

“GATEWAY TO FREEDOM” AND INSTRUMENT OF ORDER
THE FRIEDLAND TRANSIT CAMP, 1945-1955

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ABSTRACT

DEREK HOLMGREN: “Gateway to Freedom” and Instrument of Order: The Friedland Transit Camp, 1945-1955
(Under the direction of Konrad Jarausch)

This thesis examines the history of the Friedland transit camp for German refugees, expellees from Eastern Europe, and returning prisoners of war from 1945 to 1955. It contends that the camp functioned as a crucial provider of “regulated humanitarianism” for the over one million individuals processed there and for the surrounding West German society. The facility offered humanitarian assistance, but it also regulated the flow of incoming individuals in order to prevent a deluge from uprooted masses. To accomplish this mission, the camp both relied upon and fostered the reestablishment of civil organizations. Yet, as this thesis also demonstrates, the camp became a space onto which locals, German administrators, and Allied authorities projected fears of the very instability it was meant to solve. The Friedland facility thus stood at the intersection of postwar stability and security concerns and informs the history of postwar German reconstruction.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On a cold November morning in 1945 rumors concerning a mass of incoming refugees swirled around the Friedland transit camp (*Grenzdurchgangslager*) in British-occupied Germany. No one was sure how many refugees and expellees were waiting to cross into the British zone via Friedland, and there was fear that the mass would deluge the camp. According to the distressed British military government, “there is a queue on the other side of the barrier [in the Russian zone] stretching for anything up to 20 kilometers.”¹ A British volunteer at the camp, David Sainty, later submitted a report that was less alarmist than his countrymen’s but that nonetheless described a troubling situation: “There is a queue of about 6000 People [sic] from 9 to 12, and some stragglers along the road...Beyond that of course we don’t know.”²

This vignette is important reminder of the humanitarian crisis facing Germany after World War II. In addition to the destruction of infrastructure and the flotsam of homeless persons produced by Allied bombing, German and occupational authorities contended with waves of refugees and expellees from Eastern Europe. Already in 1944, masses of Germans fled westward from advancing Soviet troops and were followed by a second wave of so-called “wild expulsions” at the war’s conclusion. The transit camp at

¹ “Report 31,” November 26, 1945, B 45 11 26 – 1 01. Archives of the Service Civil International (hereafter ASCI).

² Ibid.

the small town of Friedland established in the fall of 1945 was initially meant as a stopgap measure to provide aid for the individuals at the tail end of this second wave. Yet, because of its strategic location on major rail lines at the zonal triangle (*Zonendreieck*) where the British, American, and Russian sectors met, the camp grew considerably in both size and importance during the subsequent third wave of officially sanctioned expulsions conducted as part of the Potsdam settlement between the Allies. Alongside these expellees, the facility also served as a processing point for returning prisoners of war and other civilian returnees (*Heimkehrer*) from prisons and work camps in Eastern Europe. Having processed some 1.7 million individuals from 1945 to 1949, the Friedland camp stood ready when a smaller, fourth wave of resettlement began in 1950, which consisted of those remaining ethnic Germans who had not been caught up in the previous transfers. All told, the Friedland camp processed over 1.8 million individuals from 1945 to 1955, including expellees, refugees, and returning prisoners of war.³

The timing of the Friedland camp's establishment and operation speaks to its historical significance beyond just the astonishing number of individuals who passed through it. The end of the second and beginning of the third phases of expulsions, when the camp operated at its highest capacity, was also a moment when local and occupational authorities began to reestablish control over the reception of these individuals. As such, an examination of the Friedland facility's history underlines the humanitarian imperatives under which the camp operated, the increasing efforts to provide and maintain the orderly reception necessary for eventual German reconstruction, and the relationship between these two missions. This paper therefore considers the

³ Statistics taken from "Grenzdurchgangslager Friedland 1945-2005," ed. Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Inneres und Sport (Hannover: Landesvermessung und Geobasisinformationen Niedersachsen, 2005), 20-21.

operation of Friedland within the broader issue of Germany's material, social, and administrative reconstruction after the war. In particular it contends that the camp was a site of convergence for concerns about West German security and stability. It also argues that examination of the camp's history offers a means of interrogating the interaction between humanitarian concerns and the need to establish order. Finally, this paper demonstrates that the establishment and operation of the camp created a physical space onto which the press and occupational and German authorities could project fears of disorder, thereby exacerbating perceptions of the very insecurity the camp was meant to solve.⁴

The Friedland camp emerged as a response to the displacement of Germans in the aftermath of World War II and should therefore be considered within the historiography of forced population transfers in the twentieth century. Early efforts to document Europe's post-World War II transfers regarded them as a product of the war rather than as a continuation of prewar and wartime practices.⁵ Alfred Maurice de Zayas' controversial, polemical history of the expulsion of Germans likewise focused on postwar events and missed important historical continuities.⁶ More recent studies of ethnic

⁴ This argument draws from social science literature (itself based upon theoretical work by Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben) that sees the camp as a physically delineated "state of exception" used to identify its residents as an "other" or outsiders in an inside/outside social dichotomy with the goal of re-imposing social discipline and order. See particularly, Bülent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen, *The Culture of Exception: Sociology Facing the Camp* (London: Routledge, 2005), 10, 79. For the purposes of this paper, it seems reasonable to build upon Diken and Laustsen's notion of a camp's physical space and its relation to social order and argue that authorities and the general population can assign meaning to camps by projecting the desire for order and the fear of disorder on that space.

⁵ See Theodor Schieder, "Die Vertreibung der deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neiße," Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa (Bonn: Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, 1954-1960), and Joseph B. Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe 1945-1955* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962).

⁶ Alfred Maurice de Zayas, *Nemesis at Potsdam: The Expulsion of Germans from the East* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

Germans in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe thus help to contextualize the postwar expulsions by highlighting Nazi efforts to expel Eastern Europeans from their homes and businesses in favor of ethnic German replacements. Indeed, the disruption of ethnic German populations had actually begun under the Nazi program of resettlement during the war.⁷ The expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe should therefore be regarded as a continuation of population disruptions begun by the Nazis but which also proceeded through the drastic uprooting of historic German communities scattered throughout Eastern Europe.

Yet transfers during and after World War II also need to be seen within the context of earlier twentieth-century practices. In this respect, Michael Marrus' 1985 study has helpfully located the Second World War and its aftermath as a crescendo in a broader twentieth-century problem of refugees produced by the fall of European empires during and after the First World War.⁸ Mark Mazower has further linked transfers to underlying political trends in twentieth-century Europe, in which transfers highlight the emerging consensus that successful states are constructed through national homogeneity.⁹

The Friedland transit camp also fits into a relatively narrower historiography of transit and refugee camps for Germans uprooted by World War II. Early publications celebrated the camps' humanitarian efforts, while critical analyses emerged later. Thus for Friedland, early commemorations such as *Das Buch von Friedland* and *20 Jahre*

⁷ Valdis O. Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), and Doris Bergen, "Tenuousness and Tenacity: The Volksdeutschen of Eastern Europe, World War II, and the Holocaust," in *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*, ed. Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

⁸ Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁹ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

Lager Friedland highlighted the camp's role in providing aid to the millions who passed through it.¹⁰ These books also helped to establish Friedland's reputation as the "Gateway to Freedom" (*Tor zur Freiheit*) that appears in recent celebrations, such as a book published for the camp's sixtieth anniversary and the various tributes to the charitable organizations that volunteered in the camp.¹¹

Academic scholarship on Friedland began with Dagmar Kleineke's 1992 dissertation on the camp's operational history from 1945 to 1955.¹² More recently, Andrea Riecken has discussed the camp within the contexts of health policy and refugee integration in the British zone.¹³ Friedland has also featured in postwar memory studies, such as Robert Moeller's discussion of returning prisoners of war, Birgit Schwellung's article on public memory and the construction of the Friedland memorial, and Sasha Schießl's examination of memory and Friedland's "Gateway to Freedom" moniker.¹⁴

¹⁰ Walter Müller-Bringmann, *Das Buch von Friedland* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt Verlag, 1956). See also *20 Jahre Lager Friedland*, (Heidelberg: Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge, und Kriegsgeschädigte, 1965).

¹¹ Jürgen Gückel, *60 Jahre Lager Friedland: Zeitzeugen berichten* (Göttingen: Göttinger Tageblatt GmbH & Co. KG, 2005). Commemorative histories of charitable organizations include Wilhelm Tomm, *Bewegte Jahre, erzählte Geschichte* (Friedland: Innere Mission, 1992) and Karoline Grothe, *Ein Stück Leben* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2007).

