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# Displaced persons and the politics of international categorisation(s)

Jayne Persian

*University of Wollongong*, [jpersian@uow.edu.au](mailto:jpersian@uow.edu.au)

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# Displaced persons and the politics of international categorisation(s)

## **Abstract**

Between 1947 and 1952 170,000 Displaced Persons (DPs) arrived in Australia as International Refugee Organisation (IRO)-sponsored refugees. This article sets out the international historical and political context for the migration of DPs to Australia, and interrogates the "bureaucratic labelling" inherent in the category "Displaced Persons". The post-war refugees were presented internationally as "Displaced Persons"; "refugees"; "political refugees"; and eventually, in an effort to solve the population crisis, as potential "workers" and "migrants". This article will describe the historical origin of the terms "Displaced Persons", "refugees", "political exiles" and "migrants" - terms which were, and continue to be, relevant and problematic.

## **Keywords**

persons, categorisation, displaced, international, politics

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## **Displaced Persons and the Politics of International Categorisation(s)**

*Ten million displaced persons in Europe are stateless, homeless, and hopeless.* – YMCA, 1946.<sup>1</sup>

*It is the processes of labeling as much as the labels themselves which are of significance.* – Roger Zetter.<sup>2</sup>

170,000 Displaced Persons (DPs) – predominantly Central and Eastern Europeans – arrived in Australia as International Refugee Organisation (IRO)-sponsored refugees between 1947 and 1952. They were Australia's first, experimental, mass of non-British migrants. This article sets out the international historical and political context for the migration of DPs to Australia, and interrogates the "bureaucratic labelling" inherent in the category 'Displaced Persons'.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to contemporary representations as an "anonymous mass", the DPs were a heterogenous grouping politically, culturally and socially.<sup>4</sup> Many were never part of the original post-war cohort of 'Displaced Persons' and only officially became 'refugees' in 1948 in the context of the Cold War, when they became 'political refugees'. The DPs were then sold as potential 'workers' and/or 'migrants' available to make up the post-war labour shortfall and assist in

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<sup>1</sup> F. J. Massey, national general secretary of the YMCA, cited in 'Millions Homeless and Without Hope in Shattered Europe', *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tas), 3 June, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Zetter, 'Labelling Refugees: Forming and Transforming a Bureaucratic Identity', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (1991), p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> Zetter, 'Labelling Refugees', p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Anna Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism: Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany* (Michigan, 2011), p. 47.

national economic regeneration. This article will describe the historical origin of the terms ‘Displaced Persons’, ‘refugees’, ‘political exiles’ and ‘migrants’; terms which were, and continue to be, relevant and problematic.

### **‘Displaced Persons’**

The term ‘Displaced Persons’, or ‘DPs’, has become the generic name for those groups of people resettled by the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) following the Second World War, including those technically classified as ‘Displaced Persons’, and the later ‘refugees’ from Soviet-occupied countries. Use of the term ‘Displaced Persons’ in international parlance began in 1944 when the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), commanded by the United States’ General Dwight D. Eisenhower, attempted to categorise those refugees anticipated to be displaced as a result of the war. According to the SHAEF Plan for the Allied invasion of Western Europe (Operation Overlord), ‘Displaced Persons’ would be separate from those ‘refugees’ displaced within their own country. ‘Displaced Persons’ were to be specifically those outside their national boundaries and either “desirous” but “unable to return to their home ... without assistance” or who were to be returned to “enemy or ex-enemy territory”.<sup>5</sup> Displaced Persons were to include:

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<sup>5</sup> The National Archives, War Office (WO) 204/2869, War Office: Allied Forces, Mediterranean Theatre: Military Headquarters Papers, Second World War, Refugees and displaced persons in

Evacuees, war or political fugitives, political prisoners, forced or voluntary workers, Todt workers [forced labourers], and former members of forces under German command, deportees, intruded persons, extruded persons, civilian internees, ex-prisoners of war, and stateless persons.<sup>6</sup>

On emergent understanding then, before the end of the Second World War, Displaced Persons were those persons who found themselves outside their own country, predominantly in Germany and Austria. The grouping included concentration camp inmates, voluntary and forced labourers, (non-German) soldiers in military units withdrawing westwards, and civilian evacuees fleeing west from the oncoming Russian Army. These groups were made up predominantly of Jewish and non-Jewish Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, Belarussians, 'Balts' (Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians), Hungarians, Yugoslavs and nationals of Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. Displaced ethnic Germans were the only group outside its state borders not included in the Allied's official category of Displaced Person; they were collectively excluded from the group of 'deserving' victims.<sup>7</sup>

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the Mediterranean Theatre: administration and movement: policy and correspondence, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces, Adm. Memo No. 39 (1 January 1944), <http://www.tlmea.com/postwareurope>, viewed 23 November 2010, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> The National Archives, London, Foreign Office (FO) 1052/10, Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Prisoners of War/Displaced Persons Division: Registered Files (PWDP and other Series), SHAEF planning directive: refugees and displaced persons (DPs) (3 June 1944), <http://www.tlmea.com/postwareurope>, viewed 23 November 2010.

<sup>7</sup> G. Daniel Cohen, 'The West and the Displaced, 1945-1951: The Post-War Roots of Political Refugees', PhD Thesis, Department of History/Institute of French Studies, New York University, January 2000, p. 45; Dan Stone, 'Introduction', *Post-War Europe: Refugees, Exiles and Resettlement, 1945-1950*, The National Archives, UK, and the Wiener Library, London, <http://www.tlmea.com/postwareurope/essays.asp>, viewed 9 December 2009, p. 2.

Notwithstanding the exclusion of ethnic Germans, the numbers of officially categorised Displaced Persons were staggering. By August 1944 there were 7.6 million foreign civilian labourers and prisoners of war working in Germany itself, comprising around 29% of the Reich's industrial labour force and 20% of the total labour force.<sup>8</sup> It has been estimated that towards the end of the war approximately 13.5 million foreigners worked in the German economy, and at least 12 million were forced labourers. Around 11 million survived the war. There were also several hundred thousand foreigners who had been imported into German-controlled territories and more than a million forced labourers in the Todt Organisation (a Third Reich civil and military engineering group), constructing coastal fortifications throughout Northern Europe and Southern France.<sup>9</sup> In addition, it has been estimated that in May 1945 up to 10% of the 7.8 million troops wearing German uniforms were non-German.<sup>10</sup> In all, there were approximately 12 million classifiable Displaced Persons in and around Europe at the conclusion of the war in May 1945.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker, 'Forced Labourers in Nazi Germany: Categories, Numbers, and Survivors', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (Autumn 2002), p. 171; Malcolm J. Proudfoot, *European Refugees 1939-52, A Study in Forced Population Movement* (London, 1957), p. 79; Mark Wyman, *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-51* (Ithaca NY, 1998), p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> David Cesarani, *Justice Delayed: How Britain Became a Refuge for Nazi War Criminals* (London, 2001 [1992]), p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> The National Archives, FO 1052/10, Control Office for Germany and Austria and Foreign Office: Control Commission for Germany (British Element), Prisoners of War/Displaced Persons Division: Registered Files (PWDP and other Series), SHAEF planning directive: refugees and displaced persons (DPs) (3 June 1944), <http://www.tlmea.com/postwareurope>, viewed 23 November 2010; Louise W. Holborn, *The International Refugee Organisation: A specialized*

Representations of the DPs in the immediate post-war period were uniformly negative. To the post-war Germans, the DPs were known as *schlechte Ausländern* (bad or dirty foreigners), and “held in the greatest contempt”. To Allied military authorities, they were ‘surplus population’ and ‘a nuisance’: ‘kriegies’ (POWs), ‘goddam DPs’ and ‘lousy Poles’.<sup>12</sup> Jewish DPs (and it was soon ordered that all Jewish survivors were to be categorized as DPs), who made up 20% of the immediate post-war refugee population, were described by US General George S. Patton Jr. in 1945 as “lower than animals”.<sup>13</sup> They were all, however, the responsibility of the Allied authorities.

