Facing an "Invasion of Undesirables": The Worsening of the Restrictions on Entering Portugal – From the Annexation of Austria until the End of Legal Emigration from Nazi Germany

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Abstract

The article analyzes the range of actions enacted by Portuguese diplomacy and the political police force to prevent the arrival of refugees, whether from Germany or other Nazi occupied countries. While up until November 1938 German citizens, including German Jews, were free to enter the country for a period of up to 30 days, the outbreak of the Second World War brought a series of restrictions enacted with one objective: keep Jewish refugees out of Portugal. Based on the case of two sisters, Flora and Bela Rothschild, this article confronts the true significance of these restrictions through the effects of a purely legalistic policy on the lives of human beings.

Resumo

Enfrentando uma "Vaga de Indesejáveis": o Agravar das Restrições à Entrada em Portugal – da Anexação da Áustria até ao Final da Imigração Legal da Alemanha Nazi

Este artigo analisa as várias medidas tomadas pela diplomacia e polícia política portuguesa para impedir a entrada de refugiados provenientes da Alemanha e dos países ocupados pelas forças nazis. Se até novembro de 1938 qualquer cidadão alemão, incluindo judeus de nacionalidade alemã, podia entrar no país livremente e ficar por 30 dias, o início da Segunda Guerra Mundial provoca uma série de restrições que visam um objetivo único: manter Portugal livre de refugiados judeus. A partir do caso das duas irmãs Flora e Bela Rothschild, este artigo confronta-nos com o verdadeiro significado dessas restrições, mostrando os efeitos de uma política puramente legalista sobre a vida do ser humano.

Nazi Germany Policy of Forced Emigration

After Adolf Hitler's seizure of power on 30th January 1933, "the only thing a Jew could not choose was not to be a Jew" as Jacob Boas (1986, p. 244) points out. Overnight, anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism, two currents that had laid latent in the German soil for decades, became the political manifesto of a totalitarian regime, which correspondingly sought to uproot all Jews from German society.

In the first year after *Machtergreifung*, 63,400 out of the estimated total of 561,000 Jews living in Germany in 1933[1] fled to countries neighbouring the Reich, in particular to France, the Netherlands, Poland, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland but also to Scandinavia and Britain. In subsequent years, however, this number would fall back to an annual average of about 35,000 people.

While the exodus of Jewish citizens during this period met the interests of the Nazi regime, the same did not apply to their possessions and belongings. The later President of the Jewish Community of Lisbon, Augusto d'Esaguy, explained to the Portuguese reader in his book *Europe 39*, how a German Jew who possessed 200,000 *Reichsmark* and decided to leave Germany, was able to only take 600 *Reichsmark*, something approximately like 0.3% of his/her assets (d'Esaguy, 1940)[2].

The New Constellation Following the Annexation of Austria

The annexation of Austria on March 13, 1938 was not only the first major success in Nazi Germany's new foreign policy but also initiated a new turn on the road that would lead to the death camps. The entry of German troops triggered an immediate hunt for Austrian Jews with a degree of violence unprecedented in Nazi Germany itself (Safrian, 1995, p. 30). The German writer Carl Zuckmayer remembers this day in his memoirs:

1 Statistik-des-holocaust.de (ed.). *Jährliche Entwicklung der J*üdischen *Bevölkerung in Deutschland, 1933-1945*, 2017. Available at http://www.statistik-des-holocaust.de/stat_ger_pop.html. [Accessed 15 January 2017].

2 About the financial situation of the Jews also see the report of the Portuguese diplomat Denis Fernandes, 1940. *O Problema dos Refugiados: Relatório elaborado pelo Consultor Económico do MNE Denis Fernandes*, 28 Jan. Fundo Colecção de Relatórios. Lisbon: Arquivo Histórico do Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros (AHMNE). Fernandes says in his 1940 report that the first Jewish refugees were allowed to take 75% of their possessions, a value that was gradually reduced over the next few years, until in 1937, those leaving Germany could take only around 10%, while the rest was withheld in the form of blocked funds, and in practice lost. Of great interest in this context is the passage taken from *Breslauer Tagebuch* written by Walter Tausk quoted in Aly and Heim (1997, p. 29). Tausk illustrates the serious problem caused by the low external value of the *Reichsmark* which was only 8% of its nominal value. Consequently, the amount of money people needed to be allowed to enter countries such as Kenya, which was 50£ *i.e.* 650 *Reichsmark*, buying the currencies within Germany, would increase up to 5,200 *Reichsmark* when currencies were bought outside of Germany.

