

**ASSETS AND LIABILITIES:
REFUGEES FROM HUNGARY AND EGYPT
IN FRANCE AND IN BRITAIN,
1956-1960**

ALEXANDRE DE ARANJO

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the reception and treatment of the refugees from Hungary and Egypt who arrived in France and in Britain after the Hungarian revolution and the Suez crisis. The thesis argues that the reception of the refugees from Hungary and from Egypt was primarily linked to the French and British immigration policies and influenced by the Cold War context.

The first part deals with the creation of the Hungarian refugees and their reception in France and Britain. Chapter two gives a brief account on the Hungarian revolution and what led 200,000 Hungarians to leave their country. Chapter three deals with the reception and treatment of the Hungarian refugees in France, and sets out to demonstrate how the revolution and the refugee situation were first exploited for propagandistic purposes and national political interests. It also examines immigration policy in France and how the Hungarians were to serve France's economic and demographic interests as candidates for immigration. French-Jewish responses to the refugee situation are also explored. Finally, it discusses the effects of the Cold War in the resettlement process. Chapter four explores similar questions about the Hungarians with respect to Britain.

The second part of the thesis studies the expulsion of the French, British and stateless Jews from Egypt and their resettlement in France and Britain. Chapter five deals with who the refugees from Egypt were, and the unusual nature of their nationality and cultural background. Chapter six deals with the reception

and treatment of refugees from Egypt in France, and focuses on how the French government and administration oscillated between obligation and desire to provide relief to the French Jews of Egypt, as they were not considered to be suitable candidates for resettlement in France according to immigration policies and practices. As most of the refugees from Egypt were Jewish, the chapter also looks at the Jewish specificity of the resettlement policy and how their resettlement made the refugees question their French identity. Chapter seven discusses the reception of the refugees from Egypt in Britain. It analyses the different domestic context regarding the Suez crisis and its impact on the refugees. The question of identity and cultural background is also explored.

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Abbreviations

AEAS: Anglo-Egyptian Aid Society
AERB: Anglo-Egyptian Resettlement Board
AIU: Alliance Israélite Universelle
AVH: Államvédelmi Hatóság
AVO: Államvédelmi Osztály
BCAR: British Council for Aid to Refugees
CAB: Citizens' Advice Bureau
CBF: Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief
CFTC: Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens
CGT-FO: Confédération Générale du Travail - Force Ouvrière
CIMADE: Comité Inter-Mouvements Auprès des Evacués
CNARH: Comité National d'Accueil des Réfugiés Hongrois
CNPf: Conseil National du Patronat Français
COJASOR: Comité Juif d'Action Sociale et de Reconstruction
CPGB: Communist Party of Great Britain
CRF: Croix Rouge Française
EVW: European Voluntary Workers
FLN: Front de Libération Nationale
FSJU: Fonds Social Juif Unifié
HIAS: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
HLM: Habitation à Loyer Modéré
ICEM: Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration
IFR: International Federation of Resistance Fighters
JTS: Jews' Temporary Shelter
MEFESZ: League of Hungarian University Students
NAB: National Assistance Board
NCB: National Coal Board
NUM: National Union of Mineworkers
OFPRA: Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides
ONI: Office National de l'Immigration
PCF: Parti Communiste Français
PEP: Political and Economic Planning
RFE: Radio Free Europe
RG: Renseignements Généraux
SFIO: Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière
SSAE: Service Social d'Aide aux Emigrants
TUC: Trades Union Congress
UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WJC: World Jewish Congress
WRAC: Women's Royal Army Corps
WVS: Women's Voluntary Service

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1. Introduction

The Hungarian revolution on 23 October 1956, and its repression by the Soviet army on 4 November, created 200,000 Hungarian refugees. At the same time in Egypt, the Israeli military intervened on 29 October, joined by France and Britain on 31 October to claim back the Suez canal, precipitated the expulsion of approximately 40,000 Jews, mainly French and British nationals by the Egyptian government. Out of this total of 240,000 refugees, 52,000 sought refuge in Britain and France. Almost 22,000 refugees from Hungary and 6,000 from Egypt went to Britain, while 13,000 Hungarians and 11,000 refugees from Egypt went to France.¹

This thesis deals with the creation of these two groups of refugees and their reception by France and Britain, and the refugees' responses. This study of two groups of refugees, which arrived in France and in Britain within a few weeks of each other, interrogates the links between immigration policies and two major Cold War events. Moreover, it uncovers the similarities and differences in the treatment of two different groups of refugees in two different countries, and the reasons for that. The reception and treatment of these two waves of refugees have been left almost unexplored, and aside from the politics of Hungarian refugees and the disappearance of the Jewish community in Egypt,

¹ Michael M. Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt, 1920-1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism and the Middle East Conflict* (New York, 1992), p.264; Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 20050590, art. 120, Situation of Hungarian refugees on 15 December 1957, 28 December 1957; The National Archives (TNA), AST 7/1623, R.A. Butler statement at the House of Commons on Hungarian refugees in Britain, 20 February 1958; COJASOR (COJ).R.Egy.A1, Dix ans d'action sociale en faveur des Réfugiés d'Égypte (1956-1966), n.d.; TNA, HO 240/5, Anglo-Egyptian Resettlement Board (AERB), final report, March 1960. These numbers do not include diplomatic and Suez company staffs.

the historiography is sparse.² This thesis draws on unutilised archives as well as original interviews of former refugees to add to our knowledge of the Hungarian and Egyptian refugee immigrations in France and Britain. This study deals both with the politics and organisations concerned with the reception of refugees, and refugees' reflection on their reactions to their treatment.

One hundred and eighty thousand Hungarian refugees crossed the Austrian border, while about 20,000 refugees escaped to Yugoslavia, as they fled the Soviet repression of the revolution. In those two countries, Hungarians were placed in improvised refugee camps, while waiting to emigrate to another country, as Austria and Yugoslavia did not want to provide asylum for such large populations. The Hungarian refugees arrived in France and in Britain before the refugees from Egypt. On 7 November, the French government granted asylum to 10,000 Hungarians, while the British government decided to accept 2,500, although, by the end of the month, they both claimed that they would accept any Hungarian refugee who wished to resettle there.³ Once in France or in Britain, refugees were placed in camps, or hostel, usually old military barracks or abandoned buildings, until they secured employment and permanent housing, or re-emigrated. The arrival of Hungarian refugees in France and Britain was extensively reported in the national press, and was

² Ruth Tolédano-Attias, 'La dénationalisation des Juifs d'Egypte', in Shmuel Trigano, (ed.), *La Fin du judaïsme en terres d'islam* (Paris, 2009), pp.51-85; Stéphane Dufoix, *Politiques d'exil: Hongrois, Polonais, Tchécoslovaques en France après 1945* (Paris, 2002); Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt*; Michael M. Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry under the Nasser Regime 1956-1970', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31:3 (1995), 573-619.

³ CAC, 19990260, art. 35, Minister of Defence to Minister of Interior, 29 November 1956; TNA, HO 352/144, Memorandum on the admission of refugees, 5 December 1956.

generally welcomed.⁴ It also coincided with a great popular welcome in both countries as large amounts of money, food, and clothes were collected to support the Hungarian refugees.

In contrast with the conditions of departure of the Hungarian refugees, most of the refugees from Egypt did not escape, but were expelled by the Egyptian government. In response to the joint French, British and Israeli military action, the Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, declared on 22 November that all French and British nationals, as well as stateless Jews, were to be expelled from Egypt since the country was in a state of war with France, Britain and Israel. The majority of the expellees were Jewish, most of whom had French or British nationality.⁵ Unlike the immigration policy for Hungarian refugees, the French and British governments did not accept unlimited numbers of refugees. Apart from their own nationals, both governments accepted stateless refugees only on condition that they already had close relatives established there, with Britain applying this policy in a stricter manner than France, nor did refugees from Egypt benefit from the official and popular welcome Hungarian refugees enjoyed.⁶ The focus in the press was on the Suez crisis itself rather than on the refugees from Egypt. There was little popular support for this group of refugees as they were considered to be the responsibility of the French and

⁴ Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), p.244.

⁵ Michael M. Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry under the Nasser Regime 1956-1970', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31:3 (1995), pp.573-4; see Chapter 5, pp.199-203.

⁶ Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (MAE), *Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959*, 514, Note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the evacuation of Port-Said, 8 December 1956; London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), ACC/3121/B/06/002/034, Meeting at FO, 30 November 1956.

British governments for their involvement in the Egyptian campaign.⁷ The refugees from Egypt were placed in hostels in Britain and hotels in France.

Focus will now shift to the terms in which the refugees were legally defined. The status of the Hungarians and Egyptians as political refugees was problematic. Refugees from Hungary and Egypt arrived at a time when international refugee law was still relatively new. The 1951 Geneva Convention's definition of a refugee imposed strict geographical and temporal limits:

The term 'refugee' shall apply to any person who... as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁸

In order to make sure that Hungarians could benefit from the protection of the Convention, the General Assembly of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) debated whether they fell within the mandate of the

⁷ TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain, 8 January 1958.

⁸ UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, pp.137-84. Accessed at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3be01b964.html>

UNHCR and if the 1951 Geneva Convention applied to them.⁹ Auguste Lindt, the High Commissioner, considered that the Hungarian situation was linked to political changes which took place as a result of the Second World War.¹⁰ It was argued that since Hungary became under Soviet influence following the end of the war, the refugee situation and the revolution had their origins before 1951. Lindt thus concluded that the Hungarians fell under the protection of the 1951 Geneva Convention and were under the mandate of the UNHCR. The Geneva Convention, which was originally designed with the aim of solving the Second World War refugee and Displaced Persons (DPs) problem, was reinterpreted in the light of the Cold War in order to give international protection and recognition to the Hungarian refugees. It was also a way to support the Hungarian revolution, and to condemn its repression by the Soviet army. France and Britain accepted this interpretation.

As far as the refugees from Egypt were concerned, those who were stateless fell under the 1951 Geneva Convention and mandate of the UNHCR. The French authorities linked the expulsion of stateless Jews to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and interpreted as the Egyptian response to it.¹¹ On the other hand, Britain decided to apply the Convention to them, despite linking the expulsions to the British retreat from the Canal zone in 1951, and Nasser's policy regarding the Suez Canal.¹² Although different, both interpretations focused on the Egyptian government's responsibility for the expulsions and implies that the French, British and Israeli intervention served as a pretext to

⁹ Ivor Jackson, *The Refugee Concept in Group Situations* (The Hague, 1999), pp.114-9.

¹⁰ Louise Holborn, *Refugees: A Problem of our Time: The Work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951-1972* (Metuchen, 1975), p.394.

¹¹ CAC, 19810201, art. 1, Report on a OFPRA meeting, 21 January 1957.

¹² TNA, HO 352/158, Home Office, minutes, 21 May 1957.

expel Jews from Egypt. There again, the reading of the Geneva Convention was done to serve Cold War interests.

The British and French refugees did not benefit from the protection of the Geneva Convention. They were expelled from a country of which they were not nationals, and still benefited from the protection of their respective governments. They, nonetheless, experienced the challenges linked to the resettlement in another country after losing all their assets and property. Due to their British or French nationality, this category of refugees was also sometimes referred to as 'expellees' by the British Foreign Office and 'rapatriés' by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If the word 'expellees' is accurate, the use of the word 'rapatriés' is debatable. The word 'rapatriés', despite its occasional use by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and also its use by a French person from Egypt to distinguish herself from other non-French refugees, does not reflect the situation of the French nationals expelled from Egypt since they were born in Egypt and lived there all their life.¹³ The word 'rapatriés' implies the rediscovering of the 'patrie', bringing back someone to his or her homeland. The use of this word was to make the French nationals from Egypt feel as though they were full members of the French society. It was also to make a distinction with the Hungarian refugees who were foreigners. Yet, the thesis shows how this status was put to a test when they resettled in France or Britain since they were still considered liabilities while Hungarians were seen as assets.

¹³ Interview with Renée Hakoun, 5 November 2009.

The implications linked to this work on definitions and recognition of refugee status shows that the two groups of refugees represented a political stake for France and Britain following the Suez crisis and the Hungarian revolution, in the Cold War context. In this thesis, the word 'refugee' refers to those individuals who fled from Hungary and Egypt in 1956 as a result of the political upheavals discussed, and takes into account the particular circumstances of their departure in each case.

-Analysis

The thesis establishes that refugees from Hungary and from Egypt were accepted in France and Britain on the basis of immigration policies and practices in a process of change and development which were challenged by the Cold War context. Hungarian refugees were accepted in France and Britain without limits while this was not the case for the refugees from Egypt. The difference in reception between the Hungarian refugees and the refugees from Egypt as groups in France and Britain is significant as they were considered as assets and liabilities in both countries. Yet, the two countries had different immigration policies as well as a different record during the Second World War regarding the Jews of Europe and the Holocaust. In a more immediate context, Paris and London shared a common involvement in the Suez crisis, and adopted the same position during the Hungarian revolution, not only towards refugees, but also in condemning its repression by the Soviet army,

while refusing military intervention to help insurgents.¹⁴ This thesis argues that the reception of refugees from Hungary and Egypt was framed by immigration policies and practices adapted, for the occasion, to the Cold War context. There are three main themes revolving around the characterisation of refugees as assets and liabilities affecting the refugees' treatment and reception: political, economic, and national identity.

As far as politics are concerned, this is linked to both international, Cold War, issues and to domestic considerations. We see the political instrumentalization of Hungarian refugees, even while there was silence on the situation of the refugees from Egypt. The thesis analyses the impact of the Cold War on the decision by Paris and London to accept unlimited numbers of Hungarian refugees while limiting asylum to their own nationals in the case of the refugees from Egypt. The Hungarian refugees represented multiple political advantages for Paris and London. They were considered to be of possible use for propaganda purposes: welcoming them without limitation in numbers was a way for the two countries to assert their support to anti-Soviet movements. Their reception was also the reassertion of France and Britain as members of the 'free world' against 'Soviet imperialism', as Cold War rhetoric would phrase it.¹⁵ As far as internal affairs were concerned, Hungarian refugees were used in Britain as a way to distract, temporarily at least, public and political criticism of the handling of the Suez crisis. In France, Hungarian refugees were used by left and right-wing political parties to weaken the French Communist Party (PCF). Refugees from Egypt, as reminders of the Suez campaign failure, were

¹⁴ György Litván, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform, Revolution, Repression 1953-1963* (London, 1996), p.94.

¹⁵ TNA, FO 371/122387, UN British delegation to Foreign Office (FO), 10 November 1956.

barely visible in the press, and their situation was less discussed in the French and British parliaments. They were political liabilities for Paris and London, as viewed by the press and public opinion.¹⁶

The thesis shows also that French and British immigration policies determined the reception of the two groups of refugees. The thesis demonstrates that because many were working-class, Hungarians as migrants were preferred to refugees from Egypt as they could be considered for labour. In a context of the need of manual labour in both France and Britain, Hungarian refugees represented a large and immediately employable workforce, as the bulk of refugees were composed of single young men.¹⁷ Many of the refugees from Egypt, because they were British or French nationals could not be refused entry. The fact that the refugees from Egypt were mainly composed of middle-class family units and mostly entrepreneurs and businesspeople played a part, as they were not considered suitable candidates for immigration according to French and British immigration rules and practices in 1956.¹⁸

Finally, national identity varied greatly as far as the two groups of refugees were concerned. In 1956, both France and Britain privileged immigration from European countries. As colonial powers, the two countries experienced immigration from colonies or former colonies after the Second World War,

¹⁶ TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain, 8 January 1958.

¹⁷ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Francois Seydoux to Christian Pineau, 7 December 1956; TNA, LAB 8/2580, Notes for Sir Arthur Rucker, 3 January 1957.

¹⁸ Alexis Spire, *Etrangers à la carte: l'administration de l'immigration en France 1945-1975* (Paris, 2005), p.107; Gary P. Freeman, *Immigrant Labor and Racial Conflict in Industrial Societies: The French and British Experience 1945-1975* (Princeton, 1979), pp.136-7; TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain, 8 January 1958.

which both governments were trying to find a way to control.¹⁹ Hungarian refugees were associated with European immigration, which was favoured. On the other hand, refugees from Egypt were considered to be a colonial type group of North African and Jewish immigrants. The North African identity was a considerable drawback for the refugees from Egypt who were considered to be undesirable immigrants.²⁰ In practice, it meant that refugees from Egypt with nationalities other than French or British were denied access to France and Britain, while stateless refugees were accepted on the strict conditions of having relatives already established and who could financially provide for them.²¹ Their Jewish identity was also a problem since France and Britain each had a record of restricting or discriminating, officially or by practice, Jewish immigration.²² This study will also show that the memory of the Second World War played out in different ways in France and Britain. While Britain restricted Jewish entry to Palestine during the Nazi period, it could still boast of having helped 70,000 Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, while France participated in the deportation of Jews.²³ The thesis will show how these two different memories affected the reception of the refugees from Egypt in France and Britain.

¹⁹ Spire, *Etrangers à la carte*, pp.124-5; Ian R. G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London, 1997), pp.46-8.

²⁰ Patrick Weil, *La France et ses étrangers: l'aventure d'une politique de l'immigration de 1938 à nos jours* (Paris, 1991), pp.84-5; Freeman, *Immigrant Labor*, pp.136-7.

²¹ CAC, 19900353, art. 17, Ministry of Interior, circulaire n°595 on admission of foreign nationals from Egypt in France, 29 December 1956; TNA, HO 240/1, Persons eligible for help from the Board, 7 May 1957.

²² Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.38-9; Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: Immigration, 'Race' and 'Race' Relations in Post-war Britain* (Oxford, 1992), pp.5-6; Vicki Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Refugee Crisis, 1933-1942* (Stanford, 1999), pp.358-61; Patrick Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français ? Histoire de la nationalité française depuis la Révolution* (Paris, 2002), pp.208-13.

²³ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p.9; Michaël Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs* (Paris, 1981), pp.473-4.

Each of these three themes are deeply intertwined. All of the chapters of this thesis deal with these themes and their relation to the refugee groups in France and Britain. The refugees from Hungary and Egypt were two very different groups. The Cold War politics associated with them as well as their geographical origins and the groups' composition framed the way they were treated in France and in Britain.

To uncover the impact of immigration policies and the Cold War on the refugees this thesis examines the treatment of each group of refugees and the organisations that helped them and the dynamic relation between organisations, governments and the refugees. The resettlement strategies in both countries reveal the attitudes of the authorities towards the two groups of refugees. Finally, the thesis studies the history of the refugees from the start of their life as refugees until they left refugee camps.

-The Comparative Approach

This thesis is a comparative study of two refugee groups in two different countries. The reason why it is a comparative work is to establish the reasons for having similar responses to the refugees from Hungary and Egypt in two countries with different immigration policies and practices. Comparison will also uncover the refugees' different reactions to their reception in France and Britain.

In order to carry out comparative work, valid units of comparisons must be selected to explain the phenomena studied. William Sewell, in analysing Marc Bloch's theories on comparative history, argues that history can only be fully understood when relationships between phenomena are established and explained.²⁴ The comparative method is a way to assess the validity of explanatory hypotheses and to discover the uniqueness of different societies. Bloch thus calls for the selection of an appropriate geographical framework, in which the study of the units of comparison can be done, while Sewell argues that the choice of units of comparison depends on the explanatory problem addressed, and does not need to be limited to geographical frontiers.²⁵

Yet, a different approach to the choice of units of comparison exists. Jürgen Kocka argues that units of comparison can be separated from each other, and do not necessarily need to have anything in common. Cases for comparison are not determined by continuity or mutual influences between two phenomena. Units of comparison are independent cases analytically brought together by asking for similarities and differences between them.²⁶ Kocka's approach supposes that anything is comparable and that temporal and geographical limits are not necessary.

Units of comparison, in the case of this thesis, refugees from Hungary and Egypt in France and Britain, are not the only choices to make. The comparative approach also calls for the choice of the phenomenon to explain and the choice

²⁴ William H. Sewell Jr, 'Marc Bloch and the Logic of Comparative History', *History and Theory*, 6:2 (1967), pp.208-10.

²⁵ Sewell, 'Marc Bloch', pp.211-2.

²⁶ Jürgen Kocka, 'Comparison and Beyond', *History and Theory*, 42:1 (2003), p.41.

of the level of analysis. Nancy Green claims that the comparative method fits particularly well immigration studies and that several levels of comparison are possible: past and present immigrants, immigrants and the State, immigrants and society, and immigrants as a group. Comparison helps the understanding of specific and general aspects of the phenomena being studied, and the causes and origins of these phenomena.²⁷ According to Green, 'la comparaison doit nous permettre de dégager les contraintes structurales de l'expérience individuelle, de distinguer la différenciation dans les parcours de groupes ainsi que de dégager si possible l'essence du phénomène migratoire.'²⁸ In the case of this thesis, comparison will help to uncover the differences and similarities in treatment of the refugees from Egypt and Hungary in France and Britain, but also, why these two groups were considered to be liabilities or assets in both countries.

Comparison helps us to understand the causes and origins of phenomena, as well as analyse the specificity and generality of these phenomena.²⁹ Comparing different groups of immigrants within a nation-state can help us to deconstruct the notion of nation-state for migration studies.³⁰ It thus helps us to understand that the frontier between national and foreign, as immigrants, as well as refugees, are defined by their nationality and their cultural attributes.³¹ This is especially important in the case of the refugees from Egypt, as many considered themselves to be culturally French or British. The way the two

²⁷ Nancy L. Green, 'L'Histoire comparative et le champ des études migratoires', *Annales ESC*, 45:6 (1990), p.1335-8.

²⁸ Green, 'L'Histoire comparative', p.1339.

²⁹ Nancy L. Green, 'The Comparative Method and Poststructural Structuralism: New Perspectives for Migration Studies', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 13:4 (1994), p.5

³⁰ Green, 'Comparative Method', p.7.

³¹ Green, 'Comparative Method', p.13.

refugee groups were treated helps to define the frontier between foreign and national when other attributes are taken into account. The fragmentary nature of the frontier between foreign and national is further exposed in the case of the Hungarians, who could be seen as assets despite their absence of French or British culture or nationality, while refugees from Egypt were seen as liabilities.

Comparing the reception of Hungarian refugees as assets in France and Britain to refugees from Egypt as liabilities implies comparing their experiences as groups but also as individuals before they became refugees until the moment they left refugee camps. Therefore, the thesis will compare how the two groups of refugees were created and the circumstances in which they left their original country. The French and British public and political reactions to their arrival will be analysed. The conditions and legal framework in which they were accepted to their country of asylum will be studied. It will also compare the role of governmental and non-governmental organisations in their reception: both those affecting the context from which they came and those affecting their reception. All this comparative work will be done without losing the focus that this thesis is about refugees, so it will include refugees' reactions to their treatment in France and Britain. The aim of this comparative work is to understand the political and cultural contexts of the immigration of these two groups of refugees in France and Britain, the effects of these contexts on their reception and treatment, while acknowledging the specificities of their experience depending on the country of origin and country of asylum.³²

³² Green, 'L'Histoire comparative', p.1345.

-Methodology

A range of evidence is used in the thesis. In Britain, there is a great volume of material available at the National Archives. As well as materials issued by the Home Office and the Foreign Office, the National Archives holds all the files relating the Anglo-Egyptian Resettlement Board (AERB), an official body created to organise and coordinate the reception, accommodation and employment of the refugees from Egypt in Britain. It also holds papers of the National Coal Board (NCB) which have been consulted along with files of the Labour and Employment Departments, to examine employment plans for Hungarians, and Cabinet files on Commonwealth immigration.

In France, the Archives Nationales and the Archives Diplomatiques proved to be rich in material on the creation of refugees in Egypt and Hungary, and the French reactions to it. Other governmental bodies, such as the Office Français pour la Protection des Réfugiés et des Apatrides (OFPRA) and the British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR), had little material to offer. The OFPRA archives are still in the process of being classified, while the BCAR kept very little of its original material on the subject. The Service Social d'Aide aux Emigrants (SSAE), on the other hand, has rich sources in papers now kept at the Archives Nationales. As foreigners, the refugees from Hungary and the stateless refugees from Egypt in France had to report to the police. The archives of the préfecture de Police in Paris offer a great range of material on the refugees from Hungary in Paris and the related political activity of the French Communist Party (PCF). However, nothing is to be found on the

stateless refugees from Egypt, who seem not to have caught the attention of the police. The Archives de la Ville de Paris was a good source of information on the accommodation of refugees in Paris. All these archival sources have been read alongside British and French parliamentary debates which not only point to the main flaws and successes of their national policies of asylum, but also allow for the comparison of the two cases. For reflections of public opinion, I sought out parliamentary debates and articles about refugees in the national press covering right and left-wing political opinion. I also looked at Jewish publications such as *L'Arche*.

Papers from the Central British Fund and the Board of Deputies of British Jews give a good insight into Jewish relief for refugees from Hungary and Egypt, and divergences from government plans. This aspect was correlated to the material provided by the Comité Juif d'Action Sociale et de Reconstruction (Cojasor).

However, what all the material mentioned above lacked was the 'voice' of the refugees themselves. As the period treated in the thesis is fairly recent, it was a good opportunity to seek the experiences of the former refugees in their own words. During the Forty Years Crisis conference on refugees in the twentieth century that took place at Birkbeck, University of London, in September 2010, speakers mentioned how rare it was for oral history to be included in refugee history and how hard the task is. I tried to take up this challenge and the thesis includes interviews with many former refugees from Egypt and Hungary.

The former refugees from Egypt were found through three main associations: the Association pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine Culturel des Juifs d'Egypte, the Association des Juifs Originaires d'Egypte, and the Association of Jews from Egypt. Other interviewees were found by advertising at Holland Park Synagogue in London, and via the Association of Jewish Refugees, composed of former refugees from Nazi Germany.

Finding former refugees from Hungary proved a much harder task. Only one former refugee from Hungary in Britain has been interviewed for the thesis and repeated attempts to advertise or find networks were unsuccessful. In France, advertising in the newsletter of the Mardis Hongrois, a Hungarian social group, reached four interviewees. Other efforts were unsuccessful. As a consequence Hungarian individuals tend to be less represented in the thesis than the refugees from Egypt. However, the majority of the interviews explored British and French culture before migration, and its influence on resettlement. As this phenomenon existed only in Egypt, the thesis should not suffer from the difference in the number of interviews between the two groups of former refugees.

No matter how useful these interviews are, they must be treated with critical awareness. The events related by the refugees happened more than sixty years ago. Thus, the interview material depends on the memory of the refugees. Daniel Schacter, in his work on the theory of oral history, discusses the

problems inherent to memory as 'a process of remembering'.³³ Individual memory is not a ready-formed story but a process creating meanings of past facts, also framed by the public memory of the period remembered. Moreover, what the interviewees may hold to be true may be contradicted by other forms of evidence, as memory is a narrator's interpretation of their experience.³⁴ Paul Thompson argues that oral history, as any historical evidence, is framed by 'individual perception, and selected through social bias, conveys message of prejudice and power'.³⁵ According to Thompson, depending on the fields, 'oral history can result not merely in a shift in focus, but also in the opening up of important new areas of inquiry'.³⁶ The author does not mention immigration history as an example, although it makes sense to use oral history in this case. It enables us, for instance, to discover how immigration policy was perceived by immigrants. Moreover, refugees' opinions are voiced and it can be assessed whether they felt grateful or rejected, and how it affected their experience as refugees. I have dealt with all these issues when including interviews in the thesis.

As far as the structure of the thesis is concerned, it is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the creation of the Hungarian refugees and their reception in France and Britain. Chapter two gives a brief account on the Hungarian revolution and what led 200,000 Hungarians to leave their country. Chapter three deals with the reception and treatment of the Hungarian refugees in France, and sets out to demonstrate how the revolution and the refugee

³³ Daniel Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind and the Past* (New York, 1996), p.71, quoted in Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Oxford, 2010), p.79.

³⁴ Abrams, *Oral History*, pp.78-105.

³⁵ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford, 2000), p.305.

³⁶ Thompson, *Voice of the Past*, p.7.

situation were first exploited for propagandistic purposes and national political interests. It also examines immigration policy in France and how the Hungarians were to serve France's economic and demographic interests as candidates for immigration. French-Jewish responses to the refugee situation are also explored. Finally, it discusses the effects of the Cold War in the resettlement process. Chapter four explores similar questions about the Hungarians with respect to Britain.

The second part of the thesis studies the expulsion of the French, British and stateless Jews from Egypt and their resettlement in France and Britain. Chapter five deals with who the refugees from Egypt were, and the unusual nature of their nationality and cultural background. Chapter six deals with the reception and treatment of refugees from Egypt in France, and focuses on how the French government and administration oscillated between obligation and desire to provide relief to the French Jews of Egypt, as they were not considered to be suitable candidates for resettlement in France according to immigration policies and practices. As most of the refugees from Egypt were Jewish, the chapter also looks at the Jewish specificity of the resettlement policy and how their resettlement made the refugees question their French identity. Chapter seven discusses the reception of the refugees from Egypt in Britain. It analyses the different domestic context regarding the Suez crisis and its impact on the refugees. The question of identity and cultural background is also explored.

-Historiography

The history of the refugees from Hungary and Egypt has been little studied. There is no existing comparative study of their reception and treatment in France and in Britain. There is also little secondary literature on the subject of refugees from Egypt and Hungary. Secondary literature on what happened to these two groups of refugees after 1956 is limited, so as yet we know very little about the reception and the treatment of the refugees from Egypt and Hungary in Britain and in France. This thesis therefore aims to fill that gap. Although small in numbers compared to the 15 million displaced European civilians estimated to have been on the move directly after the Second World War, refugees from Hungary and Egypt nevertheless represented a real challenge to the French and British governments.³⁷ The thesis aims to assess the nature of asylum for refugees in 1956, to explore government motivations to accept refugees and to understand how this affected their reception.

Refugees from Hungary are only briefly mentioned in studies on the Hungarian revolution,³⁸ and tend to form part of more general research on refugees in Europe in the twentieth century.³⁹ There are also only a few mentions of Hungarian refugees in France and in Britain in secondary literature on immigration. For example, Colin Holmes, in *A Tolerant Country?*, mentions,

³⁷ Jacques Doublet, 'Mouvements migratoires d'après-guerre', *Population*, 2:3 (1947), p.498.

³⁸ Terry Cox, (ed.), *Hungary 1956: Forty Years On* (London, 1997); Daniel F. Calhoun, *Hungary and Suez, 1956: An Exploration of who makes History* (Lanham, 1991); Johanna Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making During the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (College Station, 2004); Béla Király and Paul Jónás, (eds), *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in Retrospect* (New York, 1978); Litván, *Hungarian Revolution*.

³⁹ Dufoix, *Politiques d'exil*; Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, pp.241-61; Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1985), pp.359-61.

en passant, that refugees from Egypt and from Hungary generated little interest, while Black and Asian immigration captured almost exclusively all historical attention in Britain.⁴⁰ Alexis Spire in *Étrangers à la Carte* uses the example of the Hungarian refugees in France to show the arbitrariness of the uses of circulars to favour one group of migrants over the others.⁴¹ Spire argues that the example of Hungarian refugees in France illustrate how post-war immigration policy on refugees could be interpreted in different ways in order to facilitate the employment of one group, while denying the status of refugee to another. Yet, it does not analyse the specificities of the Hungarian migration and their resettlement in 1956 and 1957, especially in the Cold War context.

However, the politics of Hungarian refugees in exile have been researched. In *Politiques d'exil*, which is a comparative study with Polish and Czech exiles, Stéphane Dufoix studies how some of the Hungarian exiles recreated a political space outside their country of origin in an attempt to represent the true interests of the Hungarian people.⁴² Despite a very complete analysis of the question, Dufoix is more interested in the political activities of Hungarian exiles than their resettlement in France as a refugee group and how it was achieved, and the interests of the French government in letting a large number of Hungarians resettle. One of the drawbacks of such research is that it focuses on a smaller group among the refugees, not necessarily representative of the whole wave but more visible due to its political activity.

⁴⁰ Colin Holmes, *A Tolerant Country? Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities in Britain* (London, 1991), pp.44-5.

⁴¹ Spire, *Étrangers à la carte*, pp.224-8.

⁴² Dufoix, *Politiques d'exil*.

Another interesting aspect which has been very useful for this thesis is the role of French diplomacy during the Hungarian revolution. Gusztáv Kecskés has written a number of articles on this theme.⁴³ He has shown that the French government saw in the Hungarian revolution and the refugee crisis a way to use them as propaganda against the Soviet Union. He uses NATO archives to show that the French government reacted to the Hungarian revolution and its consequences in accordance with NATO directives. Kecskés argues that the French government followed closely the events in Hungary, and considered that granting asylum to Hungarian refugees could weaken the position of the Soviet regime. Kecskés attempts to place refugees back into history by showing their importance in international political responses. However, while focusing on political issues and propaganda, the economic aspect of the Hungarian refugee immigration is ignored, as well as conditions of reception and relations to immigration policies.

Despite a tendency to focus on the political aspect of the Hungarian refugee crisis, other works have been published on the reception of Hungarian refugees. Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox do not study the politics of refugees but the reasons and the conditions of asylum. Kushner and Knox dedicated an entire chapter on the Hungarian refugees in Britain in *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives during the*

⁴³ Gusztáv Kecskés, 'La politique étrangère française face à la révolution hongroise de 1956', *Relations Internationales*, 122 (2005), 87-103; Gusztáv Kecskés, 'La politique française et la révolution hongroise de 1956', *Matériaux pour l'Histoire de Notre Temps*, 83 (2006), 40-49; Gusztáv Kecskés, 'The Suez Crisis and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution', *East European Quarterly*, 35:1 (2001), 47-58; Gusztáv Kecskés, 'The North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956', in Lee W. Congdon and Béla K. Király, (eds), *Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution Suppressed and Victorious 1956-1999* (New York, 2002), pp.121-41.

Twentieth Century.⁴⁴ They analyse the British political context of their arrival in the country, popular responses, as well as the temporary accommodation provided for the refugees. Many of their findings are useful for this thesis, notably on the conditions of the accommodation for refugees. Their main argument is that the British government accepted a great number of refugees because of popular pressure, without considering the Cold War context in the way Kecskés does. Kushner, in *Remembering Refugees*, has a totally different argument regarding the resettlement of Hungarians in Britain. He claims that the government was not in favour of resettling refugees, and that the Home Office had to be convinced by the Foreign Office to accept Hungarians. As a consequence Kushner argues that the resettlement experience of the Hungarians was not a happy experience for them as refugees were accommodated in abandoned or semi-abandoned buildings.⁴⁵

Humanitarian responses to the Hungarian situation played a role in the refugees' reception in France and in Britain. Peter Gatrell argues that 'in addressing the refugee crisis in Hungary in 1956, Western powers responded urgently in the light of Cold War rivalries'.⁴⁶ He thus implies that France and Britain's humanitarian responses were framed by the Cold War context of the Western bloc opposition to the Soviet regime. Gatrell, however, sees another reason for this response as he claims that Western powers' actions 'affirmed a commitment to assist people who faced persecution, a stance that avoided acknowledging their belated and inadequate reaction to the plight of Europe's

⁴⁴ Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*.

⁴⁵ Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester, 2006), pp.67-8.

⁴⁶ Peter Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees, 1956-1963* (Cambridge, 2011), p.5.

Jews in the 1930s'. I will explore how the Holocaust informed French and British responses to refugee crises in 1956. But this thesis will also argue that humanitarian responses from the British and French governments to the refugee crises were largely dominated by a profit logic to exploit the situation to their own political and economic advantage, in line with both countries' immigration policies.

As far as refugees from Egypt are concerned, existing secondary literature is very limited and their history has been left almost unexplored. Research done on this group of refugees focuses on their expulsion from Egypt, or on the Jewish community as a part of multicultural Egypt before 1956.⁴⁷ Their expulsion is absent from work on the Suez Canal crisis, although it was one of the consequences of the joint military intervention by Britain, France and Israel.⁴⁸ Apart from Michael M. Laskier, the core of the historiography on their expulsion from Egypt is by people who experienced or witnessed it, along with autobiographical or semi-autobiographical publications.⁴⁹ The main exceptions are publications which focus on local experiences or on the process of expulsion from Egypt.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry', 573-619; Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt*; Deborah Starr, *Remembering Cosmopolitan Egypt: Literature, Culture, and Empire* (New York, 2009).

⁴⁸ Marc Ferro, *1956, Suez: naissance d'un tiers-monde* (Bruxelles, 2006); Barry Turner, *Suez 1956: The Forgotten War* (London, 2006), Simon C. Smith, (ed.), *Reassessing Suez 1956: New Perspectives on the Crisis and its Aftermath* (Aldershot, 2008).

⁴⁹ Jacques Hassoun, (ed.), *Histoire des Juifs du Nil* (Paris, 1990); Maurice Mizrahi, *L'Egypte et ses Juifs: le temps révolu* (Paris, 1977); Jacques Hassoun, Gilbert Cabasso, et al., *Juifs d'Egypte: images et textes* (Paris, 1984); Minou Azoulay, *Murmures d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 2001); Lucette Lagnado, *Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World* (London, 2009).

⁵⁰ Diane Afoumado, 'L'installation des juifs d'Egypte à Gennevilliers en 1958-1959', *Los Muestras*, 26 (1997), 52-53; Racheline Barda, 'The Modern Exodus of the Jews from Egypt', (No page reference - accessed online). http://www.nebidaniel.org/documents/Whence_Hence_by_R.Barda.doc; Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt 1914-1952* (Washington D.C., 1989); Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry'; Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt*.

On the subject of the expulsions from Egypt, Laskier's work has proved invaluable.⁵¹ He has thoroughly analysed the impact of the Suez crisis on the Jewish community in Egypt. His study covers the period from 1948 until 1970 and the disappearance of the Jewish community in Egypt. Laskier argues that the anti-Jewish and anti-European measures conducted by Nasser in 1956 accentuated a trend which started under the Egyptian monarchy. He has also analysed the responses of the International Committee of the Red Cross as well as Jewish organisations such as the American Joint Distribution Committee and the relief they brought to the Jewish community of Egypt.

If there is little historiography available on refugees from Egypt and Hungary, there is rather more on immigration and refugees in France and Britain. Immigration policies, and the debates surrounding the adoption of such policies, cannot be separated from the questions of ethnicity and national identity. I aim here to contextualise and introduce the main issues regarding immigration, ethnicity, and national identity.

The treatment of Jewish refugees in the 1930s is of importance for this thesis, for its impact in 1956. From 1933 until the Second World War, over 50,000 Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany sought asylum in France. Vicki Caron argues that French refugee policy fluctuated during the six years before the war, depending on the government, public opinion, and the French Jewish community.⁵² Economic factors linked to the Depression led to calls for a more restrictive refugee policy at least until 1936. Yet, demographic shortfalls from

⁵¹ Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry'; Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt*.

⁵² Caron, *Uneasy Asylum*, p.354.

1934, pushed the military to call for a more liberal refugee policy with the view of incorporating refugees as conscripts. However, Georges Mauco and René Martial, demographic experts, asked the Ministry of Immigration to select immigrants who could be assimilated to 'safeguard the nation's ethnic, as well as its economic and military, health'.⁵³ Middle-class responses to refugee immigration were very negative and motivated by antisemitism. Jewish refugees were largely urban and middle-class, and were considered by the French middle-class, and high-ranking members of the government, as ethnically inferior. The French Jewish community was itself divided over the Jewish refugees. Some considered that a restrictive refugee policy would prevent an antisemitic backlash, while others called for support to be given to the refugees.⁵⁴ The Second World War marked an end to refugee immigration in France and in Britain, except for internal displaced populations in the French case. While Jewish refugees were safe from deportation in Britain, except for the Channel islands, it was the opposite in France. During the Vichy years more than 75,000 Jews were deported, of whom two thirds were foreigners, and only 2,500 survived.⁵⁵

Historiography shows that some of the Vichy laws affecting immigrants and Jews were abrogated with difficulty. Patrick Weil takes the example of the revocation in 1940 by Vichy of the Crémieux decree, which, in 1870, gave French citizenship to Algerian Jews.⁵⁶ Yet, the decree was not automatically reinstated at the Liberation. Henri Giraud, head of the North African

⁵³ Caron, *Uneasy Asylum*, p.75.

⁵⁴ Caron, *Uneasy Asylum*, pp.358-61.

⁵⁵ Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy et les Juifs*, pp.473-4.

⁵⁶ Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français ?*, pp.208-13.

administration from December 1942, abrogated all Vichy laws passed after July 1940, except for the Crémieux decree. Giraud believed that Muslims and Jews in Algeria should be treated equally, and yet, he held Jews responsible for the French defeat in 1940. It was only after protests from the French National Committee and the American press that the decree was reinstated in October 1943. Similarly, the Minister of Justice, François de Menthon, did not want to reintegrate any 'éléments israélites douteux' into French nationality, as he believed that French Jews were responsible for antisemitism. Although in the end, most of the 15,154 denaturalised French got their citizenship back, the question of reintegrating Jews had been debated within the government. Thus there were different views within the government regarding Jews and French national identity.

After the Liberation, new immigration policy was needed, especially after the racialisation of the question by the Vichy regime. On 2 November 1945, an ordinance was passed reaffirming the link between immigration and economic and demographic needs.⁵⁷ Even if the Ordinance did not bear any mention of ethnic and national preferences, the theme was very much present in the debates during the drafting of the Ordinance. The question of immigration was indeed inseparable from the question of ethnicity and national identity. I will present here the main arguments presented during the debates of the Ordinance and their impact, as it defined French immigration policy after the Second World War and during the 1950s.

⁵⁷ Vincent Viet, *Histoire des Français venus d'ailleurs de 1850 à nos jours* (Paris, 2004), p.172.

The first major argument is that the 1945 Ordinance followed a republican model and served not only national interests but also immigrants' interests. Patrick Weil establishes the foundations of the French immigration in 1938, when Georges Mauco became member of the Minister of Work's cabinet.⁵⁸ For Mauco, it was important to select immigrants according to their ethnicity and the jobs they could occupy to make sure they would contribute to the demographic growth of France. During the Vichy years, Mauco further developed his theories to legitimise persecutions against Jews, and was a member of the French Popular Party until 1942. During the debate on the 1945 Ordinance, there was, on one side, those in favour of ethnic selection of immigrants like Mauco, and on an other side, those in favour of a more liberal immigration policy, like Alexandre Parodi, Minister of Labour from September 1944 to October 1945. Mauco's theories on ethnic preference were eventually defeated in favour of the adoption of a republican model of immigration, as Weil calls it. As a result, the 1945 Ordinance held no reference to national or ethnic preference.

When it came to establish a new set of rules for naturalisation, Mauco, just like for the 1945 Ordinance on immigration, wanted to establish criteria based on ethnicity. The naturalisation and immigration questions were initially debated together. Thus, he produced a list of nationalities, and races, which were more or less compatible with French nationality. The aim of the list was to ensure that French character, or national identity, would not be transformed by introducing people who could not be assimilated. Despite having Charles de

⁵⁸ Weil, *La France et ses étrangers*, pp.36-40

Gaulle, Alfred Sauvy, general secretary of Family and Population at the Ministry of Public Health and Population, and Marcel Pagès, director of the foreigners division at the Ministry of the Interior, producing lists more or less similar to Mauco's, in the end, the naturalisation process was separated from the 1945 Ordinance debates, as a new code of nationality was established by the Ministry of Justice, which had no part in the debate on immigration policies.⁵⁹ There was thus, according to Weil, no ethnic nor national preference for naturalisation from 1953, but a liberal interpretation of French national identity prevailed, and the contribution immigrants would make to the nation was the most important element.⁶⁰ Weil thus downplays Mauco's influence in post-war French immigration policy, despite the endorsements of many of his ideas by prominent political and administrative figures.

This dismissal of Mauco's influence is contested. Vincent Viet claims that, despite the fact that Mauco's proposals to include ethnic and assimilability criteria were rejected, a clear preference for European immigration persisted within the Ministry of Population.⁶¹ Viet argues that, when it came to admit immigrants in France, a cultural preference existed in every part of the administration dealing with immigrants until the 1970s. Alexis Spire explains the reasons for that. He argues that, while the new French government tried to dissociate itself with the Vichy regime, it was faced with pragmatic issues such as staff employment. The French government had no other option, following the adoption of the 2 November 1945 Ordinance than to use administrative structures and staff who were already in position during the Vichy years, which

⁵⁹ Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français ?*, pp.221-7.

⁶⁰ Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français ?*, pp.242-3.

⁶¹ Viet, *Histoire des Français*, p.172.

had an effect on the interpretation of the Ordinance.⁶² Gérard Noiriel points out that the protectionist system adopted in the 1930s and perfected by the Vichy regime was reactivated by the 1945 Ordinance.⁶³ There was thus a certain continuity with the Vichy regime in the administration dealing with immigration matters. In *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France*, Noiriel analyses the 1945 Ordinance as a focus on assimilation and protection of French labour. Noiriel argues that there was continuity with Vichy in drafting the ordinance, notably with the maintenance of civil servants who were in place during the Vichy years, which led to an absence of the immigration question. Indeed, as the main authors of xenophobic and antisemitic discourses and policies were still in post after the Liberation, public debates on immigration policies were carefully avoided. He nevertheless states that ideas on racial preferences were defeated as Mauco and Sauvy's theses on racial superiority were rejected by the Conseil supérieur de l'immigration.

Then, another argument regarding immigration in France lies in the selection of immigrants depending on their origins, with a focus on assimilation, and the country's economic needs. France, since the Third Republic, rationalised immigration in order to provide for its economic and demographic needs, while carefully choosing candidates for immigration but without proper structures of settlement to integrate immigrants. This argument is largely supported by Gérard Noiriel. The Third Republic, he suggests, created a new model of

⁶² Spire, *Etrangers à la carte*, p.19.

⁶³ Gérard Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France: discours publics, humiliations privées* (Paris, 2007), p.496.

immigration, whose functions were economic and social.⁶⁴ This model was legally enforced after the two world wars, and until the 1970s. Noiriel calls this immigration model, one of 'integration/exclusion', and claims it favoured categories of immigrants according to labour skills and nationality, while excluding those who did not meet those criteria. Noiriel sees in government policies and structures in charge of immigrants an oppressive, and sometimes humiliating, system in which immigrants were seen as problems when they remained attached to their country of origins or culture.

The main wave of immigrants in France after the Second World War came from Algeria, which was a French colony. Many experts and company leaders at the time spoke in positive terms about this Algerian immigration. Algerian labour was cheap, workers were mobile, and the movement of people between the colony and the metropole would encourage social and cultural assimilation, and so help secure the future of Algeria as a colony.⁶⁵ Yet, as their numbers increased in France, and the independence movement grew stronger, Algerian immigrants were faced with greater discrimination, notably due to their origins, and the French administration became divided on the question of Algerian immigration. Noiriel claims that, after the Second World War, the discourses of 'us' against 'them' no longer involved the same categories of foreigners as before the war. Before 1945, everyone not considered French could be regarded as 'them', including European immigrants and Jews. However, in the immediate post-war years, colonial subjects, and especially Algerians, were

⁶⁴ Gérard Noiriel, *Le Creuset français : histoire de l'immigration XIX^e-XX^e siècle* (Paris, 1988), p.ix.

⁶⁵ Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme*, p.539.

treated as foreigners in France, despite enjoying full citizen rights since 1947.⁶⁶ Noiriél claims that the majority of the French population believed in a hierarchy of races, and that the French were superior to the Algerians. Thus, despite an official status aiming at giving Muslim Algerians the same rights as French citizens, they were not considered French.

The policy behind the status of Algerians has been thoroughly analysed by Todd Shepard. According to Shepard, French policy towards Algeria was guided by assimilationism and coexistence until the Vichy regime. While acknowledging the particularity of different groups of people in Algeria, French officials believed that they would become full members of the French nation and eventually give up 'irrationality and religious fanaticism, Muslim in particular'.⁶⁷ Shepard opposes the assimilationist policy of France in Algeria during the Third Republic with the Crémieux Decree to the implicit pursuit of coexistence, as no similar policy targeted populations under Berber or Muslim law.⁶⁸ Despite the fact that Muslim Algerians were only granted French citizenship in 1944, Shepard dismisses the arguments that it was because of racial exclusion or thanks to the conception of the French nationality as 'race-blind and egalitarian'. The exclusion of Muslim Algerian men from citizenship was because of resistance to assimilation of Algeria's Muslims by Algerian Muslims themselves and from racist attitude of officials in France and Algeria. Yet racism was counterbalanced by the assimilationist goal of the French government. Shepard claims that the introduction of the status of 'Muslim

⁶⁶ Gérard Noiriél, *A quoi sert "l'identité nationale" ?* (Marseille, 2007), p.48; Noiriél, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme*, p.517.

⁶⁷ Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (New York, 2006), p.22.

⁶⁸ Shepard, *Invention of Decolonization*, pp.28-9.

French from Algeria' in 1944 broke with the concept of unique and indivisible citizenship, as it endorsed both full political rights and the maintenance of local civil status. Yet, the introduction of this new status was felt by nationalist and Islamic organisations and Europeans in Algeria as covered colonial domination. Under such pressure, the new statute for Algeria was modified in 1947 stating that Muslim Algerians residing in France enjoyed there all the rights attached to the quality of French citizenship, an important nuance. It meant that in France, 'French citizens with "local" civil status were... in theory politically equal to French citizens with common "French" status.' On the other hand, in Algeria, 'the statute left in place the existing local law court systems', which did not guarantee equality of rights. With the beginning of the Algerian War, Shepard argues that France 'attempted to reconcile republican values and imperial conquest' by redefining the nation-state. In an effort to guarantee that Algeria would remain part of the French Republic, France tried to extend political rights and economic assistance in Algeria.⁶⁹

Alec Hargreaves agrees with other scholars that immigration in post-war France favoured Europeans over Africans and Asians, despite the 1945 Ordinance making no mention of ethnic preferences. State control over the recruitment of immigrants was guaranteed by the Ordinance, but, according to Hargreaves, was undercut by three main forces: the low inflows from European countries, the exemption of Algerians from formal immigration controls, and French employers using their own means to recruit rather than the Office National de l'Immigration (ONI). The ONI was created by the Ordinance with

⁶⁹ Shepard, *Invention of Decolonization*, pp.33-45.

the aim of controlling and organising immigration according to labour needs, and acted as a link between labour immigrants and French employers. The *laissez-faire* attitude caused the French government to lose control over the ethnic composition of the foreign population in France.⁷⁰ Hargreaves claims that the preferences established by Mauco could be informed by the ideology of colonisation, which saw Arabs and Asians as inferior to Europeans. There was, at the Liberation, a widespread belief that colonised people differed far more from the French than Europeans.⁷¹ Hargreaves states that assimilation was the 'ultimate objective of the colonial project', as it promised equal political rights to the indigenous inhabitants of the overseas territories. However, in practice, political equality was reserved for a small elite among the indigenous populations as they were not acculturated enough to claim French citizenship as nationality did not mean full citizenship and political rights.⁷²

Gary Freeman, in *Immigrant Labor and Racial Conflict in Industrial Societies*, argues that post-war French immigration policy went from an attempt to control of immigration by the State to *laissez-faire*.⁷³ Freeman argues that the French government's decision to relate labour immigration to demography was the consequence of the post First World War situation, with the loss of 1,500,000 military and civilians. As the loss figure reached more than 2,000,000 in 1945, the French government called for immigration with economic and demographic goals. It was with this dual aim in mind that the

⁷⁰ Alec G. Hargreaves, *Multi-Ethnic France: Immigration, Politics, Culture and Society* (New York, 2007), pp.165-7.

⁷¹ Hargreaves, *Multi-Ethnic France*, pp.140-2.

⁷² Hargreaves, *Multi-Ethnic France*, p.150.

⁷³ Freeman, *Immigrant Labor*.

Ordinance of 2 November 1945 was passed, framing French immigration policy until 1980. Yet, the ONI failed to fulfil its role of organising labour immigration. Freeman argues that from 1947 to 1967, the French government barely had control of immigration, which became spontaneous and often clandestine.⁷⁴ He attributes this situation to the fact that the ONI was unable to process the number of workers needed by France, and that many firms arranged for the arrival of foreign workers themselves rather than paying a fee to the ONI. Freeman, however, does not make any mention of the debate between Mauco and Parodi about ethnicity regarding the 1945 Ordinance.

Another argument opposes Freeman's view that immigration from 1945 was a policy of *laissez-faire*. Yves Lequin argues that the years from 1945 to 1955 were marked by a failed attempt to control immigration in France.⁷⁵ Lequin states that, in contrast to the inter-war years, when immigration was controlled by the Société Générale d'Immigration (SGI), an employers' organisation selecting labour immigrants, the French government tried, with the 1945 Ordinance and the new nationality code, to associate labour immigration with assimilation of migrants into French society. The creation of the ONI by the 1945 Ordinance was a way to replace the SGI by a State-controlled organisation. Between 1945 and 1955, the French immigration policy was drafted with the aim of assimilating immigrants into French society but progressively gave way to temporary immigration of unskilled single young men, due to the urgent need of labour. Lequin describes the years from 1945 to

⁷⁴ Freeman, *Immigrant Labor*, p.73.

⁷⁵ Yves Lequin, 'Les vagues d'immigration successives', in Yves Lequin, (ed.), *Histoire des étrangers et de l'immigration en France* (Paris, 2006), p.449.

1980 as a period when immigration was absent from public debate without any law defining French immigration policy.⁷⁶

In the case of refugees, Noiriél argues that the model of 'integration/exclusion' applies again. In *Réfugiés et sans-papiers*, Noiriél analyses the French government's policies on refugees from the French revolution to the late 1980s, and the effects of these policies on refugees.⁷⁷ Refugees, just like labour immigrants, were subjected to national preference. This served to protect the French economy, and refugees were expelled if they were unemployed once in France, just like other labour migrants.⁷⁸ After the end of the Second World War, Noiriél's main argument is that refugees in France had to prove that they fitted the definition of a refugee as understood by international law, and its interpretation by the French government and administration. From 1952, the Office Français pour la Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (OFPRA) was in charge of establishing whether refugees fitted the definition and then determined whether or not they were allowed to remain in France and to work. According to Noiriél, the creation of the OFPRA changed the way refugees were perceived and controlled. From its creation, the OFPRA worked with embassies or the police to assess if refugees were indeed persecuted or not. Noiriél claims that the OFPRA assessed the political situation of refugees' countries of origin from a French perspective.⁷⁹ Rather than supporting refugees, the OFPRA's mission was to refuse 'bogus' refugees any protection

⁷⁶ Lequin, 'Vagues d'immigration', p.451.

⁷⁷ Gérard Noiriél, *Réfugiés et sans-papiers : la république face au droit d'asile XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris, 1991).

⁷⁸ Noiriél, *Réfugiés et sans-papiers*, pp.106-15.

⁷⁹ Noiriél, *Réfugiés et sans-papiers*, pp.224-8.

and right of asylum, when it actually chose which refugees could be useful for French interests.

As far as refugees are concerned, Patrick Weil argues that there was a republican tradition of asylum, interrupted from July 1940 to be replaced by ethnical hierarchy until the end of the war.⁸⁰ Weil sees in the 1951 Geneva Convention a guarantee of the rights of refugees in France, and the end of precarious conditions for them. Finally, he argues that the policies regarding the status of refugee in France were drafted in a benevolent spirit of protection.⁸¹

The discussion will now move on to the politics of immigration in Britain. Like in France, immigration questions were linked to national identity and ethnicity. British immigration policy in the 1950s was influenced by pre-war policies. It is important to understand under which context they were passed and who they targeted, in order to assess the legal framework in which refugees from Hungary and Egypt arrived in 1956. The arrival in Britain of Russian and eastern European Jews escaping pogroms at the end of the nineteenth century was the first big wave of contemporary immigrants. In 1903, the Royal Commission on Alien immigration published a report describing Jews as undesirable.⁸² At the time and since 1826, with only an interruption of two years in 1848, any foreigner could come and stay in Britain.⁸³ Panikos Panayi claims that the political stability and relative prosperity of the mid-Victorian

⁸⁰ Weil, *La France et ses étrangers*, pp.57-65.

⁸¹ Weil, *La France et ses étrangers*, pp.67-8.

⁸² Layton-Henry, *Politics of Immigration*, pp.6-7.

⁸³ Panikos Panayi, *An Immigration History of Modern Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800* (Harlow, 2010), pp.61-2.

period permitted this *laissez-faire* attitude, which started being questioned with the Great Depression of the late nineteenth century. At that point, Jewish immigrants of the East End of London became scapegoats for poverty, unemployment and overcrowding. Zig Layton-Henry claims that a campaign led by a small number of Conservatives, but supported by the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, and relying on existing antisemitism in British society, was launched to impose immigration controls.⁸⁴ It was in with the aim of stopping this wave of 'undesirable aliens' that the Aliens Act of 1905 was passed. This Act is arguably the beginning of modern immigration control in Britain. Panayi argues that the more an immigrant group is visible the more it faces restrictions. He sees two main factors determining the level of immigration since the 1905 Aliens Act: Britain's economic needs, and an xenophobic press influencing public opinion.⁸⁵

The Aliens Act of 1914, passed in a single day during the First World War, went further and was designed to keep strict control over aliens during the course of war. It led to large-scale internment and deportations. Approximately 30,000 aliens were expelled, including 7,000 Russian Jews. The power to deport aliens was made permanent under the Aliens Restrictions Act of 1919.⁸⁶ David Cesarani describes the debates of the Aliens Restrictions Act as blended with anti-German feeling, antisemitism and racism.⁸⁷ This Act was passed in anti-alien hysteria. A year later, the Order of 1920 required work permits for

⁸⁴ Layton-Henry, *Politics of Immigration*, pp.5-6.

⁸⁵ Panayi, *Immigration History*, p.308.

⁸⁶ Robin Cohen, *Migration and its Enemies: Global Capital, Migrant Labour and the Nation-State* (Abingdon, 2006), pp.70-4.

⁸⁷ David Cesarani, 'An Alien Concept? The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society before 1940', in David Cesarani and Tony Kushner (eds), *The Internment of Aliens of Twentieth Century Britain*, (London, 1993), p.38.

any immigrant wishing to settle in the UK, and entry was refused to immigrants who could not financially support themselves.⁸⁸ Finally, the Aliens Order of 1925 targeted seamen, and made them subject to the 1920 Order. This time not only aliens were concerned, but also British-born Black people who were frequently arrested by the police at British sea docks. They had to register with the police and carry identification papers, and could be deported if they failed to prove their nationality.⁸⁹

The main groups of immigrants in Britain after the Second World War came from the Commonwealth. In *The Politics of Immigration*, Zig Layton-Henry argues that, unlike France, which tried to rationalise its immigration policy, colonial immigration in Britain was largely spontaneous and unorganised. Layton-Henry notes that, in 1948, the British government looked at the possibility of filling vacant positions in Britain with Caribbean immigration. Layton-Henry claims that, from an economic point of view, Commonwealth immigration was welcomed as it was used to fill positions otherwise left vacant, and for which British and European immigrant workers had little interest.⁹⁰ He states that post-war immigration contributed to the economic growth of Britain and the improvement of living standards. As far as national identity is concerned, Layton-Henry dismisses as myth the idea that Britain, along with all European countries, was a homogeneous nation-state. Britain realised it had become a 'multiracial state with substantial non-European minorities' after 1948, and the first wave of Caribbean immigration.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Panayi, *Immigration History*, pp.62-3.

⁸⁹ Cesarani, 'An Alien Concept?', p.39.

⁹⁰ Layton-Henry, *Politics of Immigration*, pp.12-4.

⁹¹ Layton-Henry, *Politics of Immigration*, pp.18-19.

Absorbing large numbers of Commonwealth immigrants into British society became a concern for the British government in the early post-war years. Layton-Henry claims that the main reason not to call for colonial immigration was racial prejudice.⁹² He argues that, while post-war immigration contributed to economic growth, it was never considered as an asset, due to racial stereotypes found among the government and the working class.⁹³

Ian Spencer, in *British Immigration Policy since 1939*, goes further than Layton-Henry in his approach. Spencer argues that, in the post-war years, Black and Asian immigration was controlled in practice, despite the 1948 Nationality Act. The decision to restrict entry to people from former and current colonies was motivated by assumptions on the undesirability of 'physically and culturally distinct groups'.⁹⁴ Spencer shows that the government wanted to limit the number of non-white immigrants, arguing that the government blamed colonial immigration for racial disturbances.⁹⁵ However, although ministers agreed on the need to introduce legislation regarding deportation and strict immigration policy, it was never properly drafted in the 1950s. Spencer attributes this to the fact that public interest on 'coloured' immigration wore off in 1955, and that Anthony Eden, then Prime Minister, was not keen on legislating on the issue due to the political difficulties it would have caused. Spencer argues that, had a law restricting Commonwealth migration been passed in 1955, Britain's influence within the Commonwealth would have been jeopardised. It would have also damaged the still-emerging

⁹² Layton-Henry, *Politics of Immigration*, pp.27-31.

⁹³ Layton-Henry, *Politics of Immigration*, p.67.

⁹⁴ Spencer, *British Immigration Policy*, p.21.

⁹⁵ Spencer, *British Immigration Policy*, pp.43-4.

Commonwealth of Nations as a whole at a time when the government was 'preaching the virtues of multi-racialism and racial partnership to others'.

Spencer claims that, in comparison with the welcome given to 750,000 Irish immigrants who came to Britain after 1945, the government's fears about immigration were more to do with Commonwealth immigrants than immigration in general.⁹⁶

As far as refugees were concerned, they, too, faced difficulties seeking asylum in Britain. From 1933 until 1940, a significant number of refugees from Nazi Germany sought asylum in France and in Britain. Louise London argues that the 70,000 Jewish refugees were only granted asylum in Britain on the condition they would not become a burden on public funds, which put considerable pressure on private organisations to financially support them.⁹⁷ The British government favoured the *Kindertransport*, which represented 10,000 of the total of Jewish refugees, because 'Anglicisation would minimise the extent to which their ethnicity would be perceived as alien'.⁹⁸ Moreover, Anglo-Jewish leaders and the government feared that a larger Jewish population in Britain would cause a rise in antisemitism.⁹⁹ Louise London suggests that ethnicity and national identity played a role in accepting Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany.

One of the most significant contributions in the field of refugee history is Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox's *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*. Kushner and

⁹⁶ Spencer, *British Immigration Policy*, pp.73-84.

⁹⁷ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p.132.

⁹⁸ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p.281.

⁹⁹ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, pp.38-39.