After SHAEF ceased functioning in July 1945, the Displaced Persons came under the care of American, British and French military authorities.<sup>14</sup> Two international organisations were involved on the periphery: the Office of the League of Nations High Commissioner, a merger incorporating the

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*agency of the United Nations, its history and work, 1946-1952* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 395.

<sup>12</sup> Hulme, *The Wild Place*, p. 18; Rieko Karatani, ‘How History Separated Refugee and Migrant Regimes: In Search of Their Institutional Origins’, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Vol. 17, no. 3 (2005), p. 520; UNRRA Archives, Germany Mission, US Zone Office of the Director, PAG-4/3.0.11.3.0:9, ‘Confidential Report on the General Situation of DPs to the Director General of UNRRA, Sep 1946’, cited in Yury Boshyk, ‘Repatriation and Resistance: Ukrainian Refugees and Displaced Persons in Occupied Germany and Austria, 1945-48’, in Anna C. Bramwell, *Refugees in the Age of Total War* (London, 1988), p. 202; Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War Through the Cold War* (Philadelphia, 1985 [2002]), p. 300.

<sup>13</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York, 1982), p. 16; Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, p. 350; Dushnyck and Gibbons, *Refugees are People*, p. 12; Gerard Daniel Cohen, ‘The Politics of Recognition: Jewish Refugees in Relief Policies and Human Rights Debates, 1945-1950’, *Immigrants & Minorities*, Vol. 24, no. 2 (2006), p. 135.

<sup>14</sup> Arieh Kochavi, ‘The Politics of Displaced Persons in Post-War Europe, 1945-1950’, *Post-War Europe: Refugees, Exiles and Resettlement, 1945-1950*, p. 2.

Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees Coming from Germany and the Nansen International Office, and which provided legal protection and material aid to refugees from 1938 to 1946; and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, which had been set up as a result of the Evian Conference in 1938 to assist Jewish migration from Germany and Austria, and then in 1943 to care for all refugees.<sup>15</sup> The main international body, however, was the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which was initiated in late 1943 so that “preparation and arrangements shall be made for the return of prisoners and exiles to their homes”.<sup>16</sup>

UNRRA was a successor of sorts to earlier refugee relief organisations, such as the American Relief Administration (1919-1923) and various Offices under the auspices of the League of Nations. However, rather than relying on charitable and philanthropic bodies, it established an American-led internationalization of relief operations.<sup>17</sup> In November 1943, the 44 nation signatories of UNRRA agreed not only to care for the DPs, but also to relieve war victims at the request of national governments. UNRRA would provide basic necessities, with a goal towards rehabilitation. At all

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<sup>15</sup> The National Archives, FO 371/51138-0008, Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1967, Future of Inter-Governmental Committee (5 September 1945), <http://www.tlmea.com/postwareurope>, viewed 23 November 2010.

<sup>16</sup> M. L. Kovacs, 'Immigration and Assimilation: An Outline Account of the IRO Immigrants in Australia', MA Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1955, pp. 182-183; NLA, MS 8128, Unpublished manuscript by Harland Gordon (H.G.) Brooks (Department of Immigration), 'Displaced Persons Volume 1', pp. 4, 7.

<sup>17</sup> G. Daniel Cohen, 'Between Relief and Politics: Refugee Humanitarianism in Occupied Germany 1945-1946', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 43, no. 3 (2008), pp. 437, 439.



times, UNRRA operated under military jurisdiction and was largely dependent on military supplies. Their ‘first and most urgent’ task, however, was to organize the DPs.<sup>18</sup> UNRRA’s ideological basis for this task was not only to “bind up the world’s wounds” but also to propagate an American-led “new growth of confidence [in international administration] which is indispensable for the future system of general security”.<sup>19</sup>

The main aim of UNRRA in this period, in relation to the DPs, was to assist in refugee repatriation. However, some rehabilitation and material support was required until an eventual return home became possible. In effect, this meant providing all DPs with food and clothing rations initially sourced within Germany and supplemented by Red Cross parcels, and housing millions of homeless DPs in around 900 (mostly nationality-specific) camps across Germany, Austria and Italy, which were often former concentration camps.<sup>20</sup> In this way, as historian Daniel Cohen has described, UNRRA “functioned as an alternative welfare state for stateless people”.<sup>21</sup> According to the British Army, this “gigantic” task involved:

Controlling and transporting ... men, women and children; the setting up or adaptation of camps for them; disinfestations and organization of hygiene and sanitation measures ... feeding, watering, and clothing; checking and documentation; the provision

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<sup>18</sup> Jessica Reinisch, ‘Preparing for a new World Order: UNRRA and the International Management of Refugees’, *Post-War Europe: Refugees, Exiles and Resettlement, 1945-1950*. The National Archives, UK, and the Wiener Library, London, [www.tlmea.com/postwareurope/essay4.asp](http://www.tlmea.com/postwareurope/essay4.asp), viewed 9 December 2009, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Jessica Reinisch, “‘We Shall Rebuild Anew a Powerful Nation’: UNRRA, Internationalism and National Reconstruction in Poland”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 43 (2008), p. 452.

<sup>20</sup> Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> Cohen, ‘Between Relief and Politics’, p. 439.

of medical attention and supplies, the control of disease, and in the case of those who were not to be speedily repatriated, the initiation of rehabilitation, education and entertainment.<sup>22</sup>

DPs also received special benefits in a post-war Germany. Many were employed by the Allied military authorities, and all received rations of American cigarettes to use as black market currency, as well as being outside German jurisdiction.<sup>23</sup> This reliance on welfare resulted in a new characterisation, that of the “professional DP ... sitting pretty under the protection of UNRRA”.<sup>24</sup>

The repatriation attempts were successful in part: for many, “there was great enthusiasm about going home”.<sup>25</sup> The Allied military authorities repatriated about 7 million within less than six months after the end of the war, and UNRRA repatriated another million over the following 18 months.<sup>26</sup> However, UNRRA soon came up against problematic DPs who either had nowhere to return to, or refused repatriation, citing “persecution”: all Jews, who were formally classified as ‘stateless’, and those (old and new) Soviet citizens who refused to return to communist

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<sup>22</sup> War Office 205/139 Public Record Office, Notes on ‘G’ Activities of 21 Army Group during Post-Surrender Period, cited in Carol Mather, *Aftermath of War: Everyone Must Go Home* (London, 1992), p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> M. L. Kovacs and A. J. Cropley, *Immigrants and Society: Alienation and Assimilation* (Sydney, 1975), p. 85.