> "Hell began this night. The kingdom of darkness opened its gates and loosed its load, most horrendous and disgusting ghosts. The city became like one of the nightmarish paintings of Hieronymus Bosch (...). And all the people lost their features, resembled distorted faces: some with fear, others with lies, others in the wild, full triumph of anger." (Zuckmayer, 1976, p. 69).

Jews living in Austria had only two options left: death or flight. There are many and numerous records of an avalanche of suicides. As a matter of fact, the international press then referred to a number of about 200 a day – while between 45,000 and 50,000 people, about 25% of all Austrian Jews (Simpson, 1939, p. 29)[3], emigrated during the seven months following the German invasion, a phenomenon commented sarcastically by Joseph Goebbels in his diary entry for March 13, 1938: "The Jews mostly fled. Where? Being eternal Jews to nowhere" (Goebbels, 1999, p. 1216).

What Goebbels does not write in his diaries is that anyone who managed to flee Austria was deprived of his entire possessions, left totally dependent on the help of others, *i.e.* a position that made them simply undesirable to all bordering countries. Despite the wave of sympathy that accompanied the new victims of Nazi terror in London, Paris, or Prague, there were also growing concerns in neighbouring countries over a mass of new immigrants, impoverished and difficult to socially integrate, that might flood and overwhelm their labour markets.

Eleven days after the entry of German troops into Austria, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt suggested organizing an international conference focused on facilitating the emigration of refugees from territories under German administration. In hindsight, the conference proposed by Roosevelt and held at Évian-les-Bains, France, from July 6 to 15 was a complete failure. No participating state government proved willing to actually help, shielded behind arguments around how their economic and social situation would not allow for any increase in their immigration quota. Indeed, the greatest concern for the participating states did not revolve around receiving more refugees but rather finding a way to move on those already in their territories (ICE, 1999, p. 40).

The Pogroms of November 1938

The pogroms of November 1938 marked the turning point in a policy evolving from forced migration to the physical destruction of the Jews. While the most visible consequences of the night from 9 to 10 November stemmed from the destruction of 250 synagogues and thousands of Jewish-owned shops, less visible, but

3 In June 1939, Norman Bentwich estimated the number of Jews resident in Austria at 90,000, of whom only 1,000 did not reside in Vienna. After the annexation, according to the same source, about 10,000 died, were killed or committed suicide (Simpson, 1939, p. 29).

much more important to understanding the nature of these events, is the sheer number of people killed during those November days.

While an internal NSDAP report registered the occurrence of 91 murders, police records document a high number of rapes and suicides in the aftermath of the violence[4]. Additionally, about 30,000 Jews were "arrested" in the wake of November 10th. 10.911 were sent to Dachau Concentration Camp, 9,828 to Buchenwald and about 6,000 to Sachsenhausen (Wachsmann, 2015, p. 678). Some were shot shortly after their arrival at the camps, others died during escape attempts or due to the rigors of forced labour in these camps.

For our context, it is important to point out that, Jewish inmates then imprisoned exclusively for racial motives would be allowed to leave the camps whenever able to present an entry visa to any country. Deprived of all their belongings and faced with the equally terrifying alternative of either starvation or being sent to a concentration camp, the exodus of German Jews exploded from 25,500 (1937) to 49,001 (1938) and 68,000 (1939)[5]. The new exodus from Germany made it more than clear that the mechanisms developed over the previous five years, *i.e.* individual, well-planned departures from Germany, firstly to neighbouring countries and subsequently to countries overseas, had become insufficient to deal with this new situation. Arguing that their capacity to absorb refugees had become exhausted, governments began closing their borders to new refugees, limiting the stay of those who entered already to a certain timeframe, imposed severe labour restrictions on refugees or sent those who entered illegally to internment camps. In early 1939, of all the places in the world, there remained only one that allowed Jews entry without the requirement of a visa or residence permit: Shanghai (Simpson, 1939, p. 47).

