

Reaching a State of Hope

Refugees, Immigrants and
the Swedish Welfare State, 1930–2000

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Sweden's exceptional ability to organize its immigration

Frank Caestecker

This volume presents an overview of the twentieth-century Swedish historical record with its countless refugees and immigrants, but is the history it charts part of the European mainstream or a unique development—a European exception? The fact that Sweden was neutral during the First and Second World Wars, two events that determined the course of history, means that it tends to stand out.¹ However, in analysing the Swedish experience in a Western Europe setting, this volume highlights differences and similarities throughout the twentieth century. This concluding essay cannot do full justice to the richness of this volume, as it mainly traces political developments. A political history of twentieth-century refugee policy as part of mainly immigration policy has been thoroughly studied in Europe in recent decades, and this historiography enables us to address the uniqueness of the Swedish experience.

When it comes to the social and cultural dimension of immigrant settlement, we are less well equipped for such a European comparison. The contributions in this volume show the potential of a broader approach to migration history. A world that has become smaller looks in a different manner at the past. The recent historical studies, of which this book is a summary, show an interest in transnationalism and yield a less ethnocentric reading of the past. This interest is part of the cultural turn. Cultural history speaks of forced migrants rather than refugees, and works rather with 'the other' than the immigrant. Sweden, still an emigration country in the nineteenth century, only slowly became an immigration country. While in 1930 only 1 per cent of the population were foreign-born—and that included Sweden's Nordic neighbours who were hardly considered strangers—this had increased to 6.7 per cent in 1975 and 11.3 per cent in 2000. While in the first decades of the twen-

tieth century, Sweden, unlike most other countries in Western Europe, was much less exposed to immigrants and their otherness, by 2000 the Swedish share of foreign-born inhabitants was high by Western European standards, and during the second half of the twentieth century their cultural background had become ever more different. Although a cultural analysis of immigration has its merits, the contributors to this volume have opted for a socio-political focus, and show the importance of the history of immigrants and refugees; a history in which the nation-state takes a central role, but where the research goes far beyond state policy. Migration management in Western Europe developed a variety of administrative categories, one of them being the refugee. Swedish administrative practice acknowledged refugees from 1933 onwards, when the Nazis came to power in Germany and triggered an exodus. By 1937, Swedish alien legislation had strengthened the position of political refugees as a formal, privileged category of immigrants. This development is similar to the Western European experience, but did Sweden react differently to the challenges that refugees and immigrants posed?

Pre-1933 alien policy

The democratization of the Western European polities after the First World War that went hand in hand with the coming of age of industrial society made the regulation of labour migration a bone of contention. This had important repercussions for social policy as well as immigration policy. In contrast to Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands, but similar to France, in Sweden (and the other Scandinavian countries) organized labour had acquired influence in political decision-making in the 1920s, most obviously in the protection of its own nationals in the labour market. Foreign labour could only participate in Swedish economic life if they did not harm the interests of national labour. It was mandatory for all foreign workers in Sweden to apply for a work permit that was only granted for jobs for which no indigenous labour was available. The views of trade unions were heard in each case. Permits were temporary and limited to a specific employment.

In the 1920s, Sweden was rather an emigration country, and the authorities had little experience of handling immigration prior to 1933. The influence of liberalism on Swedish political culture had not waned. Liberalism put individual rights first and had an antipathy to a strong state.² This was reflected in the division of power between the government agencies dealing with alien policy in Sweden. Similarly, in other states of

Continental Europe—the Netherlands, Denmark, and Switzerland—such susceptibilities made alien policy a matter for the local authorities, while central government had only very limited say in the matter. While the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs dealt with visas, residence permits were issued by the Board of Social Affairs (Socialstyrelsen) after consultation with regional and local authorities. Regional and local authorities in the border regions could also decide autonomously to deny an immigrant entry to Swedish territory and even to expel him or her if on Swedish territory. This largely decentralized immigration control gave a degree of latitude to the border and provincial authorities charged with carrying out this policy, albeit within limits set by the legislation. In practice, this meant that there were variations between one region and another, with different interpretations of directives being made by provincial executives and local police chiefs.

Swedish control of immigration was mainly a matter of external control. Swedish border control could be organized efficiently as the country had no land borders with Continental Europe. Denmark was Sweden's gateway to Continental Europe, but those coming from Denmark of course had to take a ferry over the Sound. There were also direct connections by sea with Sweden: from Germany, most people came by ferry to Trelleborg. Sea borders are easier to control than land borders, and the effectiveness of Swedish immigration control was thus much greater than the external control of other European countries. In Europe, only the UK and Ireland, being islands, had an even better geographical position for an effective immigration control.

Still, Sweden, like most Continental European countries, supplemented its external controls with internal controls. Although from 1926 onwards there was no visa requirement for Germans wanting to enter Sweden, they had to apply within three months for a residence permit. When Germans, like any other aliens, were granted a right of abode, this did not mean that they were free to work in Sweden. For that they needed a work permit. The objectives of Swedish alien policy, as Karin Krivist Geverts shows in this volume, went far beyond economic protectionism to the defence of cultural imperatives. To ward off the foreign intrusion that was felt to be such a threat to ethnically homogenous Swedish society, the 'infiltration' of strangers deemed inassimilable had to be prevented. Communists, Roma (who from 1914 were forbidden by law to enter Sweden), and (East European) Jews were in particular to be prevented from settling in Sweden. This cultural protectionism had to ensure the cohesion of Swedish society.³

After the election victory of the Social Democrats in 1932 and their agreement with the Farmers' League, this new political constellation started to mobilize state resources for the construction of their People's Home. Over the next decades the question would be raised time and again whether immigrants and refugees should be included in the solidarity of the People's Home.

The first refugee policies, 1933-37

The flight of the Jews and the political opponents of Nazism began the day Hitler came to power in Germany on 30 January 1933.⁴ State-organized violence drove the exodus. In 1933 the Nazi regime started open attacks on those it perceived as its political opponents. The half million Jews in Germany, in the very first years of Nazi rule, were not the main object of the violence, largely because Hitler's regime regarded economic recovery as paramount, yet even so some 40,000 Jews and 10,000 political activists fled the country in 1933. While in the years after 1933 the flight of political refugees slowed to a trickle, the Jewish flight continued. According to Jewish organizations, by the end of 1937 three out of ten Jews had left Germany. Some of these emigrants found ways to move their money out of Germany, but they were hindered by severe restrictions on the export of capital that had been introduced to protect the value of the German mark: in 1933, exporting capital entailed a financial loss of 23 per cent, and in subsequent years the Nazi regime increased the cost of capital transfers as a way of stripping Jewish emigrants of their possessions. By 1939, 95 per cent of its value had to be handed over to the German authorities when money was taken out of Germany.

The direction of the flight was dependent on geography, policies, and social relations. Although proximity seems to have been the dominant element in the direction taken by many German refugees, the strategies of political movements that caused a strong concentration of German political refugees in Prague and Paris had some influence too. Travel to neighbouring countries was easy, as visas were not required for most of Central and Western Europe; Germans needed only apply for visas to enter Belgium or France, two countries with which Germany had been at war. The flight from Nazi Germany in the midst of the depression would give a strong impetus to a fully protectionist alien policy all over Western Europe.

