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Pauline Wizig April 11, 2017

From Exclusion to Emigration: The Decision- Making Process for Emigration within German- Jewish Families, 1933 - 1941

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Abstract

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This thesis explains how German Jewish families made the decision to flee Nazi Germany. It examines which phenomena most impacted the emigration decision-making process. I found that older individuals and men who were usually more invested in German society and culture were less likely to consider emigration. This sense of identity explains the resistance these groups felt towards emigration. The German Jewish community that existed prior to the rise of National Socialism was comprised of individuals who practiced different levels of religious observance, worked in numerous professions and called different cities and towns home. The thing these individuals had in common was their strong connection to Germany. Most German Jews were very nationalistic and patriotic. They considered themselves German, as well as Jewish. This sense of identity was closely linked to age. Older Jews who had lived through other periods of anti-Semitism did not initially see Nazism to be unique. As Nazism progressed, Jews were confronted with the realization that the country they considered home would rather exist without them and had to consider whether the best future for themselves and their families lay outside of Germany.

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Introduction

On September 8, 1938 Klaus Langer (13) wrote in his dairy about the afternoon he spent at the pool with his friend Bobby. The neighborhood pool had a sign saying, "Jews were not desired", but Bobby's mother knew a Jewish banker who lived in a very large park with a private pool. Klaus and Bobby swam there instead with a group of local girls. Klaus vacationed for the next two weeks in Paderborn in Westphalia at a family friend's summer home. He wrote in his diary that he was upset to be missing Maccabee Hazair meetings because of the trip. Maccabee Hazair was one of the predominant Zionist youth groups in Germany. At these meetings, Klaus studied Jewish history and Zionism. He hoped to immigrate to Palestine someday.[1]

Although he lived in Nazi Germany, Klaus enjoyed a relatively normal life in Essen. He began his diary in March 1937, shortly after his bar mitzvah. The beginning portions of the diary focus on descriptions of the family apartment, time with friends and engagements with girls.[2] Klaus did not report reactions to or opinions on the current political situation. On May 18, 1938 he wrote about a friend leaving for America because the departure affected the dynamics of his youth group. He did not suggest his family was considering emigration at the time.

Klaus's world came to a swift halt on November 9, 1938 when the Nazis instigated *Kristallnacht*, the Night of Broken Glass, a giant pogrom that marked the shift to open violence against Jews in Nazi Germany. The Nazis arrested Klaus's father and ransacked the Langer's apartment. They destroyed the synagogue and Jewish youth

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[1] Zapruder, Alexandra. *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. 18-19.

[2] Zapruder, 13.

center where Maccabee Hazair held meetings. On November 11 Klaus reflected, "Books could be written about all that had happened and about which we now begin to learn more". Klaus was shocked by the destruction in the apartment. His "parent's (musical) instruments were destroyed, the dishes were broken, the windows were broken, furniture upturned, the desk was over, drawers and mirrors were broken and the radio smashed".[3] More than ever, Klaus wanted to make *Aliyah* and immigrate to Palestine as soon as possible. Unfortunately for Klaus and thousands of other German Jews, emigration was not a ready possibility.

When Hitler took power in Germany on January 30, 1933 he ushered in an era of anti-Semitic discrimination and persecution that would culminate in the genocide of six million Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. But before the introduction of ghettos, cattle cars and concentration camps that are synonymous with the Holocaust, the Nazi party gradually took over Germany. They ousted Jews from public office and the civil service, prohibited them from visiting theaters and parks and took away their citizenship in efforts to spur Jewish emigration, which remained legal and was encouraged by the Nazi party until 1941. The Nazis gradually isolated Jews from public life and encouraged ordinary Germans to do the same. They redefined what it meant to be a German Jew in hopes to create a *Judenrein*, or Jew free, Germany.

This thesis draws on autobiographical sources including letters, diaries and memoirs to examine the decision-making process within Jewish families that considered emigration from Nazi Germany. It establishes the make-up of the German Jewish community that existed before Hitler's rise to power and then tracks the development of anti-Jewish legislation and the interactions between gentile Germans and Jews that

[3] Zapruder, 20.

often determined how individuals perceived their ability to adapt to Nazism. How did family members come to the conclusion that the best future for their families lay outside of Germany? Why did some members perceive the situation differently than others, and how did such differences of opinion within families influence their decision to emigrate?

Focusing on the decision to emigrate allows for an extensive examination of the Nazi period because there are a variety of factors that influenced whether a person would try to leave Germany. It is necessary to understand the totality of the period to draw accurate conclusions on why individuals chose to emigrate. Examining primary sources, like diaries, memoirs and letters allows for a deeper understanding of people's' perceptions of the period and for the ability to draw conclusions on how individuals made the decision to leave and what details they remember about the experience.[4] In particular, the memories individuals chose to include in memoirs, which were normally written decades after the war, are perhaps more important than what was included in sources written at the time because these instances are what people remember years after the trauma occurred.

Nazi Germany is a well researched topic and there are major historical studies on various aspects of the Nazi period, but scholarship that focuses specifically on family dynamics and the decision to emigrate is limited. Major contributions about emigration center on the bureaucratic roadblocks most Jews had to tackle when attempting to emigrate. Bat Ami Zucker examines the American anti-Semitism that influenced the actions taken by the U.S. State Department and their German consuls that impeded German emigration in her book, *In Search of Refuge: Jews and US Consuls in Nazi*

[4] Garbarini, Alexandra. *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust*. New Haven (Conn.): Yale University Press, 2006. Loc.52.

Germany.[5] Richard Breitman's *FDR and the Jews* and studies on anti-Semitism in the state department are also important works in this area.[6]

More recent scholarship has aimed to bridge the gap between historical accounts of the Nazi perpetrators and the Jewish victims. The contributors to the *Jewish Responses to Persecution* source anthologies sought to expose and analyze the breadth of Jewish reactions to Nazi persecution to inform readers about the conditions Jews lived under during the Nazi period. The series is comprised of collections of primary sources along with commentary provided by the authors on a variety of topics from the period. My examination of these anthologies informed me about how Jews made a variety of decisions during the Nazi period in response to the confusing circumstances that subsisted.[7]

Several works of scholarship influenced my understanding of how Jews used personal writing and reflection to contemplate their experiences during the Nazi period. In *Numbered Days: Diary Writing and the Holocaust*, Garbarini examines how diary writing served different functions for Jewish victims throughout the war. Garbarini assesses how individuals began to realize and understood what was happening to them, and how they processed these realizations in diaries and letters.[8] While this book focuses on Jews outside of Germany, it provides information about how to work with sources to draw conclusions about family dynamics and emigration. The text focuses on

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[5] Zucker, Bat Ami. *In Search of Refuge: Jews and US Consuls in Nazi Germany*. Portland, Oregon: Vallentine Mitchell, 2001.17.

[6] Breitman, Richard and Allan J. Lichtman. *FDR and the Jews*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013. loc. 2727, Breitman, Richard D., Alan M. Kraut: "Anti-Semitism in the State Department, 1933-44: Four Case Studies," in David A. Gerber, ed., *Anti-Semitism in American History*. (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press 1986,).

[7] Matthaus, Jurgen, and Mark Roseman. *Jewish Responses to Persecution: 1933- 1938*. Vol. 1. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010. 271.

[8] Garbarini, loc. 212- 221.

how Jews utilized writing to cope with their situation, communicate, and attempt to process what was happening to them. In *Life and Loss in the Shadow of the Holocaust*, Boehling and Larkey explain familial relationships and examine how these relationships influenced decisions to emigrate.[9] These texts not only address the historical events and how Jews coped with what was happening to them through writing, but how historians can utilize these materials to analyze these experiences.

Gender has also become a more prominent subject in scholarship about Jewish responses to the Holocaust.[10] Marion Kaplan's *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* gives powerful descriptions about Jewish daily life, combined with women's narratives from the time period, to reveal how Jews contended with their changing circumstances.[11] Kaplan offers a daily picture of Jewish life at the grassroots level. She chose to utilize women's narratives to explain how Jews behaved privately. While Kaplan does not solely focus on emigration, she does include a section on women's perceptions and contribution to the emigration debate. This thesis bridges scholarship about gender, family life and Jewish responses to the changing circumstances to conclude how Jewish families made the difficult decision to flee Germany and how different family members' perceptions of the period, which were colored by previous experiences, influenced the decision making process. What were the common elements in German Jewish families that made the difference between fight and flight? Fight meaning the active effort to continue to carve out a Jewish niche

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[9] Boehling Rebecca and Uta Larkey, *Life and Loss in the Shadow of the Holocaust: A Jewish Family's Untold Story*, New York, NY Cambridge UP, 2011. 5.

[10] Pine, Lisa. "Gender and the Family." In *The Historiography of the Holocaust.* Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 364.

[11] Kaplan, Marion. *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany,* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998. 4.

among a society that was actively rejecting Jewish life and flight meaning emigration efforts.

In January 1933, there were approximately 530,000 Jews in Germany including 100,000 foreign Jews who had immigrated to Germany primarily from Eastern Europe. More than 50 percent lived in Germany's ten biggest cities and one third, or about 160,000, lived in Berlin. German Jews as a whole were fairly assimilated. They considered themselves German and Jewish, but German Jewry did exist on a spectrum of religiosity and assimilation.[12] Many Jews were not particularly religious, but others identified as Orthodox. The diversity among that population meant that while many exclusionary measures applied to the entire German Reich, Jews were not uniformly affected. A brief encounter with a well meaning neighbor or classmate could assure a Jew the situation in Germany was livable, while a negative experience with an anti-Semitic teacher or exclusion by a former friend could have the opposite effect. Moreover, German Jews went to great lengths to adapt to the changing circumstances. They tried to acclimate to an environment controlled by individuals who believed there was no place for Jews in Germany.

About 140,000 Jews fled Germany between 1933 and the beginning of 1938, but this process was too slow and laborious for the Nazi leadership. The emigration process depended on "the willingness of Jews to leave and willingness of other countries to accept them".[13] Despite the anti-Jewish legislation and increasing social isolation, many Jews, like the Langer family, did not attempt to emigrate until 1938. Jews felt they were

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[12]Nicosia, Francis R. "Introduction" In Jewish Life in Nazi Germany: Dilemmas and Responses, by Francis R. Nicosia and David Scrase. New York" Berghahn Books, 2012. loc. 949., For more statistics on the prewar Jewish population see Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, vol. 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* New York: Harper, 1998.loc. 1246

[13] Nicosia, loc. 292.

German as well as Jewish. Germany was their home and hopes persisted that the anti-Semitism was temporary. Many thought that Hitler was a radical who would be ousted from power before long. Even when Jewish women and children, who were normally less invested in German culture and society, became eager to flee Germany, many men could still not imagine leaving. Why would they leave a successful business behind to flee to a country where there was no guarantee they could support their families? As historian Marion Kaplan points out, "German Jewish men were more closely connected to German politics, culture and commerce… and often hesitated to uproot themselves and their families".[14] Given the patriarchal structure common in German households, men had the final say and families could not consider emigration until the family patriarch was ready to flee. The older generation, who were usually more patriotic, could not imagine living anywhere else and were particularly hesitant to start the emigration process. They did not think It was conceivable for them to start their lives over at an older age. Unfortunately, by the time some families made the decision to leave, there were few, if any countries willing to take German Jews. Even those countries that were willing to take Jews had various bureaucratic obstacles and entry requirements that made the emigration process taxing and even impossible.

