹⁹⁴ London, “Whitehall and the Refugees: The 1930s and the 1990s,” 18.

¹⁹⁵ London, “Whitehall and the Refugees: The 1930s and the 1990s,” 23; Dework and Van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich*, 26-27.

¹⁹⁶ London, “Whitehall and the Refugees: The 1930s and the 1990s,” 18.

¹⁹⁷ London, “Whitehall and the Refugees: The 1930s and the 1990s,” 22.

¹⁹⁸ SCMP A British Chinese June 11. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, how local Chinese viewed, or whether they interacted with, Jewish refugees are another factor to consider. Grete Appel recalls that her grandmother was able to communicate with a local Chinese. One travel diary of a Jewish refugee doctor described, in Orientalist awe and detail, the musculature and bronzed skin of Chinese dockworkers. See LBI: Ernst Ritter, *So habe ich es erlebt* (Austria: 1958), 20.

what local Jews were doing for their refugee cousin appeared to cross the division. *Once Bitten*, a pro-expulsion contributor, suggested that “the wealthy should support the poor and weak among their own people - and they are well able to do so.”¹⁹⁹ Whether *Once Bitten* was referring to Germans in general, or was playing with a well-known antisemitic trope is difficult to judge. However, the message was clear: where was the Jewish Refugee Society?

It was no surprise that the JRS wholly opposed expulsion. Grete and Karl Appel, Herman Korczyn, and Karl Glaser all received notices of expulsion. On June 7, 1940, the JRS immediately appealed this decision, which affected at least 60 individuals.²⁰⁰ The Society requested reconsideration on the grounds that the government had originally “... given permission [to these refugees] to land in Hong Kong.”²⁰¹ The letter was explicit in its appeal that these enemy aliens posed no threat. They were Jewish refugees escaping persecution, and most had established a life in the colony and were working. Despite the response being delayed, due in part by Bishop Hall’s telegram and the interference of the Colonial Office, the answer was a resounding negative.

A second plea to the authorities, sent on June 27, employed the same language of utility and potential contributions. This second appeal, sent by Lawrence Kadoorie, was more detailed. In addition to Lawrence personally advocating for exceptions to be made for certain refugees (such as Paul Steinschneider and Dr. K. Schlam), the letter also revealed the difficulties in complying with the expulsion order. Including the Hong Kong government restricting enemy aliens from Canton and Macau, “...due to regulations now in force in

¹⁹⁹ SCMP *Once Bitten*, “Expulsion of Exiles,” *South China Morning Post*, June 12, 1940.

²⁰⁰ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/32.

²⁰¹ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/32.

Manila, Shanghai, Japan and other ports, [the refugees] are unable to obtain entry.”²⁰² And indeed, by this time, Japanese authorities in Shanghai had implemented a series of barriers that limited immigration. Although Lawrence did note that a few refugees had already left for Shanghai as they were eligible for entry, most Jewish refugees were unable to leave even if they wanted to. Despite these circumstances, the second plea was also rejected. This time the government’s response was harsher: it dismissed Lawrence’s personal request and reiterated that refugees slated for expulsion who were still in Hong Kong after July 8 – the deadline for their departure – will be interned. Should these enemy aliens be unable to acquire passage out of Hong Kong, the government threatened: “no assurances can... be given that they will be interned separately from Nazi Germans nor that the place of their internment will be in Hong Kong.”²⁰³

With Hong Kong no longer being a refuge, the Jewish Refugee Society made arrangements for refugees. Yet the avenues of escape were narrow. Shanghai, now occupied by Japan, was the only option for many without connections, but changes to its immigration policies in October 1939 restricted entry to those carrying USD\$400 or had a familial/work connection.²⁰⁴ Hence there was difficulty in getting the necessary permits for entry.²⁰⁵ As the July 8 deadline approached, Lawrence and the JRS were anxious. For the past month, there had been a constant trickle of Jewish refugees leaving Hong Kong. Most had funded their own deportation: many went to Shanghai after getting the necessary documents, but some

²⁰² HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/45.

²⁰³ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/42.

²⁰⁴ Gao Bei, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 85-86. Bei noted that these restrictions only applied to the area that made up the Shanghai International Settlement and did not apply to the Japanese concessions, which had its own separate regulations.