¹² Dagmar Kleineke, "Entstehung und Entwicklung des Lagers Friedland 1945-1955" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Göttingen, 1992). She has also authored "Das Grenzdurchgangslager Friedland: Heimkehrer, Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene, Um- und Aussiedler," in *Zuwanderung und Integration in Niedersachsen seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. Klaus J. Bade and Joachen Oltmer (Osnabrück: Universitätsverlag Rasch, 2002), and "Das Lager Friedland und die konfessionellen Verbände," in *Vertreibung und Ankunft in Niedersachsen*, ed. Ellen Ueberschar (Rehburg-Loccum: Evangelische Akademie Loccum, 2007).

¹³ Andrea Riecken, *Migration und Gesundheitspolitik: Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in Niedersachsen 1945-1953* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2006).

¹⁴ Respectively, Robert Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Birgit Schwellung, "Gedenken im Nachkrieg. Die "Friedland-Gedächtnisstätte," *Zeithistorische Forschungen Online-Ausgabe* 5, no. 2 (2008). See also Maik Tändler, Tagungsbericht "Fremd im eigenen Land": *Diasporic cultures – diasporic mentalities?* 18.09.2009-19.09.2009, Göttingen, in: H-Soz-u-Kult, 10.10.2009, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=2496>>.

Yet, other than an aside in Kleineke's dissertation,¹⁵ histories of Friedland have not considered its relationship to concerns about reestablishing order in occupied Germany and rebuilding a stable, western-oriented German republic. This paper will address both domestic and international aspects of the stability and security difficulties.

This study proceeds in five sections that will consider significant events in the Friedland camp's history, both chronologically and thematically. Each section also addresses a significant demographic group in the camp's history from 1945 to 1955 (see Appendix A for a demographic breakdown of persons registered). The first two sections on regulations and volunteer efforts from 1945 to 1947 respectively examine the camp's busiest period and one in which German refugees and expellees from Eastern Europe were the most significant population group in the camp. The first section discusses processing procedures and citizenship at Friedland, while the second part considers how volunteer efforts at Friedland contributed to social normalization in the surrounding community. The third section of this paper analyzes fears of rising criminality and the establishment of a sub-camp for male youths in 1947. A disputed transfer of German resettlers (*Aussiedler*) from Poland in 1950 is the topic of the fourth section. Resettlers were the single largest group processed in the camp after 1950, and the dispute also underlines the geopolitical aspects of Friedland's mission to provide aid and order along the West German border. The final section considers the 1955 return of prisoners of war from the Soviet Union, suggesting that both German and international press reports'

¹⁵ She argues that occupying power's behavior "obviously followed the 'climate' of high politics and in most instances can be seen as a reflection of the 'normalizing' relationships between victors and vanquished," though it is worth more closely examining these relationships, which did not necessarily exhibit a process of inexorable normalization. Kleineke, "Entstehung und Entwicklung des Lagers Friedland 1945-1955," 3.

ambivalence about the returnees drew upon earlier uneasiness about individuals within the camp.

CHAPTER 2

DELOUSING ALONG THE ROAD TO CITIZENSHIP

On 5 October 1945 the governor of the Hanover province enacted a series of requirements for refugees seeking housing. Released in an informational flyer, the directives required refugees near Hanover to pass through one of the nine transit camps in the region. Only after processing would an individual receive the registration card necessary for procuring provisions. The registration cards also contained a city assignment from the British military government, and the instructions obliged refugees to have their cards stamped at the railroad station and at the assigned place of residence. Having completed these steps, an individual could exchange his or her registration card for a rations card that was valid only for the appropriate district. Further moving from city to city was “forbidden by orders of the military government.”¹⁶

These directives evince German and British authorities’ attempts to impose order on the arrival of refugees and expellees. In contrast to the “wild expulsions” of Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia, the resettling of expellees was to proceed in a strictly-regulated manner. In return for distributing food and supplies, authorities could begin the process of sorting individuals and compiling information about new residents. As locations of first administrative contact between refugees or expellees and the government, transit camps such as Friedland played an important role in the collection of

¹⁶ “Merkblatt für Flüchtlinge” in Gückel, *60 Jahre Lager Friedland*, 13.

personal information through reports and reconfirmation of individual legal identities.¹⁷ The Friedland facility offered a means by which authorities could collect individuals and direct them to the cities and towns most capable of accommodating them, while processing also established individuals' legal identities as persons who might eventually be compensated for their suffering through a program of war burdens equalization. As such, the social bookkeeping element of camp operation provided the crucial registration and individual recognition on which welfare entitlements rested.

An examination of processing procedures at Friedland reveals the significant extent to which camp authorities relied on coercion to address what would otherwise be a chaotic situation during mass arrivals.¹⁸ Issued shortly after the camp became operational, Camp Order Number 1 of 26 September 1945 enumerated a procedure for camp personnel and arriving persons to follow.¹⁹ After the arrival and unloading of trucks, personnel sent individuals to register in tents. Only once a registration card had been obtained could persons procure their ration cards and have them stamped. Delousing and a further stamp as proof came next, and this stamp was required for obtaining food or clothing. Individuals then waited until called for a departure overseen by British soldiers. Camp personnel handed out tickets for the day of travel to assigned destinations, and processed persons could reclaim what possessions they had brought. In all, "the

¹⁷ For examples of the reports, see "Brigitte Prigannt – 29.1.48" and "Udwari, Franziska – 31.1.48" in the Friedland *Chronik 1945-1965*.

The identification of individuals and collection of personal information again relates to the sociological literature that sees camps as a space to categorize individuals within an inside/outside social dichotomy, which helps to organize the tripartite relations between camp inhabitants, the host society, and the state. See Diken and Laustsen, 10.

¹⁸ Here one sees an antecedent of current practice in refugee camps, which according to Jennifer Hyndman rely on coercion to fulfill their missions. See Hyndman, *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 120-41.

¹⁹ See Kleinecke, "Das Grenzdurchgangslager Friedland," 154.

registration, medical examination, and disinfecting as well as questioning by the British security services took about 15 minutes.”²⁰

The speed of this processing procedure points to the efficiency with which the camp operated. The typical stay in Friedland lasted between 2 and 7 days, though the wait for a housing assignment sometimes took longer.²¹ This brevity was surely the result of the need to quickly process thousands of individuals. Logistics prevented the Friedland camp from housing residents for extended periods, and the dedicated sub-camp meant for longer stays (the *Wohnlager*) typically held no more than 250 persons who fit specific criteria for extended residence based upon their place of origin and lack of contacts within the British zone.²² After all, if a significant percentage of the 1.13 million refugees and expellees from 1945 to 1947 had lived in the camp on a permanent basis, then the facility’s population would have dwarfed the small town of Friedland and the nearby city of Göttingen.²³

Another crucial observation about processing at the Friedland camp is the pervasiveness of stamps, permits, and registration cards. These administrative tools functioned as the key distribution mechanism in a system of food and housing rationing,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “Grenzdurchgangslager Friedland 1945-2005,” 8.

²² For statistics on the *Wohnlager* and detailed discussion of categorization criteria, see Kleineke, “Entstehung und Entwicklung des Lagers Friedland,” 181-85. There, however, has been no significant scholarly examination of social life in the *Wohnlager*, which is unfortunate because Atina Grossmann has documented an institutionalizing and inertial effect Displaced Persons camps had on their residents that may have also been the case in Friedland. See Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 180-84, 260-62.

²³ Here it is worth mentioning that in contrast to other instances of mass population displacement, the phenomenon of tent cities did not exist on a significant scale. A combination of factors in the German situation contributed to this result: there was no possibility of return for the displaced individuals in addition to the existence of an urgency to quickly distribute individuals in cities and the countryside, thereby preventing collective action.

not only in the camp itself but also throughout occupied Germany. The shockingly low food rations of 860 calories per day for “normal” consumers in 1945 might be the most commonly cited form of rationing, but there was also tight control over housing.²⁴ Germany had lost roughly 4 million units of housing due to the war, amounting to 25 percent of its 1939 housing stock, while cities with populations over a quarter million had on average lost 45 percent of their capacity.²⁵ The Friedland facility’s ability to quickly feed and find housing assignments for individuals speaks not only to the efficiency of the camp’s processing procedures, but also to the strength of the ration regime. Efficient camp operation prevented the facility from becoming a bottleneck for incoming masses, but local governments enabled this fast processing by rationing housing space in their own jurisdictions.²⁶ Local authorities’ ability to compel residents to share homes with expellees should therefore not be forgotten. Nor should one overlook the importance of expellee status, as could be proven through registration at Friedland, for claiming subsidies for construction of new settlements, which eventually lifted tensions by ending shared housing and offering expellees an investment in their new homeland.²⁷

The desire to create legal identities through processing at the camp thus anticipated the need for papers when individuals arrived at their new homes and registered with the local government in accordance with both the need to maintain rolls

²⁴ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 21.

²⁵ Jeffrey Diefendorf, “America and the Rebuilding of Germany” in *American Policy and the Reconstruction of Germany, 1945-1955*, ed. Jeffrey Diefendorf, Axel Frohn, and Hermann-Josef Rupierer (Washington DC: German Historical Institute, 1993), 348.