The Jewish community that existed at the start of the Nazi period was primarily comprised of individuals who believed they belonged in Germany and had no intentions of beginning a new life elsewhere. They were professors, doctors, students, mothers, attorneys and artists who occupied an important sphere of German society. This faith in their country and place within it would be changed under Nazism. In order to understand the community that existed under Nazism and the decisions they made concerning

[14] Boehling and Larkey, 113.

emigration, it is necessary to understand the history of this community and the gender and family dynamics common in this community.

Chapter 1- The Dynamics and Composition of the German Jewish Community Before 1933

The History of Assimilation and Acculturation

On the eve of Hitler's rise to power in January 1933, the Jewish community occupied a unique place among the German people. This community had undergone a complex transformation that resulted in greater integration, assimilation and acculturation into German society. Assimilation is the merging of Jewish and gentile society through processes including conversion and inter-marriage. It involves the loss of practices that are distinctly Jewish in favor of engagement with practices from the Christian majority. Acculturation is the first step of the assimilation process and includes the adoption of "outward cultural forms of the large society".[15] Prior to 1933, and following the Emancipation of European Jewry over the course of the nineteenth century, Jews enjoyed the full rights and privileges afforded to all German citizens. The barriers to entry for certain career paths were discarded, Jews lived alongside Germans; their children went to school together and the adults socialized together. While anti-Semitism existed in Germany, Jews felt proud to be German and identified with the common culture and societal norms present. Many Jews had abandoned the strict religious practices of their ancestors, in favor of a lifestyle that would allow easier integration into the Christian majority.[16]

The Jewish families that would later grapple with the decision to flee Nazi Germany were the product of these changes in German society. These changes greatly

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[15] Sorkin, David Jan. The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780- 1840. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1999, 4.

[16] On Jewish emancipation in the German lands se Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*; Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews and Anti-Semites. Trials in Emancipation* (2006).

influenced their family structures, including gender roles and generational outlooks, which were important factors that contributed to the decision to emigrate. Generally German Jews were more secular than Eastern European Jews. They were more socially and economically integrated into German society than Jews in Eastern European society and this integration impacted their immediate reactions to Nazism.[17] Differing circumstances, including generational differences and family structure, and personal relationships determined the extent that Nazism affected German Jews, which would later impact their decision to emigrate. The history of German Jewry is critical for understanding the decisions families made in Nazi Germany.

The changes German Jewry underwent beginning in the eighteenth century, included greater integration in German culture and influenced the position Jews held in German society and their understanding of German Jewish identity. Historian Steven Lowenstein argues that "despite the popular view of the German Jews as completely assimilated, the end result of the process of adaptation was much more complex" and German Jewry at the advent of Nazism existed across a broad spectrum of religious attitudes and acculturation.[18] There was not a singular German Jewish identity; rather German Jewry endured along a continuum that tilted towards assimilationist and a departure from traditional religious observance.

The process of Jewish integration in Germany began in the late eighteenth century with the European Enlightenment and political Emancipation of the Jews. These changes occurred in Western Europe first, in the "wake of the French revolution and

[17] Boehling and Larkey, 47.
[18] Lowenstein, Steven M. *Frankfurt on the Hudson: The German-Jewish Community of Washington Heights, 19330 1983, Its Structure and Culture.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989, loc. 298.

Napoleonic conquest" and created distinct differences between French and German and Eastern European Jewry.[19] France and its two deepest rivals, Prussia and Austria, were both willing to offer full Jewish emancipation. In the mid-eighteenth century, German Jewry did not exist in a unique sphere from other Central and Eastern European Jews. All Central and Eastern European Jews were Ashkenazim and only a slight regional variance existed. Traditional religious practice guided the lives of most Jewish communities. The Jewish communities were not completely isolated from the dominant culture, but still had separate languages and educational systems.[20] These systems evolved in Europe through a process that began with the advent of modernization and assimilation of German Jewry.

Enlightenment ideas about human rights and reason encouraged greater integration of Jews into modern society.[21] French and German Enlightened thinkers projected the idea that the "Jewish question", which referred to a quote by Napoleon about the issues surrounding the Jewish community in France, could be solved by increased education and political integration. Napoleon decided to settle this "Jewish question" by encouraging Jews to "abandon the autonomy of their community", balance their responsibilities to their religion and French citizenship. Emancipation came with a heavy price tag. The Jews of France struggled to maintain their Jewish identity, while joining the body politic on equal terms. These debates continue today in the Diaspora

[19] Dwork, Deborah and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003. 12-13.
[20] Lowenstein, loc. 310.
[21] Lowenstein, loc. 311.

and they certainly occurred in the German Jewish communities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[22]

As modernization progressed, changes occurred that shifted German Jewish identity and practice. The Enlightenment encouraged progressive ideas in Germany including the critique of traditional religious practices and the reform of Jewish educational institutions to present secular knowledge, which coincided with political Emancipation, and removed individual restrictions such as Jewish restrictions on land ownership. Jews no longer had to live in designated parts of the city, called ghettos.[23] Judaism was a nationality as opposed to a religion. This process of Jewish integration presented its own challenges. Jewish children had to attend German schools or Jewish schools that followed government approved curricula. The use of Yiddish and Hebrew was forbidden in ledgers and Jews were encouraged to adopt the German language and cultural traditions. German Jewry previously practiced a uniform form of traditional Judaism. Over the course of these modernizations, various forms of Judaism developed to suit the now splintering religious community including Reform and Modern Orthodox Judaism. Modern Zionism also emerged as a response to changing views about Jewish nationalism.[24]

The increasing participation in German culture led to a decline in traditional Jewish culture, accompanied by economic and professional changes occurring concurrently to Germany's swift industrialization between 1850 and 1870. The commercial fields Jews were entering shifted and by the end of the nineteenth century, many Jews worked in retail and become middle class. The Jewish paupers, beggars

[22] Dwork and van Pelt, 12-13.
[23] Lowenstein, loc. 327.
[24] Lowenstein, loc. 343.

and peddlers of the early nineteenth century disappeared and shopkeepers, merchants and wholesalers took their place.[25] Young Jews began to enter higher education and practice the free professions, particularly law and medicine. Jews developed a different career profile than non-Jews and this influenced how they were affected under Nazism. 62 percent of Jews worked in business compared with 18 percent of non-Jews.[26] In 1932, seven percent of women at German universities were Jewish.[27]

Greater economic integration impacted the geographical distribution of Jewish communities.[28] More Jews moved to cities and from old Jewish quarters into newer neighborhoods. In 1815, 85 percent of German Jews lived in towns with a population under 10,000. In 1879, this percentage fell to 70 percent. In 1925 70 percent of German Jews lived in cities of over 100,000 people, such as Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Munich.[29] At the start of the Nazi takeover in January 1933, one third or about 160,000 German Jews lived in Berlin and they made up four percent of the population there.[30] There were substantial differences between the experiences of Jews in rural areas and urban areas, which later influenced the emigration decision-making process.

Changes in religious observance increased intermarriage rates and Jewish views on German nationality and identity. After the First World War the intermarriage rate increased from nine percent between 1901 and 1905 to 25.8 percent for men and 16.1 percent for women in 1927.[31] Reform Jewry became the prevailing movement, while

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[25] Pulzer, Peter G. J. "The Jews." In *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany & Austria*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.10- 14.
[26] Kaplan, 10.
[27] Kaplan, 11.
[28] Lowenstein, loc. 366.
[29] Lowenstein, 366. Kaplan, 10, Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, vol. 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* New York: Harper, 1998, 77.
[30] Nicosia, loc. 949.
[31] Lowenstein, loc. 376.

Orthodox Jews comprised between 15 and 20 percent of German Jewry. As a result of these cultural, political and financial changes, the majority of German Jews, included Orthodox Jews, viewed themselves as German by nationality. They felt they shared German culture and language.[32] German Jews considered themselves to be an integral part of German society and many could not initially contemplate a future elsewhere, even as anti-Semitic restrictions began to unfold after 1933. In accounts of German Jewish emigration, many authors stress the assimilation and acculturation of German Jews. German Jews were usually patriotic and strongly identified with German culture. They felt they were German as well as Jewish, and these two identities were not mutually exclusive.

The First World War swept Germany with a rush of national fervor that initially united all Germans including Jews, but would end with an increase in anti-Jewish sentiment.[33] During The First World War, Jews enthusiastically served alongside along side other Germans, an action that emigrants repeatedly mention in their memoirs, letters and diaries. Jews felt this service solidified their place among the German majority, even with the anti-Semitism present in the German army. As prospects of German victory dwindled, Germans accused Jews of undermining the war effort, profiteering and shirking.[34] Germany's defeat in the First World War and the political and economic instability that followed amplified these anti-Semitic sentiments, particularly among the far right. Jews became the scapegoats for the recovering nation's social and economic troubles. "Moderate anti-Semitism" became more widespread, there was a "vague unease about Jews that stopped far short of wanting to harm them but that may

[32] Lowenstein, loc. 422.
[33] Dwork and van Pelt, 39.
[34] Dwork and van Pelt, 34- 35.

have helped to neutralize whatever aversion Germans might have otherwise felt for Nazis".[35] This environment could be found in universities, the government, political organizations and in relationships between Jews and Germans.[36] Degrees of social isolation increased, but there were significant exceptions that would exist even during the Third Reich.

As Nazism took hold in January 1933, Jews still maintained their views that German and Jewish identity were not mutually exclusive and would not allow for a decimation of the German Jewry. Kaplan notes that Jewish accounts from the period repeatedly stress German identity as well as cultural and economic assimilation. She argues that these accounts emphasize how Jews continuously adapted to their evolving circumstances so that prior to 1938, the situation in Germany appeared still "unclear" and that "even the November Pogrom [of 1938] did not provide a clear indicator of the genocide to come".[37] Many Jews like Victor Klemperer, a professor of Romance languages in Dresden, were patriotic and enthusiastic German citizens, but anti-Semitism was still present in their lives.[38] Many German Jews were able to look past the initial dangers of Nazism in hopes that the anti -Semitism would pass. After all, German Jewry had survived other periods of anti-Semitism, so why should this era be different? The emancipation and integration of Jews in Germany that had unfolded over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century assured Jews that they occupied a place in German society.[39] These views were tested under Nazism, but left Jews

[35] Kaplan, 13.
[36] Kaplan, 13.
[37] Kaplan, 5.
[38] Klemperer, Victor. *I Will Bear Witness, Volume 1: A Diary of the Nazi Years: 1933- 1941.* New York, NY: Modern Library, 2016. 300.
[39] Katz, Jacob. *Out of the Ghetto, The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770- 1870.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998. 217.

hopeful that the situation was temporary and that the conditions were livable, at least for the time being.

Generational Differences and Connections to German Identity

Different generations developed varying perceptions about the situation in Germany after the Nazi takeover in January 1933. These generational differences stemmed from varying attitudes about German culture, perceptions and experiences with anti-Semitism and levels of assimilation and acculturation. Age normally defined the level of Jewish assimilation. Historians Rebecca Boehling and Uta Larkey contend that older Jews' decisions to stay or leave were influenced by their personal familiarities with "the ebb and flow of political crises and economic fluctuations" and were colored by the expectation that the German rule of law would succeed.[40] Lowenstein claims that by the conclusion of the First World War many Jews felt they could fully embrace and assimilate into German culture.[41] Prior to the twentieth century Jews could not serve in the German army. When Jews were able to join the army during the First World War they felt they had paid the ultimate price by sacrificing their lives for Germany. This sacrifice made it even more painful when there was anti-Semitic backlash after the war driven by concerns that Jews had undermined the war effort. Jews that served in the war garnered a specific sense of German patriotism not present in younger generations.