²⁰⁵ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/45, 36.

journeyed to Manila or Singapore.²⁰⁶ Yet, there were still 40 refugees who remained, having been unable to acquire Shanghai entry permits. Then on July 3, a breakthrough: the Shanghai Refugee Committee would take responsibility of Hong Kong's Jewish deportees.²⁰⁷ It was these links between relief organizations in East Asia that provided the JRS a solution. With the issue of refuge resolved, the JRS immediately turned to facilitating their transport. Lawrence Kadoorie also prepared letters of introduction for refugees that he knew personally.²⁰⁸ By the end of July, all German nationals considered enemy aliens were gone from Hong Kong, although some Jewish refugees would be re-interned at La Salle College due to delays in receiving their entry permits.²⁰⁹

4.4 Exemptions from Deportation: A Question of Utility

Central to a refugee's claim for asylum or refuge was the assurance of their utility to the state. Skilled individuals, such as doctors, technicians, and scientists were prioritized. In the case of Britain, smooth entry into the country was inherently tied to their possible contributions to the war effort. Louise London noted that there was a scheme involving the recruitment of refugees who worked in the diamond industry. Coming from the diamond capital of Antwerp, these valuable human assets – mainly Dutch and Polish Jews – were encouraged to fill their pockets with uncut diamonds before escaping to Britain.²¹⁰ Indeed, this wartime acquisition would become the foundation for Britain's post-war domestic diamond industry.²¹¹ In Britain's eastern colonies, a similar salvaging of talent occurred. India was more liberal in its policies surround the employment of Jewish enemy aliens,

²⁰⁶ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/45.

²⁰⁷ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/58.

²⁰⁸ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/52-53.

²⁰⁹ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/64, 74-76.

²¹⁰ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 181-182.

²¹¹ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 182-183.

provided they were verified anti-Nazis and held the necessary qualifications.²¹² However, there was no policy enacted by the Hong Kong government to entice Jewish refugees. This is not to suggest that the Hong Kong authorities did not participate in identifying potentially useful refugees. During the initial round-up in early September 1939, three enemy aliens – all Austrians – avoided internment because of their contributions to Hong Kong. Dr. Leon Tillinger was employed in the Medical Department of the Hong Kong government while Mr. Corra (and by extension his wife) was serving in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps.²¹³ However, these three individuals were not Jewish refugees; and perhaps they were unaffected by the expulsion order.²¹⁴ This begs the question: could Jewish refugees avoid expulsion?

Paul Steinschneider was an engineer and coppersmith at *Hongkong & Whampoa Dock Company*. He arrived in Hong Kong with his wife and daughter in July 1939. At the outbreak of war, he was restricted but not interned due to his age (57).²¹⁵ The names of him and his family were included among the many to whom a notice of expulsion was given. However, he was lucky. The JRS petitioned his case to the government, emphasizing his current and future contributions to the colony. Included as well were letters of support from the Chief Manager at Paul Steinschneider's company and other individuals.²¹⁶ A personal appeal from Lawrence Kadoorie also included a newspaper clipping from the *China Mail*, which referred to a decision in England about the possibility of permitting *useful aliens* to

²¹² London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 186.

²¹³ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no. 40.

²¹⁴ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no. 40. As neither of the three – Leon Tillinger, and Mr. and Mrs. Corra – were interned, no entries for them exist in the internment documents except for a brief mention as exceptions to internment. Neither were their names included in the list of Jewish refugees affected by the expulsion order. But given that they were not restricted and permitted to remain in Hong Kong, it is highly plausible that they were also excluded from expulsion.

²¹⁵ TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no. 40, Advisory Committee page.

²¹⁶ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/84, 86-90, 93.

remain un-interned.²¹⁷ After a stay of a few weeks at La Salle College, Paul Steinschneider was released in early August 1940 and granted permission to stay in Hong Kong.²¹⁸ Exceptions for Jewish refugees were made. But Steinschneider's case exemplifies the tremendous requirements for refugees to meet to avoid expulsion. They had to hold technical qualifications and a present a clear contribution to the state; they also needed a broad range of support. These refugees needed a local network made up of prominent individuals that would sponsor them. It also perhaps helped that Paul Steinschneider was recorded as ethnically Jewish but religious Protestant. But this raises additional questions – should Steinschneider be considered a *Jewish* refugee? How broad was the mandate of the JRS: clearly they did not help only religious Jews, but where was the line drawn? Nonetheless, Steinschneider gestures to the fluidity of identity in a moment where the consequence of being perceived as the Other was disastrous. Steinschneider (and his family) stands as the only recorded instance the author was able to find in which a refugee sponsored by the JRS was able to avoid expulsion.