The Position of the Portuguese Government on These Events Unfurling in Central Europe

As regards the international community, the Portuguese government repeatedly maintained the position that there was no refugee problem in Portugal. Indeed, until 1935, the Portuguese state did not differentiate between a refugee and a "normal" foreigner, provided that they had entered the country legally and were in possession of valid documentation[6]. However, unlike refugees from Germany, a

4 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Holocaust Encyclopedia: Kristallnacht*. Available at https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005201 [Accessed 20 January 2017].

5 Statistik-des-holocaust.de, ed. *Jährliche Entwicklung der Jüdischen Bevölkerung in Deutschland, 1933-1945*.

6 See Andrade, F. de, 1935. Letter dated 23 Oct. 3 P, A28, M49: "REFUGIADOS". Folder: *Office Internacional NANSEN, Passaportes e títulos de identificação dos refugiados. Expulsões destes*. 10/1935. Lisbon: AHMNE. "Refugiados".

country with which the Portuguese government had signed a visa waiver agreement, nationals from other countries seeking to enter the country required a visa issued by the Portuguese authorities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior had already agreed in 1934, to make the granting of visas to "Polish Jews" dependent on prior consultation with the Political Police (PVDE) in order to "prevent an invasion of Polish Jews being felt in Portugal"[7]. Thus, even by April 1934, *i.e.* five years before the outbreak of the Second World War, Portugal had already introduced "racial and religious segregation" (Fralon, 1999, p. 43) regarding foreigners wishing to reside in the country. Over the following years, the policy adopted by the Portuguese authorities had only one goal: to limit to the greatest possible extent the entrance of those foreigners who might eventually not be able to leave the country again.

In fact, only one year later, the rules applied to the entry of Polish Jews were extended: firstly, to stateless persons, – a group of people the ministry officials designated by the German term *heimatlose* – and those whose documentation had been issued by authorities other than those of their country of origin; secondly, to holders of Nansen and Russian passports[8].

An important step in further restricting the entrance of foreigners into Portugal came with the issuing of Circular n.º 1, dated 24th March 1936. In this document, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed its consular posts that the granting of entry and residence visas for "Polish, *heimatlos* and others" had fallen under the exclusive responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior, *i.e.* the Portuguese political police (PVDE – Polícia de Vigilância e Segurança do Estado)[9]. While at the outset even this group of people could theoretically still reside in Portugal, this scope was eliminated six months later when, on 24th September 1936, the consular posts were informed that henceforth such persons were only able to enter the country as tourists, thus only for a limited period of 30 days. Furthermore, the consuls were no longer entitled to issue visas without the prior consultation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while the extension of these visas had to be decided by the PVDE[10].

7 See Chalante (2011) on the Portuguese legislation regarding Polish Jews.

8 Handwritten note on the margin of a letter from the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 23/7/1935. M358, L18, C37. Secretaria-geral, Ministério do Interior. Lisbon: Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT). See also Faria, J. A. de, 1935. Letter to the Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior, 17 Sep. M477 (1935). Gabinete do Ministro, Ministério do Interior. Lisbon: ANTT.

9 Police of State Surveillance and Defense.

10 See circular n.º 8, dated 9/24/1936, as well as the letter from Sampayo, L. de, 1936. Letter to the director of PVDE, 10 June, in which he communicates the contents of the new circular. 3P, A13-A, M98 "Passaportes para a Metrópole, passaportes fraudulentos". Lisbon: AHMNE.

The analysis of these Circulars reveals how the PVDE was then closely monitoring the competences assigned to it under article 4 of the founding decree-law, specifically: "Preventing undocumented or undesirable aliens from entering the country"[11]. And such undesirables included, from the perspective of its leadership, in addition to political refugees, all persons characterized by sharing the same common trait: being of Jewish origin.