Prior to 1933, it was common for reform German Jews to distance themselves from the religious community. This process manifested itself in the adoption of German cultural customs. Jurgen Matthaus discusses that German Jewry in 1933 was a "highly

[40] Boehling, and Larkey. 48.
[41] Lowenstein, loc. 372.

diverse minority lacking, beyond strong, but often diffuse ties to shared traditions, a collective mentality, and unified organization structure".[42] Because many German Jews tried to separate themselves from the traditional Jewish community, more religious Jews often branded them as assimilationist. It was common for Jews to embrace German nationalism and adapt traditions like having a "Jewish Christmas tree".[43] There was a small minority that still identified as Orthodox Jews, but "the monolithic Jewish community of the early eighteenth century was replaced by a continuum of religious and ethnic attitudes ranging from extreme assimilation to strong Jewish identity and Jewish traditional religious views".[44] German Jews developed an awareness of their unique identity, which Matthaus argues made them more assertive and inclined to defend their rights and rank. As Nazism emerged, Jews were "forced back into their Jewishness, including Jews who previously renounced themselves as member of the Jewish community through assimilation and conversion."[45] The Nazi legislation, specifically the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of April 1933 and more broadly the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, defined who was Jewish and forced individuals to rethink their connection to Judaism, which they may have previously thought did not exist.

Older Jews remembered the democratic changes that took place during the transition from Imperial Germany to the Weimar Republic, which involved periods of increased Jewish social and political integration. This process of acculturation affected different Jews by to various degrees and the result was a large ideological division and

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[42]Matthaus, Jurgen. "Evading Persecution: Jewish Behavior Patterns after 1933." In *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany Dilemmas and Responses*, by Francis R. Nicosia and David Scrase. New York: Berghahn Books, 2012. Loc. 949.

[43] Matthaus, "Evading Persecution: Jewish Behavior Patterns after 1933." Loc. 972
[44] Lowenstein, loc. 386.
[45] Matthaus, "Evading Persecution: Jewish Behavior Patterns after 1933." loc. 964.

internal variation.[46] The older generation was more accustomed to periods of anti-Semitism, which significantly inhibited their desire to emigrate. Many older Jews believed they could weather the storm in Germany because they had lived through other tough periods for German Jewry. Nazism, at least initially, did not appear entirely unique.

The perceptions of the political situation among Jewish children were colored by their parents' experiences. Klaus Langer's parents did not see a reason to emigrate until *Kristallnacht*. The Langers were an "archetypical German Jewish" family and had a long history in Germany. Klaus's father, Erich, fought in the First World War and then worked as a judge in the German court system. He was an ardent German patriot, who did not define himself by his Jewish identity. Klaus was eight years old when the Nazis came to power and, for a few years, his life was still recognizable under Nazism.[47] He continued to live with his parents and grandparents, attended school and participated in a Zionist youth group. Until 1938, despite signs of instability, his life did not significantly change. Ruth and Eva Gutmann were only five when in 1933. Ruth does not mention any thoughts of emigration in her memoir until 1937, when her father was arrested. At that point, she and her twin sister actively feared for their father's and their own safety in Germany.[48]

In contrast, young adults and adolescents who came of age under Nazism understood the changes taking place and urged parents to consider emigration. Phillipe Storch, age eleven in 1933, reflects on how his family debated emigrating. His father, a

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[46] Lowenstein, loc. 388
[47] Zapruder, 13.
[48] Gutmann, Ruth. *A Final Reckoning: A Hannover Family's Life and Death in the Shoah.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013. Loc. 1009- 1024.

businessman, did not contemplate emigration until after *Kristallnacht*. The family business was not suffering dramatically and his father was able to support the family. He had many German acquaintances who assured him “he had nothing to fear” because he was a “good German Jew and the authorities are after foreign Jews.” In contrast, his mother, Phillipe himself and his siblings, Sally (17) and Martha (15) wanted to emigrate already in 1933.[49] Each generation maintained different perceptions of Nazism. For young people, it was difficult to see a future in Germany. Nazism completely disrupted their livelihoods, while middle-aged men and older people generally maintained hope that the situation would improve.

Gender Norms in German Families

The gender norms in Germany dictated the roles men and women occupied in Jewish families. The narratives concerning German Jewish gender identity are constructed on the experience of Jewish men who received greater social mobility following modernization. Women experienced a similar sense of mobility, but it was dependent on their husband’s status. Paula Hyman contends that the “Jewish community was male in its self-presentation and so was modern Jewish identity”.[50] As the Jewish community became more assimilated, discussions emerged about the status of Jewish women. These women were expected to create a successful home environment for their husbands and children, while fostering acculturation and setting limits on assimilation. There was a duty to facilitate the progression and integration of

[49] Storch, Philippe, My Life: ME 1249, Leo Baeck Institute.7.
[50] Hyman, Paula. "Gender and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identities." *Jewish Social Studies* 8, no. 2 (2002): 153-61. 2002.8.

Jews in gentile society, yet to maintain and preserve the traditional home of their predecessors.[51] They had prescribed roles in their families, which echoed the roles practiced by their Christian neighbors.[52] Jewish women saw themselves as equal members of the Jewish community, but men still considered them subservient.

Gender significantly impacted the likelihood that an individual choose to stay in Germany. Women were generally more inclined to emigrate because they were less integrated in the public world, including the German economy and social circles, than their male counterparts. Women were usually less involved in the German economy, even if they had been in the workforce. Jewish men had more to lose due to emigration. If men made the decision to leave Germany when they could support themselves financially, it meant leaving their businesses and professions and removal from their clients and colleagues. Many men were fearful they could not get jobs in the countries they sought to emigrate to and would not be able to support their families. Phillipe Storch's memoir notes that his father struggled until 1938 with the decision to emigrate but feared he could only do so as a poor man. By that point, he could no longer sell his business or smuggle money abroad.[53] Willy Cohn argued with his wife over the decision to emigrate and was "sad that we are so divided on this question", but could not imagine emigrating to Palestine where his business skills would not be useful and he "did not want to start all over again".[54] Women had the skills necessary to secure jobs abroad, were less involved in the German economy, culture and society than their male

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[51] Kaplan, Marion A. *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 81.

[52] Hyman, "Gender and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Identities," 154- 157.
[53] Storch, 7.
[54] Matthaus and Roseman, 66.

counterparts and these divisions compose the gender differences that are commonly observed among German Jewish emigrants.

Given the prescribed gender norms, women were more likely to have universal skills and work in professions that could be utilized anywhere, such as teaching or domestic work. Because their skills could be used elsewhere, women were generally more likely to consider emigrating as they would be able to support themselves. [55] Women were less "status conscious" and concerned with transitioning from "employing a servant to becoming one as intensely as men, since their status has always been determined by that of their father or husband anyway."[56] Gertrude Guckenheimer took up a typing course when her family prepared to emigrate because she needed a skill she could utilize after emigration.[57] Else Gerstel wanted to flee Germany, but because her husband feared he would not be able to find a job elsewhere, they put off plans for emigration until *Kristallnacht* no longer gave them a choice.[58]

Women were less involved with the economy and had greater contact with non-Jews ranging from neighbors to merchants and schoolteachers. Jewish men commonly worked in traditionally Jewish occupations including retail, law and medicine and were "more isolated from non- Jewish peers, though not from non-Jewish customers. [59] Party authorities were shocked that some party members in full uniform were still not deterred from doing business with Jews. Men faced fewer interactions with increasingly unfriendly peers and lacked an understanding of the deteriorating circumstances in Germany. If their business was still relatively successful and they primarily interacted

[55] Matthaus and Roseman, 123.
[56] Kaplan, 64.
[57] Gertrude Guckenheimer Collection 1819- 1997: AR 10042; Leo Baeck Institute.10.
[58] Gerstel, Else, Grandma, Times Have Changed 1891-1981: ME 184, Leo Baeck Institute. 73.
[59] Kaplan, 64.

with Jewish customers or colleagues, it was easier to maintain a more positive outlook at the situation in Germany and assume it was temporary. Women, by contrast, were more likely to interact with non–Jews and were less attached to the businesses and careers their husbands pursued. It was easier for them to imagine a life outside of Germany.

The culmination of a over a century worth of legal, economic and societal change was a less traditional, and heavily assimilated German Jewish community. A single kind of the mid-century, “modern” Jew did not exist; there were significant ideological and internal variations among German Jewry. Notions concerning gender and generational differences, as well as family structure, built the foundation that structured the emigration decision-making process within German Jewish families.

In January 1933, German Jewry existed in this complex world where assimilation and acculturation was encouraged, yet moderate anti-Semitism persisted. Jews had made remarkable strides towards integration in German society, but there was an undercurrent that resisted that change and considered it detrimental for the German people. For German Jewish families this meant balancing the reactions of well-meaning Germans and friends and the memories of how far their community had come with the realization that their whole world would soon be turned upside down.

Chapter 2- Emigration Begins: Jewish Life Between 1933 and 1938

Overview of anti-Jewish Legislation and Immediate Jewish Action

When the Nazi government seized power on January 30, 1933 they used a combination of legislation, administrative decrees, and propaganda to shame and exclude German Jews and lower their societal, financial and legal standing.[60] The *Sturmabteilung* (SA) utilized the April 1933 boycott of Jewish stores to expose Jews to public condemnation and devastate their businesses. Subsequent legislation that spring limited Jewish participation in sectors of the economy and civil service. The September 1935 Nuremberg Race laws defined who was Jewish and formally abolish Jewish citizenship in Germany. In two years between 1933 and 1935 the Nazis undermined the fundamental pillars of Jewish life in Germany that had existed and flourished since the Emancipation and German unification in 1871.[61] In response to these changes, Jews began to consider leaving Germany. In retrospect, it is easy to assume Jews may have seen the writing on the wall early on and known what was to come for European Jewry, but even as the events unfolded, most Jews could not predict the madness that followed.

In order to understand what ultimately pushed Jewish families to emigrate, it is necessary to trace the escalation of anti-Jewish restrictions, the incremental or sudden changes these policies brought to everyday life and their staggered effect on Jewish individuals. Anti-Jewish measures intensified in unpredictable spells and were often triggered by specific events. While several exclusionary measures applied to the whole German Reich, Jews were not equally affected. Individual experiences depended on

[60] Kaplan, 16.
[61] Kaplan, 17.

their location, whether they lived in urban or rural areas, their income level and profession and family size. Jews living in rural areas often felt more vulnerable than those in major cities. In a large city, it was easy to remain anonymous; in a small town it was impossible to escape your identity.[62] Children were exposed differently to Nazism in schools than their parents in the workplace or their grandparents who were no longer working. These different experiences help explain why age correlated with the desire to emigrate. As Nazism progressed, the behavior of ordinary Germans changed due to anti-Jewish measures and the compounded impact of the policies and the collapse of neighborly relations influenced how Jews evaluated their situation in Germany and the option for emigration. When did life become unbearable for Jews in Germany that their only alternative became to leave?[63] This chapter will examine how beginning in 1933, Nazi legislation and policy, coupled with the actions of individual Germans influenced family dynamics and notions of German Jewish identity, and pushed people to emigrate. The decision to emigrate directly relates to individual's perceptions of Nazism and their ability to see a future for themselves in Germany. Women, who were traditionally less involved in public life, sought to emigrate early, while men wanted to stay in Germany until they either could not support themselves and their families financially anymore or could no longer succeed socially.