<sup>24</sup> Hulme, *The Wild Place*, p. 70.

<sup>25</sup> Francesca M. Wilson, *Aftermath: France, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, 1945 and 1946* (West Drayton, Middlesex, England, 1947), p. 83.

<sup>26</sup> Klaus Neumann, *Refuge Australia: Australia’s Humanitarian Record* (Sydney, 2004), p. 30.

rule in their homelands.<sup>27</sup> Others were initially repatriated and then returned to the DP camps – these were classed as uncatalogued refugees, that is, no longer official DPs, “free-livers” outside the DP camp system.<sup>28</sup>

### **Soviet Citizen ‘Displaced Persons’**

The Yalta Agreement of 1945 had promised the return of Soviet citizens to their pre-August 1939 homes (DPs from areas incorporated into the Soviet Union since September 1939 were not to be repatriated nor treated as Soviet citizens “unless they affirmatively claim Soviet citizenship”). As many Soviet citizens had no wish to return home, repatriation was at times forcibly carried out by Allied military authorities “regardless of [the DPs’] personal wishes”.<sup>29</sup> Ukrainian writer, and DP, Ivan Bahryany explained in 1947 in an English-language article in the *Ukrainian Weekly*, why so many ‘Soviet citizens’ refused to repatriate:

I am a Ukrainian, 35 years old, born in the region of Poltava of laboring parents and now I am living with no fixed residence, in constant want, wandering like a homeless cur around Europe — hiding from the repatriation committees of the USSR, who want to send me "home". I do not want to go "home". There are hundreds of thousands of us who do not want to. They can come for us with loaded rifles, but we will put up a desperate resistance — for we prefer to die in a foreign land rather than go back to that "home". I put that word in quotation marks, for it is filled with horror, for it shows the unparalleled cynicism of the Soviet propaganda directed against us: the Bolsheviks have made for 100 nationalities one

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, ‘The Politics of Recognition’, p. 136.

<sup>28</sup> Hulme, *The Wild Place*, p. 116.

<sup>29</sup> Foreign Office 1052/260, Directive from SHAEF to 21 Army Group, 14 June 1945, cited in Mather, *Aftermath of War*, p. 19; Dushnyck and Gibbons, *Refugees are People*, p. 51.

"Soviet home" and by that term they are building the terrible "prison of peoples", the so-called USSR.<sup>30</sup>

This feeling of "horror" in response to the USSR was exacerbated by the Soviet persecution of returnees. There was a general assumption in Soviet lands that all returnees, particularly POWs (but even forced labourers), had been collaborators of the Nazi regime and this led to "complicated, often crippled fates" for those forced to return.<sup>31</sup> Historian Tony Judt has estimated that one in five Soviet returnees were either shot or deported to the Gulag.<sup>32</sup> Others were turned back at the border by state officials, while many DPs received letters from family members warning them not to travel home. Soviet officials suggested that loyalty to homelands had been softened by the safe and comfortable camp environment, where "they do not work hard and they are set in a special atmosphere which is not normal".<sup>33</sup> The Soviets alleged that the DPs were being "nourished" in the camps as "tools of aggression for foreign powers".<sup>34</sup> The forced repatriations by Allied military authorities ceased around the end of 1945 as it became apparent that large numbers of Soviet repatriates were being met with violence, deported to Gulags or

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<sup>30</sup> Ivan Bahryany, 'Why I Do Not Want to Go "Home"', *Ukrainian Weekly*, 17 February 1947, p. 3, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16475947/The-Ukrainian-Weekly-194707>, viewed 9 February 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Gelinada Grinchenko, 'Ukrainian Ostarbeiters of the Third Reich: Remembering Patterns on Forced Labour in Nazi Germany', Conference Paper, 14<sup>th</sup> International Oral History Conference, Sydney, 2007 (unpublished), p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Tony Judt, cited in Dan Stone, 'Introduction', *Post-War Europe: Refugees, Exiles and Resettlement, 1945-1950*, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Reinisch, 'We Shall Rebuild Anew a Powerful Nation', p. 468.

<sup>34</sup> Cited in Dushnyk and Gibbons, *Refugees are People*, p. 49.

executed as soon as they crossed the border.<sup>35</sup>

As a result, many DPs concocted false background stories, and an entire underground industry grew up providing false identity papers for “Poles from the Urals” (that is, Soviet citizens attempting to pass as citizens of pre-1939 Poland).<sup>36</sup> A British officer noted the difficulties of identification and classification for Allied military authorities, and UNRRA:

Was [the ‘DP’] a Yugoslav? Then he might be a Serbian Chetnik who had fought against Tito, but professed undying love for England. Or he might be a Tito Partisan, captured by the Germans but now escaped and trying to make his way back to Yugoslavia. Or again he might be a member of Pavelich’s infamous Ustachi, who would no doubt attempt to conceal his identity. Was he a Russian? Then he could be a runaway Cossack, or an escaped Red Army prisoner, or a Latvian who left Latvia before it became part of the Soviet Union, or a displaced Soviet citizen who just did not want to go back home.<sup>37</sup>

The underground industry for false documents consisted of individual entrepreneurs as well as emigrant institutions such as the Tolstoy Foundation. DP employees of UNRRA were also involved.<sup>38</sup> This occurred concurrently with the practice of Nazi collaborators hiding their identity, or

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<sup>35</sup> See also National Library of Australia (NLA), MS 8128, Unpublished manuscript by H. G. Brooks (Department of Immigration), ‘Displaced Persons Volume 1’, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Margarethe Gabriel, cited in Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *The Resettlement of Soviet--Russian Displaced Persons and the Politics of ‘Fidelity’*, Arizona State University, Place of Refuge Panel Series, <http://www.asu.edu/clas/history/proj/refugee/articles/kuhlmann.htm>, viewed 15 February 2008, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> War Office 170/4461, Public Records Office, HQ 36 Infantry Brigade, War Diary, cited in Mather, *Aftermath of War*, p. 79.

