Rehabilitation through labour

Welfare or control in a postwar Austrian internment camp

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Introduction

In October 1945, Major Taylor of the US military government berated the "difficult behaviour" of Jewish Displaced Persons living in internment camps in Austria. It was impossible, he said, to persuade the "Jewish group" to accept employment in spite of the many opportunities available in Graz.[1] Taylor ignored the fact that members of this "Jewish group" had been recently liberated from German concentration camps or Soviet work camps. In their former lives, the Displaced Persons had been forced to perform hard, manual labour in inhumane conditions. An inmate in the Mauthausen camp, not far away, described how he had to "pick up a piece of rock, you know, carry it up […] maybe like 50 stories, dump it, drop it."[2] Anyone who complained was either beaten or pushed 50 metres down the quarry to his death.[3] Others had spent the war years in the Soviet Union sawing trees from morning to night seven days a week, sometimes in minus 60 degrees.[4] Strangely, at the end of the war, Jewish refugees in Graz refused to "take employment," although according to Taylor, woodcutters were badly needed to provide fuel for the coming winter.[5]

In postwar Austria, labour, frequently unpaid, was an integral part of the lives of Displaced Persons. Austria, like Germany, was divided between the four Allied Powers, and policies varied between the different zones. For instance, in the US zone – namely the provinces of Upper Austria and Salzburg – forced labour for refugees was not official policy. Moreover, the US government specifically exempted Jews from the

1 Letter from Reuben Resnick to James Rice, October 1945, Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) Archive, Item ID # 661045.

2 Norman Belfer interviewed 31 May 1996, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive, Item RG-50.030*0367, p. 38 of transcript.

3 Alan Levy, *Nazi Hunter: The Wiesenthal File* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2002), 68.

4 Goldie Buch Jonas interviewed 5 May 2013, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archive, Item RG-50.030*0697, pp. 41–4 of transcript.

5 Resnick letter to Rice.

local requirement that able-bodied Displaced Persons accept employment. This exemption was based on the fact that during the six preceding years, Jews had been the victims of state-sponsored persecution, displacement and murder by Germany and its allies. The American policy contrasted with the practice in the British and French zones of occupied Germany and Austria, where all Displaced Persons were required to work.[6] Indeed, the French General Commandant of the military government issued an order in December 1945 stipulating that Displaced Persons who refused to work would be denied access to food and accommodation.[7] The actual practice in internment camps in the US zone of Austria did not always comply with the official exemption. The US military government and subsequently welfare workers of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) strongly encouraged all refugees to work.

Relief in return for labour echoes Victorian concepts of welfare. In 1832, the British government established the Royal Commission to Investigate the Poor Laws, which subsequently recommended that relief should be granted to able-bodied adults and their families only in well-regulated workhouses. The justification was that destitute people were idle by choice. Parliament adopted the commission's recommendations in the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. As a result, the supply of food and accommodation to homeless men and women depended on their willingness to work within the confines of the workhouse.[8]

This review of life in an Austrian internment camp is intended to clarify whether the object of employment of Holocaust survivors in workshops was to promote their rehabilitation or to attain order and control over them.[9] In other words, did the labour serve the residents' interests or was it part of a quid pro quo arrangement between the camp administrator and the Displaced Persons?

Compensation demands for work performed by foreigners during the Second World War have framed the boundaries of research on the connection between camps and labour. Most studies of foreign and forced labour in Central and Western

6 George Woodbridge, UNRRA: *The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), Vol. 2, 519–21; Laure Humbert, "French Politics of Relief and International Aid: France, UNRRA and Rescue of European Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany, 1945–47," *Journal of Contemporary History* 51 (2016) 3: 628–30.

7 Humbert, "French Politics of Relief," 628.

8 George R. Boyer, *The Winding Road to the Welfare State: Economic Insecurity and Social Welfare Policy in Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 38.