A private-public mix

Travel to Sweden was an easy matter for Germans, as no visa was needed. However, due to its geographical position, linguistic difficulties, and lack of tradition as a centre of exile politics, Sweden received only a small share of the political activists fleeing Nazi Germany. In November 1933 the German Social Democratic Party estimated the number of their refugees in the liberal countries of Europe to be 2,000, of whom 800 were in France, 500 in the Netherlands, 350 in Czechoslovakia, and 100 apiece in the three Scandinavian countries.⁵ Pär Frohnert mentions in his essay that in 1937, 131 political refugees were supported by the social-democratic Labour Movement Refugee Relief. For the communist refugees, Sweden had even fewer attractions. According to an internal memorandum by the German Communist Party of May 1936, only a handful of communist refugees had fled to Sweden (and Norway). In Czechoslovakia there were 900 German communists, in France 400, and in Denmark, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands about 100-150 each.⁶

Independent of the number of refugees, the challenge posed to the immigration policy by their arrival was similar in all European countries. The support of a refugee aid organization was crucial for being eligible for asylum in any European country. Once a refugee had entered a country, she or he had to apply for a residence permit in order to be able to stay put. Under the rules pertaining to all aliens, immigrants were only to receive the right of abode if they could persuade the authorities that they had a means of subsistence. As the first half of the 1930s was a time of economic downturn in Europe, immigrants were considered unwanted competition for scarce resources, and they were banned from the labour market. Immigrants should not aggravate unemployment. Thus only if immigrants had their own means of support could they stay put. For most refugees this posed a great difficulty. Thus the authorities in Sweden and all other Western European countries banned all refugees—Jews and political activists alike—from the labour market, at least until 1936. Massive unemployment at that time made it very difficult for any unemployed person—and certainly a refugee—to find a job, but this political decision left the refugees wholly dependent on financial aid.

Faced with this economic protectionism, the political movements in the liberal countries ideologically close to the refugees from Germany created aid organizations that provided for the upkeep of refugees who were excluded from the local economy. Implicit in a refugee relief organization's recommendation to the authorities that a German was a genuine political refugee

was the organization's guarantee to pay for the upkeep of that person. The result, because of their financial responsibility for the refugees, was that all aid organizations adopted stringent eligibility criteria.⁷ In Sweden, the Social Democratic Party, together with the Trade Union Confederation, created the Labour Movement Refugee Relief. The institutional backbone of this refugee fund meant that it was able to financially support a considerable number of German refugees. The distance between these important structures created to help socialist refugees and the other aid committees was vast, including the Swedish branch of the International Red Aid, part of the pocket-sized Swedish Communist Party, which could do little more than to make minute subsistence payments for a short time.

As Pär Frohnert outlines in his contribution to this volume, the crucial factor in this was that the Social Democratic Party was in government, and it adjusted its restrictive immigration policy in order to provide asylum to like-minded German activists. German communists supported by the Swedish Red Aid—the communists who in the first half of the 1930s condemned the social democrats as 'social fascists'—were not granted asylum and at times were threatened with expulsion. At least the Swedish government agreed not to return them to Germany. This humanitarian policy came thanks to a vigilant communist press, which mobilized public opinion against any tentative attempts to repatriate communist refugees. The only way to get rid of the German communists was to send them to their first country of asylum, Denmark. Sometimes they only had passed through Denmark en route to Sweden, but it was an easy pretext to get rid of these annoying refugees.⁸

The private-public mix of the Swedish Social Democratic government's refugee policy echoed the manner in which political refugees were received all over Europe. The political leverage of the social-democratic parties, either as members of a ruling coalition (Sweden, Denmark, and Czechoslovakia) or as an opposition party that had some access to political decision-makers in the other liberal European countries, explains to a large extent why—in contrast to other foreigners—political refugees from Germany, even if they arrived without the necessary papers or means, were generally tolerated. While in Switzerland asylum claims were investigated autonomously by the state authorities, the question of eligibility was largely subcontracted out to the private sector in all other countries: if a refugee relief committee acknowledged as respectable passed an individual as a *bona fide* refugee and agreed to support the person financially, the person was granted a residence permit as a political refugee.⁹

In all European countries, moves to protect refugees reflected not

only the humanitarian concerns of the authorities, but also their desire to control political activists and prevent them from endangering diplomatic relations or the domestic order. The numbers involved were quite limited. Between 1933 and 1935, the Swiss authorities granted political refugee status to 366 Germans, while Denmark in an informal manner considered 450 Germans eligible.¹⁰ In both countries communists were eligible for refugee status, but this was not the case in Belgium and the Netherlands. In Belgium, 400 Germans, mostly social democrats, were granted informal refugee status. The Netherlands was even more restrictive: the government was particularly wary of allowing entry to both communists and social democrats. Until 1939 the Dutch Social Democratic Party, although representing 25 per cent of the electorate, was not part of central policy-making, and the Dutch Communist Party had no significant following throughout the interwar period. Political refugees did enter the Netherlands and could receive residence permits, but only under the rules pertaining to all aliens, and they had to refrain from all political activity. The latter condition was also imposed on the refugees considered eligible for refugee status, whether formal or informal, in all European countries. Refugees who defied the prohibition on political activities could be imprisoned and occasionally expelled, although only very exceptionally were they repatriated to Germany.¹¹

Refugee policy turned out to be a sensitive issue. All over Western Europe, the authorities at times came under heavy criticism for failing to grant asylum or for expelling Germans who claimed to be refugees. In Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Sweden the issues at stake in migration management convinced the central authorities to curtail local and regional discretion in this area.¹² With the new Aliens Act of 1937, the Swedish central authorities took over the task of controlling immigration and the settlement of aliens from local and provincial authorities. The Aliens Department, a section of the Board of Social Affairs, was established to fulfil this task. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs retained only power in the field of visas. A more centralized management of alien policy had to prevent decisions by local and provincial authorities having unpleasant repercussions, even internationally.

Consolidation of protecting political refugees

The leftward shift of the political regimes in the mid-1930s in Continental Europe (Belgium, France, and also Norway) improved the position of the political refugees from Germany in the liberal countries of Europe. Not

only domestic policy, but also foreign policy considerations improved the lot of the political refugees. Since 1933, Germany's neighbours had advocated an international refugee regime to make it easier for 'their' refugees to move on to other countries, eventually overseas. These European countries were not ready to accept any infringement of their sovereignty; their main aim was to share the burden. A High Commission for Refugees from Germany was set up, but it had little political clout (it was only indirectly connected to the League of Nations) and was privately funded. The first achievement of this Commission was the Provisional Arrangement for Refugees from Germany in 1936, which was ratified by all liberal countries bordering Nazi Germany, including Denmark, and also Norway—but not Sweden. The Provisional Arrangement was upgraded to a Convention in 1938, which strengthened the rights of refugees from Germany. But the initial enthusiasm for this international refugee regime had waned by 1938: Switzerland did not sign up to the Convention, seven other countries signed with reservations, and only two countries—Belgium and the UK—had ratified it by 1940.¹³

This international refugee regime set the important principle of non-refoulement: refugees could not be expelled. National sovereignty was not absolutely restrained, as only refugees residing lawfully in a country of asylum were protected and expulsion was still possible for reasons of national security or public order, though the repatriation of refugees was outlawed. The principle of non-refoulement as an incursion on the states' right to deport refugees to the persecuting state was an important precedent set in these legal texts. Another important innovation was that German refugees residing lawfully in a country of asylum were to be issued with travel documents that allowed them to travel abroad and to return to their first country of asylum. The countries that ratified the agreement hoped in this way to make it easier for their refugees, in particular those who were stateless, to move on. Providing receiving states with the possibility to send refugees back to their first country of asylum was the concession that made this possible.¹⁴

Sweden sent delegates to the international conferences that dealt with the Provisional Agreement (1936) and the Convention (1938), but stayed aloof from this international refugee regime. The Swedish government was adamant that it would not tolerate any infringement of its national sovereignty. The Swedish authorities wanted to develop an independent refugee policy, even though the codification of their policy in line with this emerging international law would have changed little. The Swedish authorities adopted an isolationist stand, abhorred by the idea that they

might have to adapt their national legislation to international law.¹⁵ The other Scandinavian countries—Denmark and Norway—signed both the Provisional Agreement and the Convention, but they did not ratify the latter. Hans Uwe Petersen assumes that Denmark did not ratify the Convention because Sweden (and Norway) refused to do so.¹⁶

Another important change on the international scene in the mid-1930s, which eased the position of the political refugees from Germany in the liberal countries of Europe, was that the Soviet Union tried to break its international isolation. This turnabout was at its most spectacular in the Czechoslovak–Soviet Treaty of Alliance of 1935. The Czechoslovakian branch of the communist International Red Aid, which had been banned in 1932, was allowed to resume operations. The patriotic turn of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party improved the respectability of the party, which led to German communist refugees being granted asylum in Czechoslovakia.¹⁷ This patriotic turn was part of the People Front's policy that all communist parties adopted—social democrats were no longer condemned as 'social fascist', but as allies in a broad-based popular front—a new communist strategy that improved their relations with the social democrats and facilitated a liberalization of refugee policy, in particular for communist refugees.