<sup>38</sup> Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *The Resettlement of Soviet--Russian Displaced Persons and the Politics of ‘Fidelity’*, pp. 7, 9; V. L. Borin, *The Uprooted Survive: A Tale of Two Continents* (London, 1959), pp. 128-129; Cohen, ‘Between Relief and Politics’, p. 444; Kim Salomon, *Refugees in the Cold War: Toward a New International Refugee Regime in the Early Postwar Era* (Lund, Sweden, 1991), p. 73.

changing certain biographical details, in order to be classified as DPs.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, the erstwhile Soviet citizens were joined by Jews and ‘border-hoppers’ (or ‘infiltrates’) fleeing the East. More than 160,000 Jews left Poland between 1945 and 1947 due to the very real danger of pogrom actions, while in 1947 the majority of those leaving the Soviet bloc were Romanian Jews fleeing via Hungary and Austria.<sup>40</sup> Border-hoppers, usually young, single males from Czechoslovakia and Hungary, were attempting to escape the encroaching Iron Curtain – “Communism-in-the-making” - in what has been termed the phenomenon of “the Voting Feet”.<sup>41</sup>

By this time, the hundreds of DP camps were regarded as “sociological and psychological cauldrons” as the heterogeneous groupings of DPs battled on ethnic, religious and political grounds.<sup>42</sup> One contemporary described the DPs as an “incredible, almost comical, melting-pot of peoples and nationalities sizzling dangerously in the very heart of Europe”.<sup>43</sup> Jewish DPs, in particular, were forced to isolate themselves from the majority DP camps, characterized by an American reporter as

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<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Ruth Balint’s investigation of Károly Zentai’s documented identity changes. Ruth Balint, ‘Australia, Hungary and the case of Károly Zentai’, *Inside Story*, <http://inside.org.au/australia-hungary-and-the-case-of-karoly-zentai/>, viewed 20 October 2010, pp. 8-9.

<sup>40</sup> Kochavi, ‘The Politics of Displaced Persons in Post-War Europe, 1945-1950’, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Sandor Berger, *An Appendix to An Appendix of Prose, A Supplement to A Supplement of ‘I Protest’: The Letters and Articles of Sandor Berger, Australia, 1964-1968* (Sydney, 1968), p. 307; Victoria Zabukovec, *The Second Landing* (Penneshaw, Kangaroo Island, SA, 1993), p. 289.

<sup>42</sup> Lubomyr Luciuk, *Searching for Place: Ukrainian Displaced Persons* (Toronto, 2000), p. 143.

<sup>43</sup> Tadeusz Borowski, cited in Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, p. 1.

“camps for collaborators”.<sup>44</sup> The DPs had to cope with the administration of their lives by UNRRA and the occupation authorities, which frequently included transfers from camp to camp, as well as deal with local Austrian or German officials.<sup>45</sup>

In this context, a specific DP collective identity, or community, failed to emerge in post-war Europe; instead, a sense of “reactive” diaspora and exile mission was established.<sup>46</sup> The DP camps, or “DP Municipalities”, encouraged by UNRRA to have a form of self-sufficiency, were usually nationality specific and attempted to keep a (homogenous) national sensibility alive through schools, cultural activities, and national celebrations and commemoration days.<sup>47</sup> Historian Marian J. Rubchak has described the camps as “a matrix for cultural preservation, and even further development, in a relatively isolated environment”.<sup>48</sup> The camps

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<sup>44</sup> Cited in Suzanne D. Rutland, ‘Sanctuary for Whom? Jewish Victims and Nazi Perpetrators in Post-War Australian Migrant Camps’, Conference Paper, *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour*, The Second International Multidisciplinary Conference at the Imperial War Museum, London, 11-13 January 2006 (unpublished), p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> Luciuk, *Searching for Place*, p. 143; Anna D Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission: The Political Polish Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939-1956* (Athens, Ohio, 2004), p. 77.

<sup>46</sup> G. Daniel Cohen, ‘Remembering Post-War Displaced Persons: From Omission to Resurrection’, in Mareike König and Rainer Ohliger, eds., *Enlarging European Memory: Migration Movements in Historical Perspective* (Ostfildern, Germany, 2006), p. 90; Egon F. Kunz, ‘The Refugee Experience: Being a Refugee’, *Refugees: The Challenge of the Future*, Academy of the Social Science of Australia, Fourth Academy Symposium, 3-4 November 1980, Proceedings, p. 123.

<sup>47</sup> Reinisch, ‘We Shall Rebuild Anew a Powerful Nation’, pp. 470-471; Cohen, ‘The Politics of Recognition’, p. 136; Laura Hilton, ‘Cultural Nationalism in Exile: The Case of Polish and Latvian Displaced Persons’, *The Historian*, Vol. 71, no. 2 (Summer 2009), 280-318, <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/ojs/index.php/csrf/article/viewFile/1520/1823>, viewed 25 October 2010.

p. 285.

<sup>48</sup> Marian J. Rubchak, ‘Dancing with the Bones: A Comparative Study of Two Ukrainian Exile Societies’, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Vol. 2 (1993), p. 360.

became a training ground for community leaders and modeled a community building process to be used after resettlement.<sup>49</sup> As well as a reconstruction of nationality, then, the DP camps could also be said to have provided a *construction* of national sentiment in diaspora.<sup>50</sup>

The most obvious example of an emergent identity is that of the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and the state of Israel, which historian Dan Diner has argued “had its beginnings [in the Jewish DP camps] in southern Germany”.<sup>51</sup> These emergent nation-building and/or diasporic identities occurred simultaneously with the ongoing excision of the DPs from both the polity and historical memory of Germany and the expanded Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> Some DP groups were thus fighting not only for national and cultural preservation (or, arguably, creation), but also their own identity, purpose and agency as ‘nationalists’ and ‘exiles’ rather than ‘refugees’.<sup>53</sup>

For UNRRA and UNRRA workers, however, a lack of agency on the part of the DPs was assumed. Historian Peter Gatrell has noted that the dominant attitude of relief workers seems to have been one of “personal

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<sup>49</sup> Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, ‘The Polish Post-World II Diaspora’, p. 52; Anna Bramwell, *Refugees in the Age of Total War* (London, Boston, 1988), p. 205; Hilton, ‘Cultural Nationalism in Exile’, p. 297.

<sup>50</sup> Rubchak, ‘Dancing with the Bones’, p. 360; see also Kavita Datla, ‘Displacement Camps: Sites of Ethnic Renewal and Nationalism’, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~ghost20j/classweb/ghost20j/displacement%20camps%20page.html>, viewed 4 May 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Dan Diner, cited in Cohen, ‘The Politics of Recognition’, p. 129.

<sup>52</sup> Cohen, ‘Remembering Post-War Displaced Persons’, pp. 93-94, 337.

<sup>53</sup> Hilton, ‘Cultural Nationalism in Exile’, p. 282.



adventure and self-fulfillment”, together with an individualized and collective agency (and developing professionalism) involved in overcoming “the arduous and sometimes hazardous nature” of their work. They were usually reluctant to ascribe much agency to the DPs themselves, and there was little attempt to consult with the DPs about their future.<sup>54</sup>

DPs were described by sociologists and psychologists working with the international bodies as “apathetic” and “cantankerous”.<sup>55</sup> In one report commissioned by the Welfare Division of UNRRA, a summary of “the psychology of Displaced Persons” used descriptors such as “[rude], [crude] behaviour, aggressiveness and touchiness”, “apathy”, “phantasy-ridden” and “unreal” thinking, “jealousy”, “recklessness”, “deep despondencies”, “hypochondrial complaining” and “mental misery”.<sup>56</sup> Peter Gatrell has argued that this sort of pathologising of the DPs also infantilized them, and justified all forms of external intervention.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the UNRRA report suggested that the “tools of repair” were “simple

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<sup>54</sup> Peter Gatrell, ‘Population Displacement in the Baltic Region in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: From ‘Refugee Studies’ to Refugee History’, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 38, no. 1 (2007), p. 54; Peter Gatrell, ‘Introduction: World Wars and Population Displacement in Europe in the Twentieth Century’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 16, no. 4 (2007), p. 423.