²⁶ Andreas Brundiers, “Neues Heim - neue Heimat? Zur Funktion des sozialen Wohnungsbaus bei der Integration von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen am Beispiel der Siedlung Vorwerk,” in *Zwischen Heimat und Zuhause: Deutsche Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in (West-) Deutschland 1945-200*, ed. Rainer Schulze, Rainard Rohde and Rainer Voss (Osnabrück: Secolo Verlag, 2001), 57-74.

²⁷ Ibid.

for rationing and the German legal tradition of documented residency. Whether camp-established identities bore any relation to an individual's prewar and wartime identity was another question. For expellees forced to leave with few possessions and no documentation, registering at the camp and reentering government rolls could offer a sort of rebirth. Dispossession and the need to reclaim a legal identity presented individuals with an opportunity to reinvent themselves, which could prove problematic for the sorting process. Historian Joseph Schechtman argued that the difficulty of verifying expellee claims about their former lives created bitterness in "Nazi or near-Nazi circles" towards expellees who were safe because they arrived "without their past, for it was difficult to muster the evidence necessary to indict them."²⁸

Reports from David Sainty, the British volunteer at Friedland, provide confirmation that the accuracy of these new legal identities depended on the registrant's honesty in the absence of resources to confirm what they claimed. Sainty's frustrations with the process, however, did not stem from fears or jealousies (as Schechtman discussed) that Nazi expellees might escape trial, but instead from his belief that the identification process inhibited volunteers' efforts to aid expellees. As such, he inveighed against time spent "stamping papers of all conceivable kinds. Wasted because it is impossible to check."²⁹

Even if there were significant problems with ensuring the truthfulness of registrants' identities, the process of stamping papers and generating rolls nonetheless represented an important attempt to reestablish the bureaucratic order necessary for

²⁸ Schechtman, 322. One area for future research concerns the confirmation of claimed identities, such as through testimonies from fellow refugees and expellees.

²⁹ "Report 31," 26 November 1945, B 45 11 26 – 1 01, ASCI.

efficient distribution of aid in the future. In addition to the humanitarian goal of reuniting families torn apart by war, search services for missing persons could help to clarify legal statuses for property claims or remarriage as well as ease the state's burden of providing for individuals by quickly placing them with relatives who could care for them. This process of registration was also important because individuals left Friedland with their citizenship and claims to welfare entitlements secured. In fact, once the government recognized an expellee, the law guaranteed citizenship to him or her regardless of place of birth, as the standard of *jus sanguinis* first encoded by the 1913 Imperial and State Citizenship Act remained in effect after the war. This standard of German ethnicity would then become integrated into the West German Basic Law in 1949.³⁰

The confirmation of refugee and expellee citizenship then extended entitlement rights to the individuals processed at Friedland. In particular, groups disproportionately affected by the war, such as refugees and expellees, would be compensated through an equalization of burdens (*Lastenausgleich*). Michael Hughes has shown that discussions of financial burden sharing had begun in Germany during the war and was a significant issue during the postwar period, in part because fears that the status quo of an inequitable distribution of the war's costs would lead to political instability.³¹ Although it had not

³⁰ Article 116 of the Basic Law assures the right of return based upon an individual's ethnicity, or "*deutsche Volkszugehörigkeit*." Amanda Klekowski von Koppenfels, "The Decline of Privilege " in *Coming Home to Germany?*, ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff (New York, 2002), 102-06. Von Koppenfels contends the decision to retain the Wilhelmine-era basis for citizenship in the Federal Republic reflected Cold War desires to protest Eastern European discrimination of Germans and to implicitly undercut East German legitimacy by underlining the decision to not formally recognize the German Democratic Republic.

It should, however, be noted that Dieter Gosewinkel has contested the historical focus on *jus sanguinis* as necessarily defining citizenship in ethnic terms up to the 1930s. See Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschließen: Die Nationalisierung der Staatsangehörigkeit vom Deutschen Bund bis zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

³¹ Michael L. Hughes, *Shouldering the Burdens of Defeat* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

been initially clear how a program of burden sharing would proceed, both Germans and the Western occupation powers recognized a need to include the individuals streaming through camps such as Friedland.³²

An examination of the Friedland facility's processing procedures and social bookkeeping functions thus reveals important overlaps between the imperative to provide humanitarian aid and the desire to reestablish order. First, the humanitarian need and desire to care for the dispossessed masses passing through Friedland relied on preexisting rationing structures. Second, occupation authorities at Friedland could create manageable spaces by diverting streams of destitute refugees away from cities unable to support them and by creating a register of persons whom the government might have otherwise lost track of in the aftermath of war and expulsions. A third and related observation is that such registration would later provide a basis for the extension of welfare benefits to help expellees materially, prevent radicalization due to poverty, and offer expellees an investment in rebuilding the German state that would subsequently be their new home.

³² This is not to suggest that the *Lastenausgleich* was a forgone conclusion or that it necessarily had wide-ranging material benefits for claimants. Hughes argues that it was a "hard-won compromise" reflecting political and economic realities in the FRG; see *Shouldering the Burdens of Defeat*, 194. In fact, it had not been clear that an equalization would proceed along native/expellee lines; cf. Reinhold Schillinger, *Der Entscheidungsprozess beim Lastenausgleich, 1945-1952* (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1985), 289-97, and Andreas Kossert, *Kalte Heimat* (Munich: Siedler, 2008), 96. Actual restitution was often piecemeal and difficult to obtain, as argued by Carl-Jochen Müller, *Praxis und Probleme des Lastenausgleichs in Mannheim, 1949-1959* (Mannheim: Südwestdeutsche Schriften, 1997), 375-80, and Daniel Levy, "Integrating Ethnic Germans in West Germany" in *Coming Home to Germany?* ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002).

CHAPTER 3

REBUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY

From its inception the Friedland camp relied heavily upon charitable organizations for staffing, food, and clothing. Indeed, the fact that the camp was first located on land donated by the University of Göttingen underscores the importance of charity to the camp's history. Histories of the facility generally discuss the Red Cross, which worked alongside German religious organizations, the Catholic Caritas and Protestant Innere Mission / Evangelische Hilfswerk.³³ This historiography on charities has focused narrowly on these three organizations because of their size and length of service, but less well-known organizations that also played a role in the camp's crucial early years have been ignored. Examination of efforts by one such group, a British chapter of the Service Civil International (SCI),³⁴ shows how volunteer work at the camp helped the reconstitution of civil society in nearby Göttingen as well as fostered goodwill and a collaborative relationship between Germans and the British.

In November 1945 David Sainty and other British SCI volunteers arrived in Friedland. While the rest of the group helped to set up Nissen huts at the camp and assist in transporting arriving persons from the Soviet-British border, much of the Sainty's

³³ For specific histories of charitable organizations at Friedland see Tomm, *Bewegte Jahre, erzählte Geschichte*; Grothe, *Ein Stück Leben*; Dagmar Kleinecke, "Friedland und die Konfessionellen Verbände". Kleinecke's "Entwicklung und Entstehung des Lagers Friedlan" also considers the relationship between charities and the state as major theme.

³⁴ The SCI was founded in 1920 out of Swiss engineer Pierre Ceresole's desire for an international effort to repair damage from World War I. On Ceresole, see Keith Maddick, *Living Truth* (Wallingford: Pendle Hill, 2005).

effort centered on attracting German volunteers to Friedland. Having met with representatives from Caritas and Innere Mission and seen their attempts to raise volunteers at the start of December, Sainty suggested organizing students from the university in Göttingen.³⁵ He proceeded to discuss volunteer work with a “professor’s wife who runs the student ‘Hilfswerke’ and the student head of this” sometime in the following week.³⁶ Sainty does not identify the student head of the organization, but it seems likely he had spoken with Joachim Frege, a law student living in the town of Friedland who had already begun organizing friends to help on the weekends.³⁷

The coordination between the Sainty and the student groups led to the distribution of a flyer and printing of a newspaper article later in December that called upon students to help. The flyer proposed that students could look after children, the elderly, and the sick. It also argued, “the Göttingen student body must...regard helpfully joining in as its foremost task.”³⁸ Paul Stein, a fellow law student of Frege’s and a member in the student group “Die Gleichen,”³⁹ wrote an article for the university newspaper about service at Friedland. After describing the difficult conditions facing expellees and refugees, Stein

³⁵ “Report 33,” 9 December 1945, B 45 12 09 – 1 01, ASCI.

³⁶ “Report 34,” 19 December 1945, B 45 12 19 – 1 01, ASCI.

³⁷ “Bericht über den Beginn des Flüchtlingslagers Friedland im Winter 1945 / 46 und meine Beteiligung an dieser Arbeit,” 20 December 1945, B 45 12 20 – 1 01, ASCI.