Historian Marion Kaplan argues that anti-Jewish discrimination unfolded in stages and that it is important to analyze each step to interpret how certain families chose to emigrate while others stayed in Germany, either because they assessed the

[62] Kaplan, 6, 37-38, 95.
[63] Matthaus and Roseman. 271.

threat differently or because they did not have the means to leave.[64] Mundane experiences in daily life often mattered more to German Jews than the wording of restrictive legislation that was meant to isolate them from the rest of the population. Children needed to go to school, adults needs to go to work, even as their teachers and supervisors became outwardly anti-Semitic and intolerant. Mothers still had to shop for groceries despite anti-Semitic posters in shop windows. Many Germans became aware of the regime's intentions gradually, "drip by drip," and "only when it hit you personally you realized what was going on".[65] Dwork and van Pelt call this progression "salami techniques"[66]. A Jewish immigrant to the United States stated that he did not "think one could ever see if something is on a steady acceleration… the terror is steady and you live with it and you go right along with it and you really crack only if it suddenly increases".[67] It is easy to assume that German Jews should have known better and left Germany earlier, which is why it is important to gain an understanding of how their everyday experiences affected their perceptions of Nazism, the dangers it posed to them, and where the threshold lay that precipitated a decision to emigrate.

These changes caused some Jews to flee immediately, while others did not see the new regime as completely detrimental to their well-being and preferred to weather the storm in Germany. Differences in occupation, social and economic standing and family dynamics often influenced how and when a family chose to emigrate. The Nazi government gave the Jews permission to leave, but there were few countries that issued visas to Jews. Moreover, many Jews did not try to leave Germany early enough

[64] Kaplan, 66.
[65] Kaplan, 5-6.
[66] Dwork and van Pelt, 83.
[67] Kaplan 6.

and the outbreak of war in 1939 and Germany's continued global influence dissuaded many countries from adopting policies that allowed for more Jewish emigration. As the situation in Germany worsened more Jewish families made the decision to emigrate, but because of xenophobia and anti-Semitism abroad there were few, if any countries, that were willing to accept Jews. This chapter will chart the Jewish responses to the anti-Semitic policies and actions taken by the Nazi party and ordinary German citizens. It seeks to explain why some Jews sought to flee Germany immediately, while others did not try or were unable to do so.

Various restrictions on private and public life influenced Jewish perceptions of the Nazi regime and determined if and when families considered emigration. The German government wanted to isolate Jews socially and professionally, and immediately passed legislation to that effect, but needed to ensure that non- Jewish Germans received these changes with minimal discontent. The changes occurred gradually, so that ordinary Germans gradually accepted them as part of the fabric of their lives.

Several events in the first months of 1933 signaled immediate danger for some German Jews. In response to the Reichstag fire on February 27, President Paul von Hindenburg passed the Reichstag Fire Decree on February 28. This decree abolished civil liberties in Germany, raised punishments for many crimes from imprisonment to the death penalty and handed Hitler emergency powers.[68] On March 23, 1933, the *Reichstag* passed the Enabling Act, which divested the *Reichstag* of its functions, gave Hitler dictatorial powers and allowed the state to quickly instigate other changes.[69] These laws gave Hitler the power he needed to proceed with his anti-Democratic

[68] Friedlander, loc. 316.
[69] Friedlander, loc. 299

agenda and persecute political enemies of the Nazism, including Social Democrats and Communists. He quickly turned from a properly appointed chancellor to a dictator. Jews, like the majority of the German populace, were not sure, especially before March 1933, whether the Nazis were going to stay in power or whether a conservative military coup might over throw them.[70] The Nazis spent their first months in power destroying trade unions, centralizing communication and power between the states and central regime and abolishing competing political parties. Jews who were politically involved saw the danger signs first which prompted some to emigrate immediately. There was a double risk of being Jewish and being a communist, socialist or pacifist. Fear of the Gestapo, the State Secret Police, compelled these Jews to hide books and other materials that may implicate them as a political threat.[71] In contrast, those Jews, particularly men, who were not involved in these political groups and felt comfortable in Germany, did not perceive the Nazi threat as severely.

Phillipe Storch, of Hannover, reflected that his father, Baruch, was a "firm German patriot" which left him "blindfolded to the events of the Nazi era". Baruch immigrated to Germany at age 13 from Galicia, Poland and started a men's clothing business, which remained successful until 1938.[72] Storch admired Germany as the country that gave him the opportunities as a poor boy to become a prosperous merchant. He acquired social and economic security in Germany that he could not have obtained in his native Poland. Phillipe and his siblings contemplated paths for

[70] Friedlander, loc. 272.
[71] Friedlander, loc. 309.
[72] Storch, 2.

emigration from Nazi Germany beginning in 1933, but his father, who considered Germany to be greater than all other nations, refused to consider emigration.[73]

The emotional stress and intimidation had some of the greatest impact on Germans Jews, as evidenced by the April 1933 boycott.[74] On April 1, 1933, the SA orchestrated a boycott of Jewish stores. While the boycott had potential to cause severe economic problems for Jewish shop owners, it was not entirely successful. Many Germans were indifferent to the boycott or found it inconvenient. Some customers insisted on buying from Jewish stores anyway. A few Jewish businesses never opened or closed early. Despite the boycott's relatively small economic impact, it had ongoing psychological consequences for individuals and left the possibility open for future boycotts.[75] Many Jewish adults and children were ridden with emotional distress and shock in response to watching their fellow Germans paint large stars on Jewish shop windows.

The anti-Jewish legislation that ousted Jews from positions of influence in German professional life immediately prompted those affected to consider emigration. On April 7, 1933, the Nazis passed the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, which "ordered the immediate retirement of all civil servants of non-Aryan origin". A second law, the Law Concerning the Admission to the Legal Profession, removed all Jews from the judiciary and prohibited Jews from admission to the bar. Approximately half of the Jewish judges and one third of Jewish lawyers in government service thus lost their jobs.[76] Veterans of the First World War and those who had been

[73] Storch, 5-6.
[74] Dwork and van Pelt, 69.
[75] Friedlander, loc. 432
[76] Dwork and van Pelt, 71.

in their professions prior to the establishment of the Weimar Republic were exempt for the time being. By October, Jews could not own farms or work as newspaper editors. A clear goal had emerged, Jews were being ousted from areas of influence "over the German national community: government and bureaucracy, health and the judicial system, high education, culture and food supply."[77] Although some Jews thought Hitler was not a threat, others argued these circumstances disproved the theory that anything could limit Hitler's power.[78] Historian Saul Friedlander states that there was "anxiety" about the new Nazi government, but many Jews still thought the anxiety or the Nazi government would pass.[79] While some Jews were cautiously optimistic, the immediate anti-Jewish legislation passed by the Nazis encouraged between 37,000 and 38,000 Jews to emigrate in 1933.[80]

The individuals who lost their jobs were more likely to leave immediately. The Eyck family of Berlin left Germany in several waves. Eleanor and her sister, Irene, emigrated in 1934. Eleanor had been dismissed from her University and Irene lost her job at a library.[81] Both were in their twenties at the time. Their father, an attorney, was dismissed from the court in 1933. Unable to make a living in his chosen profession, he turned to journalism but was subsequently fired from his second job at a liberal newspaper due to the discrimination emanating from the Reich Cultural Chamber. Without paid employment and much time on his hands, Mr. Eyck settled into writing a book about German history but did not earn much money.[82] Mr. and Mrs. Eyck and their

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[77] Dwork and van Pelt, 73.
[78] Bonelli, Charlotte, and Natascha Bodemann. *Exit Berlin: How One Woman Saved Her Family from Nazi Germany.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 23.
[79] Friedlander, loc. 1347
[80] Kaplan, 24, 72.
[81] Alexander, Eleanor, A Tribute to my Mother Hedwig Eyck (1888- 1971); ME 995; Leo Baeck Institute.2
[82] Alexander, 2.

son left for England in 1937. As Jews lost their jobs and struggled with unemployment many made the decision to flee. Those who were in the civil service or other positions that were prohibited to Jews early on, generally fled earlier, while those who could still work, tended to stay.

The Gerstel family did not initially consider leaving when Alfred, the family patriarch, was "degraded from a high position to a lower one" in his law practice in 1934 or 1935. His wife, Else wanted to flee, but Alfred convinced her that he would not be able to make a living as a German lawyer in the United States. Moreover, the family did not have enough money to relocate. Alfred "was so confident that the German people, the German judges would not stand for much more of this madness" that in 1936 the family sold their house in Dahlem and rebuilt in Potsdam. They still had Alfred's salary and pension and could not find a way out of Germany anyway.[83] The situation in Germany was tough, but the family had some, albeit temporary, financial security and made do. When their son could no longer attend university in Germany, they sent him to study in Switzerland.[84] They maintained hope that the situation would improve and Alfred did not consider leaving Germany until after *Kristallnacht* in 1938.

Just as parents faced job restriction and discrimination, Jewish children grappled with restrictions in German schools. Naturally, they often communicated their experiences to their parents, which influenced the adults', particularly mothers', views on the political situation. In 1933, 60,000 Jewish children attended German schools. On April 25, 1933 the Nazis passed the Law Against the Overcrowding of German schools. Jews could remain in German schools as long as they did not comprise more than 1.5%

[83] Gerstel, Else, 71.
[84] Gerstel, 71.

of the overall population in the school. The Nazis made exceptions for children of *Mischling,* mixed couples of the first and second degree and children of World War I veterans.[85] *Mischling* couples were composed of a non-Jewish Germans and Jews. The Nazis explicitly defined these mixed-race marriages and later enshrined these distinctions under the 1935 Nuremberg laws. The Nazis did not consider Judaism a religion. They considered it a race and this distinction changed individual's definition of what it meant to be considered Jewish. Many people suddenly found themselves defined as Jewish as a result of these distinctions because the Nazis considered individuals with one or two Jewish grandparents to be Jewish, even if the person in question was baptized. People with no connection to Judaism found themselves in the same predicament as Jews.

As anti-Semitism in classrooms increased and non-Jewish students grew increasingly hostile towards their Jewish classmates, some parents decided to take their children out of public schools and move them into the safe environment of a Jewish school, but most Jewish students remained in the public school system. As a result, the number of Jewish schools, particularly secondary schools, remained very small. At the beginning of 1934, only 25 percent out of approximately sixty thousand Jewish children attended some sort of Jewish school. The accessibility of these institutions differed depending on the local Jewish population. Small, rural Jewish communities could not sustain a Jewish school, in contrast to large cities like Berlin, which had many Jewish schools.[86] By 1935, 50 percent of Jewish children still attended German schools. While these students were legally allowed to remain in German schools, they faced increasing

[85] Friedlander, loc. 5131.
[86] Kaplan, 94. Friedlander, loc. 1247.

anti-Semitic bullying from fellow students and teachers as a part of the system that had adapted to Nazi rule.[87]

The discrimination in the school system was largely the product of individual action including insulting comments from teachers and fellow students and the inclusion of racial theory in the curriculum. Jewish children began to feel isolated from their peers and uncomfortable in the classroom. The levels of discrimination and segregation in public schools widely varied from school to school and city to city. Peter Gay said that his parents did not think about enrolling him in a Jewish school and preferred to spend the extra 20 marks a month to keep him in the prestigious Goethe Gymnasium in Berlin. Nazi policy permitted less than four percent of the school's population be Jewish, but Gay's father was a veteran of the First World War and his son was allowed to enroll.[88] Gay's privilege as a veteran did not mean his son was exempt from anti-Semitic taunts. As anti-Jewish views became more normalized, many teachers became Nazi party members and students participated in the Hitler Youth. Gay reflects on an anti-Semitic classmate, Hans Schmidt, who later joined the Hitler youth. He recalls that Schmidt often instigated anti-Semitic speech at school and encouraged others to do the same.[89] That being said, Gay does not remember most classmates ridiculing or harassing him. The atmosphere at the gymnasium was orderly, yet calm and the school never forced him to sing Nazi songs, a common imposition for other Jewish students.