However, Circular n.º 8 did not prove able to put an end to the continued entry of German Jews into Portugal who, while in possession of valid German documentation, could enter and settle in the country or, when no longer having this documentation, could still enter as tourists. Just over a week after issuing the aforementioned Circular, the PVDE Secretary-general José Catela accused the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of supporting German nationals, whose passports were either expired or expired within a few days of their arrival, would "frequently" enter Portugal. As the German consulate refused to renew these documents, their holders became undocumented and therefore had to be expelled by the PVDE at the expense of the Portuguese state. It does not prove, surprisingly, that the victims of the Consulate's refusals were "only Jews." Catela announced in his official letter that "given the difficulty of distinguishing the German Jew from the rest", henceforth, "the entry of Germans with expired passports will not be allowed under any circumstances, and Germans in general will only be allowed to stay in Portugal as tourists for as long as their passports are valid, and will not be issued a permanent residence permit, without presenting the certificate of consular registration"[12].

Catela's letter initiated a new era in the relationship between the political police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From this moment onwards, the PVDE became the sole deciding entity in the admission of foreigners into Portugal. All restrictive measures decreed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the following years, were nothing other than attempts to formally legalize administrative acts already put into practice by the political police, when dealing with persons of Jewish descent.

At the heart of the Portuguese dilemma resided the 1929 German-Portuguese visa suppression agreement, which stipulated that residents of both nations did not require visas when travelling to the other country. As a matter of fact, it was the introduction of the "J" stamp on the passports of German Jews (on October 5, 1938) that would allow the Portuguese government to finally broaden the existing restrictions regarding foreign Jews to German nationals without suspending the existing

11 Decree-law n.º 22:992, dated 29/08/1933. In *Diário do Governo*, I[st] Series, n.º 195.

12 Catela, J., 1936. Letter from the PVDE, 6 Oct., 2P, A43, M38, Processo, 36,1 "Vistos nos passaportes de indivíduos de nacionalidade mal definida (normas que regulam a entrada de indivíduos de determinadas origens (polacos, *heimatlos* e portadores de passaportes, emitidos por autoridades diferentes das do seu país de origem)", Antigo Proc. 94, Data: 1936. Lisbon: AHMNE.

bilateral agreement. Still furthermore in the same month (on October 28, 1938), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued Circular n.º 10, which stipulated in relation to Jewish immigrants "the establishment of migrants in Portugal is not allowed..."[13]. Nevertheless, while the Circular forbade the residence of foreign Jews in Portugal, it continued to allow Jewish refugees to enter the country as tourists for a limited 30-day stay. One of the most interesting documents regarding Circular n.º 10 is a letter by the Minister of the Portuguese delegation in Berlin, Alberto da Veiga Simões. The Portuguese diplomat criticized the restrictions as not adequate to the daily situation experienced by German Jews. Indeed, the explanation Veiga Simões found for the disproportionate nature of the restrictions and the German reality was the "distance" that separated the Lisbon Ministry from "the situation of the Jews here". Veiga Simões elaborated:

> "The conditions of poverty and daily humiliation to which they are deliberately subjected aggravated by a lack of humanity and rudeness which I do not know if truly Aryan but undoubtedly specifically Germanic, the insecurity of their own people, some imprisoned, others sent to concentration camps where rumours are coming that we were accustomed to read only in the chronicles of Russia, all this leads these thousands of persecuted, most of them on the run, to see as their salvation the possibility of going to another country for 30 days, for 8 days, for 24 hours, as long as they can cross the border safe and sound... From then onwards, the future belongs to God [...] especially when it cannot be worse than the present."[14]

Despite these critical observations by Veiga Simões, the scope for seeking temporal shelter in Portugal had already been repeatedly sabotaged by the PVDE. In February 1939, PVDE Captain Paul Cumano praised the work of his police force, which had prohibited the landing of German Jews in possession of valid tourist visas, concluding that due to their action "the stream of immigrants was stopped [...]"[15]. It should be noted, however, that there is consistency in the attitudes of the PVDE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in relation to the policies pursued regarding Jewish refugees. Both did agree that everything should be done so that Portugal would not be considered a "country of refuge". As already mentioned, the restrictions applied by the PVDE were never targeting foreigners as a whole but only refugees who had left their native countries for racial or political reasons. No statement better illustrates the stance of the agents of the Portuguese political police than the verdict of its director, Agostinho Lourenço, who emphasized in a letter

13 Circular n.º 10, dated 28 October 1938. Collection Telegramas Expedidas, bobine 125. Direcção-Geral dos Negócios Políticos e Económicos. Lisbon: AHMNE.

