

The Meaning of Jewish-Catholic Encounter in the Austrian Refugee Camps¹

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Abstract: This study takes its point of departure from reports of antisemitic incidents among Hungarians in Austrian refugee camps at the end of 1956. These incidents may have been provoked by agents from Communist Hungary who had penetrated the camps and found ground for provocation among the refugees. The author argues their true significance should be sought in the contemporary history of Catholic Hungary and Austria. Special attention is given to the biography of the journalist and historian, Friedrich Heer, and the priest, Leopold Ungar, who challenged the Austrian church to greater openness. An additional analysis is provided of the confrontation with the Catholic Jewish question conducted by Fathers György Kis, John Österreicher, and Alois Eckert. The engagement of Eckert and Ungar with the Hungarian refugees emerges as a prelude to the reconciliation of the Catholic Church with Judaism in the constitution *Nostra Aetate* of the Second Vatican Council.

Keywords: antisemitism, Austria, Catholic Church, Friedrich Heer, Jews, Leopold Ungar, György Kis, refugees

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Refugee camps are congested places where residents rarely get to choose their neighbors. For the Catholic majority in Austrian camps in 1956, this also meant an encounter with a Jewish minority whose identity *seemed* to provide better chances for resettlement. These Hungarian Jews were survivors of the Holocaust whose traumatic life experiences led to flight from Hungary in higher proportion than their share of that country's population. Some Jews reported

¹ I presented the original paper at the annual conference of AHEA in 2021. The anonymous reviewers of the manuscript made valuable suggestions for which I am grateful as they led to a significantly improved final product.



antisemitic incidents in the camps. Their broader significance, I will argue, lies in their place within the emerging Catholic understanding of antisemitism.

In late November 1956, Fred Ziegellaub², the Director of the American Jewish aid agency Joint Distribution Committee (or Joint) in Vienna, had a meeting with Austrian State Secretary Franz Grubhofer (the deputy of Oskar Helmer, the Minister of Interior charged with overall management of the refugee crisis) and followed it up with two letters to express his urgent concern about six antisemitic incidents (beatings and threats) experienced by Jewish refugees from Hungary after their recent arrival in Austria. It is evidence of the importance he attached to these incidents that the copy preserved by the Joint in New York identifies four open cc's (Helmer, the Vienna representative of the UN refugee commissioner, the leader of Jewish community in Vienna, and Simon Wiesenthal in Linz) and two hidden cc's to Joint officials. Ziegellaub assured Grubhofer that the Joint had no intention of making the incidents public, which would be against the interest of all the refugees and "would be water in the mills of those who are inclined to view all Hungarian refugees as fascists." Ziegellaub enclosed the photocopy of a flyer found in one refugee camp with an Arrow Cross insignia on it and a reference to the fascist leader Ferenc Szálasi.³

Zachariah Shuster, director of the Paris office of the American Jewish Committee 1948-74 ("Zachariah Shuster Dead at 83"), travelled to Vienna in late December to make his own investigation. In addition to Ziegellaub, he met with Grubhofer, the Catholic Jewish Studies scholar Professor Kurt Schubert, and Father Ernst Bannert, an advisor to the Catholic bishop in charge of ministry to the Hungarian refugees. All three agreed that these incidents were a serious problem that should be addressed. Schubert and Bannert were both leaders of Pax Christi, a Catholic organization engaged in relations with the Jews. Shuster concluded: "I believe that the Catholic leadership of Austria will take action to combat anti-Semitic expressions among the refugees."⁴

The experience of Hungarian refugees in Austria was overwhelmingly positive, regardless of their religious identity. The reported incidents were exceptional and concerned relations between nominally Jewish and Christian refugees from Hungary, not Austrians. The incidents were not only in Austria, and Joint agents also reported problems with antisemitism in the camps in Italy and Yugoslavia (Lénárt 2023). Although exceptional, I believe they are instructive and worthy of analysis. My investigation delves into the context and significance of these reports.

² Born Friedrich Ziegellaub in Worms, Germany in 1907, after medical and psychiatric education in Germany and violent clashes with the Nazis he emigrated illegally in 1933. He settled in the U.S. in 1935, where he used the name Fred in public life. He earned a Master of Social Work degree at Columbia in 1944 and occupied various JDC posts in France, Germany, and Austria during the 1950s. He died in New York in 1973. <http://www.wormserjuden.de/Biographien/Ziegellaub.html>, accessed April 26, 2022.

³ Ziegellaub to Grubhofer, November 29 and December 5, 1956. Reference code: G 55-64 / 4 / 5 / 23 / AU.113 in Folder: Austria: Hungarian Refugees 1956-1957. JDC Archives, New York, and online: <http://search.archives.jdc.org>

⁴ Shuster to the New York Office of the American Jewish Committee, December 31, 1956. Reference code: G 55-64 / 4 / 29 / 14 / HU.86 in Folder: Hungary: Refugees from Hungary November-December 1956. JDC Archives, New York, and online: <http://search.archives.jdc.org>.