The conflicting messages from non- Jews complicated Jewish views on the long-term implications of the changing situation in Germany. In large cities, Jews could

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[87] Matthaus and Roseman, 133-134.
[88] Gay, Peter. *My German Question: Growing Up in Nazi Berlin*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. Loc. 734.
[89] Gay, loc. 751.

sometimes maintain anonymity, but eager friends and neighbors frequently left anti-Semitic notices on their doors and chastised them.[90] A woman in Leipzig convinced the baker to stop delivering fresh rolls to her Jewish neighbors. The baker apologized, but followed the woman's orders. In contrast, some Germans continued to extend greetings and socialize with Jewish friends. These actions "served as a false basis for optimism" and convinced Jews the situation may improve, or at least not get substancially worse. Dwork and Van Pelt referenced Rabbi Joachim Prinz of Berlin who stated "everywhere life depends on the neighbor, not necessarily the friend, but the man who is willing to help his neighbor go through life, not to make things difficult for him, to watch his cares and efforts with a friendly eye, that we have lost".[91] There was a deceptive sense of hope that complicated the situation for many Jews who felt increased anti-Semitism and chastisement from some Germans, but continued to maintain relationships with others.[92] This was particularly problematic during the early years. Jews within the same professional and social circle received different treatment from non- Jewish Germans. Gay remembers that the pressure on Jewish students was selective and while he did not deal with taunts from anti-Semitic classmates, his cousin Edgar was repeatedly threatened with being dragged in front of a display of *Der Sturmer*, the anti-Semitic Nazi newspaper and being forced to read it.[93]

Gay's experience at the Goethe Gymnasium contradicts other narratives about the German school system. Ernest G. Heppner, who attended a gymnasium in Breslau, recalls physical and verbal attacks on Jewish pupils and the Nazi propaganda that was

[90] Kaplan, 38.
[91] Dwork and van Pelt, 86.
[92] Kaplan, 38.
[93] Gay, loc. 758.

infused into lessons. Heppner even argues that the progressive Jewish social isolation hit school children the hardest and provided them with conflicting messages about the situation in Germany.[94] Gertrude Guckenheimer's health teacher told her class there was no difference between German and Jewish blood. Her singing teacher, a Nazi party member, even articulated, "Hitler does not want what is happening to the Jews".[95] Elisabeth Block's diary entry from March 28, 1934 describes her end of school class party, which involved singing patriotic songs, crafts including "beautiful green garlands and little flags" that decorated the portraits "of Hitler and Hindenburg" and singing the "Horst Wessel Song, the anthem of the Nazi Party". It is not clear from the diary entry whether this Jewish child sang the party songs, but it implies that many Jewish children imagined themselves as one day being accepted into the German Reich.[96] Ruth Gutmann's memoir includes reflections on her time in a German elementary school in 1934. She did not know how to react to the books and newspapers containing pictures of blonde little girls greeting Hitler. She wished she could be one of them, but her hair was brown and short and she felt guilty fantasizing about not being Jewish. Gutmann knew she could not tell anyone about these thoughts because it was considered dishonorable to imagine oneself outside of the family.[97] As Jewish children felt uncomfortable in German schools, some could not see a future for themselves in Germany, yet many parents, particularly fathers, did not consider emigration.

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[94] Heppner, Ernest G. *Shanghai Refuge: A Memoir of the World War II Jewish Ghetto*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1995. 12.
[95] Gertrude Guckenheimer Collection 1819- 1997.4.
[96] Matthaus and Roseman, 139- 140.
[97] Gutmann, loc. 738.

The varying degrees of anti-Semitism in German schools caused great concern among parents and community leaders. Many parents did not know how to address the questions their children posed to them about how to deal with anti-Semitic teachers and classmates.[98] Gutmann's parents told their children not to disclose their views about the Nazi regime to non- Jewish classmates. When Gutmann and her twin sister, Eva, came home upset because classmates called them "Jewish pigs", their parents told them these comments were not true and instructed them not to answer back. Although Ruth and Eva knew these comments were not true and it was best to ignore them, they were still confused by the situation and it complicated their relationship with their parents. It was easy to disbelieve the image the Nazis projected of the Jews, until a Jew broke a law. Their father attempted to shield them from the Nazis' evil intents, but that usually resulted in a lack of candor with his children.[99] Children could not understand the nuances and interworking of the new system and whether or not they belonged with their classmates. Similar issues plagued German youth and adults in social situations. These conditions exemplify the changing and often confusing conditions for Jews in Nazi Germany that made the choice to emigrate harder.

The Emigration Conundrum

Many Jews wanted to flee Germany, but considering emigration meant accepting leaving in an impoverished state and the high costs dissuaded or prohibited many Jewish families from pursuing emigration. While the Nazi government officially encouraged emigration, they intended to strip the emigrants of their possessions first.

[98] Matthaus and Roseman, 135- 138.
[99] Gutmann, loc. 774.

Jews hoping to leave Germany had to pay the Reich Flight Tax. The tax actually antedated the Nazis. In 1931, the Bruening government passed this tax to prevent wealthy Germans from moving overseas, but the Nazi government utilized it as a partial expropriation of assets from Jewish emigrants. Jews emigrating between 1933 and 1937 lost 30-50 percent of their wealth and those emigrating from 1937- 1939 lost 60-100 percent of their wealth. Kaplan estimates that the Germans made up to 900 million *Reichmarks* on this tax.[100] Jews were free to leave Germany, but financial obstacles greatly inhibited their ability to do so and start over elsewhere. Despite these hurdles, in addition to the between 37,000 and 38,000 Jews that fled Germany in 1933, 23,000 Jews left Germany in 1934 and 21,000 left in 1935. Living in exile produced hardship in its own right. German Jews did not necessarily find it easy to adapt or find work and wrote to friends in Germany about their struggles following emigration. Of the Jews who emigrated in 1933, 73 percent left for countries in Western Europe where the German Wehrmacht caught them during the war, 19 percent left for Palestine and eight percent went overseas.[101]

There was only one case where the Germans attempted to alleviate the economic burdens of emigration. The Nazi government did take action to ease the immigration of Jews to Palestine. On August 27, 1933 the German Ministry of the Economy and Zionist representatives from Germany and Palestine established the *Haavarah* or Transfer Agreement, which allowed Jews to transfer portions of their assets and facilitate exports from Germany to Palestine. The immigrants could deposit *Reichmarks* into accounts of one of two approved banks and receive a certificate

[100] Kaplan, 70-71.
[101] Kaplan, 72.

entitling them to that amount of Palestinian currency in the form of imported German goods or property in Palestine.[102] As a result, approximately one hundred million *Reichmarks* were transferred to Palestine, which afforded the 60,000 Jews who emigrated initial economic support.[103] In 1936, the Germans became worried that the funnel of immigrants would further the possibility of an independent Jewish state and facilitate global Jewish power. Despite these concerns, Hitler continued to stress the maintenance of the *Haavarah* Agreement and its importance for expediting Jewish emigration.[104]

Such legislation benefitted Jews eager to escape Germany and establish roots in Palestine. Lotti Steinberg and Hans Kaiser- Bluth met at a Hebrew class in Cologne funded by the Zionist movement. Hans was a committed Zionist who was unable to find work as an engineer. Lotti was a dentist motivated to immigrate by social exclusion and limited professional opportunities in Germany. Lotti's marriage ensured her a brighter personal and professional future and guaranteed she had the funds to immigrate to Palestine.[105] Once the couple arrived in Palestine, they were able to live on the funds they deposited through the *Ha'varah* agreement.

Many Jews also wanted to immigrate to the United States, but the rigid American immigration quotas prohibited them from doing so. Bat Ami Zucker argues that most German Jews preferred to immigrate to America because of its reputation as a haven for the persecuted.[106] He explains contemporary American anti-Semitism and xenophobia and how these notions effected American perceptions of German Jewish

[102] Boehling and Larkey, 144.
[103] Friedlander, loc. 1247.
[104] Friedlander, loc. 4571.
[105] Boehling and Larkey, 141-142.
[106] Zucker, 17.

immigrants. Many Americans did not want to become financially responsible for an influx of immigrants, given that the Great Depression had produced high rates of unemployment in the United States. The major immigration legislation, most notably the Emergency Immigration Restriction Act or Johnson Act, was passed in 1921. The Johnson Act introduced a strict quota system. The quota system restricted immigration to three percent of the number of residents from that country living in the US as of the 1910 census, to immigrate. Once lawmakers realized that the application of a 1910 census permitted too many eastern and southern European immigrants entry, they passed the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924, which lowered the quota to two percent and changed the base year to 1890. This change primarily affected the number of Jews, Italians and Slavs who could enter the United States. Additionally, the United States did not classify refugees as a preferred class, thus Jews fleeing Nazi Germany did not take preference for visas over other German immigrants.[107] There were additional security concerns and paranoia about immigrants and their possible motives for migration. President Roosevelt and other government officials were nervous about immigrants becoming a "fifth column" of saboteurs and spies that could infiltrate America.[108]

This paranoia guided changes and attitudes to immigration legislation at the time and directly affected the number of Jews who received American visas. Between 1933 and 1945 the German emigration quota of 25,957, which increased to 27,370 to include Austria after the Anschluss in 1938, was never filled. In 1933, 1,375 German immigrants came to the United States, with 3,556 in 1934 and 5,243 in 1935.[109] The American officials who controlled immigration policy were generally anti-Semitic, including senior

[107] Zucker, 33.
[108] Breitman and Lichtman. loc. 2727
[109] Bonelli, 4.

officials in the State Department and Foreign Service Officers. Breitman and Zucker both claim that these individuals and the employees working at American consulates "manipulated the criteria governing the issuance of visas to limit the entry of German Jewish refugees" under the already narrow immigration legislation.[110] Aspects of immigration and visa legislation, most notably the likelihood "to become a public charge" clause, i.e. "those who could not demonstrate they could financially support themselves pursuant to American immigration law", was vague enough to allow the consuls to interpret them freely and control who obtained visas.[111] Ultimately, the American government did not respond seriously enough to the refugee problem because of the immigration laws in place, including strict quotas, the possibility that relations with Germany could be compromised, and anti-Semitism and paranoia in the United States.[112] Jews continued to try and immigrate to the United States until Heinrich Himmler banned Jewish emigration in October 1941, but many were unsuccessful, because of restrictions abroad.