<sup>55</sup> Gatrell, ‘Introduction’, pp. 421-422; see also Eduard Bakis, ‘D.P. Apathy’ in H. B. M. Murphy, *Flight and Resettlement* (Paris, 1955).

<sup>56</sup> Wiener Library, HAS-4/3, JRU Co-operation with Other Relief Organisations: United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), Welfare Division: Report on Psychological Problems of Displaced Persons, 1945 (1 June 1945), <http://www.tlemea.com/postwareurope>, viewed 23 November 2010.

<sup>57</sup> Gatrell, ‘Introduction’, pp. 421-422.

enough” – food, clothing, material help and “administrative guidance”.<sup>58</sup>

UNRRA tried tactics such as reducing rations and frequently relocating the DPs, as well as allowing Soviet representatives undue influence, in an attempt to force the DPs home.<sup>59</sup> DPs showed some agency by resisting these entreaties, and refusing repatriation. In an extensive repatriation poll carried out in May 1946, for example, of the DPs in the US Zone, 89% rejected repatriation, and 9% refused to participate. Those who refused repatriation expressed, in “a more or less violent form, disagreements and dissatisfaction with the Soviet regime”. Ukrainians kept insisting on referring to themselves as ‘stateless’.<sup>60</sup> Some refugees also embarked on spontaneous unauthorised journeys around Europe.<sup>61</sup>

When even bribing the DPs to go home with a sixty-day ration of food didn’t work - ‘Operation Carrot’ - it became apparent that UNRRA’s primary aim of repatriation was “sheer wasted effort” and that the DPs had become, in the words of Daniel Cohen, a problematic “collective anachronism”, an irritating remnant of the Second World War in a Europe

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<sup>58</sup> Wiener Library, HAS-4/3, JRU Co-operation with Other Relief Organisations: United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), Welfare Division: Report on Psychological Problems of Displaced Persons, 1945 (1 June 1945), <http://www.tlmea.com/postwareurope>, viewed 23 November 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Wilson, *Aftermath*, p. 151; see also Theresa Kurk McGinley, ‘Embattled Polonia: Polish-Americans and World War Two’, *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 37, no. 3 (Fall 2003), p. 5; Peter Gatrell, ‘Displacing and Re-Placing Population in the Two World Wars: Armenia and Poland Compared’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 16, no. 4 (2007), p. 524.

<sup>60</sup> Cited in Hilton, ‘Cultural Nationalism in Exile’, pp. 288, 290.

<sup>61</sup> Gatrell, ‘Population Displacement in the Baltic Region in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’, p. 54.

which was quickly forming Cold War sides.<sup>62</sup>

It was argued by the Polish-American Congress (an umbrella organization of Polish-Americans and Polish-American organizations formed in the United States in 1944), and others, that the United States, and by extension the United Nations, had a moral responsibility to solve the DP problem, as “their plight is attributable to the Yalta agreement to which America was party”.<sup>63</sup> For the Communist nations, DPs who refused repatriation were “enemies and traitors, not only of their own countries, but of all the United Nations”.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, UNRRA had no authority to keep caring for the Jews, border-hoppers and Soviet citizens who refused repatriation, and no authority to initiate resettlement.

In this context of “extreme [diplomatic] touchiness”, political debates between the three countries (the United States, the United Kingdom and France) administering the DP camps in occupied Germany and Austria, and the countries of origin of the majority of renegade DPs (the Soviet Republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, as well as Poland and Yugoslavia) took place throughout 1946.<sup>65</sup> In April, the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) officially replaced UNRRA as a temporary agency of the UN.

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<sup>62</sup> Dushnyck and Gibbons, *Refugees are People*, p. 54; Hulme, *The Wild Place*, p. 113; Cohen, ‘The West and the Displaced’, p. 7; Wyman, *DPs*, p. 177.

<sup>63</sup> Charles Rozmarek (PAC), December 1946, cited in McGinley, ‘Embattled Polonia’, p. 5.

<sup>64</sup> Cohen, ‘The Politics of Recognition’, p. 131.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Elliott, cited in Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, p. 53.

In September 1946 the Special Committee on Refugees and Displaced Persons (run by the UN Economic and Social Council) resolved protection for:

3 (b) those persons who have been displaced, as a direct or indirect result of the second World War, from their countries of nationality or residence, prior to (a specified date), or who were outside of their countries of nationality or residence on that date, and who definitely, in complete freedom and after receiving full knowledge of the facts, including adequate information from the governments of their countries of nationality or residence, are unwilling to return to those countries and are further unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of the governments of those countries.<sup>66</sup>

This definition now included those Soviet citizens who had refused repatriation, thus enlarging the category of Displaced Persons under the responsibility of the United Nations.

In December 1946 the draft constitution of the International Refugee Organisation (IRO), specifying the IRO's field of operations and promising to "find new homes elsewhere" for unrepatriable DPs, was adopted by a vote of 30 to 5 with 18 abstentions on 15 December 1946.<sup>67</sup> The ultimate responsibility for the UN was now to resettle the burgeoning group of eligible Displaced Persons, most of whom by this time were unrepatriable

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<sup>66</sup> The National Archives, FO 371/57705-0007, Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1972, Definition of term 'refugee' and 'displaced person' (9 April 1946), <http://www.tlmea.com/postwareurope>, viewed 23 November 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, *Constitution of the International Refugee Organization*, 15 December 1946, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 18, p. 3, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b37810.html>, viewed 23 November 2010; Cohen, 'The West and the Displaced', pp. 28-29.

Soviet citizens or those who refused to return to their now Soviet-occupied homelands.

The IRO (1946-1952) was formally charged with resettling the DPs and in the meantime, maintaining and protecting them in the same camp system set up by UNRRA (1943-1946).<sup>68</sup> The IRO became responsible for the “care and control” of 1.5 million DPs and ‘*bona fide*’ refugees, including older generations of League of Nations and pre-war refugees. Those ineligible for IRO protection included war criminals, quislings, traitors, anybody who had participated in the persecution of civilians of an allied nation or voluntarily assisted enemy forces, common criminals, persons of German ethnic origin and persons enjoying the financial assistance and protection of their country of nationality.<sup>69</sup>

All these processes established the IRO as a politicised international bureaucracy, whose major preoccupation was the categorization of the “administrative fiction” of DP eligibility.<sup>70</sup> One of its main tasks was issuing Identity Cards verifying the holder as a “genuine refugee or displaced person” able to access emigration channels.<sup>71</sup> This work followed on from UNRRA’s screening practices, and in fact the IRO launched a massive

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<sup>68</sup> NLA, MS 8128, Unpublished manuscript by H. G. Brooks (Department of Immigration), ‘Displaced Persons Volume 1’, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, p. 29; Kovacs and Cropley, *Immigrants and Society*, p. 87.