9 In this article, the term "survivor" is based on the definition of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which refers to individuals who were displaced, persecuted or discriminated against due to the racial, religious, ethnic, social and/or political policies of the National Socialists and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945. See <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/holocaust-survivors> (27 September 2020).

Europe concentrated on Germany and reviewed the period up to its defeat.[10] One striking exception is Ulrich Herbert's *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung in Deutschland 1880 bis 1980*. Herbert describes how postwar West Germany viewed the use of forced labour between 1939 and 1945 as an exceptional, war-related case and failed to connect this experience with the subsequent mass employment of foreigners by German companies.[11] There is no comparable study of forced labour in Austria during and after the war. Instead, studies of Displaced Persons in Austria focused on the frequently violent encounters between locals and foreigners.[12] Another topic of interest is the temporary residence of Jewish Displaced Persons in Austria *en route* to redemption in Israel.[13] UNRRA and its relations with the refugees in Austria have attracted only limited attention, except for brief references to the "preferential treatment" the organisation allegedly afforded to Jewish Displaced Persons.[14]

Archives of the United Nations are the main source for my review of labour and internment camps. To date, limited use has been made of the organisation's documents relating to its operations in postwar Austria. My case-study is a camp for Displaced Persons at Bad Gastein in the Austrian Alps, which I selected because of the relatively comprehensive and so-far unexplored documentation of life at this site. Following a brief description of the camp, the rest of the paper presents a detailed analysis of the inmates' labour.

10 An early example is Benjamin B. Ferencz, *Less than Slaves: Jewish Forced Labor and the Quest for Compensation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979). A more recent study is Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *Deportation und Zwangsarbeit: Polnische und Sowjetischer Kinder in Nationalsozialistischen Deutschland und im besetzten Osteuropa, 1939–1945* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2013).

11 Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung in Deutschland 1880 bis 1980: Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter* (Berlin – Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1986), 186. Michael Burri reviewed forced labour in Austria between 1939 and 1945 but did not discuss the continuation of the practice after the war. See Michael Burri, "Postwar Contexts and the Literary Legacy of Forced Labor in Austria," *New German Critique 93* (2004): 103–30.

12 See, for example, Margit Reiter, "'In unser aller Herzen brennt dieses Urteil. ' Der Bad Ischler 'Milch-Prozess' von 1947 vor dem amerikanischen Militärgericht," in *Politische Affären und Skandale in Österreich. Von Mayerling bis Waldheim*, edited by Michael Gehler and Hubert Sickinger (Thaur: Kulturverlag, 1995), 323–45.

13 Thomas Albrich, *Exodus durch Österreich: Die jüdischen Flüchtlinge 1945–1948* (Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag, 1987).

14 Norbert Ramp, "Prejudices and Conflicts between Locals and Jewish DPs in Salzburg and Upper Austria," *Journal of Israeli History* 19 (2008) 3: 62.

The camp for Displaced Persons at Bad Gastein

In the spring of 1945, the US Twelfth Army moved southwards from Bavaria into the Austrian Alps while Soviet forces advanced westwards into Vienna and the surrounding areas. The Allied occupation of Austria ended Germany's seven-year annexation of the country. US control drew refugees to Upper Austria and Salzburg and foreigners almost doubled the local population.[15] According to UN records, 36,704 Jewish refugees entered Vienna in one month alone (August 1946) and after registration, medical examination and "dusting" (with DDT) at the Rothschild Reception Centre, continued westwards to the Austrian Alps.[16] They joined non-Jewish inmates liberated from concentration camps, former forced labourers and ethnic Germans expelled from their homes in Eastern Europe.[17] The destination of the Jewish refugees (totalling approximately 200,000) was the Italian port of Trieste. They sought to start life anew far from the European continent. The British refusal to admit refugees to Mandatory Palestine and strict US immigration quotas thwarted their plans. Instead, they found themselves detained in Austrian Displaced Persons' camps for months or even years.