Knox argue that from the end of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, refugees were never welcome in Britain. Although the Aliens Act of 1905 included clauses to grant asylum to the persecuted, with this legislation 'asylum became a privilege granted by the state and not an automatic right'.¹⁰⁰ The potential for anti-alien sentiment in British society and the State led to restrictions of the right of asylum, with the exception of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, and even with these it was given under certain conditions and without unanimous approval. Colin Holmes goes further, as he claims that there is an history of invoking a 'tradition of tolerance' to justify xenophobic events, such as the Nottingham and Notting Hill race riots. This invoked 'tradition of tolerance' serves to downplay racial hatred by labelling it an 'unfortunate aberration'.¹⁰¹ Holmes describes hostility towards immigrants and refugees as a complex intertwinement of forces such as the role of individuals, cultural stereotypes, immediate pressures, local and international influences.¹⁰²

A recurring aspect of the history of immigration in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century is that, when confronted by significant numbers of immigrants and refugees, successive governments repeatedly asserted that Britain was not a country of immigration. The Aliens Acts mentioned earlier were all in response of what was viewed by successive governments as waves of immigration that needed, if not to be stopped, to be strictly controlled.

¹⁰⁰ Kushner and Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, p.397.

¹⁰¹ Holmes, *A Tolerant Country?*, pp.14-15.

¹⁰² Holmes, *A Tolerant Country?*, p.79.

When it comes to ethnicity, Hargreaves argues that definition varies from one country to the other. Hargreaves distinguishes three main strands to define ethnic groups: biological, politico-territorial, and cultural. The extent to which immigrants and their descendants are incorporated into nation-states depends on socio-economic processes, values and aspirations of ethnic minority groups, and on the attitudes of the majority population towards these groups both at state and society levels. In Britain, ethnic minorities are associated with skin colour and discrimination, with non-white groups defined as ethnic minorities, with the exception of the Irish, considered to be subject to discrimination.¹⁰³

The 1948 Nationality Act played a role on colonial immigration in Britain. This Act gave all imperial subjects the right of free entry into Britain. Robert Colls states that the passing of the 1948 Nationality Act was linked to the liberalist tradition of Britain.¹⁰⁴ However, liberalism had its limits. Colls states that, although colonial peoples were considered British subjects, the question of national identity did not affect colonies but only Britain. Colls' argument is that, at the time, to be British in post-war Britain meant to be Anglo-Saxon, and the arrival of immigrants from India and the West Indies challenged this identity. In post-war Britain, many considered themselves superior simply because they were white Britons, and that 'mass immigration reactivated the invader thesis'. Yet, according to Colls, the British government, in the post-war years until 1962, believed that Britain could potentially absorb anyone from the Commonwealth. However, while many politicians had a firm belief in that

¹⁰³ Hargreaves, *Multi-Ethnic France*, pp.32-3.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford, 2002), pp.136-7.

statement, local populations sometimes responded negatively to the settling of Black and Asian immigrants.¹⁰⁵

Wendy Webster, in *Englishness and Empire*, argues that, after the Second World War, Englishness was defined in opposition to the Commonwealth, as a result of the increasing immigration from former colonies. Webster claims that immigration set 'little England' in opposition to a multiracial Commonwealth.¹⁰⁶ According to Webster, Commonwealth immigration in the 1950s challenged the idea of Britain as a multiracial family. Webster shows that Black and Asian immigrants, despite being formally British citizens, were perceived as aliens. The idea of a racial boundary between Britain and the rest of the Empire was transgressed with Black and Asian immigration. On the other hand, European Voluntary Workers (EVW), an immigration scheme composed of Polish and Ukrainian prisoners of war, were seen as having greater claims to belong as white catholic immigrants. Thus the pre-war inclusive British identity, seen as a multiracial empire, changed in the mid-1950s. The British nation then identified itself by excluding Commonwealth immigrants.¹⁰⁷ Colonial immigration was thus a threat to Englishness, and Britishness, symbolised as a home. This construction of national identity, Webster argues, referred to home and family as white.

Robin Cohen, in *Migration and its Enemies*, argues that immigration policies and practices serve to define what make English and British national identities. According to him, the study of rejected groups of immigrants because of

¹⁰⁵ Colls, *Identity of England*, pp.159-60.

¹⁰⁶ Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (Oxford, 2005), pp.152-3.

¹⁰⁷ Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, pp.159-60.

religion, language, economic competition, and race, enables to grasp the construction process of British national identity.¹⁰⁸ Cohen called the period from 1945 to 1978 the 'racialization of immigration'. The British Nationality Act of 1948, along with the 1962, 1968 and 1971 Immigration Acts as supplementing the 1905, 1914, and 1919 Acts, aimed at extending the reasons for deportations and turned Commonwealth citizens into aliens.¹⁰⁹

Some historiographical work, like Adrian Favell, in *Philosophies of Integration*, compares the British and French models of immigration.¹¹⁰ Favell argues that France has a universal idea of integration, transforming migrants into full French citizens, while Britain manages public order and relations between communities.¹¹¹ Favell describes France's philosophy of integration linked to its cultural past and heritage from the Third Republic and calls it 'the myth of republican citizenship'. Favell claims that the rules of immigration and integration are republican and citizenship-based. It means that France was a 'universal nation of equal and free citizens', whose members did not belong to a particular ethnic group but were characterised by their willingness to adhere to the French nation. Immigration and naturalisation policies are thus what define who is French and who is foreign, and make integration dependent on how policies define the idea of associative membership to the French nation.¹¹² According to Favell, Britain's immigration and nationality policies are in sharp contrast to French ones. He calls it the 'myth of citizenship and social progress'.

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, *Migration and its Enemies*, p.66.

¹⁰⁹ Cohen, *Migration and its Enemies*, p.76.

¹¹⁰ Adrian Favell, *Philosophies of Integration: Immigration and the Idea of Citizenship in France and Britain* (Basingstoke, 1998).

¹¹¹ Favell, *Philosophies of Integration*, pp.3-4.

¹¹² Favell, *Philosophies of Integration*, pp.44-5.

British immigration policy is described as liberal, while British nationality is characterized by a feeling of belonging, and citizenship is defined as a 'quality of communal social life, of civilised behaviour'. In comparison with other European countries, ethnic and racial questions benefited from shared views from the Left and the Right in British politics. Thus, with the 1948 Nationality Act, the Left believed it was an appropriate response to Britain's responsibilities towards its ex-colonies. On the other hand, the Right saw in the Act 'the fulfilment of Britain's role as empire leader, and the preservation of sovereign rule'. Then, according to Favell, a political consensus existed on immigration and racial questions in post-war Britain.¹¹³

-Immigration in France and Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1956

After the Second World War, refugees from Hungary and Egypt were not the first immigrants to arrive in Britain and France. The aim of this section is to present an outline of the main waves of colonial and postcolonial immigration in France and Britain from the end of the Second World War until 1956 and their relationship with the Cold War context. In contrast to France, Britain did not pass new regulations on immigration after the Second World War. Yet, they similarly adopted new rules regarding nationality, with the British

¹¹³ Favell, *Philosophies of Integration*, pp.94-102.

Nationality Act of 1948. Understanding this Act and its impact on immigration in the 1950s is of importance for this thesis.

The British Nationality Act confirmed an already existing situation: there was no distinction 'between the citizenship and nationality of the monarch's subjects resident in the different parts of the Empire or between the monarch's citizens and the monarch's subjects' living in the United Kingdom. Citizens from newly independent countries, like India and Pakistan, remained British subjects, regardless of them having Indian or Pakistani passports. The British government reaffirmed its faith in the imperial unity.¹¹⁴ In the debate on the Act, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, the Conservative spokesman on home affairs, was proud to announce that there were no colour bar restrictions in Britain thanks to this Act, and he described it as a commitment to a great tradition of hospitality to every member of the Empire.¹¹⁵

The passing of the British Nationality Act coincides with the first time a memorandum was circulated to Cabinet members on the subject of what was referred to as 'coloured immigration'. The arrival of the Empire Windrush, a boat carrying 417 Jamaican immigrants, was widely publicised and also discussed within the Cabinet. A dichotomy between the government's public tolerance towards black immigration and private discourses of doubts and hostility took its roots back in 1948. The British Nationality Act became problematic as soon as it was passed, and soon the Cabinet debated the needs

¹¹⁴ Spencer, *British Immigration Policy*, pp.53-5.

¹¹⁵ Layton-Henry, *Politics of Immigration*, pp.9-10.

and contents of measures to prevent Commonwealth immigration.¹¹⁶ Although this type of immigration existed before the Second World War, the Cabinet feared it would rapidly increase beyond control.

In January 1951, an ad hoc committee of ministers appointed by the Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, and chaired by the Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede, reviewed the means to be adopted to check Commonwealth immigration to the United Kingdom.¹¹⁷ Three methods were considered to control it: to apply to British subjects the controls then applied to aliens, to deport British subjects who had been resident for not more than two years and had applied for national assistance or had been convicted of a serious offence or had attempted to create social unrest, to return stowaways to Britain to the territory from which they embarked or to which they belonged. However, the committee warned that these three methods were controversial and that introduction of legislation was not justified. It nonetheless recommended to maintain as effectively as possible the control of stowaways. This report shows that there was a fear that Commonwealth immigration would increase to the point of being uncontrollable. One of the main concerns was that this new immigration could become a financial burden, but also could cause crime and social unrest.

Although, the Cabinet considered it wrong to segregate what it called the 'colonial community', further memoranda made it clear that there was a potential risk in leaving Commonwealth immigration unchecked for Britain's

¹¹⁶ Spencer, *British Immigration Policy*, pp.50-2.

¹¹⁷ TNA, CAB 21/4355, Memorandum on Immigration of British Subjects into the United Kingdom, 24 January 1951.

economy and national identity.¹¹⁸ In 1954, the Lord President of the Council, Lord Salisbury, expressed his concerns that if this immigration was not controlled, Britain would face a much larger problem in 20 or 30 years.¹¹⁹ Commonwealth immigration was described as opportunistic and economic. According to this argument, the British welfare state attracted immigrants who wanted to take advantage of social services. Moreover, there was an underlying, yet widespread, concern in the Cabinet that a large number would unbalance British society. These ideas were relayed to the press and in the public, and a campaign against the arrival of West Indians also emerged in the country, despite immigrant workers usually occupying the least desirable jobs and housing.¹²⁰

The discussion now moves on to North African immigration in France and the relationship with the Algerian war. As the review of historiography suggested, there was an increase in North African immigration to France, especially from Algeria due the status of Algerians as 'Français Musulmans d'Algérie'. This citizenship status gave them the right of free circulation between Algeria and France, as well as the same rights as French citizens.¹²¹ This status had a great impact in terms of immigration. Whereas, between 1946 and 1954, foreign immigration to France stagnated, immigration from Algeria increased from 22,000 to 210,000.

¹¹⁸ TNA, CAB 21/1734, Memorandum on Coloured People from British Colonial Territories, 29 March 1950.

¹¹⁹ TNA, CAB 134/1191, Letter by the Marquess of Salisbury to Commonwealth Relations Office, 20 March 1954.

¹²⁰ David Mason, *Race and Ethnicity in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1995), p.27.

¹²¹ Noiriél, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme*, pp.517-8.

Moroccans and Tunisians had the status of protected subjects since 1938. They did not need a stay permit, but had to have authorisation to migrate to France and go through a health check. They also needed an identity card mentioning their status, and the profession they were authorised to exercise. Their employment was thus dependent on labour needs. After the independence of Morocco and Tunisia in 1956, their nationals still did not need a stay permit, until 1959 for Moroccans and 1963 for Tunisians.¹²²

The beginning of the Algerian War, in November 1954, drastically changed the representations of Algerian immigration in France. The war was fought in Algeria but also in France, and many considered Algerian immigrants as potential enemies. Algerian workers became the objects of a press campaign associating them with criminality and terrorism. This press campaign existed prior to the beginning of the Algerian War. From 1947, left and right-wing newspapers presented the alleged Algerian criminality as a national issue. The association of criminal acts with the Algerians made them appear like criminals or terrorists supporting the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN). Ultimately, the humiliations and gross exploitation of Algerian immigrants encouraged Algerian nationalism and the fight for independence, while immigrants of other nationalities lived in relative peace.¹²³

Following the insurrection that started the Algerian War, on 1 November 1954, the French press and those in the political sphere held Egypt and the Arab League responsible for it. They also saw the complicity of the Algerian

¹²² Spire, *Etrangers à la carte*, pp.192-4.

¹²³ Noiriél, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme*, pp.537-9.

Communist Party, the PCF, and international communism in general.¹²⁴

Although, this association was the result of an amalgamation of nationalism and communism, relations between communism, the Algerian War, and immigrants were complex. Participation in strikes in France was associated with the Cold War context depending on the nationality of the immigrants on strike. Very often, the French government suspected strikes to be the initiative of Communists.¹²⁵

On 12 March 1956, Guy Mollet, Socialist Prime Minister, was voted special powers by the National Assembly, suspending individual liberties and sending troops to Algeria in an effort to suppress the war.¹²⁶ The Left, including the PCF, which also voted in favour, and especially the French Section of the Socialist International (SFIO), became weaker following the special powers vote, seen as an abandonment of the Left's traditional values. Yet, the Left tried to cling on to its fundamental ideas by claiming that the aim was to protect local populations and to end the war. Despite those claims, and others in which the Left stated it still believed in the assimilation of Algeria to France and refused to talk about peoples or nations but talked rather of territories and 'indigènes', the Left became associated with military repression, and Mollet was considered a traitor to socialism. However, it marked a stronger, more repressive approach, to the Algerian War by the French government.

¹²⁴ Guy Pervillé, 'La révolution algérienne et la "guerre froide" (1954-1962)', *Etudes Internationales*, 16:1, (1985), pp.57-60.

¹²⁵ Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme*, pp.500-9.

¹²⁶ Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l'oubli: la mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris, 1992), pp.75-7.

Still in 1956, foreign workers were given the same rights as Algerian workers: they could be employed in France without the intervention of the ONI.

Spontaneous immigration was then favoured, with the hope to slow Algerian immigration. The government considered that it would be beneficial to have more desirable immigrants, as the Algerian War seriously damaged the image of Algerians in France.¹²⁷ The Cold War context only worsened the perception of the Algerian War and Algerian immigrants, confusing communism, as the PCF was against imperialism and colonisation, and nationalism.

The Suez crisis also mixed communism and nationalism, and links with the Algerian War were made, as additional reasons for France and Britain to intervene militarily in Egypt. The French and British governments established a military plan to regain control of the canal, after its nationalisation by Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Egyptian president, on 26 July 1956. The plan of action was decided in Sèvres between 22 and 24 October, by Christian Pineau, French minister of Foreign Affairs, Selwyn Lloyd, British Foreign Secretary, and David Ben-Gurion, Israeli Prime Minister. The plan was supported by Anthony Eden, the British Prime Minister, and Guy Mollet, as they believed that it would give the impression that France and Britain were acting as peacekeepers, when they actually wanted to regain control of the Suez canal and to overthrow Nasser. The plan called for Israel to attack Egypt on 29 October and to occupy the canal zone. It was followed by the French and British military intervention on 31 October, officially to end the military conflict.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Weil, *La France et ses étrangers*, pp.84-5.

¹²⁸ Ferro, 1956, *Suez*, pp.72-6; Christian Pineau, 1956 *Suez* (Paris, 1976), pp.149-55.

At the time of the Suez intervention, the alliance between Britain, France and Israel was an unexpected one. British relations with Israel were troubled at the time of the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. Britain's defensive treaty with Jordan, signed in 1948, was a major source of tension with Israel. Since 1953, the situation deteriorated between Israel and Jordan, to the point that in October 1954, Britain started to plan how to fulfil their agreement with Jordan.¹²⁹ From 1955, and even until during the planning of Operation Musketeer, a plan named Operation Cordage had been designed and modified as the situation in Egypt changed, in order to attack Israel. On the night of 28 February 1955, Israel launched a raid near the town of Gaza. Following the raid, Nasser claimed that it had led him to conclude an arms deal with Czechoslovakia. The British held Israel responsible for the escalation of tensions with Egypt.¹³⁰ Britain also reduced its supply of arms to Israel to eventually suspend it on 3 January 1956. David Ben-Gurion, the Israeli Prime Minister, considered that the arms balance was unfavourable to Israel, and that if nothing was done, it could not defend itself against Egypt.¹³¹

It made the planning of the attack on Egypt all the more difficult as Britain had to prevent Israel from attacking Jordan. On 11 October, Israel launched an attack on the Jordanian town of Qalqilya in retaliation of the murder of two Israeli farmers. Israel and Britain were on the verge of military confrontation as King Hussein asked Britain to honour the defensive pact.¹³² Britain managed to avoid confrontation by sending forces from Cyprus. It was also made clear to

¹²⁹ Eric Grove, 'Who to Fight in 1956, Egypt or Israel? Operation Musketeer versus Operation Cordage', in Smith, (ed.), *Reassessing Suez*, pp.79-80.

¹³⁰ Natan Aridan, *Britain, Israel and Anglo-Jewry 1949-1957* (London, 2004), pp.161-2.

¹³¹ Aridan, *Britain, Israel and Anglo-Jewry*, p.165.

¹³² Aridan, *Britain, Israel and Anglo-Jewry*, p.175.

Golda Meir, the Israeli Foreign Minister, that Britain would stand by their treaty to protect Jordan.¹³³

The French attitude towards Israel was different from the British one. Despite being a signatory of the Tripartite Declaration of May 1950, France sold arms to Israel, in order to have a large share of the Middle East arms market, despite already selling arms to Syria.¹³⁴ France continued to supply Israel with arms much to the discontent of Britain, until the nationalisation of the Suez canal.¹³⁵ There was, however, one exception as Israel faced an arms embargo after attacking Syrian positions on the lake Kinneret on 11 December 1955. The embargo was eventually lifted in February 1956.¹³⁶ Moreover, France and Israel had a common enemy in Egypt. In 1954, connections were made between the Algerian War and the deepening conflict between Israel and Egypt. Israel could provide France with information about events in Algeria and the links with Nasser and the FLN, if France would in return support the Israeli by selling them arms.¹³⁷ Despite a sometimes ambivalent foreign policy towards Israel, France became the intermediary between Britain and Israel in order to secure cooperation as needed for the military intervention in Egypt. Ben-Gurion and Eden agreed to collaborate if Britain promised not to attack Israel, and that Israel would not attack Jordan.¹³⁸

¹³³ Selwyn Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account* (London, 1978), p.176.

¹³⁴ Zach Levey, 'French-Israeli Relations, 1950-1956: the strategic dimension', in Smith, (ed.), *Reassessing Suez*, p.90.

¹³⁵ Aridan, *Britain, Israel and Anglo-Jewry*, p.167.

¹³⁶ Levey, 'French-Israeli Relations', pp.97-8.

¹³⁷ Levey, 'French-Israeli Relations', pp.92-3.

¹³⁸ Grove, 'Who to Fight in 1956?', p.84.

The military action in Egypt was generally supported by the French government and the French public, except for Communists and Poujadists. However, the objective of the military intervention in Egypt was not just to regain control of the Suez canal.¹³⁹ The Algerian war context, which started in November 1954, influenced the French government's decisions during the Suez crisis. When the Sèvres agreement was concluded, Guy Mollet and Christian Pineau hoped to overthrow Nasser, as the French government suspected him of providing the FLN with training and supplies.¹⁴⁰ French patriotism was very high during the Suez crisis. Nasser was depicted in France as a new Hitler, and the nationalisation of the Suez canal had been compared by the French press to the German reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936. Many among the government thought that the FLN could not be defeated until Nasser had been removed. In solving the Suez crisis, the French government was thus hoping to make a major step towards the end of the Algerian War by weakening the FLN.

In Britain, the reactions to the Suez military action were mixed. Press reactions were divided between support to the military action and Eden, and sharp criticism. The *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* claimed that intervention was necessary to safeguard the British Empire or to avoid the world irreparable damage. In contrast, the *Daily Mirror* and the *Observer* strongly criticized Eden for acting, along with France, like 'gangsters'. *The Times* also questioned the intervention, while the BBC remained supportive of Eden's policy. On the

¹³⁹ Ferro, 1956, *Suez*, p.84.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Gildea, *France since 1945* (Oxford, 1996), p.27.

whole, the press was debating the rights and wrongs of the military intervention.¹⁴¹

Reactions among the government were also divided. Eden had to deal with the resignation of two junior ministers, Anthony Nutting and Edward Boyle, when it became clear that military intervention in Egypt would take place. Other ministers also disapproved but did not resign. Parliamentary opposition, and notably Hugh Gaitskell, who had been elected Labour leader in December 1955, strongly condemned the intervention and called for Eden's resignation on 4 November 1956.¹⁴²

Although Britain's military intervention in Egypt was officially to act as a peacekeeper, the British Cabinet also had a second objective: a change of government in Egypt, although for a different reason than the French government.¹⁴³ The British Cabinet hoped that the removal of Nasser would have enabled the installation of a new regime 'less hostile to the West'.¹⁴⁴

Only days before beginning of the military action in Egypt, the Hungarian revolution started. The French and British governments supported the Hungarian revolution but took no action. Christian Pineau declared to the press on 26 October that France would not seek to exploit the events in Hungary for

¹⁴¹ Keith Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London, 1991), pp.404-5; A.J. Stockwell, 'Suez 1956 and the Moral Disarmament of the British Empire', in Smith, (ed.), *Reassessing Suez*, p.230.

¹⁴² Stockwell, 'Suez 1956', pp.228-30; Philip M. Williams, (ed.), *The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell 1945-1956* (London, 1983), pp.619-22.

¹⁴³ Kyle, *Suez*, p.148; Edward Johnson, 'The Suez Crisis at the United Nations: The Effects for the Foreign Office and British Foreign Policy', in Smith, (ed.), *Reassessing Suez*, p.166.

¹⁴⁴ Johnson, 'The Suez Crisis', p.166.

its own benefit, but nevertheless supported the demonstrations.¹⁴⁵ On 1 November, R.A. Butler, the Lord Privy Seal, announced at the House of Commons that the British government had no intention of exploiting events in Eastern Europe to undermine the security of the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁶ One of the reasons given to explain why France and Britain did not offer support to Hungary was because they were distracted by the Suez crisis.¹⁴⁷ There was also the practical issue of military support. Pierre Kende claims that, in 1956, the only terrestrial way to Hungary was via Austria.¹⁴⁸ However, Austria's recent status as a neutral country prevented the use of this option. Moreover, European countries feared that military intervention in Soviet affairs could start a world war.¹⁴⁹

This introduction to the thesis has shown that there was a complex relationship between immigration policies, immigrants, and the Cold War context. The thesis will now explore these relationships and how it affected the refugees from Hungary and Egypt in France and Britain.

¹⁴⁵ Litván, *The Hungarian Revolution*, p.94.

¹⁴⁶ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 558, col. 1616, 1 November 1956.

¹⁴⁷ Terry Cox, '1956: Discoveries, Legacies and Memory', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 58:8 (2006), p.xi.

¹⁴⁸ Pierre Kende, 'Epilogue', in François Fejtő, *La Tragédie Hongroise* (Paris, 1958), p.345.

¹⁴⁹ Litván, *Hungarian Revolution*, pp.90-1.

Part I

2. Two per cent of the Hungarian population

Before looking at the Hungarian refugee crisis itself and the French and British responses, this preamble to chapters 3 and 4 briefly introduces the context that led 200,000 Hungarians to seek refuge in Austria and in Yugoslavia after October 1956. Hungarian refugees fell under the protection of the 1951 Geneva Convention, as August Lindt declared that their situation was a consequence of the Second World War. I will discuss in this chapter the political context in Hungary since 1945.¹

Hungary did not become a Communist country immediately after it was liberated by the Soviet army in 1945. The coalition government and the National Assembly were both led by leaders of the Smallholders' party, while Communists remained a minority.² The Paris Peace Treaty signed in February 1947 gave a legal basis for the Russians to keep their troops in Hungary for an unspecified period of time. This situation improved the position of the Hungarian Communist Party and the Party was able to eliminate their political opponents. Elected in 1946, Ferenc Nagy resigned from his position of prime minister in May 1947, following political pressure, and the country thereafter was led by the Hungarian Communist Party.³

¹ Louise Holborn, *Refugees: A Problem of our Time: The Work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951-1972* (Metuchen, 1975), p.394.

² Charles Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc* (Durham, 1986), p.13.

³ László Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War 1945-1956: Between the United States and the Soviet Union* (Budapest, 2004), pp.116-8.

In early 1948, a Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship was signed in Moscow between the Hungarian government and the Soviet government. Shortly after, Hungary became a one party country and adopted the Stalinist political structure.⁴ The role of the State Security Authority (AVH) was instrumental in enforcing Stalinist values.⁵ The AVH eliminated political opponents in order to consolidate the Communist Party position in the country. Its methods were known to be brutal, and it terrorised the local population.

Many of the leaders of the Hungarian Communist Party were Jewish. However, the Communist doctrine rejected religion, and the Soviet regime was known for being antisemitic. As a consequence, Mátyás Rákosi, First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, Ernő Gerő, First Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party, and Gábor Péter, chief of the political police, all adopted Hungarian-sounding names. Charles Gati claims that 70 to 80 per cent of the leaders the AVO, the State Security Department, and then the AVH, were Jewish.⁶ As many political leaders were Jewish, there was a popular antisemitism directed against them, notably among anti-Communists.

Despite having Jews occupying high-ranking positions, antisemitism was still present and tolerated in Hungary.⁷ This can be demonstrated by the fact that Hungarian Jewish leaders rejected their Jewish identity in order to be able to make their careers progress as leaders in a country under the control of the Soviet authorities. In 1952-1953, for example, there was a large campaign of

⁴ Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War*, pp.129-30.

⁵ Borhi, *Hungary in the Cold War*, pp.207-8.

⁶ Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc*, pp.100-1.

⁷ Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc*, pp.104-5.

antisemitism in the Soviet Union, symbolised by the Slansky trial in Prague and the Doctors' Plot to murder Stalin in Moscow. Well-aware of the widespread antisemitism in the Soviet Union, Israel, since its creation, tried to negotiate the emigration of Soviet Jews.⁸ Although a large proportion of Hungarian Jews wanted to leave the country to emigrate to Israel or elsewhere, a minority of Communist Hungarian Jews viewed the Soviet authorities as liberators as they escaped deportation and death during the Second World War thanks to the arrival of the Soviet army.⁹

In order to understand how the revolution started in Hungary, it is necessary to briefly look at Poland's relationship with the Soviet Union in 1956. The accession of Wladyslaw Gomulka to the position of First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party on 21 October was a turning point for both countries. In Poland, the reform movement, strengthened in July 1956 by the workers' strike in Poznań, was reinforced during the Eighth Plenum of the Polish United Workers' Party on 19-21 October when Gomulka was elected despite Soviet disapproval. Nikita Khrushchev, along with Anastas Mikoian, First Deputy Premier of the Soviet Union, Vyacheslav Molotov and Lazar Kaganovich, both First Vice-Premier of the Council of Ministries, attended the plenum. They threatened Poland with military intervention if Gomulka's election was confirmed. However, on 20 October, the Soviet Union, under the pressure of China, refused to intervene militarily. Gomulka made it clear to Khrushchev that his new role as First Secretary would not alter Poland's ties

⁸ Yosef Govrin, 'The Beginning of the Struggle for Soviet Jewish Emigration and Its Impact on Israel-Soviet Relations', in Yaacov Ro'I, (ed.), *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Ilford, 1995), p.328.

⁹ James Mark, 'Antifacism, the 1956 Revolution and the Politics of Communist Autobiographies in Hungary, 1944-2000', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 58:8 (2006), p.1221.

with the Soviet Union. The new Polish Politburo, the executive body of the Polish Communist Party, was chosen on the closing day of the Plenum. It did not include any politicians of the Stalinist period and confirmed Gomulka as First Secretary who announced a 'Polish way to socialism'. In Hungary, students and some politicians believed the situation in Poland was an opportunity to obtain more independence in domestic political and economic affairs.¹⁰

It is in such a context that the revolution in Hungary started. The League of Hungarian University Students (MEFESZ), an independent organisation opposing the Stalinist leadership of Gerő, then First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, was re-established on 15 October by students of the University of Szeged. It opposed the government by formulating demands and publishing manifestos. Between 15 October and 23 October, student assemblies in universities were formed throughout all of Hungary. On 22 October, a student assembly at the Technical University of Budapest voted to join the newly reformed MEFESZ. It also sent its spokesmen to deliver the resolutions to other universities, factories, and local and central offices. They actively sought the use of demonstrations and strikes to make themselves heard.

On the night of 22 October, students were joined by people from all classes and asked for reforms: a multiparty system, free elections, civil rights, national economic independence, and the reinstatement of Hungarian national holidays

¹⁰ György Litván, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform, Revolution, Repression 1953-1963* (London, 1996), p.51.

and symbols of state.¹¹ A demonstration to promote those ideas took place in Budapest on 23 October, starting from the monument to General Bem, a Polish revolutionary who led Hungarian forces to victory against Habsburg and Tsarist military units in 1849. On that day, tens of thousands of demonstrators met at the monument, including students, workers and other sympathisers. Two hundred thousand people gathered in front of the Parliament building and around, calling for Imre Nagy to become the new leader of the country.

Nagy was First Secretary from 1953 to 1955, but had been removed from his functions as his policy of reforms was considered threatening by the Soviet authorities. In 1956, he still appeared as a reformist and was considered to be a possible alternative to lead the country and weaken the influence of the Soviet authorities on domestic politics and economy.¹² Nagy became prime minister on 24 October. In the streets of the city, 15,000 freedom fighters, as they were called, organised themselves in small groups led by commanders. They mainly included young skilled and unskilled workers, but some were also returnees from Soviet labour camps.¹³

On 28 October, a military attack to suppress the demonstrations was cancelled at the demand of Nagy, enabling him to declare a truce and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest. He also declared that the revolution was national and democratic. On 30 October, Nagy announced that democratic parties could

¹¹ Litván, *Hungarian Revolution*, p.53.

¹² János M. Rainer, 'The Development of Imre Nagy as a Politician and a Thinker', *Contemporary European History*, 6:3 (1997), pp.269-70.

¹³ Zsuzsanna Vajda and László Eörsi, 'Saints of the Streets': The Participants in 1956', in László Péter and Martyn Rady, (eds), *Resistance, Rebellion and Revolution in Hungary and Central Europe: Commemorating 1956* (London, 2008), p.230.

be formed again, which was immediately done. On 1 November, he went on to announce that Hungary withdrew from the Warsaw Pact to protest against the moves of Soviet troops in Ukraine and Romania towards Hungary the night before. He also declared Hungary a neutral State, a decision taken just hours before. To ensure worldwide recognition of Hungary's new status, he requested the very same day that the United Nations acknowledged the country's neutrality. Janós Kádár, who was part of the Nagy government, flew to Moscow and was convinced to form a new Hungarian government with the help of the Soviet Union.

On 2 November, Nagy sent a telegram to Dag Hammarskjöld, the General Secretary of the United Nations, to press for the international recognition of Hungary as a neutral state and that the UN mediated between Hungary and the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the situation in Hungary was being discussed by Khrushchev in Bucharest with Romanian, Bulgarian and Czechoslovak leaders. Khrushchev declared that he decided to send troops in Budapest in the early hours of 4 November. The Soviet troops in Hungary counted 150,000 men and 2,000 tanks. Houses were destroyed, forcing some people of Budapest to take refuge in cellars. The number of casualties in Budapest between 23 October and 1 December shows the violence of the repression: 13,000 were wounded and 2,000 were killed on the Hungarian side.¹⁴ Nagy sought refuge at the Yugoslav embassy, but was later handed in to the Soviet authorities. He was tried and executed in June 1958. Janós Kádár proclaimed a new Hungarian government on 4 November.

¹⁴ Miklós Molnár, *Budapest 1956: A History of the Hungarian Revolution* (London, 1971), pp.239-40.

Pierre Latzko, who was 22 years old during the revolution, was involved in revolutionary actions in October and November 1956. He was in northern Hungary, in the city of Eger, and joined a revolutionary committee. His role was to patrol the city with a small armed group. During one patrol, he arrested a high-ranking civil servant. When the revolution was repressed, he felt he had no other choice than to leave because of his actions:

[Un de mes collègues] a été arrêté. Il a été accusé de complicité, condamné à mort et exécuté. Alors qu'il avait fait beaucoup moins, entre guillemets, que moi. Avec une arme, j'avais procédé à l'arrestation [du premier secrétaire régional du bureau politique]. Il fallait partir. A mon avis, je n'aurais pas survécu aux premiers interrogatoires. Alors je suis parti pour l'Autriche.¹⁵

After living clandestinely for several days, he crossed the border to Austria eventually to be accepted in France as a refugee. Pierre Latzko was among the category of Hungarian refugees for whom it was a question of life or death to leave the country. However, not all Hungarians left because of their involvement during the revolution.

Suzanne Joseph remembers how she witnessed the demonstrations in Budapest as a 10-year old child, which although had been peacefully started were eventually violently repressed:

¹⁵ Interview with Pierre Latzko, 13 & 20 November 2009.

Les gens défilaient. Tout le début était génial. Il y avait une très bonne atmosphère, bon enfant, de la gaieté, des chansons... Cette allégresse n'a pas duré longtemps, parce que quand le gouvernement a appelé les Russes à l'aide, ça a été terrible... Ils ont tiré dans le tas. Il y a eu quatre morts dans notre immeuble, qui ne sont pas revenus de la manif'. Le soir même sur la place, on a trouvé les boucles d'oreilles de la voisine par terre, il y avait du sang. Cette voisine là, elle n'est pas revenue.¹⁶

Despite these violent memories of the repression, Suzanne Joseph remembers enjoying the fact that there was no school, and that she was playing games and eating cakes while hiding in the cellar during the day. She left the country in early 1957 with her parents, who had tried before the revolution without success to emigrate to the United States.

The experience was completely different for Anna J., a 18-year old Jewish girl at the time. She felt threatened by the demonstrations, as one of her friends had been a victim of antisemitic verbal abuse in her presence. Along with her relatives, she lived in the fear that the mass murder of the Hungarian Jewish community during the Second World War could happen again. She remembers how she managed to leave Budapest for Austria with relatives, in December 1956:

We came over to Austria during the night. At certain parts you had to go by train and then, afterwards, in the middle of the night, you had to go

¹⁶ Interview with Suzanne Joseph, 2 November 2009.

over the railway lines. There were people helping you to escape. You had to pay and they just told you: 'you go that way, where the light is'. And if you were lucky, then you went over the border.¹⁷

Anna J. left with no passport, just enough money to pay to cross the frontier. She took the chance with relatives to leave Hungary. They feared the consequences of the revolution, expecting that Jews would be turned into scapegoats.

The Soviet repression of the revolution led to the departure of more than 200,000 Hungarians, representing 2 per cent of the total population.¹⁸ One hundred and eighty thousand took refuge in Austria, while 20,000 went to Yugoslavia. Austria, which was neutral at the time, guaranteed that refugees would be protected from Soviet repression. The choice of Yugoslavia can be explained, firstly, by the geographic proximity of the border for some of the refugees who found it more convenient rather than to travel through Hungary to reach Austria. Secondly, it was a political stand for those refugees.

Yugoslavia under Tito represented an alternative to Soviet Communism, as it was a Communist country out of the Warsaw Pact and not under direct Soviet influence. Moreover, Tito supported the Hungarian revolution in its early days and appreciated Imre Nagy as a contrast to the previous Hungarian leaders.¹⁹

Some of the Hungarians who sought refuge in Yugoslavia wanted to show that they were not anti-Communist and certainly not fascist counter-revolutionaries

¹⁷ Interview with Anna J., 10 March 2009.

¹⁸ Andrew Felkay, *Hungary and the USSR, 1956-1988: Kadar's Political Leadership* (Westport, 1989), p.96.

¹⁹ John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there Was a Country* (Cambridge, 2000), p.268.

as the Soviet authorities would label them, but desired, to an extent, a situation similar to Yugoslavia for Hungary.

Pierre Latzko explains the high number of refugees to be due to many Hungarians feeling like prisoners in Communist Hungary: 'La majorité des gens ont profité de la révolution pour sortir du pays. Les gens ne peuvent pas s'imaginer ce que c'est de ne pas être libre.'²⁰ Among the refugees were students, engineers, artists, writers, workers and peasants, not just freedom fighters.²¹ Stéphane Dufoix established that most of the refugees from Hungary were living near the Austrian border when they left and were in fact closer to labour migrants than to political refugees, while some genuinely feared for their lives.²² The Comité des Réfugiés Hongrois, created in 1950 to help Hungarian refugees resettling in France, estimated in January 1957 that 30 to 35 per cent were economic migrants, another 30 per cent were real victims of the revolution, while the rest were considered as youth with no morals.²³

The French and the British governments followed the events in Hungary with great care, while their populations expressed their solidarity with the Hungarian people. The following two chapters discuss the French and the British responses to this refugee crisis, and how Hungarian refugees were received in both countries.

²⁰ Interview with Pierre Latzko.

²¹ Felkay, *Hungary and the USSR*, p.96

²² Stéphane Dufoix, *Politiques d'exil: Hongrois, Polonais, Tchécoslovaques en France après 1945* (Paris, 2002), pp.51-2.

²³ Stéphane Dufoix, 'Fausses évidences: statut de réfugié et politisation', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 16:3 (2000), p.157.

3. Hungarian refugees in France

Out of the 200,000 refugees who left Hungary, France granted asylum to approximately 13,000 between November 1956 and December 1957.¹ The Hungarian revolution of 1956 was officially welcomed by countries opposing the Soviet regime, including France. The French government ruled out military intervention to support the Hungarian population in the first days of the revolution. But it did seek to benefit from the situation, including granting asylum to refugees. There were international and national political and economic considerations linked to the support given to the refugees.

The Hungarian revolution provided an opportunity for the French government to attempt to destabilise the Soviet Union. The French government indicated its hostility to the Soviet intervention in Hungary not only by admitting refugees to France but also by other humanitarian actions. In the first days of the uprising, the French government decided to provide relief to the Hungarians fighting against the Soviet authorities.

Within France, in order to weaken the party, the PCF was represented as being associated with the repression of the revolution. As a result, left and right-wing parties tried to blame the PCF for the repression of the revolution, in what was actually a political manoeuvre to gain voters and encourage defections from the PCF. As far as it was concerned, the PCF endorsed the Soviet invasion in Hungary. These political considerations influenced the treatment of the

¹ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Situation of Hungarian refugees on 15 December 1957, 28 December 1957.

refugees who were considered as freedom fighters by the SFIO and the Right, but described as fascists by the PCF and its newspaper, *L'Humanité*. Therefore, different political elements used the Hungarians for their own ends.

The main point of this chapter is that Hungarian refugees were considered to be assets by the French government. The introduction to the thesis has shown that the 1945 Ordinance linked labour and demographic needs, and still considered national origins in practice. Hungarian refugees were seen as a potential labour force, and France wanted them to resettle permanently. The asylum policy regarding the Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia is a case in point. Civil servants went to Yugoslavia to recruit the most suitable refugees for employment and permanent resettlement in France. The French government considered refugees from Hungary like labour migrants rather than forced migrants, in the way it dealt with them. Refugee policy was designed according to general immigration policy, the 1945 Ordinance, in order to have refugees meeting the needs of sectors short of labour.

However, the reception of the Hungarian refugees had not been prepared beforehand by the French government, which led, on occasions, to misunderstandings between the authorities and the refugees. This chapter shows that refugees had expectations from the government that were not always fulfilled. Their accommodation in refugee camps led to discontent among large groups of refugees, who felt prisoner in their new surroundings.

As an example, the history of the camp des Cinq Tranchées, near Nancy in eastern France, will be studied to explore the workings of immigration and refugee policy in this Cold War context. That camp, accommodating what were regarded as unemployable and unassimilable refugees, was the last to close just days before the visit of Nikita Khrushchev to France in 1960, and illustrates the limitations of French policy towards Hungarian refugees.

-The French government's reaction

The French government's response to these events was consistent with a logic that put French interests first. On 26 October 1956, Christian Pineau declared to the press that France did not seek to exploit Hungary's situation for military and political benefit.² Yet, the same day, Jean Paul-Boncour, the French ambassador in Hungary, shared his concern with Pineau in which he observed that Hungarian insurgents, although full of enthusiasm, were already visibly suffering from deprivation.³ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs wondered how many days the revolution could last in those conditions.

Having made the same observation, the British Foreign Office asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to send supplies to Hungary via the Austrian frontier. The idea behind the Foreign Office's suggestion was that the Soviet

² Gusztáv Kecskés, 'The North Atlantic Treaty Organization', in Lee W. Congdon and Béla K. Király, (eds), *Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution, Suppressed and Victorious 1956-1999* (New York, 2002), pp.118-9.

³ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 92, Jean Paul-Boncour to Christian Pineau, 26 October 1956.

authorities would refuse the help sent, and that they would appear to be neglecting the Hungarian people. On the other hand, if the help was accepted, the supplies sent would serve to help the population in their fight. In any case the Foreign Office believed that either discontent would continue to grow, or at least it would be maintained if help was accepted.⁴

The French government accepted the request and went further than suggested. On 1 November 1956, François Seydoux, French ambassador in Vienna, proposed to Christian Pineau to make the relief coming from France visible to the Hungarians by adding a clearly displayed symbol of France on each parcel, like its flag.⁵ He called for Jean Paul-Boncour to inform the Hungarian population 'with all the means at his disposal' of the French relief effort. The French government was hoping that the Hungarians, who were receiving the supplies through the Austrian Red Cross, would realise the extent of French support and consider it as an encouragement to continue the revolution.

Rather than openly supporting the revolution, the French government, under cover of humanitarian assistance, tried to take advantage of the situation in Hungary to destabilise the Soviet authorities and weaken their influence. The choice of the Red Cross to distribute the supplies was motivated by two reasons. Firstly, it was a reliable and experienced relief organisation. Secondly, since it was a non-governmental organisation, it could not be suspected of working for French or British interests. Despite humanitarian organisations trying to remain apolitical and independent, governments treated

⁴ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 93, Jean Chauvel to Pineau, 27 October 1956.

⁵ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 93, François Seydoux to Pineau, 1 November 1956.

humanitarianism as an instrument of their foreign policies during the Cold War.⁶ The case of humanitarian action for Hungarian refugees was no exception.⁷

The collusion between the French and British governments on the support to be given to Hungary followed the logic of an alliance. France asked for the Hungarian situation to be placed on the agenda of the UN Security Council on 26 October 1956, and the matter was discussed two days later.⁸ On 31 October, the bombing of Suez started. In order to appease the criticisms France and Britain were facing following that intervention, both governments tried to have the Hungarian question placed on the agenda of the UN Extraordinary Assembly on 1 November, initially summoned to discuss the Suez question. The United States representative believed that the French and British representatives wanted to discuss the matter to direct attention away from the Suez crisis.⁹ As the situation in Hungary seemed to have calmed down following the departure of the Soviet troops in the meantime, discussions only resumed on 3 November. The theory that France and Britain utilised the Hungarian situation for their own benefit has since been supported by historians.¹⁰ However, French and British attempts to distract attention from the Suez question at the UN met with little success.

⁶ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (New York, 2011), p.133; J.D. Armstrong, 'The International Committee of the Red Cross and Political Prisoners', *International Organization*, 39:4 (1985), p.617.

⁷ Peter Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees 1956-1963* (Cambridge, 2011), pp.49-50.

⁸ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 92, Note for the President, 6 November 1956.

⁹ Ferenc Fehér and Agnes Heller, *Hungary 1956 Revisited: The Message of a Revolution - a Quarter of a Century After* (London, 1983), p.15.

¹⁰ Gusztáv Kecskés, 'La politique étrangère française face à la révolution hongroise de 1956', *Relations Internationales*, 122 (2005), pp.92-4.

After the revolution was repressed on 4 November, the French public policy was to criticise the Kádár government, thus satisfying the expectations of the French population, apart from the Communists. Internationally, the French foreign policy towards Hungary and the Soviet Union was the diplomatic boycott of both countries in line with the other NATO countries, and to discuss the situation at the UN General Assembly. Sending supplies to the Hungarian population and, later, granting asylum to Hungarian refugees was also following that diplomatic line of action.¹¹

The French government's first reactions were thus to use the situation in Hungary to engage in propaganda under the cover of humanitarianism. France and Britain joining together can be linked to the fact that both countries were involved in Suez, and that the Hungarian revolution could serve as a distraction, as the Suez action was internationally criticised. France's humanitarian action in Hungary was motivated by the Cold War. It was a way to weaken the Soviet Union's international position, and its influence in Hungary.

After the repression of the revolution by the Soviet troops, the French government nonetheless continued its humanitarian action, and the Assemblée Nationale voted in favour of 'une journée nationale en faveur de la population hongroise' on 18 November.¹² The aim was to mobilise public opinion on the Hungarian crisis. After that date, the parliament was mainly concerned about the Hungarian refugees in Austria and in France. The French population's

¹¹ Kecskés, 'Politique étrangère française', pp.95-6.

¹² Kecskés, 'Politique étrangère française', pp.94-5.

reaction was however different as, all over the country, there were demonstrations of support which turned into scenes of riots in Paris.

-Popular reactions to the Hungarian revolution

The Hungarian revolution had a strong impact on the French population. The following section shows how the public strongly responded to the events in Hungary, and how the revolution was used by the SFIO and the Right in an attempt to discredit the PCF. This attitude was to influence the reception of the Hungarian refugees when they later arrived in France.

Due to its role in the Resistance, members of the PCF occupied high-ranking positions in the French provisional government in 1944.¹³ In 1945-1946, the PCF was the political party which had the highest number of members and voters. Post-war French politics are characterised by a great instability with 26 different governments between 1944 and 1958. In order to stabilise the government, coalitions were necessary: the PCF was part of the first coalition with the SFIO and the Mouvement Républicain Populaire, called Tripartism from 1946 until 1947.¹⁴ Communists were eventually ousted from the parliament in May 1947, due to the tensions linked to the Cold War, and the pressure from the PCF put on its ministers in the government. From September 1947, following France's acceptance of the Marshall Plan and the Soviet

¹³ Robert Gildea, *France since 1945* (Oxford, 1997), pp.31-2.

¹⁴ Gildea, *France since 1945*, pp.31-7.

position against 'American imperialism', the PCF entered a phase of opposition against the government, notably on colonial issues.¹⁵ From this period though, and until 1956, other political parties firmly opposed the PCF. De Gaulle referred to communists as separatists and considered the Soviet Union a threat. The PCF was indeed considered a foreign party by the other French political parties, and was described as Stalinist and receiving its orders straight from Moscow. An anticommunist organisation, Paix et Liberté, was founded in 1951 by Jean-Paul David, Radical deputy, and received the support of René Pléven, then Prime Minister. The organisation broadcasted a weekly radio programme, printed hundreds of thousands of posters, and distributed millions of tracts during the course of its existence.¹⁶ Its action was anticommunist propaganda framed by the Cold War context, and was secretly funded by the American government.¹⁷

In 1956, the PCF was still one of the major political parties in France. The Hungarian crisis happened during the government of the socialist Guy Mollet, elected in February 1956. The results of the February election show how important the PCF still was at the time: with 25 per cent of the votes, it had 146 seats in parliament, and was eager to re-enter the governing coalition after nine years of absence.¹⁸ But in 1951, the Right had also lost its parliamentary majority and the Hungarian crisis provided it with an opportunity to try to

¹⁵ Danièle Zéraffa-Dray, *Histoire de la France: d'une République à l'autre 1918-1958* (Paris, 1992), p.165.

¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Beckers and Serge Bernstein, 'L'anticommunisme en France', *Vingtième Siècle*, 4:15 (1987), pp.24-5.

¹⁷ Frédéric Charpier, *La CIA en France: 60 ans d'ingérence dans les affaires françaises* (Paris, 2008), pp.109-12.

¹⁸ Gildea, *France since 1945*, p.42.

discredit and weaken the position of the PCF. This was attempted through demonstrations and press articles.

The French press extensively covered the Hungarian revolution, with a different approach depending on the political affiliation, as Communist newspapers like *L'Humanité* considered the revolution as a counter-revolutionary fascist event, while the rest of the press was largely supportive of the insurgents. Among those newspapers, *Franc-Tireur*, founded in 1941 and associated with the Gaullist resistance, reported that, on 24 October, the Hungarian students and workers were fighting the Soviet tanks singing the French national anthem and shouting 'Russians out!'.¹⁹ *La Marseillaise*, during the Second World War in occupied France, was a song of defiance against the occupiers. During the Liberation of France, *La Marseillaise* gained in credibility and became one of the strongest French national symbols.²⁰ The image of the Hungarians singing this French revolutionary song was very appealing to the French public. In the Cold War context of Europe divided into two blocs, the French national symbol associated Hungarians and French against the Soviet regime. *Franc-Tireur* appealed to strong national symbols and the common past of its readership, enabling the readers to feel a direct connection with the Hungarian revolution.

It has been argued that the French population reacted passively to the Hungarian revolution, being on the whole too focused on their newly found social rights, such as the adoption of a third week of paid holidays in February

¹⁹ *Franc-Tireur*, 25 October 1956.

²⁰ Michel Vovelle, 'La Marseillaise', in Pierre Nora, (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire, volume 1* (Paris, 1997), pp.147-8.

1956.²¹ However, in Paris and all over France, the public felt very concerned about what was happening in Hungary. First, in terms of relief, 98 tons of clothing, food, and first aid supplies, including 15 tons of medication were sent to Hungary via Vienna thanks to the International Red Cross.²² The population helped greatly in this operation as they donated much of the canned food and clothing that was then dispatched by the Red Cross. Newspapers regularly advertised help for the Hungarians, whether in Hungary or as refugees in Austria. By the end of December 1956, 800 tons of supplies, mostly donations by the public, had been sent to Vienna from France, showing that the French population cared a lot about the situation in Hungary.²³

A good way to realise how the Hungarian revolution and its refugees were perceived in France and what triggered such generosity is to look at the demonstrations of support. The first demonstrations in Paris to show sympathy for the Hungarians started on 29 October, six days after the beginning of the revolution, on the appeal of Force Ouvrière (FO), a trade union. Two hundred people demonstrated on Boulevard Saint-Germain, after police blocked the access to the street leading to the Soviet embassy where the event was originally supposed to take place.²⁴

However, in France and all over Europe, it was the beginning of the repression of the revolution on 4 November which triggered the largest public demonstrations against the Soviet intervention. Demonstrations took place to

²¹ Rod Kedward, *La Vie en Bleu: France and the French since 1900* (London, 2005), p.375.

²² MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Oral Question 3720, 28 December 1956.

²³ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Oral Question 3720, 28 December 1956.

²⁴ *Franc-Tireur*, 30 October 1956.

protest in front of the Soviet embassies in Berlin, Rome, Stockholm, Luxembourg, The Hague, Helsinki, and Oslo.²⁵ On 5 November, about 1,000 students demonstrated in Paris against the Soviet intervention displaying Hungarian and French flags, as a symbol of a people supporting another one in revolution.²⁶ It was also on that day that the demonstrations started to change in nature and target, as a meeting against Communism took place where Daniel Halévy, of the Académie Française, and the right-wing MPs, Pierre André, Philippe d'Argenlieu, Pierre Boutang, Raymond Dronne, as well as representatives of Hungarian refugees criticised Communism and the weakness and passivity of the UN in dealing with the Hungarian question. The presence of right-wing MPs shows that the meeting was a political one, rather than a neutral demonstration of support to the Hungarian people. The meeting called for a demonstration to express 'leur solidarité avec les Hongrois et l'expression des véritables sentiments de la Nation.' At the end of the meeting, two groups of several hundred students went to the PCF headquarters in order to confront Communists, turning the support of an international event into a domestic matter.²⁷ The 'true sentiments of the nation' referred to another way to instrumentalize the Hungarian revolution in order to discredit and isolate the PCF, rather than simply to demonstrate genuine support for the Hungarian cause. According to Gusztáv Kecskés, the Confédération Générale du Travail - Force Ouvrière (CGT-FO) and the SFIO tried to please their voters and get some of the Communist voters by severely criticizing the PCF. However, Kecskés claimed that in the long run the PCF was not affected and kept its

²⁵ *Franc-Tireur*, 6 November 1956.

²⁶ *L'Aurore*, 6 November 1956.

²⁷ *L'Aurore*, 6 November 1956.

electorate almost intact a few weeks after the revolution.²⁸ Discrediting the PCF was a way for the left- and right-wing parties to prepare the coming general election due to take place on 13 and 27 January 1957.²⁹ The strategy proved successful in the short-term as the results were that the right-wing won, the Socialists did well, while the PCF receded.³⁰

The most important day of demonstrations for the Hungarian people was on 7 November, the day the first refugees arrived, and ended in violence and death. Short strikes were observed all over France following an appeal by FO. At Simca's factories in Nanterre and Poissy, 95 per cent of the workers stopped work for 10 minutes, while half of Paris transport (RATP) workers stopped work for 5 minutes. In Renault and Brandt's factories, 60 per cent and 98 per cent of the workers went on strike, while 80 per cent did at the Sécurité Sociale. Short strikes also occurred in many French towns, showing an organised reaction of both students and the French working class regarding events in Hungary. In Caen, the PCF building was set on fire by the students demonstrating.³¹ FO representatives in Paris claimed in front of a crowd of 5,000 that the PCF was not in a position to defend the rights of the working class any more.³² FO was clearly trying to get advantage of the situation by associating the PCF with the Soviet authorities in their handling of the Hungarian revolution.

²⁸ Kecskés, 'Politique étrangère française', p.94.

²⁹ Louis Bodin and Jean Touchard, 'L'élection partielle de la Première Circonscription de la Seine', *Revue Française de Science Politique*, 7:2 (1957), p.271.

³⁰ Philip M. Williams, *Crisis and Compromise: Politics in the Fourth Republic* (London, 1964), p.50.

³¹ *L'Aurore*, 9 November 1956.

³² *Franc-Tireur*, 9 November 1956.

The main demonstration happened in Paris and resulted in more than a hundred people injured and three dead. It started as a peaceful demonstration of a crowd of approximately 25,000 on the Champs-Élysées at the end of the afternoon.³³ The demonstration included 300 actual and former members of parliament and of the government, such as Guy Mollet, Prime Minister, François Mitterand, Minister of Justice, Tanguy Prigent, Minister of War Veterans and Victims, Paul Reynaud, Georges Bidault, Antoine Pinay, René Pléven, Robert Schuman, and Joseph Laniel, all former foreign ministers or prime ministers.³⁴ There again, the composition of the members of parliament shows that the demonstration was politicised and used by the non-Communist Left and the Right, as the Hungarian revolution became an excuse to discredit the PCF. After a ceremony at the Unknown Soldier tomb, where flowers had been laid along with French and Hungarian flags and the Marseillaise sung, a crowd of 6,000 young people marched towards the PCF headquarters. Five hundred police officers were protecting the building but the demonstrators managed to break through the police block and enter the building by force to commit acts of vandalism and start several fires.³⁵ Following the intervention of the fire brigade, the demonstrators headed to the headquarters of *L'Humanité*, leaving injured people behind as well as detritus and furniture.³⁶ *Franc-Tireur* described the event in front of the building as a 'bataille rangée' led by 'd'authentiques commandos'. *Le Figaro* reported that the demonstrators had to fight against Communists with helmets who were targeting isolated

³³ *Franc-Tireur*, 9 November 1956.

³⁴ Jean-Pierre Bernard, 'Novembre 1956 à Paris', *Vingtième Siècle*, 30 (1991), p.73.

³⁵ *Franc-Tireur*, 9 November 1956.

³⁶ Bernard, 'Novembre 1956', p.73.

demonstrators to beat them up.³⁷ *L'Humanité*, on the other side, claimed that the attacks on its building were led by paratroopers, as an echo to the Algerian War.³⁸ The fights went on from 19.30 to midnight after Jean-Louis Vigier, MP for Paris, managed to calm down the remaining 200 demonstrators.³⁹ However, the demonstrations had a tragic tone as 107 people ended wounded and three people died, two Communist militants and one FO militant, marking the end of the demonstrations in Paris. Support for the Hungarians turned into a witch-hunt against Communists who still supported the Soviet action in Hungary.⁴⁰

Such a reaction, in the press and on the streets, reflects the French politics of the time. In 1956, and generally during the Fourth Republic, foreign and internal policies were inseparable.⁴¹ The Parisian demonstrations show that rather than an international matter, the Hungarian question served as an excuse for the Right and the non-Communist Left to confront the PCF as they physically assaulted its headquarters and some of its members. What started as demonstrations of support for the Hungarian people ended up in a domestic conflict between political parties. The Hungarian revolution also became a symbol of the fight against Communism in France. As a consequence, Hungarian refugees came to represent this fight, as they were largely presented in the non-Communist French press as freedom fighters or victims of Communism, and became political stakes.⁴² In that sense, the refugees became a political asset, as they were living proofs of the alleged oppressive nature of

³⁷ *Le Figaro*, 9 November 1956.

³⁸ Bernard, 'Novembre 1956', p.73.

³⁹ *Le Monde*, 9 November 1956.

⁴⁰ *Franc-Tireur*, 9 November 1956.

⁴¹ Kecskés, 'Politique étrangère française', pp.93-4.

⁴² Eszter Balázs, and Phil Casoar, 'An Emblematic Picture of the Hungarian 1956 Revolution: Photojournalism during the Hungarian Revolution', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 58:8 (2006), p.1250.

communism. The demonstration on 7 November was the most emblematic because of the violence perpetrated at this occasion. This series of demonstrations happened in a relatively short time and were motivated by anticommunism. The Hungarian situation served as a pretext to bring discredit to the PCF in what was an internal political move rather than a genuine demonstration of support to the Hungarians.

The PCF, which supported the Soviet handling of the Hungarian revolution, became disavowed by a number of its members, including a large number of intellectuals, which was a major blow as it had just returned to Parliament in February after nine years of absence.⁴³ In 1956, it lost half of its members, with the total membership descending to 400,000.⁴⁴ Among the intellectuals who condemned the PCF for its support of the Soviet invasion was Jean-Paul Sartre, who explained in length in the press why he condemned the invasion and stopped supporting the PCF.⁴⁵ In order to prove the point that the Soviet policy was the right one, *L'Humanité* engaged in a campaign supporting the claims that the revolution had been led by fascists, and that the refugees were antisemitic. Considering the Stalinist line of the PCF, *L'Humanité* denouncing antisemitism could have appeared as a surprising strategy as, in 1952, the Slansky trial in Prague symbolised the violence of anti-Jewish purges among the leadership of the Communist Parties within the Soviet Union.⁴⁶ Yet, in 1956, this was done in the name of anti-fascism.

⁴³ Stéphane Courtois, '1956: Le défi mondial du communisme', *Vingtième Siècle*, 2:14, (1987), p.111.

⁴⁴ Maxwell Adereth, *The French Communist Party: a Critical History (1920-1984), From Comintern to "The Colours of France"* (Manchester, 1984), p.158.

⁴⁵ *L'Express*, 9 November 1956.

⁴⁶ Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy: De 1944 à nos jours* (Paris, 1987), p.157.

However, remaining silent on antisemitism in Soviet Russia, the PCF and *L'Humanité* relied on Hungary's then recent history of antisemitism. From the Peace Treaty of Trianon in 1920 until the deportations and mass murder during the Second World War, Hungarian history was heavily charged with antisemitism.⁴⁷ It gave the PCF an opportunity to present the Soviet Union as a safeguard against antisemitism in Hungary. Despite well-known official antisemitism in Soviet countries, Hungary presented itself as an exception. In comparison with the deportation and mass murder of 500,000 Hungarian Jews, survivors enjoyed relative security in post-war Hungary and were able to occupy political positions with high responsibilities.⁴⁸ However, the Hungarian Jewish middle class was targeted by anti-religious and anti-bourgeois measures since 1948 for being an 'exploiting class', and some were sent into internal exile.⁴⁹ The Communist regime was against Zionism, but the importance of Jews in the party hierarchy minimised the Jewish issue.⁵⁰ Communist Hungary was relatively spared antisemitism in comparison with other Communist countries.

According to François Fejtő and Bernard Wasserstein, 10 per cent of the 200,000 Hungarian refugees were Jewish.⁵¹ Israel was the privileged destination and 9,000 Hungarian Jews chose to emigrate there during and after

⁴⁷ Tibor Frank, *Double Exile: Migrations of Jewish-Hungarian Professionals through Germany to the United States, 1919-1945* (Bern, 2009), pp.27-8.

⁴⁸ András Kovács, 'Jews and Jewishness in Post-war Hungary', *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, 1 (2010). (No page reference - accessed online). [Http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=192](http://www.quest-cdecjournal.it/focus.php?id=192)

⁴⁹ Kovács, 'Jews and Jewishness'.

⁵⁰ Victor Karady, 'Antisemitism in Twentieth-century Hungary: A Socio-historical Overview', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 27:1 (1993), pp.89-90.

⁵¹ François Fejtő, *Hongrois et Juifs: histoire millénaire d'un couple singulier, 1000-1997* (Paris, 1997), p.376; Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora: The Jews in Europe since 1945* (London, 1996), pp.207-8.

the revolution, followed by North America and Europe. In 1962, the French ambassador in Hungary estimated that out of 120,000 Jews in the country in 1948, only 70,000 were left following legal and illegal waves of immigration, which largely took place between November 1956 and December 1957.⁵²

Despite their small numbers, the Hungarian Jewish refugees received French media attention, mostly in the pages of *L'Humanité* and *Le Figaro*, which turned them into a political issue. *L'Humanité* represented Hungarian Jews as victims of a fascist counter-revolution which took place in Hungary, as the newspaper and the PCF labelled the revolution. On the other hand, *Le Figaro* dismissed those accusations and minimised antisemitism in Hungary while denying antisemitism in refugee camps. Two weeks after the violent demonstrations against the PCF and *L'Humanité* headquarters, Maurice Thorez, the party leader, claimed when speaking to the Central Committee that the people who attacked the Communist buildings on 7 November were the friends of the Hungarian counter-revolution: fascist and antisemitic emigrants from eastern Europe.⁵³ Thorez's declaration not only referred to the events on 7 November in linking the revolution and antisemitism, but the PCF also associated the refugees with these events and the people behind it. The PCF thus tried to demonstrate that the Hungarian revolution was a fascist event by associating antisemitism with the revolution and with the refugees.