14 Simões, A. da V., 1938. Letter n.º 773 of the Head of the Portuguese Delegation in Berlin, Alberto da Veiga Simões, 23 Nov., 2P, A43, M38. Lisbon: AHMNE.

15 Cumano, P., 1939. Information attached to the letter of the PVDE, 7 Feb., 2P, A43, M38. Lisbon: AHMNE.

sent a few days after the annexation of Austria: "Enough years of service in this police allow us to affirm that the foreign Jew, as a rule, is morally and politically undesirable"[16].

Further Entrance Restrictions Following the Outbreak of the Second World War

One direct consequence of the conflagration of the Second World War was the termination of the aforementioned visa waiver agreement. Henceforth, all Germans wishing to travel to Portugal needed a consular visa. Over the following two years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gradually tightened the already existing restrictions on entering Portugal still further.

On November 14, 1939, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued Circular n.º 14 that forbade its consular and diplomatic posts from granting any visas without prior consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and PVDE to:

(1) Aliens of indefinite nationality (stateless persons, holders of Nansen or Russian passports);
(2) Foreigners without satisfactory reasons for coming to Portugal or whose passports would not allow them to return to the country from which they came;
(3) Jews expelled from the countries of their nationality or those from which they originated;
(4) People without a valid consular visa to enter the country of their final destination, or without a ship or plane ticket or embarkation guaranteed by the shipping company.

At that time, however, the Ministry could never have foreseen the decision's repercussions as, due to the apparently unstoppable advance of Nazi troops through neighbouring countries, there were no longer hundreds but thousands of people applying for visas whose profile demanded a decision from Lisbon. Hence, this explains why, on May 12, 1940 (ten days after the surrender of the Netherlands), the Ministry once more amended the existing regulation. The new directive demanded consuls to make a pre-selection of all visa applications, immediately rejecting all those without both a visa for the final destination country and a ticket for sea or air passage or a similar booking confirmation. Apart from that, and as a general rule, the consuls also had to dissuade all refugees from residing in Portugal, even temporarily, by facilitating only so-called transit visas limited to a stay of only 30 days. The Ministry purpose was clear: only those people that gave more than sufficient guarantees they would quickly leave the country would be allowed to enter.

The French defeat led Lisbon to impose further restrictions. On the day after the fall of Paris on June 14, 1940, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs applied still further

16 Lourenço, A., 1938. Confidential letter from the PVDE, addressed to the Chief of the Office of the Minister of the Interior, 23 March. M495, C50. Ministério do Interior. Lisbon: ANTT.

restrictions on the consul's latitude for autonomous decision (Circular n.º 23). Henceforth, Portuguese diplomats could only grant transit visas to refugees already in actual possession of a passage ticket to the destination country. Simultaneously, the consuls had to provide the PVDE with all the data regarding visa applicants. With the issuance of Circular n.º 23, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs abdicated its responsibilities over the issuing of visas in favour of the political police who definitively and officially became the key entity that decided who entered and who had to stay outside Portugal. This decision was reinforced six months later (on December 16, 1940) by a telegraph distributed order which removed the authority of diplomatic and consular agents for granting any kind of visas[17]. By centralizing visa issuing at the headquarters of the political police, the Portuguese government sought to ensure that cases such as Aristides de Sousa Mendes, (the Portuguese consul in Bordeaux who helped thousands of refugees by handing them visas without any legal foundation) could never again happen.

Case Study of Flora and Bela Rothschild

But what did it really mean to lack one visa. As one example that represents the literally thousands of refugees refused entry into Portugal is the tragic fate of two German sisters, Flora and Bela Rothschild[18]. At the end of 1939, both ladies applied for an entry visa for Rhodesia where they intended to join the rest of their family. The Rhodesian police granted the request, ensuring both would receive the visa once they were in a neutral country. With this information, both women applied for a visa to Mozambique, the crossing point into Rhodesia. Furthermore, in December 1939, the Immigration Police in Beira, Mozambique, notified the Portuguese consul of Hamburg that the entry visas for Rhodesia were already in their hands. The Portuguese consul therefore informed Mrs. Bella Rothschild that for their departure from Nazi Germany they needed only the confirmation of their Portuguese visa by the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry instruction to grant the visas, which arrived in Hamburg via telegraph, however tated the condition that the passports had to already have the Rhodesian visa stamp, thus ignoring how these visas could not be received in Germany due to the war. Aware of this fact, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacted its colony counterpart to ask for their opinion on the situation. In its reply (on March 30, 1940), the Ministry of Colonies stated that it had previously rejected a similar