Other enemy aliens were able to remain in Hong Kong despite the expulsion order. But those who remained generally provided a social function to the Colony. Missionaries were one such exception. When war broke out in September 1939, German missionaries – the majority of whom were around 20 years-old – were exempted from internment at La Salle, although entries were recorded in the internment documents. Italian missionaries posed an interesting problem for the Hong Kong government. Italians in Hong Kong became the focus of concern with the entry of Italy on the side of Nazi Germany in June 11, 1940. As

²¹⁷ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/90.

²¹⁸ HKHP: SEK-8D-042, EJ1/90, 93; Amusingly, although Paul Steinschneider was allowed to stay in Hong Kong, Lawrence Kadoorie jotted in pen that nothing was sent to him about this reconsideration. Clearly, Lawrence was a little annoyed at this lack of courtesy.

enemy aliens, the conversation naturally flowed towards the question of deportation or internment. Correspondents like *Mrs. A. Mackie* and *A.W.M.* were quick to condemn the Italians, arguing for the confiscation of their property and internment – and even expulsion.²¹⁹ And indeed, 20 Italian nationals were interned at La Salle College in June 1940.²²⁰ However, most of the Italians spoken of by the correspondents were Catholic missionaries and nuns, who worked in the Colony’s education or healthcare sectors. Their greater visibility was not forgotten by correspondents, who emphasized the enormous contributions of their social work.²²¹ Their utility was also valued by the Hong Kong government. On July 2, 1940, the Colonial Office received a telegram from the OAG requesting guidance on the issue, arguing that they were “...doing valuable educational and nursing work much of which would have to cease if they were expelled or interned.”²²² Colonial Office officials were likewise conflicted. While they noted the important contributions offered by missionaries, the fact that many Catholic missions were primarily composed of Italian missionaries posed a security threat: especially in Britain’s African colonies.²²³ As these missionaries were under the jurisdiction of the Vatican, the Colonial Office also had to work with the Foreign Office’s insistence that good relations be maintained with the Vatican, what Louise London has noted as “compensated advantage”.²²⁴ The Colonial Office’s response on July 9 to the OAG was a compromise: prioritize security, but discretion was allowed. If the missionaries are able to continue operating under

²¹⁹ SCMP *Mrs. A. Mackie*, “Aliens,” *South China Morning Post*, June 14, 1940; *A.W.M.*, “Alien’s Property,” *South China Morning Post*, June 15, 1940.

²²⁰ SCMP “Italians Interned – Police Close Down Three Trading Firms – Priests Still Free,” *South China Morning Post*, June 12, 1940.

²²¹ SCMP *S. Tsang*, “Italians in Hong Kong,” June 17, 1940; *K.K. Lam*, “Alien’s Property,” *South China Morning Post*, June 15, 1940; *Indignant*, “Alien’s Property,” *South China Morning Post*, June 15, 1940.

²²² TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 48.

²²³ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 49 Table of Contents Commentary.

²²⁴ *Louise London*, *Whitehall and the Jews*, 189.

restrictions that the OAG was satisfied with, then the Colonial Office would not object.²²⁵

This exemption was also applied to German missionaries in Hong Kong.²²⁶ So long as their work benefited the colony, then they would be allowed to stay.

In a brief telegram to the Colonial Office dated October 8, 1940, the telegram reported that 49 Austrian and German *enemy aliens* were allowed to remain in Hong Kong. No specifics were given as to the breakdown, but it is safe to assume that most were missionaries, and that a majority held positions considered useful for the war effort.²²⁷ As discussed throughout this chapter, the decision to expel all enemy aliens from Hong Kong was motivated by larger geopolitics. France had fallen and Britain was isolated. Canton was occupied and Japanese forces were across the border in Shenzhen. Hong Kong stood on a precipice and had to make a decision: and Hong Kong officials decided that it was safer – and more convenient – to expel all enemy aliens. Whether this was because of underlying currents of antisemitism or the fears of destitution can only be speculated. Unlike internment, expulsion proved to be divisive. Those who supported expulsion drew on the threat of fifth column activities and social burden while those against expulsion emphasized the persecutions already suffered and the contributions made. The Jewish Refugee Society continued their advocacy for Jewish refugees affected by the notice of expulsion, but as expulsion seemed all but inevitable, the Society moved to facilitate the transfer of Jewish deportees to Shanghai. To this end, the networks of assistance between Jewish aid

²²⁵ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 48, 50.