German Jews with relatives in the United States had advantages over those without such ties and could ask their relatives to provide financial support, should they be allowed to immigrate. Luzie Hatch was 21 years old in January 1933. She had recently secured a job at L.S. Mayer, a Jewish-owned department store. Her father, Edwin, worked as a merchandise assistant at another Jewish owned store H. Joseph Company. This career profile was typical for German Jews; over 50 percent worked in

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[110] Breitman, Richard D., Alan M. Kraut: "Anti-Semitism in the State Department, 1933-44: Four Case Studies," in David A. Gerber, ed., *Anti-Semitism in American History*. (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press 1986,). 1.
[111] Breitman and Kraut, 2-3.
[112] Zucker,4-5, 61.

the business or commercial retail industry.[113] Hitler's rise to power "coincided with a sharp career reversal for Edwin Hecht". Hecht had just accepted a position at Karstadt Department Stores and had subsequently resigned from his position at H. Joseph Company. Shortly after January 1933, Hecht received a letter saying Karstadt could no longer extend the job offer due to "political circumstances".[114] Like many other Jews, he was suddenly unemployed. Hecht adapted, took on freelance work as a leather goods salesman and was able to support his family. Despite this, his son, Ralph, recalls that this experience made his father "jolt, and see the handwriting on the wall at the very beginning".[115]

Women in Jewish households usually wanted to emigrate before men; in the Hecht family the opposite pattern occurred.[116] Edwin began to convince his wife the time had come to flee Germany. He did not care that many of his Jewish friends were not considering emigration and wanted to flee Germany by any means. Hecht realized his family needed to reconnect with their American relative, Nathan Hecht. Nathan had arrived in New York City in June 1873 and eventually moved to Albany with his wife, Ida. The Hecht's wrote their American relatives in the spring of 1933. Initially, Nathan was reluctant to help and stated that "business in our country has come to a complete halt" and that "your intention of coming to America is sheer insanity and you would find the situation horrible". He told the family "you cannot rely on me, we have almost no income".[117] The Great Depression had crippled the American economy, leaving many American Jews without the means to support incoming German refugees. Luzie did not

[113] Bonelli, 14.
[114] Bonelli, 18.
[115] Bonelli, 18.
[116] Kaplan, 62.
[117] Bonelli, 26.

renew her efforts to connect with Nathan Hatch until April 1936. During the three years since their initial correspondence, conditions had worsened in Germany and for the Hatch family. Nathan Hatch died on June 3, 1933, four weeks after his initial letter to Luzie.

Continued anti–Semitic legislation and gradual exclusion pushed more Jews to flee Germany. On September 15, 1935, the Nazis passed the Nuremberg Laws, which explicitly defined who was Jewish and allowed for the passage of additional racist legislation. The first law established the national flag and symbol. Barred from showing the national flag, Jewish houses stood out on streets. The second law, the Reich Citizenship Law, restricted German citizenship to individuals with "German or kindred blood". The law defined who was German and who was not based on blood status.[118] The third law, the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, made marriage and extramarital relationships between Jews and Germans illegal. It forbid Jews to employ female household help under age 45.[119] Friedlander argues that the Nuremberg Laws were a major step towards the regime's ideological goals, but Hitler also wanted to ensure that the German populace did not outwardly oppose these laws. These policies were not random acts of violence, they were legalized and that facilitated acceptance by the German populace.

Various professions faced different obstacles in Germany, which determined if these individuals could remain in Germany. In April 1933, there were between 8,000 and 9,000 Jewish doctors practicing in Germany. By early 1934, 2,200 had left Germany or abandoned their profession. These numbers continued to decrease through

[118] Rabinbach and Gilman. 209.
[119] Rabinbach and Gilman, 210. Friedlander, loc. 2884.

1935. In 1936, 5,000 Jewish doctors still practiced in Germany, a number that dropped within a year to 4,200. On April 15, 1937 Jews could no longer sit for doctoral exams in German universities. On July 25, 1938 Jews could no longer practice medicine and on September 30, 1938 the Nazis removed Jewish medical licenses.[120] The Germans issued these laws in rapid succession, which encouraged more Jewish emigration.

For Dodo Liebman (27) the limited opportunities for Jewish students compelled her and her fiancé to leave Germany. Liebman was pursuing a doctorate in physics and became worried that she may not be allowed to finish her degree because of uncertainty about further anti-Jewish restrictions.[121] Liebman finished her degree by February 1934 and reflects that she could have finished it up to six months later, but still would not have been allowed to take a teaching examination because it was a state exam and Jews were no longer permitted to take the exam.[122] After obtaining her degree, Liebman struggled to find work as a physicist and had to settle for working class jobs for which she was overqualified. When she left her last job in 1934, she wrestled to find other work and qualified for unemployment and did freelance work until her emigration in 1936.[123] Liebman and her husband, Gert, wanted to leave by 1937, "before the war started". Many friends questioned their decision to leave, but the couple anticipated a war would be coming and did not want to be caught in it.[124] Neither Dodo or Gert could find work in Germany, which compelled them to flee. In most German families where the husband was the primary breadwinner and the wife was a

[120] Friedlander, loc. 4497.
[121] Liebman, Dodo, We Kept our Heads: Personal Memories of being Jewish in Nazi Germany and Making a New Home in England; ME 394; Leo Baeck Institute. 51.
[122] Liebman, 53.
[123] Liebman, 56- 58.
[124] Liebman, 59.

homemaker, the woman would not have been the deciding factor when choosing to emigrate.

Beginning in 1933, Nazism permeated all aspects of German public and private life. Everyday events, from grocery shopping, travel, and going to work and school, entailed an encounter with party policy. Individuals reacted to varying aspects of the anti-Semitic policies. For Jewish adults the "biggest uncertainty from earning a living was how to negotiate a public space" and "only in day-to-day life could Jews test whether they truly remained safe and whether normal life was possible".[125] Through daily activities they could analyze whether existing institutions, friend and neighbors could protect them in the new regime and which former friends became their enemies under Nazism.

The day- to day disenfranchisement from greater German society, coupled with worsening financial conditions convinced Jews that they had no future in Germany. These changes occurred gradually and became the norm for greater German society. Given the patriarchal structure in German families, it is unsurprising that while women were more likely to see the immediate danger, their views remained unheard until their husbands or fathers perceived that threat as well. In November 1938, Jews who did not feel the full weight of the Nazi anti-Jewish policies found their perceptions shattered by the Great Pogrom of November 1938, *Kristallnacht.* The spaces Jews thought were safe spaces, including their private homes, no longer offered security. *Kristallnacht* constituted the last straw for the remaining Jews in Germany and suddenly propelled those who remained cautiously optimistic that the situation in Germany could not get worse, that it was time to emigrate.

[125]Matthaus and Roseman.123.

Chapter 3- The Last Straw: *Kristallnacht* and its impact on German Jewish Emigration

The Progression to *Kristallnacht* and the Expansion of Nazism Beyond Germany's Borders

The November Pogrom, *Kristallnacht*, shattered assumptions among German Jews that Jewish life remained possible in Nazi Germany. The Nazis ransacked Jewish homes, synagogues and businesses and covered in a sea of broken glass. They burnt Synagogues and sent thousands of Jewish men to concentration camps. The illusion that Jews could retreat into private spaces was broken. *Kristallnacht* infiltrated the remaining safe spaces for Jewish life. The Jews remaining in Germany now felt the imminent danger and rushed to apply for emigration.[126] Jewish men, many of whom previously believed they could survive in Germany, now found themselves in concentration camps and the only way the Nazis released them was for a family member to show proof the man was able to emigrate.[127]

Kristallnacht, marked a shift towards state-sponsored open violence. In hindsight, the pogrom appears as an obvious indicator of the destruction yet to come, but most German Jews read the current situation differently. Even those Jews who had previously ruled out emigration now considered flight as their only option. In 1936, Victor Klemperer declared that although his friends "consider me dishonorable because I am staying in Germany, [I] will be the last of our family here and shall perish here, I can do nothing else"[128]. After *Kristallnacht*, he too realized that "there is no longer any choice:

[126] Garbarini, Alexandra, Emil Kerenji, Jan Lambertz, and Avinoam Patt. *Jewish Responses to Persecution: Volume II 1938-1940*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2011. Xxii- xxiv.
[127] For more information about Kristallnacht see Alan Steinweis, *Kristallnacht 1938*. Harvard UP, 2009.
[128] Klemperer, 154.

We (German Jews) must leave."[129] Jews did not see a future for life in Germany. Willy Cohn experienced a similar degree of disillusion and remarked that " I no longer believe in the rebirth of Jewish life in Germany; nor do I consider it desirable."[130] Jews who previously never considered a life outside of Germany now came to the realization that their only option was emigration. However, for those Jews who came to this conclusion only in November 1938, it was largely too late.

The events of 1938 surrounding *Kristallnacht*, signal a distinct turning point in the history of German Jewish emigration. The escalation of anti-Jewish policy in Germany contributed to radical exclusionary measures. In March, the Nazis proclaimed the "Law Regarding the Legal Status of Jewish Communities", the first significant piece of anti-Semitic legislation since the Nuremberg Laws in 1935. In the same month, Nazi Germany annexed Austria in the so-called *Anschluss*, and in September the Munich Agreement expanded Nazism beyond Germany's borders. As the German Reich incorporated these new territories, Jews in the annexed regions including Czech Jews in the Sudetenland and Austrian Jews, joined the rush to emigration.[131] The events of 1938 culminated in *Kristallnacht*.

Prior to 1938, the economic circumstances for Jews varied by location. In Hamburg many Jews had lost their jobs as doctors, attorneys or civil servants, but the Aryanisation of businesses did not rapidly progress until the end of 1938. In 1937, many Jewish businesses remained open in Hamburg despite increased efforts, including boycotts, by the Nazi Party. The Jews in Hamburg received mixed signals. Some lost

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[129] Klemperer, 278.
[130] Cohn, Willy, and Norbert Conrads. *No Justice in Germany: The Breslau Diaries, 1933- 1941.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. 184.
[131] Kaplan, 119.

their jobs early, while others were able to subsist financially and believed they could survive in Germany. In Hamburg, this false sense of security faded in 1938 when the German economy had recovered significantly and the government was consolidated, which allowed the Nazis to refocus their efforts on economic exclusion. State sponsored harassment worsened in 1938 with the "accelerated Aryanisation and liquidation of Jewish businesses".[132]

While German people had taken it upon themselves to discriminate against Jewish businesses by dismissing Jewish clients and workers, these practices became official policy in 1938. Jewish assets totaled ten to twelve billion Reichmarks in 1933. By the end of 1938 Jewish assets had been reduced to half that sum. Multiple laws and decrees shattered the "remaining Jewish economic existence in Germany." On January 1, 1938 businesses were considered Jewish if Jews owned more than one fourth of the shares, had one half of the votes, or were under "predominantly Jewish influence". Prior to this, the Nazis considered businesses to be Jewish if the proprietor or partner was a Jew, in ordinance with the Reich Citizenship Law.[133] On June 14, Jews had to report wealth totaling over 5,000 *Reichmarks* and the Interior Ministry required the registration of all Jewish businesses. On July 6 the Nazis banned commercial services, credit information and real estate brokerage. On September 27 Jews could no longer practice law, but this restriction did not take effect until October 30. By the end of 1938, approximately 70 percent of Jewish-owned businesses had been ruined or "aryanized", meaning that ownership of a business had been legally transferred to a non-Jew, albeit

[132] Bajohr, Frank. *Aryanisation In Hamburg: The Economic Exclusion of Jews and the Confiscation of their Property in Nazi Germany*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2002. 288.
[133] Friedlander, loc. 5142, Gilman and Rabinbach, 209.

frequently under duress.[134] The final blow came after *Kristallnacht* when Hermann Goring, director of the Four Year Plan for the German economy, issued a ban on all Jewish business activity in Germany on November 12.[135]

For the Storch family, the economic destruction during the summer of 1938 did not prove entirely detrimental. Their shop continued to do very well. The family patriarch, Baruch, had German acquaintances who assured him that he was "a German Jew and the authorities were after foreign Jews". This notion changed in July 1938 when a German approached Baruch and his son and said "here the Jew Storch walks"[136]. Philippe, Baruch's son, reflects that this incident changed his father's entire outlook on Nazism and he began seriously considering emigration. Unfortunately, the family had no money abroad and it was too late to sell his business or smuggle money out of Germany. Baruch Storch did not want to emigrate a poor man. This inhibition became immaterial after *Kristallnacht* when leaving Germany became an existential question.