In October 1945, the US military government requisitioned five hotels in Bad Gastein, a town in the province of Salzburg that was renowned for its radon-rich thermal springs. Since Roman times, people with ailing health had sought cures in this grand spa. The trigger for the requisitions was a damning report by Earl G. Harrison, envoy of President Harry S Truman, which categorised the local refugees' living conditions as "deplorable."[18] Harrison also criticised the military government's policy of housing former perpetrators together with their victims and called for separate camps for Jewish refugees. The creation of a camp consisting of the five requisitioned hotels was one outcome of his report. It served as a temporary home for between one thousand and two thousand Jewish survivors, with the number fluctuating throughout the camp's existence due to the constant arrival and departure of refugees. In addition, it was impossible to establish a precise figure because many

15 See "Als Oberösterreich kurz zwei Millionen Einwohner hatte" <https://www.nachrichten.at/nachrichten/politik/70-jahre-zweiter-weltkrieg/Als-Oberoesterreich-kurz-zwei-Millionen-Einwohner-hatte;art173463,1788336> (27 September 2020).

16 Narrative and statistical report for August 1946, United Nations Archives, UNRRA File S-1253-0000-0032-00001. One explanation for this migration is the pogrom that took place in Kielce, Poland, on 4 July 1946. See Jan Tomasz Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (New York: Random House, 2005).

17 Tara Zahra, "'Prisoners of the Postwar': Expellees, Displaced Persons and Jews in Austria after World War II," *Austrian History Yearbook* 41 (2010): 191.

18 The Harrison Report is cited at <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Harrison_Report_ENG.pdf> (27 September 2020). See also Albrich, *Exodus durch Österreich*, 45.

refugees avoided registration with the military or local authorities. Rooms in the hotels were crowded and sometimes there was no running water or heating.

The US military government authorised UNRRA to administer camps throughout the region, including Bad Gastein. A small, eleven-person unit (Team 322) supervised day-to-day life in the camp. The first camp director was Jacob Lomazow, a former US soldier who married one of the inmates and left the camp six months after his arrival.[19] The refugees played an active role in the camp's management. The residents of each hotel elected five representatives to a central committee headed by a survivor named Jakubowicz.[20] The central committee's mandate was to represent the interests of the Displaced Persons vis-à-vis UNRRA. Salzburg's military government retained and exercised ultimate control over the camp.

UNRRA policy on labour by Displaced Persons

UNRRA publications and documents outline three distinct and conflicting approaches to work by refugees. The initial position was that employment was voluntary but should be encouraged and stimulated by every possible means.[21] George Woodbridge, the organisation's historian, expressed this view when suggesting that the higher the level of employment in appropriate work, the happier the residents.[22] Less than a year after the commencement of operations in Austria, UNRRA adopted a resolution that undermined the voluntary nature of work by refugees. In June 1946, the organisation's central committee convened in Washington and resolved that able-bodied Displaced Persons in Austria, such as former soldiers or labourers from Eastern Europe who refused to return home, should accept suitable employment under conditions no less favourable than for the local population.[23] This resolution expressly excluded persecuted groups, including Jewish refugees. A pamphlet published by UNRRA in the following month on its operations in Austria advocated a third approach. It described the organisation's efforts to encourage full employment of Displaced Persons, particularly inside camps. The overall objective was "to employ all DPs in work for which they had training and enable untrained DPs to follow courses in trade or craft," and this time there was no explicit exemption for

19 Lomazow married Wanda Neumark from Łódź, who survived the war under a false identity. See the Wanda Lomazow Collection in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn162662> (27 September 2020).

20 Jakubowicz's first name does not appear in the UNRRA records.

21 Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, Vol. 2, 519–21.

22 Ibid., 519.

23 Minutes of the Thirtieth Meeting of the UNRRA Central Committee of the Council, 17 June 1946, Washington, DC, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1536-0000-0239-00001.