²²⁶ Both the Italian and German missionary orders would have an English priest appointed as the provisional leader for the duration of the war. TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 76, 79, 81.

²²⁷ TNA: CO 323/1797/13, no. 84; The short telegram that on June 1, 1940, there were still 144 German and Austrian enemy aliens in Hong Kong. It states that 56 males and 36 females were ordered to leave, 13 males and 19 females allowed to remain with restrictions along with 8 males and 8 females allowed to remain without restrictions. Whether this included children is unknown, but the possibility is low given that previous records did separate adult from children. Another uncertainty is in regards to the actual amount of enemy aliens allowed to remain. 63 people appealed the order of expulsion, of which 17 were allowed to remain in Hong Kong. Whether this number was included into the previous number of people allowed to stay is unknown.

organizations in East Asia helped to smooth out the process. However, exceptions were given. But as Steinschneider's case (and those of the Italian and German missionaries) demonstrated, it was near impossible for the average refugee to remain without a network of influential persons along with the necessary skills to be deemed valuable enough to evade expulsion. For all intents and purposes, Hong Kong had gotten rid of its security concern.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

On October 4, 1940, a month after the expulsion order, an unnamed Austrian Jewish refugee onboard the steamer *Arabia Maru* wrote in his diary about his transit through Hong Kong. He was taken aback by its natural beauty, describing Hong Kong's harbour as a "marvellous canvas," and that "the sea here is very slightly green probably due to the reflections of the surrounding mountains."²²⁸ As our refugee held a German passport, he was forbidden by the customs officer from entering Hong Kong. Despite having a through ticket, he was not given permission to enter the city. Even his passport was taken from him.²²⁹ He would not be able to introduce himself nor make connections, hence a missed opportunity. Were it not for the stream of merchants – most likely local Chinese – flooding onboard to peddle their wares, remaining on the ship would have been boring. Indeed, there were multiple commotions. His fellow passengers ran to purchase food – anything that could stave them off the dreaded ship food.

This encounter – or micro-interaction – is emblematic of Elizabeth Sinn's framework of the *in-between place* and can be applied to Hong Kong's relationship with Jewish refugees. Their arrival into Hong Kong's harbour, their encounter with customs officials, and talks with members of the Jewish Refugee Society were all a shared experience of being a refugee in a migration hub.²³⁰ By moving away from the narrative of Shanghai as the *sole* refuge in East Asia and focusing on Hong Kong, this thesis revealed the broader socio-political conditions which made Shanghai an attractive destination for refugee Jews. But as evident throughout this thesis, Hong Kong was in itself a different kind of Shanghai. Hong Kong was

²²⁸ LBI, Anonymous, *Unsere große Reise* (1940), 5.

²²⁹ LBI, Anonymous, *Unsere große Reise* (1940), 5.

²³⁰ LBI, Anonymous, *Unsere große Reise* (1940), 5; LBI, Ernst Ritter, *So habe ich erlebt* (Austria: 1958), 20; Heppner, *Shanghai Refuge*, 32-33.

not merely a transit point on the way to Shanghai rather it actively participated in the transmigration of Jewish refugees. Herman Korczyn, Grete Appel's uncle, acquired visas for his extended family members to stay in Hong Kong. Lawrence Kadoorie and the Jewish Refugee Society were active in networking with and accommodating their fellow Jews. Members of the JRS, such as Moses Talan, met with representatives from other forgotten refugees such as the Philippines while Lawrence Kadoorie corresponded with Mr. L. Raphaely of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.²³¹ Not only was the movement of Jewish refugees facilitated through Hong Kong, some Jewish refugees established themselves in the Colony. Karl Glaser, the former director of an Austrian grain firm, started up a business working as a grain importer between Hong Kong and Shanghai.²³² However, an emphasis on those refugees who stayed in Hong Kong risks a deterministic view of this moment. The historical reality was that most Jewish refugees in Hong Kong were often transmigrants and had no intention of residing in the colony beyond a couple of days. Immigration barriers, namely the visa, limited the number of Jewish refugees hoping to remain. Permission to stay was generally only given if the refugee was able to secure a job (or had a job offer coming into Hong Kong), which meant they had to have the proper qualifications and connections. Additionally, while refugee Jews could have been sponsored by the Jewish Refugee Society, sponsorship was rare and only rose in quantity during internment. Nonetheless, this should not downplay Hong Kong's contributions. This thesis raised the question of how to situate a site like Hong Kong, which facilitated the movement of Jewish refugees but also became a temporary host for Jewish refugees. How would an examination of similar sites, namely port cities along the sea route of escape, account for particularities? Centering on Hong Kong not

²³¹ HKHP: SEK-8D-002, FJ1/11.