<sup>70</sup> Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Holborn, *The International Refugee Organisation*, p. 206.

review of individual cases already evaluated under UNRRA due to widespread “discrepancies and incoherence”.<sup>72</sup> The IRO Identity Cards certified a politically blameless past, safeguarded the holder from repatriation, guaranteed continued maintenance and enabled possible resettlement.<sup>73</sup>

The screening process, while necessary, was not particularly stringent, even “superficial and in the eyes of some, ‘corrupt’”. The Eligibility Manual “made clear that the IRO was not particularly enthusiastic about screening for war criminals”, and that a certain amount of untruthfulness was expected.<sup>74</sup> Historian David Cesarani has noted that that UNRRA and IRO screening was “so weak that, in reality, it was useful only for public relations purposes”.<sup>75</sup>

Even though ‘Displaced Person’ remained the official IRO term for all groups under its mandate, and eventuated as the historical signifier of the disparate groups in Europe, a subtle change had taken place regarding both terminology and eligibility for refugee status.<sup>76</sup> A DP could become a ‘refugee’ if, on refusing repatriation, he or she demonstrated a “valid objection” to such repatriation.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Cohen, ‘The West and the Displaced’, pp. 90, 94.

<sup>73</sup> Kunz, *Displaced Persons*, p. 31.

<sup>74</sup> Rutland, ‘Sanctuary for Whom?’, pp. 23-24.

<sup>75</sup> Cesarani, *Justice Delayed*, pp. 40, 52, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Cohen, ‘The West and the Displaced’, p. 54.

<sup>77</sup> NLA, MS 8128, Unpublished manuscript by H. G. Brooks (Department of Immigration), ‘Displaced Persons Volume 1’, pp 3-4.

### **‘Political Refugees’**

After June 1948, in the context of increasing anti-Soviet sentiment, the IRO’s eligibility focus changed from “genuine” victims of Nazism to anticommunist “dissidents”.<sup>78</sup> In this way, and with the stroke of a pen, all Soviet citizen DPs and other unrepatriables became ‘refugees’ from communism, and indeed by the end of the 1940s the two categories of ‘displaced persons’ and ‘refugees’ merged into the official appellations ‘political refugees’ and ‘stateless refugees’.<sup>79</sup>

The US-controlled IRO concentrated on an evaluation of individual ‘dissidence’, paving the way for a broader notion of refugees, one which privileged the individual over the state.<sup>80</sup> The ideal-type refugee was now assumed to have ‘genuine’ (democratic) political creeds as well as ‘genuine’ reasons to fear persecution. This post-war change to individual rather than group eligibility (except in the case of Jews, who were classed as eligible *because* they were Jews), with an emphasis on ‘proof’ and ‘persecution,’ led to an attempt by the United Nations to codify an international legal framework for refugees, incorporating a language of

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<sup>78</sup> Cohen, ‘The West and the Displaced’, p. 47.

<sup>79</sup> Holborn, *The International Refugee Organisation*, p. 48; Cohen, ‘The West and the Displaced’, p. 2; The National Archives, FO 371/87401-0006, Foreign Office: Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906-1966, Copy of U.N. Report ‘A Study of Statelessness’ (15 August 1950), <http://www.tlmea.com/postwareurope>, viewed 23 November 2010.

<sup>80</sup> Karatani, ‘How History Separated Refugee and Migrant Regimes’, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, p. 529; Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, ‘New Histories of the United Nations’, *Journal of World History*, Vol. 19, no. 3 (2008), p. 2.

protection and individual human rights.<sup>81</sup> The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees defined a refugee as a person who:

Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence ... is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.<sup>82</sup>

The Convention embodied the historical, geopolitical specificity of the DP experience as it applied only to people who became refugees as a result of events that occurred prior to 1 January 1951, and was obviously aimed at the DPs as Western-perceived victims of Communist state persecution. Signatories even had the option of limiting their obligations to European refugees.<sup>83</sup> Academic Gil Loescher, an expert in international refugee policy, has noted that “the definition had the added advantage that it would serve ideological purposes by stigmatizing the fledgling Communist regimes as persecutors”.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Marrus, *The Unwanted*, p. 342; Cohen, ‘The West and the Displaced’, pp. 106-107, 265; see also United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>, viewed 17 August 2010, particularly Article 15: ‘Everyone has the right to a nationality. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality, nor denied the right to change his nationality’.

<sup>82</sup> Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, The UN Refugee Agency, *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf>, p. 16, viewed 2 February 2010.

<sup>83</sup> Neumann, *Refuge Australia*, p. 12.

<sup>84</sup> The Protocols of 1967, which extended the conditions of the Convention to refugees produced by events after 1951, were partly instigated to enable intellectuals behind the Iron Curtain to seek refuge in the West. Gil Loescher, cited in Neumann, *Refuge Australia*, p. 84; Sonia Tascón, ‘Refugees and the Coloniality of Power: Border-Crossers of Postcolonial Whiteness’, in Eileen Moreton-Robinson, Ed., *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Canberra, 2004), p. 245.



From being members of ethnic, religious and political groups, the refugees were now under pressure to present themselves to the IRO as individual “asylum seekers”.<sup>85</sup> Daniel Cohen has identified a “new theatricality” imposed by the IRO under this system, where the incentive of refugee status encouraged an overemphasized “presentation of self”, such as the open expression of fear. In this way, “storytelling” became of primary importance in order to fit the Western vision and definition of individual political persecution. This “Cold War myopia” privileged the “political persecutee”, a “true” refugee, over the “false” “economic migrant”.<sup>86</sup> In this way, the DPs were further homogenized, as they were reduced to a question of their Cold War identities.

It can be argued that the IRO’s pressure on individuals to present themselves as ‘political refugees’ obviated any of the age-old economic motives those from Eastern Europe may have had for refusing repatriation and aspiring to resettlement in the West.<sup>87</sup> According to one IRO officer, motives of adventure and a tradition of economic migration applied to “most” of the DPs; others estimated that only 25% of the DPs in August 1948 were “genuine refugees” as set out by the IRO. In such cases, IRO

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<sup>85</sup> Gerard Noiriel, cited in Cohen, ‘The West and the Displaced’, p. 18.

<sup>86</sup> Cohen, ‘The West and the Displaced’, p. 2; Rutland, ‘Sanctuary for Whom?’, p. 25; Susan L. Carruthers, *Carl Bon Tempo, ‘The United States and Refugees’, Comments*, Place of Refuge Panel Series, Arizona State University, [http://www.asu.edu/clas/history/proj/refugee/articles/bontempo\\_comments.htm](http://www.asu.edu/clas/history/proj/refugee/articles/bontempo_comments.htm), viewed 15 February 2008, p. 2; Salomon, *Refugees in the Cold War*, pp. 64-65; Cohen, ‘The Politics of Recognition’, p. 127.