L'Humanité and Communist deputies particularly insisted on Hungary as a Nazi ally during the war and claimed that the insurgents were supporters of

⁵² MAE, Europe 1961-1970, Hongrie, 158, Pierre Francfort to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 December 1962.

⁵³ Philippe Robrieux, *Histoire interne du Parti Communiste, volume 2* (Paris, 1981), pp.477-8.

Admiral Horthy, regent of Hungary until 1944.⁵⁴ On several occasions *L'Humanité* reported acts of antisemitism during the revolution, which were not reported in any other newspapers, except for *Voix Ouvrière*, another Communist newspaper.⁵⁵ Other newspapers like *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* did not report those events, as they supported the Hungarian revolution. To admit that antisemitic acts took place would have threatened the popular support the Hungarians received.

L'Humanité reported that Hungarian Jews in the refugee camp in Châtellerault, in the Vienne département, had been victims of such bad treatment from the other Hungarian refugees that they had sought help from the president of the local Jewish community:

Douze cents réfugiés hongrois sont arrivés à Châtellerault... Parmi ces réfugiés se trouvent un certain nombre de Juifs, qui se plaignent des mauvais traitements qu'ils subissent... Ils sont allés voir le président de la communauté juive de Châtellerault et l'ont supplié d'intervenir pour les faire retirer de la caserne, en raison des sévices dont ils sont l'objet de la part des autres réfugiés.⁵⁶

The article remains vague about the nature of the treatment supposedly inflicted and did not mention the exact number of the refugees involved. It reports and denounces antisemitism among refugees in a specific camp.

⁵⁴ *L'Humanité* 30 October 1956; 3 November 1956; 17 November 1956. *Journal Officiel* (JO), Assemblée Nationale, 18 December 1956, p.6083-7; 19 December 1956, p.6165; 7 November 1956, pp.4512-26.

⁵⁵ *L'Humanité*, 15 November 1956; 19 December 1956; *Voix Ouvrière*, 27 December 1956.

⁵⁶ *L'Humanité*, 29 December 1956.

However, the aim of the article was to convince readers that the revolution was a fascist act led by fascist counter-revolutionaries.

On the day the article was published, the Ministry of the Interior inquired on the events reported in *L'Humanité*. A short report was produced denying its claims. However, a contradiction exists in the report as it states that 'Les deux familles dont il s'agit... ont quitté la Vienne depuis plusieurs jours et se trouvent à Paris 12 rue Cadet',⁵⁷ which refers to the people affected by antisemitic acts. The address in Paris was next door to the Synagogue Adas Yereim, at number 10 rue Cadet, which suggests that they may have been looked after by the Jewish community. The other point is that the Ministry of the Interior inquired on the day, showing that it was concerned that something did happen. The French government was thus aware of antisemitism in the Hungarian refugee camps, but denied publicly that anything had happened. *Le Figaro* reported three days later that *L'Humanité* lied and that nothing happened in Châtellerault.⁵⁸ The newspaper mentioned that the Rabbi of Tours, Pierre Blum, declared that he had visited the camps three times in December and that the Jews there did not complain about being ill-treated.

References to antisemitism among the Hungarian refugees and during the revolution were not limited to mentions in the press. In January 1957, leaflets on the revolution in Hungary were distributed in the Paris metro by members of the PCF. According to György Marosán, Minister of State in charge of propaganda since the end of the revolution and quoted in the leaflets, in the last

⁵⁷ Archives Départementales de la Vienne (ADV), 1W2958, Renseignements Généraux (RG) to the Prefect of Vienne, 29 December 1956.

⁵⁸ *Le Figaro*, 1 January 1957.

days of the revolution, fascists took advantage of rumours that the West would support it:⁵⁹

On a vu se manifester les traits caractéristiques du fascisme: le nationalisme, le chauvinisme et l'antisémitisme. Pourtant une remarque instructive peut être faite au sujet de l'antisémitisme. Il y a eu des faits d'antisémitisme, mais il est vrai qu'il n'a pas pris ouvertement une grande extension. Pourquoi?... Les manifestations antisémites ont été déconseillées d'en haut. Dans un état-major contre-révolutionnaire, un chef a expliqué: pas d'antisémitisme pour le moment; des faits d'antisémitisme gêneraient l'aide de l'Ouest... Que l'antisémitisme ne se soit manifesté que partiellement ne contredit pas ce caractère fasciste de la contre-révolution. Cela signifie simplement que l'antisémitisme a été tenu momentanément en réserve.⁶⁰

Those accusations tried to use the few antisemitic acts that happened during the revolution to the Communists' advantage. The PCF and the Communists in general tried to bring forward the question of antisemitism, hoping that it would discredit the Hungarian revolution, and justify the repression of the revolution.

Not only was there an attempt from the PCF through *L'Humanité* and in Parliament to discredit the Hungarian revolution and its supporters among the

⁵⁹ Archives de la Préfecture de Police de Paris (APPP), BA 2389 Hongrie, Commissaire Principal to the Directeur Général de la Police Municipale, 10 January 1957.

⁶⁰ APPP, BA 2389 Hongrie, Leaflet on Georg Marosan's views of the revolution, 10 January 1957.

French by calling it fascist, but raising the question of antisemitism among the Hungarian refugees and in the revolution was also a way to link the Second World War events with the Hungarian revolution. To that end, Communists used the International Federation of Resistance Fighters (IFR). The IFR, founded in 1951, sought the creation of international committees in several Second World War concentration camps. Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, Mauthausen, Ravensbrück and Sachsenhausen were all affiliated to the IFR.⁶¹ Following the events of 1956, they linked commemoration with ideology, and insisted on the major role of Communist resistance fighters during the Second World War. The very large proportion of deported Communists in concentration camps served then a new purpose: to present Communists in a favourable light to compensate for the sharp criticisms after the repression of the Hungarian revolution.

Therefore the question of antisemitism of the Hungarian refugees comes within this strategy: putting forward antisemitic elements among the refugees to show the revolution's fascist character in order to discredit it and justify the support of the PCF towards the Soviet repression of the revolution. It was the result of the general political utilisation of the Hungarian revolution and the refugee crisis. However, as the PCF faced stern criticism for its support of the Soviet invasion of Hungary, it had no impact on the population's support for the Hungarians, and on the government's policy to grant asylum to the refugees.

⁶¹ Pieter Lagrou, *Mémoires patriotiques et occupation nazie: résistants, requis et déportés en Europe occidentale 1945-1965* (Brussels, 2003), pp.260-1.

The treatment of the question of antisemitism shows that the French government took tensions among refugees seriously, as it wanted to avoid returns to Hungary and bad publicity. On 28 October 1956, the first Hungarian refugees started to arrive in Austria. Twelve Austrian Red Cross posts were set up near the Hungarian border, while transports were mobilised in the area to facilitate their evacuation.⁶² The Cold War played a role in the necessity of sorting out the refugee crisis in Austria. Indeed, the French embassy there was concerned that if refugees were not resettled quickly in another country that would lead to a rise in discontentment among refugees:

Si la situation se prolonge, un nombre important et toujours croissant de Hongrois déçus... retourneront de l'autre côté de la frontière: autant d'agents efficaces de la contre-propagande communiste. Au sein même du bloc soviétique, ils seront... une preuve vivante des amères désillusions qui attendent ceux qui se seront laissés prendre aux 'mensonges' de la propagande occidentale.⁶³

François Seydoux clearly establishes here the link between France's, and other countries' humanitarian relief and propaganda objectives. The French government believed that it would have been both a moral and a propaganda failure if refugees started to return to Hungary, as they would go back with the feeling that life was not any better under a democratic regime.⁶⁴ There were

⁶² MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Seydoux to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 28 October 1956.

⁶³ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Seydoux to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1 February 1957.

⁶⁴ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Seydoux to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1 February 1957.

also allegations made that some of the refugees were, in fact, Kádár's agents. There were claims that such agents were acting as a fifth column among the refugees, and were either threatening refugees' families if they did not return to Hungary, or even kidnapping refugees and taking them back to Hungary.⁶⁵ The French government remained largely unworried regarding such statements. Beliefs of a fifth column were marginal, and returns to Hungary were attributed rather to being deceived with false hopes. Yet, it was deemed crucial for the French government that once refugees were accepted for resettlement in France, they did not go back to Hungary, as it would be considered a propaganda failure.⁶⁶

To avoid refugees returning to Hungary, it was essential for the French government to resettle refugees out of Austria as quickly as possible. To that end, the evacuation of the refugees to France was organised at the beginning of November. Christian Pineau announced on 7 November at the Assemblée Nationale that the government decided to grant asylum to 10,000 Hungarian refugees, the same day that *L'Humanité* headquarters were under attack.⁶⁷ The first 60 refugees were planned to fly to France that very evening, while another 40 were expected the next day. Diplomats in Austria were well aware of what was going on in Egypt, and the international disapproval it engendered.⁶⁸ The results were quick as, on 1 December, Seydoux remarked that French action in Austria, along with that by the British, German, and Swiss, had been

⁶⁵ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Jacques Fouques Duparc to Christian Pineau, 1 December 1956 ; French Embassy in the Netherlands to Christian Pineau, 29 November 1956.

⁶⁶ Gusztáv Kecskés, 'Acte de propagande ou geste humanitaire? L'accueil des réfugiés hongrois de 1956 en France', unpublished paper given at the Institut Hongrois, Paris, 4 November 2009.

⁶⁷ JO, Assemblée Nationale, 7 Novembre 1956, p.4519.

⁶⁸ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Seydoux to MAE, 6 November 1956.

internationally praised, so that French policy abroad was not as subject to criticism as it was when the refugee crisis started.⁶⁹ Granting asylum to Hungarian refugees was a way for the France to regain some credit on the international scene after Suez, and with respect to the French government's handling of the Algerian War. Humanitarian considerations were clearly not the main motive behind the asylum policy for the Hungarians.

The refugees from Hungary represented a national and international political issue. The government of Guy Mollet had planned to use the reception of the Hungarian refugees as a way of campaigning against the PCF and to strengthen the SFIO, as well as using the refugees in the media for that purpose.⁷⁰ It was also a way to distract the attention of the UN and the United States from the Suez crisis, and had political advantages for France's international politics.⁷¹ To that end, the French government did not hesitate to remind the UN General Secretary of the position as France as one of the leading countries in helping the Hungarian population by granting asylum or by sending supplies and financially contributing to their relief.⁷² It has been suggested that the refugee situation was a matter taken very seriously by NATO, to which France was a member. For NATO members, not only was there a moral responsibility for them to help Hungarian refugees, but more importantly it would have been a moral defeat if refugees returned in great numbers to Hungary. From the beginning of the Hungarian crisis in later October, NATO followed the

⁶⁹ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Seydoux to MAE, 1 December 1956.

⁷⁰ Kecskés, 'Acte de propagande ou geste humanitaire?'.

⁷¹ MAE, ONU, Hongrie, 244, Note on the French policy regarding Hungarian refugees, 6 April 1957.

⁷² MAE, ONU, Hongrie, 244, Secrétariat des Conférences to UN General Secretary, 10 April 1957.

evolution of the situation very closely. As military intervention was ruled out, because of the nuclear power of the Soviet Union and the risk of another world war, NATO was nevertheless hoping that satellite countries would emancipate themselves little by little from the Soviet influence.⁷³ NATO's directives were to intensify the humanitarian relief to the Hungarian population and to make sure that the Kádár government was not benefiting from that help.⁷⁴ Granting asylum to Hungarian refugees was following that policy, hence it was an important political matter that the French government managed to resettle in France or help to migrate somewhere else the refugees under its charge to avoid returns to Hungary as much as possible.

As far as it was concerned, the government saw in the Hungarian refugees a way morally and politically to weaken the Soviet Union and the PCF, but essentially it also saw potential candidates for economic and demographic immigration, under French immigration policies and practices.

-Refugees as labour immigrants

As we have seen, Cold War politics played a major role in the perception of Hungarian refugees in France. Here, I will demonstrate the additional factors of their use as a labour force. It is first necessary to understand the post-war

⁷³ Kecskés, 'North Atlantic Treaty Organization', in Congdon and Király, (eds), *Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution*, pp.121-9.

⁷⁴ MAE, ONU, Hongrie, 244, Note on the relief for Hungary, 6 April 1957.

labour context into which these Hungarians were brought. As a Western power, France's response to the Hungarian refugee crisis in Austria has been interpreted by Peter Gatrell as a commitment to assist people facing persecution.⁷⁵ Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox argue that the French support, just as was British support, was motivated by feelings of guilt following the repression of the Hungarian revolution.⁷⁶ This section shows that, rather than motivated by feeling of guilt or a commitment to assist people facing persecution, the French government saw in the Hungarians potentially employable workers in sectors in need of labour, and a population that could serve France's demographic interests, while still serving French propaganda interests. Looking at how the French government set up an immigration plan since the arrival of the first refugees in Austria shows that the Hungarians were considered as labour immigrants rather than refugees.

If France accepted 10,000 Hungarians refugees, and then unlimited numbers by the end of November 1956, to permanently resettle, it also did so as they could contribute to the growth of the country because of their origins, gender, and professional skills. The conditions for staying in France for immigrants were defined by the Ordinance of 2 November 1945. In theory, the Ordinance did not make any distinctions or establish a hierarchy between immigrants.⁷⁷ Yet, it stressed the importance of assimilation, just as the 1945 Code de la Nationalité did.⁷⁸ From this year, the assessment of immigration that was needed was

⁷⁵ Gatrell, *Free World?*, p.5.

⁷⁶ Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp.244-8.

⁷⁷ Alexis Spire, *Etrangers à la carte: l'administration de l'immigration en France 1945-1975* (Paris, 2005), pp.29-31.

⁷⁸ Karen H. Adler, *Jews and Gender in Liberation France* (Cambridge, 2003), pp.97-9.

carried out by the Office National d'Immigration (ONI). Created by the Ordinance of 2 November 1945, the ONI's purpose was to provide the French economy with foreign labour in sectors in need of labour, and to enhance demography, following the populationist trend from before the Second World War.⁷⁹ The Ministry of Population established lists of immigration needs by sectors and desired nationalities for immigrants for the ONI. These lists were designed to keep an 'ethnic balance' in France, and largely privileged European and non-Muslim immigration.⁸⁰

The Ministry of the Interior also had a leading role in immigration policies.⁸¹ It separated the acquisition of work and residence permits, the first depending on the Ministry of Labour and the second on the Ministry of the Interior. There were three different kinds of residence permit: the card of temporary residence valid for less than a year, the card of ordinary residence valid for three years, and the card of privileged residence valid ten years and automatically renewable.⁸² The card of temporary residence could be renewed several times, leaving immigrants in a temporary and precarious situation. To get a better card, immigrants depended on their work situation, and whether their type of work was needed or not in the French economic situation.⁸³ In 1956, the economic context was expansion in many sectors. Due to the Algerian War, the number of Algerian workers in France decreased, while the ONI could not

⁷⁹ Nancy L. Green, 'Les vagues d'immigrations successives', in Yves Lequin, (ed.), *Histoire des étrangers et de l'immigration en France* (Paris, 2006), pp.384-5.

⁸⁰ Spire, *Etrangers à la carte*, pp.118-25.

⁸¹ Gérard Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France XIX-XX siècle: discours publics, humiliations privées* (Paris, 2007), pp.494-7.

⁸² Spire, *Etrangers à la carte*, pp.29-31.

⁸³ Spire, *Etrangers à la carte*, pp.43-50.

satisfy employers' demands.⁸⁴ In April, the Ministry of the Interior issued a circular advocating mass regularisations for immigrants in France. Despite being refugees, the Hungarians benefited from this favourable economic context.

The French government and administration carried out the regularisation of the Hungarians' status unusually fast. Refugees in France, if their status was legally recognized as such, were normally dependent on the OFPRA, created by the law of 25 July 1952, and under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, contrary to the principles of the November 1945 Ordinance, but according to practice, the reception of refugees in France depended on their nationality and was adapted depending on the national economic situation.⁸⁵ This was due to a practice of privileging some nationalities, considered assimilable, upon others, considered unassimilable.⁸⁶ The use of circulars supplanted in some cases the 1945 Ordinance, giving the immigration administration more freedom.⁸⁷ Hungarian refugees thus benefited from better conditions than those recommended by the 1945 Ordinance on the separation of the 'carte de séjour' and the 'carte de résident', and also in comparison to other refugees such as the Yugoslavian refugees arriving in France through Italy in early 1957.⁸⁸ Although the 1945 Ordinance applied to both Hungarian and Yugoslavian refugees, the interpretation of the Ordinance for the

⁸⁴ Spire, *Etrangers à la carte*, pp.131-2.

⁸⁵ Alexis Spire, 'Les réfugiés, une main d'œuvre à part? Conditions de séjour et d'emploi, France, 1945-1975', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 20:2 (2004), p.6.

⁸⁶ Spire, *Etrangers à la carte*, pp.139-40.

⁸⁷ Linda Amiri and Benjamin Stora, 'Les politiques de l'immigration en France du début du XX^e siècle à nos jours', in Benjamin Stora and Emile Temime, (eds), *Immigrations: l'immigration en France au XX^e Siècle* (Paris, 2007), pp.171-2.

⁸⁸ Alexis Spire, 'Les réfugiés', p.6.

Hungarian refugees favoured their resettlement by granting them ordinary 'cartes de séjour' after one year in France as refugees. In contrast, the Ministry of the Interior denied 'cartes de séjour' to Yugoslavian refugees in transit through Italy on the grounds that they were labour migrants trying to pass for refugees and that the employment situation did not favour their resettlement in France, but also because they were inassimilable.⁸⁹ Despite the absence of reference to national preference in the 1945 Ordinance, practice made these policies still effective in 1956.

This selective practice was also a proof that Mauco's ethnic and national preferences were applied even if the text of the Ordinance made no mention of such preferences. The Hungarian refugees, as Central Europeans, were not undesirable. Their demographic composition and occupations also fitted immigration prospects: mainly young single men who could be employed for manual work. They were also a symbol of a fight against Communism, which, as stated Mauco during the war, was influenced by Jews.⁹⁰

Moreover, thanks to Auguste Lindt, Hungarian refugees benefited from the protection of the Geneva Convention of 1951, contrary to the limitation of its application to events prior to 1 January 1951, and were almost immediately recognised as refugees, when the OFPRA decided that their situation was a consequence of the Yalta Conference. According to Stéphane Dufoix, individual files were not even checked and Hungarians were recognised as refugees based on their provenance, showing on the one hand the national

⁸⁹ Claude Guillon, 'Le SSAE: soixante ans d'accueil des réfugiés', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 4:1-2 (1988), p.121.

⁹⁰ Adler, *Jews and Gender*, p.110.

origin preference, and, on the other hand, the importance of the Cold War context.⁹¹ The OFPRA had registered 13,111 Hungarian refugees on 31 December 1956, of whom 1,189 were new cases, and 18,865 on 31 December 1957, representing 5,754 new cases.⁹²

The number of refugees in Austria rose very quickly after the Soviet military intervention in Hungary, from 15,000 on 6 November to 30,000 on 17 November, and reaching 45,000 on 22 November.⁹³ In response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs created a special body to coordinate the reception of the refugees in France. The Comité National d'Accueil des Réfugiés Hongrois (CNARH) included representatives from the ministries having an interest in the Hungarian refugee situation, namely Interior, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Public Health and Population, and Labour and Social Security. Representatives from private and non-governmental associations joined from the Croix Rouge Française, Secours Catholique, Cimade, CGT-FO, Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens (CFTC), Conseil National du Patronat Français (CNPF), and Service Social d'Aide aux Emigrants (SSAE).⁹⁴ The role of this committee was to organise the reception of the Hungarian refugees at a national level. The CNARH also served as a model for committees at the level of départements where refugees were accommodated. The prefects in each département were to serve as heads of the committees, each committee including representatives

⁹¹ Stéphane Dufoix, 'Fausses évidences: statut de réfugié et politisation', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 16:3 (2000), pp.156-7.

⁹² OFPRA, 1956 and 1958 Annual Reports.

⁹³ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Seydoux to MAE, 6 November 1956, 17 November 1956, 22 November 1956.

⁹⁴ APPP, BA 2389, Secrétaire d'Etat à la Santé Publique et à la Population to Prefects, and to Directeurs Départementaux de la Population et de l'Aide Sociale, 9 January 1957. The CNPF was a union of employers created in December 1945, by recommendation of the French government.

from the same organisations as of the national one.⁹⁵ The French government, through the prefects, kept strict control of the CNARH.

The composition of the committee, which included representatives from two major non-Communist trade unions as well as the CNPF, suggests employment was central in the reception of the Hungarians. The CNPF regrouped local, departmental and regional unions of employers, trade unions, and representatives of the trade, industry, and services sectors. The aim of the CNARH was thus to place refugees into employment as quickly as possible. Trade union representatives were, however, concerned by the arrival of a great number of refugees. They tried to reach a compromise and asked that the total number of refugees did not go beyond 10,000, as difficulties for employing them in some areas had already surfaced.⁹⁶ There was thus protectionist behaviour from the unions as they feared that a sudden influx of Hungarian workers might have led to problems of employment.

The CNARH showed in its composition that the reception of the Hungarian refugees was specific, as the committee included governmental bodies and associations. The composition of the CNARH meant that all ministries interested in the resettlement of the Hungarians were involved in the process. The presence of trade unions and refugee associations suggests that all means possible were made available for the quick resettlement and support of the refugees, as well as to put them in employment as soon as possible.

Organisations represented at the CNARH also give a clue on the composition

⁹⁵ CAC, 19810201, art. 2, Secrétaire d'Etat au Travail et à la Sécurité Sociale to Prefects and Directeurs Départementaux de la Main d'œuvre, 27 November 1956.

⁹⁶ CAC, 19810201, art. 2, Note for Juvigny, 10 December 1956.

of the refugees, since the Cimade, and the Secours Catholique, were Protestant and Catholic organisations respectively, while Jewish organisations were absent. This absence was mainly due to the limited number of Jews among the refugees. Despite its help, the Cojasor, a Jewish organisation created in France after the war for the care of Holocaust survivors and displaced persons, was not included in the CNARH.⁹⁷

Low figures of Jewish refugees are confirmed by the archives. Several Jewish organisations and local Jewish communities helped the Hungarian Jewish refugees to resettle in France or to re-emigrate. The Jewish Agency was one of those. Its role was to facilitate the re-emigration of those who wanted to go to Israel.⁹⁸ At domestic level, Jewish refugees were visited in the camps by representatives of local Jewish communities.⁹⁹ This visibility in camps led the Cojasor to become well known among the Jewish refugees. It helped the majority of the Hungarian Jews in France.¹⁰⁰ It provided relief for 627 individuals, including 322 families between 1956 and 1958.¹⁰¹ This small number can be explained by the fact that most of the Jewish refugees resettled in Israel, rather than emigrating to France.¹⁰² Despite all the measures taken to place the refugees in employment as quickly as possible, while protecting the reputation of the refugees and letting the Cojasor provide relief for Jewish

⁹⁷ The Cojasor was created in 1945 by the American Joint Distribution Committee to centralise the material and moral support to survivors of the Holocaust. See Gabriel Vadnaï and Laure Politis, *La Solidarité Juive: 200 ans d'action sociale, du Comité de bienfaisance israélite de Paris à la Fondation Casip-Cojasor* (Paris, 2010), pp.65-110.

⁹⁸ ADV, 1W3533, Montmorillon sub-prefect to Vienne prefect on Hungarians in Jouhet, 4 February 1957.

⁹⁹ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, SSAE on Hungarian refugees in Châtellerault, 5 December 1956.

¹⁰⁰ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Trillat to Service Social de la Main d'Œuvre Etrangère, 7 November 1958.

¹⁰¹ Vadnaï and Politis, *La Solidarité Juive*, p.84.

¹⁰² Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora*, pp.207-8.

refugees, the French government's treatment of the Hungarian refugees as labour migrants was quickly jeopardised by the Cold War.

-A land unprepared for asylum

With France accepting a large number of refugees for resettlement, the government and organisations involved in their reception had to quickly set up plans and accommodation for the refugees. The focus of the government on the employability of the refugees, made the refugees feel on some occasions forsaken and misunderstood, as their prime interest was in freedom.

The refugees from Hungary arrived in France mostly by train, transiting through Strasbourg. There, they would stop for a short while and be given a speech and some food, before taking the train to Paris. Once in the capital, they would be identified, and their needs and prospects for the future would be evaluated.¹⁰³ Until early 1957, the main reception centre in Paris was a sports centre, in the eleventh arrondissement. The centre opened on 19 November and accommodated 152 single men. Couples, with or without children, and women and children were accommodated in eight hotels in the tenth and eleventh arrondissements.¹⁰⁴ All these refugees were under the supervision of the

¹⁰³ Interview with Akos Ditroy, 19 February 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Archives de la Ville de Paris (AVP), Perotin 1023/68/157, Room booking for Hungarians, n.d.

Préfecture de Police de la Seine.¹⁰⁵ The Red Cross assessed their labour skills and helped them while in Paris, their stay not exceeding four or five days. Paris was considered a temporary location for assessing the needs of the refugees before directing them to refugee camps in the rest of the country. There was no possibility to accommodate Hungarian refugees in the city due to the major housing crisis in the country at the time. In April 1957, *Le Monde* estimated that 500,000 families were living in hotels or bedsits and that 450,000 lived in precarious accommodation conditions.¹⁰⁶

When the Austrian government publicly asked for help, the French Prime Minister announced that the previous limit of 10,000 refugees was lifted and that there would be no limitation on numbers.¹⁰⁷ Following this decision, the government then decided to accept three trains of refugees without selection or even asking them if they wanted to re-emigrate from France, on top of the 500 voluntary refugees per week the country was already accepting.¹⁰⁸ As a result the reception of the refugees was rushed and the Ministry of Defence, which was providing accommodation for the refugees in military camps, could only provide what was available at the time, regardless of employment opportunities in the area:

¹⁰⁵ AVP, Perotin 1023/68/157, Prefect of Seine to Préfet de Police, 20 November 1956.

¹⁰⁶ Jean-Marc Stébé, *Le Logement social en France* (Paris, 1998), pp.88-9.

¹⁰⁷ CAC, 19990260, art. 35, Minister of Defence to Minister of Interior, 29 November 1956.

¹⁰⁸ CAC, 19810201, art. 2, Note for Juvigny, 10 December 1956.

Table 3.1: Ministry of Defence's plan for the accommodation of Hungarian refugees

Dates	Centres	Capacity
26 November	Nancy (Meurthe-et-Moselle)	1,000
27 November	Gap (Hautes-Alpes) Mont-Dauphin (Hautes-Alpes)	1,000 (in total for both camps)
28 November	Châtellerault (Vienne)	1,000
29 November	Valdahon (Doubs)	2,000
30 November	Sissonne (Aisne)	1,000
1 December	Montluçon (Allier)	2,000
3 December	Rouen (Seine-Maritime) Rochefort (Charente-Maritime) Angoulême (Charente)	800 500 300
4 December	Colmar (Haut-Rhin) Mulhouse (Haut-Rhin) Strasbourg (Bas-Rhin)	300 300 1,000
5 December	Rochefort (Savoie) La Roche-sur-Yon (Vendée)	400 300
	Total capacity available	11,900

(Source: CAC, 19810201, art. 2, Note for Juvigny, 10 December 1956)

All the camps mentioned in the table belonged to the Ministry of Defence and were military barracks or camps. Some of the camps were in isolated areas far from urban centres with potential employment opportunities. For example, in

the Hautes-Alpes, the Mont-Dauphin camp was isolated from any major urban centre and was described as a cold place in the mountains.¹⁰⁹ It was an old military fort with high ramparts, two kilometres away from the nearest village. The military, in charge of all the camps, were instructed to do everything possible to provide the refugees with material and moral support, and especially to prevent any kind of propaganda from reaching them.¹¹⁰

The government accepted many refugees very quickly and no proper structure for accommodation was available except for these military camps. This consequently affected the reception of the refugees. The accommodation of refugees raised a lot of concern among the CNARH, as it went directly against its aim of placing the refugees into employment as quickly as possible.

The consequences of this rushed plan to accommodate the refugees were felt as soon as refugees started to arrive. Mont-Dauphin, in the Hautes-Alpes, was one of the first places to welcome refugees from Hungary, and one of the shortest-lived refugee camps. On 29 November, the refugee camp in Mont-Dauphin, along with the one in Gap, also in the Hautes-Alpes, received 974 Hungarian refugees coming from Strasbourg by train.¹¹¹ Both convoys arrived at the Gap railway station and were welcomed by the Prefect, the Mayor of Gap, the regional president of the Red Cross, and the military officers attached to the camp.

¹⁰⁹ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, RG to Hautes-Alpes prefecture, 7 December 1956.

¹¹⁰ CAC, 19990260, art. 35, The Secretary of State for the French Army to the General of the 1st to 9th military regions, 29 November 1956.

¹¹¹ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, The Prefect of Hautes-Alpes to the Minister of the Interior and the Prefect of Rhône, 30 November 1956.

About half the group, mainly families with children, were sent to Gap, while the rest, single men, were sent to Mont-Dauphin.¹¹² The aim of the Ministry of the Interior was to move families, isolated women and children out of the military refugee camps as quickly as possible, whereas single men could stay in the refugee camps until they were placed into employment.¹¹³ Families benefited from better accommodation and they were quickly moved to hotels or small houses. They were generally not pressured into employment in the way single men were, even if the Ministry of the Interior also considered it as an important step for resettlement to go to a permanent accommodation.

The first days in Mont-Dauphin went smoothly and, according to the Direction Centrale des Renseignements Généraux (RG), the intelligence service of the French police, the Hungarians felt grateful for the efforts made by the authorities and the Red Cross.¹¹⁴ According to the camp military authorities, the refugees arrived at the camp in a state of euphoria, explained by the fact that they were enjoying freedom again. Despite the reported high spirits, in both Gap and Mont-Dauphin camps, the authorities made sure that all the employment services were at work to find jobs for the Hungarians before they arrived in order to avoid 'le découragement et le laisser-aller'.¹¹⁵ The Ministry of the Interior believed that employment was the key to a successful resettlement. It was all the more necessary since the conditions of accommodation for the refugees were not ideal.

¹¹² CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, Prefect of Hautes-Alpes to Minister of Interior and Prefect of Rhône, 30 November 1956.

¹¹³ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, Ministry of the Interior to Prefect of Hautes-Alpes, 7 December 1956.

¹¹⁴ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, RG to Hautes-Alpes prefecture, 7 December 1956.

¹¹⁵ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, RG to Hautes-Alpes prefecture, 7 December 1956.

However, the initial report of the RG was one-sided and lacked subtlety and understanding of the refugees as, very quickly, the moment of euphoria mentioned was gone. Employment became an issue for the refugees. They feared that if they took employment they would lose their status as refugees and would not be able to re-emigrate overseas. It left the authorities in a delicate position as their aim was to make sure the refugees took up a job so that they left the camps as quickly as possible and started to settle in France. Yet out of the 545 job offers, only 18 refugees took up work.¹¹⁶

Other organisations in charge of the Hungarians offered another insight on the refugees' conditions. The largest non-governmental organisation involved in the reception of the Hungarian refugees was the Service Social d'Aide aux Emigrants. The SSAE, whose origins go back to 1920, had a solid experience in dealing with refugees.¹¹⁷ It successively dealt with refugees from Spain, Russia, and Armenia for resettlement in France.¹¹⁸ In the case of the refugees from Hungary, the SSAE's support was mainly financial. From November 1956 to January 1958, the SSAE distributed 24 million francs to the refugee camps as pocket money, and a further 40 million as an advance on salary for fifteen days to help those who found work.¹¹⁹ It also distributed funds and trousseaux to students and adults.¹²⁰ Moreover, the SSAE had been chosen by the UNHCR to observe and survey the unaccompanied Hungarian children in

¹¹⁶ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, RG to Hautes-Alpes prefecture, 7 December 1956.

¹¹⁷ Lucienne Chibrac, *Les Pionnières du travail social auprès des étrangers: le Service Social d'Aide aux Emigrants, des origines à la Libération* (Rennes, 2005), pp.27-82.

¹¹⁸ Suzanne Roux, *Action sociale et migration: expérience et méthodes d'un service social spécialisé* (Paris, 2005), pp.17-8.

¹¹⁹ Archives Nationales (AN), F7/16069, Meeting of the Commission for refugee support, 24 March 1958.

¹²⁰ AN, F7/16060, Memorandum on the reception of the Hungarian refugees, December 1957.

France. The role of the SSAE was to evaluate as a whole the problem of individual cases and find solutions. In February 1958, the SSAE had dealt with 1,511 children under 18, and was still responsible for 562 of them.¹²¹

Relying on its expertise in refugee questions, the SSAE tried to assess the reaction of the Hungarian refugees to their reception and treatment in France. It thus gave a detailed analysis of the refugees' state of mind:

Ce sont des exilés que nous recevons. L'exilé est celui qui est sorti de son ambiance naturelle. Ce réfugié n'est nullement en état d'apprécier les avantages de sa situation nouvelle, car les pertes subies, les souffrances encourues par son exode, le traumatisme trop récent, ne lui permettent pas d'accomplir avec calme et lucidité l'effort d'adaptation nécessaire à une vie nouvelle dans un climat étranger.¹²²

The SSAE referred to the Hungarian refugees as exiles, but the French government did not use that term. The term exile was politically charged, and it implies a wish for return once the situation home has improved. However, the SSAE failed to realise that only a portion of the refugees from Hungary were exiles, as many of them took the opportunity of the revolution to cross the border to Austria, and were closer to economic migrants than to exiles.¹²³

Based on this analysis, the SSAE expected two kinds of refugee behaviour. The first one was described as refugees being able to start a new life quickly thanks

¹²¹ AN, F7/16069, Trillat, SSAE, to Cantan, Ministry of the Interior, 11 March 1958.

¹²² CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Reflections on the new cases of Hungarian refugees, n.d.

¹²³ Dufoix, 'Fausses évidences', p.157.

to the support provided. The other one, considered to represent the majority of the refugees, was a critical attitude regarding the help provided:

Il est néanmoins certain que beaucoup d'entre eux trouveront cette aide insuffisante car leur nouvelle vie exigera forcément et pour un temps indéfini, l'acceptation de la rupture totale avec le passé. Dans le domaine des problèmes matériels, le cas pourra être temporairement résolu; mais quoi que nous fassions, même si nous allons jusqu'au bout de nos forces, il nous sera impossible de satisfaire les besoins réels de ces déracinés. Notre effort ne saurait effacer le passé ni éliminer ses résonances.¹²⁴

The SSAE expected various reactions from the refugees rather than a uniform one. The SSAE's analysis of the situation was a different approach from that of the French government. The SSAE was not so concerned with the political aspect of the refugees, and to define them as exiles was an attempt to understand the psychology of that population of refugees, and to try to support them accordingly. There were thus two aspects among the committee for the relief of Hungarian refugees in France: on one side there was the government, which interpreted the situation politically and pragmatically, and on the other side, private organisations like the SSAE, which were more concerned about who the refugees were and how to help them. Yet, despite all these organisations contributing to the government's efforts to the relief of Hungarian refugees in France, their resettlement did not always go smoothly because they

¹²⁴ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Reflections on the new cases, n.d.

were considered as labour immigrants, while the Hungarians considered themselves as refugees.

Emigration also became an issue. As soon as they arrived many refugees expressed their desire to re-emigrate to the United States, Canada or Australia. Out of the 530 Hungarian refugees accommodated in Mont-Dauphin, 20 per cent of them wanted to resettle in the United States, 14 per cent in Australia, 7 per cent in the Federal Republic of Germany, and 6 per cent in Canada, representing almost half of the refugees in the camp.¹²⁵ France was aware that the United States limited their initial offer to take refugees from Hungary to 5,000 individuals, and it was only after pressure from the American public, on the grounds that the country was not doing enough to help the Hungarians, that the US government decided to raise the bar to 21,000. France on the other hand did not have any limits and had to deal with growing numbers of refugees, some of whom wished to re-emigrate overseas.¹²⁶ On top of that, rumours started spreading in the camp that American navy boats docked in Marseille would take refugees from Hungary with them during the Christmas period to the United States. Radio Free Europe (RFE) propaganda and the rumours that followed had negative effects on the Hungarian refugees. RFE was launched in 1951 on the initiative of the National Committee for Free Europe, pressing for an aggressive campaign of liberation of the Russian satellites, and was listened

¹²⁵ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, Prefect of Hautes-Alpes to Minister of Interior and Prefect of Rhône, 8 December 1956.

¹²⁶ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Hervé Alphand to Christian Pineau, 7 December 1956.

to by millions of Hungarians especially during the days of the revolution.¹²⁷

RFE was secretly funded and sponsored by the CIA, being then instrumental in the Hungarian revolution, and was used as a way of shaping reactions of the populations under Soviet influence.¹²⁸

RFE led them to believe that they would be accepted for emigration to the United States without any problems when actually this was far from the case. RFE was already criticised by the refugees who felt abandoned by the USA and Europe as they understood that they would receive military support for the revolution.¹²⁹ However, the US government defended itself and claimed it had not recommended RFE to encourage revolutionary actions nor had it promised military intervention, and claimed that the revolution was the result of ten years of Soviet repression.¹³⁰ After the so-called euphoria of the first few days in the camp, the refugees started to fear for their future as they realised that their prospects for emigration overseas were complicated:

Désespérés, les réfugiés... ressentent un certain sentiment de crainte, de perte de confiance, en un mot, de peur, malgré toutes les interventions officielles pour leur expliquer les mesures projetées en leur faveur pour

¹²⁷ W. Scott Lucas, 'Beyond Freedom, Beyond Control: Approaches to Culture and the State-Private Network in the Cold war', in Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, (eds), *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe 1945-1960* (London, 2003), p.60.

¹²⁸ Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York, 1997), p.83.

¹²⁹ George R. Urban, *Radio Free Europe and the Pursuit of Democracy: My War within the Cold War* (New Haven, 1997), pp.212-3.

¹³⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1955-1957, vol. XXV, *Eastern Europe*, 199, Memorandum from Director of Central Intelligence to the President, 20 November 1956, pp.473-5.

les reclasser rapidement. Inquiets sur leur avenir, ils envisagent même d'envoyer une délégation à Paris, auprès des ambassades étrangères.¹³¹

The RG witnessed the situation in the camps deteriorating as well as the lack of faith of the refugees in the French government. Hungarian refugees believed that the French government was not doing enough to make sure they could re-emigrate in another country. The atmosphere quickly deteriorated as the refugees felt more and more helpless and believed that they had no freedom of choice as to whether they could re-emigrate or stay in France. It was at that point that refugees in Mont-Dauphin said they felt like prisoners in a concentration or forced labour camp.¹³² It shows that the French government was failing in giving the refugees the freedom they had hoped to find in France. The government was under pressure to find solutions regarding the claims of the refugees, as they wanted to prevent them from returning to Hungary with the feeling that France had let them down.

The situation started to escape the French government's control on 6 December when 50 refugees decided to leave the camp. They were stopped at Embrun, a about 20 kilometres from Mont-Dauphin, and sent back to the camp.¹³³ The following day, all the refugees left the camp, except 50 people. In order to avoid more incidents, the Ministry of the Interior decided to relocate them to Montluçon, Allier, a more populated area. The Ministry explained that the refugees were longing for freedom after 'dix ans de régime soviétique' and

¹³¹ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, RG to Hautes-Alpes prefecture, 7 December 1956.

¹³² CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, Prefect of Hautes-Alpes to Minister of Interior and Prefect of Rhône, 8 December 1956.

¹³³ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, RG to Hautes-Alpes prefecture, 7 December 1956.

'après les promesses inconsidérées qui leur avaient été faites en Autriche'.¹³⁴

Those were references to RFE which had a negative impact on the refugees in Hungary and in Austria.

The Soviet authorities and the Kádár government accused RFE of having initiated the Hungarian revolution and promised military intervention from the West. When the first 10,000 refugees arrived in Austria, they were reported as being bitter since the intervention from the West never came: '[Un jeune socialiste de Hongrie] s'exprima avec une grande amertume sur Radio-Europe-Libre qui, dit-il, pendant des années a exhorté les Hongrois à chasser les communistes et les Russes. Mais, au moment décisif, l'Ouest nous a lâchés', ajoutait-il.¹³⁵ That case was not unusual as observers in the Austrian refugee camps started to interview the refugees from Hungary. When interviewed, refugees manifested a grudge against RFE as they claimed it had pushed them to revolt and it had promised them support if they did.¹³⁶ Years of propaganda by RFE led the Hungarians to understand the radio programmes as a promise of military intervention to support the revolution. However, since no such support was provided, refugees were disappointed and had the feeling that Western Europe and the USA had given up on them.¹³⁷

Archives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirm that the refugees genuinely thought that help from the USA, France or Britain would come, and

¹³⁴ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, Prefect of Hautes-Alpes to Minister of Interior and Prefect of Rhône, 8 December 1956.

¹³⁵ *Le Monde*, 7 November 1956.

¹³⁶ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, MAE to Vienna, Budapest, Washington, Moscow, London, and Munich embassies, 13 November 1956.

¹³⁷ Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, p.85.

most likely in a military way. A survey carried out by an Austrian Institute on 450 refugees in the first month following their arrival in Austria, revealed that out of the 96 per cent of those who listened to Western radio programmes, 79 per cent of them listened to RFE, showing its importance during the revolution.¹³⁸ An investigation by the West German government on the responsibility of the Munich-based RFE, following hundreds of testimonies of despondent refugees who claimed they were promised Western intervention, led the West German chancellor to admit that 'remarks were made which were liable to cause misinterpretations.'¹³⁹

However, these were not the only reasons and they only partially explained the behaviour of the refugees in Mont-Dauphin. If propaganda while in Hungary and Austria played a part, being accommodated in an isolated military camp definitely made the refugees feel like prisoners and triggered their desire to leave the camp as soon as possible. Comparing Mont-Dauphin with the Valdahon camp, near Besançon, suggests this was the case.

Only a couple of days after the events in Mont-Dauphin, 300 refugees in the Valdahon camp, also a military barracks, left the camp on 9 December in an attempt to cross the Swiss border to re-emigrate to the United States or Canada.¹⁴⁰ Stopped at the border, they were returned to the camp the following day. These two similar cases were raised at the National Assembly.¹⁴¹ The Minister of Defence, Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, claimed that what happened

¹³⁸ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 97, Seydoux to Pineau, 7 December 1956.

¹³⁹ Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, pp.85-6.

¹⁴⁰ *Le Monde*, 12 December 1956.

¹⁴¹ JO, Assemblée Nationale, 21 December 1956, pp.6200-1.

in Mont-Dauphin and Valdahon was linked to Soviet propaganda, which made refugees believe that they did not earn as much money as the French for the same job. He also stated that, due to rumours, refugees believed that France was just a transit country and that they would have been able to re-emigrate quickly. Finally, he said that the years of Soviet authority psychologically affected some of the refugees. He made, however, no mention of the refugees being accommodated in military camps as a possible reason for their reaction.¹⁴²

On the contrary, Jean Montalat, SFIO deputy, argued that accommodating of the refugees in military camps was an unacceptable mistake:

Nous avons craint et nous craignons malheureusement encore que les conditions matérielles de l'accueil des réfugiés hongrois ne soient à la mesure des engagements pris à leur égard. Nous pensons qu'il eût été préférable d'éviter, à ces malheureux qui avaient fui la guerre et les menaces pesant sur eux et qui sont arrivés en France dans l'état psychologique que vous venez de décrire, un séjour dans les camps militaires... Le choix des camps militaires et, en particulier, celui du Valdahon, comme centres d'accueil des réfugiés hongrois est une faute inadmissible. Il ne faudrait pas qu'elle se renouvelle à l'avenir.¹⁴³

The French government was not able to set up a proper plan to accommodate refugees and used existing military camps for that purpose, to the detriment of

¹⁴² CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, RG to prefect and RG director, 8 December 1956.

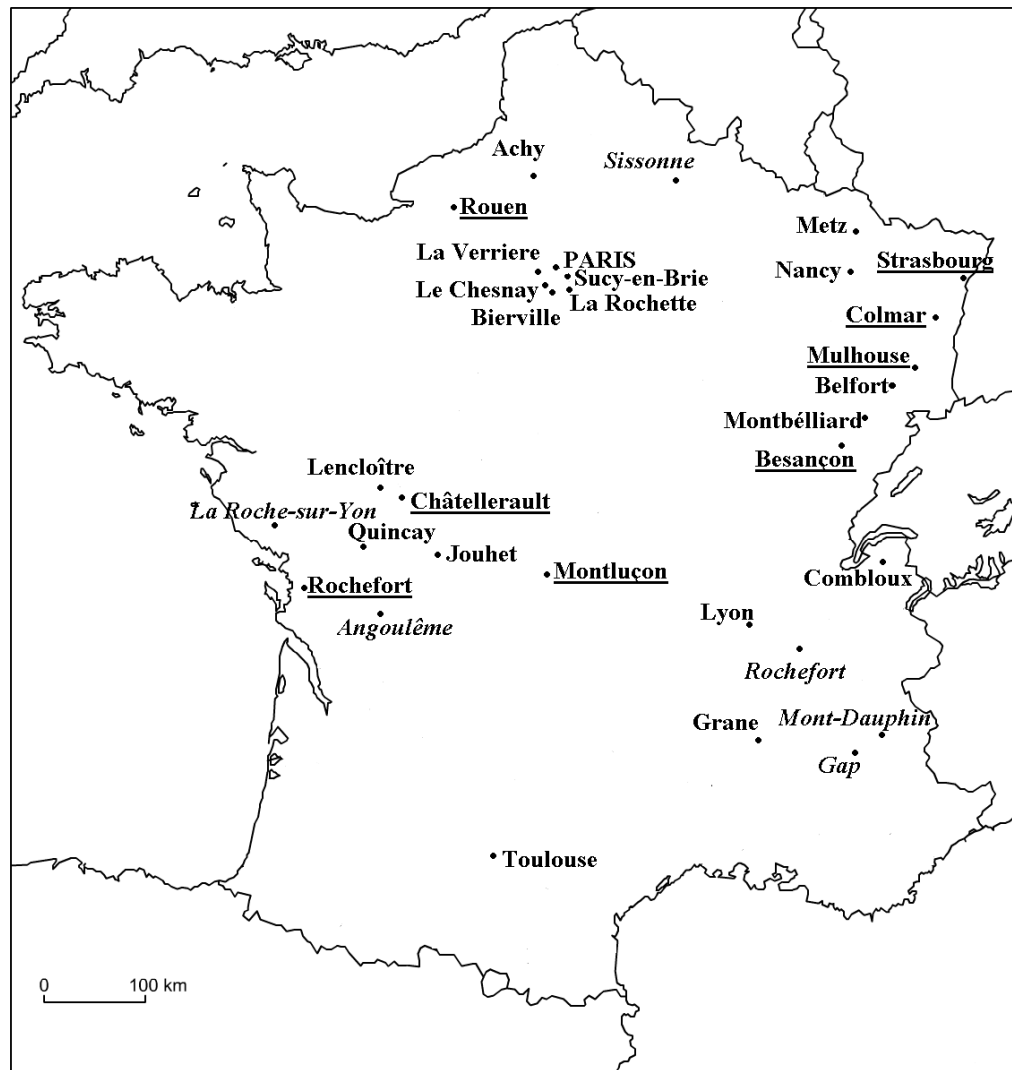
¹⁴³ JO, Assemblée Nationale, 21 December 1956, p.6201.

the refugees. A discrepancy existed between the promises made to the refugees to help them and the way in which they were received. The French government's mistake was to accommodate in military structures a population trying to liberate itself from a regime which repressed their revolution with military force. Montalat's wish to not see that mistake repeated in the future was, however, not granted as, except for smaller accommodation around Paris run by the Cimade, refugees from Hungary were still accommodated in military camps. Yet, Montalat believed that in granting asylum to the Hungarian refugees, the reputation of France as a country of asylum was at stake.¹⁴⁴

Faced with unexpected difficulties in Mont-Dauphin and Valdahon, the CNARH decided to rethink its policy and to close the camps in isolated areas. Out of the initial list proposed by the Ministry of Defence, six camps were closed largely because of poor prospect of employment in the region. The Ministry of Defence, which was still in charge of accommodating the refugees, on Guy Mollet's demand, proposed a revised plan in early 1957:

¹⁴⁴ JO, Assemblée Nationale, 21 December 1956, p.6201.

**Map 3.1: Accommodation Centres for Hungarian refugees
on 1 February 1957**



Legend:

Strasbourg: Functioning camp opened between 27 November and 5 December 1956.

Metz: Camp opened after 5 December 1956.

Gap: Closed camp on 1 February 1957.

(Source: CAC, 19810201, art 2, Note for Juvigny, 10 December 1956;
Accommodation centres for Hungarian refugees, 14 February 1957.)

The camps around Paris were run by the Cimade and were not under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior. They were very different from the other camps as they were smaller and were not military barracks.

Following the new plan, the Ministry of Defence's discontent grew very quickly as neither Guy Mollet nor Jean Gilbert-Jules, the Minister of the

Interior, proposed alternative plans for the refugees in military camps run by the army. Another consequence of Mollet's decision to welcome Hungarian refugees without limit was that, at a time of housing shortages, the resettlement of many of the refugees proved to be difficult.¹⁴⁵ In early January 1957, the Ministry of Defence had accommodated a total of 7,000 Hungarians, of whom 4,000 were still in camps. Other military camps, like in Domfront, Orne, and in Cambrai, Nord, were also later used to accommodate refugees. The Ministry of Defence criticised the Ministry of the Interior and Guy Mollet for having accepted more refugees than the government could possibly handle. It also blamed them for having to support the refugees, when it should have been the role of other ministries.

The situation led to increasing tensions between the two ministries. Although after spring 1957, refugees arrived at a much slower rate, the Ministry of Defence pressured the Ministry of the Interior into relieving the army from its responsibilities. It periodically proposed new plans to the Ministry of the Interior in order to evacuate its camps and pass on full responsibility to the Ministry of the Interior and other administrative bodies. Its plan of 30 September 1957 proposed to evacuate Cambrai and one Nancy camp on 1 October, Montbéliard on 1 November, Metz and the other Nancy camp on 1 January 1958, and Domfront on 1 March.¹⁴⁶ Cambrai, Montbéliard and one of the Nancy camps were closed in due time, with the remaining camps still

¹⁴⁵ CAC, 19990260, art. 35, Minister of Defence to Thomas, 4 January 1957.

¹⁴⁶ CAC, 19990260, art. 35, Minister of the Interior to Minister of Defence, 30 September 1957.

representing a total of 600 refugees.¹⁴⁷ The housing crisis was such that the Ministry of the Interior had great difficulties in finding accommodation even for those in employment, and was unwilling to move those with jobs to another camp as it would delay their resettlement. On the other hand, refugees who were unwilling to work were sent to Domfront.¹⁴⁸ Thus, refugees from Hungary, except for those at the care of the Cimade, had not been accommodated anywhere else but in military camps until they found permanent accommodation elsewhere.

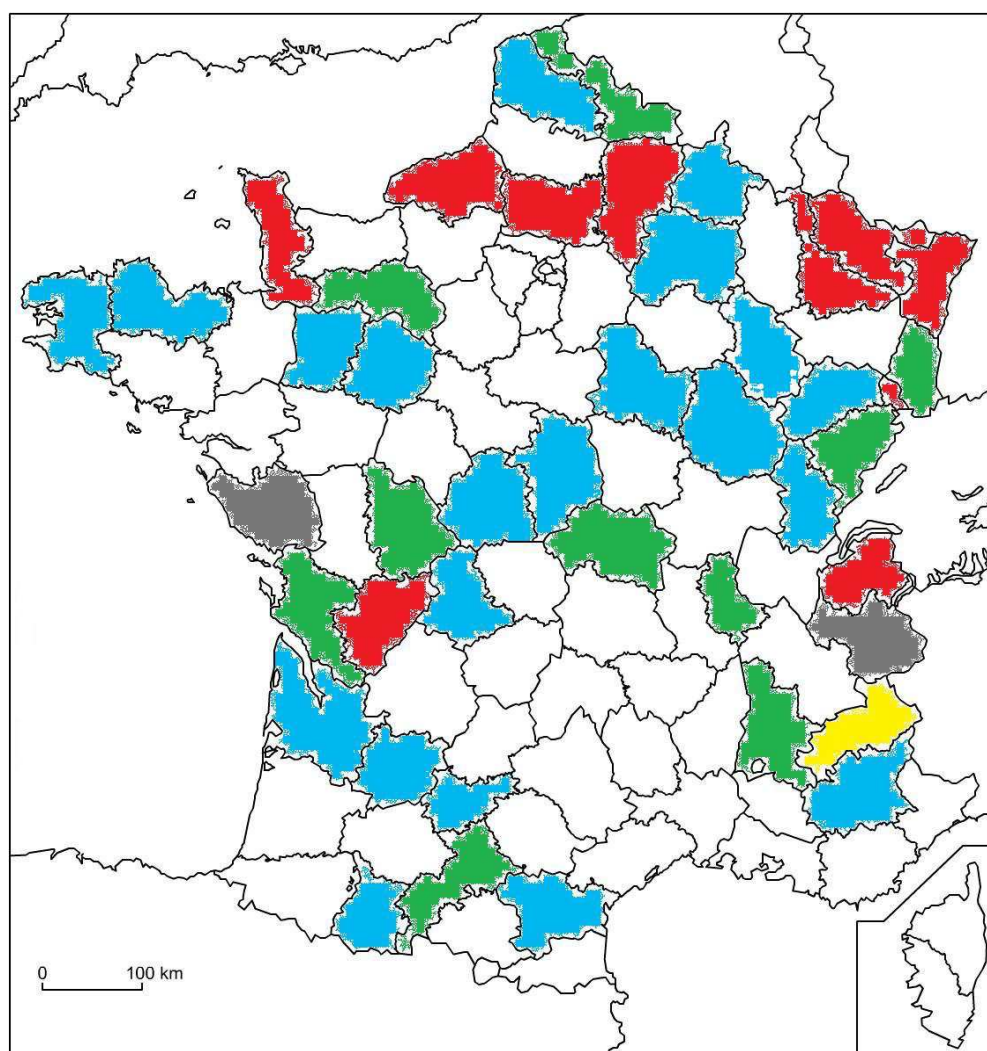
The Ministry of Labour established a list in early December 1956 of the départements with employment opportunities for the Hungarian refugees.¹⁴⁹ A total of 6,818 positions were available for the Hungarians to take. That number included 5,913 for men and 905 for women, with the vast majority of the jobs available in metallurgy (1,884), construction (1,730), agriculture (926), and mining (424). Comparing this plan with the places of accommodation in camps can help to understand the effects of the resettlement policy:

¹⁴⁷ CAC, 19990260, art. 35, Minister of Defence to Minister of the Interior, 8 March 1957, 29 November 1957.

¹⁴⁸ CAC, 19990260, art. 35, Minister of the Interior to Minister of Defence, 30 September 1957.

¹⁴⁹ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, List of employment opportunities for the Hungarian refugees, 4 December 1956.

Map 3.2: Employment opportunities and refugee camps by départements (excluding Paris region), December 1956-February 1957



Legend:

- Départements with camps and with employment for Hungarian refugees
- Départements without camps but with employment
- Départements with camps but without employment
- Département with camps and with employment but closed down because of trouble
- Départements with unused camps and without employment

(Source: CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Employment opportunities for Hungarian refugees, 4 December 1956; 19810201, art. 2, Note for Juvigny, 10 December 1956; 19810201, art. 2, Existing accommodation centres for Hungarian refugees, 14 February 1957)

The map clearly shows that the Ministry of the Interior did not respect the suggestions of the Ministry of Labour. If the refugees happened to be in a département with employment opportunities, it was mostly because there was a military camp there that could be used as a refugee camp. Roughly half the refugees found themselves in camps with no large employment opportunities, while 21 départements with prospects of employment could not receive any refugees in great numbers due to lack of accommodation.

The Moselle, Meurthe-et-Moselle and Haute-Marne départements, which offered a large number of jobs in the steel industry and coal mines, were the most promising départements. Refugees who worked in those two sectors there could be accommodated by their employers, and thus solved the question of them leaving the camps.

Those difficulties happened because the Ministry of the Interior tackled the resettlement of the refugees from the perspective of employment, without enough means of proper accommodation. This perspective ignored refugees' own expectations of their stay in France, such as re-emigration opportunities. The events in Mont-Dauphin, for example, were not linked to employment, as 545 jobs had been offered to the refugees.¹⁵⁰ The refugees simply refused to take those jobs because they feared they would lose their status as refugees and not be able to re-emigrate overseas if they did. In the first months, emigration was an important issue for the Hungarian refugees in France.

¹⁵⁰ CAC, 19890576, art. 3, liasse 2, RG to Hautes-Alpes prefecture, 7 December 1956.

After those initial problems and when the refugees who were determined to leave France did so, the resettlement of those who decided to stay in France went quickly. Some camps benefited from renovation work. The military barracks in Cambrai, for example, were turned into a refugee camp for the occasion. The Ministry of Defence refurbished the camp to make it more comfortable for the refugees.¹⁵¹ The SSAE played a part as it recommended that the conditions should be improved.¹⁵² Walls were painted with light colours, rooms for couples were arranged, and sanitary installations were in good condition. On the whole, camps were improved to make refugees less prone to complain as far as the French government was concerned. For the SSAE, on the other hand, it was a matter of treating refugees with decency.

The majority of the Hungarian refugees had been resettled by the end of 1957. This encouraged the French government in accepting Hungarian refugees from Yugoslavia. In its plans to resettle Hungarians from Yugoslavia, the government made it clear that only those who could be employed in sectors lacking a full workforce in France would be accepted.

¹⁵¹ CAC, 19810201, art. 2, Inspecteur Divisionnaire, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, to Minister of Social Affairs, 26 June 1957.

¹⁵² CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Meeting with Ms Woillez, 25 May 1957.

-Granting asylum or recruiting workers? Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia

From the mid-1950s onwards, France benefited from great economic growth, the so-called Trente Glorieuses, and was in need of workers, which the government sought to meet with labour immigration.¹⁵³ In granting asylum to Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia, Cold War considerations were put aside, and the French government set up a plan to recruit a labour force. I will now show, through the example of the Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia chosen for resettlement in France, how the French government turned the refugee crisis into labour migration.

The problem of the Hungarian refugees who sought refuge in Yugoslavia was of a different nature in comparison to the Austrian situation. They were fewer in numbers, representing roughly 20,000 of the total 200,000 refugees who left Hungary. However, countries which granted asylum to Hungarian refugees in Austria were far more reluctant to do the same for Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia because they sought refuge in a Communist country.¹⁵⁴ France, however, proved to be one of the most generous countries and granted asylum to 2,453 Hungarian refugees from Yugoslavia, while the United States, still accepting refugees on its quota system, only accepted 2,326 of them for resettlement. During his visit in Yugoslavia in December 1957, the UNHCR

¹⁵³ Vincent Viet, *Histoire des Français venus d'ailleurs de 1850 à nos jours* (Paris, 2004), p.199.

¹⁵⁴ MAE, HCR, 300, Broustra to Pineau, 24 December 1957.

High Commissioner, Auguste Lindt, congratulated the French government for its help regarding the Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia.¹⁵⁵

Despite Lindt's statements, it was not generosity that motivated the French government in granting asylum to refugees in Yugoslavia. Just as the Hungarian refugees in Austria were accepted because it was profitable for France's economy and industry, the refugees in Yugoslavia were carefully selected to make sure they would fit immigration criteria. A first mission was sent on 2 June 1957 to recruit 1,300 refugees, after 200 had been selected by the French embassy there already.¹⁵⁶ The mission, which included representatives of the Ministries of Labour and of Foreign Affairs, selected 1,100 for immigration to France. Among the refugees screened, 90 per cent were employable in France, most of them being workers or skilled workers in metallurgy and agriculture. The mission was pleased that 82 per cent of the workers were men, among whom 72 per cent were single, as they were looking to recruit young single men, who were believed to be easier to employ because they had no family and were more mobile. The recruitment of the Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia privileged individuals who could be put in employment immediately and resettled quickly. The mission was thus far from serving a humanitarian purpose as it recruited a majority of men at the expense of family groups or female refugees:

Un problème reste donc posé et que le travail effectué par la mission ne fait que confirmer, à savoir qu'il serait urgent que fut fixé un deuxième

¹⁵⁵ MAE, HCR, 300, Broustra to Pineau, 24 December 1957.

¹⁵⁶ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Report on the recruitment of Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia, 27 June 1957.

contingent, ne serait-ce que pour donner suite aux promesses qui par ailleurs ont été faites à ces réfugiés. Cette deuxième action pourrait peut-être se situer sur un plan plus 'social' puisque aussi la première, par la force des choses et des circonstances, a pris essentiellement un caractère économique.¹⁵⁷

The mission was used, above all, to recruit workers and not to grant asylum to refugees. The fact that there was a selection process shows that the government wanted to recruit refugees who could be employed and not simply grant asylum to any refugee. The report suggested that the French government send another mission as soon as possible in order to get the best people for labour migration to France, before other countries arranged for their emigration elsewhere. From the tone of the report, it appears that the social aspect of the refugee policy was overshadowed by economic motives.

The Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Labour then arranged with various employers in France to recruit some of the refugees directly from refugee camps abroad. To that end it used the ONI which aimed to recruit workers under 35 years of age.¹⁵⁸ The ONI is an example of the rationalisation of immigration in France, as it served a double purpose, and attempted to control immigration. The introduction of the ONI in the recruitment of Hungarian refugees provides further proof that the French government considered the refugees as labour.

¹⁵⁷ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Report on the recruitment of Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia, 27 June 1957.

¹⁵⁸ CAC, 19900353, art. 17, Minister of the Interior to ONI Director, 21 December 1957.

The ONI sent a physician, a selection officer, and a policeman in order to recruit 200 young single unskilled men for agricultural work, industry and construction.¹⁵⁹ Only 28 refugees were recruited on that occasion as Canada had already sent a mission with the same goals. The UNHCR was aware of the selection of refugees for work, and agreed on condition that only single men were recruited so that families were not split up. Thus France was not the only country recruiting refugees as workers in Yugoslavia. As the refugees from Hungary were not 'news' anymore and the UNHCR wanted the remaining refugees to be resettled, the French government benefited from good conditions to select refugees for employment without being worried that this scheme would be criticised.