Such reports circulated in many Austrian papers, according to Jerzy Künstlinger, the editor of *Neue Welt*, the Vienna Jewish monthly. He stressed these incidents involved "only Hungarians, Jews and non-Jews," and no Austrians, although they gave rise to antisemitic remarks by Austrians (Künstlinger 1957). Künstlinger picked up on an assertion in an article of the Austrian socialist daily, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* or *AZ*. The paper reported at length on a psychiatric team's investigation of the emotional state of camp residents. Much of the article seems to be based on an interview with the team's leader, Dr. Hans Hoff, and its conclusions correspond to arguments in a collection of studies published by Hoff and his colleagues in 1958. They found that many refugees suddenly uprooted from familiar surroundings, surrounded mostly by strangers in the camps, troubled by uncertainty about their future and lack of information from people in authority who mostly did not speak their language, were prone to emotional outbursts and paranoia. Many accounts of the refugee experience have a technical term for what Hoff's authors described: camp psychosis. The studies by Hoff and his colleagues make no mention of antisemitism, but the connection is made by the *AZ*'s anonymous author who states: "From the perspective of the psychiatrist, antisemitism, which may be found in many camps, is also not hard to explain."

A survivor testimony recently added to the Shoah Foundation database is interesting, although that of an individual removed by decades from his experience. The Jewish born American historian Gabor Vermes passed through Austria as a refugee after the Revolution, at the age of 23. He recalled in his interview in 1995 that "during the Revolution there was a kind of very nice national unity. Nobody cared whether...somebody was Jewish or non-Jewish." Yet when bitterness arose among refugees out of boredom over their inaction, "whom to beat up but the Jews." He added that "there was really quite strong antisemitism in these camps." When he and his friends learned of an opportunity to move to a separate Jewish camp, they did so (Vermes 1995).

The author of the *AZ* article suggests an additional spark for incidents besides boredom: Hungarian Communist agents were in the camps and known to provoke expressions of resentment against Jewish refugees who, some refugees believed, enjoyed an advantage in resettlement due to their well-functioning aid organizations ("Die ungarischen Fluchtlinge" 1957; Hoff and Strotzka, 1958; Zahra 2010: 211-12). The provocation of incidents by agents from Hungary is plausible on several levels. First, research in the Hungarian Security Archives has identified several Hungarian agents who were active in Austria during the 1950s. The former Hungarian Smallholder politician Miklós Szabó, alias "Mihály Kerekes," was infiltrated into Austria in 1955 after being "turned" while in custody. He is known to have been in contact with the refugees in 1956-57, and visited some of the camps, before his repatriation in September 1957. We do not know what he did in the camps, but the Hungarian National Committee (based in the US) appointed him head of its Asylum Committee in Austria. Despite this appointment, his memoirs indicate the goal of his activity was to undermine the political unity of the émigré leadership rather than interact with people in the camps. We know of several other Hungarian agents in Austria, but Szabó stands out (Sz. Kovács 2021: 153-76; Sz. Kovács 2013; Szabó 1978). I could find no evidence in the Hungarian Security Archives of activity in the camps by him or anyone else.

Jews constituted a higher proportion of the refugees than of the general population. In January 1957, *Neue Welt* put their number at "more than 16,500" ("Die Situation" 1957). Historians' estimates of the ultimate number range from 20 to 30,000, or 10-15% of the 200,000 who left Hungary. Held in Hungary in 1949, the last official religious census had put the Jewish

percentage at 2.7%, a rate measured after the Holocaust and the emigration of many survivors to the new state of Israel. An estimated one-fifth to one-third of the remaining Jewish population in 1956 may have left after the Revolution (Niessen 2017: 585). Moses A. Leavitt, Executive Vice Chairman of the American Joint, calculated that 18-20,000 Jews left, or "about 14 per cent of Hungary's 1956 Jewish population."⁵ Such estimates beg the question, of course, of who counted as a Jew: descendants of Jews, members of the religious community, or those identifying themselves thus after their arrival in Austria? Contemporaries agreed that the number was disproportionately large among the refugees to Austria in 1956.

The Kádár regime's published *Fehér könyvek* ['White Books'] on the Revolution detailed antisemitic incidents that were also recorded by Jewish organizations. For the government, this circumstance conveniently served its assertion that the defeated uprising constituted a Fascist counterrevolution. Today historians agree that "the Jewish question" rarely stood out in the behavior of the revolutionary crowds, especially in the western half of the country that was the home of most refugees. Two small antisemitic atrocities occurred in the east during the days of the Revolution, in Miskolc and in Hajdúnánás. However, it was rumor and a generalized fear, not tied to specific events, that best explains the disproportionately large Jewish emigration among the survivors (Győri Szabó 2009: 254-71; Komoróczy 2012: 1032-40; Bahar 2016: 688-706). There was fear of potentially resurgent antisemitism and of the Soviet crackdown, intensified by traumatic memories for survivors of the Hungarian Jewish laws of the 1930s and then the labor service, deportations, and Arrow Cross terror of 1944.