³⁸ “Handzettel des ASTA Göttingen,” 20 December 1945, B 45 12 20 – 2 01, ASCI.

³⁹ Die Gleichen was newly-founded organization that drew its membership from both anti-Nazi students and the former National Socialist student association named Kameradschaft Schlieffen, which itself had been the Burschenschaft “Allemania” before its incorporation into Nationalsozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbundes (NSDStB) under the Nazi program of coordination in 1935. Stein, who had not belonged to the Kameradschaft Schlieffen, commented that in the society “surprisingly, there were supporters of the Third Reich and decided opponents of National Socialism bound together in openness and tolerance under the principle of life-long bond [*Lebensbundprinzip*].” See “Der Studentenbund ‘Die Gleichen,’” n.d., B 45 12 20 – 3 01, ASCI; and “Die Gründung der ‘Gleichen’ und ihre Entwicklung in den ersten Semestern,” n.d., B 45 12 20 – 4 01, ASCI.

tried to rally students to their aid: “Opportunities to help? Hundredfold. We push and pull the carts, repair broken vehicles, carry luggage, sacks, trunks, boxes, give advice, in short, we are ready to help in any capacity [*wir sind Mädchen für alles*].”⁴⁰

One of the striking aspects of these documents is the extant level of local organization in what has otherwise been characterized as a society split asunder. The early coordinating efforts by Sainty in 1945 relied upon already existing semi-formal and formal social networks, such as Frege’s law student friends or the association “Die Gleichen.” University newspapers printed with British approval, student groups, and religious volunteers at the camps therefore point to a significant level of social organization and normalizing interactions in the “society of collapse,” or *Zusammenbruchsgesellschaft*.⁴¹ Indeed, by the end of February 1946, Frege was co-responsible for coordinating a month-long effort by the SCI and the General Students’ Committee (*Allgemeiner Studententausschuß*) that included 36 students, a German relief worker, and two British relief workers. From February 25 to March 26, 1946, the SCI and Frege’s group completed tasks including: assembling Nissen huts with wooden floors, the removal and transport of barracks for their reconstruction, the erection of porch roofs and a fence, snow removal, the cleaning of drainage ditches and pipes, and the transport and loading of refugees’ luggage.⁴²

The other issue of postwar social relations raised by the SCI documents is how collaboration between British and German groups could accelerate a process of

⁴⁰ “Göttinger Universitäts-Zeitung.” B 45 12 24 – 1 01, ASCI.

⁴¹ See Christoph Klessmann, *Die Doppelte Staatsgründung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 37-65. This is not to dispute Klessmann’s overall forceful depiction of social breakdown in postwar Germany, but to highlight the fact that the threadbare social fabric remained intact at some level.

⁴² “Friedland 25.02. – 26.03.1946,” n.d., 46 02 25 <> 46 03 26 – 1 01, ASCI.

reconciliation. In his recollections about helping at Friedland, Frege emphasized, “the trusting collaboration of former war foes in the Friedland camp only seven months after the end of a very hard war was a decisive experience.”⁴³ Stein likewise reported that “evening discussions were conducive to mutual understanding” between members of the SCI and Die Gleichen.⁴⁴ Although the two groups had a different “ideological outlook” (*Ideenrichtung*), Stein felt that the combined British and German efforts to relieve the hardships at Friedland “yielded a good synthesis.”⁴⁵ Of course, interactions between Germans and the British could be difficult as well. The relationship between German volunteers and British soldiers, for instance, was “very complicated and not self-evident” because of rules against fraternization.⁴⁶ What Sainty and his fellow civilian volunteers could provide, then, was a way to bridge a gap in social interaction between Germans and the military occupiers.

The British and German accounts of voluntary service at Friedland during the winter and spring of 1945/46 thus offer several conclusions. First, and not to be overlooked in light of recent literature stressing the cold reception expellees faced in Germany,⁴⁷ British and German volunteers eagerly helped to care for refugees and expellees entering the British zone and in doing so provided much needed personnel for

⁴³ “Bericht über den Beginn des Flüchtlingslagers Friedland im Winter 1945 / 46 und meine Beteiligung an dieser Arbeit,” n.d., B 45 12 20 – 1 01, ASCI.

⁴⁴ “Die Gründung der ‘Gleichen’ und ihre Entwicklung in den ersten Semestern,” B 45 12 20 – 4 01, ASCI.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “Bericht über den Beginn des Flüchtlingslagers Friedland im Winter 1945 / 46 und meine Beteiligung an dieser Arbeit,” B 45 12 20 – 1 01, ASCI.

⁴⁷ See Kossert, *Kalte Heimat*; and Rainer Schulze, “The Struggle of Past and Present in Individual Identities” in *Coming Home to Germany?* ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff (New York, 2002). Both Kossert and Schulze are undoubtedly correct to point out the difficulties of integration and existence of resentment against expellees, especially since they focus on areas of settlement rather than the clearly transitory situation at Friedland, but the outpouring of help from other Germans must also be accounted for.

the camp. Expellees with high expectations may have been disappointed by the sometimes-strained relations with local populations, but their very entrance to the British zone had partly depended upon the efforts of local volunteers. Second, the SCI efforts at Friedland relied upon and helped to cement the newly developing civil associations at Göttingen's university. Finally, the cooperation between the SCI and university student associations helped to engender goodwill by introducing Germans to the British as friends and partners in the rebuilding process rather than solely as occupiers.

CHAPTER 4

CRIME AND THE FRIEDLAND YOUTH CAMP

In March 1948 a 77-year-old man was brutally beaten and robbed when he tried to cross from Soviet-controlled Thuringia into British-controlled Lower Saxony. A local paper in Göttingen reported the incident in an article entitled “With Clubs and Pistols.”⁴⁸ According to police, the brothers Hahn had escorted the elderly man to the town of Friedland where they beat him senseless with a club and then stole a suitcase full of clothes. This was not an isolated incident, but rather represented a violent culmination of criminal activity as reported in a series of articles run by the *Abendpost* that centered on the Friedland camp. In its tabloid reporting, the *Abendpost* had already warned border crossers of thieves offering to carry their luggage, and it had noted the confiscation of 25 kilograms of rapeseed and 8 bottles of alcohol from smugglers in Friedland.⁴⁹ The *Abendpost* had also printed a lengthy investigative report on police attempts to stop smugglers and win the trust of “harmless border crossers.”⁵⁰ In fact, a retrospective account published a few years later included this alarmist description of the situation: “Murderers walk about in the immediate vicinity of the camp. The border has become

⁴⁸ “Mit Knüppeln und Pistolen,” *Abendpost*, 25 March 1948.

⁴⁹ “Achtung, Grenzgänger!,” *Abendpost*, 19 January 1948.

⁵⁰ “Grenzpolizei an der Arbeit,” *Abendpost*, 9 February 1948.

dangerous. Bandits descend upon women, steal their suitcases, rip cloths from the bodies of the defenseless, [and] take everything that can be taken.”⁵¹

In contrast to the regimented environment British military and German civilian administrators tried to establish at Friedland, the British-Soviet border remained a site of continuing disorder. Indeed, by concentrating the influx of impoverished refugees, the camp contributed to perceptions of increasing criminality, while the camp and border became physical spaces onto which locals could project their fears.⁵² Documents from 1947 and 1948 make clear the administrators’ increasing unease with the disorderly conditions. In this context, the 1947 development at Friedland of a separate camp for male adolescents demonstrates a response by authorities to fears that unruliness would eventually lead to more violent crime along the border.

In March 1947 an unknown camp administrator wrote to Walter Müller-Bringmann, then a contact in the Hanover press.⁵³ The administrator discussed the recently constructed youth camp designed to hold approximately 40 males up to 18 years of age. Trying to emphasize the gravity of problem presented by unruly youths processed by the camp, he included a copy of a letter found on the teenaged Georg Heubaum when he tried to cross the border. The letter contained instructions written by his older brother

⁵¹ Müller-Bringmann, *Das Buch von Friedland*, 71-72. Given the diary-like nature of Müller-Bringmann’s 1956 retrospective account of the camp, it can be difficult to determine when an individual entry was written, and thus whether it was a contemporary description or instead reflected an emergent narrative consensus about that period in the camp’s history. Nevertheless, the description is worth including because it does reflect the dominant narrative for that moment in the camp’s history, which itself was based upon the perceptions of increased criminality, as demonstrated (if not created by) local press accounts.

⁵² It is telling, for instance, that the “Mit Knüppeln und Pistolen” article in the *Abendpost* began with a crime report from Friedland before moving onto news of a potentially more serious robbery in Göttingen by a pistol-wielding individual.

⁵³ “The/Mü, An die Hannover’sche Presse,” 20.3.1947, *Friedland Chronik: 1945-1965*. Müller-Bringmann would, of course, later publish his diary-like retrospective of the Friedland camp’s history in 1956, which represents the first of the commemorative camp histories and included the previously cited description of the local crime wave.