Domestic and international changes in mid-1930s meant that the liberal regimes' refugee policies, which had developed on an ad hoc basis from 1933 onwards, were consolidated. The position of the political refugees from Germany was formally improved. In Belgium and France legislation was introduced that institutionalized refugee policy. Such a domestic legislative innovation was considered possible because the emerging international refugee regime they both subscribed to entailed some notion of sharing the burden placed on them as first countries of asylum. Switzerland already in 1932 had legislated for the separate treatment of asylum seekers, and had given the Federal Prosecutor's Office (Bundesanwaltschaft) eligibility competence. In 1936, the French and Belgian authorities created asylum agencies, which included representatives from pro-refugee organizations and the legal profession, to advise the authorities on an individual basis about the eligibility of asylum seekers.¹⁸

In Sweden, refugee policy also became institutionalized. The Swedish Aliens Act of 1937 stipulated that the situation of those claiming to have fled political persecution, and for whom Sweden was their first safe country of asylum, had to be investigated. Similar to most European countries, the Aliens Department decided whether asylum seekers were to be granted refugee status. Although the concept of the first country of asylum had

persecution compared to that of the Nazis' political opponents. This innovative brand of state persecution—Jews were victims not because of what they did, but because who they were—might explain some of the reluctance to consider them fully fledged political refugees. Jewish refugees were only granted temporary protection to enable them to find a final place of abode elsewhere, preferably overseas.²⁰ The fact that there were a relatively large number of Jewish refugees in 1933 and the manner how Jewish communities conceived of supporting 'their' refugees may also explain their second-class refugee status.

As already noted, much of the business of determining refugee eligibility was subcontracted to private organizations in the 1930s. The Jewish aid organizations that underwrote the costs of the reception of Jewish refugees held the key to protecting them. The Jewish aid organizations had a long tradition of supporting migrants in transit. Since the end of the nineteenth century, West European Jewish communities had supported the westwards movement of East European Jewry, but this was mainly meant to enable these Jews to continue further afield.²¹ The Jewish communities in the liberal countries of Europe agreed to support German Jewish refugees in the 1930s, but only temporarily. Solidarity with the refugees was not to damage the interests of the local Jewish communities. During the depression of the 1930s, the authorities and Jewish communities alike did not want the presence of Jewish refugees to impinge on the economic prospects of the local population. The Jewish organizations undertook the management of the refugee influx and underwrote the financial risks of admitting them until they found a permanent place of abode. The Jewish communities in the countries neighbouring Germany were thus crucial for the reception the Jewish refugees received.

In the 1930s the Jews mostly constituted small minorities in Western Europe. That was particularly the case in Scandinavia. In Sweden, the Jewish community numbered 7,000 members, or a mere 0.1 per cent of the population. In Switzerland there were not many more (18,000). Elsewhere, the Jewish communities were slightly larger. In the Netherlands in 1930, there were 110,000 Jews (1.5 per cent of the population); in Belgium, 70,000 Jews (1 per cent of the population); while the French Jewish community numbered 300,000 members. The composition of these Jewish minorities varied considerably: in Sweden, as in the Netherlands, the community was quite old, while the Belgian, Swiss, and, to a lesser extent, French Jewish communities were composed of mostly first and second generation immigrants from Eastern Europe. The size and rootedness of the Jewish communities in

been used since the beginning of the German refugee crisis, there were, as yet, no internationally accepted criteria by which a country became the first country of asylum and responsible for an asylum seeker on its territory; however, the Swedish Aliens Act stipulated that refugees who could not be certain whether their first country of asylum would not repatriate them could still claim asylum in Sweden. Swedish law introduced clearly the notion of the safe (first) country of asylum. Even more important, the Swedish Aliens Act of 1937 stipulated that asylum seekers could appeal a decision to expel them to the Aliens Department of the Board of Social Affairs in order to safeguard the Swedish tradition of asylum. The semi-independent Aliens Appeals Board (Utlänningsnämnden)—a committee of three nominated by the government, comprising a member of the judiciary, a pro-refugee advocate, and an expert in international law—could verify whether an alien who appealed against a Swedish decision to expel or stop him or her at the border was a refugee. This provision curtailed the executive's administrative discretion in eligibility decisions, making it possible to challenge them on a case-by-case basis.

However, the Aliens Appeals Board took a rather bureaucratic stand, and chose to work using written appeals rather than interviewing the refugees themselves. The lack of activism of this institution made it possible for the Aliens Department of the Board of Social Affairs to pursue its own course. Contrary to developments in Belgium and France, where the asylum agencies were more active, Swedish refugee policy at the end of the 1930s remained firmly in the hands of the executive.¹⁹ Still, the Swedish legislative shift in 1937 seems to have improved the treatment of political refugees, and in particular of communist refugees—developments similar to those in other European countries. In some countries, the creation of an asylum agency brought up the question whether those persecuted in Nazi Germany because of being considered Jews were collectively eligible to be refugees. The authorities in charge of immigration policy and the asylum agency responsible for ensuring immigration policy respected human rights found themselves at loggerheads over the right to determine the answer. In Sweden it seems no such dispute arose.

The challenge of Jewish refugees

From 1933 onwards, Jewish refugees were treated even more restrictively than political refugees, in Sweden as elsewhere. Throughout Western Europe, the victims of the new German regime's antisemitic policies were considered second-rate refugees, a reflection of their as yet milder

their home countries had ramifications for the political and material resources they could mobilize.

Due to its geography, relatively few Jewish refugees from Germany arrived spontaneously in Sweden; their arrival was mostly organized by the Jewish Community, and the authorities consented to the arrival of these invited refugees. Quotas for a mere handful of Jewish refugees had already been introduced in 1933. For German Jews, getting to Sweden (and Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the UK) was an easy matter, as no visa was needed. However, problems arose after the first three months when their stay had to be legalized. For East European Jews in Germany the matter was different: they needed a visa to enter Swedish territory. The Jews who had emigrated from the Tsarist Empire or Romania at the end of the nineteenth century and had settled in Germany, and had even acquired German citizenship, found themselves in the vanguard of the Jewish flight from Nazi Germany in 1933. Those who had been naturalized had to flee as stateless persons as their German citizenship was revoked by the new German regime.²²

The frontline states such as Denmark, the gateway to Scandinavia, and other Continental European countries that shared a border with Germany, felt a stronger pressure on their borders from Jews trying to flee. The porous nature of the borders made these states much less capable of controlling the refugees entering their territory. The 'green' border between Nazi Germany and these countries was difficult to monitor, and those determined to leave Germany could always find a way to cross. Thousands of Jewish refugees turned up uninvited at the Jewish refugee aid organizations in Zurich, Brussels, Paris, and Amsterdam. The authorities of the frontline states wanted those who immigrated illegally to be removed; however, when these German Jews presented themselves in person at the refugee aid committees, the committees considered themselves responsible for those (they considered to be) refugees and tried to legalize their stay. In Sweden, the Jewish committees were in a more comfortable position. To a large extent they could pre-select the refugees they supported. It was more difficult for Jews to flee to Sweden than to Denmark or other countries bordering Germany. Though the Jewish refugee aid committees in Sweden also had to invest some energy in regularizing the stay of uninvited asylum seekers, their political struggle was directed mainly at obtaining quotas for Jews in Germany in danger. The committees gave priority to refugees transiting Sweden.

Sweden and the Jews under mortal threat, 1938-45

From March 1938 onwards the Nazi persecution directed against the Jews escalated, and the number of refugees exploded, while geopolitical changes and the outbreak of war brought ever more Jews under Nazi rule. From 1941 onwards, the Nazi's exclusionary policy transitioned into the murder of the Jews. Jews continued to flee with ever greater determination, but it became almost impossible to escape German-occupied Europe.