Despite being able to put refugees in employment quickly, other problems surfaced in some of the camps and were not related to the availability of employment for refugees. In several camps, a minority of refugees started to raise concerns among the CNARH members as they refused to take up proposed employment and remained idle in camps, in some cases influencing other refugees to do the same.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ CAC, 19900353, art. 17, ONI Police Officer Reitzer to Directeur de la Réglementation, 10 December 1957.

¹⁶⁰ MAE, Hongrie, 97, Report on the Hungarian refugees in Metz and Nancy, 31 December 1956.

-Refugee policy - success or failure? The Camp des Cinq

Tranchées

Despite, the quick resettlement of the refugees from Hungary in general, the French government had to deal with a minority of difficult cases, who were not willing to move out of the camps, or were too poor to go into permanent accommodation. The camp des Cinq Tranchées, near Nancy, represented to a large extent a failure in the French policy for the Hungarian refugees. Although the camp was relatively small, it represented a problem hard to solve. The camp was intrinsically linked to government decisions to accept an unlimited number of refugees for asylum: principally to show the world and especially countries in the Soviet sphere of influence, that the West, to use the expression of that time, cared about the people and that freedom could be achieved there, but above all to recruit mobile and immediately available workers.

The camp des Cinq Tranchées consisted of unused military barracks and was run by the Ministry of the Interior, to re-accommodate the 150 refugees left in the Molitor military camp in Nancy in early 1958. The general state of the camp was very poor as electricity and running water were cut off in April 1959.¹⁶¹ Henri Trémeaud, French representative at the UNHCR, blamed France for having misled the UNHCR by calling the camps 'accommodation centres' and created the situation at the Cinq Tranchées:

¹⁶¹ AN, F7/16069, Prefect of Meurthe-et-Moselle to Minister of the Interior, 6 November 1959.

En France, on a toujours refusé d'appeler les choses de ce nom et le résultat est que les crédits pour fermer les camps sont épuisés et qu'aucun d'entre eux n'a pu être attribué à la France puisqu'en principe elle n'avait pas de 'camps'... On a créé un camp pire que les autres dans les baraques des Cinq Tranchées.¹⁶²

The French government did not arbitrarily choose to call the military camps 'accommodation centres', but chose to give them a positive connotation rather than the negative one of 'camp', which could in 1956 still evoke concentration camps or refugee camps from the Second World War. It wanted to give an impression of comfort, especially to the Soviet authorities, who were trying to repatriate the Hungarian refugees by promising immunity regarding the October revolution. In reality, those 'accommodation centres' were simply military camps under army surveillance. The consequences were that the French government could not ask for the financial help from the UNHCR to close the refugee camps and resettle their occupants, as had been the case in Austria. Attempts to use the refugees for their political and economic advantage led to a financial backlash for France.

The Cinq Tranchées camp became a bigger problem after Radio Luxembourg broadcast a report on the disastrous conditions in the camp in November 1959.¹⁶³ The refugees in Cinq Tranchées were hard to resettle because only 27 of the 150 inhabitants were working, and were paid too little to rent private

¹⁶² CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Phone call to Trémeaud, 3 February 1958.

¹⁶³ AN, F7/16069, Prefect of Meurthe-et-Moselle to Minister of the Interior, 6 November 1959.

accommodation.¹⁶⁴ Many others were known to be petty criminals.¹⁶⁵ Although the Radio Luxembourg report provoked ministerial discussions on the camp, no satisfactory solution was found. The camp remained open and supported by the SSAE.¹⁶⁶

However, the camp was prematurely closed on 1 March 1960, when the visit of Nikita Khrushchev was announced in France from 23 March to 3 April.¹⁶⁷ Stéphane Dufoix argues that this visit symbolised the improvement of relations between France and Hungary after Charles de Gaulle became president. The French government put hundreds of political activists among the Hungarian refugees under house arrest in Corsica, in an effort to prevent potential public demonstrations protesting against the visit and the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁸ That was one consequence of the visit on the Hungarian refugees. As far as the remaining refugees at the camp des Cinq Tranchées were concerned, who were not classified as political activists but rather difficult cases for resettlement, they were dispersed to other départements. To facilitate their resettlement, the Ministry of the Interior agreed with the Ministry of Labour to grant them permanent work permit for any profession. The end of the Hungarian refugees resettlement occurred in an effort to conceal the camp des Cinq Tranchées from the Soviet head of government, showing that the refugee problem remained

¹⁶⁴ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Report on the meeting at the Ministry of the Interior, 26 November 1959.

¹⁶⁵ AN, F7/16069, Prefect of Meurthe-et-Moselle to Minister of the Interior, 6 November 1959.

¹⁶⁶ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Report on the meeting at the Ministry of the Interior, 26 November 1959.

¹⁶⁷ CAC, 19810201, art. 2, Minister of the Interior to the Prefect of Meurthe-et-Moselle, 13 February 1960.

¹⁶⁸ Stéphane Dufoix, *Politiques d'exil: Hongrois, Polonais, Tchécoslovaques en France après 1945* (Paris 2002), pp.103-4.

linked to the Cold War context, when the economic resettlement of the refugees was not achieved.

-Attitudes towards naturalisation

In January 1957, 7,346 Hungarian refugees were accommodated in camps spread in 17 départements, of whom only 460 re-emigrated.¹⁶⁹ In December 1957, only 669 refugees were left in camps. At that date, a total of 12,858 refugees had come to France, of whom 8,224 were resettled in France, 3,269 re-emigrated elsewhere and 696 went back to Hungary.¹⁷⁰ Thus, the French government succeeded in limiting the return of Hungarian refugees to their country of origin as part of its propaganda action, while attempting to have them fill unoccupied jobs and permanently resettle.

However, naturalisation, which was considered to be, if not the final, then a major step in the process of assimilation, as France wanted Hungarians to contribute to the country's demographic growth, did not necessarily happen after the five years period of residence to apply for French citizenship.¹⁷¹

Attitudes towards naturalisation were mixed among the Hungarian refugees.

For some, it was a means by which a proper passport could replace temporary

¹⁶⁹ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Situation of Hungarian refugees on 4 January 1957, 28 December 1957.

¹⁷⁰ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Situation of Hungarian refugees on 15 December 1957, 28 December 1957.

¹⁷¹ Patrick Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français ? Histoire de la nationalité française depuis la Révolution* (Paris, 2002), p.230.

and inconvenient refugee documents. It also gave refugees a feeling of stability. Akos Ditroy, who left Hungary because of his involvement in the revolution, initially wanted to go back, but changed his mind after he got married in France in 1961. However, he returned on his own to Hungary for the first time in 1965 to take stock of the situation in the country almost ten years after the revolution. Akos Ditroy waited a long time before applying for French nationality, which made him feel safe enough to travel with his family: 'Je suis devenu citoyen français en 1980. Ca m'a permis d'aller [en Hongrie] avec la famille. Avant, ma femme y allait avec les enfants mais sans moi'.¹⁷² His concern about the Hungarian situation, and because he was hoping for a regime change in Hungary, made him delay his decision to get naturalised.

The Algerian War was also one of the reasons why Hungarian refugees in France sometimes waited to apply for French nationality:

J'ai d'abord eu un titre de voyage, valable pour tous les pays au monde sauf la Hongrie... En 1967, j'ai eu ma naturalisation. J'aurais pu l'avoir dès 1962, mais à l'époque il y avait la guerre d'Algérie. Les copains qui ont demandé la naturalisation à cette période, le lendemain, c'était la convocation pour 28 mois d'Algérie.¹⁷³

Pierre Latzko also considered returning to Hungary after the end of the Soviet Union, but he quickly realised that life there was difficult for him after 35 years in France: 'Je suis parti en préretraite en 1991, ce qui coïncidait avec la chute

¹⁷² Interview with Akos Ditroy.

¹⁷³ Interview with Pierre Latzko, 13 & 20 November 2009.

du mur. Je me suis dit: 'tiens, je vais rentrer chez moi'. C'est ce que j'ai fait, c'est ce que j'ai tenté de faire. Mais, ça n'a pas marché, car la vie de tous les jours pour moi là-bas, ce n'est plus possible.' His statement shows that in the early 1990s, despite having French nationality for nearly 25 years, he still considered Hungary as home.

-Conclusion

The French government was quick to react to the Hungarian revolution. It had first used the situation in Hungary to carry out, with Britain, a humanitarian response that was also to serve as propaganda to weaken the Soviet Union. This relief also enabled France to regain some credit at the UN Assembly, following the military intervention in Egypt. Accepting unlimited number of refugees was part of this propaganda. It was considered a moral victory over the Soviet Union that Hungarian refugees successfully resettled in France.

This propaganda goal found its expression in the public demonstrations in Paris, which were anticommunist and the occasion to weaken the PCF, during a Fourth Republic made of alliances between parties and difficulties to form parliamentary majorities, characterised by ministerial instability.¹⁷⁴ In this context, the Hungarian revolution and the Hungarian refugees became political objects.

¹⁷⁴ Gildea, *France since 1945*, p.41.

However, the fact that the refugees were composed of single young men was determinant in their resettlement in France. Aside from the political considerations linked the Cold War, Hungarian refugees were considered to be labour immigrants, within the terms of the 1945 Ordinance, as they could be employed in agricultural and industrial sectors, which lacked sufficient a workforce. The refugees were also thought to be able to boost France's demography, as their national origin was a welcome addition to the French population in contrast with the Algerians, who made up the main wave of post-war immigrants. The French government and administration thus eased their immigration policy by massively and automatically regularising all Hungarian refugees who wished to resettle in France.

Yet, this chapter has also shown that their resettlement in France had its limits. France was not prepared to accommodate a large number of refugees, which led to unrest in some of the camps. Moreover, because of the complex linkage between immigration policies and the Cold War, the French government did not know what to do with refugees who could not be placed in employment and permanent accommodation. The fact that the last Hungarian refugee camp was hastily closed before Khrushchev's visit to France, in a period of thaw with the Soviet Union, shows that this particular group of refugees was a political embarrassment as a living proof of the limitations of the French resettlement policy.

4. Britain and the Refugees from Hungary

Before the Hungarian refugee crisis started, the British government saw political advantage in supporting the revolution in Hungary. It worked with the French government to make sure the insurgents knew their revolution was supported in the West. Despite public popular support for the Hungarian revolutionaries, the Soviet invasion of Hungary did not trigger demonstrations in Britain similar to the ones in France. This can be explained by the national political context in Britain. The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was not a major party and did not experience attacks on the scale that the PCF suffered. Yet, it adopted a similar position regarding the Soviet invasion of Hungary.¹ The revolution, nevertheless, raised a lot of sympathy from the British public.

However, granting asylum to the Hungarian refugees was a means of propaganda against the Soviet Union and a way to support and encourage rebellion in countries under Soviet influence. It was also a way to distract attention from the Suez crisis, criticised in Britain and at the United Nations. Moreover, the previous chapter showed that the French government had demographic and economic interests in admitting a great number of refugees for permanent resettlement. Britain also experienced labour shortages in late 1956, especially in the industrial and agricultural sectors where the government thought that Hungarian refugees could contribute, as the bulk of the refugees

¹ *Daily Worker*, 25 October, 1 November, 5 November 1956.

were young single men who previously worked in these areas.² The use of Hungarian refugees as an available workforce is also shown through the scheme set up by the National Coal Board (NCB). The NCB received authorisation from the Home Office to recruit as many Hungarian refugees to work in British mines as necessary, as the NCB's estimations at the time showed that the mining sector was in great need of miners.³

Refugees from Hungary arrived in Britain at a time when the Cabinet was looking into the possibility of limiting immigration from the West Indies, India, and Pakistan. Hungarian refugees were a more welcome population: it was believed that their large number would not cause social unrest because they were white.

However, as in France, granting asylum to potentially unlimited numbers of refugees in such a short time in a country usually reluctant to grant asylum posed some practical issues. The British government did not have enough accommodation available. Thus, very different kinds of accommodation were used, from former military camps and barracks to houses and disused medical buildings, sometimes in remote places far from employment opportunities. This obviously affected the reception of the refugees.

Whereas the French government and parliament supported the resettlement of Hungarian refugees in France, with the exception of the Communists, the same cannot be said of the British government. Tony Kushner argues that the Home

² TNA, LAB 8/2580, Notes for Sir Arthur Rucker, 3 January 1957.

³ TNA, PREM 11/1715, Memorandum on Hungarian Refugees, 19 December 1956.

Office was reluctant to admit Hungarian refugees and only did so under Foreign Office and popular pressure.⁴ The Home Office indeed was opposed, at first, to the resettlement of Hungarian refugees in Britain. This opposition was motivated, to an extent, by anti-immigrant feelings but also by anticommunism. The Home Office and the London Metropolitan Police, governed by the Home Office, remained very suspicious of the Hungarian refugees, as they feared a communist fifth column amongst them.

Finally, the previous chapter suggested that the French government did not distinguish between the Hungarian refugees and that the small number of Jews among the refugees limited French Jewish responses. Yet, in Britain, the Jewish community was concerned with potential antisemitism among refugees, and wanted to support Jewish refugees, as they, too, were suspicious of the Hungarian refugees.

-Responses to the Hungarian crisis

Popular reactions to the Hungarian revolution were very limited in comparison with the demonstrations in France, which were directed against the PCF. This can be explained by the fact that the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was smaller than its French counterpart. In 1945, the CPGB's membership reached 45,000. It enjoyed a renewed importance in the trade unions after the

⁴ Tony Kushner, *Remembering Refugees: Then and Now* (Manchester, 2006), p.67.

election of Bert Papworth to the General Council of the Trades Union Congress (TUC).⁵ By 1950, the CPGB's influence had already greatly diminished due the increased tensions between the Western bloc and the Soviet Union and the anticommunism of the TUC leaders.⁶ Moreover, the British working-class was traditionally supporters of the Labour party. In 1956, in contrast with the PCF, the party had no MP.

The Hungarian revolution and its repression had major repercussions on the CPGB and its official newspaper, the *Daily Worker*. Harry Pollitt, the leader of the CPGB, supported the Soviet repression of the Hungarian revolution, which led to the departure of many of its members. Following the events in Hungary, it lost 7,000 of its 33,000 members after November 1956.⁷ Not only did the *Daily Worker* lose some of its subscribers, on the back of its support for the Soviet regime, but it also lost a third of its journalists, including its special reporter in Budapest, Peter Fryer, who witnessed the military repression.⁸ Fryer's articles had been edited and spiked by the editor of the *Daily Worker* to make them conform to the Soviet interpretation of the Hungarian revolution.⁹ Even some local branches of the CPGB publicly condemned the Soviet military intervention in Hungary.¹⁰ To tackle this loss of credibility and to justify their position, the CPGB followed a line similar to the PCF by claiming that the Hungarian uprising was a fascist counter-revolution. This policy was in

⁵ Phillip Deery and Neil Redfern, 'No Lasting Peace? Labor, Communism and the Cominform: Australia and Great Britain, 1945-1950', *Labour History*, 88 (2005), p.63.

⁶ Deery and Redfern, 'No Lasting Peace?', p.80.

⁷ Keith Laybourn and Dylan Murphy, *Under the Red Flag: A History of Communism in Britain, 1849-1991* (Stroud, 1999), p.141.

⁸ Francis Beckett, *Enemy Within: The Rise and Fall of the British Communist Party* (London, 1995), pp.134-5.

⁹ James Eadon and David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920* (New York, 2002), p.120.

¹⁰ *The Times*, 8 November 1956.

line with the confidence maintained in the Soviet Union earlier in March 1956.¹¹

Only a few demonstrations of support for the Hungarian people took place in Britain and, like in France, these were directed against the CPGB.¹² Among the few hundred demonstrating many were Hungarians or students. Yet, unlike the demonstrations in Paris, those in London were much more orderly, and only a few milk bottles were thrown at the Communist party building in London. Many of the protests in Britain took the form of delegations of Hungarians already in exile to meet the Prime Minister, or letters of protest to the Soviet embassy from British academics.¹³

As far as the British press was concerned, it showed sympathy to the Hungarian revolution and condemned its repression by the Soviet army.¹⁴ Those limited reactions can be explained by the fact that public opinion and the government were much more concerned with the Suez military intervention than by the Hungarian revolution. If the situation in Hungary made the headlines of all the major newspapers in Britain, attention progressively returned to Suez.¹⁵ On the other hand, the *Daily Worker* favoured the Soviet repression of the revolution. Like *L'Humanité* in France, the *Daily Worker* considered the revolution to be led by fascists and an attempt to a return to the

¹¹ TNA, FO 1110/847, Memorandum on trends of Communist propaganda, 29 March 1956.

¹² *The Times*, 12 November 1956.

¹³ *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November, 6 November 1956.

¹⁴ Tony Shaw, *Eden, Suez and the Mass Media: Propaganda and Persuasion During the Suez Crisis* (London, 2009), pp.77-8.

¹⁵ Shaw, *Eden, Suez and the Mass Media*, pp.77-8.

Horthy regime.¹⁶ It thus welcomed the end of the revolution and the forming of 'new Hungarian anti-fascist government' and the end of the 'white terror' by which it characterised the violence of the revolution on the demonstrators' side.¹⁷ Yet, in line with the lesser influence of the CPGB in comparison with the PCF, the *Daily Worker* did not engage in a lengthy debate with other newspapers on the nature of the Hungarian revolution and the refugees.

-The British government's reaction

As far as the British government was concerned, it reacted very carefully to the news of the Hungarian revolution. Just like the French government, it publicly claimed in the House of Commons that it would not intervene in the Soviet Union's affairs: 'Her Majesty's Government have in no way the intention of exploiting events in Eastern Europe to undermine the security of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics', said Lord Privy Seal, R.A. Butler.¹⁸ Despite this statement, the Foreign Office worked on a way to use the Hungarian situation for the government's own benefit. Although the British embassy in Budapest tried to make sure that the Hungarian population understood that no military action was envisaged, it advised that any promise made by Britain should be kept. Such promises were usually to send food and medical supplies.¹⁹ The British government, rather than taking military action, engaged in propaganda

¹⁶ *Daily Worker*, 25 October, 1 November, 5 November 1956.

¹⁷ *Daily Worker*, 5 November 1956.

¹⁸ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 558, col. 1616, 1 November 1956.

¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/122377, British Embassy in Budapest to Foreign Office, 27 October 1956.

action by providing support to the insurgents and, later, refugees. The same course of action was taken by the French government, as discussed in the previous chapter.²⁰

Using the Hungarian situation for propaganda purposes was to continue the ideological warfare started in 1948, with the creation of the Information Research Department (IRD) by the Foreign Office. The IRD was a secret propaganda department and an instrument in 'Britain's covert ideological offensive against the Soviet Union during the Cold War'.²¹ Before the Hungarian revolution, it had engaged in the planning and organisation of anti-Communist publicity.²² The IRD had established in 1955 that Hungarians were missing Imre Nagy as the government's leader, which gave the Foreign Office another incentive to support the Hungarian revolution.²³ Yet, archives do not suggest an active role of the IRD during the Hungarian revolution or in the reception of Hungarian refugees in Britain.

The other motive, in submitting the plan to the French government, was to distract national and international attention from Suez. When the revolution broke out, the decision to attack Egypt to regain the control of the Suez Canal had already been taken at Sèvres on 24 October. The Hungarian revolution did not affect the planned attack on Egypt on 29 October, but was a way to minimise its negative political consequences on the international scene, and

²⁰ MAE, Europe 1956-1960, Hongrie, 92, Jean Chauvel to Christian Pineau, 27 October 1956.

²¹ Phillip Deery, 'Confronting the Cominform: George Orwell and the Cold War Offensive of the Information Research Department, 1948-1950', *Labour History*, 73 (1997), p.219.

²² TNA, FO 1110/383, Minute by K.S. Butler, 28 February 1951.

²³ TNA, FO 1110/781, British delegation in Budapest to IRD, 2 June 1955.

domestically for Britain.²⁴ Anthony Eden, whose cabinet disagreed over Suez, hoped that the news from Hungary would turn in his favour.²⁵ He was indeed criticised by the press, and newspapers usually supporting Eden's policy were divided on the Suez intervention. If the French press was on the whole supportive of the Suez military intervention, it was not the case in Britain.²⁶ This was also reflected in parliament as, for example, there were only 270 against 218 votes in favour of an ultimatum asking the Egyptian army to withdraw far behind the Suez Canal. In comparison, when the same ultimatum was voted on in the French national assembly there were 368 in favour with 182 votes against.²⁷ At the same time, between 2,000 and 3,000 students demonstrated against the Suez intervention in early November in Edinburgh and London.²⁸

The Hungarian revolution represented an opportunity for Anthony Eden and for the British government, just like the French government, to divert attention from Suez while using propaganda against the Soviet authorities. However, after the repression of the Hungarian revolution, the press, except the *Daily Worker*, first blamed Eden and the government for the outcome in Hungary.²⁹ The British press was convinced that the Suez military intervention had given Khrushchev similarly the opportunity to intervene in Hungary. Despite those criticisms, the Soviet intervention in Hungary eventually enabled the British

²⁴ György Litván, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform, Revolution, Repression 1953-1963* (London, 1996), p.95.

²⁵ Serge Bernier, *Relations politiques franco-britanniques 1947-1958: Etude du comportement d'une alliance* (Sherbrooke, 1984), p.250.

²⁶ Shaw, *Eden, Suez and the Mass Media*, pp.65-95.

²⁷ Bernier, *Relations politiques*, p.247.

²⁸ *The Times*, 3 November, 5 November 1956.

²⁹ David Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951-1957* (London, 2009), pp.687-8.

government to partly divert attention away from its actions, both at the UN and in the press. British government spokesmen exaggerated the difference between Suez and Hungary by referring to legitimate military action in Egypt and an act of aggression in Hungary.³⁰

At the UN Assembly, Sir Pierson Dixon, the British delegate, made a link between Suez and Hungary and declared that both situations shared in common 'one clear simple and disturbing pattern': they were the result of Soviet imperialism.³¹ He claimed that the Soviet Union had expanded its sphere of influence and this had caused the Egyptian situation to get out of control, and that the Hungarian revolution turned into a major crisis. Dixon used vocabulary consecrated by the Cold War and much used in the press to explain to the UN Assembly that the 'Free World' was fighting against the 'Russian Empire', and that the 'Soviet psychological warfare machine' had tried to bully and intimidate the British people without success.

Granting asylum to Hungarian refugees in Britain was part of the same ideological war. Soon after the repression of the Hungarian revolution, the number of Hungarians fleeing the country to Austria started to rise dramatically. In the logic of 'Free World' against 'Soviet imperialism', Sir Pierson Dixon declared to the UN Assembly that the British government was examining arrangements to receive 2,500 refugees from Hungary, following the Austrian government's demand for international help a few days before.³²

³⁰ Shaw, *Eden, Suez and the Mass Media*, p.78.

³¹ TNA, FO 371/122387, UN British delegation to Foreign Office (FO), 10 November 1956.

³² TNA, FO 371/122387, UN British delegation to FO, 10 November 1956.

The reception of the first Hungarian refugees was then partly motivated by propaganda reasons which mirrored the French government's policy.

Moreover, Britain, like France, was a NATO member, for which it was very important to sort out the refugee crisis in Austria. The decision to waive the limitation on the number of refugees to be permitted to enter the UK was following the general policy of NATO. During the Cold War, it was important that propaganda depicted Britain and the West as maintaining high moral values, so providing relief to Hungarian refugees in Austria was also a way to support the Hungarian revolution.³³ Such action stemmed from the beginning of the Cold War, from NATO's determination to counter Communist propaganda.³⁴ The responses involved assessing the threat posed by legal Communist parties in NATO countries, and representing Communism as a failing political and economic system. Discrediting Communism and Communist political parties was a key objective in NATO's propaganda plans. As a consequence, NATO became very involved in providing relief for Hungarian refugees. The relief provided by NATO country members was significant as they had provided asylum to 100,977 refugees from Hungary out of a total 124,822 refugees moved from Austria in March 1957.³⁵ However, as far as Britain was concerned, and as the chapter on France and Hungarian refugees suggested, Hungarian refugees were not indiscriminately accepted for resettlement despite public claims to the contrary. Although the Cold War context played a role in granting asylum to refugees, the main condition of

³³ Johanna Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (College Station, 2004), p.205.

³⁴ TNA, FO 1110/526, Memorandum on methods of countering communist propaganda, n.d.

³⁵ TNA, HO 352/142, Status report on Hungarian refugee situation in Austria, 26 March 1957.

resettlement for refugees was that they were suitable candidates for immigration as defined by British policy.

-British policy on Hungarian refugees

When Lord John Hope, the Joint Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, announced at the House of Commons on 7 November that Britain was ready to accept 2,500 Hungarian refugees, he also claimed that the refugee crisis in Austria would be solved quickly if all countries followed its example.³⁶ The announcement was on the whole welcomed by the press.³⁷ Peter Gatrell argues that the quick response from Western powers to the Hungarian refugee crisis enabled them to avoid acknowledging the late response to refugees from Nazi Germany, and was a commitment to assist people facing persecution.³⁸ However, in the cases of the French and British governments, there were very few comparisons made between Jewish refugees in the 1930s and Hungarian refugees at the time. Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox argue that the main motivations to grant asylum to the Hungarian refugees came from 'feelings of guilt' and a will to please the popular demand to help the Hungarians.³⁹ There

³⁶ *Hansard*, HC (Series 5), vol. 560, col. 113-14, 7 November 1956.

³⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, 8 November 1956; *The Times*, 9 November 1956; *Observer*, 11 November 1956.

³⁸ Peter Gatrell, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees 1956-1963* (Cambridge, 2011), p.5.

³⁹ Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp.244-5.

were indeed public demands for the support of Hungarian refugees.⁴⁰ This was the case as well in parliament. For example, Peter Kirk, Conservative MP for Gravesend, believed the 2,500 bar was too low: 'First, I cannot feel that for us to take 2,500 is enough. I do not think that we should have put any ceiling on the number, in the first place. We should have sought, in this emergency and this stormy situation, to keep the gates free and wide open for any Hungarian who cares to come.'⁴¹

Behind the humanitarian declaration of Lord John Hope, there was the prospect of using the Hungarian refugees as labour immigrants. Following the declaration of Lord John Hope, the Home Office asked the embassy in Vienna to provide all information possible on how to identify and recruit refugees who could be employed in Britain in sectors lacking workers.⁴² The Home Office then set up a team which went to Austria to select refugees for resettlement in Britain among the 32,000 in Austrian camps.⁴³ The government was indeed willing to grant asylum but only according to employers' needs.

The reason why the British government lifted the 2,500 bar and accepted so many Hungarian refugees can be explained by immigration policies and practices. Since the end of the Second World War, the government had privileged European immigration to Britain, and this despite claims of Britain

⁴⁰ Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (London, 2004), p.384; Magda Czigány, *'Just Like Other Students': Reception of the 1956 Hungarian Refugee Students in Britain* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009), pp.30-1.

⁴¹ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 560, col. 1485-6, 19 November 1956.

⁴² TNA, LAB 8/2344, Whitehall to Vienna Embassy, 12 November 1956.

⁴³ TNA, FO 371/122398, Draft reply of Parliamentary Question for Commander Noble to Arthur Lewis, 11 November 1956.

not being an immigration country, as those claims were to discourage any spontaneous and unwanted immigration.

In 1948, coinciding with the passing of the British Nationality Act, Britain experienced increased immigration from the Commonwealth. West Indian, Pakistani and Indian immigrants started to arrive in Britain with the prospect of securing jobs and housing. The Home Office very quickly became worried about what it referred to as 'coloured immigration' which would lead to 'undesirable elements' coming, and present a large problem for the government to tackle. Although, the black community was estimated to only number 30,000 individuals in 1950, it was feared that large populations could exacerbate racial tensions, and many of the immigrants were considered unemployable. When a Working Party on the Employment in the United Kingdom of Surplus Colonial Labour mentioned the possibility of employing black immigrants in sectors such as mining and agriculture, the Ministry of Labour dismissed the idea by arguing that West Indians were 'not of the type required in the UK'.⁴⁴ There was thus a lot of racial prejudice when it came to the employment of West Indians in Britain, and the Ministry of Labour claimed that they could not be absorbed in British industry should they come in great numbers. In contrast, 345,000 eastern and southern Europeans immigrated to Britain through the European Voluntary Workers (EVW) scheme between 1947 and 1949, showing a clear preference for European immigration.⁴⁵ Moreover, this scheme was also political and immigrants coming through the EVW scheme were

⁴⁴ Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.163-7.

⁴⁵ Anthony Messina, 'The Impacts of Post-WWII Migration to Britain: Policy Constraints, Political Opportunism and the Alteration of Representational Politics', *The Review of Politics*, 63:2 (2001), p.262.

considered as refugees from communism.⁴⁶ EVW immigrants were welcomed in Britain for ideological reasons and because of the country's economic needs.

Yet, in 1954, reflecting on the possibility of adopting policy to control this postcolonial immigration, the Cabinet did not recommend any action other than deportation of 'undesirables', as it feared that general restrictions would damage the relations with the Commonwealth. However, 'some ministers evidently felt that this would not be enough, that black immigration would increase the population to 'unmanageable proportions' in ten to fifteen years' time.⁴⁷ The arrival of the Hungarian refugees was a welcome alternative to this immigration due to their European origins.

In 1956, the immigration rules were defined by the Aliens Order of 1953, which established a link between labour needs and entry and work permits issued by the Ministry of Labour.⁴⁸ The permits were valid for one year, then extended up to four years. There was also an arbitrary element in the 1953 Aliens Order as any alien could be refused entry at the discretion of an immigration officer.⁴⁹ On top of Cold War considerations, their European origin and their professional skills made them strong candidates for immigration to Britain. In the case of the Hungarian refugees then, the Aliens Order was used to facilitate their entry.

⁴⁶ Kushner and Know, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, p.218.

⁴⁷ Ian R. G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London, 1997), pp.62-3.

⁴⁸ Martin Schain, *The Politics of Immigration in France, Britain, and the United States: A Comparative Study* (New York, 2008), p.128.

⁴⁹ Schain, *Politics of Immigration*, p.168.

Since it considered refugees as labour immigrants, the British government set up a plan to select Hungarians in Austrian camps who were considered to be suitable people for resettlement in Britain, despite claiming it would accept any refugees. On 25 November, following a new appeal made by the Austrian government, the British waived the 2,500 limit, and said that no more individual interviews would take place in the refugee camp to speed up the evacuation process.⁵⁰ The first immigration team returned to Britain the following day and put on hold its immigration mission until the beginning of 1957. The British government left the task to arrange the refugees' travel arrangements to the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) officers in association with the Austrian government with the assistance of the British embassy.

The ICEM, a body of which Britain was not a member, was the main organisation dealing with the transportation of Hungarian refugees from Austria to other countries of asylum.⁵¹ It was an independent organisation founded in 1952, after a conference on the refugee problem in Europe, on the initiative of the United States and Belgium.⁵² The British government refused to be part of ICEM officially because of the yearly cost of £70,000 for administrative expenses. In reality, it was because it would be pressured to contribute to other refugee relief operations, but above all because it did not consider Britain as a country of immigration and therefore would not benefit

⁵⁰ TNA, HO 352/144, Memorandum on the admission of refugees, 5 December 1956.

⁵¹ TNA, FO 371/127703, Memorandum by Rodgers on ICEM, 1 February 1957.

⁵² Edward Marks, 'Internationally Assisted Migration: ICEM Rounds out Five Years of Resettlement', *International Organization*, 11:3 (1957), p.482.

from ICEM action. In 1956-57, ICEM largely relied on financial aid provided by the US as it had limited funds from elsewhere.⁵³

However, in January 1957, ICEM withdrew from the mission after having sent 13,000 Hungarians to Britain for a cost of over \$300,000.⁵⁴ Due to a lack of funds, ICEM was forced to stop transportation of refugees to the United Kingdom. Yet, the British government was reluctant to pay the organisation for transportation services as it was not a member. The Foreign Office wanted to make a point to ICEM that it was not the British government's habit to pay to have refugees sent over for resettlement. The Foreign Office only very reluctantly agreed to pay £10,000 if ICEM asked for a financial contribution.⁵⁵

The Home Office claimed that its refugee policy was not discriminatory, and a month after the decision to grant asylum to refugees was taken, it stated that 'there was no attempt to select particular classes of refugees, and with the exception of any found to be undesirable, the refugees sent [to Britain] were a representative cross-section of those who had crossed into Austria.'⁵⁶ But selection existed as the word 'undesirable' suggests.

The report of the immigration team sent from January to March 1957 to Traiskirchen camp, in Austria, to recruit 500 refugees among the 3,500 at the

⁵³ Michael Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1985), p.361.

⁵⁴ TNA, HO 352/142, Report of the Home Office Mission in Austria at Traiskirchen, Vienna and Innsbruck, 27 March 1957; FO 371/127698, Minutes on ICEM, 23 January 1957.

⁵⁵ TNA, FO 371/127698, Minutes on ICEM, 24 January 1957.

⁵⁶ TNA, HO 352/144, Memorandum on Admission of Hungarian Refugees to Britain, 5 December 1956.

camp, reveals the details of the selection process.⁵⁷ The camp was a former training school for 200 Soviet officer cadets who had lived there from the end of the war to November 1955. When they left, they looted the place and smashed every pane of glass.⁵⁸ The overall condition of the camp was thus very poor.

The mission was composed of eight immigration officers, two Aliens Registration officers, four Foreign Office staff, four ICEM typists, a photographer, and the Chief Inspector of the Home Office Immigration Branch. The selection process was detailed and involved the examination and photographing of each refugee.⁵⁹ This lengthy process demonstrates the complete control over who would be accepted for resettlement in Britain. Despite the absence of anyone from the Ministry of Labour, refugees were still accepted under its conditions. Among the people accepted by the mission 60 per cent were unmarried men and women, the rest were family groups joining relatives in Britain, usually husbands. According to the mission, they were working-class people, mainly miners, and factory and agricultural workers. The employment factor was predominant in the selection of refugees.

In total, the mission refused 35 applications: 18 appeared not to be intending permanent residence, seven were 'gypsies of an undesirable type', five were of other nationalities, three were mentally unbalanced, one was a homosexual,

⁵⁷ TNA, HO 352/142, Report of the Home Office Mission in Austria at Traiskirchen, Vienna and Innsbruck, 27 March 1957.

⁵⁸ TNA, HO 352/142, Report of the Home Office Mission in Austria at Traiskirchen, Vienna and Innsbruck, 27 March 1957.

⁵⁹ TNA, HO 352/142, Report of the Home Office Mission in Austria at Traiskirchen, Vienna and Innsbruck, 27 March 1957.

and one was in possession of forged papers. The selection was thus not only motivated by employment reasons, but also by integration reasons as the refugees were selected to resettle permanently in Britain. The fact that 'mentally unbalanced' refugees were refused suggests that refugees should not be a burden to the country. Race and sexual orientation were also important, as gypsies and homosexuals were refused. They were not considered by the mission to be suitable for permanent resettlement in Britain as homosexuality was illegal there in the 1950s.

The Ministry of Labour claimed that the refugees were free to choose the job they wanted as long as it was approved by the Ministry of Labour, showing that this freedom was actually very relative, and that refugees were to take up jobs in specific sectors.⁶⁰ The control of the Ministry of Labour over the employment of Hungarian refugees stresses the fact that immigrants were accepted on the conditions laid out by the 1953 Aliens Order. The same statement mentioned that the employment regulation was especially relaxed for the refugees so that they could take up employment as soon as possible but only certain categories were effectively available to them, meaning that in practice the freedom granted to the refugees from Hungary fell more or less under the provisions of the Aliens Order of 1953.⁶¹ Yet the arbitrariness of the 1953 Aliens Order did play in favour of the Hungarian refugees as they had the support of the Ministry of Labour to resettle in Britain. It shows how much the British government was willing to turn the Hungarian refugee crisis into a

⁶⁰ TNA, LAB 8/2345, Memorandum on the Employment of Hungarian refugees, n.d.

⁶¹ Satvinder Juss, *Immigration, Nationality and Citizenship* (London, 1993), p.38.

useful way in which to fill vacant jobs in industrial sectors, while discarding those who were considered unfit for permanent resettlement.

The number of refugees accepted for resettlement in Britain, however, posed a problem. The British government failed to anticipate accommodation issues linked to the arrival of several thousands refugees in just a few months. The question of emigration was also overlooked when recruiting refugees in Austria, as many of them did not plan to permanently resettle in Britain.

-Life in British camps

As in France, Hungarians in Britain were accommodated in refugee camps, which were referred to as hostels. The way the hostels were run reveals that everything was to be done to put the refugees in employment and permanent accommodation as quickly as possible. The British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR) was appointed by the government to run the refugee hostels and benefited from a £10,000 grant to cover administrative expenses.⁶² The BCAR was in turn helped by voluntary organisations such as the British Red Cross, the Women's Voluntary Service, as well as religious and local organisations. The Lord Mayor of London's appeal launched in November 1956 was very successful and raised £2.5 million mainly used by the BCAR.⁶³

⁶² *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 560, col. 6w, 9 November 1956.

⁶³ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 566, col. 758-9, 8 March 1957.

The first major contingent of refugees arrived on 17 November at Blackbushe airport, near London, and consisted mostly of children and women, of whom only 18 were available for work interviews which took place at their hostel in Fulham.⁶⁴ Just two days later, another 350 refugees arrived, consisting mainly of men this time. They were all interviewed in their hostels in Chigwell and Islington by labour officers for placement in employment.⁶⁵ This type of hostel was referred to as first-line hostels, where all newly arrived refugees were sent and interviewed. They were then sent to second-line hostels mainly in England, where they usually stayed until they found permanent accommodation and employment or re-emigrated.

The Ministry of Labour established a list of good areas and of places to avoid for the resettlement of Hungarian refugees. According to the list areas to avoid were the Central Valley of Scotland, the Highlands, Cumberland, Durham, Westmorland, Lancashire and particularly Liverpool, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, North Wales and Anglesey, South Wales, and more generally, any seaside resort depending on the holiday trade.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the good areas were South Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Bedfordshire and the other Home Counties, and London. However, the British government, being traditionally reluctant to grant asylum to refugees, did not have the necessary accommodation to provide refugees with.⁶⁷ This led the British government to announce the temporarily suspension of arrival of refugees from 11

⁶⁴ TNA, LAB 8/2344, Report on dealing with the first of the arrivals of Hungarian refugees, 20 November 1956.

⁶⁵ TNA, LAB 8/2344, Report on dealing with the first of the arrivals of Hungarian refugees, 20 November 1956.

⁶⁶ TNA, LAB 8/2344, List of good areas and areas to avoid regarding employment, n.d.

⁶⁷ Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, p.68.

December.⁶⁸ However it resumed in early 1957 when the possibility to welcome another 5,000 to replace those re-emigrating to Canada was studied.⁶⁹

In January 1957, 10,200 Hungarian refugees were accommodated in 128 hotels across the country.⁷⁰ At its peak, a total of 150 hostels, reception centres and private buildings were run directly or indirectly by the BCAR.⁷¹ The following map shows where Hungarian refugees were sent in Britain:

⁶⁸ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 561, col. 159-60w, 6 December 1956.





⁶⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, 2 January 1957.

⁷⁰ TNA, AST 7/1621, Memorandum on Refugees in Britain, 8 January 1958.

⁷¹ TNA, AST 7/1621, Final report on Hungarian hostels, 23 October 1959.

A map of England and Wales showing the results of the 2001 UK general election for the Conservative Party. Each constituency is labeled with its name and the number of Conservative votes. The map is color-coded: red for the winning Conservative seat (STS), yellow for seats won by the Conservative Party, and blue for seats won by other parties. The map includes labels for 'ENGLAND' and 'WALES'. An inset map shows the results for London, with a yellow seat (532) and a blue seat (264). The following table summarizes the data from the map:

Constituency	Conservative Votes	Party
AGY	11	Other
CAE	0	Other
DEN	0	Other
ELN	0	Other
LAN	187	Conservative
CUM	0	Other
NBL	0	Other
DUR	272	Conservative
YOR	406	Conservative
CHS	381	Conservative
DBY	75	Other
NTT	0	Other
LIN	102	Conservative
STG	2464	Conservative
LEI	10	Other
RUT	0	Other
NFK	24	Other
SFK	29	Other
WOR	254	Conservative
WAR	11	Other
NTH	9	Other
HUN	231	Other
CAM	0	Other
BOF	188	Conservative
HRT	534	Conservative
ESS	0	Other
GLS	0	Other
OXF	188	Conservative
BKM	40	Other
BRK	40	Other
WIL	687	Conservative
SOM	109	Conservative
GLA	0	Other
MON	0	Other
DEV	77	Other
CON	0	Other
DOR	0	Other
HAM	104	Conservative
SRY	178	Conservative
KEN	437	Conservative
SSX	88	Other
LOW	106	Other
WOL	0	Other
WOL	264	Other
LON	532	Conservative

 Between 0 and 99 refugees from Hungary
 Between 100 and 499 refugees from Hungary
 Between 500 and 999 refugees from Hungary
 More than 1,000 refugees from Hungary

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By April 1957, a total of 7,672 Hungarian refugees were accommodated in 67 hostels in Britain, although the Hungarian Jews under the care of the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation (CBF) were not included in those figures.⁷² The large number of hostels is explained by the fact that they were of very diverse nature from large former military camps to smaller accommodation at the YMCA or other charity and religious buildings.

Many of the camps such as the hutted or Nissen huts camps at Hydon Heath, Surrey, or in Plawsworth, Durham, had been last used during the Second World War. Other accommodation included former Royal Air Force stations, industrial hostels, a former TB hospital in Blagdon near Bristol, an empty sanatorium in Sheffield, an old school in Liverpool, and a former children's home in Wilmslow. The biggest concentration of refugees by far was between Rugeley and Hednesford, Staffordshire, where 2,454 people lived in former military barracks.⁷³ The Hednesford camp served as a transit camp.⁷⁴ The variety of the accommodation shows that the British government used every building at its disposal to give temporary accommodation to the Hungarian refugees.

This variety of accommodation also shows that the government did not have the means necessary to standardise the reception of the Hungarian refugees. As a consequence the quality of accommodation varied greatly from one place to the other. Tony Kushner argues that the standard of refugee accommodation was kept low so that they would understand that they were only in temporary

⁷² TNA, HO 352/143, Hostel situation at 6 April 1957.

⁷³ TNA, HO 352/143, Hostel situation at 6 April 1957.

⁷⁴ TNA, LAB 12/933, Second Conference on Placing Work, 6-7 March 1957.

accommodation.⁷⁵ It is also linked to the fact that the government had a limited choice in places of accommodation for the refugees. Like in France, because of the lack of suitable accommodation, the geographical situation of the camps did not pay much respect for the recommendations issued by the Ministry of Labour back in November 1956, which sometimes led to frustration among refugees.⁷⁶

Despite Britain enjoying a period of full employment and the fact that the vast majority of the Hungarian refugees could be employed in the areas where labour was lacking, various problems regarding their employment and resettlement occurred. First, there was the emigration issue. In December 1956, approximately 5,000 refugees in Britain had already expressed a wish to re-emigrate, preferably to Canada which was the only country accepting refugees from Britain at the time.⁷⁷ Indeed, out of nearly 22,000 Hungarian refugees who came to Britain, approximately 5,500 of them re-emigrated.⁷⁸ The problem for the government was that it wanted to use the refugees as labour even if they wanted to re-emigrate. The government publicly gave assurances that taking employment was not prejudicial to re-emigration to Canada, and on the contrary the refugees were advised to do so as well as to learn English.⁷⁹

Since the government expected Canada to accept 5,000 Hungarian refugees fairly quickly, putting them in employment was an economic necessity to limit their maintenance costs. Unless refugees who wanted to emigrate had a sponsor

⁷⁵ Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, p.64.

⁷⁶ TNA, LAB 8/2344, List of good areas and areas to avoid regarding employment, n.d.

⁷⁷ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 562, col. 1317-21, 19 December 1956.

⁷⁸ TNA, AST 7/1621, Final report on Hungarian hostels, 23 October 1959.

⁷⁹ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 562, col. 1317-21, 19 December 1956.

in Canada, they had to wait until April to re-emigrate.⁸⁰ A letter was sent to all prospective candidates for emigration to explain to them that employment was also a way to make money and so to resettle more easily once in Canada. The letter also told them:

To assist us and the Canadian authorities in making the final arrangements for immigration, some of you who are not in regular employment may be asked to move to other hostels specially set aside for emigrants... Those of you in regular employment will be called to the nearest hostel set aside for emigration when the Canadian authorities come to that hostel for medical examination and interview.⁸¹

To some of the refugees, being unemployed seemed to offer a better chance to be accepted in Canada as they were moved to special hostels, waiting to emigrate. Hence some of them turned down job offers claiming that pay was too low and that ultimately they would emigrate to Canada anyway.⁸²

Although no group of refugees deserted the camps as in France, some refugees refused to take up or look for employment or accommodation outside hostels.⁸³ Others refused to be transferred from one hostel to another or to pay for their maintenance when in employment. Also, as in France, the British authorities had to deal with individuals or groups of individuals refusing to comply with the rules established in the hostels by the Home Office and the BCAR. The

⁸⁰ TNA, AST 7/1617, Letter to all prospective Canadian immigrants, n.d.

⁸¹ TNA, AST 7/1617, Letter to all prospective Canadian immigrants, n.d.

⁸² *East Kent Times*, 18 January 1957.

⁸³ TNA, HO 352/149, Meeting on action to be taken against un-cooperative refugees, 25 February 1957.

hostels were seen as temporary accommodation and the aim of the Home Office was to sort out the refugee situation as quickly as possible by placing the Hungarian refugees into permanent accommodation and employment so that they could become financially independent. Any delay on their resettlement was also a delay for securing much-wanted additional labour, one of the main reasons for the Hungarian refugees' presence in the country.

The Home Office took those matters very seriously, as refugees had been accepted with a view that the British economy would benefit from their presence. A special meeting was held in February 1957 with representatives of the Home Office, the BCAR, the National Assistance Board (NAB), the National Coal Board (NCB), and the Ministry of Labour to tackle the issue.⁸⁴ The outcome of the meeting was that the refugees were to be dealt with firmly but not arbitrarily. The first step was to withhold pocket money. If this had no effect after two weeks, recalcitrant refugees were to be moved to a less attractive hostel or to a hostel where the warden was known to handle difficult situations with success. When refugees refused to pay for their maintenance, they were to be denied meals at the hostels while the most extreme cases required exclusion from hostels and re-entry was barred. However, if the meeting advised in some rare cases 'to make an example of a recalcitrant refugee', it was hoped that the threat would be enough to persuade the refugees to comply to the rules. The Home Office, and the other governmental bodies involved in the refugee hostels management as well as the BCAR followed a rather strict line in order to enforce their employment policy for the refugees.

⁸⁴ TNA, HO 352/149, Meeting on action to be taken against un-cooperative refugees, 25 February 1957.

A set of rules and circulars regarding the Hungarian refugees was put together in a handbook called the H-Code. The H-Code was distributed to all wardens and officers in the hostels and contained guidelines for discipline. On top of all the measures adopted during the February 1957 meeting, the H-Code also recommended that if the refugee was married, that 'it may be salutary to tackle him in the presence of his wife.'⁸⁵ This was an assumption on the part of the Home Office that refugees likely to cause trouble were male. Not only was pressure from the warden strong, as disciplined refugees were deprived of their meal rights, but, to an extent, the pressure was humiliating as the disciplinary action was to be taken in the presence of the refugee's wife if he had one. On the basis of a careful reading of the H-Code and Hostel administrative meetings reports, it seems that very little consideration was given to the experiences, and possible traumas, of the Hungarians as refugees.⁸⁶ Hungarians were considered as labour immigrants and treated as such.

Despite these problems, the refugees were settled relatively quickly, thanks to the work of voluntary organisations like the Women's Voluntary Service which sought suitable accommodation outside the camps for the refugees and helped resettle more than 5,000 of them.⁸⁷ In spite of the chaotic organisation regarding accommodation in different kinds of camps all over the country, from 10,200 Hungarians in hostels in January 1957, there were only 1,560 left in November that year. The BCAR stayed in charge of the hostels until that time. The Home Office decided to replace it by the National Assistance Board earlier in May 1957 as funding was running out. That way the remaining

⁸⁵ TNA, AST 13/37, H-Code paragraph 104, n.d.

⁸⁶ Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, p.68.

⁸⁷ TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain, 8 January 1958.

refugees still waiting for resettlement became an exclusive charge on the government.⁸⁸ It was also in May 1957, that the decision was taken to stop large scheme Hungarian refugee migration to Britain in anticipation of the exhaustion of Lord Mayor's fund.⁸⁹ These decisions to stop immigration when funding ran out reveals the nature of granting asylum: Hungarian refugees were labour that was to be brought to Britain at a lesser cost, and employed as quickly as possible to be profitable for Britain's economy. The Hungarian refugees emigrating to Britain after that time were even more carefully selected, as the cost of their emigration and maintenance in Britain were not paid for by the Lord Mayor's fund anymore but by the government, and they were to fill in specific employment opportunities.

-The National Coal Board and useful refugees

In addition to the normal procedure for the reception of Hungarian refugees in Britain, the NCB set up its own plan to recruit refugees for employment in the mining industry. The vast majority of Hungarian refugees being young single men, the NCB believed that it was a good way to fill up vacancies and to slow down the decline in numbers of miners.⁹⁰ To that extent, the Home Office set up the hostels policy along with the Ministry of Labour for one precise goal:

⁸⁸ TNA, AST 7/1621, Future financial arrangements for Hungarian refugees, 17 May 1957.

⁸⁹ TNA, FO 371/127711, Statistical report on Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia, 23 May 1957.

⁹⁰ Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman, and John McIlroy, 'The Post-War Compromise: Mapping Industrial Politics 1945-79', in Alan Campbell, Nina Fishman and John McIlroy, (eds), *British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics: The Post-War Compromise, 1945-1964* (Aldershot, 1999), p.99.

The substantial proportion of [Hungarian refugees] who are in the 18-38 age range makes the problem [of employment] simpler. There is a good deal to be gained by taking advantage of the present situation to fill the continuing gap in the manpower to get the coal which the country requires. It is obvious therefore that every effort should be made to recruit and to retain those who are brought here for employment in the mines.⁹¹

In granting asylum to the Hungarian refugees, the Home Office saw an opportunity to enhance British coal production, and as generous as it might have seemed at the time to grant asylum to thousands of refugees from Hungary, it privileged national interests first by accepting a number of those refugees considered to be good quality labour.

The NCB thus regarded the Hungarian refugees as a very attractive workforce. The NCB wanted to benefit from the same terms as the 1947 European Voluntary Workers agreement, under which, 91,000 Baltic people and Ukrainians were recruited to work in Britain between 1947 and 1949.⁹² The matter was carefully studied by the NCB which estimated that 12,000 vacancies needed to be filled at the pits.⁹³ The NCB was willing to take non-experienced miners as each refugee would get three weeks preliminary training, plus a twelve-week English language course.⁹⁴ The NCB promised not

⁹¹ TNA, HLG 52/1631, Invitation of the Home Affairs Committee to the Home Secretary to report on the matter of Hungarian refugees in Britain, 12 December 1956.

⁹² TNA, COAL 48/618, Director General Industrial Relations to all Industrial Relations Directors, 4 January 1957; David Cesarani, *Justice Delayed: How Britain Became a Refuge for Nazi War Criminals* (London, 2001), p.80. See also: Thomas Lane, *Victims of Stalin and Hitler: The Exodus of Poles and Balts to Britain* (Basingstoke, 2004).

⁹³ TNA, PREM 11/1715, Memorandum, Hungarian Refugees, 19 December 1956.

⁹⁴ TNA, COAL 48/618, National Coal Board (NCB), note on Hungarian refugees, 18 December 1956.

to stop employing British workers, and to continue its usual recruitment of new British miners along with Hungarian refugees. The recruitment of Hungarian refugees was also to enable the NCB to upgrade a number of British miners, as the whole scheme had been set up in agreement with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM),⁹⁵ as the terms of the agreement of 1947 required. By mid-February 1957, it was estimated that 3,900 refugees from Hungary were enrolled in the NCB scheme.⁹⁶ The NCB then decided to advertise this as serving 'human interest', but it is clear that the NCB did not only recruit Hungarian refugees for the sake of human interest as it and Britain would benefit from a quickly employable workforce. Recruiting 5,000 miners plus their families among the refugees was following the Home Office general policy on Hungarian asylum policy as it was a way to work towards Britain's own profit. Rather than a moral duty to relieve Austria from its refugee crisis or simply to contribute to the relief of the plight of the Hungarian refugees, economic arguments prevailed. From this policy and the freedom given to the NCB emerges a pattern according to which the Home Office would privilege economically useful refugees.

However, the NCB plan to recruit Hungarian refugees in Austria showed its limitations. During the meeting on sanctions for the difficult cases that had been held in February 1957, the NCB faced particular difficulties with its recruitment scheme:

⁹⁵ TNA, COAL 48/618, NCB, North Eastern Division, to Colliery Managers, 29 January 1957.

⁹⁶ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 565, col. 586, 21 February 1957.

The Board has in addition other problems, arising from the circumstances in which they recruited refugees in Austria for coalmining, in some cases without fully taking into account the difficulties to be expected, e.g. the recruit who has 'no interest in coalmining' or who is obviously unsuitable for that work... What the Board would like to do is to relieve themselves of responsibility for their careless selection by turning out of their scheme any unsuitable, unwilling or troublesome recruit, and throw responsibility on to either (i) BCAR or (ii) the National Assistance Board... The resettlement of their failures is the responsibility of the Board.⁹⁷

The NCB did not realise that the refugees recruited did not always understand what they were signing up for in Austria, as their main preoccupation was to emigrate. When the scheme started to show its limitations, the NCB tried to foist the unsuitable refugees back on the BCAR or Home Office.

Not only did some refugees show little interest in mining jobs, but the NCB had to deal with the discontent of trade unions in some coalmining areas. While it was publicly reported in December 1956 that there was 'no opposition in the mining areas to the reception of refugees', the situation quickly deteriorated in early 1957.⁹⁸ As far as employment of Hungarians was concerned, they could not take jobs in sectors objected by the Trades Union Congress, and they were not to take jobs for which British workers were available. Although the NCB scheme to employ Hungarians for coalmining was agreed with the National Executive of the NUM, Hungarians remained subject to acceptance by local

⁹⁷ TNA, HO 352/149, Note on a meeting on sanctions, 15 February 1957.

⁹⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 13 December 1956.

branches of the Union. Local agreement was hard to achieve, and many collieries refused Hungarians for work.⁹⁹ Local branches opposed the employment of Hungarians on the grounds that they feared they would get priority accommodation, while some British miners were on waiting lists. They also feared that the job availabilities would not last and employing Hungarians would prevent British miners from finding jobs in the future. Local branches thus adopted a protectionist attitude towards Hungarians. Moreover, the relationship between the NCB and the NUM was tense. The NUM believed that the NCB was privileging the government's interests rather than those of the miners. The employment of Hungarian refugees was associated by the NUM to the abolition of the Bonus Disqualification resulting in a loss of salary for miners in some cases.¹⁰⁰

Following press reports on problems of refugees in mining areas, questions were raised in parliament on the state of employment of refugees in the coalmining industry.¹⁰¹ In January 1957, the Minister of Labour and National Service, Iain Macleod, estimated that despite 4,700 immediate vacancies, the NUM was facing local problems employing Hungarian refugees.¹⁰² Those problems were reported in the press. In March, the situation had barely evolved, and impatience grew in the House of Commons as Hungarian refugees who had enrolled in the NCB scheme failed to become 'effective units

⁹⁹ TNA, LAB 8/2371, Memorandum on Hungarian refugees, n.d.; TNA, COAL 75/2468, Curry to Mitchell, 10 January 1957.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Taylor, *The NUM and British Politics, Volume 1: 1944-1968* (Aldershot, 2003), p.178.

¹⁰¹ *Daily Mail*, 2 March 1957; *Daily Worker*, 21 January, 29 January 1957; *Manchester Guardian*, 16 January, 17 January, 22 January, 23 January, 31 January, 12 February, 15 February 1957; *The Times*, 12 January, 17 January, 21 January, 12 February 1957.

¹⁰² *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 563, col. 23-4, 22 January 1957.

of production'.¹⁰³ The expression gave away the fact that NCB scheme was based on economic motives in which Hungarian refugees were to be used to increase profits, as recommended by the 1953 Aliens Order.

If the rate of employment through the normal scheme of the Ministry of Labour is compared to the one of the NCB for the period 8 March to 14 June 1957, the results are eloquent: out of approximately 3,900 refugees who came to Britain through the NCB scheme, only 429 were employed by the NCB,¹⁰⁴ while 8,324 men and 1,717 women were employed under the normal employment scheme of the Ministry of Labour.¹⁰⁵ The figures reflect the absolute failure of the NCB scheme to employ 5,000 Hungarian refugees as miners. By mid-June 1957, the excuse of the 12-week training of the refugees in coalmining and in English, used repeatedly in the press and during parliamentary debates, did not hold up any more. Promises that no British miners would be rejected for lack of vacancies where Hungarians were employed did not convince local branches.¹⁰⁶ Very few collieries agreed to employ Hungarians, and only a fifth of the trained refugees were eventually absorbed into coalmining.¹⁰⁷ By the end of 1957, 4,186 Hungarians had been trained by the NCB, but only 731 had been placed while 370 others were waiting to be employed.¹⁰⁸ What seemed a good opportunity to fill vacancies in the mining sector at the beginning of the refugee crisis did not fulfil its promises, and the attempt to use the Hungarian

¹⁰³ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 566, col. 16-7, 4 March 1957.

¹⁰⁴ TNA, LAB 8/2580, Hungarian refugees: number accepted by NCB, 8 March 1957 to 14 June 1957.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, LAB 8/2580, Hungarian refugees: placing, 8 March 1957 to 14 June 1957.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, COAL 48/618, Deputy Industrial Relations Director to Industrial Relations Officers, 22 March 1957.

¹⁰⁷ TNA, LAB 8/2371, Confidential memorandum on Hungarian refugees, n.d.

¹⁰⁸ William Ashworth, *The History of the British Coal Industry, Volume 5: 1946-82 The Nationalised Industry* (Oxford, 1986), pp.164-5.

refugees as a specialised labour migration was simply proved wrong as only a minority went through the whole NCB scheme. The refugees experience in the British coal industry also counterbalances the general tendency in previous research that Hungarian refugees were unanimously welcomed in all strata of British society.

-Anglo-Jewish responses

As well as an attempt to turn the refugee crisis into an opportunity to gain valuable labour, the reception of the refugees was also affected by Cold War politics. As in France, the question of whether antisemitism was prevalent during the Hungarian revolution and in the refugee camps was raised. The CPGB and the *Daily Worker* supported the Soviet repression of the revolution and its interpretation that it was a fascist counter-revolution. However, that question was answered by claims that agents of the Kádár government posing as refugees were responsible for antisemitism. This section argues that the British government covered up antisemitism in order to defend the Hungarian revolution, and that Anglo-Jewish responses were framed by fear of antisemitism in refugee camps.

The *Daily Worker* quoted the *Jewish Chronicle* and World Jewish Congress claims about 'anti-Semitic excesses occurred in more than 20 villages and small

towns during the October-November revolt'.¹⁰⁹ The nature of the antisemitic excesses were not mentioned, and the newspaper did not insist on that issue in the way the French paper *L'Humanité* did. The main point that the *Daily Worker* made was that many Jews fled Hungary fearing persecution similar to the Second World War period and a return to fascism.¹¹⁰

The *Jewish Chronicle* showed much more concern regarding the situation of the Jews in Hungary and in refugee camps. From the very first days of the Hungarian revolution, it covered the event focusing in particular on the Jewish population:

The change from the rule of Mátyás Rákosi to that of Imre Nagy in Hungary should, in ordinary circumstances, have been one to bring some alleviation to the position of Jews there... His return to the Premiership now, after years of disgrace, ought to bring back the policy of toleration which he tried to follow several years ago. But all, of course, depends on the turn which the revolution, which has already caused a good deal of bloodshed, takes.¹¹¹

At that point, the newspaper had no tangible proof of antisemitism in Hungary, but feared its presence because of the recent past. Once in Austria, Jewish Hungarians claimed that they had left Hungary because of 'fears of a re-emergence of antisemitism', and this was at the time when the revolutionary

¹⁰⁹ *Daily Worker*, 22 June 1957.

¹¹⁰ Miklós Molnár, *Histoire de la Hongrie* (Paris, 2004), pp.374-5.

¹¹¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 October 1956.

side seemed to be victorious.¹¹² The Jewish refugees feared that since a number of Jews occupied high-ranking positions in the previous Hungarian government, the whole community would be stigmatised and persecuted.¹¹³

The Soviet repression of the revolution prevented the allegation from being confirmed, but the fear of persecution among some Jewish refugees remained.¹¹⁴ The *Jewish Chronicle* claimed, for example, that Jews were killed in some regions of Hungary.¹¹⁵ In December, the newspaper reported that the primary motivation compelling Jews to leave was because 'they feared the Hungarians, not the Russians'.¹¹⁶ These fears drew heavily on the history of Hungary during the Second World War. Since then, it had become difficult to get reliable information out of Hungary, so these reports may have relied more on speculation than hard journalism, particularly given the *Jewish Chronicle's* antagonistic position on the Soviet Union. Such a view is confirmed by the archives.¹¹⁷

The Board of Deputies' reports contrast with the articles in the *Jewish Chronicle*. In mid-November 1956, Dr Stephen Roth, European Director of the World Jewish Congress, interviewed Jewish and non-Jewish refugees from Hungary, British and Israeli diplomats, members of the Vienna Jewish community, and representatives of the American Joint Distribution Committee, the Jewish Agency and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (Hias) to assess the

¹¹² *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 November 1956.

¹¹³ *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 November 1956.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Anna J., 10 March 2009.

¹¹⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 December 1956.

¹¹⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 December 1956.

¹¹⁷ David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry 1841-1991* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.205-6.

situation of the Hungarian Jews during and after the revolution.¹¹⁸ Apart from two minor cases, Roth concluded that there was little antisemitism:

It is abundantly clear that no antisemitism was noticeable during the uprising. This fact was confirmed by all observers. Only two smaller incidents have come to light. One of these was a small demonstration by students two or three months back and the second on October 23 as part of the demonstration that started the revolution. One small group of students is reported to have shouted 'Down with the Jews' only to be immediately quelled by the others. Jewish Youth participated in the fighting along with the rest of the population.¹¹⁹

Dr Roth observed that the reason why there was so little antisemitism was because the hatred was concentrated against the Russians, and the revolutionary leaders discouraged any action that would have served as an excuse for the Russians to intervene or 'that might have affected the sympathy of the West for their cause'. His report confirms that the exodus of a part of the Jews from Hungary to Austria was motivated by fears rather than an actual life-threatening situation. According to him, the absence of antisemitism during the revolution remained, however, very surprising due to the strong antisemitic tendencies of the Hungarian population.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/013/024, Report on visit to Vienna on Jewish community in Hungary and Hungarian Jewish refugees, 10 December 1956.