Karl for traveling to live with him in the Ruhr industrial region. Karl instructed his brother to procure the false documents that eventually aroused suspicion at Friedland and led to the letter's confiscation: "Try to change your birth date so that you are already 18," and a friend might be able to "arrange a little paper for you."⁵⁴ If questioned about his papers, Georg was supposed to lie about having fled from a prisoner transport to the Soviet Union under the presumption that disproving such a claim would be difficult at best. Moreover, Karl's request that Georg bring significant quantities of stationary, envelopes, oxidized silver, cigarettes and cigarette paper, lighter fluid, and alcohol indicated that Georg was to serve as a courier for Karl's flourishing black market trade. Although Karl asked Georg to borrow 140 Reichsmarks from his mother to finance the trip, he assured Georg that there was plenty of money to be made, "because I am cutting big deals in the coming days and weeks."⁵⁵

For the camp administrator, this letter presented the quintessential example of the need for intervention in lives of youths separated from their parents. He argued, "The hardships of today's youth become obvious in the attached letter...it is clear that youths in most cases, as was the case here, are led astray by older people."⁵⁶ The author feared that if authorities failed to adequately address unruly youths, then criminality would become a much greater problem later. The youth camp would redirect Georg to "an orderly profession and family," but an implicit concern was how many other individuals might already have received "instructions for the start of a criminal career."⁵⁷

⁵⁴ "Abschrift – Karl Heubaum," 14.2.47, Friedland *Chronik 1945-1965*.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ "The/Mü, An die Hannover'sche Presse," 20.3.1947, Friedland *Chronik: 1945-1965*.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

To a certain extent the worries about youth criminality addressed at Friedland were part of a larger set of problems concerning youth in postwar Germany. Kimberly Redding, for instance, has found that many Berliners considered the years 1944 to 1947 as “lovely childhood years” (*schöne Kinderjahre*) with unprecedented freedom from adult authority figures, and this freedom then led to adult concerns that “young Berliners would resort to a life of crime.”⁵⁸ Redding further argues that youths engaged in black market trade thought little of debates over “young lawbreakers as both products and perpetrators of immorality and lawlessness,” but instead focused on the immediate concern of “meeting their personal needs without getting caught.”⁵⁹ This difference in perceptions of criminality based upon age – what to adults seemed a sign of immorality was just a means of getting by in the minds of youths – was also likely the case for Georg Heubaum, who may well have seen smuggling as a means to get to the Ruhr region and support himself there until he could find work.

The level of coercion at Friedland as well as differences in gendered perceptions of disorderly youths, however, illustrate how local circumstances produced a situation at Friedland different from Berlin. According to Redding, normalization in Berlin entailed “opportunities to resume or finally begin educational and professional paths upset by the war and its aftermath.”⁶⁰ An article from *Die Welt* spoke in a similar language of normalization and professionalization at the Friedland facility, but it also suggests that the youth camp operated more coercively by detaining youths. The article focused on the directionless lives led by many youths who had “roamed about for months without a

⁵⁸ Kimberly Redding, *Growing up in Hitler's Shadow* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 99.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

stable home in Germany.”⁶¹ Their wandering came to an end under police detention and transfer to Friedland. Now appropriately supervised, the youths could return to lives that were more normal in terms of schooling and supervision, even if the camp location belied traditional upbringing in a home. This coercive attempt to bring order into youths’ lives benefitted both the youths and broader society, and the article’s author characterized their arrival at the Friedland camp as “the start of a new life for many, many thousands.”⁶² By emphasizing the start of new lives absent any apparent bad influences, the article could therefore reassure readers that German and British authorities were taking a proactive and effective approach to the issue of perceived adolescent criminality.

A close reading of the house rules (*Hausordnung*) for the youth camp underscores the tight control of youths in the camp and how new lives for adolescent males would be based upon productivity and order.⁶³ To begin with, the youth camp administrators required residents to work within the camp or for farmers or artisans in the surrounding area. A portion of their earnings was withheld to pay for room and board, while further withholdings were placed in individual savings accounts to be accessed once residents moved out of the camp. The residents kept what remained of their earnings as pocket money, though any buying or selling of items within the camp was strictly forbidden in the apparent effort to prevent the development of a black market. The decision to seal off residents in the youth camp from the general camp population stemmed from apprehension about the larger camp as a “moral danger zone,” thereby justifying a

⁶¹ Friedrich Mörtzsch, “Die Tür im Eisernen Vorhang” *Die Welt*, 13 December 1947.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ A reproduction of the *Hausordnung* can be found in Kleineke, “Entstehung und Entwicklung des Lagers Friedland, 1945-1955,” 193.

separate youth camp as a means to guard against future criminality.⁶⁴ Smoking and disorderly behavior were strictly forbidden, and the weekly schedule that developed theoretically left little idle time for the youths other than after Sunday church service. While housing and feeding youths was meant to relieve pressures driving them to participate in the black market or other criminal activities, there was more at work in these rules. By reorienting youths through education and apprenticeships, camp administrators could help to construct new social networks that would help to guard against future unruliness or criminality, while savings accounts and newly acquired skills presumably offered an early investment in the start of a respectable career.

The two interrelated silences regarding women and youths' sexual activities stand out from these documents and further suggest that concerns about minors were dictated by local circumstances at Friedland. Whereas Berlin authorities' concerns about girls play a significant role in Redding's study, the camp administration at Friedland evidently did not worry about unaccompanied female minors. Regarding discussions of femininity, what one finds is comments on the need for a "feminine element" (*weiblichen Element*) for the socialization of boys in the youth sub-camp, and there was evidently much frustration in trying to find a suitable, female teacher for them.⁶⁵

It is therefore worth asking why the camp administrators' worries about criminality were male-coded and why there was no analogous effort to establish a sub-camp for girls. Much of the answer must stem from the fact that violent crime near the camp solely involved male perpetrators, as indicated by suspects' names in news reports at the time. Still, camp officials and the local press evidently did not fret over female

⁶⁴ Ibid., 192.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 205.

youths growing into unruly or criminal lives in the same way they worried about male youths, even though women were surely involved in black market trade in the camp and newspaper reports mentioned women among the illegal border-crossers. What is certain is that the camp sent orphaned or otherwise unaccompanied female youths to a home in Göttingen. One might therefore speculate that administrators did not feel the camp was the proper site to house such girls. Alternatively, the existence of the home in Göttingen perhaps offered administrators an expedient with which they could reduce demands on camp resources by putting female youths out of sight and out of mind.

The absence of concerns about youths' sexual activity is a further important difference between documents about Friedland and what Redding identified in Berlin. Specifically, the specter of "depraved girls" that stemmed from rape and a perceived surplus of women found no expression at Friedland though it was common in Berlin.⁶⁶ Nor does one find discussion of male sexuality among the minors in Friedland's youth camp. To a certain extent, this silence on sexual matters is unsurprising given that church organizations ran the youth camp. Another explanation, albeit tentative and necessarily unsupported by documentary evidence, is that the lack of discussion or worry stemmed from an assumption that there would be no sexual activity. There were no women in the youth camp and the male youths housed there supposedly had no contact with the main camp's residents. Given the apparent lack of opportunity for sexual relationships, the youth camp's administration may have seen no need to discuss such matters. Still, it worth noting the irony that in a setting meant to promote the normalization of youths and

⁶⁶ Redding, 53-63.

prepare them for future lives beyond the camp, there was no discussion of male-female relationships assumed to form the basis of stable, normally-functioning society.⁶⁷

When the Friedland youth camp was founded in 1947 it offered authorities an opportunity to better control the disorderly lives of youths passing into the British zone who lacked parental supervision. The decision to create the camp where one could begin a process of normalizing the youths' lives also seems to have been affected by perceptions of rising criminality centered on Friedland, for by providing oversight, discipline, and education, these youths would be reoriented toward a path of orderly respectability rather than eventually replacing the current generation of criminals operating near the border. The ongoing operation of the youth camp for several years even after worries of criminality died down with the closure of the border in 1948 suggests that authorities continued to see the youth camp as a useful space for intervening in the lives of a subset of Germany's youth and fostering the development of men specifically who could later contribute to an orderly German society.

⁶⁷ As Elizabeth Heineman has convincingly demonstrated, West German authorities viewed marriage and the nuclear family as both a normal and necessary form of social organization in need of restoration. Heineman, *What Difference does a Husband Make? Women and Marital Status in Nazi and Postwar Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 9, 75-76, 137-75, 236.