<sup>87</sup> Marrus, *The Unwanted*, p. 352.

policy was to reject only the few who were “naïve enough to admit that they are economic migrants”.<sup>88</sup>

Regardless of the motivations or means of escape of the various types of DPs, now re-branded ‘political refugees’, by 1948 it was clear that it was up to the IRO to solve the problem of how to resettle these ‘Last Million’ of internationally recognized DPs, made up of 636,000 DPs under the care of UNRRA, 60,000 from camps under military rule, and 16,000 who had been under the mandate of the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees, as well as around 900,000 refugees who made their way to the West from the encroaching Soviet bloc in the years to 1951.<sup>89</sup> The solution came as the IRO re-branded the DPs as ‘workers’ and ‘migrants’. As one UNRRA relief worker observed in 1947: “Fortunately, the present manpower shortage in Western countries has revolutionized the outlook for DPs”.<sup>90</sup> The emphasis for DPs now was on exchanging their IRO identity card to obtain an IRO passport.<sup>91</sup>

### **‘Workers’ and ‘Migrants’**

From 1948, the IRO funded migration to any country willing to accept the DPs. Some countries, including Turkey and the new state of Israel,

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<sup>88</sup> Cohen, ‘The West and the Displaced’, pp. 112, 158; Salomon, *Refugees in the Cold War*, pp. 65, 85; see also Hilton, ‘Cultural Nationalism in Exile’, p. 306.

<sup>89</sup> Kovacs, ‘Immigration and Assimilation’, pp. 188-189.

<sup>90</sup> Wilson, *Aftermath*, p. 152.

<sup>91</sup> Berger, *An Appendix to An Appendix of Prose*, p. 307.

accepted DPs from a particular cultural background, and the United States accepted a small number as “compassionate cases”.<sup>92</sup> However, most interested countries were looking for workers to regenerate post-war economies. The first European schemes involved recruitments by Britain, the Netherlands and Belgium of “bright-eyed [and] healthy” single persons or childless married couples as short-term workers to fill industry shortages in coal mining and textile manufacturing.<sup>93</sup> In Britain a limited scheme was initiated for young Baltic women (the ‘Balt Cygnets’) to be used as maids or sanatorium attendants for the first three months of their stay. Then, around 100,000 non-Jewish DPs were renamed ‘European Voluntary Workers’ and defined primarily as labour migrants.<sup>94</sup> Canada and Argentina were the first countries outside Europe to take advantage of the labour potential, with Canada similarly recruiting workers for two year ‘apprenticeships’ in specific industries, including lumbering, mining, agriculture and domestic service.<sup>95</sup> In 1948 the United States finally passed legislation, the *Displaced Persons Act*, in order to sidestep earlier migration quota restrictions to ultimately admit 400,000 DPs under a sponsorship system whereby the (private or organizational) sponsor had to guarantee housing and employment.

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<sup>92</sup> Hulme, *The Wild Place*, p. 115.

<sup>93</sup> Kuhlmann-Smirnov, ‘The Resettlement of Soviet-Russian Displaced Persons and the Politics of ‘Fidelity’, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Diana Kay and Robert Miles, *Refugees or Migrant Workers? European Volunteer Workers in Britain 1946-1951*(London, 1992), pp. 7-8; Cesarani, *Justice Delayed*, pp. 4, 5, 50, 77.

<sup>95</sup> D. H. Avery and J. K. Federowicz, *The Poles in Canada, Canada’s Ethnic Groups*, Booklet No. 4, Canadian Historical Association with the support of the Multiculturalism Program, (Ottawa, Canada, 1982), p. 13; Carmela Patrias, *The Hungarians in Canada*, The Canadian Historical Association, Canada’s Ethnic Group Series, Editor Roberto Perin, Booklet No. 27 (Ottawa, 1999), p. 21.

By 1948, then, the eligibility of DPs as both Displaced Persons and 'refugees' had morphed into the "selection, control and regimentation" of both the IRO and the international community on "muscle-gathering missions".<sup>96</sup> The DPs, who had earlier presented themselves to the IRO as Cold War 'political refugees', were now coerced into presenting themselves to fit recruiters' needs. For Canadian immigration authorities, intellectuals turned into lumberjacks, workers and farmers; for the United States, they became farmers and mechanics. In Australia, all DPs were re-categorized as 'labourers' and 'domestics', and required to complete a two year work contract.

As well as an emphasis on manual work skills, there was a strong 'racial' component in the international community's selections. The United Nations reported that "without openly declaring their unwillingness to accept Jewish immigrants, the various recruiting missions invariably reject all the Jewish candidates".<sup>97</sup> It has also been argued that non-Jewish, particularly Baltic DPs, were specifically recruited for British work schemes to stem the immigration of non-white Africans and Asians, due to the racially-based belief that European DPs were "of good human stock".<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Cohen, 'The West and the Displaced', p. 171; Kay and Miles, *Refugees or Migrant Workers?*, p. 63.

<sup>97</sup> Cited in Cohen, 'The West and the Displaced', p. 206.

<sup>98</sup> Elizabeth White, *Reconstruction on the Immediate Aftermath of War*, a comparative study of Europe, 1945-50, Workshop Report, Birkbeck College, <http://www.balzan.bbk.ac.uk/page19.html>, viewed 24 June 2007; Silvia Salvatici, 'English Government and European Women Refugees

There was a hierarchy of race (and class) in the selection process, with middle-class Balts seen as the “elite of the refugee problem”.<sup>99</sup> The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg recruited single workers with no dependents, Balts preferred. In the United States, almost a quarter of all visas were reserved for Balts.<sup>100</sup> Australia’s first shipments were made up exclusively of the so-called ‘beautiful Balts’ from Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia - blonde, blue-eyed migrants who would easily fit into a White Australian demographic.

Historian Laura Hilton has argued that some DP groups were complicit in such representations. Poles and Balts depicted themselves to potential settlement countries as “strong, handsome, hardworking, God-fearing lovers of democracy”.<sup>101</sup> In one publication produced in a DP camp, Latvians “somewhat eerily emphasized that 60% of the population had fair hair and blue eyes”, and that they were physically healthy. They also successfully emphasized their anti-communism.<sup>102</sup> Some DPs sent letters to the governments of potential resettlement countries, assuring them of their “race’s” assimilability.<sup>103</sup>

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after World War II’, History/Gender/Migration Conference, Paris, March 2006, <http://barthes.ens.fr/cli/dos/genre/com/salvatici.pdf>, viewed 20 November 2010, p. 7.

<sup>99</sup> A. W. H. Wilkinson, Foreign Office Refugee Department, cited in Cesarani, *Justice Delayed*, p. 74.

<sup>100</sup> Hulme, *The Wild Place*, p. 181.

<sup>101</sup> Hilton, ‘Cultural Nationalism in Exile’, p. 313.

<sup>102</sup> Hilton, ‘Cultural Nationalism in Exile’, p. 316; see also Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, p. 119.

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, National Archives of Australia (NAA), A434, Department of Immigration, Central Office, Correspondence Files, 1949/3/487, Daumont, Harry Leslie – Admission under D.P. Scheme – View on Assimilation of Migrants, Letter from Harry Leslie Daumont to Director, Current Affairs Bulletin, Commonwealth Office of Education, dated 21 November 1948.