¹¹⁹ LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/013/024, Report on Jewish community in Hungary and refugees, 10 December 1956.

¹²⁰ LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/013/024, Report on Jewish community in Hungary and refugees, 10 December 1956.

The CBF also sent observers to Austria in order to assess the needs of the refugees and schemes for emigration and resettlement, after a special Hungarian Relief Committee was formed.¹²¹ Another report from the West London Synagogue of British Jews confirmed Dr Roth's views by stating that both in Hungary and in Austrian camps, the fear of pogroms and persecution in general was greater than the antisemitic manifestations which happened.¹²²

Beyond fears of antisemitism, many Hungarian Jews saw in the revolution an opportunity to escape to new economic opportunities, a motive common among many other refugees. The first Jewish refugees, who came from small towns near the Austrian border, left out of fear that the revolution might turn against the Jews. However, after 4 November, Jewish refugees mainly came from Budapest and followed the pattern of non-Jewish refugees, that is to say, they were mostly young people rather than family groups.¹²³

Despite the lack of proof of antisemitism, the Board of Deputies did not want to take the risk of exposing refugees to antisemitism in refugee camps in Britain, as reports of antisemitism in refugee camps in Austria were mentioned in the Jewish press.¹²⁴ The Board of Deputies decided to provide the CBF with all the help it needed.¹²⁵ The CBF asked the Jews' Temporary Shelter (JTS) to provide accommodation for some of the refugees, while the Jewish Refugee

¹²¹ LMA, ACC/3121/C/02/002/009, Brief report of the activities of Hungarian Relief Committee, n.d.

¹²² LMA, ACC/3121/C/02/002/009, West London Synagogue of British Jews report on the situation of Hungarian Jewish refugees in Austria, 9 January 1957.

¹²³ LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/013/024, Report on Jewish community in Hungary refugees, 10 December 1956.

¹²⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 December 1956.

¹²⁵ LMA, ACC/3121/C/02/002/012, Aliens Committee report, 21 November 1956.

Committee took charge of welfare work, having officers at the JTS in order to help the refugees in their search for permanent accommodation and employment as well as helping with any emigration plans.¹²⁶

On 23 November, it was estimated that among the 750 Hungarian refugees at the time, only 22 were Jewish and had arrived in Britain with the first group of refugees, of whom five were accommodated by the JTS.¹²⁷ At first, very few Hungarian Jews benefited from special help as they went through the camps run by the BCAR and were not always aware of the action of the CBF. So in order to register Jewish refugees, the CBF met the refugees off the transports or saw them in camps.¹²⁸ The work of the CBF to meet Jewish refugees was facilitated by the BCAR, which was also concerned by antisemitism in refugee camps: 'A number of people were transferred from the Reception Centres and second line Hostels where there was a certain amount of antisemitism, to the Jews' Temporary Shelter.'¹²⁹ The nature of the antisemitism was not disclosed, but was nevertheless important enough for the Jewish refugees to have to be moved out from the camps and it was declared a matter of urgency to remove Jewish refugees from camps by the CBF.¹³⁰ Payments were still made from the BCAR to support the refugees under Jewish care. Consequently, the number of Jewish refugees under CBF care rose and, by 14 December, 200 Jewish refugees were known to the services of the CBF and the JTS, which at that date

¹²⁶ LMA, ACC/2793/01/06/006, CBF to JTS, Note for Mr. Julian Layton, 8 February 1957.

¹²⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 November 1956.

¹²⁸ LMA, ACC/3121/C/02/002/012, Aliens Committee report, 21 November 1956.

¹²⁹ LMA, ACC/2793/05/A/006, CBF, Minutes and Appendages 1955-1962, 29 November 1956.

¹³⁰ LMA, ACC/2793/01/01/04, CBF, Meeting of the Council, Minutes, 8 January 1957.

accommodated approximately 60 refugees from Hungary.¹³¹ The CBF negotiated the renting of temporary premises in seaside boarding houses until April 1957.¹³² There were thus slight differences in the help that was given to Jewish and non-Jewish refugees, even if the level of financial support was the same.¹³³

In its annual report for the years 1956/1957, the CBF confirmed the presence of antisemitism, although avoiding the term, in the Hungarian refugee camps in Britain, as a motive for the BCAR to make the Jewish organisation the main supporter of the Hungarian Jews' needs:

[The Jewish refugees] were brought in the first instance to Reception Camps, but, for good reasons, the BCAR asked the CBF to remove the Jewish Refugees as quickly as possible. Many were placed at the Jews' Temporary Shelter, but this was soon full and boarding-house accommodation was found at Westgate and at Brighton for large groups.¹³⁴

The 1,500 registered Hungarian Jewish refugees who arrived in Britain from November 1956 to November 1957 were thus the responsibility of the CBF, as the BCAR was unwilling or unable to tackle the issue of antisemitism in the Hungarian refugee camps.

¹³¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 December 1956.

¹³² LMA, ACC/2793/01/01/04, CBF, Meeting of the Council, Minutes, 1 April 1957.

¹³³ LMA, ACC/2793/01/01/04, CBF, Meeting of the Council, Minutes, 8 January 1957.

¹³⁴ LMA, ACC/2793/05/A/102, 24th Annual Report, 1956-1957, 1 December 1957.

The way Jewish refugees defined themselves varied. A report from the CBF on Styal Cottage Homes in Manchester mentioned that some of them were Orthodox, and others claimed to be Catholics, in particular those married to non-Jews. A CBF representative stated to the observer that there were 30 Jews registered: 'I visited accordingly all the 20 houses where refugees are being accommodated and found only 15 people who claimed to be Jews directly or by marriage. I found several Jewish people who whilst they admitted to be of Jewish birth, they claimed at present to belong to the Catholic faith'.¹³⁵ They nevertheless were under the care of the CBF.

As in France, antisemitism in refugee camps was a problem for both the British government and the BCAR. Yet, responses were different, even if fears of antisemitism were the main reason for the intervention of Jewish organisations in refugee camps in both countries. This section has shown that Anglo-Jewry used schemes previously set up for the support of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany to provide relief for Hungarian Jews. There is no evidence of a French-Jewish response of that magnitude. Antisemitism in refugee camps consisted of remarks made against the Jews who were considered better treated than the non-Jews, and appeared to have been made as revenge against the Jews in Hungary who were perceived as occupying more positions of leadership in Hungary than was warranted.¹³⁶ There was thus antisemitism in British refugee camps which forced the BCAR and the British government to adapt their response to Hungarian refugees. However, there were no violent cases of antisemitism and Jewish refugees were moved from camps to be under

¹³⁵ LMA, ACC/2793/01/03/09, Report on the Hungarian Jewish Refugees in Styal Cottage Homes, 28 December 1956.

¹³⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 7 February 1957.

CBF care as a measure of precaution. The fear of antisemitism in Hungarian refugee camps was nourished mostly by antisemitic remarks from other refugees, rather than physical manifestations. These allegations of antisemitism were, however, monitored by the Home Office, which had remained suspicious of the Hungarian refugees.

-A Communist 'fifth column'?

There was, at the time, in the British press another theory regarding the responsibility for antisemitism in refugee camps: that it was the doing of undercover AVH agents, the Hungarian State Security Authority, passing as refugees. The Cold War context of paranoia and spies, influenced the reception of Hungarian refugees in Britain. The fifth column theory of Soviet agents within the refugees' ranks was mainly supported by the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police. Suspecting refugees of being enemy agents was not something new in 1956, as German Jewish refugees in Britain during the Second World War had been suspected of being Nazi agents.¹³⁷

The British press was concerned by the possibility of Communist spies being among refugees in Britain. Doubts started to appear in the press in December 1956, after the general enthusiasm for refugees started to wither. Rumours started to spread that AVH agents were among refugees in Britain and that they

¹³⁷ See: François Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens* (London, 1940).

aimed to cause mayhem in the camps, which would explain some refugees' wish to return to Hungary.¹³⁸ According to the *Daily Mail*, those Communist agents posing as refugees were making lists of freedom fighters to deport if they ever returned to Hungary.¹³⁹ George Mikes, a Hungarian-born British satirist, believed that antisemitism in refugee camps was their doing in order to give the impression to the public that Hungarian refugees were fascist.¹⁴⁰ Rumours were based on denunciations in refugee camps as some refugees claimed that some others were agents.¹⁴¹

A certain paranoia also existed on the part of the British authorities towards the Hungarian refugees. Although the Home Office appeared in public to be concerned and seemingly caring for Hungarian, some elements in the Home Office remained sceptical as to the nature of the Hungarian refugees. Moreover, it was the Home Office that initially wanted to limit the number of Hungarian refugees on the basis that Britain was not an immigration country.¹⁴² Although it is not explicit in the archives material, raising doubts on the nature of the Hungarian refugees was a way to bring attention about the need to control Hungarian immigration to the other departments and most notably the Foreign Office.

It was also the effects of a tradition of suspecting immigrants of being spies or fifth columnists. The Home Office had a history of being suspicious towards refugees in Britain in the Twentieth Century. Immigration policies, since the

¹³⁸ *Daily Mail*, 13 December, 15 December 1956.

¹³⁹ *Daily Mail*, 11 January 1957.

¹⁴⁰ *The Observer*, 10 March 1957.

¹⁴¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 17 January 1957.

¹⁴² Kushner, *Remembering Refugees*, p.21.

1905 Aliens Act, were all responses to the presence of specific groups of immigrants or aliens in Britain seen as undesirable or enemies. During the First World War, a German spy scare led to the internment of 32,000 German and Austrian nationals in Britain. The 1914 British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act was amended in 1918 to enable the government to strip former enemy aliens of their citizenship and to deport them. During the Second World War, German and Austrian Jewish refugees were interned, as it was feared there were Nazi spies among them.¹⁴³ Although Hungarian refugees were not interned, the Home Office remained very suspicious towards them in the Cold War context.

The discourse of the Home Office's representatives became ambiguous when mentioning refugees, as they claimed that admitting a large number of refugees was not without risks for the safety of Britain. When asked at the House of Commons whether steps had been taken to prevent Communist agents in disguise from entering the United Kingdom, the Secretary of State for the Home Office, Major Lloyd-George, said they had:

When the decision was taken, on 23 November, to dispense with individual interviews with Hungarian refugees before admitting them to this country, it was realised that this involved certain risks, but these risks were deliberately accepted in order to give help as quickly as possible to the refugees and to the Austrian Government. It would not be in the

¹⁴³ David Cesarani, 'An Alien Concept? The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society before 1940', in David Cesarani and Tony Kushner, (eds), *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 1993), pp.33-47.

public interest to give details of security arrangements but I can assure my hon. Friend that the point he makes has not been overlooked.¹⁴⁴

Although individual interviews were not systematically carried out in Austria, all the refugees were identified and interviewed within the first days of their arrival to the United Kingdom. The security arrangements that Lloyd-George referred to were Operation Post Report, adapted to the occasion for the arrival of the Hungarian refugees in the country. Operation Post Report has its origins in October 1950, when the Home Office launched it in order to interview all foreigners who had arrived in Britain since 1939 'in circumstances in which the usual enquiries could not be made into their history.'¹⁴⁵ These reports were to serve as 'the basis of any future internment policy', clearly showing a lack of trust towards Hungarian refugees.¹⁴⁶ It was also a way for MI6 to send some refugees into the Soviet Union as British agents, although there is no evidence that this happened in 1956.¹⁴⁷ The operation required the Metropolitan police to cooperate with MI5, Special Branch and local police, as the scheme was extended to all nationalities.¹⁴⁸ Operation Post Report permitted the internment of certain categories of enemy and non-enemy aliens in times of war, suspected of spreading Communist propaganda, or of being in contact with the Soviet authorities, and, even more arbitrarily, 'aliens suspected by the Police of being a danger to security on any other grounds.'¹⁴⁹ Operation Post Report was based

¹⁴⁴ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 562, col. 610, 13 December 1956.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, HO 213/2246, Secret Home Office Circular 221/1951, Operation Post Report, 29 November 1951.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, MEPO 3/2958, Establishment of amalgamated AROS, 21 April 1957.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Smith, *New Cloak, Old Dagger: How Britain's Spies Came in from the Cold* (London, 1996), p.59.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, MEPO 3/2958, Establishment of amalgamated AROS, 21 April 1957.

¹⁴⁹ TNA, HO 213/2246, Secret Home Office Circular 221/1951, Operation Post Report, 29 November 1951.

on the systematic interviewing of all aliens considered to be potential threats, or who would have been enemy nationals in a case of a war with Britain, that is to say any Soviet and satellite countries citizens. Operation Post Report was revived in November 1956, in order to control and even eradicate the Communist threat in the country supposedly posed by the arrival of foreigners from Eastern Europe.¹⁵⁰ The sudden influx of refugees from Hungary was thus at the origin of the revival of the Operation Post Report, and between November 1956 and April 1957, 35,000 aliens in Britain were interviewed by Immigration officers or the Metropolitan Police. The Home Office, along with the Metropolitan Police, MI5 and Special Branch were thus keeping a check on the Hungarian refugees, verifying discrepancies between the information they provided during their interviews and their records, and were in a position to apply the arbitrary measures above in case of war with the Soviet Union.¹⁵¹

However, the publicly available records in British archives suggest that there were very few undercover Communist agents among the refugees.¹⁵² One noticeable case of an agent was that of Sandor Tarsoly who was detained in Brixton prison in March 1958, and discovered following an Operation Post Report interview.¹⁵³ Tarsoly was recruited by the AVH in Hungary which offered to let him escape with his mistress if he provided information on the 'refugees generally in certain camps in Austria, the steps which the Americans were believed to be taking to recruit and train intelligence agents from among the refugees and Hungarian refugees of professional standing, including their

¹⁵⁰ TNA, MEPO 3/2958, Proposed establishment of the amalgamated AROS, 21 April 1957.

¹⁵¹ TNA, MEPO 3/2958, Proposed establishment of amalgamated AROS, 21 April 1957.

¹⁵² TNA, FO 371/137049, Murray to Heppel, 16 May 1958.

¹⁵³ TNA, FO 371/137049, Summary on Sandor Tarsoly, March 1958.

names, and the names and addresses of relatives in Hungary.' Tarsoly, along with a handful of other people, were deported to Austria.

The whole Operation Post Report scheme meant that the Home Office did not actually consider Hungarian refugees as freedom fighters, despite referring to them as such in public.¹⁵⁴ This episode is revealing of a general distrust towards Hungarian refugees, as the available evidence in British archives shows that there were little grounds for reviving an operation of the scale of Post Report. AVH agents in refugee camps were also thought to be at least partly responsible for the antisemitism reported. They were sent to discredit refugees in a propaganda move. As far as antisemitism was concerned in the press, there had been thus a transfer of responsibility from Hungarian refugees to secret agents. Yet, putting the blame for antisemitism on AVH agents ignored the fact that there were Hungarian refugees who were antisemitic without being agents. The Home Office was simply motivated by limiting the numbers of Hungarian refugees in Britain, as it had done in the past with other waves of refugees.

Despite the suspicious attitude towards Hungarian refugees, Britain nevertheless granted asylum to 21,667 Hungarian refugees from 28 October 1956 to 20 February 1958 of whom 14,710 permanently resettled in the country, thereby placing Britain among the countries which allowed the most refugees to enter at the time.¹⁵⁵ As far as naturalisation is concerned, it is hard to establish any trend or pattern due to the lack of archival material available

¹⁵⁴ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 560, col. 1467-9, 19 November 1956.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, AST 7/1623, Butler statement at the House of Commons on Hungarian refugees in Britain, 20 February 1958.

on the subject. Yet, contrary to the attitudes towards naturalisation presented in the previous chapter, naturalisation in Britain could be a way to completely turn the page and forget about Hungary.¹⁵⁶ Anna J. and her husband applied for naturalisation as soon as they could in 1962: 'We just wanted to belong. That was really our aim.' Anna J. never felt homesick and did not want to go back to Hungary as she associated it with bad memories. However, she eventually went back in 1965 to give up her Hungarian nationality.¹⁵⁷

-Conclusion

Examining British and French responses to the Hungarian refugees brings out more similarities than differences. In both countries, the Hungarian refugees benefited from a lot of public support through public and private donations. It found also a way to fight ideologically the Soviet Union and communism. The humanitarian plan set up by the Foreign Office with its French counterpart indicates how both countries managed to conciliate humanitarian and moral values with propaganda.

In both cases apparent government altruism was underpinned by a determination to secure the most economically useful people for economic sectors short of labour. Accepting large numbers of Hungarian refugees for permanent resettlement was driven by political and economic motives.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Anna J.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Anna J.

Hungarian refugees were accepted because they fitted French and British immigration policies. This group of refugees was seen as a potential workforce to be used in sectors in need of labour. The Hungarians were also white Europeans, which was considered a welcome alternative to the growing West Indian and Asian immigration to Britain. Yet, the claims of unlimited access led in both countries to concerns about communist infiltration. Indeed, Cold War concerns had a substantial impact on British and French policy makers. This was linked to the problem of antisemitism in refugee camps. The case of the Jewish refugees was problematic for both countries. In order to contain antisemitism, British Jewish organisations stepped up to support Jewish refugees, just like the Cojasor did in France. As a consequence, Jewish refugees were accommodated in smaller sized hostels, and benefited from better support than the other refugees thanks to their small numbers.

Despite many similarities between France and Britain, this chapter has also uncovered differences regarding the reception of Hungarian refugees. Contrary to France, which was determined to grant asylum to refugees as long as they were deemed to be profitable for the country, the reception of Hungarian refugees in Britain depended on available funds. The British government decided to stop the Hungarian immigration in May 1957 before the Lord Mayor's fund ran out, even though the refugee crisis in Austria and Yugoslavia was not completely solved at that time.¹⁵⁸ There were still 45,000 refugees left in Austria while Yugoslavia had counted 14,300 refugees out of the original

¹⁵⁸ TNA, AST 7/1621, Future financial arrangements for Hungarian refugees, 17 May 1957.

19,100.¹⁵⁹ On top of that, the British government could not prevent the failure of the NCB scheme, which meant that approximately 3,900 refugees on top of those already accepted had to be resettled without being employed in the mining industry.

Moreover, the repression of the Hungarian revolution and the refugee crisis which followed did not have the same impact on British national politics the way it had in France, and demonstrations against the CPGB were much smaller. That can be explained by the fact that the CPGB did not have the same influence in British parliament, since it had none in 1956, than the PCF had. In Britain, the use of the Hungarian revolution was primarily to fulfil propaganda and economic objectives.

Finally, Hungarian refugees responded differently from their condition of asylum in Britain than in France. Whereas France had to deal with Hungarians deserting refugee camps on two occasions, refugees in Britain only expressed their concerns to the bodies in charge without leaving their hostels. It can be explained by the fact that Britain had particular re-emigration schemes, notably with Australia, which fitted the refugees' desire to settle outside Europe.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, HO 352/142, Final report on Hungarian refugees in Austria, 27 March 1957; FO 371/127711, Statistical report on Hungarian refugees in Yugoslavia, 23 May 1957.

Part II

5. The French and British presence in Egypt and the Jewish Community

In order to study the reception of the refugees from Egypt in France and in Britain, it is necessary to first look at who these refugees were. Unlike the Hungarian refugees, the majority of the refugees from Egypt were Jewish, and had a special status in Egypt. Many Jews of Egypt were stateless, while others had French or British passports, and this determined their treatment by the French and British immigration authorities. This preamble looks at how some of the Jews of Egypt accessed French and British nationality, while others remained stateless or were Egyptian.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Jewish community in Egypt numbered only 6,000 individuals. Thanks to various waves of immigration from Asia Minor, Iraq, Syria, Italy, Western Europe, and Greek and Turkish regions of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the nineteenth century, and from Palestine during the First World War, the community had risen to 63,550 by 1927, with the vast majority living in Alexandria and Cairo.¹ Most were Sephardi. Most of them could only speak Arabic well enough to communicate with merchants or servants, which still applied in 1956.² The rest were Ashkenazi Jews who had arrived in the same period, and between 7,000 and

¹ Gudrun Krämer and Alfred Morabia, 'Face à la modernité: les Juifs d'Egypte aux XIXe et XXe siècles', in Jacques Hassoun, (ed.), *Histoire des Juifs du Nil* (Paris, 1990), p.72, p.92.

² Deborah Starr, *Remembering Cosmopolitan Egypt: Literature, Culture, and Empire* (New York, 2009), p.113.

9,000 Karaites, whose presence in Egypt dates back to the eighth century.³ As a result, the majority of the Jews of Egypt were a rather heterogeneous recent addition to the then small Jewish community in the country and that explains why they were also more receptive to the European influences, not having deep roots in the country.

Egypt was subject to French and British influence from the eighteenth century. The French presence in the country started in 1798 with the Napoleonic campaign and ended in 1801. Although short in time, the campaign exposed Egypt to European influences and the country adopted some European practices, notably in the sectors of the army, administration and economy without necessarily challenging the traditional social and political structures of the country.⁴ British and French influences were dominant in the economic life of the country from 1875. Britain occupied Egypt in 1882, and it became a protectorate in 1915 until its independence in 1922.

Egypt became independent following a British unilateral declaration, although the British reserved four points of contention for future negotiation: the defence of Egypt against foreign aggression, the security of the Suez Canal, the protection of foreign interests and of minorities, and the status of the Sudan which had been occupied along with Egypt by Britain in 1882.⁵ Britain often

³ Jacques Hassoun, 'Un rameau vivant du judaïsme égyptien: le karaïsme', in Hassoun, (ed.), *Juifs du Nil*, pp.103-7.

⁴ Ruth Tolédano-Attias, 'La dénationalisation des Juifs d'Egypte', in Shmuel Trigano, (ed.), *La Fin du Judaïsme en Terres d'Islam* (Paris, 2009), pp.52-3.

⁵ Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *A History of Egypt from the Arab Conquest to the Present* (Cambridge, 2007), pp.82-98.

used the four reserved points as a way to block any policy or appointment considered likely to harm its interests.⁶

However, this did not mean that French influence vanished. The first French schools opened in Egypt under Napoleonic occupation, but it is from 1850 that these schools became more popular and more numerous with the arrival of the French Catholic missionaries and the presence of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU). Since its opening of a school in Cairo in 1897, the AIU gave a French education to the Karaite community as part of its larger mission since its creation in France in 1860 to prepare and encourage the emancipation of Oriental Jews.⁷ Karaites were rejected by the rabbinate in Egypt for being Arabophone, and the AIU aimed at reconciling them with the larger Jewish community through education.⁸ The Karaite students came from the Jewish lower class, which remained a neglected minority within the community.⁹

French schools were mostly composed of students from the minority communities in Egypt which responded very well to French culture and language. They were popular with parents: in 1945-46, 33,000 students attended, compared to 11,000 students at British, American, Greek and Italian

⁶ Arthur Goldschmidt, *Modern Egypt: The Formation of a Nation State* (Boulder, 2004), p.75.

⁷ Catherine Nicault, 'L'Alliance au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale: ruptures et continuités idéologiques', *Archives Juives*, 34:1 (2001), pp.23-4.

⁸ Frédéric Abecassis and Jean-François Faï, 'Les Karaïtes: une communauté cairote à l'heure de l'État-nation', *Égypte/Monde arabe*, 11:1 (1992), 47-58 (No page reference - accessed online). [Http://ema.revues.org/index307.html](http://ema.revues.org/index307.html)

⁹ Gudrun Krämer, 'Radical Nationalists, Fundamentalists, and the Jews in Egypt or, Who Is a Real Egyptian?', in Gabriel R. Warburg and Uri M. Kupferschmidt, (eds), *Islam, Nationalism, and Radicalism in Egypt and the Sudan* (New York, 1983), p.357.

schools.¹⁰ Between the wars, about half of all students at foreign schools attended French schools. As a result, French culture had a strong impact on Egyptian urban society, since most of those schools were concentrated in the Alexandria, Cairo and the Suez Canal areas.¹¹ French schools in Egypt were not reserved for French nationals but open to anyone who could afford it. Many students with other nationalities, like Greeks or Italians, received a French education, ensuring that the French language would continue to be spoken by different communities in Egypt.¹²

The French language had become at the turn of the century the most used European language among the Jewish and foreign communities, be it in legal matters or commercial ones.¹³ In Alexandria for example, the foreign communities communicated in French rather than in Arabic according to one interviewee: 'Il y avait des communautés italiennes, grecques, arméniennes, qui étaient minoritaires, mais qui avaient toujours cette connaissance du français. C'était une constante.'¹⁴ French was a transcommunal language as well as the language of the Egyptian elite, the diplomacy, the scientific community and the lawyers, in the inter-war years, and it was still the case in 1956.¹⁵ It also meant, as there were school fees to pay to attend, that the students in French schools belonged to the middle- and upper-classes of Egyptian society.

¹⁰ Delphine Gérard, 'Le choix culturel de la langue en Égypte: la langue française en Égypte dans l'entre-deux guerres', *Égypte/Monde arabe*, 27-28:1 (1996), 253-284 (No page reference - accessed online). [Http://ema.revues.org/index1942.html](http://ema.revues.org/index1942.html)

¹¹ Frédéric Abecassis, 'Approche d'un champ: l'enseignement étranger en Égypte, d'après la statistique scolaire de l'Égypte, 1921-1951', *Égypte/Monde arabe*, 18-19:1 (1994), 169-196 (No page reference - accessed online). [Http://ema.revues.org/index101.html](http://ema.revues.org/index101.html)

¹² Gérard, 'Le choix culturel'.

¹³ Gérard, 'Le choix culturel'.

¹⁴ Interview with Yves R., 25 August 2009.

¹⁵ Gérard, 'Le choix culturel'.

After the Entente Cordiale in 1904, and a loss of direct political influence on Egypt, the French government sought to expand even more its cultural influence in the country, assuming a civilising role through the diffusion of the French language and ideals. Those aims were reflected in French schools' classes. Students went to French schools like the école Jabès, a private school focused on French education, in Alexandria, where they were taught what one former pupil called 'l'amour de la France' through its national symbols. Isaac Saporta and Rosy Kowsman, brother and sister, discuss the place that France occupied at the school:

Isaac Saporta: Le deuxième pays, c'était la France. On ne parlait que de la France dans cette école.

Rosy Kowsman: On recevait le Consul de France une fois par an, on chantait la Marseillaise. La France! La France! Et on faisait des puzzles immenses! C'était: la France!

Isaac Saporta: Pour nous, la Marseillaise, on l'avait au fond du cœur, et il y avait toujours une [he thrusts out his chest]... sensation de... ça continue pour moi.

Rosy Kowsman: ...qui continue quand on l'entend.¹⁶

These schools benefited from an excellent reputation in terms of teaching quality. They were for many Jewish families a natural choice when it came to the education of their children as the cultural ties between the community and French culture had become very close. The French government and French

¹⁶ Interview with Rosy Kowsman and Isaac Saporta, 24 August 2009.

agencies thus successfully fulfilled their role of diffusion of the French culture and language.

At its peak in the 1940s, the Jewish community was estimated to have between 75,000 and 80,000 members,¹⁷ and approximately 4,500 children from the Jewish community in Egypt attended French schools in 1946, making a very high proportion among the community.¹⁸ There were also children from the Muslim Egyptian elite, diplomats, scientists, and lawyers, who were sent to benefit from a better education as it would prepare them for a future in the same elite in a country opened to European influences. The main reason, apart from the excellent reputation that French schools had in Egypt, was that the French language, especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, was an alternative to English, which even in Egyptian schools, was the language of the occupying forces, a feeling that would persist after the Second World War.¹⁹ French did not have the negative connotation that English had due to the recent history of occupation in the country.

In 1951, 51 per cent of the students in the Jewish community of Egypt attended French schools, demonstrating the success of the French government's mission to attract and to form a local elite serving its economic, political, cultural and strategic interests in Egypt.²⁰ The Egyptian monarchy ended in 1952 following the Free Officers coup. Although one of its proclaimed aims was the

¹⁷ Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914-1952* (Washington D.C., 1989), p.9.

¹⁸ Gérard, 'Le choix culturel'.

¹⁹ See: Hassan Muhammad Hassân, 'Choix culturels et orientations éducatives en Égypte: 1923-1952', *Égypte/Monde arabe*, 18-19:1 (1994), 17-38 (No page reference - accessed online). [Http://ema.revues.org/index68.html](http://ema.revues.org/index68.html)

²⁰ Abecassis, 'Approche d'un champ'.

elimination of foreign influence,²¹ foreign schools remained largely unaffected in their teaching programme. Foreign schools were subject by law in 1955 to inspection by the Ministry of Education, and the compulsory teaching of Arabic and 'national' subjects in Arabic like history and geography. Yet, it never threatened the teaching of French or English, and some schools did not even apply those measures.²²

The British occupation also had a cultural influence in Egypt. Some schools were founded on the British model in Egypt, though it happened later than the first French schools. French culture and language enjoyed a predominant role in the elite spheres of Egypt and within the Jewish and foreign communities, and British cultural influence never equalled the French one.²³ The Anglicisation of Egyptian schools started in 1891, when Douglas Dunlop became Minister of Public Instruction, and continued until 1919. In order to replace French as the most spoken foreign language in Egypt, he suppressed its teaching in primary and secondary Egyptian schools replacing it with English.²⁴

The most famous British school was Victoria College, inaugurated by Lord Cromer in Alexandria in 1909. At that time, the college had 196 students, made up of 90 Christians, 67 Jews, and 39 Muslims, and a variety of nationalities such as Egyptian, Turkish, Syrian, Armenian, Maltese, Greek, English, French,

²¹ Robert McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952-1967: From the Egyptian Revolution to the Six-Day War* (London, 2003), p.25.

²² Frédéric Abecassis, Review of 'Girgis Salama, histoire de l'enseignement étranger, 1963', *Égypte/Monde arabe*, 18-19:1 (1994), 521-527 (No page reference - accessed online). [Http://ema.revues.org/index138.html](http://ema.revues.org/index138.html)

²³ Gérard, 'Le choix culturel'.

²⁴ Gérard, 'Le choix culturel'.

Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Swiss, and Belgian.²⁵ Branded by Lord Cromer as an 'excellent example of the composition of the Egyptian society', it nevertheless shows a great discrepancy between the number of Muslim and non-Muslim students at the time in a predominantly Muslim country. British schools did not have national and religious criteria when recruiting, even if they privileged members of the foreign communities and the Egyptian elite. In 1921, only a third of the 2,400 British subjects and of the 1,700 Protestant students went to British schools. As a sign of the predominance of the French culture in Egypt, French schools had more British students than the British schools.²⁶

More British schools were founded in Egypt from 1927, as the British High Commissioner, Lord Lloyd, insisted on the necessity of developing the British culture in the Near-East, and weakening the position of the French language and culture in Egypt which he considered to be a crusade against the political and cultural influence of Britain in the country. From the 1930s, the English language gained more importance, notably with the emergence of the United States as world power and the influence of its culture through cinema and literature. Moreover, the world economic situation meant that the use of English became necessary as it facilitated international trade. This policy was reflected in the attendance in British schools as between the First and the Second World Wars, the number of students rose between 2,000 and 4,000, to reach 10,000 in 1945.²⁷ If English did not completely replace French as the inter-communal language, the younger generation had at least a basic knowledge of the English language.

²⁵ Abecassis, 'Approche d'un champ'.

²⁶ Abecassis, 'Approche d'un champ'.

²⁷ Gérard, 'Le choix culturel'.

Among the refugees who came to France and to Britain following the Suez crisis were stateless Jews. Before the Egyptian Citizenship Laws of 1929, Egyptian nationality was not legally defined, and the Jews in Egypt who did not have a foreign passport were considered as 'local subjects' or indigenous by the Egyptian authorities. The status of 'local subject' was a way to differentiate Egyptian-born people from the Ottoman subjects who were born elsewhere under the capitulation system, which permitted non-Muslims to be judged by the law of their country of origin. The attribution of the status of 'local subject' depended on local administrations rather than on a national decision, except for three common criteria: birth, residence, and military service.²⁸ The members of the Jewish community in Egypt were dhimmis, that is to say non-Muslims of the Book, a category which also included Christians and Zoroastrians, and were subject to certain restrictions and to religious tribunals established in 1875. The attachment of some members of the Jewish community went beyond nationality. It was not unusual that for different members of one family to have different nationalities while the common denominator was the Jewish identity and the use of the French language. This was the case for Régine Zayan, Yves Fedida, and David Yohana, for example.

When it became possible to obtain Egyptian nationality in 1929, many local subjects among the Jewish community did not apply for Egyptian citizenship. According to Frédéric Abecassis, this is because they were more attached to the communal identity than the national one, or because they had faith in the British protection of religious minorities. Being Egyptian was not necessary to

²⁸ Frédéric Abecassis and Anne Le Gall-Kazazian, 'L'identité au miroir du droit: Le statut des personnes en Égypte (fin XIXe - milieu XXe siècle)', *Égypte/Monde arabe*, 11:1 (1992), 11-38 (No page reference - accessed online). [Http://ema.revues.org/index296.html](http://ema.revues.org/index296.html)

live in Egypt as long as the local subjects did not want to become civil servants or start a career in politics.²⁹

The end of Egypt as part of the Ottoman Empire and its status as a British protectorate in 1914 did not end the local subject status nor the capitulation system, but the need for a definition of Egyptian nationality became more and more pressing. However, it was only after Egypt became independent, that the Egyptian government set up a committee to draft a law regarding nationality. After many changes, a law regarding the definition, acquisition and loss of Egyptian nationality was introduced in 1929. It established a distinction between Egyptian Ottoman subjects who were automatically and compulsorily naturalised Egyptian, and foreigners who could become Egyptian by decree only if they asked to be naturalised.³⁰ To qualify, foreigners had to be born in Egypt from a father himself born in Egypt, but who was originally from an Arab or Muslim country.³¹ This disposition prevented a number of Jews from being naturalised Egyptian, and they remained stateless. As a result only 5,000 Jews were granted Egyptian nationality out of a potential 40,000.³² It also announced the will of the Egyptian government to turn the country into a

²⁹ Abecassis and Le Gall-Kazazian, 'L'identité au miroir du droit'.

³⁰ Syrian-Lebanese and Iraqi Jews acquired Egyptian nationality easily under these rules.

³¹ Abecassis and Le Gall-Kazazian, 'L'identité au miroir du droit'. See also: Shimon Shamir, 'The Evolution of the Egyptian Nationality Laws and their Application to the Jews in the Monarchy Period', in Shimon Shamir, (ed.), *The Jews of Egypt: A Mediterranean Society in Modern Times* (Boulder, 1987), p.57.

³² Tolédano-Attias, 'La dénationalisation des Juifs d'Egypte', pp.59-60. See also: Michael Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt, 1920-1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism and the Middle East Conflict* (New York, 1999); Krämer, *Jews in Modern Egypt*; Gudrun Krämer, 'Political Participation of the Jews in Egypt between World War I and the 1952 Revolution', in Shamir, (ed.), *Jews of Egypt*, pp.68-82; Shimon Shamir, 'The Evolution of the Egyptian Nationality Laws and their Application to the Jews in the Monarchy Period', in Shamir, (ed.), *Jews of Egypt*, pp.33-65.

Muslim nation-state by excluding large numbers of people from non-Muslim and non-Arabic communities.

A number of Jews, in order to avoid discrimination, sought the protection of the European presence to benefit from the capitulation system, meaning that they could be tried in mixed tribunals where European laws were applied in concordance with Egyptian laws. It concerned the following countries: France, Britain, Greece, Italy, Belgium, the United States, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. People with consular protection then became foreign residents in Egypt and avoided the discriminatory status of dhimmis.³³

The capitulation system was eventually abolished in 1937, following the Convention of Montreux between Egypt and the twelve capitulatory powers, ending the privileges of the foreign communities.³⁴ Mixed tribunals were planned to disappear twelve years after the treaty, even if from 1937 foreign nationals could be subject to Egypt's laws and taxation. Despite the convention, the foreign communities kept their economic dominance.³⁵

In 1956, Jews from Egypt with French nationality were called 'Français de Code Civil' by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These were different from the French nationals, who included mainly teaching and diplomatic staff.³⁶ They were thus considered as administratively French and they had become French

³³ Tolédano-Attias, 'La dénationalisation des Juifs d'Egypte', pp.52-3.

³⁴ Selma Botman, 'The liberal age', in Martin W. Daly, (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Volume 2, Modern Egypt: From 1517 to the end of the twentieth century* (Cambridge, 1998), p.295.

³⁵ Starr, *Remembering Cosmopolitan Egypt*, p.21.

³⁶ See: MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 514, for example.

while living in a foreign country. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs differentiated between the French from France and the 'Français de Code Civil'. Most of the Egyptian Jews who had French nationality managed to secure it by claiming they had relatives who had lived at one point in Algeria and thus were entitled to the 1870 Crémieux decree, which granted French nationality to Jews in Algeria. It nevertheless appeared after a general inspection in 1939 that 90 per cent of those registered, mostly Jews and representing more than 4,000 individuals, had no claim to French protection, since neither they nor their ancestors had ever lived in Algeria.³⁷ The facility with which the Jews obtained and kept their French nationality shows how important it was for the French government to have some French and Francophile nationals in the country as part of its influence, a state of affairs of which France had been keenly aware in the 1930s.

It is estimated that in the 1920s and 1930s, between 25 and 30 per cent of the Jewish population had Egyptian citizenship, while 25 per cent were foreign nationals, the rest being stateless.³⁸ In the 1930s, about 9 per cent of Jews in Egypt were 'Français de Code Civil', while those who were British nationals represented only 3 per cent, which out of 80,000 members represented roughly 2,500 individuals.³⁹ The main reason was that it was harder for the Jews of Egypt to obtain British nationality in comparison with French nationality.

Only families originating from Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus, which were all part of the British empire, were eligible. Exceptions could be made if

³⁷ Krämer, 'Radical Nationalists', p.368.

³⁸ Krämer, 'Radical Nationalists', p.357.

³⁹ Krämer, *Jews in Modern Egypt*, p.35.

applicants were considered to be an asset for British policy in Egypt, as they could act as intermediaries between Britain and the local power, or if they rendered services to the British nation, like serving in the British army during the Second World War.⁴⁰ When a member of staff proposed to adopt a more liberal attitude regarding the naturalisation of Jewish families in Egypt who had lost their Austro-Hungarian protection during the First World War, as they could form 'a useful nucleus for a Colony after [the British] direct withdrawal from the control of Egyptian Affairs', the Foreign Office showed no interest whatsoever 'in names like de Kraemer, Menasce, and [Gherein]', names typically considered Jewish.⁴¹ Very few British naturalisations happened in comparison with French ones among the Jewish community during the period Egypt was under British rule. Though Gudrun Krämer suggests that Britain limited its protection as it was the dominant European power in Egypt at the time, the policy also parallels the general anti-alien policy in Britain.⁴² During the First World War, anti-alienism, along with antisemitism even towards British-born Jews, was still high.⁴³ Naturalising the Austro-Hungarian Jews in Egypt, who were technically enemy aliens, would have meant letting them having full access to Britain, if it had been their wish to re-emigrate.

While many British-naturalised Jewish families in Egypt had a knowledge of English, they mostly spoke French:

⁴⁰ Racheline Barda, 'The Modern Exodus of the Jews from Egypt'. (No page reference - accessed online). [Http://www.nebidaniel.org/documents/Whence_Hence by R.Barda.doc](http://www.nebidaniel.org/documents/Whence_Hence_by_R.Barda.doc)

⁴¹ Krämer, *Jews in Modern Egypt*, p.31.

⁴² Bryan Cheyette, *Construction of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society* (Cambridge, 1993), p.159.

⁴³ David Cesarani, 'An Alien Concept? The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society before 1940', in David Cesarani and Tony Kushner, (eds), *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 1993), pp.35-7.

We came from a Europeanised Jewish family... Although we were British subjects, we were not part of the British administrative class... However, the language situation at home was complex yet typical of the times for Jewish families in Egypt. My parents spoke French but we had a Slovene nanny... And the Slovenian language is not a very usable one so my mother asked my nanny to talk to us, children, in Italian instead of Slovene.⁴⁴

Having a British passport did not necessarily mean speaking English at home, nor the Arabic of the country they lived in. Nationality was not a defining element for the Jews of Egypt before the Suez crisis. What mattered was Egyptian Jewish identity and social class. Middle- and upper-middle-class Jews had little contact with the lower-class Jews who made up 25 per cent of the Jewish community in 1948, and were mainly indigenous Arabic-speaking individuals.⁴⁵ Nationality for the Jews of Egypt was a way to be protected by European powers and was a matter of passport rather than national identity: Raymond Levy said, 'People did not speak about nationality, but about passport: "Quel passeport as-tu?" [laughs]. People had all sort of passports. I had friends who had Italian passports and couldn't speak Italian!'⁴⁶ The fact that people had a foreign passport did not mean that they had an allegiance to their country of nationality. Nationality was not defining identity for many Jews of Egypt. However, for the Egyptian government it meant that they were foreign nationals, which made it easier to expel them when they became enemy nationals during the Suez crisis.

⁴⁴ Interview with Ellis Douek, 15 December 2008.

⁴⁵ Starr, *Remembering Cosmopolitan Egypt*, p.109.

⁴⁶ Interview with Raymond Levy, 22 October 2009.

As far as the questions of Israel and Zionism were concerned, only a few Jews were actively involved in Zionist movements, though many were sympathetic to the creation of the State of Israel, and only 4,000 Jews from Egypt emigrated to Palestine between 1917 and 1947. Most Jews of Egypt were at first hostile or indifferent to Zionism as a political movement.⁴⁷ Zionist activity expanded during the 1940s, and Zionist youth movements saw an increase of their membership. In general, the Jews from Egypt were to be found in every political affiliation in Egypt from supporters of the King to Communists, and also sympathisers of the Wafd.⁴⁸ It reflects the complexity of allegiances. Their Jewish identity was very important as Jews of Egypt in opposition to Jews from another place.

At the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Egyptian army attempted to invade Israel, only to be defeated. However, this changed the relationship between the Egyptian government and society and the Jewish community. Jews were suspected of being Zionists by the government, and several were arrested and interned. Some others were arrested on the allegation that they were Communists. Thus, 1,000 Jews, Muslims and Europeans known to be opponents to the Egyptian government were interned, plus another 300 Jews for their past association with Zionist activities which were legal before 1948.⁴⁹ Their properties were sequestered during their internment, and only returned in 1949 after the end of the war with Israel, and the internees liberated. More broadly, the Jewish community became the target of anti-European and

⁴⁷ Michael M. Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry under the Nasser Regime 1956-1970', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31:3 (1995), pp.574-5.

⁴⁸ Starr, *Remembering Cosmopolitan Egypt*, p.109-10. See also: Krämer, 'Radical Nationalists', pp.359-63.

⁴⁹ Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry', pp.575-6.

antisemitic actions from July to September 1949: demonstrations, arson and destruction of Jewish property happened in Cairo.⁵⁰ As a result 20,000 Jews left Egypt between May 1948 and January 1950, a large proportion of whom settled in Israel. From 1951 to 1953, their situation seemed to have stabilised, despite the revolution of 1952 and the end of the Monarchy.⁵¹ The change of regime in 1952 made the Jews of Egypt question their future in the country, even though Neguib, then head of State after the coup, pledged friendly relations with the Jews of Egypt.⁵²

As a minority group more subjected to European influences than Egyptian ones, and because of their peculiar legal status and their Jewish identity, the Jews from Egypt were deeply affected by the French and British occupations and the rise of Egyptian nationalism and pan-Arabism. Inside the Jewish community, their status and future in the country was questioned, as well as privately in family circles.⁵³

Egypt was moving towards nationalism and Arabism from the 1930s, and these developments gained considerable popularity in the early 1950s when the monarchy was overthrown.⁵⁴ Once he became leader of Egypt, Nasser tried to minimise European influence, and especially that of the British, to make Egypt a leading Arab country. He stood as a charismatic leader of the Arab world from Algeria to Yemen, promoting a nationalist ideology which sometimes

⁵⁰ Krämer, Morabia, 'Face à la modernité', pp.86-7.

⁵¹ Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry', p.577.

⁵² MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 482, Anniversary of the Libération, 31 July 1953.

⁵³ Eglal Errera, 'Le demi-siècle', in Hassoun, (ed.), *Juifs du Nil*, pp.97-102.

⁵⁴ See: Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation 1930-1945* (Cambridge, 1995); R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Egypt under Nasir: A Study in Political Dynamics* (New York, 1971).

leaned towards xenophobia.⁵⁵ In October 1956 and following the Suez military intervention, those who had managed to be granted Egyptian citizenship were targeted by a series of removals of naturalisations. The French and British nationals were expelled, in an attempt to reduce the European presence. The Egyptian government also suspected Jews of being Zionist or Communist activists and sometimes interned them. In a context of Egyptianisation of the country and affirmed opposition to Zionism and Israel, the Jews of Egypt were targeted for expulsion regardless of whether they had personally avowed support for Zionism or not. Refugees who sought asylum in France had more affinity with French culture or had relatives in France.

⁵⁵ Spencer Mawby, *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955-67: Last Outpost of a Middle East Empire* (Abingdon, 2005), pp.29-30.

6. From French Jews in Egypt to Jews from Egypt in France

At the time of the Suez canal crisis, approximately 10,000 French nationals were living in Egypt. Out of those 3,000 were diplomatic and teaching staff and workers at the Suez Canal Company. The rest of the French nationals in Egypt at the time were Jews who had acquired relatively recently French citizenship.¹ Most of them had never lived in France before, but considered themselves of French culture since they spoke the language, and many had a French education at school.

While the Suez crisis was extensively reported and debated in the press and in parliament, the situation of the French nationals was not as much discussed in the press as was the situation of the Hungarians. There were also very few parliamentary debates mentioning the situation of foreign and Jewish communities during the Suez crisis. As a consequence, the refugees from Egypt arrived in France rather anonymously.

Yet, France granted asylum to 11,000 Jewish refugees from Egypt for permanent resettlement or re-emigration.² While many of the refugees were French nationals, the French government also had to deal with approximately 4,000 foreign and stateless refugees from Egypt who sought refuge there due to

¹ Frédéric Abecassis and Anne Le Gall-Kazazian, 'L'identité au miroir du droit: le statut des personnes en Egypte (fin XIXe - milieu XXe siècle)', *Egypte/Monde Arabe*, 11:1 (1992), 11-38 (No page reference - accessed online). [Http://ema.revues.org/index296.html](http://ema.revues.org/index296.html)

² COJ.R.Egy.A1, Dix ans d'action sociale en faveur des Réfugiés d'Égypte (1956-1966).

a familial and/or cultural attachment to the country. Among these, some simply transited through France to re-emigrate somewhere else, mostly Israel.³

While Hungarians were welcomed by the government because they were considered suitable candidates for immigration, refugees from Egypt were seen as less desirable. They were assimilated with Algerian immigrants by the French administration, which, in the Algerian War context, made them feel unwelcome. For French Jewish refugees, even their nationality was questioned and was seen as a special status as they were referred to as 'Français de Code Civil'. According to immigration policies, this group of refugees was restricted entry to France as much as possible. The French government thus tried to limit as much as possible the immigration of refugees from Egypt, but were faced with political and moral dilemmas because of France's responsibility in the Suez crisis, the Algerian context, and as well as the treatment of the Jewish population during the Vichy years.

This chapter shows that the arrival of the Jewish refugees from Egypt, French nationals and stateless, was considered by the French government to be a Jewish problem and handled as such. It argues that despite a common knowledge of the French language, and in some cases French education and nationality, their French culture was not sufficient for them to be considered as French by the French authorities. Delegating the reception of refugees to organisations such as the Cojasor emphasises the fact that the government had little interest in this wave of refugees, in contrast with the Hungarian refugees.

³ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 492, French embassy in Berne to MAE, 23 January 1958.

Studying those organisations is necessary as their work enabled a great majority of the refugees to have support until permanent accommodation was offered to them. The fact that the care for the refugees from Egypt was delegated for the most part to a Jewish association and its work was central to the permanent resettlement of the refugees emphasises the Jewish character of the handling of this refugee situation. The chapter analyses how immigration and resettlement policies affected differently refugees from Egypt in comparison with the Hungarian refugees. Finally, this chapter also studies the effect of the resettlement in France on the identity of the Jews from Egypt. It focuses particularly on how their French identity and culture was affected by the treatment they received from the French authorities, and how their resettlement played a major part in emphasising their Egyptian common past rather than their French culture in the immediate years after their arrival in France.

-The expulsion of French nationals and stateless Jews

The event that led to the expulsion of the French and British nationals and the 6,000 stateless Jews was the French, British and Israeli military intervention in Egypt in October 1956. This military intervention was the response to the nationalisation of the Suez canal by Nasser on 26 July 1956. Some of the Jews from Egypt believed then that the nationalisation would worsen the Jewish community's position in the country. André H.'s father and grandfather warned

him that the time had come to leave the country on hearing the announcement on the radio: 'Mon père et mon grand-père ont écouté la radio et ils ont dit: "C'est fini!" Donc il faut partir!'⁴ Although André H. and his family were not able to leave for France until 1959, since being stateless they were not subject to direct expulsion, his family's worries reflect the general concern among Jews in Egypt.

In Alexandria, 77 French nationals emigrated soon after the nationalisation of the canal. Most of them were Jewish. The rest of the Jews of Egypt forming the French colony were worried but preferred to see how the situation would evolve.⁵ At this time they were not subject to any restriction and could transfer their assets relatively easily. On the other hand, 1,888 non-Jewish French nationals out of the 2,108 registered at the Port-Said consulate working for the Suez Canal Company and originally from France decided to leave following the nationalisation.⁶ The attachment to Egypt was strong for the French Jews born there. The French, British, and some Egyptian and stateless members of the community who stayed after the nationalisation of the canal, had to leave a few months later in much stricter conditions.

The nationalisation of the canal raised concerns about the French population in Egypt at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In early August, the French embassy in Cairo tried to assess the intentions of the French colony in case of a major crisis in Egypt, and to have precise figures on the number of people who would

⁴ Interview with André H., 3 August 2009.

⁵ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 514, Consulate in Alexandria to Embassy in Cairo, 6 September 1956.

⁶ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 514, MAE to UN representative, 15 December 1956.

then became potential candidates for evacuation. Table 6.1 shows that the French embassy used again the distinction between nationals and 'Français de Code Civil':

Table 6.1: Composition of the French colony in Egypt on 15 August 1956 on the eventuality of evacuation to France.

Categories Zones	French citizens		North Africans		Total
	Nationals	'Français de Code Civil'	Algerians (incl. Jews)	Moroccans (incl. Jews)	
Cairo	2,885	1,400	2,120 (several 100s)	500	6,905
Alexandria	2,574	1,542	1,794 (1,500)	780 (600)	6690
Canal Zone	0	405	0	0	405
Total		8,806	3,914 (about 2,000)	1,280 (600)	14,000 (approx. 2,600)

(Source: MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 514, French population in Egypt, 15 August 1956.)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs anticipated the evacuation of the French colony at an early date and had figures regarding who would have to be evacuated to France in case of a military operation against Egypt. However, apart from advising its nationals to move to France, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not set up a proper evacuation plan. It did not anticipate the expulsion plans of Nasser, even in the nationalistic political context in Egypt at the time, and his intention to reduce the European influence in the country.⁷

⁷ R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Egypt under Nasir: A Study in Political Dynamics* (New York, 1971), pp.64-118.

This failure to anticipate had an impact on the reception of the Jews who sought refuge in France, aggravated by the fact that non-French Jews were not considered as potential immigrants.

Table 6.1 also reveals the presence of a number of Algerians and Moroccans in Egypt in 1956. Though they were not considered as elements to be evacuated, the French embassy nevertheless surveyed their intentions, as Moroccans and Algerians had the status of 'protégés'. The table reveals as well that the embassy made a distinction between Jews and non-Jews in those two national categories. The Algerians in Cairo were mainly Muslims, and their presence in the city can be explained by the fact that various nationalist figures from the Maghreb met there to encourage anti-colonial movement since the end of the Second World War.⁸ Moreover, Nasser openly supported the Front National de Libération (FLN), even if their relations were sometimes tense.⁹ The French government believed the Egyptian president was actively involved in the Algerian War, and reclaiming the Suez canal was just an extension of the same conflict, as well as protecting financial assets links to the Suez canal.¹⁰ As a result, the Muslim Algerians in Egypt were suspected of links with the FLN.¹¹ Though Morocco had been independent since March 1956, Moroccans in Egypt were also suspected of being nationalists.

⁸ Henry Jackson, *The FLN in Algeria: Party Development in a Revolutionary Society* (Westport, 1977), p.19.

⁹ Bernard Droz and Evelyne Lever, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Algérie: 1954-1962* (Paris, 1982), p.103.

¹⁰ JO, Assemblée Nationale, 18 December 1956, p.6098; John Talbot, *The War without a Name: France in Algeria, 1954-1962* (New York, 1980), p.70.

¹¹ Droz and Lever, *Histoire de la Guerre d'Algérie*, pp.53-5.

French staff at the French schools were the first to be expelled, the schools being a symbol of French presence in Egypt. The military intervention was for Nasser the opportunity to minimise their influence in the country by shutting down their schools and institutions. Yves R., student at the time at the Lycée Français in Alexandria, remembers how quickly it happened: 'Les écoles ferment. Les professeurs sont expulsés. Instantanément. D'abord les institutions françaises. Fermées! Virées! Ensuite, avec un peu plus de temps, tous les ressortissants français.'¹² Nasser was able to carry out his politics of Egyptianisation and pan-Arabism by quickly shutting down the French institutions, as well as British and Jewish schools. During the military intervention which started in October, schools were closed because of the war. However, despite what Yves R. remembered, it was only on 20 November, that the Lycée Français in Cairo and its annexe in Meadi were requisitioned and occupied by the Egyptian army. Similarly, all the schools of the Mission Laïque Française and Alliance Française were closed, representing a total of 10,000 students unable to attend school.¹³ More generally, the Centre Culturel Français in Cairo closed down on 9 November along with the French embassy and the Institut des Hautes Etudes Françaises du Caire while the French hospitals were occupied by the Egyptian army, thus reducing French cultural influence on Egyptian territory.¹⁴

¹² Interview with Yves R., 24 August 2009.

¹³ Both the Mission Laïque Française, created in 1902 and 'reconnue d'utilité publique' in 1907, and the Alliance Française, created in 1883 and also 'reconnue d'utilité publique', believed in the mission of civilizing colonised countries with French education. See Matthew Burrows, "'Mission civilisatrice": French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860-1914', *The Historical Journal*, 29:1 (1986), pp.109-35.

¹⁴ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 503, Situation of French institutions, 20 November 1956.

When the Egyptian government forced 280 French teaching staff (400 with relatives included) to stay at home, and interned about ten of them, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made their evacuation a priority.¹⁵ While the remaining 6,500 French nationals in Egypt were not put under house arrest, the Ministry was concerned that the French Jews' freedom of movement was restricted.¹⁶ It left the other French nationals behind as no evacuation plan had been prepared despite the estimation of numbers likely to be affected made during the summer. The 'Français de Code Civil' could only turn to the Swiss embassy which represented French interests in Egypt after the French embassy closed in November. As diplomatic relations between France and Egypt stopped on 1 November 1956, the Swiss delegation was in charge of French interests in the country and could deliver a safe conduct with a visa valid for one month to stateless refugees who had relatives in France.¹⁷

In most cases, police officers came to the workplace or home of the people who were being expelled and asked them to leave the country within two to seven days. Assets belonging to French nationals were frozen, and were forcibly given to the Egyptian government as expellees had to agree to leave everything behind. Expellees were only allowed to take with them a suitcase of maximum 20 kilos and twenty Egyptian pounds worth just under twenty British pounds. A laissez-passer was then delivered with 'aller définitif sans

¹⁵ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 503, Situation of French institutions, 20 November 1956.

¹⁶ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 503, Swiss Delegation in Egypt to French Embassy in Switzerland, 20 November 1956.

¹⁷ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 502, Egyptian Embassy to Pineau, 1 November 1956.

retour' written on it. This form of expulsion was called voluntary expulsion and was common from November 1956.¹⁸

However, leaving Egypt was not always easy at that time, and Régine Zayan had to stay longer despite an expulsion order:

Ils m'ont remis un petit papier disant que j'étais expulsée, que je devais quitter le territoire égyptien pour un départ sans retour. Deux semaines plus tard ou un peu plus, ils sont revenus parce que je n'étais pas partie. En fait, les avions étaient complets partout. La foule était énorme dans les consulats, les agences de voyage, les compagnies d'aviation. Pouvoir partir immédiatement c'était très difficile. Et le papier indiquait sous huit jours. Cette fois ils sont venus me chercher... L'officier a demandé pourquoi nous n'étions pas partis. Ils nous ont simplement fait peur en disant que si nous ne quitions pas les lieux rapidement, nous serions emprisonnés. Hors, nous savions qu'il y avait énormément de gens en prison. Ils nous ont relâchés et c'est tout.¹⁹

Régine Zayan was luckier than many. By early December, at least 900 Jews had been arrested.²⁰ As she explains, it was not always easy to leave quickly as so many others were being expelled or trying to leave as they could not imagine that they had a future there any more.

¹⁸ Michael M. Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry under the Nasser Regime 1956-1970', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31:3 (1995), p.581.

¹⁹ Interview with Régine Zayan, 15 August 2009.

²⁰ Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry', p.579.

The Jewish community was also targeted by a series of restrictions since the Egyptian government associated Jews with Zionism and Israel. The first restriction was that Jewish schools were shut down and requisitioned, while some of their staff was interned like the French director of the Ecole de la Communauté Israélite du Caire.²¹ However, the Egyptian government went further than just closing down schools. On 22 November, Nasser amended the Egyptian nationality law of 13 September 1950, aiming at achieving 'national homogeneity', by a decree-law according to which 'only individuals resident on Egyptian territory before 1 January 1900, who maintained their residence until the date of promulgation of the present decree and who are not under the jurisdiction of a foreign state, are Egyptians.'²² In other words, all Jews who had been granted Egyptian nationality after 1 January 1900 became stateless. Those who had been naturalised between that date and 1932, and on the condition that they were not known to have taken part to Zionist activities or associations, could remain in Egypt. The following day, Nasser declared all Jews enemies of the State, and as such, they were subject to expulsion from Egypt, along with French and British citizens.²³

Other stateless Jews or local subjects, like David Yohana, decided to leave Egypt later despite not being expressly asked to leave the country. However, in the spring of 1957, it was much harder to leave for France, even as a refugee. In an attempt to limit the number of refugees, the French authorities refused to

²¹ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 503, Situation of French institutions, 20 November 1956.

²² Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry', pp.582-3.

²³ *Le Parisien Libéré*, 'Expulsion des Juifs d'Égypte', 26 November 1956; *Libération*, 'L'aventure égyptienne coûte de plus en plus cher, 6000 français menacés d'expulsion', 26 November 1956; *Le Monde*, 'Le Caire fait pression sur les ressortissants franco-britanniques pour qu'ils quittent l'Égypte', 27 November 1956.

deliver visas to the stateless Jews with insufficient financial means to live in France. It was only with the sponsorship of friends who had come to France as refugees a few months before that he obtained a transit visa for Israel valid for 15 days that enabled him to go to France on 13 August 1957.²⁴

In general, it was the Jewish community that was the most affected by the consequences of the military intervention led by France, Britain and Israel. The aim of Nasser's government was to purge Egypt of foreign influence and of its Jewish community and to replace foreigners or non-Muslims in key positions in society and the administration by Egyptian Muslims. Some foreigners or Jews were requisitioned by the Egyptian government to train Egyptians for positions they had previously occupied, delaying their expulsion by a few months or even years.²⁵ The action of the Egyptian authorities can be summed up in four points: arrest and internment, sequestration of possessions and businesses, expulsion, and, finally, promulgation of a new status stripping the Jews of their Egyptian nationality. Thousands of Jews, stateless or Egyptian, French or British were interned or put under house arrest, while between November 1956 and March 1957, more than 500 Jewish businesses were seized and had their accounts frozen, and 800 more businesses were put on a black list with their accounts frozen as well. All the sequestered enterprises were ordered to fire their Jewish employees, which was done promptly.²⁶ Subject to expulsion or not, the Jews from Egypt had little choice other than to leave the country and seek refuge elsewhere. Due to the French influences of their educational and cultural background, France was a natural choice for

²⁴ Interview with David Yohana, 5 November 2009.

²⁵ Interview with Yves R.; Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry', p.581.

²⁶ Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry', pp.579-81.

immigration for many members of the Jewish community of Egypt. In early 1961, following a continuous anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli propaganda campaign since the Suez crisis, only 7,000 Jews remained in Egypt, of which 2,000 were Karaites, mostly unskilled labourers and small artisans.²⁷

-The reception of refugees from Egypt in France

Before the refugees started to arrive in France, the French press had characterised the nationalisation of the Suez Canal in July 1956 as a repetition of the Munich agreement or Germany's annexation of Austria in 1938. Many articles presented Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the inability of the UN to solve the issue as a new Anschluss. Except in the case of the Communist papers, there was a pro-war tone in the French press. *Combat* claimed that allowing Nasser to nationalise the canal was the Anschluss all over again.²⁸ *Le Monde* also believed that 'l'histoire recommence' and drew the same parallels with Nasser and Hitler, the nationalisation of the canal and the Anschluss.²⁹ *Paris-Presse* castigated the American attitude at the UN Security Council and felt the spirit of Munich over the whole affair.³⁰ The press overall called the government to act on the Suez question.

²⁷ Michael M. Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt, 1920-1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism and the Middle East Conflict* (New York, 1999), p.287.

²⁸ *Combat*, 28 July 1956.

²⁹ *Le Monde*, 7 August 1956.

³⁰ *Paris-Presse*, 14 October 1956.