CHAPTER 5

COMPETING INTERPRETATIONS OF HUMANITARIANISM

On 3 March 1950, a standoff developed along the Thuringian-Lower Saxon border between Russian authorities, British soldiers, and West German customs officials. At issue were hundreds of resettlers from Poland whose names did not appear on official resettlement lists for the agreed-upon population transfer codenamed “Operation Link.”⁶⁸ About seven hundred resettlers waited in the cold for transfer to Friedland while a British officer met with his Russian counterparts and border officials tried to determine their instructions. Eventually Lower Saxon Minister for Refugees Heinrich Albertz declared to the press: “Gentlemen, the explanation I have to give is short. General Robertson has refused to accept the transport.”⁶⁹

This standoff was a power politics confrontation between East and West played out on German soil, but it also provides a window onto conflict between West Germans and the British over the relative importance of economic stability in calculating humanitarian responses. For the British, the situation represented an attempt by Polish Communists, perhaps in cooperation with East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet

⁶⁸ Beginning in 1950, ethnic Germans transferred to the Federal Republic under agreements between the German government and foreign states were known as “*Aussiedler*.” Resettlers seems the best translation of *Aussiedler*, but it should not be confused with the East German term used for expellees, “*Umsiedler*,” which may also be translated as resettlers. It should also be noted that newspaper reports in 1950 also referred to the resettlers as expellees (*Ausgewiesene*).

⁶⁹ “Schlagbaum hoch für siebenhundert,” *Göttinger Presse*, 4 March 1950. Albertz, himself an expellee, went on to become *Innensenator* for West Berlin in 1961. He later served one year as the mayor of Berlin from 1966 to 1967, when he resigned amidst the fallout from the police shooting of Benno Ohnesorg.

Union to displace the recovering West German economy by flooding it with a new wave of German expellees. In this line of reasoning, the acceptance of tens if not hundreds of thousands more ethnic Germans without the capacity to care for them or provide housing and work could hardly be considered humanitarian. German politicians and press, however, saw the situation in extraordinarily different terms. Examination of German responses will demonstrate that they no longer focused on the destabilizing effects of population transfer, which had been the dominant paradigm for such transfers and which still affected Anglo-American attitudes. Instead, the West German discourse focused on rescuing victims of communism, even at a point when the number of transferred persons threatened to make their absorption difficult.

Diplomatic communiqués between Britain, the United States, and Poland help to clarify the buildup to the events on March 3. In November and December 1949, the Allied High Commission for Germany approved an agreement between the Federal Republic and Poland for the transfer of 25,000 Germans who still lived in Poland, but who had relatives in Federal Republic. Once the agreement had been made, according to the British ambassador to Poland, the High Commission received no further word until information “reached the Land Authorities in Hesse and Lower Saxony simultaneously that a first train bringing refugees from Poland would arrive on the border of the Federal Republic on 3rd or 4th of March and that it was intended that a similar train should arrive at each of two border points every four days for the remainder of the year.”⁷⁰ A calculation based on the number of registered and unregistered resettlers, the train’s

⁷⁰ “Note Addressed by the British Ambassador,” 7 March 1950, Record Group 59, 848.411/3-750, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (hereafter NARA).

capacity, and the supposed frequency of arriving transports led to British fears that as many as 180,000 resettlers might arrive over the course of the year.⁷¹

In their protests to Poland, the Western powers engaged a language of humanitarianism to strengthen their position. The British complained that any such mass transfer “would be both arbitrary and inhumane,” while emphasizing that their initial agreement to a transfer of 25,000 individuals had been a “humanitarian concession.”⁷² In addition to explicit claims that the British had fulfilled their obligations under the Potsdam Agreement, such language of arbitrary and inhumane transfers made an implicit case for the illegality of further transfers under the principles set forth at Potsdam. The American protest likewise noted that the acceptance of the original 25,000 had been only undertaken as an “exception on humanitarian and compassionate grounds,” and the entry of individuals on that list could still occur “as an extra-ordinary and humanitarian move.”⁷³ Both documents made clear that the border would be shut for any additional resettlers.

While the standoff continued at Friedland, articles in the British press focused on the High Commission’s fear for German economic stability if masses of resettlers began to move through Friedland. An article in the *Times* of London suggested that the transfer was part of a larger Eastern Bloc effort to “embarrass the west German economy by adding to the number who have to be fed and supported.”⁷⁴ The *Manchester Guardian*

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ “Note Addressed by the American Ambassador,” 7 March 1950, 848.411/3-750, NARA.

⁷⁴ “German Refugees from Poland,” *Times*, 4 March 1950.

reported on March 7 that the British government regarded the Polish government's actions as "a deliberate attempt to undermine the economy of the Western zones."⁷⁵

German newspaper coverage of the ongoing dispute, however, makes clear that the opinions of the German authorities and press diverged significantly from the High Commission. Robertson's order had been predicated on fears of disorder and economic difficulties associated with the previous waves of expulsion. Moreover, British and American appeals to humanitarianism alternated between legalistic references to the Potsdam Agreement and short-sighted complaints about the inhumanity of forcing resettlers upon an unprepared Federal Republic even as the transports faced indefinite waits along the border. The West German government and press, on the other hand, valued a perceived responsibility to their fellow nationals that outweighed concerns over economic stability. In particular, German newspapers published stories meant to evoke sympathy from their readership, and government officials described the crisis in terms of a humanitarian duty to fellow Germans.⁷⁶

Two articles published respectively by Hanover and Göttingen newspapers typify sympathetic portrayals of the refused resettlers. In a report published on March 4, the *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung* described the situation on the border and why the British had refused entry despite their role in negotiating the population transfer in the first place. The report's final paragraph discussed the hardships the group had faced during the intervening years. Most had come from a camp in Leszno near Poznań, where

⁷⁵ "Attempts to upset German economy," *Manchester Guardian*, 7 March 1950.

⁷⁶ It is worth briefly noting that the East German press used the opportunity to decry the episode as evidence of the western powers' inhumanity. See "Die Engländer wollen uns nicht: Heimkehrer als Spielball westlicher Besatzungspolitik," *Thüringer Volk*, 21 March 1950; and "Blockade forderte ein weiteres Todesopfer," *Neues Deutschland*, 23 March 1950.

“they had been sent to work for farmers without reimbursement since 1947.”⁷⁷ It went on to note, “an older resettler suffered a heart attack when the transport assembled behind the Soviet sentry gate.”⁷⁸ Childhood innocence and deprivation under the Polish Communists also played prominent roles. Children had not been allowed to learn German, and the article recounted the common story of a journalist who gave oranges to the arriving children. In return for the fruit, the children thanked him “for the nice, colorful potatoes.”⁷⁹

A few days later, the *Göttinger Tageblatt* published a profile of the Büttner family who had been fortunate to cross the border. The article explained that the family’s triumphant entry into West Germany largely resulted from their comparatively good financial situation in Poland. When they reached the border, the family had the appropriate entry visa from the High Commission offices in Warsaw, but procuring the visa had been difficult. The author wrote sardonically, “Any German living in Poland could have this paper, if he had the money to repeatedly travel to Warsaw and to pay for the countless certificates and finally the fee of 800 zloty for the permit.”⁸⁰ The article went on to celebrate Josef Büttner’s “sharpness” (*Pfiffigkeit*) in obtaining the necessary documents for his family, but it also lamented the slow process of sorting through the list of remaining persons. German bureaucrats were not at fault for the delay, as the author praised the sixteen customs officials who were working “feverishly” to produce an

⁷⁷ “Umsiedlungsaktion mit Hindernissen,” *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4 March 1950.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ “Sie durchbrachen den Sicherheitsgürtel,” *Göttinger Tageblatt*, 9 March 1950.

alphabetical list of authorized resettlers. Rather, fault lay with the Polish offices that had handed over an “arbitrarily” organized list.⁸¹

Lower Saxon Refugee Minister Heinrich Albertz became a fixture in the German press and de facto spokesperson for accepting all individuals from the incoming transports. In contrast to the British, Albertz favored a more embracing humanitarianism that likely stemmed from his previous training as a pastor and which was defined by a German obligation to care for this new wave of their ethnic brethren.⁸² Articles often included statements from him that made clear his displeasure with Robertson’s interdiction and his opinion that West Germans had a duty to come to their ethnic counterparts’ aid. A report of the first day’s standoff in the *Essener Tageblatt* featured Albertz, who beseeched the English border officer to allow the waiting group through. The article let the officer’s response speak for itself: “‘No,’ said the intimidated guard, ‘that won’t do. I have my orders...’”⁸³ That day Albertz was also reputed to have remarked, “Ask General Robertson if he wants to treat human beings in the same way as the Russians treat goods.”⁸⁴ A week later Albertz wrote to *Die Welt* and again decried the instructions from the High Commission that weighed on the “backs of the weakest, and divest people coming from terrible suffering of their last dignity.”⁸⁵

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² On Albertz’s life experiences and their effects on his outlook as refugee minister, see Rainhard Rohde, “Heinrich Albertz und Erich Schellhaus: Zwei Flüchtlingspolitiker der ersten Stunde,” in *Zwischen Heimat und Zuhause: Deutsche Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in (West-) Deutschland 1945-2000*, ed. by Rainer Schulze, Rainhard Rohde and Rainer Voss (Osnabrück: Secolo Verlag, 2001), 126-40.