A Swedish racist refugee policy, 1938-9

The radicalization in the policy to make Germany 'Judenrein' was first implemented in Austria. A high level of terror, together with bureaucratic collusion, forced nearly 50,000 Jews to leave Austria in the first six months after the 'Anschluss' of 11 March 1938.²³

The arrival of these uninvited and destitute Jews in countries bordering Nazi Germany caused the authorities there to take preventive measures. As a first step, they imposed visa requirements on Austrians as a way of stopping the arrival of Jewish refugees.²⁴ The Swedish authorities also decided to follow suit, although there was little need to. Still, the Swedish decision had important repercussions, because the other Scandinavian countries followed their lead. Since the 'Anschluss', the Danish Chief of Police Eigil Thune Jacobsen had monitored the arrival of Austrians very closely. There had been few arrivals, it turned out, and thus there was no immediate cause for alarm; however, when Sweden, the UK, and Switzerland all decided to impose visa requirements, he felt that Denmark would rise up the list of possible destinations for the refugees, and he argued that Denmark, as the gateway to Scandinavia, faced a heavy responsibility—and in April 1938, a visa obligation for Austrians was imposed.²⁵

The public brutality against the Jews in Germany proper then culminated in the orgy of violence that was 'Kristallnacht' (9-10 November 1938), followed by the incarceration of some 30,000 Jewish men in concentration camps. They were only released in order to leave the country stripped of their belongings. Already on 9 September 1938, the Swedish authorities decided to impose stricter controls on the influx of German Jews. Although Germans did not need a visa to enter Sweden, those whom the border guards suspected of wanting to settle in Sweden were to be refused access unless they had a so-called border recommendation from a Swedish consulate abroad. This implied that Sweden was introducing a quasi-visa for German Jews.²⁶ 'Aryan' Germans could still

travel freely to Sweden. Jews who Sweden would consider protecting had to be pre-selected. The pre-selection criteria used in Sweden were common to all European countries: visas were only granted to those with relatives in the country who were able to put up substantial guarantees that the person in question would not become a burden on public funds. Also those who could move on quickly to a final destination could be granted transit visas.²⁷

The introduction of a quasi-visa for German Jews wanting to enter Sweden forced refugees to pose as travellers or businessmen when they fled. The Swedish border guards, but also the guards in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Denmark (all countries which had had open borders with Germany), had the greatest difficulty in distinguishing between bona fide German travellers and German Jews seeking entry in order to stay, but do it they must. The Swiss and Swedish authorities insisted that the Nazi authorities provided them with technical means to identify (and exclude) German Jews. Although the Nazi authorities realized that this would make it more difficult to get rid of Jews, they conceded, because it was the only way 'Aryan' Germans would remain free from the requirement to obtain a visa. The concession was to introduce a new passport regulation for German Jews, which required that a three-centimetre red 'J' be stamped on the left-hand side of the first page indicating their 'non-Aryan' status.²⁸ The introduction of the J-stamp is a striking example of how liberal countries—in this case Switzerland and Sweden—manoeuvred in order to partly subcontract their selective immigration policy to Germany after the summer of 1938.

Another striking example of the willingness to cooperate with the Germans was the demands from the Swiss and Belgian authorities that the German authorities arrest Jewish would-be immigrants without proper documents in the German border zone. Other countries were more hesitant to call upon the persecuting state to stop the departure of their victims. The Dutch and Danish authorities did not ask for German cooperation in stopping the Jews' flight to their countries, but the J-passports were of great help for their border guards in preventing Jewish refugees from entering their territory.

Although Sweden did not ask the German authorities to stop the departure of undocumented Jewish would-be immigrants, and although it refrained from using the word Jew in the agreement with the German authorities, far-reaching concessions to Nazi racial ideology have been documented. Karin Kvist Geverts shows in this volume that the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs by 1939 used Nazi racial language by not

only asking for the religious affiliation of the visa applicants—a question several European consulates asked by that time of visa applicants from Germany—but also by asking those of the Christian faith which race they belonged to.

The Swedish authorities had already shown little apprehension of the illiberal nature of German racial practices. The Nuremberg Laws (1935), which created the crime of '*Rassenschande*', were in most cases applied fully in Sweden when German citizens wanted to marry. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs stipulated that even Swedish citizens who wished to marry German citizens had to sign a declaration affirming whether or not their grandparents had belonged to the 'Jewish race or religion' in order not to break German racial law. The clergy of the Church of Sweden, who called the bans and conducted the weddings, applied these instructions uncritically, and did not publicly oppose the categorization of people, even those of Christian faith, as part of a Jewish or Aryan race.²⁹ On top of that, the Swedish Alien Census of February 1939, organized by the Board of Social Affairs, used Nazi racial categorization.

That Nazi racist terminology penetrated the top levels of decision-making to quite that extent is exceptional. Although Nazi racial categorization was being used internally in several West European countries, it was not done as openly as in Sweden, and instead instructions were couched in moderate language. Consulates of other Western European countries were told to refuse visas to those applicants who wanted to settle in the country without having enough means to do so using ethnically and racially neutral terms, but in more detailed instructions one can see the use of coded language and even at times the term 'non-Aryan'. The Nazi crime of '*Rassenschande*' was considered not applicable in several countries, especially if one of the spouses was a national. Public order concerns were invoked in order to avoid using the German racial legislation. However, the Swedish authorities and church gave an unrestrained extraterritorial effect to the Nazi racial laws, and this was publicly not contested at all.³⁰

The Swedish concern with cultural homogeneity that had been expressed in antisemitic terms before 1933 was translated into exclusionary practices using Nazi racial categories. This straightforward adoption of Nazi racial categories in public policy was reminiscent of the radicalism of Sweden's population policy in general, in which the authorities did not refrain from far-reaching interventions to influence the make-up of the population of Sweden. Thus in the 1930s, Swedes who were considered mentally or socially deficient were sterilized, at times by force.³¹

The introduction of a quasi-visa for German Jews was meant to pre-select the Jewish refugees admitted to Sweden. Immediately after the 'Kristallnacht' the solidarity that the general public expressed towards the Jews in Germany prompted the authorities in most Western European countries to agree to a larger effort for the Jews. Only Swiss policy remained strictly on the course set before November 1938; all other countries showed a greater generosity, and in particular more refugees in transit were allowed to wait in safety for a final emigration visa and the departure of their ship. While the Dutch government agreed to admit 7,000 Jews temporarily, the Swedish effort was limited first to a mere 40 additional refugees, admitted at one time, a quota which was increased to 150.³² The greater generosity of the Dutch towards (adult) refugees in transit soon disappeared when it became apparent that it was extremely difficult to get watertight guarantees that such refugees would receive all the necessary papers to move on. The Netherlands as well as other countries curtailed their facilities for transit refugees by the turn of the year; only the UK agreed to a larger intake of privately sponsored Jewish refugees.³³ Sweden stuck to a quota of 150 transit migrants (besides the quotas already decided), which benefited about a 1,000 Jews.