The Jewish refugee crisis became worse on March 12, 1938 when the German army, the *Wehrmacht*, arrived in Austria. The next day, Austria became part of the German Reich. 190,000 additional Jews now found themselves under Nazi control. In Austria, the Nazis immediately introduced the anti-Jewish legislation they had developed over the past five years in Germany. The Nazi government took steps to hasten Austrian Jewish emigration.[137] 45,000 Jews left Austria within six months of the *Anschluss* and by March 1939 100,000 Jews had emigrated. Unfortunately, due to

[134] Bonelli, 74.
[135] Friedlander, loc. 5144.
[136] Storch, 7.
[137] Friedlander, loc. 4795- loc. 4883.

immense anti-Semitism abroad and rigid quotas many of these Jews fleeing Germany had nowhere to go.

Following the Munich Agreement in September 1938 an additional 30,000 Jews came under German control. In summer 1938 Hitler demanded the return of the ethnic German population in Czechoslovakia and the land they lived on, to the German Reich. Nazi Germany threatened war unless these demands were meet. In response, British, French, Italian and German leaders convened in Munich from September 29 – 30 to discuss the situation. This event, known as the Munich Conference, gave Germany the Sudetenland in exchange for peace in Europe. There were no Czechoslovak representatives invited to the conference and as a result, they had little to no input in the decision-making process. The Czechoslovak government reluctantly signed the agreement on September 30, 1938 and the Sudetenland became part of Germany. In response, 17,000 Jews fled Czechoslovakia.[138]

The Emigration Dilemma in 1938 and its Contributions to *Kristallnacht*

Following the *Anschluss* and Munich Agreement, the Jewish refugee problem became a global issue. Jews could technically leave the German Reich, but few places were willing to accept Jewish immigrants. From July 6 to 17, 1938 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt convened a conference of 32 countries in Evian, France to discuss the world refugee crisis.[139] The outcome of the conference was largely decided before it even started because the invitation stated “no country would be expected to receive a

[138] Timothy Snyder. *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning.* Tim Duggan Books, New York, NY. 2015, loc. 1732, Gay, loc. 1603.
[139] Kaplan, 70.

greater number of emigrants that is permitted by its existing legislation".[140] The Australian delegate said taking more Jews would endanger his own race. He stated that Australians "have no real race problem" and "we are not desirous of importing one".[141] While the world's leaders recognized the refugee crisis, most were unwilling to broaden their legislation to accept more Jews. Breitman reasons that the Evian Conference did not condemn Nazi policy rather it justified it, as country after country came forth with a reason for not accepting Jews.[142] The immigration issue remained unresolved, yet the desperate need of German Jews to get out of Germany only increased after *Kristallnacht.*

The impetus for *Kristallnacht* began on October 27, 1938 when the Gestapo arrested and deported the 12,000 Polish Jews living in Germany in response to a Polish decree, set to abolish the Polish citizenship of Jews living outside of the country on November 1.[143] The family of Zindel Grynzpan was deported and became trapped in the "no man's land" between Germany and Poland. He wrote his son, Hershel, who was living in Paris about the situation. In response, Hershel went to the German embassy and assassinated Ernst vom Rath, a junior embassy official. Vom Rath's assassination provided the Germans with a catalyst needed to unleash a national pogrom.[144]

The *Kristallnacht* pogrom occurred on November 9, 1938. Coincidentally, the Nazi leadership was together in Munich celebrating the anniversary of the 1923 Putsch. This gathering presented a perfect excuse for local leaders to communicate with their organizations at home to destroy synagogues and Jewish businesses. The police were

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[140] Friedlander, loc. 4938.
[141] Breitman, loc. 2087.
[142] Breitman, "FDR and the Jews" loc. 2075- loc. 2099.
[143] Friedlander, loc. 5321, Kaplan, 120.
[144] Dwork and van Pelt, 99.

instructed not to intervene and citizens involved were not to be arrested. Reinhard Heydrich told the Gestapo and SD that "no measures endangering German life or property could be taken", "Jewish businesses or apartment could be destroyed but not looted" and "in all district as many Jews, especially rich ones, are to be arrested as can be accommodated."[145] During *Kristallnacht*, the SA along with ordinary German citizens destroyed 267 synagogues and 7,500 Jewish businesses. The destruction of Jewish property, businesses and synagogues signaled the end of a foreseeable future for Jewish life in Nazi Germany. 91 Jews were murdered and close to 30,000 Jewish men were hauled off to concentration camps.[146] The Germans "crossed a significant threshold" into open violence with *Kristallnacht*. [147]

At this point, family members, particularly wives and daughters, scrambled to assemble the paperwork necessary to secure their loved ones' release.[148] The SS, the Nazi branch in charge of the concentration camps, released these men if they received documents assuring emigration from Germany.[149] The Gestapo arrested Kurt Steinberg on November 10 and sent him to Buchenwald concentration camp. His fiancé, Hanna, and his mother, Selma, immediately began searching for any possible way for Kurt to escape Germany. Hanna fabricated a letter to the State Police in Frankfurt on behalf of the Jewish Rural Labor Service. This letter specified details of Kurt's passage on a steamship leaving Germany on December 10 bound for Argentina. When Kurt left Buchenwald, he signed a form saying he would leave Germany by December 31, 1938. But since Hannah had presented a fake letter to the police, Kurt did not have a way out

[145] Friedlander, loc. 5451.
[146] Bonelli,11.
[147] Dwork and Van Pelt, 101.
[148] Kaplan,126.
[149] Boehling and Larkey, 134.

of Germany.[150] Hans Jacobi, the director of the Emigration Counseling Office of the *Hilfsverein*, a Jewish relief organization, put Kurt in contact with J.E. Bell, the British Counsel of Cologne. Bell listened to Kurt recount his experience in Buchenwald and granted Hanna and Kurt tourist visas to Palestine, on the condition they marry before their departure. Because the British consul was ordered to stop issuing visas to Palestine, Bell lost his job for continuing to do so and was transferred to Switzerland as a result.[151] Hanna and Kurt arrived in Palestine in early February 1939.[152]

Else Gerstel had stayed in Germany at the insistence of her husband, Alfred, a decision that almost cost Else her life. On November 10, the Gestapo destroyed their apartment and arrested Alfred. Luckily the Gestapo released him from prison a few days later, but only on the condition he would emigrate. Else immediately wrote to her brother in the United States to secure the necessary paperwork and in May 1939 the family left for Cuba.[153]

By November 1938, the Nazi party was assured ordinary Germans condoned these anti-Jewish measures without widespread opposition. While not every German took part, and some aided their Jewish friends and neighbors, many stood idly by and watched the destruction unfold. Bonelli argues that the "fourteen hours of rioting and destruction were a bolt that struck the consciousness for German Jews, making it impossible to cling to any notion, any fantasy that they could somehow accommodate

[150] Boehling and Larkey, 127- 128.
[151] Boehling and Larkey, 135- 136.
[152] Boehling and Larkey, 157.
[153] Gerstel, 79

themselves to the Nazi regime, that it would eventually become more moderate and that Germany could still be there home."[154]

The Nazis utilized *Kristallnacht* to show gentile Germans that attempts to sympathize or assist victims, were very dangerous. It was common for people who Jews considered friends or colleagues, to turn a blind eye to the insanity or worse, partake in it themselves.[155] On the ship to Cuba the Gerstels met another family from a small town of 8,000 people. The Gestapo arrested the husband on November 10 and sent him to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. When Else asked the family who wrecked the apartment, the woman replied that their "acquaintances, teachers, and shopkeepers" destroyed the home. One later apologized and said he could not say no and party members forced him to participate. On November 11, the Gestapo arrested the fourteen-year-old son and sent him to Sachsenhausen as well. The wife had to sell almost everything the family owned to the German state to pay for their tickets to Cuba.[156] The people this family used to regard as friends and colleagues turned against them. Dwork and Van Pelt argue that the Nazis "no longer felt a political need to hide behind the chimera of wanton mob-driven destruction." Instead, "bureaucratic systemized persecution became open policy, visible to all".[157] The hope that the storm could be weathered in Germany had proved to be false, as former friends, neighbors and colleagues did not resist the Nazi machine. Most stood by and watched the madness unfold, or worse, partook in it themselves.

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[154] Bonelli, 43.
[155] Gay, loc. 1624.
[156] Gerstel, 79-80.
[157] Dwork and Van Pelt, 102.

For the families remaining in Nazi Germany, *Kristallnacht* confirmed their worst fears. Those families that had been preparing to emigrate before November 10 were lucky. The Gutmann family, of Hannover, was thrown into a state of shock when their father was arrested in 1937. He returned two months later and began preparing for his three children to emigrate. During *Kristallnacht*, the whole family hid at the home of a Czech friend and Mr. Gutmann was spared arrest. The Nazis could not enter the house of a Czech citizen. When the Gutmann's returned to their home, they found it completely destroyed. Luckily, Mr. Gutmann had already been preparing for his two youngest daughters, Eva and Ruth, to go on a children's transport, or *kindertransport*, to Holland. Their older daughter, Grete immigrated to England.[158] Had Mr. Gutmann not prepared for his family's emigration in advance, it is unlikely they would have been able to flee.

After *Kristallnach*t the Nazis escalated the already severe restrictions on Jewish life. On November 12 Jews had to sell their art and valuables. On November 15, they were permanently expelled from German schools. Four days later they were excluded from the welfare system and by December 6 they were banned from theaters, cinemas, cabarets, fairs and sports facilities.[159] These anti-Jewish measures severely restricted their "freedom of movement and participation in German life."[160]

Kristallnacht and its aftermath prompted most Jews remaining in Germany to consider emigration, but the prospects of securing the necessary paperwork at this point were low. Many Jews were given numbers so high on the American quota that they

[158] Gutmann, loc. 955- loc. 99, loc. 1141- loc. 1165.
[159] Friendlander, loc. 5670.
[160] Bonelli, 81.

would not be called for years.[161] There were some locations that were accepting Jews, including Shanghai. While many Jews were apprehensive about immigrating to Shanghai and preferred destinations like the United States or Great Britain Shanghai was their only option, as it did not require visas, an affidavit, a health certificate or a quota number. Approximately 2,000 Jews per month immigrated to Shanghai.[162] Others found refuge in South and Central America. Because men were released from concentration camps on the condition they would emigrate immediately, more men left Germany at this point than women. In May 1939 the British released the White Paper on Palestine, dramatically reducing the number of Jews allowed to immigrate there.[163] These numbers were slashed as German Jews were desperately trying to escape. In 1936, the Peel Commission allowed 12,000 Jews to enter Palestine annually, in contrast, due to the White Paper, 10,000 Jews could enter Palestine each year for the next five years with an additional 25,000 allowed given the dangerous situation in Europe.[164] The options for emigration were dwindling, as more Jews attempted to flee the rapidly deteriorating situation in Germany.

The Gay family of Berlin did not consider emigration a serious possibility until *Kristallnacht*. The Gays had a cousin in America and secured an affidavit, but the chances of securing an American visa at this point were still slim. The family patriarch, Moritz, was born in the portion of Silesia that became part of Poland after the First World War and he was considered part of the Polish quota rather than the German quota. About 6,000 spots existed each year for Polish immigrants. This bureaucratic

[161] Bonelli 54.
[162] Bonelli, 81.
[163] Boehling and Larkey, 176.
[164] Dwork and van Pelt, 125.

detail made the emigration process even more complicated. Peter Gay remembers being frustrated because while foreign newspapers and governments condemned *Kristallnacht,* the doors to those countries still remained closed for most German Jews.[165]

As the situation in Germany worsened and the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939, Moritz became more determined to find his family a way to escape Germany. With the assistance of a German friend, the Gays managed to secure passage on the St. Louis, the ill-fated ship that was turned back to Germany after arriving in Cuba. For whatever reason, either guilt that he prolonged making plans for emigration earlier or fear that new restrictions may block their voyage. Moritz secured tickets on the Iberia for April 27, two weeks before their scheduled departure on the St. Louis. There was no time to obtain new travel documents, so Moritz altered the existing documents. On May 13, 1939 the Gay family arrived in Havana, Cuba.[166] Had the family used their tickets for the St. Louis, it is likely they would have had to return to Germany.

