



# Jüdisches Museum Berlin

Zwei Jahrtausende Deutsch-Jüdische Geschichte

## *Home and Exile.*

### *Jewish Emigration from Germany since 1933*

in the Jewish Museum Berlin

**The expulsion and flight of 280,000 German Jews to over 100 countries and their integration in a foreign environment are the subject of a major exhibition developed by the Jewish Museum Berlin in cooperation with the Haus der Geschichte in Bonn.**

Through the forced historical exodus of the German Jews after 1933, the center of Jewry shifted from Europe to overseas. The refugees' settling into the various foreign societies was a major historical act of adaptation. While the younger emigrés soon became accustomed to their new surroundings, starting over was difficult for those who had established professions or had families. The exhibition is dedicated to these first years, presenting a wealth of biographical material, many film interviews and documentaries, and audio stations.

Visitors are greeted by family photographs from the period before 1933. Sunday strolls, cheerful coffee circles, friends hiking and rowing supply the image of a Jewish society integrated into society.

After this tableau the visitor is confronted with the National Socialist politics of expulsion and with the bureaucratic hurdles with which every story of emigration begin. The procedures for registering and deregistration at tax, residency and other agencies; permits, applications, and constant inquiries about the constantly changing conditions for immigration to various countries stood in stark contrast to the political intention to expel the Jews. Initially, the first destinations for refugees were usually the bordering countries of France, the Netherlands and the political bridgehead Prague – until the quickly advancing Wehrmacht put an end to this refuge.

The main part of the exhibition is dedicated to the most important countries of immigration: the U.S., Palestine, Great Britain and South America, in which three quarters of all emigrants were located by 1955. Shanghai and the Dominican Republic were important exotic destinations for escape.

Fifty thousand Jews fled to Great Britain. The country pursued a restrictive immigration policy that gave preference to domestic workers, who were in short supply on the island, and to entrepreneurs to fortify the economically underdeveloped North. The emigrés were regarded as guests who would stay for a limited period. Despite the experience of the German attacks they lived through together, integration was hard in the class-conscious English society. The most successful in this respect were the 10,000 children permitted to enter the country after the November pogroms in 1938.



Eretz Israel, the promised land of the Bible and a destination for Zionist emigrés since the late nineteenth century, was a difficult, dangerous country, marked by constant conflicts between Arabs and the Eastern European Jews who had already settled there. The majority of the Jewish immigrants from Germany had no Zionist pioneer spirit at all. Yet the “Jeckes,” as they were caricatured, made their own contribution to constructing the country, as the exhibition shows on the basis of the Naharija settlement in the north of the country, Ben Yehuda Street in Tel Aviv and the Philharmonic Orchestra.

The United States were held to be the land of liberty, and became the most important emigration country by taking in 130,000 refugees. In spite of the strictly applied immigration law, which demanded a visa and a sponsorship and allowed immigrants only up to a specified quota, every new arrival was greeted as a future fellow citizen. Over 70,000 Jewish refugees lived in New York alone. The exhibition introduces the Washington Heights neighborhood, in which 20,000 Jews settled in just under ten years, setting up communities, businesses and associations as a kind of “Fourth Reich,” as they ironically referred to their quarter. One of them was Kurt Roberg of Celle, who fled in 1938 at the age of fourteen. He first went to Rotterdam before being allowed in to the U.S. There he worked in his newly learned trade as a mechanic. After the war he joined the company of another emigré from Celle and started a family. The individual steps of settling in to the strange new world are illustrated on the basis of his biography and those of others.

Another important destination was South America, where 75,000 emigrés fled, often as a second choice after immigration to other countries foundered on missing papers, passage, or money. The states on the east coast – Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay – with their Western-oriented capitals were preferred to the inhospitable countries of the tablelands. There was little risk of running into a German colony of Nazis faithful to the regime, as the circles remained well separated. To many émigrés, starting over there offered good opportunities. So Günter Flieg, a young photographer who had trained in Berlin while it was still the avant-garde, became one of Brazil’s leading industrial photographers. His parents used the embroidery machine they brought with them from Germany to found a successful factory. For them as for other emigrés in Latin America, the culture and nature of their new homes “stopped at the front door.” Inside they lived with German literature and classical music and their familiar table china.

Much less well known is the fact that the Dominican Republic once offered German Jews a future. At the international Conference on the Refugee Question in Evian in 1938, only this small country declared its willingness to take in refugees. Although Dictator Trujillo presumably was pursuing interests of his own, the American Jewish organization Joint immediately grasped at this straw, founding DORSA as a settlement society to determine land purchases and settlement destinations and recruit emigrés. Around 500 Jews from Germany and Austria survived in the Caribbean through market gardening and animal



husbandry. Even the island's first vacation accommodations can be traced back to them. However, after the war most of the emigrés left the country.

Shanghai was probably the most extreme emigration experience. In 1940 it was the only single country that continued to accept emigrés unconditionally after the ban on emigration. For 15,000 German and Austrian Jews – among them the director of the Jewish Museum Berlin, W. Michael Blumenthal, and his parents and sister – it became the final refuge. The majority of emigrés lived in the district of Hongkew, where they were housed in mass shelters and subjected to a moist, humid climate and unfamiliar diseases. Once Japan entered the war, they soon found themselves in a ghetto. Almost all of them moved on after the end of the war, many on the first ship to San Francisco.

Only few of the emigrés returned to Germany – usually those who were politically motivated to participate in building a new Germany. A small chapter at the end of the exhibition is dedicated to these returnees.

The rooms were designed by the architect and set designer Hans-Dieter Schaal.

### **Information on the Exhibition**

“Home and Exile. Jewish Emigration from Germany since 1933”

An exhibition by the Jewish Museum Berlin in cooperation with the House of the History of the Federal Republic of Germany (Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland), Bonn.

### **From 29 September 2006 to 9 April 2007**

Thereafter the exhibition will be shown at Haus der Geschichte in Bonn (May through October 2007) and in the Forum of Contemporary History Leipzig (December 2007 through February 2008).

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**Hours:** daily\* 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Mondays 10 am to 10 pm

\*closed on the Jewish holidays Rosh Hashana (9/23+24/2006) and Yom Kippur (10/2/2006) and on Christmas Eve

**Admission:** “Home and Exile” 4 euros, reduced 2 euros;

Combined ticket for “Home and Exile” and permanent exhibition 7 euros, reduced 3.50

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euros

Information on guided tours: tel. 030 25993 305; e-mail [fuehrungen@jmberlin.de](mailto:fuehrungen@jmberlin.de)

**Exhibition book:** *Heimat und Exil. Emigration der deutschen Juden nach 1933*

Edited by the Jewish Museum Berlin and the Foundation Haus der Geschichte, Bonn

Jüdischer Verlag of Suhrkamp Verlag

300 pages, with many figures and plates

Price: 24.90 euros