17 See the letter of December 16, 1940, annexed to the order of the Secretary General of the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dated 13/6/1940. Arquivo R/C, M779. Lisbon: AHMNE.

18 The case "Rothschild" is contained in a folder with the title: "Suspended for aggravation of the situation (to be seen when there is opportunity)". Processo "Rothschild". 2P, A43, M80. Lisbon: AHMNE.

request concerning the same ladies considering that it was "inconvenient to comply with the claim".

Surprisingly, on the border of this letter, there is an unreadable signature and a pencil written note asking: "Would it not be of advantage to consult the English or the people of Rhodesia?" That note conveys how the idea of rejecting the requests of Bela and Flora Rothschild did not get full support in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, on April 4, 1940, the Ministry did send a telegram to the Hamburg consulate, which read as follows: "Visa Rothschild sister passports rejected." But the relatives did not give up and, by April 1940, the two ladies had already received their passports from the German authorities and had even already purchased their passages to Beira (Mozambique) aboard the ship "Lloyd Triestino". These are the latest details to be found in the archive of the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The fact that the "Rothschild case" is filed in a folder entitled "Suspended due to worsened situation (for consideration when there is opportunity)" is no indication of a happy ending. Indeed, we find the names of both sisters in the *Memorial Book*[19] edited by the German Federal Archive, which remembers the names of the 149,600 German Jews killed in the Holocaust. Flora and Bella Rothschild were both deported on October 20, 1941 from Frankfurt to the Lodz ghetto where Bella most probably died while her sister Flora was killed at the Kulmhof (Chelmno) extermination camp[20].

Final Remarks

In the postwar period, Portugal repeatedly heaped praise upon itself as a country that had offered a safe haven to tens of thousands of Jewish refugees. Just one day after the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany, António de Oliveira Salazar, the regime's dictatorial leader, addressed the National Assembly on the Portuguese contribution to the Allied victory, summarizing Portuguese refugee policy as follows:

> "Anyone in our situation would welcome refugees, save and shelter shipwrecked people, help and soften the hardship of the prisoners, send donations to the needy, not only for the duty of human solidarity, but also to maintain in the world, though convulsed by mortal hatreds, what one could call, though tenuously, charity, prevision, and even, though pale, justice and peace. Too bad we could not do more."[21]

19 Das Bundesarchiv. *Memorial Book. Victims of the Persecution of Jews under the National Socialist Tyranny in Germany 1933-1945.* Available at http://www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch/index.html.en [Accessed 15 January 2017].

20 *Ibidem.*

21 Extraordinary legislative session from 4 May to 6 July 1945. In *Diário das Sessões, III[a] Legislatura, Índice Geral*. Lisbon: National Assembly 1946, p. 469.

Our analysis of the politics pursued by the two central Portuguese government agencies dealing with Jewish refugees, the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Portuguese political police conveys how, very much contrary to Salazar's statement, Portugal undoubtedly could indeed have done much more to assist the Jewish refugees. After all, those who did manage to overcome all the bureaucratic obstacles and succeed in entering the country legally constituted only a very small minority when compared to the numbers who failed and were consequently excluded and left utterly in the lurch.

However, going to the extent of accusing Salazar and his government of having been an "involuntary accomplice to the genocide", as a Portuguese daily newspaper headline maintained several years ago (Correio da Manhã, 2012)[22], for not having played an active role in saving the hundreds of thousands refugees stranded north of the Pyrenees, means completely ignoring the specific situation prevailing back then. Indeed, at the height of the refugee crisis, in the Summer of 1940, the existence of Nazi concentration camps in occupied Europe was a known fact. However, no one could yet foresee either the later construction of the extermination camps or even imagine the tragic dimension of the Holocaust. On the other hand, while the annexation of Austria and, later, the November pogroms in Germany, Austria and Sudetenland did trigger a wave of international solidarity, the atrocities suffered by the Jewish population in Germany and the territories under German administration did not lead the governments of neighboring countries to reduce or otherwise facilitate the existing entry restrictions. In fact, on the contrary, as a brief overview of the refugee policies of three countries known for their tradition of generously granting asylum shall demonstrate.