In effect, then, the IRO, admittedly “hat in hand”, presided over and administered a “labour-recruitment program on an international scale”.<sup>104</sup> The Soviets alleged that “a real slave trade” was flourishing, with the IRO the “main purveyor of cheap labour for the capitalist countries”, and even *The Times* (London) was inclined to agree: “There is a whiff of the slave market in the invitations to DPs to enter most countries”.<sup>105</sup> Some IRO leaders attacked this “skimming of the cream” and “embargo on brains” as ruinous, a denial of the organisation’s humanitarian aims.<sup>106</sup> However, to the recruiting countries the refugees were “immense pools of manpower representing every known skill”, and the IRO was soon dubbed by the press the “largest travel agency in human history”.<sup>107</sup>

Although the IRO was intermittently uncomfortable with facilitating the recruitment of mass labour, there was also a perception that labour would have a moralizing and rehabilitative effect on the DPs, negating the “evil

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<sup>104</sup> NAA, CP815/1, Department of Information, Central Office, Correspondence Files, 021.134, Immigration – Displaced Persons – General, Letter from Robert C. Doty, Director of Public Information, IRO, dated 20 June 1949; Christiane Harzig, ‘Book Review: *Zwischen Fremde und Fremde: Displaced Persons in Australien, den USA, und Kanada, 1946-1952* (Between strangers and strangers: Displaced persons in Australia, the USA, and Canada, 1946-1952). By Henriette von Holleuffer. (Osnabrück, 2001. 416 pp. Paper, DM 52.00, ISBN 3-932147-19-7.) In German,’ *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 90, No. 1, [http://www.Historycooperative.org/journals/jah/90.1/br\\_100.html](http://www.Historycooperative.org/journals/jah/90.1/br_100.html), viewed 3 April 2007.

<sup>105</sup> NAA, Series A446, Department of Immigration, Central Office, Correspondence Files, IRO, 1962/67355, International Refugee Organisation 1947-1977, Slave Labour of Displaced Persons in the Capitalistic Countries by V Irinin. See also allegations of a ‘slave market’ by Poland’s representative to the United Nations, United Nations, General Assembly, Third Committee, Meeting 228, 8 November 1946.

<sup>106</sup> NAA, Series A446, Department of Immigration, Central Office, Correspondence Files, IRO, 1962/67355, International Refugee Organisation 1947-1977, The Facts About Refugees, International Refugee Organisation, Geneva dated 15 September 1948.

<sup>107</sup> Cohen, ‘The West and the Displaced’, p. 51.

and anti-social consequences of continued idleness”.<sup>108</sup> Allied employment policies attempted to turn DPs from “slaves of the Nazi regime” to “labourers suitable for democracies”, while DP “apathy” was contrasted with state and agency “action” in a “grand vision of reconstruction and replacement”.<sup>109</sup>

The actual process of the IRO pipe-line involved individual DPs applying for immigration to the IRO, which selected successful applicants through a process of medical, professional and biographical reviews.<sup>110</sup> The recruiting countries then often made their own selections out of these successful applicants, entailing a second review process. Those rejected by recruiting countries as “sub-standard” included the ill, the infirm, the old, and those who stayed to care for them, as well as intellectuals, those with too many dependants and single mothers.<sup>111</sup> Left to fend for themselves, this “minus” or “hard core” had “passed through the sieves of

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<sup>108</sup> Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, *Constitution of the International Refugee Organization*, 15 December 1946, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 18, p. 3, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b37810.html>, viewed 23 November 2010.

<sup>109</sup> It has been further argued that the professional redirection involved in compelling intellectual DPs to hard manual labour was a theme linked to the culture of reconstruction. White, *Reconstruction in the Immediate Aftermath of War*, <http://www.balzan.bbk.ac.uk/page19.html>; Daniel G Cohen, ‘Regeneration through Labor: Vocational Training and the Reintegration of Déportés and Refugees, 1945-1950’, *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History, Selected Papers of the Annual Meeting*, 32, 2005, <http://www.hti.umich.edu/w/wsfh/>, viewed 28 June 2007, p. 380.

<sup>110</sup> Kuhlmann-Smirnov, ‘The Resettlement of Soviet-Russian Displaced Persons and the Politics of ‘Fidelity’, pp. 3-4.

<sup>111</sup> NAA, A445, Department of Immigration, Central Office, Correspondence Files, 200/1/5, Medical – Displaced Persons, Policy and Procedure in regard to Migrants and Applicants, for Landing Permits, Letter from the Australian Military Mission, Köln, to the Director General of Health, Canberra, dated 28 December 1949; see also NAA, MP579/1, Department of Labour and National Service – Central Office, 702/42/1, Resettlement of Specialists under care of IRO; Economic and Social Council of UNO, cited in ‘UNO Appeals on Refugees’, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 1949, p. 3.

nations".<sup>112</sup> They were the "most truly forgotten human flotsam of the war": "despair was the footnote".<sup>113</sup> In 1949 there were 20,000 seriously handicapped persons, 30,000 of their dependents, and approximately 100,000 others with limited opportunities for resettlement.<sup>114</sup> The IRO initiated and administered retraining schemes in an attempt to resettle these DPs, but with minimal success. Some were accepted by Norway in "good-will" transports.<sup>115</sup> The rest were somehow to integrate into the Germany economy as 'homeless foreigners'.<sup>116</sup> The last operative camp, a Jewish DP camp near Munich still housing 177,000 people, was dissolved in February 1957; all of the others had closed by 1952.<sup>117</sup> 1959-60 was ascribed World Refugee Year in order to highlight those DPs who still had not found a home.<sup>118</sup>

Despite the failure of the 'hard core', and the latent issues of nationalisms and agency, the IRO scheme was largely viewed as a political and humanitarian success. The immediate post-war 'Displaced Persons' had been successfully re-categorised and joined by 'refugees' and 'political refugees'. The thorny issue of repatriation to the Soviet Union had been

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<sup>112</sup> Marrus, *The Unwanted*, p. 352.

<sup>113</sup> L Eitinger, 'Mental Diseases Among Refugees in Norway After World War II' in Charles Zwingmann and Maria Pfister-Ammende, eds., *Uprooting and After ...* (Berlin, 1973), p. 193; Luciuk, *Searching for Place*, p. 139; Kay and Miles, *Refugees or Migrant Workers?*, p. 64; Hulme, *The Wild Place*, p. 144.

<sup>114</sup> Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-9', p. 81.

<sup>115</sup> Eitinger, 'Mental Diseases Among Refugees in Norway After World War II', p. 203.

<sup>116</sup> Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism*, p. 4.

<sup>117</sup> Königseder and Wetzel, 'Displaced Persons, 1945-1950', p. 9; Stone, 'Introduction', p. 3; Datla, 'Displacement Camps: Sites of Ethnic Renewal and Nationalism'.

<sup>118</sup> Gatrell, 'Introduction', p. 419.



tackled head-on with the formation of the International Refugee Organisation, and more than one million DPs, now renamed 'workers' and 'migrants', were re-settled by the end of 1951. This vision of success was nowhere more apparent than in Australia, where DPs were re-branded as 'migrant workers', who were to rapidly become 'New Australians'.