Another rescue initiative was directed at unaccompanied Jewish children. In November 1938, Jewish refugee organizations convinced various Western European governments to make children eligible for admission. Sweden, Switzerland, and France took in a few hundred children each; Belgium and Denmark, a thousand apiece; the Dutch, two thousand children; and the UK fully ten thousand children.³⁴

The ungenerous attitude of the Swedish authorities towards the Jews in serious danger from 1938 onwards contrasts with a proactive refugee policy towards political refugees. The dismemberment of Czechoslovakia gave the impetus for a Europe-wide, proactive refugee policy. No longer was refugee policy dealing only with those immigrants who arrived uninvited in the country; selecting those in danger abroad for resettlement also became a task of the authorities. The Sudeten German refugees were the main beneficiaries of this. While Sweden granted 370 Sudeten German refugees permission to enter the country, France issued 100 visas, Belgium 253, Denmark 163, and Norway 200. Being a deserving refugee qualifying for these visa did not always refer to the danger one was exposed to. Jews were excluded altogether from this proactive refugee policy, and Belgium, Sweden, and Denmark refused to grant communists such visas.³⁵

By July 1939 there were about 4,500 refugees in Sweden, about two-thirds of them Jews. When we compare the refugee population in Sweden

with other European countries at the time—the UK had about 78,000 refugees, Belgium 22,000, Switzerland 8,000, and in all three countries 90 per cent of the refugees were Jews—the Swedish refugee policy, with its anti-Jewish selectiveness, is revealed in all its stinginess.³⁶ In Belgium the government had even agreed with the Jewish aid committees in April 1939 to share the costs for the upkeep of 7,000 Jewish refugees. The Swedish (and Swiss) authorities had agreed to co-finance refugee relief, while elsewhere the costs of refugees' relief remained solely a matter for charitable organizations. The Swedish (and certainly Swiss) public funds were not meant to increase the capacity of the refugee committees to support refugees, but rather to finance the emigration of refugees. By offering financial aid, the authorities aimed at putting pressure on the refugees, sometimes also including the political activists, to move on.³⁷

The Swedish war record, 1939–45

From April 1940 onwards a green border existed between German-occupied Europe and Sweden. Jews from Norway made use of this permeable border to seek protection in Sweden. Initially, in 1941 and early 1942, it seems the Swedish authorities were not eager to let Jews from Norway enter.³⁸ Information on the Nazi deportation of Norwegian Jews from October 1942 onwards made the urgency of their situation more obvious. From then on the Swedish authorities developed a proactive refugee policy. That the Norwegian Jews were considered part of the Nordic nation, albeit with some reservations, and that their costs were covered by the Norwegian government in exile, added to the Swedes' willingness to protect them. The reception of about 1,100 Jewish refugees from Norway added considerably to the refugee population. Before the planned deportations from Denmark in October 1943, the 8,000 Jews in that country were invited to flee by the Swedish government, and they crossed the Sound.

Klas Åmark indicates in this volume that the Swedish political elite mobilized resources for such rescue operations. Resources put at the disposal of a proactive and well-organized Swedish public emergency administration contributed strongly to an increased capacity for large-scale humanitarian operations. In the summer of 1943 a few thousand gentle, Swedish-speaking Estonians were shipped to Sweden in accordance with an agreement with the German leadership. The number of gentle Baltic refugees would rise to 25,000 by the end of 1944, mainly through the spontaneous flight of entire families. Once in Sweden, Baltic

men were recruited to the forestry industry in remote areas to maintain essential fuel supplies.³⁹ Later, the well-organized reception of 30,000 Jewish camp inmates from Germany in 1945 was possible because this strengthened Swedish state power was matched with a new readiness to use it to aid Jews, even those without Scandinavian roots. The epitome of all this was the Hungarian operation under Raoul Wallenberg. Paul Levine makes clear in this volume that he did not act on his own behalf, but had a Swedish public mandate to perform this US-initiated mission to protect Hungarian Jews on the spot in Budapest.⁴⁰

Humanitarian and political considerations explain this enthusiasm for helping Jewish survivors. The Swedish authorities wanted to improve Sweden's reputation among the Western Allies, tarnished by its overly close collaboration with Germany. The military tipping-point in the autumn of 1942 left Sweden eager to show its loyalty to the new victors. To which extent was this more generous policy of the Swedish political elite also the work of the Jewish community? Malin Thor Tureby points out in this volume that in the Swedish public discourse, Jews were only one of the many groups of war victims, but that in Swedish Jewish public narratives the Jewish victims figure prominently. To what extent was the Swedish Jewish community able to convince the authorities of the mortal danger to Jewish existence in Europe, and why were no more escape routes opened for Jews in Europe during the war?

The extent to which the Jewish organizations in Western European countries defended the interests of the Jews in need of protection was dependent on the financial and political means of the rescuers and their ability to use them for the sake of protection for Jews—and, of course, the political process in which the Jewish committees had to operate. The political clout of a Jewish community or its individual members, its wealth and a readiness to share it were important in understanding this relief effort and its effectiveness in influencing state policy.

In the Swedish case, Pontus Rudberg points to the close collaboration between the authorities and the Jewish community as represented by the refugee aid organization, the Jewish Community of Stockholm (JFST). In the 1930s, this refugee committee to a large extent selected who was to be included in the official quotas. However, the sizes of the quotas were the authorities' decision. Rudberg states that the committee's demand to increase the quota was not met, and goes on to demonstrate that the accusations made immediately after the war that the JFST had hindered the rescue of Jews were unfounded. However, he is not concerned with the efforts of the JFST to increase quotas, or with its opposition to the

racial practices of the Swedish state, a topic that has been neglected in the research until now. Could the JFST aid committee have lobbied harder for a more generous Swedish refugee policy? From 1938 onwards, all things considered, one can say that the Belgian and French Jews did their utmost to protect Jews fleeing Nazi Germany, while the Dutch, Danish, and Swiss Jews did less.⁴¹ How far did Swedish Jews restrain themselves from lobbying hard for fear of stirring up antisemitism that might endanger their own position? What was their input in the decision to rescue Norwegian, Danish, and Hungarian Jews, and in the reception of survivors after the war? The questions remain open whether the Swedish-Jewish community used its financial and political capacities to the full in order to save their fellow Jews.⁴²

Still, during the war the authorities in Sweden became more generous to refugees. The Swedish change of heart is also to be seen in its welfare policy. Refugees were considered to be solely the responsibility of private philanthropy in the 1930s—even if many of the refugees were able to get paid employment from the mid-1930 onwards—and Swedish public support for refugees through the refugee relief organizations from July 1939 onwards was largely meant to assist refugees to leave. Mikael Byström points out in this volume that direct and individual assistance to refugees in Sweden became a public matter from 1941 onwards. In Swedish welfare policy, refugees became a category distinct from other aliens. Refugees were considered *de facto* citizens—members of the Swedish welfare community. The hard-pressed economic situation in which the refugees found themselves meant that they even could receive more substantial help than a Swedish citizen could expect. The exceptional circumstances of the war explain this generosity: refugees in Sweden were there to stay, as during the war they had nowhere else to go. Were the refugees during the war considered just temporary guests in need, or was this a precursor of the later social citizenship of denizens? Only in the winter of 1945–6 did the resettlement of Baltic and Jewish refugees come to the fore, as it turned out that most of these refugees were not willing to be repatriated. During the war and the immediate aftermath, they had been considered as a labour reserve for those jobs where too few Swedish workers were available. They had been mainly employed in agriculture and forestry, sectors where manpower was in short supply because of military conscription and the better working conditions in industry. A corporatist state agency organized their labour input, and refugees were thus mobilized for national interests.

Economic and political interests, but mainly pressure on its borders

and a humanitarian willingness to help Scandinavians in danger—and in 1944–5 even people without Scandinavian roots—facilitated by a state capacity to accommodate large number of refugees, explain the Swedish wartime record, which was considerably more generous than its pre-war efforts. However, it is astonishing that so few Central and East European Jews made it to Sweden during the war, given the determination with which thousands of Jews escaped to Switzerland and the Iberian peninsula in the same period. Was the passage through German-controlled Norway and Denmark or the Baltic Sea crossing that much more difficult than passing through Germany itself or German-occupied France? Why were there no escape routes from Germany or Poland to Sweden similar to the networks that helped Jews to flee across the Pyrenees? Was it merely geographical accident, or were more fugitives stopped from departing for Sweden by a more efficient German control apparatus or by an illiberal image of Sweden? Did fugitives consider their chances of survival higher by heading west than north? Whatever the answer, during the war the Swedish authorities did not consider assisting those willing to organize such escape routes, with the sole exception of the Danish Jews.