While, during the 1930s, France stood out as the key destination for German emigration, harboring a total of around 100,000 refugees[23], the Daladier government, immediately after taking power in April 1938, passed several laws tightening the terms for refugees. Correspondingly, while those living in the country illegally, as well persons assisting them, were threatened either with a fine varying from 100 to 1000 Francs or with imprisonment from one month up to one year, new refugees entering illegally were now deemed eligible for repatriation (Grynberg, 1999, p. 33). A few weeks earlier (on March 28, 1938), the Swiss government had already introduced a visa for Austrian passport holders to reduce the inflow of Jewish refugees from Austria in the wake of the annexation. Only four months later (on August 19), the Swiss Federal Council passed a decree that stepped up border

22 Quoting the Portuguese historian Manuel Loff.

23 Jüdisches Museum Berlin and Stiftung/Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, eds., 2006. *Heimat und Exil: Emigration der Deutschen Juden nach 1933*. Frankfurt: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, p. 44.

controls and led to the turning back of all refugees seeking to enter illicitly (ICE, 1999, pp. 75-76). While in France and Switzerland, the annexation of Austria led to much more restrictive refugee policies, in Great Britain, news about the Nazi atrocities during the *Anschluss* and the following November pogroms made the government loosen existing restrictions and also authorizing about 10,000 children from Nazi occupied territories to enter the country[24]. However, while the government was opening the borders of its own territory to the *Kindertransporte*, the British civil administration in Palestine was bending to the rules of *realpolitik*. In the face of constant Arab uprisings in Palestine and fearing that losing the support of the neighboring Arab states might jeopardize the lines of communication with India and the Far East, the British government reversed the Balfour Declaration with the publication of the so called White Paper (on May 1939) and limited the immigration of Jews into Palestine to a maximum of 75,000 over a five year period (Wasserstein, 1999, p. 18).

However, what about the refugee policy of Portugal's neighbour? The main difference between Spain under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco and Portugal under Salazar can be pinpointed to one historical aspect: their political proximity to Nazi Germany. While Franco opted for openly supporting the axis powers through a declaration of non-belligerence, Portugal affirmed its neutrality towards all warring countries. Franco's fascist regime, with the presence of Gestapo officers in Madrid and the poverty-stricken post-civil war country never appealed to the refugees fleeing Western Europe as many feared that they would be caught and extradited from Spain (Mühlen, 1992, p. 85). Although Salazar, exactly like Franco, feared the liberal spirit of these foreigners as a potential threat to the continued existence of his antidemocratic and antiparliamentarian regime, Portugal did still authorize the establishing of the main international Jewish organizations for the assistance of Jewish refugees on Portuguese soil (Milgram, 2010, p. 371). However, even this decision only reflects the basic principle underlying the entire Portuguese refugee policy: Portugal never accepted being a country of refuge but rather only of transit and correspondingly allowing in only those able to guarantee that they would leave just as soon as possible.

But with this policy, Portugal under Salazar behaved exactly like the (democratically elected) rulers of the entire world. And this probably embodies one of the most disturbing truths to the history of the Holocaust. Not one of the world's leaders proved willing to step beyond national interests and actively contribute to an international evacuation plan for the Jews in the Nazi occupied territories.

24 During the previous years, Britain only allowed scientists and female refugees, who were going to be employed as maids, to enter the country. On the topic of the emigration of Jewish women from Germany, see Kushner (2006, pp. 72-75).

The failed international Evian conference of July 1938, organized in the aftermath of the annexation of Austria, simply made it clear, not only to wider public opinion but also to the victims within Nazi Germany, that the world "was not willing to provide any place to the Jews" (Jäckel, Longerich and Shoeps, 1993, p. 427).

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