The government had considered military intervention to reclaim the canal, but that was not the only reason to intervene. It saw in the Egyptian situation a prolongation of the Algerian War. Links between Nasser and the FLN were established, and overthrowing the Egyptian leader was considered a necessity in order to win the Algerian War. Robert Lacoste, resident minister and governor general of Algeria, recommended action against Nasser, as he feared that if the Egyptian leader appeared victorious in nationalising the Suez canal, the Algerian War could not be won.³¹ This view was shared in the French government. Nasser's links with Moscow were also emphasised, and many considered that he was serving, knowingly or not, Soviet interests. Moreover, Egypt concluded a deal in 1955 with Czechoslovakia to receive military material, much to the dismay of Israel.³² Then, reclaiming the Suez canal was not only a way to fight the Algerian War, it was also a way to diminish communist influence in Egypt by ousting its leader. The PCF did not support the military intervention in Egypt. Yet, the party was in a difficult position having to justify the Soviet invasion of Hungary at the same time. Their criticisms of the Suez intervention were thus greatly weakened.

Despite the fact that France had to leave Egypt following pressure from the Soviet Union and the United States, the operation was not considered a failure. Christian Pineau indeed claimed that Egypt was the main loser: Nasser's army was defeated and demoralised, most of the Soviet military material was lost and had to be paid for by Egypt, the canal was unusable and Egyptian

³¹ Marc Ferro, *Suez 1956: naissance d'un tiers-monde* (Bruxelles, 2006), p.61.

³² Zach Levey, 'French-Israeli Relations, 1950-1956: The Strategic Dimension', in Simon C. Smith, (ed.), *Reassessing Suez 1956: New Perspectives on the Crisis and its Aftermath* (Aldershot, 2008), p.96.

economic improvements were halted.³³ It was in such a political context that the question of the expulsion from Egypt of French, British and stateless nationals was posed.

While the repatriation of the diplomatic and teaching staffs posed little problem, since it was considered a priority, the reception of the other French nationals and the stateless and denaturalised Jews proved more difficult. Hungarian refugees were considered good candidates for resettlement in France, due to the fact that they were mostly young European men who could be potentially employed. They were fitting the economic and demographic needs as established by French immigration policies and practices. The demographic composition of the Jewish refugees from Egypt differed greatly, as they were large family units from a predominantly middle-class background.³⁴

The introduction to the thesis has shown the importance of Georges Mauco's ideas on labour, ethnicity and nationality in French immigration practices. Despite the absence of mentions of ethnic preferences in French law after the war, national and ethnic preferences remained strong within the French administration.³⁵ Mauco considered that among 'foreign races', people from the Levant, a category also referring to Jews, were unassimilable and undesirable because they were too distant from the 'French race'.³⁶ He wanted to limit as

³³ Christian Pineau, *1956 Suez* (Paris, 1976), p.184.

³⁴ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, Note on the expellees from Egypt, 19 February 1957.

³⁵ Alexis Spire, *Etrangers à la carte: l'administration de l'immigration en France 1945-1975* (Paris, 2005), p.19.

³⁶ Patrick Weil, 'Racisme et discrimination dans la politique française de l'immigration 1938-1945/1974-1995', *Vingtième Siècle*, 47 (1995), p.80.

much as possible the introduction to France of Mediterranean and Oriental people for immigration and naturalisation and favoured instead European immigration. In terms of occupation, priority was given to farmers, miners, and builders, while commercial, professional, and banking occupations were to be given limited access to immigration.³⁷ Immigration from Egypt was therefore to be avoided according to French immigration policy.

Egyptian immigration had already been specifically labelled as undesirable in 1947.³⁸ Immigration policy was constantly in conflict among concerned ministries and the ONI between labour needs and demographic needs. The focus was on favouring the entry of assimilable workers in France, which was a way to reconcile both labour and demographic objectives. In case of conflicting interests, population needs were often put forward, which led to policy of general restriction of immigration from Arab countries, including Egypt despite any significant immigration from this country. The amalgamation of Arab immigration and the refugees from Egypt persisted until naturalisation, notably when dealing with the administrative services.³⁹

Moreover, refugees from Egypt arrived at a time when Algerian immigration was considered undesirable.⁴⁰ The position of the French administration was that Algerian immigrants and any immigration from the Mediterranean region were to be avoided. Algerian immigration was considered not to serve France's

³⁷ Patrick Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français ? Histoire de la nationalité française depuis la Révolution* (Paris, 2002), pp.220-2.

³⁸ Spire, *Etrangers à la carte*, pp.120-1.

³⁹ Interviews with Emile Gabbay, Lucien Perez, David Yohana, Régine Zayan.

⁴⁰ Gérard Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France: discours publics, humiliations privées* (Paris, 2007), pp.521-2.

demographic interests. To that aim, in March 1956, any person wishing to travel from France to Algeria or from Algeria to France had to produce their national identity card, which marked the end of the free passage between France and Algeria. This practice was indirect discrimination towards the Algerians, who travelled the most between the two countries.⁴¹ All necessary information for providing national identity cards was thoroughly checked by the French administration, which delayed many Algerians in their travel plans, or prevented them if they could not present the required information.

In addition to that, the Algerian War context greatly affected the condition of Algerians in France. They were treated with suspicion, both by the government and administration, and in the press. On 9 March 1956, the police violently repressed a demonstration organised in Paris by the Algerian National Movement against the special powers wanted by Guy Mollet. Yet, this repression took place with total indifference on the part of public opinion.⁴² The link between Algerian workers and terrorists was commonly made. When confronting the French administration, the refugees from Egypt were nevertheless amalgamated with Algerian immigrants.⁴³ The fact that they were referred to as 'Français de Code Civil' was an emphasis of the fact that they were not of French culture nor birth, and was an echo to the status of Algerians as 'Français musulmans d'Algérie'. Such status, rather than protecting those it referred to, became the object of discrimination.

⁴¹ Spire, *Etrangers à la carte*, pp.200-1.

⁴² Noiriél, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme*, pp.539-40.

⁴³ Noiriél, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme*, pp.521-2.

As a consequence, the French government tried in the first place to prevent any form of expulsion of the Jewish community in Egypt. In order to limit the arrival of refugees from Egypt in France, and also because the Ministry of the Interior considered that it did not have the resources to accommodate the whole French population from Egypt and some stateless Jews, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried to investigate ways of making the expulsions illegal on the international scene. According to the Ministry, the expulsions violated Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of which Egypt was a signatory.⁴⁴ The Jurisconsulte for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs managed to show that Egypt was thus violating several international agreements by expelling its Jewish population. France had a strong case to present to the United Nations, by showing that the Egyptian measures were an attempt at genocide, internationally defined since the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide by the UN General Assembly in December 1948 and signed by France and Egypt the same month.⁴⁵ The Jurisconsulte believed that the new regulations concerning the Jewish community in Egypt could be interpreted as a plan to exterminate or to make an entire group or race disappear.⁴⁶ These recommendations, however, were not applied, and little was done by the French government to bring up the case of its nationals and the Jewish population in Egypt in the UN Assembly. The main reason was that the French government was hoping to discuss the future of the Suez Canal with the Egyptian government in an attempt to renegotiate

⁴⁴ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 503, Note of the Jurisconsulte on the expulsions in Egypt, 26 November 1956.

⁴⁵ Josef L. Kunz, 'The United Nations Convention on Genocide', *American Journal of International Law*, 43:4 (1949), p.740.

⁴⁶ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 503, Note of the Jurisconsulte on the expulsions in Egypt, November 1956.

the terms of the nationalisation. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered that bringing up the matter of the ill-treatments and the expulsions to the UN Assembly could prevent the negotiations from happening due to the French army's actions in Algeria:

Nous désirons certainement que des négociations soient entamées le plus rapidement possible avec l'Egypte sur le futur statut du Canal de Suez. Je me demande si un débat à l'Assemblée dans lequel nous accuserions l'Egypte d'avoir fait subir à nos nationaux des traitements inadmissibles et où seraient évoquées les prétendues 'atrocités' commises par nos troupes ne risquerait pas de retarder les négociations ou même de compromettre l'ouverture de celles-ci.⁴⁷

The atrocities the Jurisconsulte mentioned referred to the French army handling of the situation in Algeria. By the end of 1956, some of the soldiers in the French army had revealed in letters to newspapers and politicians the use of illegal violent force and torture in Algeria. From October the matter was regularly discussed at the Assemblée Nationale.⁴⁸ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs feared that such talks could lead to embarrassment if the Egyptian treatment of the French and Jewish communities was paralleled to the Algerian situation. Furthermore, it could also have been perceived as an isolated move by the French government in the handling of the Suez crisis, which, up until

⁴⁷ MAE, UNRWA, 1944-1973, 251, French Office in New York to MAE, 5 December 1956.

⁴⁸ Raphaëlle Branche, *La Torture et l'Armée Pendant la Guerre d'Algérie 1954-1962* (Paris, 2001), pp.68-9.

that time, had been jointly conducted with the British government.⁴⁹ This explains in part why the case of the expellees from Egypt did not receive as much attention on the international scene as the Hungarian refugees. Rather than a means to put pressure on Egypt, their mention at the UN General Assembly would have been a liability for France, as the French government feared that its handling of the Algerian War would also be publicly criticised. The French intention was also to distract international opinion from the Suez crisis by focusing on the Soviet repression of the Hungarian revolution.⁵⁰

Moreover, the fact that most of the expellees were Jewish limited France's scope of action. Press comparison of Egypt to Nazi Germany after the nationalisation of the Suez Canal put pressure on the French government to relax its immigration policy. That pressure on the French government increased when it became public that Nasser targeted the Jews with discriminatory laws after the bombing of Suez. *Le Figaro* and *Franc-Tireur* claimed the 70,000 Jews in Egypt were all subject to expulsion.⁵¹ *Le Monde* reported that the Egyptian government was adopting laws and decrees denaturalising the Jews and nationalising their businesses and assets.⁵²

There was a further complication to the admission of refugees from Egypt. It was a political necessity to be generous towards the Jewish refugees from Egypt, so that the French collaborationist past could remain buried. Since the

⁴⁹ Martin Thomas, *The French North African Crisis: Colonial Breakdown and Anglo-French Relations, 1945-1962* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp.106-29.

⁵⁰ Gusztáv Kecskés, 'La politique française et la révolution hongroise de 1956', *Matériaux pour l'Histoire de Notre Temps*, 83 (2006), pp.40-9; Gusztáv Kecskés, 'The Suez Crisis and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution', *East European Quarterly*, 35:1 (2001), pp.47-58.

⁵¹ *Le Figaro*, *Franc-Tireur*, 26 November 1956.

⁵² *Le Monde*, 2/3 December 1956.

end of the Second World War, there had been a refusal, from the French government and the Jewish community, to emphasise the wartime deportations and murder of Jews.⁵³ Moreover Jewish deportees were considered like any other deportees. This was a period when the French government concealed its treatment of the collaboration and Jewish questions during the Vichy years.⁵⁴ Despite decrees and commissions created from 1945 to study imprisonment and deportation during the Vichy years, the focus was more on the deportation of French workers rather than the Jewish condition.⁵⁵ The emphasis was on the unity of the French people, who could not be divided into categories: all deportees, Jews and non-Jews, were French and died 'pour la France'. The French Jewish community itself remained fairly silent, and kept the memory of the Jewish genocide dormant after the war. The Jewish community rather chose integration and commemorated its deportations as part of the French unity.⁵⁶ Commemorations of Jewish deportees existed, but they were carried out within the Jewish community, and integrated the memory of non-Jews in the ceremony or memorials.⁵⁷

The threats of expulsion by the Egyptian government put France in a difficult situation. Due to its involvement in the Suez crisis, France had a responsibility for the expulsion of the Jews from Egypt. Being generous with the Jews from Egypt was important in order to avoid criticism and to keep this myth of a

⁵³ Michel Winock, *La France et les Juifs: de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris, 2004), pp.269-74.

⁵⁴ Pieter Lagrou, *Mémoires patriotiques et occupation nazie: résistants, requis et déportés en Europe occidentale 1945-1965* (Bruxelles, 2003), pp.239-41; Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris, 1990), pp.77-85.

⁵⁵ Annette Wieviorka, *Déportation et génocide: Entre la mémoire et l'oubli* (Paris, 1992), pp.423-6.

⁵⁶ Wieviorka, *Déportation et génocide*, p.436.

⁵⁷ Annette Wieviorka, '1992. Réflexions sur une commémoration', *Annales Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 48:3 (1993), pp.704-9.

French unity alive and the past buried, especially since the 'mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu' was inaugurated in Paris on 30 October 1956.⁵⁸ René Coty and Guy Mollet, although invited, could not attend the ceremony due to the Suez events, while Israel was officially represented.⁵⁹

Since the French government could not stop the expulsions, it tried to limit the access to France of refugees without being accused of restrictive measures against Jewish refugees. Therefore, refugees from Egypt were only accepted on the condition that they were (a) French, Moroccan or Tunisian nationals, (b) stateless, (c) Egyptian Jews with French parents or children or French spouse, (d) stateless persons with Moroccan or Tunisian parents or children or French spouse, and (e) foreigners exposed to serious risks following services given to the Nation.⁶⁰ French nationals were top priorities for evacuation. However, the case of the Egyptian Jews reveals that only those who had French relatives could be evacuated to France. There were limits to the French cultural policy in Egypt since the French government was not ready to accept those among the Egyptian Jews who did not have any French relatives. For the French government, their French culture and education were not enough to claim a right to refuge in France. However, since the Egyptian Jews lost their nationality when they left the country, the difference between categories (b) and (c) was irrelevant in practice. The mission of giving a French education to the Jews of Egypt backfired, as the French government found itself in a

⁵⁸ *Le Parisien Libéré*, 31 October 1956; Renée Poznanski, 'La création du Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine en France (avril 1943)', *Vingtième Siècle*, 63 (1999), p.63.

⁵⁹ Annette Wieviorka, 'Un Lieu de mémoire et d'histoire: le Mémorial du Martyr Juif Inconnu', *Revue de l'Université de Bruxelles*, 1-2 (1987), p.127.

⁶⁰ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 514, Note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the evacuation of Port-Said, 8 December 1956.

position where it became very hard to refuse the entry of stateless Jews to French territory.

For many of the stateless Jews of Egypt, the kinship required for asylum in France was understood as being familiar with French culture, through language and education, rather than to have family members with French nationality. For those who spoke French and had been to French schools, France was the first choice before Israel, where life was thought to be hard, among some of the refugees interviewed.⁶¹ French local authorities also interpreted the circular in a very liberal sense. For example, the Bouches-du-Rhône prefecture issued no refusal to stay on French territory to stateless Jews without relatives in France, as the administration there considered the situation of the refugees who were expelled from Egypt.⁶² However, since stateless refugees did not have French citizenship, they had to deal with the administration more often. In practice, they had to prove that they would not become a financial burden on the State, which most of them inevitably became, as they had to leave Egypt with virtually no money or assets. Liberal interpretation and relaxing of the immigration policy enabled a part of the stateless refugees from Egypt to seek refuge in France.

It is important to distinguish between stateless Egyptians and Moroccans and Tunisians. Along with the French nationals, they were first in order of priority, and they did not have to get a work permit like other foreigners.⁶³ The reason

⁶¹ Interview with Yves Fedida, 11 November 2009.

⁶² CAC, 19900353, art. 17, Bouches-du-Rhône Prefect to Minister of the Interior on foreign refugees from Egypt, 16 February 1957.

⁶³ CAC, 19900353, art. 17, Circular on expellees from Egypt, 20 February 1957.

was that many Moroccans and Tunisians had a French passport and were subject to expulsion as French nationals. They were thus accepted without restriction in France.

-Arrival in France

It is estimated that from November 1956 to March 1957, 80 per cent of the refugees from Egypt arriving in France were Jewish.⁶⁴ Most refugees from Egypt left the country by boat, while the rest mainly flew to Paris. Almost 3,000 Jews from Egypt arrived on thirteen ships which landed in Marseille between 30 November 1956 and 22 January 1957.⁶⁵ By January, the reception of the refugees from Egypt was already organised. Refugees who did not have any relatives able to take care of them, were met by the Red Cross at their arrival. After a quick registration they were sent to sports centres or cheap hotels in the area that served as temporary accommodation, or redirected to Paris. Régine Zayan remembers her arrival in Paris in January 1957 and how quickly she and her mother were taken care of:

L'arrivée à Paris a été assez impressionnante pour nous. Nous sommes arrivées à Orly... Il y avait une cellule de la Croix Rouge qui était présente et qui nous accueillait. On nous a donné un billet de 50 francs anciens, pour prendre un taxi... Le taxi nous a déposé à l'hôtel. Certains

⁶⁴ COJ.R.Egy.A1, Dix ans d'action sociale en faveur des Réfugiés d'Égypte (1956-1966).

⁶⁵ CAC, 19810201, art. 2, Arrival in Europe of Jews from Egypt, n.d.

hôtels étaient réquisitionnés pour les Français d'Egypte. Il y avait toute une partie de cet hôtel réservée aux réfugiés.⁶⁶

Because of the lack of accommodation available in hotels, their location varied. Renée Hakoun, a French national who arrived with her husband in Marseille a few weeks before Régine Zayan, was sent briefly to Arles, and then moved to Paris to a hotel full of French nationals from Egypt in the Quartier Latin.⁶⁷

In the Bouches-du-Rhône, the problem was different, Marseille was already receiving many French nationals leaving North Africa.⁶⁸ The French government had no additional structures to accommodate the refugees from Egypt, as the existing ones were already full with refugees from Spain, because of the Franco regime, and Jews from Morocco.⁶⁹ In order to cope with a large influx of refugees, the Ministry of the Interior worked with the SSAE and the Red Cross to open budget hotels. Yves Fedida, remembers his arrival in Marseille:

On a pris le bateau et on est arrivé à Marseille... A cette époque il y avait la Croix Rouge qui accueillait les réfugiés à Marseille et le gouvernement français avait installé des camps pour accueillir les gens. Ce qu'on ne voulait surtout pas c'est qu'ils viennent en région parisienne au départ car il y avait une crise du logement épouvantable en France.

⁶⁶ Interview with Régine Zayan.

⁶⁷ Interview with Renée Hakoun, 5 November 2009.

⁶⁸ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, SSAE, Note on the expelled from Egypt, 26 February 1957.

⁶⁹ Nathalie Deguigné and Emile Temime, *Le Camp du Grand Arénas, Marseille 1944-1966* (Paris, 2008), p.71.

Il y avait toutes sortes de camps... Il y avait un camp à Toulon qui était un camp de la marine, il y avait des hôtels à Carry-le-Rouet, et nous avons été dans des hôtels à Arles. En fait ils réquisitionnaient des une étoile, des deux étoiles, etc., et qui, en hiver, étaient complètement vides. Ils les ouvraient, ils nous mettaient là-bas et nous étions deux familles dans une chambre double avec enfants.⁷⁰

The words used by Yves Fedida show that even if the refugees from Egypt were not in actual camps, hotels were considered as such. Calling them camps was also a way of acknowledging their condition of being refugees. The refugees from Egypt in France did not experience the camp situation as did the Hungarian and Egyptian refugees in Britain, and the Hungarian refugees in France, but some of them nevertheless felt as refugees, and found life in hotels comparable to life in camps.

The housing crisis, mentioned by Yves Fedida, was a major problem as French cities were desperately lacking accommodation. It affected the experience of the refugees from Egypt, as they had to cope with isolation in small towns' hotels. The French government found itself in a situation where requisitioning hotels became a viable solution as the influx of Hungarians meant that military bases serving as camps were full.

The SSAE needed to requisition 110 hotels in the Bouches-du-Rhône and Var départements due to the influx of stateless refugees in the Marseille area, as

⁷⁰ Interview with Yves Fedida.

most of the open hotels there were already full.⁷¹ Marseille, to the same extent as Paris because of the accommodation crisis, had limited space and the refugees ended up being accommodated in isolated areas in the south of France.⁷²

When the refugees arrived in large numbers in December 1956, the SSAE found itself completely overwhelmed and was not able to register them all. The number of stateless refugees who arrived along with the French refugees was not be the only factor in the sometimes chaotic handling of the arrival of the expellees from Egypt in France. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs failed to anticipate the effect of the French culture on the Jewish community in Egypt, and among the 6,000 stateless refugees who left Egypt between November 1956 and the end of 1957, almost a quarter chose to seek refuge in France.⁷³ As a consequence, both French and stateless refugees who had no family to stay with in France during the first few months found themselves isolated in small villages of the Var or the Bouches-du-Rhône, thus slowing down their resettlement in France. As shown in the following table the main concentration of non-French refugees from Egypt were to be found in the Allier, Bouches-du-Rhône, Lozère, Var, Isère, and the Seine départements, where the refugees stayed in hotels closed during the winter but requisitioned by the Ministry of the Interior and reopened to accommodate the refugees and repatriates:

⁷¹ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, SSAE Marseille Branch to Social workers of the SSMOE in receiving départements, 26 February 1957.

⁷² Anne Power, *Hovels to High Rise: State Housing in Europe since 1850* (New York, 1993), pp.44-50. According to her estimations, in 1954, 14 million people lived in overcrowded accommodation, half a million families lived in hotels or furnished rooms, several hundred thousand lived in makeshift shanty settlements, and about 10,000 families were squatting. The majority of the French population was living in grossly inadequate accommodation.

⁷³ Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry', p.589.

Table 6.2: Numbers of non-French refugees arriving from Egypt by départements in France, January 1957

	Moroccans	Tunisians	Stateless	Egyptians	Italians	British	Greeks	Spanish	Iranians	Austrians	Monaco	Yugoslavians	Lebanese	Bulgarians	Total
Allier	21	35	39		4	1									100
Aisne				1											1
Alpes-Mari-times			3	3	4	8						7			25
Bouches-du-Rhône	56	52	130	4	5	2	15						1	1	266*
Gironde					3	1									4
Hérault				1											1
Ille-et-Vilaine				2											2
Lozère	15	32	19		1	1	2								70
Orne			1												1
Hautes-Pyrénées					1										1
Bas-Rhin			1												1
Seine	176	178	251	3		1		5	1						615
Seine-et-Oise			1		5										6
Seine-et-Marne												4			4
Var	56	151	116	18	8	15	2			1	1	2			370
Vaucluse				3											3
Isère	14	21	27			1									63
Total	338	469	588	35	31	30	19	5	1	1	1	13	1	1	1,533

*Bouches-Du-Rhône: 266 - This number does not include children under 16 years of age. Moreover, 184 foreigners from Egypt were in transit for Israel in the Camp du Grand Arénas as of 18 January 1957.

(Source: CAC, 19900353, art. 17, Number of repatriates from Egypt, end of January 1957)

The most represented categories were the stateless refugees (588), the Tunisians (469), and the Moroccans (338), for a total number of 1,533 foreign refugees at the end of January 1957, which was far from a massive wave of uncontrolled and uncontrollable immigration to France.

Thirty British nationals were also in France, showing that attachment to French culture was more important than to nationality in some cases, especially if they had French relatives in the country. It was also because French was the only language they could speak despite their British nationality. These figures show that despite initial measures to restrict the number of non-French refugees from Egypt, the Ministry of the Interior eventually adopted a rather liberal policy in admitting them.

The Tunisian and Moroccan refugees from Egypt were mostly Jews and did not want to return to Tunisia and Morocco due to the rise of antisemitism since the creation of Israel and the independence of both countries.⁷⁴ It reveals a certain sympathy for the Jewish condition by the French government, as they were granted permission to stay in the country, after the Moroccan and Tunisian authorities unofficially informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it detached itself from the question of its Jewish nationals expelled from Egypt, if they did not show any intention of returning to Morocco or Tunisia.⁷⁵ The OFPRA was thus able to put these refugees under the protection of the

⁷⁴ Yigal Bin-Nun, 'La négociation de l'évacuation en masse des Juifs du Maroc', in Shmuel Trigano, (ed.), *La Fin du judaïsme en terres d'islam* (Paris, 2009), pp.303-20; Jacques Taïeb, 'L'échec de l'intégration des Juifs de Tunisie', in Trigano, (ed.), *La Fin du judaïsme*, pp.359-66.

⁷⁵ AN, F7/16062, Notes on the Tunisian and Moroccan expellees from Egypt, 8 July 1957.

UNHCR, after a period of three months.⁷⁶ In March 1958, 584 Tunisian and 453 Moroccan expellees from Egypt were considered as refugees.⁷⁷

Table 6.2 also points out the main geographical reception areas of the refugees in the first months of their arrival in France. The Allier département had quite a small population and was not the most attractive destination in terms of employment opportunities, with Vichy as a main destination for the refugees in the area. Although of French nationality, as French and non-French refugees and repatriates from Egypt were mixed in hotels, Robert Suarès was among the refugees sent to Vichy after transiting through Paris. He remembers what life was like there in the first months:

On a été pris en charge par la Croix Rouge qui nous a conduit dans des hôtels à Paris Montparnasse. Et là, nous nous sommes retrouvés à plusieurs européens d’Egypte où nous sommes restés un certain temps et ils nous ont demandé "vers quelle destination voulez-vous aller ?" Alors moi je me suis dit, je suis en France je reste en France... Ils nous ont renvoyé sur Vichy... Ils ont rouvert des hôtels en plein mois de décembre, donc fin décembre à Vichy les chaudières de l’hôtel ont éclaté. C’était l’hiver le plus froid depuis cinquante ans ! C’était très moyen.⁷⁸

The hotels were not adapted to receive such a large number of people during the winter period, but the refugees were nevertheless compliant and did not pose problems during their stays in the requisitioned hotels.

⁷⁶ CAC, 19810201, art. 1, OFPRA, Report on meeting, 22 November 1957.

⁷⁷ AN, F7/16069, Meeting of the Commission pour l'Assistance des Réfugiés, 24 March 1958.

⁷⁸ Interview with Robert Suarès, 25 August 2009.

The SSAE was asked by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide financial support to the refugees from Egypt registered with the OFPRA. The financial support was calculated on the basis of the unemployment benefits in the Paris region, along with extra money coming from a donation by the American Joint Distribution Committee. Refugees from Egypt looked after by the SSAE received 22,300 Francs per month if single, 32,800 Frs per month for a couple without children, or 40,300 Frs per month for a couple with children.⁷⁹

Although based on unemployment rates, some of the refugees interviewed considered the allocation too small, especially those who were too old to find suitable employment, and they had to buy cheap food to cook in hotels, even if that was forbidden, or go to soup kitchens.⁸⁰

Once in France, the stateless refugees had to register with the police in order to obtain a *carte de séjour* (residence permit) valid for a month, this length of time being used to check that the applicant had relatives in France. Once this had been verified, a *carte de séjour* receipt was delivered so that refugees could ask the OFPRA to be legally recognised as statutory refugees or stateless persons, which enabled them to obtain a work permit at the Direction Départementale du Travail et de la Main d'Œuvre.⁸¹ Without the recognition of refugee status at OFPRA under the Geneva Convention, refugees could be expelled.⁸² The refugees from Egypt were normally not eligible, as 1956 was not covered by the Convention, but nevertheless benefited from the status of

⁷⁹ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, Expellees from Egypt, 20 February 1957.

⁸⁰ JO, Assemblée Nationale, p.2122, 30 October 1959; Interview with Denise Chabah, 19 November 2009.

⁸¹ CAC, 19900353, art. 17, circulaire 595 on foreign refugees from Egypt, 29 December 1956.

⁸² Gérard Noiriel, *Etat, nation et immigration: vers une histoire du pouvoir* (Paris, 2001), pp.413-20.

refugees under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as they were stateless. They were referred to as 'réfugiés provenant d'Egypte sous mandat du Haut Commissaire'.⁸³ Although they were called differently, they had the same rights as refugees under the definition of the 1951 Convention in France.⁸⁴ Once administrative steps had been completed, the stateless refugees had the same rights and obligations as any other aliens residing on French territory.

The French nationals expelled from Egypt did not have to go through those procedures. Instead, they had to register at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris with the Comité d'Aide aux Français Rapatriés de l'Etranger when they arrived, where they received a *carte de rapatrié*. The committee was under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The primary function of the *carte de rapatrié* was to track French refugees from Egypt when they asked for support from public services.⁸⁵ Although the other reason mentioned for this card was that it would facilitate the support for those refugees, it existed within a logic of control of a category of people difficult to classify as they were foreigners with a French passport. The card meant in practice that they were considered as foreign migrants.

The fact that the refugees from Egypt were not as numerous as the refugees from Hungary enabled the Ministry of the Interior to use hotels rather than military camps to accommodate them, even if they were in unsatisfactory conditions. The heating broke down in some places, and refugees were not

⁸³ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, OFPRA, Registration of alien Jews from Egypt, 21 March 1957.

⁸⁴ CAC, 19810201, art. 2, Benefits to alien Jews from Egypt, 12 July 1957.

⁸⁵ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, Note on refugees from Egypt, 7 December 1956.

allowed to cook.⁸⁶ Some of the refugees managed to buy a portable stove and secretly cooked food in their rooms, as they could not afford to eat out every day. Others went to the soup kitchens that the Cojasor ran for impoverished Holocaust survivors.⁸⁷ Life in hotels was a very convenient way for the French authorities to deal with the refugees. Unlike in camps, where discontent could have led to strikes or other spontaneous mass movements, spreading the refugees across different parts of France and accommodating them in hotels enabled the Ministry of the Interior to control them. Small groups of people in smaller structures proved easier to handle.

As most of the refugees and repatriates were Jewish, the French Red Cross (CRF) believed that it was the duty of Jewish associations to be in charge of them.⁸⁸ The CRF contacted Jewish organisations in France, and decided that the Cojasor was the most active and appropriate organisation to take on the refugees from Egypt. Although the CRF did not dismiss the French government's responsibility towards its nationals expelled from Egypt, the organisation argued that the French Jewish associations should financially support the French government's assistance by helping the refugees. For the CRF, the refugees from Egypt were an exclusively Jewish problem calling for a Jewish solution rather than public support.

From the beginning of 1957, the role of the Cojasor became increasingly important, and the association was consulted on various decisions regarding the refugees. Although never acknowledged, the Ministry of the Interior handled

⁸⁶ Interviews with Robert Suarès, Renée Hakoun, Denise Chabah.

⁸⁷ Interview with Denise Chabah.

⁸⁸ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, Report on refugees from Egypt, January 1957.

the reception of the refugees from Egypt, French or stateless, as a Jewish problem. It attempted to resettle them among already existing French Jewish communities, and by relying heavily on the help of the Cojasor, which was specialised in Jewish relief. The Ministry of the Interior, the SSAE and the Cojasor decided that they should be resettled in cities with employment and resettlement opportunities as well as with active and considerable Jewish communities. In cities with a large Jewish community, Jews from Egypt could benefit from extra local help, and their integration in French society would also be facilitated by contact with French Jews. The last criterion was the most important and it was decided in early 1957 to resettle a number of Jews from Egypt in the following départements:

Table 6.3: Proposed dispersal of Jews from Egypt for permanent resettlement in February 1957

Départements	Number of Jews from Egypt
Cote d'Or	40
Haute-Garonne	50
Gironde	50
Loire	40
Bas-Rhin	100
Haut-Rhin	30
Rhône	100
Nord	40
Belfort	30
Total	480

(Source: CAC, 20050590, art. 119, Conversation with Cantan, 20 February 1957.)

The problem of having privileged the Jewish community criterion was that it did not always match employment and resettlement opportunities. The Ministry of the Interior had, as a result, trouble convincing some of the prefectures to

admit the desired number of refugees as shown in table 6.3. For example, the Prefecture in Lyon tried to avoid receiving any refugees at all, as it was facing severe housing shortages.⁸⁹ The situation became such at a local level that the SSAE, the Cojasor, the Fonds Social Juif Unifié (FSJU), and the French Red Cross wrote to the French government concerned by the slowness and the lack of permanent solution for the resettlement of the refugees from Egypt:

La réintégration dans la vie métropolitaine de ces Français, dépouillés de tout et dont la nation ne saurait se désintéresser, est rendue extrêmement difficile, sinon impossible, par l'absence de logement permettant une vie familiale, même précaire, et alors même qu'un salaire et un travail normal sont assurés.⁹⁰

The phrasing of the letter suggests that the refugees from Egypt, despite their French nationality, had to be reintegrated into the nation because they were born outside France, which emphasises the idea of a different nationality status for the French nationals from Egypt. This unification of different organisations led to concrete solutions soon after. It was acknowledged in the letter that funds were given to help the refugees, but permanent resettlement was considered to be the only way out of a precarious life in France.

The aim of the Cojasor was to know who considered resettling permanently in France, to facilitate the settlement and integration of the refugees and to take

⁸⁹ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, SSAE to Cantan, 20 February 1957; Power, *Hovels to High Rise*, pp.44-50.

⁹⁰ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, SSAE, Open letter to the government, 14 March 1957.

care of their legal status.⁹¹ The role of the Cojasor was to morally and psychologically support the refugees, but also to support them financially to help them paying for hotel rooms or furnished flats, to grant scholarships or apprenticeships for students, until families could earn enough money. The refugees benefited from Cojasor's Service Spécial de Placement created when the first refugees arrived in France, since it considered that successful resettlement could only happen if they were in employment.⁹²

As most of the Egyptian refugees were Jewish, the Hias, based in the United States, worked with the Cojasor to determine how many refugees wanted to re-emigrate to Israel. The core of the emigration to Israel from France happened in the first months after the expulsions. In May 1957, 2,232 refugees from Egypt, French nationals and stateless, emigrated to Israel after transiting through France.⁹³ Thus more than three quarters of the refugees decided to stay in France rather than to re-emigrate. Refugees with clear intentions to emigrate to Israel benefited from a different reception scheme. They were issued transit visas from the Swiss embassy in Egypt, after confirming their desire to resettle in Israel. Once in France, they were under the care of the Israeli embassy and accommodated in camps run by the Jewish Agency for Israel around Marseille. While facilitating the transit of those refugees, who could not leave Egypt directly for Israel because of the situation of war arising from the Suez crisis, the French government declined any financial responsibility for those refugees, leaving them to the care of the Israeli diplomatic authorities.⁹⁴

⁹¹ COJ.R.Egy.A1, Dix ans d'action sociale en faveur des Réfugiés d'Égypte (1956-1966).

⁹² COJ.R.Egy.A1, Dix ans d'action sociale en faveur des Réfugiés d'Égypte (1956-1966).

⁹³ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Confidential Occasional Statistical Bulletin 2, 12 August 1957.

⁹⁴ CAC, 20050590, art. 120, Minister of Interior to Bouches du Rhône prefect, 13 March 1957.

For the refugees who decided to settle in France, employment was one of the major problems. Most refugees came from middle-class and upper-middle-class backgrounds, and had jobs in business or the liberal professions. Many male refugees owned their own businesses or worked in family-run enterprises or banks and most of the married women did not have paid work. There was a great difference between the manual jobs available in France and the last occupations the refugees had before leaving Egypt: 'D'abord, nous avons essayé de trouver du travail. J'ai trouvé du travail rapidement dans une société qui fabriquait des colles. J'étais simple correspondancier, j'ai commencé au bas de l'échelle. Je ne pouvais pas avoir de prétentions.'⁹⁵ The testimony of Robert Suarès, whose job in Egypt in an electrical and plastics company required him to speak five different languages, shows the importance of employment in order to resettle in a new place, even if it meant working at a lower level than in Egypt. Benefits were barely enough to live on, so that refugees from Egypt saw in employment a way to earn enough money. If this example reflects a certain adaptability and understanding of the difficult situation in which the refugees were, not all of them could do the same. In general, the older the refugees were, the harder it was for them to find a suitable job. Refugees from Egypt who were older than 45 years old had many difficulties in finding employment again. Even if they had engineering qualifications, French employers refused to hire them on the basis that they were not accustomed to the latest technologies and work conditions in France, or because they had

⁹⁵ Interview with Robert Suarès.

lived all their life outside of France. Five hundred refugees were in that position by the end of 1959.⁹⁶

Many Egyptians experienced problems of employment. Despite jobs left vacant by Algerian workers because of the Algerian war, the refugees from Egypt were not employable in these sectors due to their bourgeois background.⁹⁷ A sample of unemployed refugees from Egypt in Marseille in November 1957 shows in which sectors it was hard to find a job: technicians, shop clerks, trade employees, bank clerks, and executives.⁹⁸ The sectors in which those refugees were looking for employment were not matching the job opportunities in France at that period, leaving the refugees in the above categories in long-term unemployment. Because of their age and their previous social class and employment background, refugees from Egypt were harder to resettle than Hungarian refugees.⁹⁹

Long-term unemployment had practical effects on the duration of support to refugees. While the last Hungarian refugee camp was closed down in March 1960, which put an end to support as their resettlement was considered achieved, some refugees from Egypt were still being looked after by the Cojasor until the mid-1960s.¹⁰⁰ Because of the unemployment situation of some of the refugees from Egypt, the Service d'Accueil aux Français Expulsés d'Egypte, under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still existed after

⁹⁶ JO, Sénat, 1^{ère} séance, André Armengaud, pp.971-972, 17 November 1959,.

⁹⁷ COJ.R.Egy.B3, Note on support to refugees from Egypt, n.d.

⁹⁸ CAC, 19810201, art. 2, Unemployed French, stateless and foreign workers in Marseille, 6 November 1957.

⁹⁹ AN, F7/16069, Meeting of the Commission pour l'Assistance aux Réfugiés, 24 March 1958.

¹⁰⁰ CAC, 19810201, art. 2, Minister of the Interior to Meurthe-et-Moselle prefect, 13 February 1960.

1961. Similarly, the SSAE was still in charge of refugees from Egypt who could not be placed into employment, especially those who were more than 40 years old.¹⁰¹ The Fonds Commun, which financed the resettlement of refugees from Egypt, held regular meetings from its creation in 1957 to 1963 when the bulk of the refugees were put into permanent accommodation. It was finally wound up in 1965 and only three families benefited from the scheme after 30 September that year.¹⁰² It thus took four years longer to officially resettle the refugees from Egypt than the more numerous Hungarians.

The action of the Cojasor for Hungarian refugees was limited due to their small number and because of the government's close supervision of their resettlement. As far as the refugees from Egypt were concerned, the Cojasor played a central role in the resettlement of the refugees. It was reported in 1966, that 4,300 families, representing 11,000 persons, used the organisation's services either for help to resettle in France or to re-emigrate.¹⁰³ For the Cojasor, one of the main conditions needed to secure the integration of refugees in France was permanent accommodation. Before October 1957, 750 Jewish families from Egypt, including 550 in the Paris area, were living in hotels since the closing of the Japy and Jean Jaurès reception centres.¹⁰⁴ Life in the Parisian hotels could only be a temporary solution, especially because of the cost of living there. Some of the refugees from Egypt, and notably those supported by the Cojasor and the Red Cross, found a permanent solution in the offer that was made to them to live in social housing (HLM) around Paris in

¹⁰¹ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, Meeting with Cottin, 21 February 1961.

¹⁰² CAC, 20050590, art. 119, Trillat to Jouve, 25 November 1965.

¹⁰³ COJ.R.Egy.A1, Dix ans d'action sociale en faveur des Réfugiés d'Egypte (1956-1966).

¹⁰⁴ COJ.R.Egy.A3, Note on the creation of the Fonds Commun, n.d.

Villiers-Le-Bel or Sarcelles for example. Thanks to an idea from the Cojasor and the partnership of the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations, a public financial organisation under Parliamentary control, the Red Cross, the UNHCR, and the American Joint Distribution Committee,¹⁰⁵ the Fonds Commun pour l'Établissement des Réfugiés d'Égypte was created, originally to help 300 families.¹⁰⁶ The support was first granted as loans,¹⁰⁷ but these quickly became donations since some of the refugees found repayment too difficult. SSAE and Cojasor social workers would initially decide who was to be granted the loans.¹⁰⁸ Because of the housing crisis, the refugees had to apply for a flat in buildings yet to be built.¹⁰⁹ The Fonds Commun enabled the resettlement of 600 families from 1957 to the end of 1966.¹¹⁰

-Effects of resettlement policies on refugees

So far I have argued that the French government had delegated the resettlement process of the refugees from Egypt to the Cojasor, after unsuccessfully trying to limit their arrival in France. Despite being undesirable immigrants in the sense of the 1945 Ordinance, refugees from Egypt were accepted with little restriction because of the Vichy past and the Algerian War context. Moreover, some officials showed occasional compassion for the refugees and liberally

¹⁰⁵ COJ.R.Egy.A2, Report on the Fonds Commun, 28 December 1959.

¹⁰⁶ COJ.R.Egy.A3, Note on the creation of the Fonds Commun, n.d.

¹⁰⁷ 'Prêts d'honneur'.

¹⁰⁸ COJ.R.Egy.A2, Report on the Fonds Commun, 28 December 1959.

¹⁰⁹ COJ.R.Egy.A1, Dix ans d'action sociale en faveur des Réfugiés d'Égypte (1956-1966).

¹¹⁰ COJ.R.Egy.A1, Dix ans d'action sociale en faveur des Réfugiés d'Égypte (1956-1966).

interpreted the immigration policy. On the other hand, Chapter 3 of the thesis has established that refugees from Hungary were under the care of the Ministry of the Interior with the CNARH, and were largely welcomed by the public and the government. Therefore, the two waves of refugees eventually benefited from generous offers of asylum but for different reasons. This part now compares how these immigration policies affected both waves of refugees, and argues that, despite being considered as undesirable immigrants at first, refugees from Egypt benefited from better structures of resettlement than the Hungarians in France.

If the immigration policies for the refugees from Egypt and from Hungary ended up being similar, the identity and composition of the refugees affected their resettlement in different ways. Being associated on many occasions with Algerian immigrants by the French administration officers, the refugees from Egypt were not seen in a favourable light in France. While the Ministry of Labour believed that Algerian immigration was a useful addition to the French workforce, that view was not shared by the whole government.¹¹¹ With the Algerian War, which started in 1954, there was also a growing distrust of Algerian workers in France from the authorities and the public.¹¹² The refugees from Egypt were compared to the Algerians, as North Africans, but without the economic advantages they represented. Due to their bourgeois background, most of the refugees were not employable in the same sectors as the Algerian immigrants.¹¹³ Moreover, many Egyptians, forced migrants from a higher

¹¹¹ Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme*, pp.521-2.

¹¹² Lequin, 'Les vagues d'immigration', pp.396-8.

¹¹³ COJ.R.Egy.B3, Note on support to refugees from Egypt, n.d.

social class than the Hungarian refugees, experienced problems of employment, as their qualifications did match labour needs.¹¹⁴

On the other hand, there is no archival evidence of prejudice against Hungarian refugees because of their origins. They represented a European alternative to Algerian immigration in accordance with the interpretation made of the 1945 Ordinance. Their relative young age on average was also part of the demographic and professional recommendations as people under 30 and certainly not above 40 were supposed to enhance France's productivity and demography.¹¹⁵ The Hungarian refugees were easier to place in employment for the vast majority.

Yet, as far as resettlement in permanent accommodation was concerned, thanks to the action of the Fonds Commun for resettlement grants and providing accommodation in the suburbs of Paris, many of the refugees from Egypt were accommodated together and benefited from the experience of the Cojasor in dealing with refugees. The fact that they were considered hard to be employed, and because they were family groups, led the government to a more flexible approach towards the refugees from Egypt. Whereas Paris was initially considered to be avoided as a resettlement place for both waves of refugees, many refugees from Egypt were accommodated in its suburbs.

In contrast, the fact that the Hungarian refugees were considered as a labour immigration by the government, led to occasional misunderstandings. The

¹¹⁴ AN, F7/16069, Meeting of the Commission pour l'Assistance aux Réfugiés, 24 March 1958.

¹¹⁵ Vincent Viet, *Histoire des Français venus d'ailleurs de 1850 à nos jours* (Paris, 2004), pp.172-3.

resettlement plan for the Hungarian obeyed to a logic of quick resettlement through employment in sectors which lacked workforce. Despite the help of the SSAE, there was little moral support for the Hungarian refugees the way the refugees from Egypt received thanks to the Cojasor. It was thought that once employed, France would look as having completed its humanitarian role towards Cold War refugees while satisfying to its economic needs. That explains why the camp of the Cinq Tranchées, near Nancy, represented a moral, political and economic problem for the French government. All of the French government plan for resettling Hungarians was based on their employability in specific sectors, and unemployed refugees were left out.

The resettlement policy of Hungarian refugees was ill-adapted to refugees who were not single young men, in contrast with the resettlement policy of the refugees from Egypt, which included everyone. This problem is reflected in the handling of unaccompanied children among the Hungarian refugees.

Unaccompanied children, aged between 15 and 18 for the most part, represented a total of 13 per cent of Hungarian refugees in France. Many were members of the same class or factory and spontaneously decided to leave Hungary attracted by life in Western Europe.¹¹⁶ The children were separated from their families who were left in Hungary or who had emigrated elsewhere, but were not given separate accommodation and had to share with adults in camps. An agreement was signed by the UNHCR and the SSAE to tackle this issue. The SSAE set up a team of four social workers working full time on the issue of unaccompanied Hungarian refugee children. The case of these children

¹¹⁶ CAC, 20050590, art. 119, Young Hungarian refugees, 25 November 1959.

was particularly problematic for the SSAE as most children were unsettled: they would change job very often, and were left wandering alone in France, to often ending up looking for work in Paris. In February 1958, the SSAE had dealt in total with 1,151 children including 562 cases still active. The closed cases were mostly composed of children who became legally adults (311), whereas some chose to re-emigrate (192), when only a handful were repatriated to Hungary (67).¹¹⁷ The case of the unaccompanied children shows the limits of the French government's resettlement policy for Hungarian refugees. This category of refugees, although posing a specific problem of resettlement, was not matching the type of Hungarian refugees immediately employable wanted by the government. As they were not desirable immigrants in the sense of the 1945 Ordinance, the French government delegated their support to the SSAE, which indicates a lack of interest for their situation.

Therefore, despite benefiting from similar immigration policies but for different reasons, considering Hungarian refugees as political and economic assets and refugees from Egypt as liabilities led the government to treat the refugees differently. It eventually led the refugees from Egypt to be better taken care of, mostly thanks to the Cojasor and the Fonds Commun, than the Hungarians. Yet, despite a policy which favoured resettlement in large groups around Paris, the refugees from Egypt felt challenged in their French identity.

¹¹⁷ AN, F7/16069, Trillat to Cantan, 11 March 1958.

-Limitations of French identity

The Fonds Commun represented a completely different approach to the initial plan to resettle the Jewish refugees from Egypt in cities with a large Jewish community. The main places of resettlement presented in table 6.3 changed following the application of the plan, and the new places were situated around Paris and included Villiers-le-Bel, Gennevilliers, Garges-lès-Gonnesses, and Sarcelles. These places were part of the French government's mass housing policy where HLMs were built at great speed and efficiency in the suburbs of Paris to tackle the housing crisis.¹¹⁸

In Gennevilliers, for example, 125 of 129 flats divided into eight blocks had been granted to Jewish families from Egypt.¹¹⁹ In this environment, a part of the Jewish community from Egypt managed to re-form itself, where a life as similar as possible to the one in Egypt was recreated, and where provisional synagogues were made in flats. As a consequence, having quite a large number of Jews from Egypt in the same place slowed down the integration of many of them into French society, and led to misunderstandings between two different French cultures.¹²⁰ People from France and the French from Egypt had different traditions and habits. One refugee from Egypt living in Villiers-Le-Bel, Youda Lévy, was quoted in 1960 as saying:

¹¹⁸ Power, *Hovels to High Rise*, pp.44-50.

¹¹⁹ Diane Afoumado, 'L'installation des juifs d'Egypte à Gennevilliers en 1958-1959', *Los Muestras*, 26 (1997), pp.52-3.

¹²⁰ Interview with Robert Suarès; *L'Arche*, 'De Haret El Yahoud à Villiers-le-Bel', August/September, 1960.

Certainement les choses ne se passent pas comme chez nous... Nous sommes différents, c'est une réalité qu'on ne peut pas ignorer. Elle se traduit partout, dans les gestes, les petites activités quotidiennes... Ici, personne n'a le temps d'écouter les confidences, d'attendre que l'on choisisse son pain. Cela est très bizarre pour nous qui avons été accoutumés à ne pas compter avec le temps. C'est un autre monde, et il faut les comprendre comme nous voulons nous faire comprendre par "eux".¹²¹

Despite the French culture of most of the Jews from Egypt, acquired through education, language, films, books or magazines, the refugees realised that many cultural differences separated them from the metropolitan French. This problem was not only to be found in Villiers-Le-Bel as those who lived somewhere else, or left the recreated community realised how much metropolitan French habits could be different from the habits of those Egyptians of French culture. Refugees in Villiers-Le-Bel quickly recreated the traditions of the Jewish community in Egypt:

Les réunions autour d'un café. Les longues conversations du soir. Les "viens dîner chez moi/je viens dîner chez toi" qui n'existaient pas en France. Quand, après quitté Villiers-Le-Bel et que nous avons été confronté à la France profonde et que vous restez dans un immeuble comme ça... On peut rester cinq ans en disant bonjour/bonsoir dans l'ascenseur... Les Français ne vous accueillent pas dans leur appartement.

¹²¹ *L'Arche*, 'Haret El Yahoud'.

Les Égyptiens c'est tout de suite: Viens! Ça manquait énormément de chaleur humaine. C'est le jour et la nuit.¹²²

Life in Villiers-Le-Bel, and in other places with a large concentration of Jewish refugees from Egypt, allowed a transition phase for the refugees who lived in a very different environment compared to the one where they used to live in Egypt, in which they had to learn to live with less means. As familiar as they could have been with French culture, the refugees described the metropolitan French as strangers with whom they had little in common except for the language. The education they received in French schools in Egypt, and the fact that they could speak French did not prepare them to live in 1950s France. Contacts with the French population were not always easy, as André Cohen remembers: 'Cela n'a pas été difficile de vivre en France. Les Français ont été accueillants... oui et non! Je ne me suis pas fait de vrais amis à part les contacts de travail. Je fréquentais des collègues mais ça n'allait pas plus loin que les déjeuners ensemble.'¹²³ Despite thinking of themselves as French or as of French culture, resettling in France demanded adaptation for the refugees. It is obvious that a gap existed between the Francophone Jews from Egypt and the French from France and, in the interviews, narratives of 'them' against 'us' were often used to emphasise this difference, especially in the case of the Jews who were not French nationals.

Je suis en même temps détaché et imbriqué dans la vie française... Le contact avec les Français n'est pas le même qu'avec mes amis égyptiens.

¹²² Interview with Robert Suarès.

¹²³ Interview with André Cohen, 10 November 2009.

À Alexandrie c'était une vie... pas communautaire... mais on allait sonner chez quelqu'un, il était là, on montait puis on discutait, puis on allait au cinéma ensemble. A Paris ça ne se faisait pas. Cela ne se faisait pas d'aller sonner chez un voisin et de lui dire qu'est-ce que tu fais ce soir? Les rapports en Egypte étaient plus chaleureux, évidemment!¹²⁴

Lucien Perez, who was stateless, has his own explanation regarding the problems the French from Egypt had when they arrived in France, as they were born and had lived all their life in Egypt:

Les Français d'Egypte ils ne connaissaient rien de la France, ils étaient français mais ils ne connaissaient rien de la France. C'est comme un Algérien qui est né ici mais il ne connaît rien de l'Algérie. Nous c'était un peu comme ça. Moi ce qui me rattachait à la France c'est que je parlais français, c'est tout. Mais je ne savais rien de la France. Je ne savais même pas le parlé français de la rue, du marché, c'était tout à fait différent. Ce qu'on avait appris c'était le bon français. C'était la Tour Eiffel, la France. La France, le pays des cultures, c'est ça qu'on avait appris. Et c'est ça que je recherchais en venant en France et c'était tout à fait différent.¹²⁵

The main problem of the refugees from Egypt in France is very well presented here as many thought that speaking the language and having a French education was enough to be easily integrated. However, the reality was different as many of the refugees from Egypt had an accent when they spoke

¹²⁴ Interview with André Cohen.

¹²⁵ Interview with Lucien Perez, 18 August 2009.

French, and they were easily recognised as non-metropolitan French: 'Moi, je me suis senti comme un réfugié. Souvent on me demandait: "votre accent il est d'où ?" Moi, j'étais gêné de dire que j'étais d'Egypte... parce que c'était un peu mal vu, on était presque arabe après [laughs]! Avec l'afflux des Arabes, venir d'Egypte, on est arabe!'¹²⁶ Some, who felt French in Egypt discovered that there was a cultural gap between the French from Egypt and the French from France. Lucien Perez mentioned 'les Arabes': since 1956 more and more Algerians were coming to France, and France was getting deeper into the Algerian War.¹²⁷ The fact that the Algerian War also happened in metropolitan France, through terrorist attacks, ensured that the perception of the Algerians in France from 1954 onwards deteriorated, with them being described as 'terrorists' and 'fellagha' in public discourses.¹²⁸ According to Gérard Noiriel, the Algerians became the 'enemy within', victims of a new racism stigmatising the Algerians as foreigners and colonised, and which was emphasised by their working-class status. The refugees from Egypt also experienced to an extent this type of racism in their first years in France, as the public institutions dealing with immigrants associated them with the Algerians.

On the other hand, other refugees managed to integrate well in the French society. Albert Setton, who was a French national born in Egypt, never felt like a refugee and felt French as he was entitled to the same rights and had the same obligations as any other French citizen: 'Je ne suis pas senti du tout réfugié. J'étais considéré comme français. Dès que je suis arrivé, j'ai été au centre

¹²⁶ Interview with Lucien Perez.

¹²⁷ Yves Lequin, 'Les vagues d'immigration successives', in Yves Lequin, (ed.), *Histoire des étrangers et de l'immigration en France* (Paris, 2006), pp.396-8.

¹²⁸ Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme*, p.537.

d'inscription des militaires, j'ai passé mon conseil de révision.'¹²⁹ Similarly, Régine Zayan, who had a French passport as well, did not simply look for integration but for assimilation, a feature common to people of her age at the time according to her:

Comme beaucoup de personnes de mon âge, nous ne voulions pas seulement nous intégrer mais nous voulions presque nous assimiler. Un grand nombre de mes connaissances étaient de la communauté juive égyptienne. Mais j'ai eu des collègues, donc déjà je commençais à avoir d'autres relations hors de la communauté... Je ne cachais ni du fait que j'étais d'Egypte ni du fait que j'étais juive, mais je mettais en évidence le fait que j'étais française.¹³⁰

Without denying her past, Régine Zayan deliberately chose to emphasise her French identity when with others. It was a way, if not hide, to minimise the differences between the French from Egypt and the French from France, and to avoid being considered in a different way.

However, not all the French from Egypt felt the same way. In the case of Robert Suarès, who had a French passport, he had a hard time realising that he would not be able to live in Egypt anymore:

Ah ça, j'ai toujours eu une certaine nostalgie de l'Egypte! On n'a pas retrouvé, à aucun moment, l'atmosphère égyptienne, les plaisirs

¹²⁹ Interview with Albert Setton, 18 August 2009.

¹³⁰ Interview with Régine Zayan.

égyptiens. Ça a été un chambardement. Ça a été vraiment un choc, on peut parler d'un choc culturel énorme! Colossal! Même à Villiers-Le-Bel! C'est un choc. Il a fallu vraiment dire: "ou je m'adapte ou je crève!" Il ne fallait plus rechercher à retrouver. Il fallait s'adapter. Ça m'a fait me sentir comme un réfugié, un déraciné. Pendant de nombreuses années... pendant de nombreuses années.¹³¹

Even if Robert Suarès was French, he still felt like an Egyptian in the sense that he had previously lived all his life there. Born in 1934, he was already a young man when he had to leave for France. Having lived all his youth in Egypt, he felt like a refugee in France despite his French nationality. Robert Suarès' reflections on being a French refugee in France bridge the gap between the younger and older generations of refugees from Egypt, for whom it was harder to adapt to life in France.

The Jews of Egypt believed they had a special relationship with France as many went to a French school in Egypt and understood the importance of the French language in the community. Renée Hakoun, one of the refugees interviewed, made clear that she felt French because of her French nationality and considered herself a 'rapatriée' rather than a refugee. During her time in Egypt, she considered she had the same habits as the French in France, as she went to see French films at the cinema for example. She nevertheless acknowledged that she spoke Arabic, and had many interactions with

¹³¹ Interview with Robert Suarès.

Armenians, Greeks, English and Arabs.¹³² Once in France, she did not feel the cultural distance that some of the other refugees from Egypt felt, French and non-French alike, despite their French education and language. On the other hand, Régine Zayan's experience was completely different, as she felt that her status as French citizen was questioned by civil servants who considered her as a foreigner because she was born in Egypt despite her French nationality:

Au commissariat, ils nous considéraient comme venants d'Egypte peut-être comme des Arabes. Il faut dire que l'Arabe n'était pas très bien perçu et il faut dire que nous étions très mal perçus au commissariat, vraiment!... On nous demandait la preuve de notre nationalité française. Il fallait donc fournir des certificats de nationalité française. Pour fournir ce certificat il fallait un extrait de naissance. Nous n'étions pas nés en France, il fallait donc trouver un extrait de naissance. Or à l'époque, c'était la Suisse qui s'occupait des ressortissants français... Pour prouver qu'on était français ce n'était pas évident. Né a l'étranger ça voulait dire qu'on était étranger! J'ai très très mal ressenti ça.¹³³

At a time of a growing immigration of Algerian workers, the administration made little difference between Algerian labour immigrants and refugees from Egypt. Régine Zayan realised that being mistaken for Arabs by the administration was discriminatory for them. French Jews from Egypt had to prove that they were French.

¹³² Interview with Renée Hakoun.

¹³³ Interview with Régine Zayan.

The situation with the administration was even worse for stateless refugees. The non-French refugees from Egypt were subject to the normal rules for refugees and foreigners, that is to say registration with the OFPRA was compulsory in order to have a refugee card, and frequent registration at the *préfecture de Police* was also compulsory to have the residence permit along with a work permit.¹³⁴ To obtain or to renew the *carte de séjour* was a real challenge for the stateless refugees. Emile Gabbay, who had been stripped of his Egyptian nationality, was in shock when he first discovered the ignorance of a patronising civil servant at the Police prefecture:

Il y a un gars qui m'a reçu avec le passeport annulé, les papiers de l'OFPRA. Il regarde et commence à me parler en petit nègre: "oui, tu cherches bon petit français qui te remplit un document, qui te fait une lettre." Donc pendant qu'il parlait, moi j'écrivais sur un papier comme ça, il me dit: "oh, vous savez écrire!" Je croyais rêver!¹³⁵

The prefecture officers knew nothing about the refugees from Egypt, who they were and their background. A similar experience happened to David Yohana, who queuing among Algerians, was mistaken for an immigrant worker:

Il fallait renouveler les papiers à la *préfecture de Police*, et là, je vous avoue, c'était des moments difficiles... Je me trouvais dans des queues avec des gens... des Algériens... Une fois on m'a demandé tout de suite:

¹³⁴ Gérard Noiriel, *Réfugiés et Sans-Papiers: la république face au droit d'asile XIXe-XX siècles* (Paris, 1991), pp.181-229.

¹³⁵ Interview with Emile Gabbay, 10 November 2009.

"Vous parlez français?! Vous savez écrire?!" J'ai dit: "Oui je sais écrire. Oui je parle...", "Ah! Alors remplissez moi ce papier!"¹³⁶

Those two examples show the contempt and ignorance with which the refugees from Egypt were treated at first, but they also reveal how the French administration interacted with the Algerian immigrant workers. In these situations the French education that many of the refugees received was of little use, as civil servants considered them as foreigners. In the context of a large scale immigration of workers from Algeria, the French administration showed neither patience nor compassion for the refugees from Egypt who were assumed to be uneducated Algerians:¹³⁷

Une autre fois j'y ai été pour renouveler mes papiers. Je faisais la queue avec des Algériens et puis tout à coup, après avoir fait la queue, on nous fait attendre pendant des heures, j'entends: "Yohana! Yohana! YOHANA! YOHANA! Où tu étais!?" Je lui dis: "j'étais en face, le temps de venir." "Qu'est-ce tu fais?!" "Voici, je voudrais renouveler." "Ah, vous êtes étudiant." Déjà le "tu" avait changé en "vous". "Attendez on va regarder."¹³⁸

In the case of David Yohana, the fact that he was not an immigrant worker improved the reception he had at the prefecture. His student status and the fact that he spoke French fluently helped considerably:

¹³⁶ Interview with David Yohana.

¹³⁷ Neil MacMaster, *Colonial Migrants and Racism: Algerians in France 1900-1962* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp.198-9.

¹³⁸ Interview with David Yohana.

Il y avait un regard particulier. Parce que j'étais pas un travailleur émigré, j'étais un étudiant. C'était les différences que j'ai vu surtout par rapport aux dames qui étaient à la préfecture. Et puis quand elles me posaient des questions je leur répondais tout de suite. Plusieurs fois elles m'ont dit: "Est-ce que vous comprenez?" "Oui bien sûr, je comprends, laissez moi le temps de réfléchir..." Ils étaient tellement agressifs quand les gens venaient et ne comprenaient pas comment remplir le papier... Le fait de connaître le français, de connaître la langue, d'être instruit a fait beaucoup. On a beaucoup avancé. Et ils nous ont automatiquement un peu mieux considéré.¹³⁹

The prefecture was not the only place where the non-French refugees from Egypt were treated badly by the administration. The same kind of experiences happened when trying to obtain a work permit at the Services de la Main d'Œuvre Etrangère. The refugees from Egypt were treated with discriminated against, having to queue for hours in very humiliating circumstances to have their work permit renewed:

En fait, faire une carte de travail en France c'était très difficile: pour avoir une carte de travail, il fallait une carte de séjour, pour avoir une carte de séjour, il fallait une carte de travail... Ça se mordait la queue, et beaucoup de gens finalement, fatigués, épuisés, quand ils le pouvaient, retournaient dans leur pays d'origine ou partaient ailleurs. C'était pour démoraliser. Dans la rue de Vaugirard, tout au bout, à côté de la Porte de

¹³⁹ Interview with David Yohana.

Versailles, il y avait le bureau pour faire les cartes de travail. On arrivait le matin très tôt pour faire la queue. En fin d'après-midi on avait le droit à un petit ticket rouge avec un numéro qui était prioritaire pour le lendemain. Donc on avait passé toute la journée debout. Il y a un policier qui disait: si quelqu'un veut pisser c'est là-bas, mais si il sort du rang il recommence. Donc on ne pouvait pas pisser... Ça a duré comme ça de '60 à '64.¹⁴⁰

If the relations with the French from France already made the refugees from Egypt feel that cultural differences existed between them, the treatment they all received from the French administration in general confronted them with the limitations of their French culture. Before being considered as French or Francophone, they had to produce proof of their French nationality or culture.