Immigration to post-war Sweden

The three decades after the Second World War were a period of unprecedented economic growth. Due to the division of Europe in two blocs, labour migration from Eastern Europe was halted. The core countries of Western Europe tapped labour reserves in the South of Europe and from their former colonies. The war had created a mass of refugees, but after 1949 only a trickle of refugees still arrived in the West. Only in the 1970s would refugees again become a political issue.

Cold-war concerns

After the Second World War, Sweden found itself in a new geopolitical position. Sweden advocated an independent and neutral Scandinavian bloc in the new post-war world. To develop this independent stand, but also to counter claims that Sweden had maintained overly friendly relations with Nazi Germany during the Second World War, it had to be very considerate of the interests of all victorious allies, including the Soviet Union. This stand demanded strategic concessions, and the refugees who the Soviet Union laid claim to ultimately paid the price.

Immediately after the victory against the Nazis, the international

political climate was not prepared to acknowledge that Soviet citizens displaced by the war had legitimate reasons not to return. The American and British authorities were willing to honour the Soviet claims, but with some restrictions. At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, the Allies decided that all their citizens displaced by the war would be repatriated, if necessary by force. The Soviet authorities counted as their citizens all people resident within Soviet borders on 22 June 1941, the day of the German attack. The Western Allies, however, did not accept the annexation of new territories by the Soviet Union in the first stage of the Second World War. This meant that only the citizens who had lived within Soviet borders before 1 September 1939, the day when the Second World War started, could be considered Soviet citizens. At Yalta, the Western Allies had exempted the citizens of the former Baltic states—Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia—from forced repatriation.⁴³ Between May and October 1945 all Western Allies repatriated Soviet citizens, occasionally by force.

As Cecilia Notini Burch shows in this volume, Sweden went further than the Western Allies, as it agreed in the winter of 1945–6 to the forced repatriations of almost all 'Soviet' citizens, including former Baltic citizens, who had been in German military service and in the wake of the war had found themselves on Swedish territory. Sweden, although not allied to the Soviet Union, on important issues conceded to Soviet demands but refused to repatriate the large groups of civilian former Baltic citizens who had arrived in 1944–45.

Gradually the cold war changed the official Western attitude towards Soviet displaced persons in the Western zone. From October 1945 onwards, Soviet repatriations from the American zone in Germany were only voluntary (with a few clearly defined exceptions), and by June 1946 also the British forces had ceased using force. Shortly afterwards, in December 1946, the International Refugee Organization (IRO) was created, which institutionalized the cold war refugee regime. This new organization, opposed by the Soviet Union and its allies, drove a wedge between the Eastern and Western blocs. From then on, most Soviet and East European displaced persons could claim protection by invoking fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion.

The cold war meant that it became very difficult for Sweden to retain its neutral geopolitical position. Its dream of being part of an independent alliance with the other Scandinavian countries was shattered. Finland became part of the Soviet sphere of influence, from 1948 formally so. In 1949, as Norway and Denmark joined the NATO, Sweden remained the only Scandinavian state that, at least formally, held to a neutral stance.

1960s respectively. Employers preferred no state involvement as it made the recruitment process bureaucratic and costly, and evidently implied also a loss of power, as they needed the consent of the state (and eventually the unions) to recruit foreign labour. State-controlled labour migration regimes such as that in Sweden offered advantages for labour, as it granted all workers—newcomers included—fair pay and working conditions, but it deprived foreign labour of their initial freedom of movement in the labour market. The inflow of labour migrants was regulated so as to improve economic performance without hurting national labour. This implied that in case of redundancy foreign workers were the first to be dismissed, and they were forbidden to work in sectors reserved for the national workforce. If foreign workers competed with national labour, they had to leave. This labour migration regime had economic costs, but the enforced flexibility of the foreign workforce had political and economic advantages.

After the Second World War, the expanding role of the state and trade unions in the Swedish economy did not translate into corporatist control of labour immigration. Labour migration from Finland was liberalized, and immigration from third countries was only organized to a limited extent. As Johan Svanberg shows in this volume, Swedish workers and their trade unions to a certain extent still controlled immigrants' labour market integration, locally at least. Non-Nordic immigrants, mostly Germans, tended to make their own way to Sweden, and their stay in the country was strongly monitored by the state. The new Aliens Act of 1945 ensured a centralized and discretionary control over all foreign nationals in Sweden. During a long probation, aliens remained in Sweden wholly at the state's discretion. Short-term residence permits, sometimes with geographical restrictions, ensured that aliens kept to the terms imposed by the Swedish authorities. It seems the authorities did not set a clear timetable for the acquisition of the right to reside in Sweden: they did not want to be pinned down to a clear procedure. A five-year residence permit was the closest one could get to the right to reside in Sweden. Immigrants never became migrants with leave to remain. The objectives of the Swedish alien policy as outlined in the essays by Cecilia Notini Burch and Artilla Lajos were threefold: the already mentioned security aims, but also economic and cultural objectives.

Similar to West European countries, foreign labour in Sweden had a replacement function and served as an economic buffer, expanding in times of economic boom, and as a shock absorber in times of recession. In this volume this is illustrated by Artilla Lajos in a case-study of workers

Soon Sweden allied itself clearly with the Western bloc, becoming a de facto Western state on the frontline of the Soviet sphere of influence.

Cecilia Notini Burch in her essay shows that Swedish immigration policy served strong anti-Soviet security concerns. Refugees from Eastern Europe, and in particular from the Soviet Union, were suspected of being Soviet agents. With the increasing tensions between the West and the East, the danger of a fifth column became increasingly important in Sweden's alien policy. Soviet asylum seekers were put on a nearly life-long probation. Other Western European countries were equally mistrustful of asylum seekers from the Eastern bloc: in the Netherlands, for example, starting in 1953, East European asylum seekers, mainly Polish sailors, were interned to see whether they were spies, in a security check that could take up to a year.⁴⁴ The rights of the individual, cherished by liberalism, were sacrificed to the security state.

Market-driven labour immigration

The post-war boom meant that immigration was looked upon more positively, for it provided the labour-hungry economy with extra hands. In the 1950s, Sweden was able to cope with labour shortages by tapping the labour reserves in Finland, a country considered culturally close. Through the Nordic labour market set up in 1954, Finnish labour migration to Sweden became formally unregulated. With immigrating Norwegians and Danes too, the labour needs of the Swedish industrial complex were thus met in an informal manner similar to the UK, which, since the nineteenth century, had tapped Ireland's labour reserves. Even once they were citizens of the Irish Free State, the Irish remained British subjects until 1949, when the Republic left the Commonwealth, and even after 1949 there were no border controls between the UK and the Republic.⁴⁵ In Sweden, as in the UK, there was no substantial third-country labour migration until the mid-1960s, but the UK—in contrast to Sweden, which had no colonies—saw considerable colonial immigration. Sweden, with its nearly exclusively Nordic migration, remained largely an ethnically homogenous society. Most other Western European countries had from the beginning of the twentieth century called on 'strangers' from abroad to supplement their workforces. By the 1930s in Switzerland, France, and Belgium, the state decided about the inflow of immigrants, taking into account the interests of the employers and the national workforce. After the Second World War, the latter was represented by the unions in France and Belgium, but this union influence waned in the 1950s and

recruited by Swedish employers in Hungary in 1947. This recruitment was the last convulsion of Western Europe's massive recruitment in Eastern Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. This demographic hinterland of the Western economy was closed off for nearly half a century as the cold war cut Western Europe off from Eastern Europe (with the exception of Yugoslavia).

Sweden was probably the last country to recruit labour in Eastern Europe (Hungary), but the other sources of Sweden's foreign labour—Italy, and the refugee camps in Austria and Germany—were the places where Western European industry and agriculture, mostly under supervision of the state, recruited foreign labour during the second half of the 1940s and the 1950s. The use of refugee labour clashed with a manpower policy geared to the interests of national labour. Displaced persons were searching for a new home, not the temporary, second-rate jobs which immigration policies reserved for them, and their resettlement turned out to be difficult to combine with guest-worker policies.⁴⁶ Sweden found this out too with its Hungarian workers. When the communists seized power in Hungary in 1949, the Hungarian workers in Sweden lost the much-desired flexibility of foreign labour. As Attila Lajos shows, the Swedish authorities realized that they had to accept the Hungarians working in Sweden as citizens with free access to the labour market. This concession to refugee labour heralded the international refugee regime of which Sweden became a strong advocate—one that placed refugees in a privileged immigrant category, with rights that were not curtailed to fit the strict economic interests of the receiving state.