Jewish refugees.[24] In conclusion, UNRRA advocated labour by Displaced Persons, but it remains unclear whether Jewish refugees were exempt from compulsory work.

Employment in the Bad Gastein camp

In January 1946, Team 322 at Bad Gastein published a programme detailing the establishment of twelve workshops in the camp for the refugee community.[25] The intention was to employ the inmates as carpenters, metalworkers, electricians, motor mechanics and plumbers. Workshops would also be set up for shoemaking, the production of upper and fancy leather goods slippers, hats and mittens, ladies' dresses and men's tailored garments. According to the programme, each workshop would elect a leader who would be responsible for acquiring tools and materials, overseeing their correct use, ensuring that work was completed on schedule, cleanliness and worker satisfaction. The team also proposed the creation of a workers' council composed of workshop leaders, UNRRA officials and Displaced Persons' representatives.

The workshops had three declared aims: (1) to produce high-quality goods for the camp itself and the local community; (2) to inculcate disciplined, high-quality work and honest shop conduct among the workers; and (3) to provide practical training facilities for those who wished to learn a trade.[26] Accordingly, the declared motivation was for the benefit of both the refugees (by providing them with useful training) and the authorities (by promoting discipline among the residents and producing much-needed goods). In contrast to Woodbridge, the authors of the programme did not claim that employment would result in happier residents.

The camp administrator and residents duly set up the workshops. A shortage of tools and materials limited the number of people they could employ. In response, the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), a Jewish welfare organisation, supplied sewing-machines and carpentry tools (see Figure 1).[27] Jewish refugees also performed camp management functions, such as serving as policemen and working in the local People's Court, the camp store and the UNRRA office. In addition, they undertook "manual labour tasks concerned with the cleanliness and orderliness of the camp."[28] The UNRRA team set up a workers' council but almost immediately

24 *UNRRA at Work: UNRRA in Austria* (London: European Regional Office, 1946).

25 UNRRA Team 322, "Program for Badgastein Workshops," 15 January 1946 (unsigned), UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1509-0000-0020-00001.

26 Ibid.

27 See the JDC reports for US zone operations, 10 September 1946 and 4 October 1946, Center for Jewish History, YIVO Archives, RG 294.4.

28 Report by Leon Fisher, 12 March 1946, JDC Archives, Item ID # 660980.

disbanded it for overstepping its authority.[29] UNRRA submitted lists of inmates employed within and outside the camp to the Austrian regional authority, the mayor (*Bürgermeister*), who calculated wages for the labour performed and deducted a fixed amount to cover the cost of the refugees' maintenance.[30] The local authority then registered the balance for work performed in the camp to the account of UNRRA, rather than the worker.

Figure 1: Workshops in the Bad Gastein camp for Displaced Persons

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Rabbi Eli A. Bohnen Photograph Collection, Accession Number 2015.458.1.

UNRRA documents attest to the fact that hundreds of Bad Gastein inmates worked during their time there, mainly inside the camp. There were more male than female workers, since many women in the camp were pregnant and/or looking

29 Letter of 1st Lt. Col. Thomas B. Giboney, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 12 January 1946, in UNRRA File S-1509-0000-0020-00001.

30 UNRRA Team 322, narrative report, 1–31 July 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1494-0000-0338-00001.

after small children.[31] In April 1946, a total of 495 residents of the camp worked including three individuals who were employed outside the camp by the military government.[32] Eight months later, the number of working refugees had declined to 276 (208 men and 68 women).[33] Nevertheless, these reports clearly contradict Ben Shepherd's assertion in *The Long Road Home* that Jewish Displaced Persons refused to work.[34]

Payment for inmates' labour

Payment for labour performed by the refugees in the workshops became a major bone of contention between the UNRRA team and the residents. The workshops produced goods of high economic value, including clothes, shoes, hats and furniture. Similarly, residents undertook many of the maintenance tasks around the camp, which obviated the need to hire local tradesmen. In addition, any work done in the camp formed part of the financial reckoning between UNRRA and the *Bürgermeister*. However, UNRRA did not pay the refugees wages for their work. Instead, it rewarded them with larger food rations and/or points. For instance, a working inmate was entitled to twice as much food as a non-worker in return for thirty-six hours' work. In view of the chronic shortage of food in the region and the very poor basic diet, this was a major incentive for participation in the workshop programme.