⁸³ “Die ersten aus Polen,” *Essener Tageblatt*, 4 March 1950.

⁸⁴ “Refugees Refused Entry to West Germany,” *Manchester Guardian*, 7 March 1950.

⁸⁵ “Die letzten aus Polen,” *Die Welt*, 11 March 1950.

At the end of March Albertz resumed his attacks on the British. He claimed, “what is grotesque about the Allied attitude is that those who signed the Potsdam Agreement without batting an eyelash and tolerated the expulsion of millions now in the last phase raise their objections.”⁸⁶ Albertz further argued that the incoming transports had nothing to do with mass expulsions from Poland, but rather consisted of German nationals who had worked for years to secure their transfer to West Germany. Finally, according to a report, “The Minister turned against the allied argumentation that the Polish side intended to ‘burst the West German economy’ through this resettlement.”⁸⁷ For Albertz, and the press that uncritically reported his condemnations of the British, there was no question that West Germany needed to accept resettlers as prescribed by Basic Law and irrespective of economic considerations.

Despite Allied High Commission fears of March 1950, Poland never flooded West Germany with impoverished expellees. It remains unclear whether the Polish government had actually planned a mass expulsion or if the Allied High Commission had misread their intentions, but the crisis was quietly defused by middle-to-late May.⁸⁸ As such, the Friedland facility ultimately processed some 35,000 resettlers rather than the agreed-upon 25,000 in 1950. The Friedland transit camp at the center of this dispute received a great deal of international attention, and a comment by Albertz suggests the episode might have played out differently were it not for the facility. Speaking about the impracticality of High Commission demands, Albertz suggested that resettlers would

⁸⁶ “Albertz: Keine Massenausweisung,” *Göttinger Tageblatt*, 28 March 1950.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ See “Weekly Intelligence Report,” 17 May 1950, 762a.00/6-1950, NARA.

simply “be funneled across the border illegally,”⁸⁹ and the matter of factness of his comment points to an apparent belief that such an informal acceptance could be accomplished without much public tribulation. One therefore wonders if the Friedland camp might not have contributed to the apparent crisis in a manner similar to the worries about crime several years earlier. It did so by providing a physical space in which impoverished resettlers and fears of them were concentrated rather than being dealt with diffusely along the border between the two German states.

⁸⁹ “Large-Scale Expulsions from Poland,” *Manchester Guardian*, 7 March 1950.

CHAPTER 6

THE AMBIVALENCE OF PRISONER HOMECOMINGS

The Friedland transit camp experienced emotional high points with the return of German soldiers and civilians (*Heimkehrer*) from Eastern European and Soviet prisons in February 1954 and October 1955. As the facility's first decade of operation came to a close, these *Heimkehrer* transports brought major political figures to celebrate the camp. Speaking to over 1,000 *Heimkehrer* at Friedland on 28 February 1954, Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer promised, "The federal government will not relax and not rest until the last German woman and man has returned home."⁹⁰ Federal President Theodor Heuss was on hand in October 1955 to offer a "hearty welcome" to some of the 10,000 *Heimkehrer* returning from Soviet prisons, including approximately 200 generals.⁹¹

Historians of the postwar period in West Germany have recognized these *Heimkehrer* returns, and particularly the one in October 1955, as important moments for the developing state. Robert Moeller has contended that press reports on the return of prisoners of war transformed "private homecomings into a celebration of national unity."⁹² These returning soldiers fed into a preexisting rhetoric and memory of German

⁹⁰ Gückel, 36.

⁹¹ Gückel, 37, and "Wie man verhandelt," *Der Spiegel*, 9 November 1955.

⁹² Moeller, *War Stories*, 14. See also Moeller, "'The Last Soldiers of the Great War' and Tales of Family Reunions in the Federal Republic of Germany," *Signs* 24, no. 1 (Autumn, 1998), 129-45.

suffering “at Soviet hands, but the invocation of the past that they represented also allowed their stories to become commentaries on the development of West German society during the decade since the war’s end.”⁹³ For Frank Biess, issues related to prisoners of war, their return, and their integration into society significantly defined narratives of the war and postwar.⁹⁴ Sasha Schiebl echoes Moeller in his recently advanced argument that Friedland and the return of German soldiers played a significant role in memory and anti-Communist rhetoric in the emergent Cold War.⁹⁵ In particular, the camp’s reputation as a “Gateway to Freedom” dovetailed with the *Heimkehrer* experience of leaving communist imprisonment and entering the freedom of the Federal Republic via Friedland.

The return of prisoners of war is a particularly interesting element of the facility’s history, because it exhibited a reversal of concerns about order and the arrival of individuals at Friedland. The absence of millions of fathers and husbands from German society due to their incarceration in POW camps had underscored the need for women to undertake men’s work in the early postwar period. The arrival of POWs offered a return to the stability of supposedly normal household and workplace gender divisions. Returning POWs were to lessen the so-called “surplus of women” (*Frauenüberschuss*) and solve the vexing problem of the “women standing alone” (*alleinstehende Frauen*).⁹⁶ Thus, in contrast to the specter of chaos presented by the masses of refugees, expellees,

⁹³ Moeller, *War Stories*, 14.

⁹⁴ Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁹⁵ Cf. Tändler, “Tagungsbericht ‘*Fremd im eigenen Land*’: Diasporic cultures – diasporic mentalities?”.

⁹⁶ Heineman, 118-19; and Moeller, *War Stories*, 107.

orphaned youths, and resettlers from 1945 to 1950, the 1955 return of POWs purportedly offered a reinvigoration of order and stability. If Friedland had sought to provide orderly conditions for the aforementioned groups out of necessity, then its role with POWs was to facilitate the reintroduction of the men and reestablishment of “normal” family life. The camp so closely associated with groups seen as injurious to social order, would also ease the return of male soldiers was thought to naturally promote social order.⁹⁷

An examination of international and German newspaper reports about *Heimkehrer* returns during the 1950s, however, offers counter-narratives of skepticism that coexisted with the overall joyful narratives of return highlighted by Moeller and Schießl. In fact, the celebrations in October 1955 were accompanied by an American preoccupation with returning Nazis. The *New York Times* in particular focused its reporting on high-ranking Nazis, who it featured alongside stories of joyful returns and tearful reunions now familiar from the historiography. One article offered a sympathetic portrayal of General Walther von Seydlitz, who had surrendered at Stalingrad and engaged in anti-Nazi propaganda thereafter.⁹⁸ The article particularly dwelled on the fact that the majority of Seydlitz’s compatriots had ostracized him. The next day, the paper noted the arrival of Harald von Bohlen und Halbach, who, it reported, had headed the “Krupp industrial empire.”⁹⁹ The paper also noted the return of security chiefs and aides to major figures such as Hitler and Rudolf Hess, as well as Karl Clauberg, who had run

⁹⁷ Of course, as Heineman suggests, these returns led to other forms of social instability through increased familial tensions and divorce rates because many women chafed at the renewal of patriarchal relations, because many returning POWs had been thoroughly changed by their experience of war and captivity, and, finally, because the war and leave from the front led to rushed marriages. Heineman, 119.

⁹⁸ “General Snubbed by his Nazi Mates,” *New York Times*, 8 October 1955.

⁹⁹ “More Prisoners Reach Germany,” *New York Times*, 8 October 1955.

medical experiments at Auschwitz.¹⁰⁰ The *New York Times* was even attuned to stereotypes of German officers when it ran a short, tongue-in-cheek article reporting the Soviets had taken German generals' monocles despite the generals' protests that they were "not only decorative but necessary."¹⁰¹

Much like in the *New York Times*, the reporting in the *Times* of London counterbalanced news of joyous returns with worries about their effects. Although the *Times* also regularly mentioned the return of generals through Friedland, it was less concerned about returning Nazis. In fact, one article discussed how the repatriation of certain Nazis would be beneficial, because they could help to clarify the final hours of Hitler's regime.¹⁰² The return of soldiers could still prove problematic for the Federal Republic in other ways, according to the *Times*. For instance, there was the issue of the 749 prisoners released to Germany without the pardon most of their comrades had received. The paper lamented that the West German spokesman was "uninformative about the manner in which the Federal Government proposed to treat [these] prisoners."¹⁰³ The article concluded, "If they are handed over in custody the Federal authorities will plainly have to take a decision to do something with them."¹⁰⁴ Another problem for the West German state that arose in the paper's reporting was how the prisoner returns would affect East-West German relations. Articles discussed a need to avoid injuring East German opinion because the passage of prisoner transports through

¹⁰⁰ See in the *New York Times*: "Hitler's Chief Guard Freed," 11 October 1955; "Nazi Camp Doctor back in Germany," 18 October 1955; and "Soviet Frees Hess Aide," 17 December 1955.