Another objective of Sweden's alien policy was to assimilate aliens into the Swedish way of life and not to jeopardize the cultural status quo. An important element in the defining characteristics of the Swedish nation was its working ethos, and this also entailed exclusionary practices towards Swedes, let alone foreigners. Aliens had to behave appropriately. An improper work ethic, criminal behaviour, homosexuality, alcoholism, 'antisocial' behaviour of any kind: an alien (who by definition was on probation) who did anything of the kind in the 1950s, would find that five-year residence permit, postponed time and again, if the applicant was not simply expelled.⁴⁷

Labour needs became paramount in Swedish migration control in the 1960s. While in the 1950s, Germans constituted the largest non-Nordic labour migration to Sweden in the 1960s, non-Nordic labour migration originated mainly from Yugoslavia, Greece, and Turkey, countries with which Sweden had agreements on labour immigration. The decision to

open the Swedish borders in 1965 in response to a feared labour shortage resulted in a considerable labour inflow, which then was perceived as alarming. The state again took it upon itself to organize labour immigration, again in cooperation with the unions. From 1967 onwards, (non-Nordic) foreigners wanting to work in Sweden (and thus employers wanting to hire foreign labour) had to obtain work permits *before* arrival. This corporatist labour migration implied that foreigners were to expect the same pay and conditions as Swedish workers, and could only immigrate when there was a consensus that there was a need for additional hands. The Swedish trade unions felt confident that those labour migrants whose arrival they had agreed to were structurally needed. They considered them an integral part of the Swedish working class and their unions. As an indication of their acceptance in Sweden as future citizens, they became fully fledged members of the Swedish welfare community. If fired, foreign workers were no longer deported, but were to enjoy the same unemployment benefits as all other union members. Those recruited were soon, within one or two years of arrival, given a permanent residence permit. Only those who committed a crime or voluntarily left the country for a long period could lose this permit.⁴⁸

Shortly after this (liberal) migrant policy was launched, immigration policy became much more strict. While it became much more difficult to enter Sweden as a labour migrant, the migrants became the subject of a new state policy. From the 1970s onwards, the authorities embarked on a programme to educate, inform, and *integrate* migrants into the Swedish way of life. The concomitant multicultural discourse seems only to have paid lip service to the immigrants' interests. The Swedish People's Home did not change into a Peoples' Home, where the culture of the ethnic minorities was fully accepted. As Jesper Johansson argues in this volume, integration was a mainly union-driven strategy to make immigrants adapt to the world-view of the organized Swedish worker. Social engineering mechanisms became more refined than the mere withholding of a permanent residence permits, as seen in the 1950s. Christina Johansson even argues in this volume that policymakers aimed in the 1970s to eradicate the linguistic, religious, and cultural 'deviance' of migrants in order to keep the Swedish nation homogenous.

Similar ambitions are to be found in the immigration policies of other European states and political actors, but the Swedish close monitoring of its aliens in the 1950s and early 1960s, taken with the early and intensive investment in integration policy, seems to be exceptional in an European perspective.⁴⁹ The change in Swedish policy after 1965 to accept its badly

needed additional workforce as quasi-citizens or denizens is also evident in other European countries of the same date. The harsh guest-workers policy of the late 1940s, where foreign labour was relegated for a long time, if necessary by force, to a secondary labour market, had been softened considerably across Western Europe by the 1960s. Other West European states also opened their welfare community to immigrants.⁵⁰ Swedish developments in the management of labour migration were thus not that exceptional.

However, the Swedish policy turn was far more pronounced, and had far more repercussions on immigration. The Swedish capitalist economy was organized along corporatist lines, and unregulated immigration from third countries was marginal. The early universal system of personal identification was instrumental in assuring that Sweden hardly knew unregulated foreign labour beyond the Nordic labour. More importantly, state control remained very effective, as the unions were able to exercise considerable, institutionalized, social control over the labour market. Even outside the union strongholds, it was barely possible for a third-country national to find a job without the consent of the state. In the high growth economy of other Western Europe countries, the employers' lobby could relinquish corporatist or merely state control of the labour market as they considered the labour shortages even beyond heavy industry and agriculture to be acute. The resistance of the guest-workers themselves and the political power of the emigration states, and in particular Italy, due to fiercer competition for Europe's labour reserves, as well as European economic and political integration (the EEC) also served to loosen the grip on the labour market position of immigrants. By European standards the effectiveness of Swedish alien control was exceptional.⁵¹

Dutiful observance of the international refugee regime

At the end of the 1940s, all Western countries favoured international action on behalf of those residing in Western Europe for whom no state assumed responsibility. There were still several hundred thousands of refugees, mainly in occupied Germany, for whom no solution had been found. A new refugee definition was negotiated under the auspices of the UN. The IRO definition was the basis of this negotiation, and an open-ended refugee definition was duly adopted. The Soviet bloc remained hostile to refugee protection. The Geneva Convention of 1951 would determine refugee policy for the second half of the twentieth century

and into the twenty-first century; in 1951, few would have thought it would last that long.⁵²

Within the Western bloc there was no consensus on the scope and nature of refugee protection. The US feared being drawn into open-ended obligations to refugees, and favoured a restrictive definition: obligations to refugees should be restricted by only taking into account refugees created by events in Europe (the geographical limitation) and prior to January 1951 (the time limitation). France too preferred a narrow mandate of the international refugee regime, as it wanted to preserve its national sovereignty and keep its power over communist refugees intact; it also wanted to restrain the competition that refugee labour threatened to bring to the French labour market.⁵³ Neither the US nor France wanted to sign a blank cheque, and they partly carried the day, for, as adopted, the Geneva Convention had the time clause and undertook no obligations toward future refugees, the origin and number of whom would be unknown; where they were less successful was the geographical limitation, as the Convention of 1951 left it to every contracting party to state the choice of restriction, whether events 'occurring in Europe' or elsewhere. Benelux, the UK, and the Scandinavian countries supported a comprehensive and expansive refugee definition. The 1951 Convention defined a refugee as a person who, as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951, left his country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group.⁵⁴ Sweden had an important input in this definition, as it had proposed the 'social group' element, for reasons that are unclear.⁵⁵

The treaty hardly intruded upon national sovereignty. The signatories only conceded to the principle of non-refoulement: states were not forced to grant asylum to refugees, but those who signed the convention could not send a refugee back to the persecuting state. As noted, the Refugee Convention was also intended to promote the socio-economic integration of refugees in the host society. The articles on freedom of employment, which obliged signatories to remove employment controls after three years of residence, cut across the states' sovereign powers to direct refugee labour in the labour market. Sweden was among the first countries to ratify the Geneva Convention and to incorporate it into national legislation in 1954.⁵⁶ Swedish adherence to the international refugee regime stands in stark contrast to its isolationist policy in the 1930s. Still, joining the international refugee regime had little direct impact on Swedish immigration policy, as very few asylum seekers made their way

to Sweden. Until the mid-1970s, most of Sweden's Convention refugees were invited refugees of European extraction who entered as UNHCR quota refugees. Refugee migration was thus a largely controlled migration.