The second form of work motivation was a point system based on a pecking order. A shop leader received sixty points for a week's work, while an apprentice (at the bottom of the hierarchy) was entitled to just twenty-four. These points could then be exchanged for food, toiletries, cigarettes, clothing or shoes (provided in part by the Red Cross) in the camp store (referred to as the "*magazin*" or "PX" in the UNRRA documents).[35] The declared aims of this system were to encourage work in the camp, to

31 On the postwar baby boom see Atina Grossmann, "Victims, Villains and Survivors: Gendered Perceptions and Self-perceptions of Jewish Displaced Persons in Occupied Postwar Germany," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11 (2002) 1–2: 291–318.

32 UNRRA Austrian Mission, semi-monthly statistical report on DP Assembly Centre Administration, 30 April 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1494-0000-0372-00001.

33 UNRRA Austrian Mission, monthly statistical report on Displaced Persons, December 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1494-0000-0372-00001.

34 Ben Shephard, The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War (London: Vintage Books, 2011), 278.

35 UNRRA Team 322, Program for Badgastein Workshops, 15 January 1946 (unsigned), UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1509-0000-0020-00001.

ensure the fair distribution of clothing and other goods and "to prepare members for a normal economic life."[36]

The points system failed to meet the expectations of the camp administrator. First, refugees charged money for the goods they produced in private workshops using the tools and raw materials supplied by UNRRA and the JDC. The camp welfare officer regarded this as dishonest.[37] According to a UNRRA resolution, charging money for goods or services amounted to black-market activities and would be reported to the military government. The organisation duly ordered the closure of the private workshops and threatened to report any future infringements to the military court.[38] A later memorandum jointly signed by the camp military commander and the UNRRA director reiterated (in German) that all work undertaken in the shoemakers' workshop must be remunerated with points, not cash.[39] Next, the administrator complained that too many residents were receiving the maximum number of points and workers were falsifying their worksheets. In response, a general staff meeting advocated stricter control of the residents' "wages."[40] In addition, UNRRA staff criticized the fact that non-working residents still received "all the comforts they require," while the meagre rewards afforded by the points system did not constitute sufficient incentive to work.[41] Team 322 suggested an alternative – "no work, no food"[42] – but there is no evidence that this system was subsequently adopted in the camp.

In response to rising dissatisfaction among the residents, Team 322 set up a "workers' café" in a local bakery (the well-known Sponfeldner pastry shop), where refugees could exchange points for sandwiches supplied by the *Bürgermeister* and coffee, tea or beer supplied by the JDC.[43] Any camp resident could purchase a two-week "café card" for ten points that entitled him or her to ten servings at the café,

36 "The Point System – Badgastein," 11 April 1946 (unsigned), UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1510-0000-0006-00001.

37 Memorandum from Fay Calkins to Mr Lomazow re "Control in the Café," 1 March 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1509-0000-0020-00001; Marguerite Pohek, "Welfare Programme," January 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1494-0000-0338-00001.

38 Resolutions of UNRRA team meeting with DP officer, 27 March 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1509-0000-0020-00001.

39 Memorandum from the camp commander and UNRRA director to the shoemakers' workshop, 5 April 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1510-0000-00001.

40 Minutes of General Staff meeting, 22 January 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1510-0000-0002-0001.

41 James Travis, acting deputy director, Bad Gastein Assembly Centre 46, monthly report, 1 February, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1494-0000-0338-00001.