¹⁰¹ "Soviet Took Monocles from Nazi Generals," *New York Times*, 10 October 1955.

¹⁰² "Ex-Prisoners from Russia," *Times*, 10 October 1955.

¹⁰³ "Restraint about Prisoners," *Times*, 11 October 1955.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

East Germany required their cooperation. Boisterously joyful receptions at Friedland threatened to exacerbate strained relations between the German states, in part because East German authorities hoped soldiers would choose to stay in their country.¹⁰⁵ The delayed arrival of a transport thus led to speculation that the East Germans had forced to the transport to travel during the night in order that it might arrive in the early morning hours, thus preventing further celebration.¹⁰⁶

If international reports on the events of October 1955 at Friedland voiced implicit worries about returning prisoners even as they celebrated the reunion of families, then they echoed a similar ambivalence about returning prisoners evident in reporting about *Heimkehrer* in German newspapers some five years earlier.¹⁰⁷ One such example of domestic German ambivalence can be found in a January 1950 story from the major German press agency *Deutsche Presse Agentur* about the transport of former SS men out of Soviet imprisonment to Friedland.¹⁰⁸ What the DPA found particularly troubling was the group of reeducated anti-fascists who wore civilian clothes and large fur hats in contrast to the other, presumably shoddily-clothed prisoners. The former SS soldiers refused to accept greetings from the camp pastor, to eat within the camp, or to take part in the search for missing persons through the camp's picture search service. When asked about their reception by German and British authorities at the border, the now-communist fanatics dismissed it as a "pure propaganda activity." Without further comment on the SS men, the article then went on to note that the members of the transport would be released

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ "Delayed Prisoners from Russia," *Times*, 14 October 1955.

¹⁰⁷ Though one must note that it is not clear international press reports were in dialogue with domestic German newspapers.

¹⁰⁸ "'Aktivisten Heimkehrer' in Friedland," *Göttinger Tageblatt*, 5 January 1950.

to their home cities in the coming days, leaving the unsettling implication that such destabilizing men would soon be about in Germany.

The fact that this troubling press report was discredited within the next two weeks makes the episode all the more intriguing. A Hamburg man evidently familiar with Friedland camp staff wrote a letter to the *Welt am Sonntag*, which had run the article under the headline “Twice Misled” (*Zweimal Verführt*).¹⁰⁹ The author claimed that the article had not accurately related the facts of the situation: some of the returning prisoners who had been “Waffen-SS men” were better clothed than the others and had behaved guardedly, but that was all. “Neither the camp pastor nor the camp administration in Friedland knew anything about Waffen-SS *Heimkehrer* declining supervision from the Red Cross or refusing to disclose information about the missing.”¹¹⁰ Of course, the low likelihood of survival for the hard core of SS soldiers in Soviet prisons means it is hardly surprising that someone should raise doubts about the original report. What the initial story and subsequent publication of a letter debunking it do reveal is how prepared the press was to focus on the most destabilizing elements of the populations moving through the Friedland elements, even if such fears proved untrue.

An examination of newspaper articles about the return of prisoners of war in 1950 and 1955 thus helps to complicate the fond narratives in commemorative literature and which have been studied in the recent historiography of Friedland and the Federal Republic. To be sure, prisoner returns have been analyzed for their celebratory aspects in media presentations and memory because these events were often seen as positive developments. Press reports from the final 1955 returns, such as those discussed by

¹⁰⁹ “SS-Heimkehrer,” *Welt am Sonntag*, 15 January 1950.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Moeller, were largely celebratory because this group of prisoners represented the culmination of the long fight to bring Germany's last soldiers home. The news reports discussed above offer a counter-narrative to stories of a solely joyous reception.¹¹¹ The examples of reports from 1950 and 1955 suggest that newspapers had ample experience seeing ambivalences in the movement of various groups around and through the Friedland camp, so they were therefore quick to voice uneasiness about individuals during these otherwise happy episodes.

¹¹¹ Indeed, such a narrative would be fundamentally distorted anyway by the elision of the mass disappointment for those families whose worst fears were confirmed when their loved ones were not among this final gasp of returnees.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

The Friedland transit camp was initially established in the fall of 1945 as a stopgap measure to provide immediate aid and relief for refugees along the common border of the British, American, and Russian zones of occupation. During the postwar decade of 1945-1955 the facility played a crucial role in the lives of the nearly two million individuals it processed by providing food, shelter, medical assistance, and search services for missing persons to these displaced masses. The establishment and operation of the Friedland facility was thus clearly a response to humanitarian imperatives, but it also contributed significantly to efforts to reestablish an orderly German society in the aftermath of World War II and amidst mass population transfers. A sort of regulated humanitarianism was necessary in order to produce a manageable region for British military administration, and this paradigm helps to explain camp operation from 1945 to 1955. The camp at Friedland fulfilled the interconnected necessities for aid and order not only by helping individuals in order alleviate the humanitarian crisis, but also through the identification, registration, and redirection of these uprooted individuals to cities and areas of the countryside that could accommodate them. This process further played a role in establishing which Germans would be eligible for compensation in the forthcoming programs to equalize war burdens, thereby buttressing social cohesion through further relief of suffering and by offering expellees an investment in their new home.

The regulated humanitarianism at work in the Friedland camp relied upon the surrounding communities and simultaneously contributed to social reconstruction. Attempts to organize volunteers, whether through religious or secular charities, had the side benefit of rebuilding public, associational life following the war. Drawing upon informal networks of friends, Nazi organizations disbanded by the military occupation government, and newly formed student groups, the volunteer efforts at Friedland offered a safe, military-government-approved public space for organization and the normalization of social interaction. Moreover, the cooperative efforts between British volunteers and the students who would subsequently make up the professional German classes offered an important chance for reconciliation and a deepening understanding between former enemies. This was particularly significant at a moment when anti-fraternization rules for soldiers would have otherwise made such interaction more difficult if not impossible.

More than just a means to address issues of order, the Friedland facility played a role in shaping concerns about criminality, stability, and humanitarian obligations. The camp could address all manner of issues – such as public health dangers, the loss of identification, and the need for food and shelter – by concentrating destitute refugees and expellees in at specific location, but such a concentration also generated new problems. The camp pulled the destitute toward itself, thereby creating conditions for a perception of rising criminality, which the camp then proactively addressed through the establishment of a youth camp. Likewise, the camp's existence led to the concentration of poor resettlers at the Lower Saxon border with Thuringia, which stoked British fears of economic ruin and a resulting social collapse in a manner that might not have occurred had the resettlers from Poland crossed the border in a more diffuse, illegal manner. In this

way, the camp came to affect a geopolitical conflict between the Western Allies and communist Eastern Bloc, albeit briefly and to an admittedly uncertain extent.

Such consideration of the Friedland camp as a physical space leads to a final conclusion. Friedland may have been an expedient for addressing the host of social concerns addressed in this paper, but the incidents surrounding the youth camp, resettlers from Poland, and returning prisoners of war also demonstrate that the camp was a space onto which government authorities, the press, and, presumably, the public projected fears, aspirations, and joys. Concerns about unsupervised youths, worries about impoverished refugees and expellees without work, and the ambivalence about returning soldiers' commitment to a free, liberal, and democratic Germany after years in communist prisons all found their expression in news reports about the camp. Yet as suggested by common use of the camp's moniker, "The Gateway to Freedom," the West German public also came to project hopes for a better future on the Friedland facility.

APPENDIX

Persons Processed at Friedland, 1945-1955¹¹²

	Year	Refugees from East to West	Resettlers Part of Operation Link	Evacuated Refugees and Expellees	Heimkehrer	Child Transports	Foreigners	Others	Total
46	1945	344,493	0	198,474	8,104	0	2,024	0	553,095
	1946	493,090	0	41,189	44,634	0	4,186	0	583,099
	1947	58,555	0	17,438	129,909	0	19	0	205,921
	1948	22,248	0	3,402	179,300	765	0	0	205,715
	1949	11,027	0	2,530	150,062	2,365	403	0	166,387
	1950	6,207	34,162	1,464	21,114	1,608	743	0	65,298
	1951	1,416	19,010	563	1,075	770	706	1,186	24,726
	1952	3,981	3,258	214	784	99	42	1,646	10,024
	1953	2,972	1,778	166	5,983	173	0	684	11,756
	1954	148	1,583	56	4,757	198	0	675	7,417
	1955	432	1,581	10	10,050	10	0	675	12,758
	Total	944,569	61,372	265,506	555,772	5,988	8,123	4,866	1,846,196

¹¹² Data reproduced from "Grenzdurchgangslager Friedland, 1945-1955," 20-21.

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