For the stateless refugees, it had another effect. Many felt that their treatment, by associating them with the Algerian immigration, had sometimes been inadequate and different from what they expected. Some of the refugees clearly came to believe that they had been granted French citizenship because it was in France's interest, rather than it had been primarily motivated to support the refugees' situation. Emile Gabbay, who had lost his Egyptian nationality and become stateless, felt that his naturalisation was granted because the French government needed his skills to work on the nuclear programme.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Emile Gabbay.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Emile Gabbay.

The context of the Algerian War meant that many refugees delayed formalising their situation in France because they did not want to take part of it, either because they did not approve of the war, or because they felt it would be more useful to stay in France and provide for their families. Isaac Saporta waited because leaving for military service would have left his family in a precarious condition so he decided to wait until he was too old to serve in the military:

Autrefois le service militaire était de deux ans et demi. Et moi je suis resté apatride jusqu'à l'âge de 29 ans, car à partir de 29 ans, si je me faisais naturaliser français, je ne faisais pas le service militaire. Parce que là, j'étais obligé de travailler pour aider mes parents! Pour aider la famille! Il fallait payer pour la famille! Il fallait travailler... Je ne pouvais pas partir pour le service militaire pendant deux ans et demi, mes parents crèveraient de faim.¹⁴²

For many refugees, it was more important to provide for their family than to fight in the Algerian War. Despite Isaac Saporta's aspirations and pride to become French, he preferred to wait to be able to financially support his family. The war with Algeria was one of the main reasons that he had postponed his application for naturalisation. David Yohana, just like Isaac Saporta, waited a few years more before applying for French citizenship:

J'ai fait une demande de naturalisation en 1962. J'avais pas envie de faire la Guerre d'Algérie mais j'ai fait une demande après l'indépendance de

¹⁴² Interview with Rosy Kowsman and Isaac Saporta, 24 August 2009.

l'Algérie. J'ai fait une demande de naturalisation et deux ans après j'ai obtenu la naturalisation en '64 ou '65. J'étais totalement intégré. J'ai pu changer d'employeur, j'étais plus dans le quota étranger. J'étais reconnu, l'intégration malgré mon nom, mon accent. Mais j'étais beaucoup plus intégré.¹⁴³

Others felt that it was their duty to serve France during the Algerian War to show their gratitude for the help they received. Harry Guened, for example, tried to enrol in the military to fight in Algeria. However, his application was rejected as he did not have French nationality at the time.¹⁴⁴ There was thus not one single approach to integration for the refugees from Egypt. Naturalisation was a step forward integration for many of the stateless refugees. It gave them a passport, a new national identity, which had been missing since their expulsion from Egypt. It allowed them to be finally considered as French and not French-speaking foreigners.

Another case is that of the French refugees from Egypt who settled in Britain. Raymond Levy, a refugee from Egypt with a French passport studying in Britain in October 1956, decided to change nationality in order to stay in Britain and to avoid military service during the Algerian War, as he did not consider living in France. Despite changing nationality, he still feels French today:

¹⁴³ Interview with David Yohana.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Harry Guened, 17 November 2009.

I felt more French than anything else. I have spent now more than 50 years in England. I still don't feel British. I changed my nationality, because when I finished my medical degree, I got called up for national service or service militaire during the Algerian War. I said no, thank you very much!... So I switched nationality. At that time I had been there longer than 5 years, I married a British woman, I had children. It didn't take me long to get British nationality, but it was very difficult to give up my French nationality, because the French said: "ok, you're English now, but the minute you set foot in France, we'll get you because you're a deserter." So for a while... I couldn't go to see my parents in Paris.¹⁴⁵

The complexity of the identity of the Jews from Egypt is to be found here again, as while he gave up his French nationality to avoid military service and the Algerian War, Raymond Levy still feels French despite having been British for about fifty years, and is still able to speak French as well as English.

-Conclusion

The Suez crisis marked the beginning of the end for the Jewish community in Egypt, as by the end of 1958 only 10,000 remained there, and many among these were trying to leave the country.¹⁴⁶ From the very beginning of the expulsions from Egypt, the French government tried to limit the number of

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Raymond Levy, 22 October 2009.

¹⁴⁶ MAE, Levant 1944-1965, Egypte 1953-1959, 613, Aumale to Wormser, 7 November 1958.

refugees from Egypt seeking refuge in France. They did not represent economic or demographic assets, and could not be used for propaganda. The reception of the refugees from Egypt in France was thus very different from the reception of the Hungarian refugees.

The fact that the French Jews from Egypt were referred to as 'Français de Code Civil' shows that they were believed to be another category of French nationals. Their unofficial status referred to the purely administrative aspect of their French nationality. For the stateless Jews, the difference with the French was even more obvious. The French policy, especially regarding the stateless and denaturalised Jews, oscillated between obligation and genuine intention to support the Jews of Egypt. After a desperate attempt to resort to international law to prevent the Jews from Egypt from being expelled, the French government preferred to discreetly grant asylum to most of them to avoid raising questions on its North African policy on the international scene, and because of its collaborationist past.

This treatment was in conformity with immigration policies and practices at the time. Because of the increase of Algerian immigration and the Algerian War, refugees from Egypt were seen as North Africans. Moreover, most were in large family units from middle-class backgrounds, which did not match economic and demographic criteria for immigration and resettlement in France.

This chapter has also shown that the French culture or nationality of the refugees from Egypt only played a minor role in being accepted for asylum in

France. Despite their French nationality and culture, the French government first reaction was to try to prevent the expulsions from Egypt and then try to grant asylum only to French nationals and refugees with French relatives. On the other hand, the Hungarians, because of the French immigration policy, but also because of the Cold War context, were accepted without limit for permanent resettlement.

Undesirable according to the 1945 Ordinance, the French government preferred to delegate their resettlement to the Cojasor. By making the Cojasor one of the main actors to support the refugees from Egypt, and by resettling French Jews with stateless Jews in places like Villiers-Le-Bel, the government turned their reception into a Jewish problem, and the experiences of the Jews with French nationality and stateless Jews became similar at this point. Following the problems to resettle the refugees in the places with a large Jewish community, the Fonds Commun, gave up the idea of resettling the refugees in spaces shared with French Jews, and resettled them in places with virtually no existing Jewish communities. It was a striking contrast with the Hungarian refugees' resettlement as it was oriented towards employment with the creation of the CNARH. The handling of the resettlement of the refugees from Egypt shows the opposite. The French government did not believe in the possibility of using this group of refugees to the country's economic and demographic profit. The different policies and considerations regarding refugees from Egypt and from Hungary framed their treatment, and the refugees from Egypt benefited from a more compassionate support than the Hungarians did.

Their resettlement in Villiers-Le-Bel and other suburbs around Paris, where the Jewish traditions from Egypt could be recreated, slowed down their integration in the French society as many of them, especially among the older generation, preferred to stay together as a group. This group resettlement nevertheless enabled them to face together the difficulties of their refugee and repatriate experience, and those who did not benefit from the scheme as they refused any kind of help might have regretted it looking back later.¹⁴⁷

Once in France, the refugees' French culture and identity were put to the test. There were several categories of refugees. The first was those who felt treated like labour immigrants, and faced ignorance of their background when renewing official papers. The second category was the French nationals who felt they were treated like second-class citizens or foreigners because they came from an Arab country. Finally, a minority of French nationals among the interviewees felt that they were accepted as French in France, and did not feel any different from other French nationals.

Despite being considered as liabilities, the French economy eventually benefited from the refugees from Egypt, from those who took up manual work despite better qualifications to those who started shops and businesses.¹⁴⁸ Many of the younger refugees continued their studies to become successful in their field.¹⁴⁹ In one exceptional case, a stateless refugee even helped to develop the French nuclear weapons programme in 1964-1965, having access to restricted

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Robert Suarès; Interview with Rosy Kowsman and Isaac Saporta.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Rosy Kowsman and Isaac Saporta.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Harry Guened; Interview with André H.

areas despite having no nationality at the beginning.¹⁵⁰ His knowledge of radiography and being the owner of several patents convinced the authorities to grant him French nationality. Despite a slow resettlement, France thus benefited from the arrival of the refugees from Egypt in many sectors. The refugees from Egypt were able to put into good use their level of education in the long term, while others were downgraded to more menial jobs in order to provide for the rest of the family.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Emile Gabbay.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Rosy Kowsman and Isaac Saporta.

7. Anglo-Egyptian refugees in Britain

The French and stateless Jews from Egypt were not the only ones affected by the expulsions by the Nasser government: 6,000 refugees from Egypt came to Britain in late 1956, of whom a total of 4,000 were accommodated by the government in hostels across the country.¹ Like the French nationals from Egypt, the Anglo-Egyptians had lived all their lives in Egypt, and while some spoke English and went to English schools, many were of French culture.

Reactions to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the military intervention that followed differed in comparison with France. Anthony Eden did not have the full support of the government and public opinion was left divided on the question of the military intervention. There was little public support for the refugees from Egypt as they were considered the responsibility of the government.

Like the French government, the British government had anticipated the immigration of its nationals at the time of the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Nasser in the summer of 1956, and surveyed possible places of accommodation without drafting any definitive policy. When the expulsions began the British government tried to limit the number of refugees by only accepting British subjects and stateless Jews with close relatives in Britain for asylum.

¹ TNA, AST 7/1621, Memorandum: Refugees in Britain, 8 January 1958.

The refugees from Egypt were considered to be liabilities by the British government for two reasons. First because this group of refugees was associated with postcolonial immigration, at a time when immigration from the West Indies, India and Pakistan was on the increase. The question of restricting postcolonial migration had been surveyed by the Cabinet since the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in 1948, and was much discussed in the press.²

Moreover, the British government had a tradition of limiting Jewish immigration to Britain, from the Aliens Act of 1905 to the Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, and the treatment of Displaced Persons. In 1956, the refugees from Egypt were seen as another wave of Jewish refugees. The Home Office tried to limit the number of refugees from Egypt coming to Britain as much as it could, while questioning the nationality of those who had a British passport. Refugees from Egypt were associated with undesirable immigration. This group, composed of Jewish large families from a predominantly middle-class background, did not match the country's economic needs.

However, the government was criticised in parliament for not doing enough. The unpopularity of the Suez crisis motivated the Government to give the impression that refugees from Egypt were treated as British nationals, and at least as well as the Hungarian refugees in Britain at the time. The Home Office created the Anglo-Egyptian Resettlement Board to manage the hostels and resettle the refugees from Egypt in the most efficient way possible, Jews and non-Jews alike. Yet, these efforts were limited by views within the British

² TNA, CAB 21/1734, Note on Cabinet Committee on Immigration of British Subjects, 22 June 1950; TNA, CAB 134/1191, Draft Memo by Home Secretary on Colonial Immigrants, n.d.; CAB 134/1210, Meeting of Committee on Colonial Immigrants, 17 May 1956.

administration according to which the refugees from Egypt were colonial immigrants rather than British citizens, and by the desire to let in to Britain as few Egyptian refugees as possible. This chapter analyses the impact of the Anglo-Egyptian Resettlement Board (AERB) on the reception of the refugees, and how it was an attempt to have better control of the resettlement process. The chapter also studies how the government was divided on the question of the reception of refugees, and how they lacked support compared to the treatment of Hungarian refugees.

The consequences of this policy regarding the refugees from Egypt can be analysed by studying the treatment of the refugees in some of the hostels. Two hostels, Crowborough and Oxton, were remarkable for being experimental, and were tests intended to enhance the resettlement process. The main concerns of the Anglo-Egyptians that manifested themselves in the hostel are also addressed. The cases of the Eastwood and Summerfield hostels show how refugees, when they felt that their treatment was inadequate, managed to get attention from the British government to solve their problems. These cases also reveal how this question of how they were treated was linked to identity. As Chapter 4 of the thesis introduced the reception of Hungarian refugees in Britain, this chapter analyses the similarities and differences of treatment of both waves of refugees in Britain.

Attention is given to the work of Anglo-Jewry regarding the relief of the Jewish refugees from Egypt. As the British government did not consider the refugees from Egypt to be a Jewish issue, the responses of the British Jewish

community will be studied. Finally, the chapter discusses how the refugees managed to leave the hostels, and discusses whether the British policy of resettlement was adapted to the situation.

-Responses to the Suez crisis

Before the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, rising nationalism in Egypt associated itself with the situation in Palestine, under British mandate. As a result anti-British sentiment became more and more widespread, and was directed at both Britain and its supporters in Egypt.³ During his speech in which he announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal on 26 July 1956, Nasser also made verbal attacks on Britain, as being responsible for the creation of Israel:

Who allowed Israel to rise in this region? Who administered the mandate in Palestine? It was Britain. Who was it that proclaimed the Balfour Declaration in 1917? It was Britain. Who was it that caused the tragedy of the people of Palestine by making it possible for Zionists to arm themselves and by preventing the Arabs to arm themselves? It was Britain!⁴

³ Michael M. Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry under the Nasser Regime 1956-1970', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 31:3 (1995), p.574.

⁴ Gamal Abdel Nasser, 26 July 1956, in *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 August 1956.

The nationalisation of the Suez Canal happened at a time when Britain was considered to be an enemy of Egypt and an invader, and as the main body responsible for the creation of the State of Israel. According to Nasser, the presence of Israel in the region prevented Arab nationalism from developing, and he considered the country to be a 'vanguard of imperialism'.⁵

Anthony Eden considered that Nasser's seizure was illegal and a breach of the Convention of 1888, guaranteeing free use of the canal at all times. Nasser, in nationalising the canal, had 'destroyed all assurance that the rights guaranteed by the Convention to users of the canal would continue to be enjoyed'.⁶ Eden then recommended that the canal be placed in international custody. Eden's moves were also an excuse to try to overthrow Nasser. Eden considered Nasser to be an enemy of British policy in Middle East and possibly to be serving communist interest.⁷ Ideas about Nasser were confused, as R.A. Butler stated. Although Butler saw in Nasser a 'proud nationalist', who had no love for communism, Eden considered that the arms deal signed in 1955 with Czechoslovakia turned Egypt into a hostile country, and saw in it the influence of communism in Egypt.⁸

In order to isolate Nasser, Eden wanted to create an adverse world opinion against him. With the prospect of military intervention, he felt that, in that way,

⁵ Nasser, 26 July 1956, in *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 August 1956.

⁶ Anthony Eden, *Full Circle* (London, 1960), pp.474-5.

⁷ Eden, *Full Circle*, p.498.

⁸ Richard Austen Butler, *The Art of the Possible* (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp.186-7; Eden, *Full Circle*, pp.329-31

it would have less negative repercussions.⁹ Thus, Eden compared Nasser with Hitler on several occasions and considered, in the light of the events preceding the Second World War, that military intervention in Egypt, and the overthrowing of the Egyptian leader, referred to as a dictator, could avoid a major disaster.¹⁰ The comparison was repeated in the press, and after the conflict, *The Times*, as well as other British newspapers, sometimes branded Nasser as the 'Egyptian Hitler' either because of the internments of British nationals or because of his foreign policy.¹¹

Yet, once the bombing of Suez started, the situation changed for the government, and the legitimacy of the intervention was questioned. Unlike the French government, which benefited from large public and parliamentary support during the intervention in Egypt, the British government and public opinion were divided over the question. During the preparation of the military intervention, two junior ministers had resigned.¹² Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskell, who, in August, had been supportive of Eden's policy towards Egypt and Nasser, and had compared him to Hitler too, called for his resignation, though some Tories accused Gaitskell and the Labour Party of a political volte-face as soon as the military intervention started.¹³

⁹ Butler, *The Art of the Possible*, p.188.

¹⁰ Eden, *Full Circle*, p.518.

¹¹ *Daily Mail*, 1 December 1956, 10 December 1956; *Manchester Guardian*, 5 November 1956, 6 December 1956; *Observer*, 4 November 1956; *The Times*, 23 February 1957. On parallels drawn between Nasser and Hitler, see: Jonathan Pearson, *Sir Anthony Eden and the Suez Crisis: Reluctant Gamble* (Basingstoke, 2003), p.63; Peter J. Beck, 'Britain and the Suez Crisis: The Abadan Dimension', in Simon C. Smith, (ed.), *Reassessing Suez 1956: New Perspectives on the Crisis and its Aftermath* (Aldershot, 2008), pp.61-4.

¹² A.J. Stockwell, 'Suez 1956 and the Moral Disarmament of the British Empire', in Smith, (ed.), *Reassessing Suez*, pp.228-30; Philip M. Williams, (ed.), *The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell 1945-1956* (London, 1983), pp.619-22.

¹³ Eden, *Full Circle*, pp.439-40; David Maxwell Fyfe, *Political Adventure* (London, 1964), pp.268-9.

As far as the press was concerned, it was divided between support and criticism of the government. The reasons given by the government for the military intervention in Egypt confused the public, which had trouble finding coherence in Eden's policy: from the protection of British interests in Egypt, to peacekeepers, or to keep the Suez Canal open. If during the summer of 1956, the press, when not supportive of a military response to the nationalisation of the canal, at least understood the reasons for action, the lack of consistency in Britain's policy towards Egypt provoked mixed reactions. The Conservative press supported the government while questioning its motives. The opposition newspapers were much more critical of the military intervention.¹⁴

The Communist press called on Eden to stop the war and focused on the demonstrations against the Suez campaign.¹⁵ The *Daily Worker* reported a first demonstration of 1,000 people against Eden, which led to skirmishes with the police.¹⁶ Three days later, the *Daily Worker* claimed that '40,000 took up the roar: Eden must go!'¹⁷ The Communist line was thus to ask for Eden's resignation and present the British military intervention as a colonialist move.

As a consequence, the context was delicate for the British government, as its policy was questioned from many sides of the press and in parliament. The expulsion of the British subjects from Egypt came as an additional problem to solve for the government, as an unwanted group of immigrants, and as reminders of the failed attempt to seize the Suez Canal.

¹⁴ Guillaume Parmentier, 'The British Press in the Suez Crisis', *Historical Journal*, 23:2 (1980), pp.439-40.

¹⁵ *Daily Worker*, 31 October 1956.

¹⁶ *Daily Worker*, 2 November 1956.

¹⁷ *Daily Worker*, 5 November 1956.

-The expulsion of Anglo-Egyptians

Just like the French government, the British government closely followed political changes in Egypt. When the country became a republic in 1953 after the Free Officers coup, the Foreign Office proposed a plan to evacuate 'between 7,000 and 8,000 British residents of Maltese origin'.¹⁸ A working party was created at the initiative of the Foreign Secretary to assess the situation in Egypt and the need to evacuate the British residents to Britain. However, what transpires from the archives is that no department within the British government was willing to be in charge of organising the evacuation of the British residents in the event of crisis.¹⁹ Moreover, figures on the number of people willing to evacuate to Britain varied from 600 to 13,000 and reflected the lack of knowledge of the situation. In addition, the Home Secretary objected to the British residents of Maltese origin being evacuated to Britain.²⁰ In the end, there was no mass evacuation.

However, the recommendations of 1953 actually framed the policy for the asylum of the refugees from Egypt in 1956, as it never had been the intention of the Home Office to grant asylum to the Anglo-Egyptians even though they were British. Anticipating the evacuation as a precaution, Selwyn Lloyd estimated that 13,000 British subjects were in Egypt, of whom 6,000 were United Kingdom based.²¹

¹⁸ TNA, HO 297/19, AERB, proposed termination of scheme, n.d.

¹⁹ TNA, AST 7/1601, Evacuation of British Subjects from the Middle East, 20 August 1956; Evacuation from Egypt of British Subjects, 4 September 1956.

²⁰ TNA, AST 7/1601, Evacuation from Egypt of British Subjects, 4 September 1956.

²¹ Selwyn Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A Personal Account* (London 1978), p.125.

A working party had been created to determine whether evacuation from Egypt was needed and how and by whom it was to be conducted. It included representatives from Treasury, National Assistance Board (NAB), War Office, Home Office, Ministry of Works, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Supplies. The first notable point about this working party is that it did not include any members of the Foreign Office, the first point of contact with the British residents in Egypt. The working party drafted a secret report in August 1956 on the evacuation of the British in Egypt following the nationalisation of the Canal. The report stated that the NAB agreed reluctantly to be in charge of the evacuees as an ad hoc arrangement. The evacuation policy for September 1956 was decided as follows: the evacuees from Egypt were to be screened in Cyprus and divided into two categories. The first category was those who would need temporary accommodation until they found employment. The second one included the British of Maltese origin, who were considered long-term problems and were thought not to speak English. If the first group was to be sent to Britain quickly after being screened, the working party wanted the British of Maltese origin to stay in Cyprus for a longer time and that other destinations should be considered, sending them to Britain being the very last option and preferably avoided.²² Although this policy was not applied, mostly due to the fact that the British of Maltese origins left by their own means by plane or by boat, it shows that the British government had no intention to repatriate those who were not born in the United Kingdom. As they were not native speakers and were born in the Mediterranean region, they were considered to be a potential resettlement problem in Britain.

²² TNA, AST 7/1601, Note of the Third Meeting of the Working Party, 20 August 1956.

When the Africa department of the Foreign Office was assessing the British population in Egypt to prepare plans for evacuation, it made a clear distinction between the origins of British nationals. Three categories of British nationals were considered: 'Anglo-Saxons', citizens of 'old Commonwealth' countries, and Maltese. Of a total 6,500 individuals, 85 per cent of 'Anglo-Saxons', 30 per cent of Maltese, and only 15 per cent of citizens of 'old Commonwealth' countries were thought likely to leave.²³ The term 'Anglo-Saxons' was used to make a contrast with colonial or postcolonial subjects, in a way to privilege the repatriation of this category of British nationals rather than colonial ones as if they were not belonging in Britain.²⁴

This plan of evacuation was linked to the possibility of military intervention in Egypt. It included the drawing up of a list of possible accommodation in hostels for refugees. On this list, from September 1956, were Frobisher Hall and Drake Hall, both in Swynnerston, Staffordshire, Eaves Brow between Manchester and Liverpool, Minor's Hostel in Alfreton, Derbyshire, and Stowell Park near Cirencester, Gloucestershire.²⁵ All these hostels were at some distance from large cities, and even remote from villages. This meant that refugees were quite far from areas of potential employment. This list served as a basis for the accommodation of refugees from Egypt after the bombing of Suez.

²³ TNA, FO 371/118892, Memorandum on Evacuation of British Nationals, 28 July 1956; Telegram, Cairo to Foreign Office, 8 August 1956.

²⁴ Robert Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford, 2002), p.138.

²⁵ TNA, AST 7/1601, Note on hostels recently visited to Miss Hope-Wallace, 4 September 1956.

Unaware of this policy, the World Jewish Congress questioned the intentions of the British government, as it was concerned by the situation of Egyptian Jewry following Nasser's threats of expulsion. The reply was that Britain would only deal with refugees in possession of a British passport and even those nationals would be a problem since 'many of them had lived all their lives in Egypt and had nowhere to go in any other country'.²⁶ This statement was of major importance as it informed the reception of Anglo-Egyptians in Britain, since the composition of the expellees in November 1956 was different from the numbers assessed during the previous summer.

The Anglo-Egyptians came at a time when the government was considering restricting immigration from the West Indies, India and Pakistan. Since 1948, the year of the passing of Nationality Act permitting all citizens of the British Commonwealth countries to work and reside in Britain, the Cabinet had been trying to find a way to reduce Commonwealth immigration to Britain.²⁷ The main reasons, according to the Conservative government, were that Commonwealth immigrants were considered to be of limited employability and could be the source of potential social unrest. There were also fears within the government, that these immigrants tended to congregate together in major cities, like London or Liverpool for example, and could unbalance the ethnic composition of Britain.²⁸ Despite reports stating that social and employment

²⁶ TNA, FO 371/119265, Comments on Easterman's letter by Lord Marquess of Reading, 27 November 1956.

²⁷ Ian R. G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London, 1997), pp.68-81; David Cesarani, 'The Changing Character of Citizenship and Nationality in Britain', in David Cesarani and Mary Fulbrook, (eds), *Citizenship, Nationality and Migration in Europe* (London, 1996), pp.64-5.

²⁸ TNA, CAB 21/1734, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies on Coloured People from British Colonial Territories, 29 March 1950.

problems were still relatively minor, the Cabinet clung on to predictions of unmanageable problems if Commonwealth immigration was to continue.²⁹ In 1954, the Cabinet felt that public opinion was becoming more and more concerned about Commonwealth immigration and that former opponents to immigration control started to revise their position, even if legislation could be perceived as a breach of tradition of unrestricted entry into Britain for Commonwealth subjects.³⁰ *The Times* reported accommodation problems for West Indians, and predicted how, in the event of mass unemployment, feelings against them would rise.³¹ To justify the need to impose strict control on this immigration, much was made of potential bad consequences. This included portraying these as taking advantage of Britain's social services, and talk of inter-breeding and miscegenation with long-term consequences for British society.³²

Although they were not black, nor was Egypt a British colony in 1956, the Anglo-Egyptians were associated with this Commonwealth immigration, and were considered undesirable immigrants and the British government saw them as a racial problem rather than an asset. Despite Britain's claims to a liberal immigration policy, their North African origins led some officers to associate Anglo-Egyptians with 'southern races' adding another unwanted element to their identity as racial tensions were brewing in Britain.³³ British immigration policy was framed by the concept of race and good race relations, rather than

²⁹ TNA, CAB 134/1191, Draft memorandum on Jamaicans in Britain, 20 December 1954

³⁰ TNA, CAB 134/1191, Memorandum by the Home Secretary on Colonial Immigrants, n.d.; *Manchester Guardian*, 30 September 1955.

³¹ *The Times*, 28 June 1955.

³² TNA, CAB 134/1191, Note by Robert Gascoyne-Cecil for the Commonwealth Relations Office, March 1954; TNA, CAB 134/1210, Committee on Colonial Immigrants, 30 April 1956.

³³ TNA, HO 240/11, Note for Lord Colyton, 9 February 1957.

assimilation as in France.³⁴ It explains the fears of social unrest of the Cabinet if Commonwealth immigration continued to increase. The Cabinet meetings on colonial immigration tended to hold immigrants responsible for social tensions and racism.

In 1956, the Cabinet Committee on Colonial Immigrants was still assessing the legal means at its disposal to control some migration without having to restrict Irish immigration.³⁵ The main problem was not considered to be employment but shortages of housing, notably in London and in Birmingham. Yet, in the short term, the Cabinet was worried about a possible change in the employment situation, while in the long term it expressed concern about 'miscegenation on any significant scale, with its gradual effect on the national way of life', and the creation of 'a plural way of society'.³⁶ Even if there was no evidence of major problems in 1956, the recommendation was to restrict immigration from the Commonwealth which was deemed to be too large in comparison with European immigration.³⁷ Coming from Africa, the Anglo-Egyptians fell under the category of immigration that the Cabinet was looking to restrict. The distinction by the Africa department of the Foreign Office between 'Anglo-Saxons' and citizens of 'old Commonwealth' countries falls within this logic.³⁸

³⁴ Martin Schain, *The Politics of Immigration in France, Britain, and the United States: A Comparative Study* (New York, 2008), p.154.

³⁵ TNA, CAB 134/1210, Committee on Colonial Immigrants, Report on Colonial Immigrants, 19 October 1956.

³⁶ TNA, CAB 134/1210, Committee on Colonial Immigrants, Memorandum by the Lord Chancellor, 10 February 1956.

³⁷ TNA, CAB 134/1210, Committee on Colonial Immigrants, Draft Report to the Cabinet, 19 March 1956; TNA, CAB 134/1466, Cabinet Committee on Colonial Immigrants, Report of Meeting, 19 May 1958.

³⁸ TNA, FO 371/118892, Minute by Shepherd on Evacuation Planning, 28 July 1956.

Moreover, the fact that most of the refugees were Jewish was also considered a problem. The British government, which did not have to conceal a collaborationist and antisemitic past as France did, limited entry to Jewish refugees in 1930s, but was nevertheless celebrated in the 1950s for what was perceived as a generous contribution by the Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain.³⁹ The British government did not have to accept refugees from Egypt other than those with a British passport, as it was already praised by former Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany.

The first major wave of post-war immigrants to come to Britain was made up of 345,000 eastern and southern Europeans through the European Voluntary Workers scheme between 1947 and 1949.⁴⁰ David Cesarani argues that through the EVW, the British government knowingly recruited approximately 10,000 Waffen-SS.⁴¹ On the other hand, Jews were discriminated against by the scheme as they were considered a problem due to their support for the creation of Israel and anti-Jewish feelings in Britain, and also because they were regarded as not easy to fit in.⁴² During the 1930s, the British government limited entry to Jewish refugees from Germany. One of the reasons was that Samuel Hoare, Home Secretary from 1937 to 1939, believed that admitting too

³⁹ See: Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948: British Immigration Policy and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 2000); Hans Reichmann, 'Tribute to Britain', in *Britain's New Citizens: The Story of the Refugees from Germany and Austria, Tenth Anniversary Publication of the Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain*, (London, 1951) pp.7-9; Norman Bentwich, *The Jews in Our Time: The Development of Jewish Life in the Modern World* (Harmondsworth, 1960), p.54.

⁴⁰ Anthony Messina, 'The Impacts of Post-WWII Migration to Britain: Policy Constraints, Political Opportunism and the Alteration of Representational Politics', *Review of Politics*, 63:2 (2001), p.262.

⁴¹ David Cesarani, *Justice Delayed: How Britain Became a Refuge for Nazi War Criminals* (London, 2001), pp.83-133.

⁴² Cesarani, *Justice Delayed*, pp.79-80.

many Jews in Britain would cause an unacceptable rise in antisemitism, making Jews responsible for antisemitism.⁴³

In 1956, the fact that the Home Office deemed it inadvisable to link the expulsion of Jews from Egypt to event prior to 1951, as defined by the status of refugees under the 1951 Geneva Convention, was part of this discriminatory immigration policy against Jews inherited from the 1905 Aliens Act.⁴⁴ The Foreign Office nonetheless considered that there was a relationship between the creation of the State of Israel and the persecution of the Jews of Egypt following the Suez military intervention in October 1956. Although the Home Office acknowledged that the definition of the 1951 Geneva Convention on the status of refugees could be easily stretched to the Jews of Egypt, it considered that it was politically inconvenient to do so in this case.⁴⁵ The Home Office did not want to issue refugee passports to stateless Jews from Egypt as required by the Geneva Convention. Such a document would have enabled the holder to leave and re-enter Britain without restriction for a period of two years. Yet the Home Office did not want any of the stateless refugees to be able to resettle in Britain if they had re-emigrated somewhere else. As a justification, the Home Office preferred to mention the British retreat from the Canal Zone in 1951, Nasser's rise to power and the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, resulting from the refusal to finance the Aswan Dam.⁴⁶ By recognising their international status as refugees, but by partly applying the Convention, the British government was able to keep a stricter control on their immigration, and

⁴³ London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, pp.38-9.

⁴⁴ TNA, HO 352/158, Home Office, minutes, 21 May 1957.

⁴⁵ TNA, HO 352/158, HO minutes, 21 May 1957.

⁴⁶ TNA, HO 352/158, HO minutes, 16 May 1957.

managed to appear as a tolerant country since it applied the Geneva Convention despite not recognising their expulsion as linked to events prior to 1951. The Home Office, by rejecting the interpretation of the Foreign Office that the stateless Jews fell under the mandate of the Geneva Convention, found a legal way to justify its restrictive policy of asylum on the international scene.

Prejudice towards colonial immigration and Jewish immigration applied in the case of the refugees from Egypt. The Anglo-Egyptians were described, in the African department of the Foreign Office, by John Wilton, who later became ambassador to Kuwait and to Saudi Arabia, as Jewish British subjects in Egypt who 'cannot, of course, be prevented from coming to this country, and those, presumably, are Mr Montefiore's "Gypsies displaying British passports". Any attempt to distinguish between HM pink and HM coffee-coloured subjects is fraught with great political peril.'⁴⁷ This comment was the bluntest expression of a common idea that the Jews from Egypt were different from the British born in the United Kingdom. In a context of increasing immigration from the West Indies, the refugees from Egypt were regarded as adding to 'Britain's colour problem', and it was not possible to refuse them entry.⁴⁸ The comment referred to Leonard G. Montefiore's⁴⁹ response to a Foreign Office's official description of 'Gypsies, or as I should say Jewish refugees from Egypt, displaying, poor dears, British passports' and its surprise at their 'social standing' as some of them were members of the Jockey Club Cairo.⁵⁰

Montefiore also referred to the work done by British Jewish organisations to

⁴⁷ TNA, FO 371/127700, Minute by Wilton, African Department, 2 January 1957.

⁴⁸ Peter Hennessy, *Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (London, 2006), pp.223-4.

⁴⁹ Leonard G. Montefiore was the founder of Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief in 1933, and the President of the Anglo-Jewish Association.

⁵⁰ TNA, FO 371/127700, Montefiore to Hermann, 29 December 1956.

rescue the Jews from Nazi Germany in the 1930s, implying that the situation in 1956-1957 was similar.⁵¹ He implied that the Jews from Egypt belonged to the same upper-middle class as some German Jews. Not only were the comments of some officers at the Foreign Office racist but also they were based on social class, meaning that the British Jews from Egypt were at times considered as uneducated southern second-class subjects. In 1956, the Anglo-Egyptians were perceived as possible threats to the balance of race relations at a time of increasing tensions between communities. The immigration policy regarding Anglo-Egyptians was thus influenced by antisemitism and racial prejudice.

The British government therefore only accepted refugees from Egypt who were British subjects. It resisted pressure to admit a larger number of refugees than it would legally have to. However, in order to avoid criticisms from the press or the political opposition, the government made one exception. It was decided to allow the admission of stateless and foreign refugees as long as they came from a 'predominantly British family group', but they were not entitled to the same rights as British refugees:

An alien refugee from Egypt... will not be considered eligible in his own right... for a resettlement grant to enable him to set up in business or to help him buy a house. The principle as outlined above is that we may help an alien refugee from Egypt by virtue of his association with, or

⁵¹ On British Jewish responses to the Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany see: Ari J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich, 1933-1939* (Portland, 1973); London, *Whitehall and the Jews*.

membership of, a British family group who have been evicted from Egypt.⁵²

The Home Office adopted the same line as the French government: only those who had British family members could seek refuge in Britain. The only, yet major, difference was that the Home Office would not help those who only had a distant family association, leaving them in a precarious condition, while in France they benefited from the help of the Cojasor. The Home Office followed a very strict line in limiting relief to the refugees from Egypt in order to reduce their numbers in British care. The reaction of the British government, by limiting admission in Britain strictly to Anglo-Egyptians and accepting stateless Jews on condition they had British family and refusing Jews of another nationality for resettlement, shows that it still considered Jews as undesirable immigrants in 1956.⁵³

Despite appeals from Jewish organisations, the British government remained strict regarding asylum for Jews from Egypt. One of the concerns of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, and other Jewish organisations was Nasser's attitude towards the Jews of Egypt. The *Jewish Chronicle* compared him to Hitler and drew comparisons with the Nazi methods of internment and expulsions before the Second World War.⁵⁴ According to Israel Sieff and Alex

⁵² TNA, HO 240/1, Persons eligible for help from the Board, 7 May 1957.

⁵³ LMA, ACC/3121/B/06/002/034, Note of meeting at the Foreign Office, 30 November 1956.

⁵⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 'Egyptian Jews Face Disaster, Deportations and Internment, Nasser imitates Nazi methods', 30 November 1956; 'The Barbarism of Egypt', 30 November 1956; 'Egyptian Jewry's Sufferings, The Parallel with Hitler', 14 December 1956.

Easterman of the World Jewish Congress,⁵⁵ the similarity between Nasser and Hitler was striking since Nasser's aim was to make Egypt "*Judenrein*", that is to say free of Jews. Sieff and Easterman were concerned about the silence of the United Nations regarding the fate of the Jews from Egypt, and the silence of the governments involved in the Suez Crisis.⁵⁶ It was feared that what happened to the Jews during the Second World War would happen again because of diplomatic weaknesses from the British and French sides: 'Are we faced once more with the same diplomatic niceties and reticences which, before the last war and until 1942, embedded the Great Powers in silence and unwillingness to act in the case of Hitler's anti-Jewish outrages, culminating in the massacre of six million Jews in Europe?'⁵⁷ The parallel could be pushed further, since both situations created refugees who sought asylum in Britain and France. This echo of the Second World War, and especially of the appeasement debacle, led some MPs and the refugees to think that the situation of the Jewish refugees from Egypt had been forgotten by Britain and France, and that no lesson had been learnt from the previous war.⁵⁸ But Britain did not regard the situation in Egypt as a Jewish problem, and merely promised to raise the matter at the UN Assembly, leaving Jewish organisations to organise relief for those Jews in Egypt who were ineligible for refuge in Britain.⁵⁹

Acknowledging that the Jewish population was in immediate danger would have pressured Britain to accept them as refugees under international law,

⁵⁵ Israel Sieff was a British businessman, vice-chairman and joint managing director of Marks & Spencer from 1926, and chairman from 1964 to 1967. Alex Easterman was the British representative of the World Jewish Congress.

⁵⁶ *The Times*, 23 February 1957.

⁵⁷ *The Times*, 23 February 1957.

⁵⁸ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 566, col. 765-9, 8 March 1957; *The Guardian Journal*, 7 March 1957.

⁵⁹ See: Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry'.

which would have gone against its policy of restricted admission and acted as a sort of tacit admission that their earlier policy of restricting immigration to mandate Palestine had been wrong.

As British nationals, the Anglo-Egyptians left under the same conditions as the French nationals, that is to say after receiving a notice of expulsion, sometimes after being interned, with only a suitcase and 20 Egyptian pounds, their valuables and extra money being confiscated by the Egyptian authorities at the border. Although some of the Anglo-Egyptians were simply notified, some were terrorised by the Egyptian army or police who locked them up in prison or abandoned houses or schools, with other British nationals.⁶⁰ Similarly in Port-Said, David M., on his way back from Heliopolis with his father, following the closure of the English School in Cairo by its director, experienced the radical change of atmosphere following the bombings. On the train, people were shouting anti-European and sometimes antisemitic slogans:

It was the most horrific experience... By that time, everybody was anti-West and were shouting and screaming on the train: 'to death with the British!'... My father and I were really petrified. We heard one or two people saying something about the Jews. We kept our heads down for about two and a half hours. We didn't want anybody to notice us. It was an amazing change in attitude, so quickly in the whole of Egypt.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Interview with Sylvia Jordan, 16 December 2009; interview with Claudia Roden, 25 November 2008; Laskier, 'Egyptian Jewry', p.579.

⁶¹ Interview with David M., 14 December 2009.

For David M., the situation went to the point that he was spat on in the street so it became very difficult to go out. One of the worst feelings for the British Jews of Egypt was that they were suddenly rejected by the Egyptian population which had been considered to be very friendly before that. It was also for some of them the realisation that they were not as integrated in the life of Egypt as they thought,⁶² as the country was taking a more nationalist stance led by Nasser, based on Islam as an Arabic culture, in which Jews and Europeans did not have a place.

Not all the refugees followed the same route to Britain. They either travelled by boat or by plane. As long as the British army was in Egypt, it was possible for the refugees to be evacuated by the army by boat. However, when the British embassy closed, it became more difficult for the refugees to organise their evacuation. The Swiss embassy, which was representing the interests of Britain and France, advised the Anglo-Egyptians on how they could leave the country.⁶³

When flying, refugees usually arrived at London after a stop somewhere else in Europe. Other refugees went by boat to Marseille, like David M., and took the train to cross France, to finally take the boat to Dover or other Channel ports. However, those who stopped at Marseille were sometimes taken care of by the Jewish Agency which was helping the refugees willing to go to Israel.⁶⁴

⁶² Interview with Claudia Roden.

⁶³ Interview with Sylvia Jordan.

⁶⁴ Interview with David M.; COJ.R.Egy.F, Report on operation Cojasor-Marseille, 26 January 1957.

Jenny Stewart, who was 21 in 1956, claims to have been one of the very first refugees to have arrived in Britain after being expelled from Egypt, being born to British parents. The Egyptian authorities gave her, her mother and her stepfather, three days' notice on 21 November to leave Egypt. They boarded a plane chartered by the United Nations to Naples, because there was no direct flight to London, but had to pay for the ticket. From there, they took a train to Milan, and flew to London via Amsterdam:

We arrived on the 25th of November 1956. Basically, we were the very first ones. They said: "what are you doing here?" And we said: "you will have a whole army of people. All the British people will come." They knew nothing about it. We had relatives at London airport so we could stay a little while there until everything was sorted out. Within a few weeks, all the British people left or were given a few days to leave, but we were really the very first ones.⁶⁵

Although aware of the situation of the Jews in Egypt, and of the British nationals, the Home Office arranged only in December for the refugees to be met at points of arrival by members of the National Assistance Board, the British Red Cross, or the Women's Voluntary Service.⁶⁶ Anna Ludwig remembers her arrival in London:

I think it was beginning of December 1956. The WVS and some Jewish people were at the airport to welcome us... We went to Cyprus for a

⁶⁵ Interview with Jenny Stewart, 15 June 2009.

⁶⁶ TNA, HO 297/7, HO meeting , 4 December 1956.

week then sailed to Malta. We spent one night there. Then we took the plane to London. We stayed in London for one day. We arrived early in the morning and then they put us on a bus to Eastwood. We did not know where we were going. You could not choose.⁶⁷

The aim was to screen as many refugees as possible to help them join relatives in Britain if they had any, or to accommodate them in hostels.⁶⁸ Anna Ludwig's description of her reception indicates how cold it was for many refugees. Very little information was given to the refugees on their destination, and the places they were sent to were so remote and isolated that they usually were unknown to them. They had no choice regarding the hostel they were sent to. The fact that few among them spoke English did not help, and added to the general confusion in which the refugees could be found when they first arrived in the country.⁶⁹ For the refugees who did not have family to accommodate them, staying in hostels was the only option. Anthony Eden, who partly justified the military intervention to protect 'some 13,000 subjects still in Egypt', had failed to do so, and his government had to quickly set up a plan to accommodate the refugees from Egypt.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Interview with Anna Ludwig, 25 February 2009.

⁶⁸ TNA, HO 297/7, HO, meeting, 4 December 1956.

⁶⁹ TNA, HO 240/23, WVS report on meeting the Anglo-Egyptians at Stansted airport, December 1956.

⁷⁰ Eden, *Full Circle*, p.441.

-The reception of Anglo-Egyptians: first phase

The reception of the Anglo-Egyptians can be divided in two phases. The first phase of the hostel system refers to the management of the hostels by the NAB, under the supervision of the Home Office. It lasted from November 1956 until April 1957, and is characterised by sharp criticisms in parliament of the handling of the refugee situation in Britain. It eventually led to a rethinking of the asylum policy.

Jenny Stewart arrived on 25 November 1956 in London with her mother and stepfather and remembers warning that many other British nationals in Egypt were to follow soon. Two days later the policy regarding the reception of Anglo-Egyptians refugees was drafted, at an emergency meeting of the Defence Committee. The Committee agreed that the Home Secretary, Gwilym Lloyd George, would be responsible for the coordination of the resettlement of the British refugees from Egypt, while delegating executive powers to relevant departments for the support of the refugees. The Ministry of Works was to be in charge of providing the hostels buildings, while the NAB managed them, with financial means voted by the Home Office.⁷¹

This list thus served as a basis to establish the policy of reception in late November, and was modified for practical purposes. The accommodation of refugees from Egypt in hostels was carried out in two steps. At their arrival in London, families and single men were sent to a RAF hostel in Hendon, run by

⁷¹ TNA, HO 297/9, Notes on Egyptian refugees, Departmental responsibility, n.d.

the NAB. Women and children, who were not accompanied by their husbands or fathers, were accommodated at a WRAC camp in Richmond, separating men and women.⁷² After a few days to register the refugees and verify their identity, they were moved to five other hostels in Britain. The list differed from the one established in September, except for two hostels, and offered better accommodation closer to areas of potential employment: Frobisher Hall and Drake Hall from the initial list, Bridgend hostel in Gloucestershire, Eastwood hostel in Nottinghamshire, and the Summerfield hostel in Kidderminster, all managed by the National Assistance Board. These had enough space to accommodate for 2,500 persons, showing that they were not initially expecting the whole community of Anglo-Egyptians to come to Britain for refuge.⁷³ However, following the continuous arrival of refugees from Egypt, new hostels were added from early January to early March 1957: Eaves Brow, between Liverpool and Manchester, Crowborough, in Sussex, and Henstridge, in Somerset, were hostels managed by St John's Ambulance; Greenbanks, near Leeds, Bishopwood, near Reading, Caerwent, near Newport, and Wrens Warren, in Sussex, were hostels managed by the British Red Cross.⁷⁴ These hostels, except for Greenbanks and Bishopwood, were isolated from major cities.

It was decided that the refugees without means would be accommodated on a free basis and given 12 shillings a week for an adult and 5 shillings a week for a child. Those with means were charged for board and lodging in such a way

⁷² TNA, HO 297/7, HO, meeting, 4 December 1956.

⁷³ TNA, HO 297/7, HO, meeting, 4 December 1956.

⁷⁴ Henstridge and Wrens Warren never received any refugees and were closed on 1 May 1957. TNA, HO 240/18, List of hostels accommodating refugees from Egypt, 3 May 1957.

that they would be left with a least £2 a week. A situation which Anna Ludwig, a British refugee from Egypt, finds very unfair:

When we came to England we got nothing, not a penny, and we were thrown in a camp! And we were British subjects! We had British passports and we were not privileged at all. In my time I have been thrown away in a camp! We got a pound maybe per week. It was nothing! I feel very upset about that compared to what they get now.⁷⁵

Anna Ludwig considered that the sum provided as pocket money by the National Assistance Board was insufficient to start anew in Britain. Many of the refugees could not understand how they were supposed to leave the hostels quickly when financial support was so low, while those who worked were angered by the fact that they had to pay for their accommodation in hostels when the majority of their assets had been confiscated in Egypt.⁷⁶ In one sense, the Home Office plan worked, as they moved as soon as they could from the hostels, preferring to spend money on better accommodation, while leaving the refugees embittered. This limitation in support had been decided by the Treasury which did not want to give them better financial treatment than other refugees at the time, regardless of their British nationality.⁷⁷

Sir Frank Newsam, Permanent Under Secretary of State of the Home Office, and Gwilym Lloyd George, Home Secretary, found themselves in a difficult

⁷⁵ Interview with Anna Ludwig.

⁷⁶ TNA, HO 240/98, AERB, Minutes of meeting, 20 February 1958.

⁷⁷ TNA, AST 7/1602, Letter to Controllers on the reception of refugees, 30 November 1956.

position since they had agreed that a special financial effort was to be made to show that they supported the British refugees:

I think there is a special responsibility to make provision for British subjects who through no fault of their own have been reduced to a state of temporary destitution... I think it would be most unwise politically for the Government to take the line that we are not prepared to do any more for these people than arrange for them to be accommodated in National Assistance Board hostels, and provided for, if they are in want, at National Assistance Board rates.⁷⁸

They were both worried that if nothing was done to show that the government helped them the best way it could, it would suffer criticism. The decision was a political move in a difficult context to spare the government further difficulties, rather than a genuine attempt to do more to help refugees, at a time when public opinion and the press were criticising the government for the handling of the Suez crisis.⁷⁹

Nonetheless, the scheme to help the refugees was set up quickly. It was announced to parliament on 13 December 1956, by R.A. Butler, Lord Privy Seal, that the Home Secretary had 'undertaken responsibility for co-ordinating the arrangements for the reception of British subjects returning to this country from Egypt'.⁸⁰ He then reminded MPs that, even if the NAB made

⁷⁸ TNA, AST 7/1602, Lloyd-George to Macmillan, 3 December 1956.

⁷⁹ See: Tony Shaw, *Eden, Suez and the Mass Media: Propaganda and Persuasion During the Suez Crisis* (London, 2009).

⁸⁰ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 562, col. 71-2w, 13 December 1956.

arrangements for the needs of the refugees, a grant of £100,000, announced on 6 December, was to be made by the Home Office to the Anglo-Egyptian Aid Society (AEAS) for the relief and reception of the British nationals from Egypt, and that the AEAS had made a public appeal for funds, so that the NAB would deal with cases of urgent need in the future.⁸¹ The AEAS benefited from a good reputation as it had the experience in supporting and dealing with the British from Egypt.⁸² The AEAS was a charity chaired, at the time, by Frederick Smith, 2nd Baron Colwyn, and had been called upon by the British government three times before the Suez crisis for relief. The first occasion was before the Second World War when British officials had been dismissed from their occupations, and the Foreign Office gave the Society a grant for their resettlement in Britain. Then, the AEAS helped when women were evacuated following the presence of Rommel in North Africa in 1942. Finally, following new discriminatory commercial laws in Egypt in 1948 and 1949, the AEAS ran a hotel in London to accommodate those who were not able to make a living anymore in Egypt.⁸³

Hugh Gaitskell, the leader of the opposition who had expressed stern criticism of the Suez military intervention,⁸⁴ had doubts about the financial efforts provided by the government which kept branding the £100,000 as a token of its financial participation to the resettlement of the British refugees from Egypt.⁸⁵ As Macmillan estimated the number of refugees in Great Britain to be 4,000, Gaitskell mentioned that it amounted to £25 per person, and wondered how

⁸¹ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 562, col. 71-2w, 13 December 1956.

⁸² TNA, AST 7/1602, Lloyd-George to Macmillan, 3 December 1956.

⁸³ TNA, HO 240/11, Note to Colyton from AEAS, 9 February 1957.

⁸⁴ Williams, (ed.), *Diary of Hugh Gaitskell*, pp.619-22.

⁸⁵ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 564, col. 245-6, 5 February 1957.

such a sum would be sufficient to cover for all the refugees in Britain. Richard Crossman, MP for Coventry East, considered that the government had a responsibility toward the British refugees then in the country regardless of payments from the Egyptian government, if any compensation was to ever be given for the seizure of private property and assets, as well as Egyptianisation of businesses.⁸⁶ Despite their questioning, it appears that Macmillan did not plan to use more money at the time for the relief of the refugees.⁸⁷ No other grant or action was promised. Macmillan's attitude was rather to wait to see how much the cost of resettling the British refugees would be in case the initial grant was not enough.

Gaitskell was right in his accusations regarding the financial effort made by Britain, as the Home Secretary indeed had difficulties securing a grant for the refugees: 'With some difficulty we managed to persuade the Treasury to authorise a grant of £100,000 to the Anglo-Egyptian Aid Society, but it was a condition of this grant that any payments made out of Government funds should be on approximately the same scale as the National Assistance Board rates.'⁸⁸ The Home Office wanted to provide relief on the NAB normal rates and wanted to do it through the AEAS so that public opinion believed that a special effort was made for their relief. The Home Office believed that making payment through the NAB showed that the Anglo-Egyptians were treated as nationals and not as foreign refugees. The Home Office did not offer much financial help to the refugees from Egypt, as the Treasury showed a total lack of interest in their situation, and ignored the fact that the refugees came to

⁸⁶ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 564, col. 245-6, 5 February 1957.

⁸⁷ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 564, col. 244-9, 5 February 1957.

⁸⁸ TNA, HO 297/24, British Refugees from Egypt, 24 January 1957.

Britain stripped of their possessions. This is emphasised by the fact that the Treasury had to be persuaded to deliver a grant. Anglo-Egyptian resettlement was thus limited by restricted funds.

As far as funds were concerned, the AEAS was a façade as assistance was coming from the NAB, the Ministry of Works and the Ministry of Supply under the supervision of the Home Office. Its role was quickly reduced to the minimum following the creation of the AERB by the Home Office, in an attempt to reorganise the hostel system and improve the coordination between local, national and associative administrations.⁸⁹

-The Anglo-Egyptian Resettlement Board: second phase

Although hostels were initially run independently by the NAB, St John's Brigade and the British Red Cross Society, their aims were all the same: to put the refugees from Egypt into employment and private accommodation quickly so that they could resettle, or to organise the re-emigration of those willing to resettle in another country. Locally, hostels were working with local authorities in order to check if housing and work were available for the refugees. Councils of the nearest cities were regularly consulted on this matter. However, collaboration with local councils was not always easy, as suggests the case of Greenbanks, near Leeds. In February 1957, the clerk of Horsforth Urban

⁸⁹ TNA, T 221/471, Memorandum on the British refugees from Egypt, 15 January 1957.

District filed a formal complaint to the Home Office as it was feeling increasingly exasperated that the Council was not receiving any help in dealing with the refugees arrival and their welfare. It criticised the British Red Cross Society for the management of the hostel, and feared that the charge of the refugees would eventually fall upon the Council.⁹⁰ The Council felt left without assistance from the Home Office and witnessed how poorly managed the camp was. It accused the Home Office of a blatant lack of organisation between the hostel management, the Home Office, and local authorities in the early days of the hostel system. The AERB was created in order to re-organise and coordinate the resettlement of the Anglo-Egyptians.

The creation of the AERB was announced at the House of Commons on 5 February 1957 by Harold Macmillan, then Prime Minister in place of Anthony Eden, to deal with the 4,000 British refugees from Egypt then in the United Kingdom.⁹¹ The Home Office decided that the AEAS, as a voluntary welfare organisation, could not carry on alone making payments from government funds. The function of the AERB was 'to co-ordinate all the work at present being done to assist British subjects from Egypt, including the running of the hostels and the giving of financial help'.⁹² The financial help referred to resettlement grants. The AEAS from that point mainly dealt with the payment of weekly allowances to refugees, instead of the NAB, and the organisation of their re-emigration.

⁹⁰ TNA, HLG 52/1631, Anglo-Egyptian Refugees - Horsforth, 4 February 1957.

⁹¹ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 564, col. 244-5, 5 February 1957.

⁹² *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 564, col. 245, 5 February 1957.

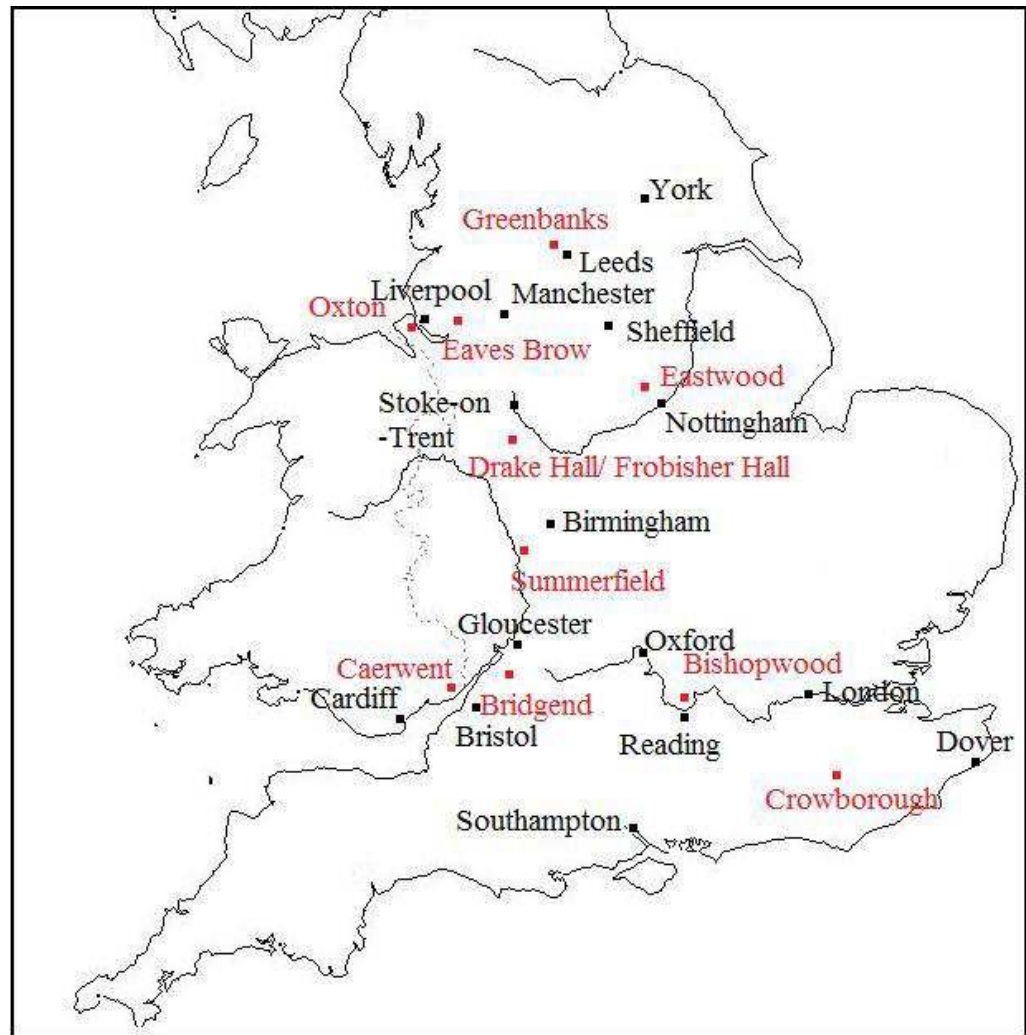
The AERB was composed of representatives of the British Red Cross Society, St John's Ambulance Brigade, Women's Voluntary Service, National Council of Social Service, and the AEAS. The staff came from the AEAS, as well as the Home Office and other departments, while other posts were occupied by external people hired for the occasion. The AERB employed some of the refugees too, in order to have a better understanding and communication with the refugees in the hostels, because they were not born in Britain and had no experience of living there.⁹³ Out of 146 employees working for the AERB, 21 were Anglo-Egyptians.⁹⁴ The AERB was scheduled to take over the Anglo-Egyptian refugee hostels on 1 April 1957.

The first task of the AERB was to reorganise the hostel situation. The fact that the hostels in Britain were so far apart added to the difficulty of the refugees resettlement. Just like in the case of the Hungarian refugees, the government had little accommodation available, and once again, hostels were supposed to be situated near places of potential employment. When the AERB took over as the leading organisation for the resettlement of the Anglo-Egyptians, hostels were situated as follows:

⁹³ TNA, HO 297/9, Constitution of the Board, n.d.

⁹⁴ TNA, HO 297/12, AERB, Headquarters Staff, n.d.

Map 7.1: Hostels run by the AERB from 1 April 1957 to March 1960



(Source: TNA, HO 240/18, Hostels accommodating refugees from Egypt, 3 May 1957)

The map shows that, apart from Oxtou, the hostels were all far from London and other major cities. In order to get the refugees in employment and permanent accommodation as quickly as possible, the Home Office and the NAB re-organised the hostel system. Each hostel was to have a Consultative Committee, with a representation of all the voluntary organisations and departments involved in the life of the hostels, and a Working Committee, which was a nucleus of the Consultative Committee including officers of the voluntary organisations, representatives of the Ministry of Labour and the

Local Authority Health and Education Services, and also temporary members from the Consultative Committee. The Chairman of the Consultative Committee was to be approved by the AERB. The Consultative Committee was to record and inform the AERB every month of the progress made at the hostels in matters such as employment and resettlement, emigration, and the efficiency of the AERB policy in resettling the refugees from Egypt.⁹⁵

The Working Committee was concerned primarily with the coordination of group welfare arrangements and with the general welfare issues. This committee met weekly under the chairmanship of the hostel warden, and the minutes of the meetings were sent to the AERB.⁹⁶ The idea was that, by April 1957, refugees who could find work or accommodation would have left, and the hostels would be left with more difficult cases to resettle, hence the need for a more solid organisation in the hostels with all the bodies involved in the resettlement of the refugees from Egypt. Those refugees were usually described as the elderly, not easily employable, people lacking knowledge of English, or people who did not want to leave the community inside the hostel.⁹⁷ This communal attitude was also found in France, as some of refugees stayed together to face the ordeals of settling in a new country. The Home Office feared what they called the 'hostelization' of the refugees and issued recommendations to staff in hostels to form advisory panels in order to 'make every effort through local connections to place them into work'.⁹⁸ In order to tackle this issue, which, as far as the AERB was concerned, was delaying the

⁹⁵ TNA, HO 240/107, Take-over of hostels by the AERB, 19 March 1957.

⁹⁶ TNA, HO 240/107, Take-over of hostels by the AERB, 19 March 1957.

⁹⁷ TNA, HO 240/104, Memorandum to the Chairman of the Consultative Committee, Eaves Brow hostel, n.d.

⁹⁸ TNA, HO 240/2, Future Policy of the AERB, 6 June 1957.

resettlement work, the Home Office expected wardens to lecture refugees about life and social conditions in Britain, showing that for the Home Office, their British passport was their only link with Britain.⁹⁹

The AEAS shared this view of the refugees and described the work regarding their reception as a 'key job' to the right-wing diplomat, Lord Colyton, chairman of the AERB:

Personnel must have an understanding and sympathetic approach to these people – most of whom tend to have the temperament of southern races – knowledge of their former way of life and their languages, and sound knowledge of social and welfare work in this country... Perhaps the most important factor is knowledge of the people concerned.¹⁰⁰

The terms in which the British refugees from Egypt are described shows the extent to which the refugees were considered different from the British living in Britain. Despite Egypt not being part of the Commonwealth, Anglo-Egyptians were part of this multi-racial community.¹⁰¹ Although British, the quotation above suggests that Anglo-Egyptians lacked 'Englishness'.¹⁰² A leaflet was produced for the attention of the refugees in which a set of practical recommendations about life in Britain was formulated.¹⁰³ For example, the leaflet mentioned that refugees should not bargain in shops and recommends

⁹⁹ TNA, HO 240/104, Memorandum to the Chairman of the Consultative Committee, Eaves Brow hostel, n.d.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, HO 240/11, Note for Lord Colyton, AEAS, 9 February 1957.

¹⁰¹ Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965* (Oxford, 2005), p.172

¹⁰² Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, pp.152-3.

¹⁰³ TNA, HO 297/6, Leaflet for information of British refugees, 22 January 1957.

that refugees be accompanied by friends or relatives already settled in Britain for these occasions.