42 Ibid.

43 Report by Fay Calkins, undated, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1510-0000-0005-00001.

whereas heavy workers received their ration in the form of a free "sandwich card."[44] The café was open every evening, with dancing to a live band twice a week. At first, the inmates greatly appreciated this new facility. According to the welfare officer, "workers seem to enjoy getting cleaned up and taking their girls out for a date."[45] This success proved short-lived. The supply of beer and workers' rations dried up after a month, and thereafter the café opened just twice a week for dancing, with no refreshments available.[46]

UNRRA staff made frequent changes to the points system. For instance, in April 1946, the camp administrator amended the pay scale and developed a new work-requirement system – he justified the changes on the grounds that residents were still reluctant to work.[47] The following month, a report advocated a total revision of the system to combat the falsification of timesheets and eliminate wage inequality.[48] Then, in June, the camp director listed the points system under the heading "problems and targets." He reported a reorganization of the system to ensure that only those who were actually working and making constructive contributions to the camp would receive points. However, this reorganisation proved unsuccessful due to a lack of merchandise to offer workers in exchange for points earned.[49] The next month, Team 322 admitted that the points system may have to be abandoned altogether due to a lack of stock in the storeroom and the depleted supplies of cigarettes provided by the Red Cross. This problem was compounded when UNRRA and the *Bürgermeister* agreed that workshop employees would not be paid but instead would receive extra food rations and preferential treatment in the distribution of clothing.[50]

Unfortunately, the archives contain no reports from the second half of 1946, so it is unclear what happened to the workshops during this period. UNRRA's frequent revisions of the points system highlight the problems associated with its efforts to impose its authority on the residents. The organisation attempted to regulate the refugees' labour, but the refugees refused to take orders.

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44 The term "heavy workers" appears in the UNRRA report and presumably refers to inmates engaged in hard manual labour.

45 Report by Calkins.

46 Memo from Fay Calkins to Jacob Lomazow, 7 April 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1510-0000-0006-00001.

47 "Work Projects," 22 April 1946 (unsigned), UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1510-0000-0006-00001.

48 Report by Lee Hamburg of Team 322, 31 May 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1494-0000-0338-00001.

49 Report by Lee Hamburg of Team 322, 30 June 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1494-0000-0338-00001.

50 Narrative report, 31 July 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1494-0000-0338-00001.

Relations between the administrator and the inmates

The relationship between the camp administrator and the inmates was characterised by a complete lack of trust. From the outset, the UNRRA welfare officer attempted to lay down the rules. In response, the residents' central committee explained that they were responsible "for the whole economic system and can change any personnel they deem dishonest, at any time."[51] Team 322 rejected this claim, but at the same time advocated more self-government and a greater sense of responsibility for the elected committee.

Tensions between UNRRA and the central committee came to a head in March 1946. The latter filed three complaints against the points system in the workshops.[52] First, they demanded that all inmates should be provided with one packet of cigarettes each week and one cake of soap each month, without these items being included in the points system. Lomazow, the camp director, rejected this demand on the grounds that "any exception to the point system would disturb its effectiveness."[53]

In the second complaint, the central committee accused the camp store staff of favouritism and contended that they reserved many of the better goods for their friends. It suggested that the store management should be replaced. In addition, it demanded a special shopping hour for the camp's teachers.

The subject of the third complaint was control of the goods supplied by the JDC. This Jewish organisation distributed food, religious items and clothes to camps throughout Europe, including Bad Gastein. The central committee demanded the right to appoint a representative to manage the JDC storeroom and keep an accurate record of all incoming articles and their distribution.

The central committee threatened strikes and walkouts if these three complaints were not addressed. A visiting JDC representative eventually negotiated a compromise between the two sides. This included a reduction in the number of points required for a packet of cigarettes (although not for a bar of soap), replacement of the camp store manager and disclosure of the supplies sent by the JDC to the camp and their distribution.