From the mid-1970s onwards, the flow of spontaneous refugees as well as follow-on migration jeopardized the post-war set-up. External controls were not able to keep them out. Asylum-seekers fleeing collective violence (war refugees) and other kinds of persecution who did not qualify as Convention refugees were in Sweden considered to be *de facto* refugees and were granted B-status. The highly organized Swedish society seemed not to permit an informal solution for refugees who were considered ineligible for protection under the Refugee Convention, but could not be repatriated. Elsewhere in Western Europe, these *de facto* refugees were merely tolerated. The tolerance—and in Sweden, the full protection—shown to non-Convention refugees came thanks to humanitarianism. Pragmatic considerations and a legal obligation⁵⁷ deriving from the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), which the European states, including Sweden, had subscribed to, also explain this additional refugee protection.⁵⁸ Only at the beginning of the twenty-first century, under German pressure, would a solution for non-Convention refugees be found within the EU with subsidiary protection, the legal status introduced by European law in 2004 for victims of general violence and others protected by the European Convention on Human rights, filling the gap in the protection provided by the Geneva Convention by institutionalizing subsidiary protection as part of European law.⁵⁹ As Zeki Yalcin shows in this volume, the Swedish unions in the 1970s and early 1980s considered any immigrant, refugee or not, as adding to the competition in the labour market. They opposed a generous eligibility policy for both Convention refugees and *de facto* refugees, and they advocated a remote refugee policy and a return to a cultural exclusionism in order to stop unregulated labour migration. Yet, despite this, Sweden remained a generous recipient of refugees, which shows that the corporatist Swedish polity had lost much of its political clout.

Conclusion

Sweden's history with immigrants and refugees in the twentieth century was one of responding to the same developments seen in other West European countries. Sweden's culturally homogeneous population perforce gave way to a culturally more diverse population. While Sweden, in contrast to the Netherlands, France, and the UK, had no postcolonial immigration, the

cultural diversity of its contemporary population, much like Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland, is mainly the result of economic migration. The main impetus in Swedish immigration was the labour needs of its high-growth post-war economy. A particular characteristic of Swedish policy that this volume highlights is its concern with cultural homogeneity. The Swedish state gave itself large powers to select immigrants, but also to mould them in the national self-image. Until the 1960s this was mostly achieved by disciplinary and stigmatizing measures. In its immigrant policy, the Swedish state was quite happy to sacrifice liberal values and individual interests to what it considered to be the public good. In the 1970s, this policy was softened, but its so-called multicultural policy seems paradoxically to have served largely the same objectives—to prop up the cultural status quo.

It was only in the mid-1960s that large numbers of non-Nordic migrants began to arrive in Sweden. This brings us to the second particular feature of Sweden's twentieth-century history: its ability to manage immigration. Due to its geographical location, Swedish immigration control during the last century was mainly based on external obstacles and remote controls, and was thus very effective. The few refugees who entered the country were kept track of by an efficient control system, itself part of a highly organized society. It was only in 1938, as antisemitic persecution accelerated beyond all recognition in Nazi Germany, that migration pressure built up at the Swedish border, but never to the point of total collapse. The Swedish authorities succeeded then in a brutal manner in preventing Jewish refugees from entering in larger numbers. The refugees from Nazi Germany who were authorized to enter the country at the end of the 1930s remained a select number, who were mostly only tolerated in Sweden pending their departure overseas. Overall, until the 1960s, few foreign nationals came to live in Sweden, and when large numbers of non-Nordic migrants did begin to arrive in the mid-1960s, the Swedish state took it upon itself, where additional labour was needed, to organize their immigration. Even in the 1960s and 1970s, most refugees did not come spontaneously to Sweden to seek protection, but came in resettlement operations organized by the Swedish authorities.

During the 1930s, Sweden refused to commit itself to the incipient international refugee regime as the authorities feared that they would have to loosen immigration control. For all those reasons, refugees could hardly impose themselves on the Swedish authorities. The message that the Swedish authorities were determined to keep (Jewish) refugees out of the country seem to have been clearly received among the victims in Germany. At a time

when Jews in Germany were ready to go anywhere, Sweden seems not to have been considered a safe destination. The Swedish authorities succeeded in controlling the flight of refugees from Nazi Germany to their country where many other European states failed to do so. From the end of 1942, this changed, but the escape of refugees from Norway and Denmark was even co-organized by the Swedish authorities. Not only humanitarian, but also diplomatic reasons spoke in favour of this organized rescue action. Still, partly due to geographical factors, wartime Sweden did not experience the kind of pressure that a country like Switzerland did. It was only in the last quarter of the twentieth century, when the world had become a bit smaller, that Sweden was to lose some control over its borders.

Sweden also lost, again by its own making, its position as an island in Europe. The fact that Sweden adhered to international norms diminished its power over immigration. The international refugee regime that Sweden signed up to in 1954 and the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), combined with its self-image and reputation, forced the Swedish nation-state to relinquish some of its sovereignty in the matter of immigration. Most important here is the globalization process and the dramatically increased mobility it has brought. Once distant from the most frequented European mobility routes, Sweden's geopolitical position is no longer a protection against uninvited immigration. Its once strictly regulated labour market, under the relentless pressure of the new division of labour, has given way to a more liberal economy with more opportunities for uninvited immigrants. And in so doing, Sweden has lost its distinctive character.

Notes

- 1 Switzerland too was neutral, of course. Several essays in this volume compare the Swedish war experience of refugees with the Swiss one. In this comparative essay, I position the Swedish experience within Western European history.
- 2 I refer here to political liberalism, with its strong focus on the importance of individual freedom and equal rights. Political liberalism is distinct from economic liberalism, which promotes free markets.
- 3 Tomas Hammar, 'Sweden', in id. (ed.), *European Immigration Policy*, Cambridge 1985, 26–8; Frantisek Hudec, 'Asyl in Schweden. Von den Anfängen der Ausländerkontrolle bis heute (1906–1992)', in Carsten Goehrke & Werner G. Zimmermann (eds.), *Zusflucht Schweiz. Der Umgang mit Asylproblemen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Zürich 1994, 523–9; Ingar Swanberg & Mattias Tydén, *Tusen år av invandring. En svensk kulturhistoria*, Stockholm 2005, 277.
- 4 On the construction of the Nazis' racial categorizations, such as Jew and Aryan, which were and are not at all transparent and self-evident, see Cornelia Esser, *Die*

'Nürnberger Gesetz' oder die Verwaltung des Rassenwahns 1933–1945, Paderborn 2002; and David Fraser, 'Aryan and Jew in the Nazi Rechtsstaat', in Pheng Cheah, David Fraser & Judith Grbich (eds.), *Thinking Through the Body of the Law*, Sydney 1996, 63–79.

- 5 Bundesarchiv, Berlin (BArch), R58 (Reichsicherheitshauptamt), 3426a, Memorandum des Vorstandes der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschland (Sitz Prag) zur Frage der politischen Flüchtlinge, November 1933; ibid., (Reichsicherheitshauptamt), 3426b, Report on the meeting of the International Matteotti committee, 1934 (December 1933), mentions 8721 German refugees of socialist leaning in European countries, of which only 5 per cent were living in Scandinavia, probably mostly in Denmark.
- 6 Carola Tischler, *Flucht in die Verfolgung. Deutsche Emigranten in sowjetischen Exil 1933 bis 1945*, Münster 1996, 97.
- 7 Helmut Müssemer, 'Die deutschsprachige Emigration in Schweden nach 1933. Ihre Geschichte und kulturelle Leistung', unpublished undergraduate diss., Uppsala University, 1971, 125. For Continental Europe, see Frank Caestecker & Bob Moore, 'A comparative analysis of immigration policies of liberal states in Western Europe and the flight from Nazi Germany', in eid. (eds.), *Refugees from Nazi Germany and the liberal states of Europe, 1933–1939*, New York 2010, 193–326.
- 8 Jan Peters, *Exilland Schweden. Deutsche und schwedische Antifaschisten 1933–1945*, Berlin (East) 1984, 62–4. I am grateful to Pär Frohnert for sharing insights on communist refugees from his forthcoming book.
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- 34 Claudia Curio, 'Were unaccompanied child refugees a privileged class of refugees in the liberal states of Europe?', in Caestecker & Moore 2010, 169–89; BAArch, R58 (Reichssicherheitshauptamt), 8150, Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland, Organisation und Auswanderung 1933 bis 1941; Central Archives for the History of the Jewish people, Jerusalem, A/W 165, 3, Bericht der Israel. Kultusgemeinde Wien, 1–25 March 1939.
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