Luzie Hecht and her younger cousin, Herta Stein, left Berlin on November 16, one week after *Kristallnacht*. Their American family members arranged for the cousin's immigration before *Kristallnacht*.[167] Luzie's parents remained in Berlin. Her father, Edwin, had only applied to immigrate to the United States after *Kristallnacht* and his number was so high on the quota list it may not have been called for years. Once Luzie arrived in America, she tried to secure affidavits for the rest her family. She was successful in December 1938. Despite securing an affidavit, the family was unable to secure American visas. Time was running out, Edwin Hecht concluded the only option

[165] Gay, loc. 1702.
[166] Gay, loc. 1806 - loc. 1865.
[167] Bonelli, 3.

for emigration was Shanghai. In winter 1939, Edwin and his wife, Berta, left Berlin for Shanghai.[168] Shanghai was Edwin's last choice, but it was far better than staying in Germany.

The Last Years of Emigration 1939- 1941

The outbreak of war worsened conditions in Europe and more or less eliminated further emigration options. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland and two days later Great Britain and France declared war on Germany.[169] By 1939, 82 percent of children under age fifteen and 83 percent of adolescents age sixteen to twenty four had emigrated from Germany.[170] More than 170,000 Jews left in Germany in September 1939, including Klaus Langer of Essen.[171] Klaus left Germany on September 2; the day after the war began. With the help of the Aid to Jewish Youth Klaus and 200 other children were able to flee Germany and enter Denmark. Klaus's parents remained trapped in Germany and perished during the war. Alexandra Zapruder, the historian who found Klaus's diary, reasons that *Kristallnacht* served as the "power catalyst for emigration" and emigration is the main subject of Klaus's diary. Erich, Klaus's father, was arrested on *Kristallnacht* and returned home two weeks later. The Langer's attempted to find passage to Chile, India, Holland, Peru, Shanghai and England, but each effort was unsuccessful. The "paper walls" including, personal papers, travel documents, visas and affidavits made emigration nearly impossible by this point.[172] Despite the danger present in Germany, the Langers still debated where to go based on

[168] Bonelli, 81 - 82.
[169] Bonelli, 137.
[170] Kaplan, 118.
[171] Boehling and Larkey, 175.
[172] Zapruder, 14- 16.

the likelihood of finding work and the transfer of Erich's pension, even rejecting opportunities to find the best option. The family considered Palestine, but Klaus wrote that they worried Erich's "income would not be enough to make a living".[173] It seems trivial that the Langers thought about these issues, but like many other German families, it was difficult to comprehend the nature of this move and to accept their circumstances.[174] Ultimately, Erich Langer's faith in the German state failed him and left him to perish in a death camp.

While months passed without major combat in the west during the so-called "phony war", this changed on May 10, 1940 when Germany invaded the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. By the end of May, these countries fell and France surrendered on June 22. Once the war began, the US consuls required even stricter affidavit standards and only ten percent of applicants were able to secure visas. In September 1940, the U.S. halted emigration from Germany altogether because of fears that Nazi agents might infiltrate the country under the cover of seeking refuge.[175] In July 1941, the U.S. closed its German consulates. In October 1941, Heinrich Himmler, the *Reichsfuehrer*, Reich Leader of the SS, secretly issued a ban on Jewish emigration from Germany. By October 1941, the planning for what was to become the Final Solution was underway and the Nazis did not want to deal with Jewish emigration anymore as they began to plan for mass deportations.[176]

The plans for the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question" occurred in various stages, but did not necessarily proceed in a linear fashion. Various historians theorize

[173] Zapruder, 22.
[174] Zapruder, 16.
[175] Boehling and Larkey, 183.
[176] Boehling and Larkey, 207.

how the Nazi leadership made the decision for complete annihilation and genocide. The definitive plans did not commence until after the invasion of the USSR in the summer of 1941. By the end of November 1941 “many agencies had taken the initiative to kill Jews”, but Himmler needed to centralize this plan and oversee it himself.[177] By the time Reinhard Heydrich, the head of the Reich Main Security Office, organized the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942, the Nazi leadership was certain about the fate of European Jewry and needed to secure “a uniform view among the relevant central agencies of the further tasks concerned with the remaining work on this final solution”. Heydrich felt too few Jews had left Europe between 1933 and 1939 and 11 million were still in Europe.[178] At this point, the logistical aspects of the operation were complete and the deportations progressed, which drove millions of Jews to their death.

Kristallnacht served as the culmination of five years of increasing restrictions, isolation and humiliation. The pogrom came unexpectedly and awoke the remaining Jewish community in Germany to the severity of Nazism. The onslaught of anti-Jewish decrees following *Kristallnacht* assured Jews that there was not a life for them in this Germany, a notion that was incomprehensible. Jews contemplating emigration before *Kristallnacht* were more likely to be able to flee, but by November 1938, there were few emigration options left and the copious amounts of paperwork required meant most Jews contemplating emigration did not find a way out of Germany. With the onslaught of war in September 1939 and subsequent invasions of the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium in May 1940, the remnants of German Jewry slowly came to the realization their faith in Germany had failed to save them.

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[177] Dwork and van Pelt, 281.
[178] Dwork and van Pelt, 280.

Conclusion

On May 30, 1942 Victor Klemperer wrote in his diary. He wrote that "I am German, and still waiting for Germans to come back, they have gone to ground somewhere".[179] For Klemperer and other German Jews, Nazism was a shock to their preexisting notions about the state of Germany Jewry. In the decades since Jewish emancipation in Germany, Jews became an integral part of German professional circles, social groups and the arts. By the time Jewish emigration ceased in October 1941, it was a community on the path to complete annihilation. Jews considered Germany to be their home. It was a country that until the Nazi takeover offered them economic opportunities and religious freedom.

Beginning in January 1933, drip-by-drip, day-by-day, the Nazis commenced the process for social and economic death for Jews in Germany. The daily occurrences and actions by ordinary Germans invited clear breaks in preexisting relationships and convinced Jews they were no longer welcome in Germany. Daily activities, going to work or studying in school, distracted Jews, particularly Jewish men, from the worsening situation in Germany, but the worsening economic conditions for Jews, especially the new legislation the party introduced in 1938, persuaded more men they had to flee Germany. After 1938, more intense economic exclusion, coupled with the events of *Kristallnacht*, convinced the remaining Jewish community in Germany that emigration was their only option. There were limited options for families that started contemplating emigration after *Kristallnacht* and many pursuing emigration at that point did not get out of Germany in time.

[179] Klemperer, loc. 301.

The composition of the remaining Jewish population in Germany in 1941 demonstrate the influence the emigration decision-making process had on chances of survival. When the Nazis government halted Jewish emigration from Germany altogether in October 1941 and the plans for the Final Solution materialized, the Jewish population in Germany was overwhelmingly older and female. 66 percent of those deported towards ghettos and death camps were age 45 or older, and there were 32,000 more females than males. In 1941, 163,000 remained in Germany.[180] Approximately three fifth of German Jews had managed to emigrate. 525,000 Jews had lived in Germany in 1933 and only 15,000 survived in hiding or in mixed marriages "within the pre-1938 borders".[181]

German Jews in mixed marriages had the best changes of surviving. These Jews were not automatically destined for murder, but not specifically spared either. The Nazis excluded *Mischlinge* and Jews in mixed marriages from the early deportations, but in later years there were major regional discrepancies. Beginning in 1942, Nazi officials in Frankfurt deported Jews in mixed marriages. 99 percent of German Jews who survived Nazism without emigrating were partners in a mixed marriage.[182] Victor Klemperer, of Dresden, had married a Protestant and converted to Protestantism in 1912. He and his wife, Eva, escaped deportation during the war, but had to move into a *Judenhaus*, Jewish house, in 1940.[183] Of the 1,265 Jews still in Dresden in 1941, only 198 were left

[180] Klemperer, loc. 247.
[181] Kaplan, 232.
[182] Kaplan 189- 190.
[183] Klemperer, loc. 123.

in 1945. All 198 were in some sort of a mixed marriage. The rest had been deported to Auschwitz, Riga and Theresienstadt. A handful survived.[184]

Kaplan argues that age and gender proved a "lethal combination" in Nazi Germany and these factors, combined with families' occupation and dynamics often determined the likelihood who within a family emigrated.[185] Of the German Jews the Nazis deported to the Lodz Ghetto in 1941, 60 percent were women and 81 percent were over age fifty. Two thirds of deportees were over age forty-five.[186] After *Kristallnacht*, the SS agreed to free men from concentration camps if the wives and daughters could produce proof that these men would emigrate. Thus many Jewish families put their efforts into ensuring the release of their husbands and fathers. Younger people were more likely to flee earlier because of limited economic, academic and professional opportunities in Germany. They were also more surprised by the rise of anti-Semitism than the older generation who had lived through more similar periods of discrimination in their lives. The men who decided if emigration was an option for their families were the ones who dictated the likelihood that family could flee Germany or if they were destined for deportation.

The younger members of the Kaufman-Steinberg family all managed to escape Germany before, or immediately after *Kristallnacht*. The two family matriarchs, Henny and Selma, remained in Germany. With their younger relatives safely abroad, the two sisters could focus on their own emigration plans. Kurt and Hannah tried to help them flee to Palestine, but the British White Paper limited immigration there. Henny and Selma continued to write to their children abroad, but the war disrupted postal service

[184] Klemperer, loc. 61.
[185] Kaplan, 7.
[186] Kaplan, 189.

and resulted in delays. Both became depressed in the company of mostly older people left in Germany. There were “lonely parents everywhere, we have almost no young people left in our family and the older people are getting more and more lonesome.”[187] Henny and Selma received registration numbers to immigrate to the United States, but the process of securing affidavits and other paperwork prohibited them from leaving.[188]

Jews who contemplating emigration throughout the Nazi period had to discern whether it was worth leaving their lives in Germany in hopes of creating a new life elsewhere. Women and children normally saw the danger signs first and encouraged their husbands and fathers to explore emigration, but men tended to be more nationalistic and could not imagine a future outside of Germany. Men were more involved in the German economy and did not want to immigrate without a job or any other financial security to support their families. For those families who escaped Germany earlier on, having financial support abroad and sometimes just a stroke of and the will of a loyal gentile friend or even party official, allowed Jews to escape the horrors of Nazism.

Those who tried to emigrate, but could not and perished during the war include Erich Langer (Sobibor or Belzec), Mina Langer (Minsk), Samuel Gutmann (Auschwitz), Baruch Storch (Bergen Belsen), Willy Cohn (Lithuania), Henny Kaufman (Treblinka) and Selma Kaufman (Treblinka). Each of these individuals attempted to escape the worsening conditions in Germany, but by the time they decided to do so, it was too late. Some managed to save their children, most of whom made emigration a priority early on, but their faith in the German state failed to save their lives. The different perceptions

[187] Boehling and Larkey, 178- 179.
[188] Boehling and Larkey, 235- 236.

Jews developed of the situation in Germany, which were primarily based on their gender, age and career profile, determined the likelihood they would chose to emigrate. Unfortunately, it was the steadfast belief in the German state that failed many Jews and left them to perish.

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