At the end of February 1947, UNRRA ceded control of the Bad Gastein camp to the military government. This may be seen as part of the process of winding up UNRRA,

51 Letter from Fay Calkins to Captain Levy, 29 November 1945, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1510-0000-0006-00001.

52 Report by Leon Fisher, 12 March 1946, JDC Archive, Item ID # 660980 and Bad Gastein Assembly Centre 46, monthly report, 31 March 1946, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1494-0000-0338-00001.

53 Ibid.

which ceased all operations a few months later.[54] However, the local team attributed it to "a series of alleged black-market incidents" in the camp.[55] In September, the military government closed the camp and moved the remaining inmates to the Magen David (Star of David) camp in Ebelsberg, Linz. By the end of 1948, the vast majority of Jewish refugees had left Austria for the newly created state of Israel, the United States, Canada, Australia and other countries.

Conclusion

Labour was an essential feature of the UNRRA programme for the administration of Displaced Persons who were caught in a state of limbo in postwar Austria. In his review of refugees and individuals without documents, Gérard Noiriel suggests that assistance is simultaneously an instrument of control over the beneficiaries.[56] The case-study of the Bad Gastein camp for Displaced Persons confirms this view. It illustrates how UNRRA perceived employment as both a means of control and a form of welfare.

There was a consensus between the UNRRA team and the residents of the Bad Gastein camp regarding the benefits of work. The staff viewed it as rehabilitation, while the residents welcomed the opportunity to keep themselves occupied with meaningful, productive work that was very different from the slave labour that many of them had endured during the war. Nevertheless, disputes broke out repeatedly. The workshops and camp maintenance formed part of the survivors' attempts to regain control of their lives. They wanted the freedom to choose particular vocations and trade. They expected to receive payment in cash – or a cash equivalent that actually had some value – for their efforts. They set up their own workshops and charged cash for the products they made. In response, UNRRA restricted the forms of labour residents could undertake, prohibited trade and insisted on paying for work with points rather than cash. Indeed, the organisation refused to allow cash payments even when the points system collapsed due to a shortage of resources.

UNRRA reports and memos repeatedly emphasised the need to teach refugees discipline and obedience (or "honesty" in UNRRA jargon). As part of this policy, the organization viewed any activity that generated cash as black-market profiteering and prohibited it. Order and control were the guiding principles of labour in the

54 Jessica Reinisch, "'Auntie UNRRA' at the Crossroads," *Past and Present 218* (2013) 8: 71 <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gts035> (21 October 2021).

55 Letter from the Office of the Commanding Officer to the UNRRA director, 10 February 1947, UN Archives, UNRRA File S-1492-0000-0068-0002.

56 Gérard Noiriel, *Réfugiés et sans-papiers: La République face au droit d'asile XIX^e–XX^e siècle* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 1998), 12.

Bad Gastein camp and the chief beneficiary was the camp administrator – namely UNRRA – not the refugees.

The notion of rehabilitation through labour for the benefit of the organisations that administer refugee camps persists to this day. Immigrant detention centres in the United States are a striking example of the double-speak on camp labour. Under the Trump administration, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) operated an allegedly voluntary work programme for detainees. The declared goal was to provide detainees with opportunities to work and earn money. Another aim was to reduce the negative impact of confinement by combating idleness.[57] However, reports in the media revealed that some privately run detention centres coerced detainees into working for just one dollar a day.[58] Many detained immigrants did not even receive these wages.[59] Contrary to the declared aims of the voluntary work programme, labour by detainees was a means of control. ICE was the main beneficiary of the fruits of the immigrants' work.

57 <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/detention-standards/2011/5-8.pdf> (27 September 2020).

58 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/29/opinion/forced-labor-immigrants.html> (27 September 2020). The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution exempts prisons from the minimum-wage requirement.

59 See the American Civil Liberties Union's research report on the detention of immigrants under the Trump administration <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/supporting_resources/justice_free_zones_immigrant_detention.pdf> (27 September 2020).