²³² TNA: CO 323/1797/12, no. 40-2, Karl Glaser entry.

only reinforces the importance of studying lesser-known East Asian refugees in globalizing the Holocaust and Jewish refugee transmigration, but concomitantly reveals barriers which made Shanghai more accessible and attractive.

Throughout this thesis, the focus on the relationship between Hong Kong and Jewish refugees deepened our understanding of Hong Kong during the Second World War. All Germans had restrictions placed on them while the men were interned at La Salle College as a precaution. This mass internment of German males differed from the actions done in Britain, but was still within an understanding of isolating and investigating possibly fifth columnists. Internment itself served to reinforce the reality that most of the internees were anti-Nazis: Jewish refugees, local-born Germans and ethnic Czechs. Internment revealed the limits of associating nationality and identities as one inflexible category.

Similarly, Jewish-ness and German-ness were fluctuating identities assigned to Jewish refugees. Through their humanitarianism, the Jewish Refugee Society sought to emphasize the former: the persecution and tribulations that these refugees faced. But Jewish-ness was also hampered by preconceived ideas of what it entailed: the stereotypes that accompanied both refugees and Eastern European Jews – destitute, filthy, and foreign-looking.²³³ It was not simply *Tzedakah* (‘Righteousness’ in Hebrew) that motivated Jewish elite charity, but more practical reasons: the maintenance and protection of status. This was especially true in the status-driven and racialized society that is Hong Kong. Conversely, German-ness was prioritized by the colonial government. Necessitating out of the Second World War, the Hong Kong government pointed to the possibilities that these Germans – these Other – could threaten the security of the colony. These potentially dangerous

²³³ Tananbaum, *Jewish Immigrants in London*, 56; Peter Gatrell, *Modern Refugee*, 283.

characteristics included: military training, pro-Nazi beliefs, membership in the local German Club or Nazi Party, or a German passport. This current of anti-alienism and distrust towards foreigners circulated amongst the general population and local authorities was aptly summarised by Grete Appel: “In Germany we were Jews; in Hong Kong we were Germans.”²³⁴

These markers of identity operated as another layer within the rubric of enemy alien. Useful, enemy aliens – those whose presence benefitted Hong Kong society – were permitted to remain. However, the worsening military situation in China, along with the military defeats in Europe prompted the Hong Kong government to reconsider its initial leniency by adopting stricter policies regarding exemptions. German and Italian missionaries were one of the more visible groups allowed to stay because of their utility: they contributed through Hong Kong’s medical and educational institutions. Conversely, those viewed to be useless were required to leave the colony. And this was the attitude that many Jewish refugees received: they were useless in the eyes of Hong Kong authorities, and a possible security risk. Of course, a few refugees were able to stay: Paul Steinschneider being the most notable. Yet, his case is more of an exception because Steinschneider benefited from a personal network that few of his fellow refugees had access. His appeal to remain in Hong Kong was supported not just by the Jewish Refugee Society, but also Lawrence Kadoorie and other Jewish/local leaders. For the average Jewish refugee, expulsion from Hong Kong was the only guarantee.

Italy’s entry into the war closed off the sea route that Jewish refugees used to escape Europe, making the Trans-Siberian Railway the sole remaining path to safety. But as our unnamed Austrian Jewish refugee demonstrated, Hong Kong continued to facilitate the

²³⁴ Grete Appel, Interview 19293, *Visual History Archives*, 1996.

movement of Jewish refugees until the Colony's occupation by Japan in December 1941.

Instead of Shanghai – the port where he was coming from – this refugee was going to Buenos Aires, another refuge.²³⁵ Jewish refugees found solace in Hong Kong. The physical space, the local Jewish community, and the Jewish Refugee Society offered some respite. While most Jewish refugees were passing through the colony, some made it a temporary home. For a moment, Hong Kong was more than a transit station but less than a refuge.

²³⁵ LBI, Anonymous, *Unsere große Reise* (1940), 5.

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