Still in the spirit of limiting support to the refugees from Egypt when possible, the Home Office instructed the AERB not to accept refugees from Egypt who had no affiliation with a British family, and that an enquiry be made if there were any doubts on affiliation before admitting the refugee as a hostel resident. The staff in hostels were ordered not to encourage residents to think that their relatives in other countries would be admitted to hostels, in order to limit the influx of refugees from Egypt in the country.¹⁰⁴ Unlike the French Ministry of the Interior, which eventually adopted a rather flexible attitude towards the refugees from Egypt in spite of a strict policy of immigration, the Home Office and the AERB worked together to limit the arrival of non-British nationals, or part of a British family.¹⁰⁵ The AERB was to be consulted on the admission of non-British relatives joining British refugees for resettlement. The role of the hostels was to support and resettle the refugees, but also to refuse those who were not supposed to be claimants for relief in order to limit the help provided. However, in order to avoid bad publicity, the Aliens Department of the Home Office, would issue a refusal to stay in the country rather than the AERB itself.¹⁰⁶ The role of the AERB was thus not only social but to make sure that support was provided to the refugees as defined by the Home Office general policy and to limit as much as possible relief to non-British nationals. However, the AERB could not decide what to do with problem cases such as

¹⁰⁴ TNA, HO 240/72, Residents at AERB hostels, n.d.

¹⁰⁵ TNA, HO 297/5, Wilson to Dibble, 11 October 1957.

¹⁰⁶ TNA, HO 297/5, Consultation with the AERB, n.d.

people who refused to leave the hostel. It considered but abandoned the idea of eviction, fearing bad publicity.¹⁰⁷

Hostels had to be considered as temporary accommodation by the refugees.

The plan for the AERB was to resettle all refugees by the end of 1957, although this did not happen until 1960 and the closure of the last hostel.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ TNA, HO 240/105, AERB Minutes of meeting, 13 March 1958.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, HO 240/5, AERB, Final Report, March 1960.

Table 7.1: Numbers of residents in hostels from since AERB take-over

Hostel Date	Drake Hall	Frobisher Hall	Bridgend	Eastwood	Summerfield	Eaves Brow	Crowborough	Greenbanks	Bishopswood	Caerwent	Oxton	Total
Total capacity	700	378	245	300	524	551	52	611	177	127	55	3,720
5 April 1957	553	211	184	221	416	452	47	498	97	115		2,774
28 June	381	140	174	201	335	422	28	442	114	106		2,343
30 Aug.	287	109	223	168	396	428		172	114	91	24	2,012
27 Sept.	240	124	235	151	409	414		27	101	96	45	1,842
1 Nov.		301	225	138	379	378		3	93	94	48	1,659
31 Jan. 1958		322	241	46	390	115			26	58	48	1,246
28 Feb.		303	198	10	389				8	38	44	990
25 Apr.		199	162		332					9	33	735
30 May		176	156		316						16	664
25 July		227	204		33							464
26 Sept.		12	246									258
26 Dec.			167									167
June 1959			13*									13

*Bridgend stayed opened until March 1960 with a small number of refugees.

(Source: TNA, HO 240/77, Notes on hostels, n.d.)

This table does not take into account the refugees who were accommodated in hostels before the AERB took over. Since approximately 4,000 refugees from

Egypt were accommodated since November 1956, and the AERB was in charge since April 1957, it had to deal with roughly three quarters of the total number. The elderly were accommodated in residential clubs when spaces became available, whereas the refugees who could be employed found a job and moved out of the hostels after finding private accommodation. For example, in December 1958, the AERB managed to secure 19 flats in Stroud, near Bridgend hostel, with the help of the Stroud Rural District Council, in order to resettle some of the residents at the hostel and to speed up its closure.¹⁰⁹

With the AERB managing all the hostels, it became easier to draft a common policy to place the refugees into work. It contrasts with the disorganisation in the first steps of the hostels system before it was in charge. To facilitate the employment process, the AERB paid for the cost of transportation for refugees to attend interviews.¹¹⁰ The AERB benefited from the support of the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB), and every hostel had a CAB liaison officer. Their role was 'to assist their resettlement and integration with the general community'. When refugees found work and accommodation outside hostels they were put in touch with the CAB organisation in their district. The CAB liaison officers provided valuable help in finding work and permanent accommodation. The CAB liaison officers were also competent to deal with the questions of emigration.¹¹¹ By involving the CAB in each hostel, the AERB managed to

¹⁰⁹ TNA, HO 240/53, Letter to Lord Dickinson, 8 December 1958.

¹¹⁰ TNA, LAB 8/2338, Offers of Accommodation by New Towns and Local Authorities, 15 October 1957.

¹¹¹ TNA, HO 240/14, Functions of the CAB Liaison Officers in relation to the work of the AERB, n.d.

harmonise the resettlement of the refugees, though the CAB liaison officers were expected to respect the AERB's policy.

One of the most problematic aspects for the AERB was that refugees in large family groups often wanted to live together. In mid-April 1957, it decided to let local authorities solve this problem by paying them £300 to house family units. The AERB insisted on the need to 'impress' upon the refugees that they could not let other relatives join them after they were allocated a house.¹¹²

By October 1958, only 90 families representing 342 individuals had been resettled in council houses.¹¹³ The AERB and the Home Office failed to have a resettlement plan similar to the one of the French government and the Cojasor which managed to resettle large groups of refugees together around Paris. The housing situation in Britain was also difficult at the time, but, unlike France, no new sites were reserved for the Anglo-Egyptian refugees although they came to Britain in similar numbers.

-Hostel life

In order to improve the chances of a quick resettlement, the Home Office decided to open two experimental hostels: Crowborough and Oxtun.

¹¹² TNA, LAB 8/2338, Housing: approach to local authorities or housing associations, 17 April 1957.

¹¹³ TNA, HO 297/15, Progress of resettlement, 16 October 1958.

Crowborough was opened when the AERB took over the management of the refugee hostels, and was initially on a peppercorn rental. The small capacity of the hostel, 52 persons, was thought ideal to try to resettle a few of the Anglo-Egyptian refugee families who could be employed locally and paid maintenance charges. The experiment was however short-lived as it took a lot of persuasion to convince families to move there, as they were reluctant to leave their initial hostel. Once in Crowborough, they did not get on well due to social class differences. The AERB closed down the hostel in July 1957 and relocated the refugees.¹¹⁴ Crowborough hostel is a good example of the heterogeneity of the Anglo-Egyptian refugees, who in Egypt did not mix between classes. Moreover, the fact that families were reluctant to leave their initial hostel shows that a sense of community was built up in some of the hostels among the refugees who could be together, among people of the same social class, in larger hostels.¹¹⁵

Oxton, near Birkenhead, was the second hostel experiment led by the Home Office. Formerly the married quarters at an army anti-aircraft unit, it offered accommodation in huts.¹¹⁶ The Home Office thought refugees would easily find work in Birkenhead and Liverpool.¹¹⁷ The main difference with the other hostels was that families lived in self-catering wooden bungalows including a living room with a fire-place, a kitchen, a bathroom, and two or three bedrooms, greatly improving the standards of accommodation in comparison with the other hostels. In order to make sure that the families in Oxton did not

¹¹⁴ TNA, HO 240/77, Notes on hostels, n.d.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Anna Ludwig.

¹¹⁶ TNA, HO 240/77, Notes on hostels, n.d.

¹¹⁷ TNA, HO 240/105, Otton to Caulcott, 29 March 1957.

mistake the hostel with permanent accommodation, the Ministry of Labour employed a superintendent and residents were told not to confuse the maintenance charges with rent. Residents were selected on the basis that they were 'good mixers', keen to get work, and sure to understand the set-up of Oxton hostel.¹¹⁸ The Home Office and the AERB hoped to avoid a repeat of the Crowborough experiment. Oxton demonstrates that despite the initial claims that the other hostels had been chosen for their proximity to employment opportunities, the Home Office was aware that they were too isolated, and that the general policy of reception was far from satisfying.

Although supervised by the AERB, Oxton was run by the British Red Cross. The hostel started receiving residents in August 1957,¹¹⁹ all 49 of whom were married couples with children.¹²⁰ However, by February 1958, it became clear that the experiment was a failure too. It was hard to find families willing to move to Oxton, and the employment situation in the Merseyside region had deteriorated since the hostel was set up. The only sectors where employment was available, draughtspeople, domestic workers, and clothing workers, did not match the refugees' skills or desires. As a result, only five people had left the hostel within six months.¹²¹ Considering the spirit in which Oxton hostel was set up, the experiment was hardly a success.

¹¹⁸ TNA, HO 240/105, Dibble to Wardens and Liaison Officers, 10 July 1957.

¹¹⁹ TNA, HO 240/105, Clynes to Drake Hall, Eaves Brow, and Greenbanks wardens, 1 August 1957.

¹²⁰ TNA, HO 240/105, Clynes to Mrs Gorst, 1 August 1957.

¹²¹ TNA, HO 240/105, Report of the Board's Employment Adviser on Oxton, 20 February 1958.

Despite an overall bad report and a recommendation to wind up the hostel, the AERB refused to see the experiment as a total failure, and saw in Oxton a 'useful transition stage to complete resettlement' for some, blaming the employment conditions on Merseyside, the lack of offers of help from local residents, and the fact that the potential transferees had been resettled between March and August 1957, when the hostel was being prepared.¹²² It was not until May 1958 that all the refugees moved out of Oxton.¹²³

The creation of the AERB, although it standardised the reception of the refugees, while experimenting with other hostel systems, did not solve all problems. Focus will now shift to the cases of the refugees of Eastwood and Summerfield hostels, who decided to act to improve their conditions as refugees in Britain. It shows that the responses to the Anglo-Egyptians were ill-adapted, and that refugees were far from passive.

On arrival in Britain, refugees from Egypt received little popular support, and far less than the Hungarians: '[We] have no official support for our Appeal. Some of the Press, notably *The Times*, is antagonistic, the rest are lukewarm... And so the future results of our Appeal are not rosy unless we discover means to arouse more enthusiasm than now exists.'¹²⁴ The refugees' reception was conditioned by widespread hostility to the campaign led by Britain in the Suez Canal and its failed attempt to regain control over the region along with France

¹²² TNA, HO 240/105, Report of the Board's Employment Adviser on Oxton, 20 February 1958.

¹²³ TNA, HO 240/77, Notes on hostels, n.d.

¹²⁴ TNA, HO 297/7, Martin to Newsam, 25 January 1957.

and Israel. As a result, the appeal launched by the AEAS did not receive the official support from the government that it expected.

There was then a problem of perception from the public of the Anglo-Egyptians' identity by the public and the press. The fact that they were described as British nationals led newspapers and the public to believe that they needed less help in comparison with the Hungarians who were foreigners.¹²⁵ Hungarian refugees were described as freedom fighters in November and December 1956 and their situation was much more appealing to the British press and population. The construction of the image of the Hungarian refugees in the press and in parliamentary debates constantly swung between the concepts of the Hungarians who 'came not merely as refugees from oppression but as fighters for freedom with the light of battle of their eyes'¹²⁶ and the 'men, women and children [who] have had to flee from possible death and imprisonment at home to an uncertain life abroad'.¹²⁷ In the first couple of months following the revolution, references to Hungarian refugees oscillated between freedom fighters and victims of oppression. They were not perceived as economic immigrants nor referred to as such publicly. At a popular level, the Hungarian refugees reached a level of acceptability that the refugees from Egypt were not even close to achieving due to the unpopularity of the Suez Crisis in Britain, and being unwanted by the British government. The emphasis both in the government and in the press and public had always been on supporting the Hungarian refugees, while the support for the Anglo-

¹²⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 13 December 1956.

¹²⁶ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 560, col. 1468, 19 November 1956

¹²⁷ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 562, col. 1338, 19 December 1956.

Egyptians was left to the care of the government, and the stateless refugees from Egypt were almost completely forgotten in all public discourses.

The refugees from Egypt felt that their treatment was far from what they should have received as British nationals, and believed that not only were they poorly helped and treated by governmental organisations, but that Britain was more interested in helping the refugees from Hungary. This situation led to protests by some of the refugees. In two of the hostels, the refugees started to complain quite vociferously: in Eastwood Hostel in Nottingham they organised a campaign,¹²⁸ while the residents at the Summerfield Hostel, near Kidderminster, went on hunger strike.¹²⁹

At Eastwood Hostel, a group of residents organised a committee to protest against their reception in Britain. They elected a chair, contacted the press and wrote a petition to the Home Office. Seventy of the 300 residents signed the petition to complain mainly about compensation and emigration.¹³⁰ Their case was supported by an article in the *Manchester Guardian* which, they claimed, meant that 'all of England knew how the refugees in Eastwood hostel were treated'. The article itself reported that 'everybody considered the refugees from Egypt to be an embarrassment' despite them being British subjects.¹³¹

However, the two main complaints in the petition and the article were compensation and re-emigration. It claims that since the Egyptian authorities confiscated all of their assets the refugees were left with virtually nothing and

¹²⁸ TNA, HO 240/95, Petition from the Eastwood Hostel residents, 7 March 1957.

¹²⁹ TNA, HO 240/98, AERB, Minutes of meeting, 20 February 1958.

¹³⁰ TNA, HO 240/95, Petition from the Eastwood Hostel residents, 7 March 1957.

¹³¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 7 March 1957.

were expecting more than a low weekly allowance. As far as re-emigration was concerned, the article claims that two-thirds of the refugees wanted to re-emigrate to Canada but they did not qualify because they had no sponsor there. The last complaint concerned the very poor state of the accommodation in the hostel, with two or three families having to share the same room. By having this article published the refugees managed to catch the attention of the Home Office which sent a representative on 15 March. But more than that, it shows how much these refugees feared to be silenced and forgotten in Britain. It shows as well how the hostel system put in place by the Home Office was inadequate in solving the refugees' issues.

The Home Office representative described the 70 refugees who complained as young men, single and married, who refused to co-operate and to take up the jobs offered. The representative proposed no solution nor recommended any particular action to be taken. He also denied in his report that some families were sharing the same room but confirmed that the main issues were compensation and re-emigration,¹³² though Anna Lüdwig remembers very clearly that if families were not staying together, older women had to share the same room with younger women, which everyone found very difficult:

We stayed in a big room. The women were in one place and the men were somewhere else. It wasn't very nice because old women and young people with small children had to be together... During the day we met somewhere else. It was a big hall, you meet the men, the children, after

¹³² TNA, HO 240/95, Visit to Eastwood Hostel, Nottingham, on 15 March 1957.

that they put you somewhere else: women on one side, men somewhere else.¹³³

The separation from her husband proved difficult, because, although she had a British passport, she spoke little English. The handling of the refugee crisis at Eastwood accentuated the feeling of loss and loneliness, common to the refugee experience. Anna Ludwig's testimony indicates that rooms were shared by different people and contradicts the report. A mother and her child still makes a family, despite the Home Office more conservative vision of a family being husband, wife and children.

The Home Office visitor in Eastwood explained as well that the reason some refugees refused to take up the jobs offered was because after all the years of experience they had in Egypt and their age, they refused to start from the bottom again, with a salary much below their needs; claims which were obviously not those of young men. The trend became general in April 1957 as more refugees refused to take up jobs and housing far from hostels if that meant leaving their wives and hostel community behind.¹³⁴ Victor Lagnado, the Chairman of the newly founded Eastwood Hostel Refugees Committee, expressed concern about the way the British refugees from Egypt were treated as if they were not entitled to the treatment of the other British citizens.

The day of the visit, Lagnado wrote to the Chairman of the AERB to express in detail their complaints in six main points: the insufficient amount of paid in

¹³³ Interview with Anna Ludwig.

¹³⁴ TNA, HO 240/102, AERB, Minutes, 2 July 1957.

allowances to the refugees, the absence of compensation, the absence of a public campaign matching the one for the Hungarian refugees, the difficulties for the refugees from Egypt to emigrate to Australia or any other country of the Commonwealth, the poor jobs offered, and the insufficient pocket money received.¹³⁵ In the letter, Lagnado held the British government responsible for the situation of the refugees from Egypt. His argument was that if Britain had never launched a military operation with France and Israel to regain control of the Suez Canal, the Anglo-Egyptians would still have had their assets and properties. That was why the refugees from Eastwood hostel asked for proper compensation in order to resettle. The letter appeals for basic human rights and dignity:

We believe that the Government should advance money from public funds... for this is a matter which touch deeply everybody in his dignity and selfpride and the least we would expect from the Government, to show that the British refugees are well looked after and treated on the same level as any British citizen in the United Kingdom.¹³⁶

Lagnado stated that the British refugees from Egypt felt like 'poor cousins abandoned in hostels living like animals'. The refugees from Eastwood hostel obviously played on their nationality as British citizens to catch the attention of the Home Office accused of not taking care of their nationals, while the expression 'poor cousins' emphasises how the refugees in this hostel actually felt. Anna Lüdwig recalled that:

¹³⁵ TNA, HO 240/95, Lagnado to Colyton, 15 March 1957.

¹³⁶ TNA, HO 240/95, Lagnado to Colyton, 15 March 1957.

Eastwood was like an army. You go, take your plate and they put the food on it and so on. It wasn't very good, really. We felt like we were nothing in Eastwood. We had to do the washing ourselves by hand, I wasn't used to that, I had a maid to do everything. My hands used to be swollen. We didn't have any support really at all from them. They treated you like nothing. There were some poor people and they were happy to find the food for them but we weren't happy...I don't want to know about Eastwood anymore. It is like a nightmare I don't want to remember. I haven't got a clue what it has become, I don't want to know. I was happy to leave it, that's it. It was the end of it!¹³⁷

Though she did not sign the petition, it is clear that she had difficulties adapting to her new environment. Despite the work of the AERB, the change was too brutal for some of the refugees from Egypt, used to a better life in Egypt, where they could enjoy the comfort of upper-middle-class life, as most of them had servants and cars. The change of life was very hard to handle. As the refugees from Egypt in Britain were British subjects for the great majority, some of them expected better conditions after their reception.

Reports such as that by the Home Office representative show that the Home Office and the AERB considered the refugees from Egypt as foreign to British culture. This cultural difference meant that regardless of their citizenship, the British refugees from Egypt were Britons of another kind as far as the British government was concerned. The claims made by the refugees at Eastwood

¹³⁷ Interview with Anna Lüdwig.

hostel that they felt like 'poor cousins' was well founded, for if their British citizenship was indeed acknowledged, they nevertheless considered them having an Egyptian culture. This attitude was common among the British government as well as the AERB and other voluntary organisations like the WVS.¹³⁸

The Eastwood campaign succeeded in reaching the House of Commons. Maurice Orbach, Labour MP for Willesden East, denounced the hesitancies of the government to help the British refugees from Egypt in comparison with the help the refugees from Hungary received.¹³⁹ He accused the government of 'niggardliness', and strongly criticised the fact that refugees could file their claims to the Foreign Office for restitution from the Egyptian government in what he saw as a 'clerical exercise and not any desire to help our own people who were in such grave trouble'. But, above all, Orbach criticised sharply the general silence surrounding the situation of the refugees in Britain, blaming the government for taking no action due to its embarrassment regarding the whole Suez crisis, which he himself had opposed:

But what is more alarming... is the fact that everybody is so ominously quiet about the Egyptian expellees. Why such generosity, which I applaud, towards the Hungarians, in contrast to the way in which we have forgotten the fact that we have our own folk, stateless people and others, not from Hungary? Do the Government feel so guilty about what they were responsible for some months ago, that they cannot do the honest,

¹³⁸ TNA, HO 240/23, Anglo-Egyptian Dossier, May 1957.

¹³⁹ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 566, col. 715-31, 8 March 1957.

decent and simple thing? I think this problem should be aired, and I hope that we shall put it in its proper proportions.¹⁴⁰

Orbach suspected that the British action in Egypt discredited the government so much, that it preferred not to advertise the situation of the British refugees from Egypt, leaving them forgotten in the hostels in inadequate conditions. In not putting forward the case of the refugees from Egypt, the British government was able to play down the consequences of a lost fight with Egypt and the human forced migration which resulted. The fact that the refugees were rarely mentioned in the press minimised their visibility to the public and they became just a minor event caught in the middle of the Suez crisis.

As far as the AERB was concerned, Lord Colyton tried to brush their worries aside claiming that the AERB was not in a position to discuss the question of compensation since it was not its role, but reminded them that the question would be treated during a parliamentary debate in the near future.¹⁴¹ Lord Colyton mentioned as well the grants that were at the disposal of the refugees to help them resettling, implicitly admitting that the payments they received were insufficient alone. On the public appeal, though he refused to extensively comment on it or blame anyone for the lack of funds received, he suggested that because it was made in 'the shadow of the appeal' for the Hungarians less money had been raised.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ *Hansard*, HC (series 5), vol. 566, col. 722, 8 March 1957.

¹⁴¹ TNA, HO 240/95, Colyton to Eastwood Hostel refugees, 27 March 1957.

¹⁴² TNA, HO 240/95, Colyton to Eastwood Hostel refugees, 27 March 1957.

Lord Colyton argued as well that the fact that the AERB was created showed 'the strong public sympathy for our fellows subjects from Egypt in their plight'. Then, he reminded the residents as well that the positions that they held in Egypt could not be offered in Britain as the system was different in Britain from the one in Egypt and that standards could differ greatly. Finally, as far as emigration was concerned, he reminded the refugees that the Australian authorities were the only body dealing with admission to Australia, and that the AERB would pay for travel expenses if they were eligible for emigration.¹⁴³

Although the protest was not of the same scale as in Eastwood, 150 out of the 400 refugees at Summerfield Hostel went on hunger strike in February 1958, a few days before a meeting to complain about the fact that after a transfer from another hostel to Summerfield, some of the out of work refugees had to pay maintenance charges from their unemployment benefits.¹⁴⁴ Money was again the problem, and the refugees felt they were struggling too much. Emigration was also a reason for the hunger strike, which was triggered after one individual was refused emigration to Australia on medical grounds. The refugees felt that they should be authorised to emigrate to Australia if this was their wish, and that the AERB should help them regarding this matter.

The AERB's answer to the hunger strike demands was that maintenance charges had to be taken off their unemployment benefits, whether or not the refugees were familiar with this system.¹⁴⁵ Regarding emigration, the AERB, even though it was not its role, appealed to the Australian authorities to

¹⁴³ TNA, HO 240/95, Colyton to Eastwood Hostel refugees, 27 March 1957.

¹⁴⁴ TNA, HO 240/98, AERB, Minutes of meeting, 20 February 1958.

¹⁴⁵ TNA, HO 240/98, AERB, Minutes of meeting, 20 February 1958.

reconsider their decision. The AERB and the Home Office considered that they were not in a position to do more than what they were already doing for the refugees.

The case of Eastwood Hostel reflects how inadequate the treatment of the British refugees from Egypt in hostels was, mirrored by the hunger strike at Summerfield.¹⁴⁶ The British government failed to understand the condition of the British refugees from Egypt, and their basic needs. They responded to this refugee crisis by privileging an administrative approach rather than a humanitarian one. Moreover, Anglo-Egyptians did not represent economic or political interests the way Hungarian refugees did. They were more of an embarrassment, consequence of the failed campaign in Egypt, and the British government wanted to avoid any publicity on their situation.

The financial difficulties that the reception of Anglo-Egyptians were facing led Israel Sieff, who had previously been worried about Nasser's treatment of Jews in Egypt, to interrogate whether refugees from Egypt and Hungary had been treated differently.

¹⁴⁶ TNA, HO 240/98, Summerfield Hostel, Complaints and Hunger Strike, n.d.

-Questioning differences of treatment

So far this chapter has argued that, despite considering them as undesirable immigrants, the government tried to make a special effort for the Anglo-Egyptians, which the refugees felt was unsuitable in some cases. I will now compare the treatment of the refugees from Egypt with the refugees from Hungary to uncover differences but also similarities in their treatment.

A year after the first refugees from Egypt arrived, Political and Economic Planning (PEP), a think tank whose vice-chairman was Israel Sieff, made a comparative study of the reception and treatment of the refugees from Hungary and the refugees from Egypt.¹⁴⁷ When it was published in 1958, less than 1,500 Hungarians and a similar number of Anglo-Egyptians were still in hostels, which gave PEP a basis to draw early conclusions.¹⁴⁸ It especially questioned the extent to which the refugees' origins influenced governmental and public responses. It considered that the Hungarian refugees were 'typical of many refugees of the past: citizens of a foreign nation who came here for political reasons. The Anglo-Egyptians on the other hand were not foreigners, but British subjects: not strictly speaking refugees, but expellees, expatriates.'¹⁴⁹ If the Hungarians were typical in the sense that they left their country for political reasons, and in some cases to avoid possible imprisonment, deportation, or death sentence, the Anglo-Egyptians were different as they were forced out of Egypt and because they were British subjects. There was thus a negative

¹⁴⁷ TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain, 8 January 1958.

¹⁴⁸ TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain Memorandum, 8 January 1958.

¹⁴⁹ TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain, 8 January 1958.

connotation regarding the Anglo-Egyptians, as they were undesirable, expelled from another country and imposed on to Britain for resettlement. The mixed reactions in Britain caused by the Suez crisis added to this negative connotation. PEP concluded that their arrival was thus more problematic than that of the Hungarians:

Irrespective of the views about the rights or wrongs of the Suez intervention, the expellees could hardly be other than an embarrassment. The Hungarian refugees were a national political asset: the Anglo-Egyptians a considerable liability. A fairly general reaction was that the Government should be responsible for helping those who had suffered, in some measure at least, as a result of their own policies.¹⁵⁰

In both cases, the perception of the public about refugees was linked to its feelings regarding the Suez crisis and the Hungarian revolution. This situation meant that there were less public funds available for the refugees from Egypt than for the Hungarians who benefited from the Lord Mayor's fund.

Yet, there were moral and political imperatives for the British government to support the refugees from Egypt, especially since most of them were British nationals, in order to avoid further criticism regarding the Suez campaign. To compensate for the publicity and financial aid refugees from Hungary received and to tackle any criticism on the human consequences of the Suez intervention, refugees from Egypt received higher maintenance through the

¹⁵⁰ TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain, 8 January 1958.

AERB than Hungarian refugees were receiving through the NAB. They thus relied more heavily on public funds, and were regarded as financial burden. They also benefited from favourable resettlement grants.¹⁵¹

The vocabulary used in the quotation above perfectly sums up the British immigration policy regarding the two waves of refugees: liability and asset. The economic and political advantages that Hungarian refugees represented were opposed to the cost and the negative impact linked to Suez that refugees from Egypt represented for the British government. The Anglo-Egyptians were considered a political liability by the British government as they were one of the consequences of the failed attempt to reclaim control of the Suez Canal. Their expulsion from Egypt and their British nationality turned them into British casualties, and the government was responsible for their support once in Britain. The word liability also suggests that despite their nationality, they were not desired in Britain by the government, and rather reluctantly accepted for resettlement as it was impossible to refuse entry to British nationals.

As far as the PEP report was concerned, the Hungarian refugees were thus considered as political and economic assets. Welcoming Hungarians in Britain was a way to compensate for the mixed reactions that followed the Suez campaign. The economic potential of the Hungarians was accentuated by the NCB scheme.

¹⁵¹ TNA, AST 7/1621, Future financial arrangements for Hungarian refugees, 17 May 1957.

Yet, the PEP report failed to see all of the government's reasons in having different organisations in charge of the two refugee groups. The composition of the BCAR and the AERB was similar in many points. The Hungarian Department in the BCAR was a creation of the government, composed of civil servants on secondment, retired civil servants, and voluntary workers. The AERB was also staffed by voluntary workers as well, including some of the AEAS, and civil servants on loan from their Departments.¹⁵² It meant, that despite the status of non-governmental organisation of the BCAR, its Hungarian Department was staffed in the way the AERB was. It thus gave the British government closer control on every matter regarding the resettlement of refugees. The situation was even clearer when the BCAR was stripped off its responsibilities in favour of the National Assistance Board in October 1957, following the exhaustion of the Lord Mayor's Fund.¹⁵³ Despite having different organisations in charge of the refugees from Egypt and from Hungary, the British government kept a tight control over the two groups, contrary to France which relied on the Cojasor for resettlement of the refugees from Egypt.

However the Anglo-Egyptians' attitude in comparison with the Hungarians was commended by the PEP report. The problem for the Hungarians was that having been welcomed as heroes and made the centre of attention, their demands became more and more pressing and they felt let down when they were not satisfied. The Home Office was expecting the Hungarians refugees simply to be grateful:

¹⁵² TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain, 8 January 1958.

¹⁵³ TNA, AST 7/1621, Future financial arrangements for Hungarian refugees, 17 May 1957.

It might have been expected that the Hungarians would be particularly amenable, being filled with gratitude for the help and generosity of the British people, while the Anglo-Egyptians would be embittered at being expelled from Egypt and insistent on the duty and responsibility of the British Government towards them... Many of the Hungarian refugees came to Britain expecting far too much... In such a frame of mind it was not easy to settle down to learn English, take a job and build up a home from nothing.¹⁵⁴

While propaganda, notably through Radio Free Europe, may have given the Hungarian refugees false hopes, their popular reception and financial support both advantaged them and posed problems. Many refugees from Hungary quickly realised that Britain did not live up to their expectations, and being accommodated in camps, after their previous experience in Austria or Yugoslavia, did not help. On the contrary, while criticism was expected from the Egyptians and gratitude from the Hungarians, it proved to have been the opposite:

Reports of the reactions of Anglo-Egyptian expellees show that although indeed they mostly held the Government responsible for their situation, they have not been unduly intransigent. The chief difficulty has arisen from their refusal to accept jobs which they consider beneath their status

¹⁵⁴ TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain Memorandum, 8 January 1958.

and qualifications in Egypt, sometimes for language reasons, and sometimes because requirements in this country are more rigorous.¹⁵⁵

While the Hungarian refugees both in Britain and France represented an easily employable population, finding employment and accommodation for the refugees from Egypt was more problematic. Indeed, they were in general of an older group age with people in their forties or fifties, and they were mostly families.¹⁵⁶ Moreover, many of the refugees from Egypt owned businesses or shops, and were well-educated, although some families were willing to make sacrifices.

The PEP report therefore clearly established the economic and political advantages than the Hungarian refugees represented for the British government, in contrast with the Anglo-Egyptians. Although the PEP report made interesting points on the differences of treatment between the two groups of refugees, it remains incomplete. The report only partially analysed the different immigration policies for the two waves of refugees. Moreover, it did not mention the role of Anglo-Jewry in their reception, and finally did not see the influence of the Cold War context in accepting refugees.

¹⁵⁵ TNA, AST 7/1621, Refugees in Britain Memorandum, 8 January 1958.

¹⁵⁶ COJ.R.Egy.A1, Dix ans d'action sociale en faveur des Réfugiés d'Égypte (1956-1966).

-Anglo-Jewry and the Egyptians

Like Maurice Orbach, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the Central British Fund were very concerned with the situation of the Jews in Egypt and Britain. As early as November 1956, the Board of Deputies asked its members to lobby their local MP in order to 'secure [the refugees] the maximum moral, financial and physical assistance to achieve a resettlement in this country should they ever require it.'¹⁵⁷ A delegation from the Board of Deputies, led by their President, the MP Barnett Janner, met with David Ormsby-Gore and W. F. Deedes, ministers at the Foreign Office and the Home Office respectively, to discuss the position of Jews in Egypt, and what could be done by the British government to improve the situation. The delegation demanded that the British government use its influence at the United Nations to stop the persecution in Egypt, and that if refugees were to come to Britain, facilities of asylum of a similar fashion to the ones accorded to the Hungarian refugees be granted. The government promised that Britain would join Israel to defend the case of the Jews of Egypt at the United Nations but refused to offer any guarantees. The Foreign Office and the Home Office did not know how many refugees to expect, and told the delegation that if the British nationals were to be accepted for asylum without problem, consideration was to be given in the case of stateless Jews with British relatives, whereas Jews of other nationalities could not be granted asylum.¹⁵⁸ While the British government showed apparent

¹⁵⁷ LMA, ACC/3121/E/02/059, Circular of the Board of Jewish Deputies to its members on the situation of the Jews in Egypt, 29 November 1956.

¹⁵⁸ LMA, ACC/3121/B/06/002/034, Meeting at FO, 30 November 1956.

goodwill to receive Hungarian refugees without number restrictions, it was not willing to do the same for the Jews of Egypt.

As far as the few non-British Jews of Egypt who managed to seek refuge in Britain thanks to relatives in the country were concerned, the Board of Deputies, through its Aliens Committee, helped them with their applications to the Home Office in order to have their situation regularised. The Jews of British nationality were not in need of such help as they were able to come to the country and seek employment freely. However, the Sephardi community along with the Board of Deputies helped them with their religious needs, especially regarding kosher food.¹⁵⁹ David M., who stayed at Eastwood hostel, remembers that only after a couple of days, Rabbi Posen from Nottingham, chose him to go to collect kosher meat from the butcher. With the rabbi's help, the 17-year-old David M. was placed into a Jewish family in Nottingham after only two weeks in the camp.¹⁶⁰

The Jewish Refugees Committee, created in 1933 by Otto Schiff in response to the first wave of German Jewish refugees in Britain, also helped the refugees from Egypt to resettle in Britain or emigrate elsewhere. By June 1957, the Egyptian Section of the London Branch of the Jewish Refugees Committee had dealt with 389 families, representing approximately 1,000 individuals, among whom 200 were stateless refugees or of a nationality other than British and allowed to stay in Britain thanks to close British relatives.¹⁶¹ The refugees were considered to be for the main part employable, except for those too old. Those

¹⁵⁹ LMA, ACC/3121/G/01/001/035, Annual Report 1956.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with David M.

¹⁶¹ LMA, ACC/3121/G/01/001/036, Annual Report 1957.

with low incomes were financially supported by the Board of Deputies.

Accommodation out of hostels remained a far bigger problem, but the help of the Board of Deputies and the local Jewish communities was such that only a few people were left in hostels by mid-1957.¹⁶² The Anglo-Jewish organisations shared a similar goal with the British government: getting the refugees out of the hostels as quickly as possible.¹⁶³ Of the 250 refugees in Frobisher Hall and Drake Hall, almost all had been resettled thanks to the Jewish Refugees Committee branch in Manchester, 25 families having been resettled in Manchester and the rest in or around London. All the 80 Jewish residents at Bridgend hostel resettled mainly in and around London. Residents at the other hostels in Eastwood, Greenbanks, and Eaves Brow Hall were almost all reaccommodated in Liverpool and Leeds.¹⁶⁴ However, these Jewish refugees represented only those known by the service of the Jewish organisations in Britain, so the numbers provided by the Board of Deputies can only partly reflect the total population of Jewish refugees in British hostels.

Indeed, the Board of Deputies was not mandated by the government for the relief of the Jewish refugees from Egypt, as it did not distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees from Egypt. As a result, the Jewish organisations could not reach as easily the refugees in camps in comparison with the Cojasor in France. The CBF counted in April 1957 only 225 Jewish refugees in British hostels,¹⁶⁵ while the Board of Deputies estimated the number to be 410, taking into account only the hostels with a significant Jewish

¹⁶² LMA, ACC/3121/A/038, Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, 3 June 1957.

¹⁶³ LMA, ACC/2793/01/01/04, CBF, Minutes of the Council, 8 January 1957.

¹⁶⁴ LMA, ACC/3121/A/038, Report by the Chairman of the Aliens Committee, n.d.

¹⁶⁵ LMA, ACC/2793/01/01/04, CBF, Minutes of the Council, 1 April 1957.

population.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, these figures do not acknowledge the Jewish refugees who managed to stay with relatives when they arrived in Britain, and those who were already in Britain, such as students, when the expulsions began. However, at its peak, in 1960, 723 families from Egypt representing 2,108 persons, of which 354 families, representing 1,115 British nationals, were registered with the Jewish Refugees Committee.¹⁶⁷ It took more time than in France for British Jewish organisations to be able to register most of the Jewish refugees from Egypt.

The Jewish organisations were faced with the same problems of accommodation as the AERB. The CBF acknowledged that the fact that the middle- and upper-middle-class Jewish refugees who arrived penniless had a harder time adapting to the conditions in Britain, especially since most of them were composed of large family groups for which accommodation was hard to find.¹⁶⁸ Families who came to Britain in smaller numbers could find suitable housing more easily. Sylvia Jordan's father benefited from the help of the local Jewish community to find accommodation in Birmingham with other Jewish families from Egypt in an old Victorian house, after her father had turned down a job and house offer in Kidderminster, near the hostel they were staying in, to join a bigger Jewish community.¹⁶⁹ Thus, the Board of Deputies helped Jewish refugees to find both employment and accommodation, in addition to help from the government, allowing them to leave hostels quicker than some of the non-Jewish refugees, especially those in old age.

¹⁶⁶ LMA, ACC/3121/A/038, Report by the Chairman of the Aliens Committee, n.d.

¹⁶⁷ LMA, ACC/2793/05/A/105, 27th Annual Report of the Central British Fund, July 1960.

¹⁶⁸ LMA, ACC/2793/05/A/102, CBF, 24th Annual Report, 1 December 1957.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Sylvia Jordan.

The fact that those associations had mainly operated independently from the British government showed the difference with the French way of handling the Egyptian refugee crisis, as the French government largely relied on the Cojasor to provide support and relief. The British government did not turn the Egyptian crisis into a Jewish question, though it did rely to a point on Jewish organisations to provide Jewish support. It was only when the AERB closed down in 1960, that the Home Office contacted the CBF to assume permanent responsibility for the remaining Jews from Egypt who had not been resettled yet, granting an undisclosed amount to the CBF in order to support them.¹⁷⁰ The AEAS helped the Jewish Refugee Committee by paying weekly allowances to the refugees, while the AERB facilitated the access to the hostels for their officials. However, the appeal launched by the Central British Fund reached half of the £200,000 target by mid-1957.¹⁷¹ Despite these difficulties, the Jewish organisations managed to offer permanent accommodation and employment faster in comparison with other refugees who only relied on government support.

-Leaving the hostels

There were only a limited number of ways for the refugees to leave the hostels. Most refugees who had relatives in Britain prior to the Suez crisis were out of the hostels before the AERB took over, if those relatives had enough money or

¹⁷⁰ LMA, ACC/2793/05/A/105, CBF, 27th Annual Report, July 1960.

¹⁷¹ LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/A/013, Minutes of the Foreign Affairs Committee, 3 June 1957.

space to accommodate them. The other solutions to leave the hostels were to find a job and private accommodation, or to re-emigrate to another country.

For the refugees who decided to settle in Britain, being in employment was the prime concern in order to be independent. As many of the refugees from Egypt were family groups, small or large, getting a job was often not enough to cover all the cost of life outside hostels. To that end, the AERB continued to pay maintenance allowances, and spent £935,500 in total to that effect. Moreover, not all private accommodation was furnished, and the AERB once again helped the refugees in the form of grants and loans for a total of £1,371,800, between £750 and £1000 for a family.¹⁷²

Some of the refugees had no choice other than to go to Britain due to their British nationality, whereas the Jews among them could always choose to emigrate to Israel. Emigration was one of the themes that led to disquiet in some of the hostels as the Eastwood hostel case suggested. Many refugees felt that their chances to emigrate somewhere else were small. Despite those concerns, the bulk of the refugees candidates for emigration left Britain quickly as the following table suggests:

¹⁷² TNA, HO 240/5, AERB, Final Report, March 1960.

Table 7.2: Numbers and destinations of refugees from Egypt emigrated from February 1957 to 31 December 1959

Origin and Destination	1957	1958	1959	Total
Persons from hostels to Australia	840	77	0	917
Persons from private accommodation to Australia	125	34	5	164
Total to Australia	965	111	5	1,081
Persons from hostels to other countries	197	21	6	224
Persons from private accommodation to other countries	213	25	1	239
Total to other countries	410	46	7	463
Grand total	1,375	157	12	1,544

(Source: TNA, HO 240/77 Notes on hostels, n.d.)

Table 7.2 clearly shows the attraction of Australia for the refugees, as it was the destination for two-thirds of the refugees emigrating. It was at the time a country representing a better life much like the United States and Canada, not only just for the refugees, as skilled professionals were also emigrating to the old colonies in search of better quality of life and higher wages.¹⁷³ Israel was the main destination for refugees leaving Egypt, and it was estimated that 20,000 Jews from Egypt had emigrated there.¹⁷⁴ The majority of the refugees who emigrated to Israel did not transit through Britain, which explains why Australia was the most attractive destination for Anglo-Egyptians. Other destinations included Brazil, Canada, Italy, Cyprus, France, Libya, Lebanon,

¹⁷³ Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London, 2005), pp.290-1.

¹⁷⁴ LMA, ACC/3121/C/11/A/013, Foreign Affairs Committee, Minutes, 8 October 1957.

Sudan, United States, and East Africa.¹⁷⁵ Although emigration to those countries was much smaller, it reflects the attachment of some of the refugees to the Mediterranean region, while others went to France or English-speaking countries.

It was the AERB itself which initiated discussions with the High Commissioner for Australia to accept large numbers of Egyptians, despite earlier claims that the organisation was not dealing with emigration issues.¹⁷⁶ The Australian government accepted all the refugees who had permits or proof of permits issued by the Australian authorities in Egypt before their expulsion, on the condition that they did not occupy berths allocated for other British emigrants. This condition was decided because there were waiting lists of 50,000 British for emigration to Australia, and the Australian government did not want to privilege Anglo-Egyptians for emigration. Other refugees could be accepted, subject to the Australian fulfilment of immigration requirements, and following interviews and medical examinations by Australian immigration officers in hostels.¹⁷⁷ The Australian authorities accepted 1,400 refugees for resettlement.¹⁷⁸ Table 7.2 shows that the offer exceeded the number of refugees who emigrated to Australia. It can be explained by the fact that some eventually decided to emigrate somewhere else or decided to stay in Britain after all.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, HO 240/77, Notes on hostels, n.d.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, HO 240/22, Minutes of a meeting of the AERB, 7 March 1957.

¹⁷⁷ TNA, HO 240/18, Note of a meeting of hostel wardens, welfare and liaison officers at AERB headquarters, 19 March 1957.

¹⁷⁸ TNA, HO 240/22, Australian Chief Immigration Officer to AERB, 19 March 1957; Message from Colyton to refugees, n.d.

A large number of refugees re-emigrated as the figure of 1,544 individuals suggests. If the refugees were not pushed to re-emigrate, their re-emigration was facilitated by the AERB who centralised all the demands and processed them with the concerned foreign authorities. More than just attractive places for work and living-standards, many refugees did not cope very well with the British climate, especially since most of them arrived during the 1956-1957 winter.¹⁷⁹

All the hostels apart from Bridgend had closed by the end of 1959. Bridgend housed the refugees who represented the greatest problems for re-employment and permanent accommodation elsewhere. The hostel became the place where all the refugees having problems for resettlement were transferred to. Bridgend eventually closed in March 1960, while 25 mainly elderly and sick people were still receiving allowances from the AERB and were in private accommodation, unable or unwilling to move to residential clubs in Gloucestershire.¹⁸⁰ They became the responsibility of the AEAS as the AERB was wound up. The AERB did not recommend the creation of a new ad hoc body, but encouraged the refugees to use the existing social services if needed.¹⁸¹

It is difficult to draw a pattern regarding attitudes towards naturalisation as very few stateless Jews managed to resettle permanently in Britain. Yet, for some of them, despite the fact that the stateless refugees from Egypt in Britain had to report to the Aliens Department of the Home Office as foreigners, those interviewed barely mentioned it, and when mentioned it was far from being the

¹⁷⁹ Interviews with Jenny Stewart, David M.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, HO 240/5, AERB, Final Report, March 1960.

¹⁸¹ TNA, HO 240/92, Bridgend Working Sub-Committee, Minutes, 27 February 1959.

traumatic event it was for the stateless refugees from Egypt in France. Being naturalised British was all that mattered, as Sebastian Salama remembers:

When I left Egypt, we came here. I took a decision and I thought, now, we are British! My loyalty is to this country. I owe this country a hell of a lot. My children are British.... Total loyalty to the country. I love it. I have absolutely no concern about Egypt or the Egyptians. I never had any wish to go back as a tourist or otherwise.¹⁸²

His gratitude towards the British government is framed by the expulsion from Egypt. He arrived with nothing in Britain, after having being expelled from Egypt. The help he received in Britain made him feel wanted there.

-Conclusion

When the Egyptian government began to threaten British nationals with expulsions, Anthony Eden interpreted it as a move to bring further pressure on the British government, which was already criticised for the intervention by the United States and at the United Nations.¹⁸³ While mentioning in his memoirs the expulsion of 2,500 British nationals out of 10,000 and 3,500 French nationals, Eden claimed that no general expulsion took place thanks to British

¹⁸² Interview with Sebastian Salama.

¹⁸³ Eden, *Full Circle*, p.567.

diplomatic pressure.¹⁸⁴ This chapter has shown that what happened was very different.

Refugees from Egypt were only accepted reluctantly in Britain, and the Home Office tried to accept only those it could not refuse, since they had British passports or close families ties. British immigration policies and practices were such that as they were coming from Africa, they were associated with West Indian immigration at a time when the Cabinet was not in favour of what it called 'coloured immigration'. The middle-class background of the refugees did not match the labour needs of Britain. Moreover, the fact that most of the refugees from Egypt were Jewish was not considered an asset, as immigration policies were applied in such a way to prevent any major wave of Jewish immigration.

The refugees from Egypt were granted asylum due to political and national obligation rather than on a humanitarian basis. Moreover, the reception of the refugees from Egypt was tainted with racial prejudice from some members of the government and the AERB. This attitude towards the refugees framed their reception. The two experimental hostels of Crowborough and Oxtun also show that they knew little about the Anglo-Egyptians and how to resettle them successfully, when on top of those issues, only limited funds were available. The cases of Eastwood and Summerfield illustrate the limits of the refugee policy of the Home Office, and how it affected their resettlement, while no such disruption was reported with the Egyptian refugees in France. Although

¹⁸⁴ Eden, *Full Circle*, pp.575-6.

not a complete failure, the Home Office policy of resettlement of the refugees from Egypt was ill-adapted and sometimes ineffective. As a consequence, it only achieved complete resettlement in early 1960, that is to say two years after the announced goal of resettling all the refugees by the end of 1957.

This chapter has shown that the lack of public and financial support for Anglo-Egyptians largely affected their treatment. While refugees from Hungary were on normal National Assistance rates, but benefited from large public funds, such as that of the Lord Mayor, there was only limited funds available for the refugees from Egypt. The government had to take the responsibility of financially supporting the refugees from Egypt, whereas the Hungarians were mainly funded by the Lord Mayor's fund. The Anglo-Egyptians did not receive direct financial assistance from the NAB, as press and popular pressure blamed the British government for their situation. It then gave the appearance that a special effort was made towards their resettlement, and that as British nationals, they were better treated than Hungarian refugees.¹⁸⁵ Yet it also strengthened the belief of the Home Office according which the immigration of refugees from Egypt needed to be kept to a minimum, because of its cost and the deemed little economic potential benefit for Britain.

Anglo-Egyptians were considered undesired migrants by the British government, but a special effort was made to dissociate the help they received from the Hungarians, which was considered not to have been enough by the Anglo-Egyptians. Unlike the French government, the British government thus

¹⁸⁵ TNA, AST 7/1602, Lloyd-George to Macmillan, 3 December 1956.

kept a tight control on the resettlement of both Hungarians and Anglo-Egyptians.

Considering the re-emigration rate among the refugees from Egypt, it is obvious that many did not want to resettle in Britain, or that they felt unwanted in Britain. The final report of the AERB demonstrates that despite their British nationality many among the refugees from Egypt needed to adapt to a new country and a new culture.¹⁸⁶ Although the Jews from Egypt gladly associated themselves with French and, for some of them, British cultures before the Suez crisis, once in Britain the differences between them and the British were exacerbated. It is striking that the feeling of being British among the refugees was less common than in France where refugees could speak the language, whereas it was not always the case in Britain. The predominance of the French culture on the minority communities in Egypt contributed as a factor in the difficulty of resettlement in Britain, as well as did the middle- and upper-middle-class background of the refugees from Egypt, hardly re-employable in 1957 Britain in jobs equivalent to what they previously had occupied. The refugees from Egypt were no longer completely Egyptian as they had been expelled, and were not totally British, as they were not considered to be so by the British government.

Despite the government's claims to provide special care to the Anglo-Egyptians, this chapter has shown that refugees from Hungary and from Egypt were under the care of similarly staffed organisations, which gave the Home

¹⁸⁶ TNA, HO 240/5, AERB, Final Report, March 1960.

Office more control . Yet the effects of this policy were different on the two groups of refugees. With less means and funds at their disposal, the refugees from Egypt had lower expectations than the Hungarian refugees according to the PEP report. Yet this chapter has shown that the refugees from Egypt in Eastwood Hostel managed to catch the attention of the Home Office to complain about their treatment. The lack of attention they received from the public and because they were not considered easily employable made them feel forgotten. There is no archival evidence of the Hungarians doing the same.

The Board of Deputies facilitated to some extent the resettlement of the Jews from Egypt by using pre-Second World War refugee organisations in order to support them. Although the British government did not turn the Egyptian refugee situation into a Jewish question, the Board of Deputies managed to provide the Jewish refugees known to their services with better support. In that aspect, their help was comparable to the support provided for the Hungarian Jews although for different reasons. In both cases, the Board of Deputies action was much more limited than the Cojasor action, but this was mainly due to a difference between French and British policies regarding the resettlement of refugees from Egypt.

Finally, the rate of re-emigration from Britain was much higher than in France. This can be explained by the fact that the Cojasor provided the refugees from Egypt with more adequate support by enabling them to resettle together for example than in Britain. The fact that many of the refugees from Egypt had a French culture is also a factor contributing to re-emigration.

8. Conclusion

Refugees from Hungary were considered as assets in France and Britain whereas refugees from Egypt were treated as liabilities, which had effects on their treatment and resettlement in the two countries. This thesis has shown that both refugee groups were accepted on the basis of immigration policies and practices, based on professional background, demographic needs and domestic views of ethnicity. This study also analysed the influence of the Cold War on the application of these immigration policies and the effects on their resettlement. These policies and practices were more favourable to the Hungarians than to the Egyptian refugees, but their effects on the refugees were different in each country.

The Cold War context was especially relevant before and just after refugees started to arrive in France and in Britain. Reactions following the Hungarian revolution were characterised by great popular support both in France and in Britain, which played a part in the reception of the Hungarian refugees. As far as the French and the British governments were concerned, they saw in the Hungarian revolution, and the subsequent refugee crisis in Austria, a way to divert attention from the Suez crisis, but also to be praised for their actions. Moreover, the thesis has suggested that, as NATO members, French and British humanitarian responses were motivated in large part by a desire foremost to weaken Soviet influence. It was considered a moral victory over Moscow to permanently resettle the Hungarian refugees in the West. In that

sense the Hungarian refugees were instrumentalized for propaganda purposes, and were political assets for Britain and France.

A particular feature of the French case was that the Hungarian refugees became an issue in French national politics. The repression of the Hungarian revolution, and the population displacement which followed, was the occasion for the Left and the Right to try to weaken as much as possible the PCF, at least in the short term. This was done under the pretext of demonstrating in support of Hungary and the Hungarians, which eventually led to the physical assault on the *L'Humanité* and the PCF headquarters. This was not the case in Britain.

The role of the PCF in France and the CPGB in Britain also played out in different ways, mostly due to their respective influences in national political life. Yet, both parties tried to present the Hungarian revolution and the refugees as fascists and antisemites in order to justify the repression of the revolution by the Soviet army with little success. The PCF and the CPGB's influence on the refugees' treatment was even more limited in the case of the refugees from Egypt. Following their frequently asserted support for Moscow after the suppression of the Hungarian revolution, both parties' focus was on the return of Communist order in Hungary and on a critique of the Suez campaign.

In contrast with the public support for the Hungarians, governments' responses to the refugees from Egypt was much less and was not primarily humanitarian. The initial efforts of Britain and especially France were to try to stop the expulsion by appealing to international laws and to the UN, and in particular by

focusing on the internment of their nationals in improvised prisons in Egypt. Yet, this was considered unadvisable in the end, as France feared it would be accused of the same in Algeria. It was only reluctantly that France and Britain accepted refugees from Egypt.

The British public considered that the refugees from Egypt were the responsibilities of the government, as they believed that their expulsion was the consequence of the military intervention in Egypt. While in France, there was popular and parliamentary support for the military intervention in Egypt, reactions were more mixed in Britain. The refugees from Egypt, thus, did not benefit from public support comparable to that given to the Hungarians.

If the Cold War played a part in the treatment of refugees, it does not alone explain why refugees from Hungary were accepted without limits while refugees from Egypt were not. The latter were, after all, Cold War refugees, just as the Hungarians were. The 1945 Ordinance on immigration and its application in France considerably favoured the immigration of Hungarian refugees because of their white European background, and because this group of refugees was mostly composed of single young men who could be employed in industrial or agricultural sectors. Missions of recruitment were sent to refugee camps in Austria and Yugoslavia to select refugees with the view of employing them in France in specific sectors.

The same Ordinance applied to the refugees from Egypt. The thesis has discussed the national and ethnic preferences linked to immigration despite the

1945 Ordinance making no mention of those. Because of their North African and Jewish identities, the refugees from Egypt were not considered to be suitable for resettlement in France. Moreover, they were large family groups, and their professional background did not match those needed in France at the time. If refugees with a French passport could not be legally prevented from resettling in France, stateless refugees and those with other nationalities were only accepted if they had relatives already living there. Despite the restrictive nature of this policy, it ended being interpreted sometimes positively by the French local administration in sympathy for the situation of the refugees. France's recent past also influenced such decisions. After the Vichy regime, France tried to remain united in commemorating deportation, and refusing Jewish refugees in 1956 would have endangered this search for unity.

The situation was slightly different in Britain for the Hungarians, as the Home Office was first opposed to their resettlement, on the principle that Britain was not a country generally open to immigration. However, the opportunity to employ Hungarians in sectors which lacked labour was not to be missed for the British government, and the vast majority of refugees were placed into employment quickly, as the refugees benefited from a positive interpretation of the 1953 Aliens Order. However, the recruitment of refugees by National Coal Board was a failure. The thesis has shown that, even if the Home Office eventually accepted the resettlement of Hungarians in Britain, it nevertheless remained suspicious on the nature of the refugees, and revived the Operation Post Report to watch them.

As far as the refugees from Egypt were concerned, Britain adopted a rule similar to France: only British nationals would be accepted for resettlement, and stateless refugees with relatives already established there. Britain applied this policy strictly. The refugees from Egypt were considered as a Jewish wave of immigration, and since 1905, Britain had regularly tried to control this type of immigration. The belief that Jews were responsible for antisemitism still existed in the 1950s.¹ Yet, Britain was celebrated for granting asylum to protect Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany and the government could limit immigration from Egypt without fearing accusations of antisemitism or being unsympathetic to Jewish refugees.

The colonial and postcolonial immigration contexts played out differently in both countries for the refugees from Hungary and Egypt. The fact that West Indian, Pakistani and Indian immigration was on the increase in Britain favoured the immigration of the Hungarian refugees, but limited the stateless refugees from Egypt to be accepted on strict conditions. Refugees from Egypt, whether British nationals or stateless, were associated with Commonwealth immigration, because of their North African origins.

Similarly, Egyptian refugees, French and stateless, were associated with colonial immigration from Algeria. As the 1945 Ordinance recommended the imposition of limits on North African immigration, and because of the Algerian War context, refugees from Egypt felt, for the most part, discriminated against and challenged in their own identity. They realised that, although they

¹ Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford, 1994), p.277.

considered themselves French or of French culture, they were sometimes treated as foreigners in France, and even as undesirable immigrants.

This study has assessed the impact of immigration policies had on the two groups of refugees. As the Hungarians were considered as labour immigrants rather than refugees, it caused some distress and misunderstandings about their situation between the refugees and the government. Both in France and in Britain some of the refugees refused to take up employment, with more explicit manifestations of this refusal in the French case. Most of the time, this situation was linked to the refugees' desire to emigrate somewhere else, as many expressed a preference for permanent resettlement in the United States or outside Europe. Yet, it was also linked to accommodation conditions, especially in France. The fact that the refugees were, for the most part, accommodated in isolated camps, usually old military barracks or forts made the refugees feel like prisoners.

The reception of the refugees from Egypt differed between France and Britain. In France, all the refugees from Egypt were accommodated in hotels until they permanently resettled with already established families or were placed into permanent accommodation through the Cojasor or by their own means. The geographic situation of the hotels varied as many refugees were accommodated in Marseille, Paris, and also smaller cities like Vichy. The accommodation of refugees from Egypt depended on the good will of the prefects in each region. Moreover, the refugees from Egypt were largely supported by the Cojasor, instead of the French government, which saw little benefit in the resettlement

of the refugees from Egypt. Thanks to the Cojasor and the Fonds Commun, many refugees were accommodated in newly-built blocks of flats around Paris, which kept alive the traditions of the Jews from Egypt. As a result, the Jewish response, mostly through the Cojasor, provided better treatment to the refugees from Egypt in comparison to what the Hungarian refugees received.

In Britain, the accommodation of refugees from Egypt was very similar to the one of the Hungarians. They too were accommodated in large refugee camps. To avoid criticism, the government gave Anglo-Egyptians the same treatment as any other British nationals on National Assistance Board's rate, and they remained the charges of governmental or semi-governmental organisations. The British government wanted to show that Anglo-Egyptians were treated like any other British citizens, despite being considered by some people as foreign to British culture and people. The fact that the great majority of the Anglo-Egyptians were British nationals led to some resentment on the refugees' parts who felt that they were not adequately treated. The example of the petition in Eastwood Hostel, near Nottingham, shows that the Anglo-Egyptians felt forgotten while the Hungarian refugees benefited from a large public and financial support. The government's policy made them feel challenged in their own identity as British nationals. These problems explain why a fair part of the Anglo-Egyptians chose to re-emigrate rather than to resettle in Britain. However, in comparison with France, Anglo-Jewish organisations were less present in the Anglo-Egyptians' resettlement, as the government was in charge.

The thesis has also shown that the role of French and British Jewish organisations was different in both countries, and depended on views on refugees as well as the political context. In France, the Cojasor had a key role in the resettlement of the refugees from Egypt because the French government considered them a Jewish wave of refugees, and was less interested in their resettlement. In Britain, the role of the Board of Jewish Deputies was limited, as the Home Office wanted to make sure the public knew the Anglo-Egyptians were at the charge of the government. The involvement of the two Jewish organisations is however similar in the case of the Hungarian refugees. The Cojasor and the Board, along with the CBF, intervened in refugee camps to take care of Hungarian Jews following reports of antisemitism.

The comparative aspect of the thesis has shown the limits of humanitarianism and joint decisions when it came to accept Hungarian refugees. The humanitarian objectives and the NATO directives to avoid a refugee crisis in Austria quickly were eventually replaced with France and Britain's own national interests, as shown by missions of recruitment in refugee camps in Austria and Yugoslavia in order to get the refugees who could take up employment in French and British industrial sectors needing workforce.

The comparison of the two refugee groups in France and in Britain has therefore uncovered more similarities in the treatment of refugees than differences, despite different immigration policies, and the reasons for that. The thesis has highlighted a major similarity in the French and British views on refugees from Hungary and from Egypt: both countries initially wanted to limit

the number of refugees from Egypt because of their North African and Jewish identities. The French and British nationality or culture of the refugees from Egypt was confronted to the French and British administrations and governments considering them as undesirable colonial immigrants and sometimes foreigners. On the other hand, Hungarian refugees were not of French or British culture, but were accepted for permanent resettlement in both country in large numbers. Thus, in 1956, French and British reactions towards refugees largely depended on the origins and the identity of the refugees. Having French or British nationality was not enough to be considered French or British by governments. Hungarians were considered to be better candidates for permanent resettlement, which implies eventual naturalisation, despite not sharing the same culture. Hungarians were associated with a common European identity, in contrast with the North African, colonial and Jewish identities of the refugees from Egypt.²

Yet, despite a similar policy of restricting refugee immigration from Egypt, French and British reasons for it varied. This thesis has shown that the main issue regarding refugees from Egypt was their Jewish and North African identities, which was associated with labour immigration from Algeria. On the other hand, the British government opposed their immigration based on Jewish and colonial identities, but also because of skin colour prejudice, as some officials believed the refugees from Egypt to be black. There is no evidence of similar prejudice linked to skin colour in France.³

² Gérard Noiriel, *A quoi sert "l'identité nationale" ?* (Marseille, 2007), p.48

³ Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (New York, 2006), pp.13-4.

Finally, because of the moral imperative linked to refugee immigration, France and Britain ended accepting refugees from Egypt but on different terms and for different reasons. As the refugees from Egypt were mainly French and British nationals, there was no other option than to accept them for resettlement. It is thus in handling the cases of stateless refugees that the terms of asylum were revealed. In both cases, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Office were willing to accept stateless refugees on the 1951 Geneva Convention terms. Yet, the Home Office managed to convince the Foreign Office to refrain from linking the expulsion to the creation of the State of Israel, denying the stateless refugees from a refugee passport. Contrary to the Hungarian refugees who had no connection with France and Britain, stateless refugees from Egypt had to have relatives in the country to be accepted for resettlement. The thesis, in comparing the two waves of refugees in France and in Britain, has thus revealed the exclusionary nature of asylum. It was only moderated by consideration of the hardship of the refugees by local administration in France, although on rare occasions, and by the work of refugee organisations.

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Yves Fedida	11 November 2009	Paris
Emile Gabbay	10 November 2009	Paris
Ann Grieve	20 April 2010	Paris
Harry Guened	17 November 2009	Paris
Adorée Harari	3 June 2009	London
André H.	3 August 2009	Paris
David Harari	3 June 2009	London
David Harari	10 August 2009	Paris
Isaac Harari	4 November 2009	Paris
Renée Hakoun	5 November 2009	Paris
Renée Hodari	20 October 2009	Manchester
Anna J.	10 March 2009	London

Livia Javor	4 August 2008	Paris
Sylvia Jordan	16 December 2009	London
Suzanne Joseph	2 November 2009	Chatou
Rosy Kowsman	24 August 2009	Aubervilliers
Pierre Latzko	13 & 20 November 2009	Paris
Raymond Levy	22 October 2009	London
Anna Lüdwig	25 February 2009	Nottingham
David M.	14 December 2009	London
Marie Messeca	16 December 2009	London
Alec Nacamuli	22 October 2009	London
Lucien Perez	18 August 2009	Paris
Claudia Roden	25 November 2008	London (Phone Interview)
Yves R.	24 August 2009	Paris
Sebastian Salama	15 June 2009	London
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