After 1945 and especially 1948, Jewish organizations in Hungary experienced suppression or *Gleichschaltung* like those of the rest of the population. Expropriation and deportation to the countryside of "bourgeois" property owners hit Jewish survivors more heavily because of their urban concentration and business activities. Officially, the Communist Party did not tolerate antisemitism, but their harsh campaign against Zionism beginning in 1949 was another matter. An official publication in 1955, *Az antiszemitizmus és a cionizmus igazi arca* ['Antisemitism and the True Face of Zionism'], made the dubious case that Zionism was in fact a manifestation of antisemitism (Cited by Győri Szabó 2009: 203). Recent research has documented official manipulation and even provocation of antisemitism. In 1946, communist attacks on black marketeers using coded language led to pogroms in Kunmadaras and Miskolc. Dictator Mátyás Rákosi was the most notorious of many non-practicing Jews in his party, but he engineered purges of Jewish members because he realized that the perception of Jewish domination in the party was a political liability with voters and, perhaps more urgently, with Stalin (Győri Szabó 2009: 163-4).

Politicians in postwar Austria also manipulated the Jewish question. Austria's very direct implication in the Holocaust, and the four-power occupation of Austria until 1955, meant that the discussion of Jewish issues was more subtle than in Hungary, and it did not lead to renewed violence in Austria after the war. Before the Anschluss, Austria had descended into a brief civil war between its rightist (Christian Social) and leftist (socialist) camps. The key to establishing

⁵ Moses A. Leavitt, "1957: There are Still Refugees," in *1957 Annual Report*, in JDC Archives.

postwar democracy was therefore to defang the bitter rivalry between these forces, and they formed a great coalition of the two major successor parties, ÖVP [*Österreichische Volkspartei*, 'Austrian People's Party'] and SPÖ [*Sozialistische Partei Österreichs*, 'Socialist Party of Austria']. In the coalition government, one or another of these parties occupied the ministerial posts, while the other provided their deputies: thus the partnership of Helmer and Grubhofer in the Ministry of Interior that prompted Fred Ziegellaub to address his letters to both of them. Both Austrian parties aspired to tap the support of the League of Independents, a small party that attracted many former Nazis. Helmer himself hoped to bring the League into the Austrian government (Rathkolb 2005: 98-100). In a Cabinet discussion about whether to offer compensation for Jewish victims, Helmer had stated cynically: "I am in favor of dragging this matter out." In other words, he chose stonewalling rather than addressing the issue in order not to forfeit the potential support of former Nazis (Pick 2000: 207).

In Hungary, when the Communist Party launched a general assault on religious organizations at the beginning of 1949, the leaders of the Jews were the first to knuckle down and sign an agreement. In a declaration they accused the arrested Cardinal Mindszenty of spreading antisemitism from the pulpit and "preparing a new Auschwitz" (Györi Szabó 2009: 163). This claim was false and absurd in the case of Mindszenty, who had opposed the persecution of the Jews during the war. However, the accusation rang true for those who recalled the antisemitic rhetoric of interwar Hungarian churchmen like Ottokár Prohászka and Béla Bangha or the weak church response to Hungary's anti-Jewish policies. Composed during his self-imposed exile in Austria during the 1970s, the moving memoir of the Catholic priest of Jewish ancestry, György Kis (1914-2005), records the tradition of antisemitism in Catholic teaching based on Biblical passages misinterpreted in a hateful way, the poisonous writings of many early church fathers that were passed on to later centuries, and his own hard experiences. After seminary training and ordination in Austria, he was denied admission to two religious orders because of his ancestry, but as a parish priest in Hungary he denounced racist antisemitism from the pulpit. In 1944, he provided Christian instruction in Budapest to Jews who were seeking baptism; in 1946 he prevented the unjust deportation of his German-speaking parishioners and was sanctioned for his protest against Communist measures against the church. After 1956, Kis was persecuted for his support of people injured in the Revolution. Kis insists that a Christian cannot be an antisemite (Kis 1987).

In Austria, too, the Catholic clergy made a fateful contribution to the trajectory of antisemitism leading to the Holocaust. A study of forty-one monthly parish bulletins in Vienna during the interwar period found 201 articles with antisemitic content in 179 issues. Their frequency increased during the last years before the Anschluss (Scholz 2001: 283-301). Many priests and even bishops collaborated with the Nazis after 1938. Both Cardinal Innitzer, Archbishop of Vienna, and Bishop Alois Hudal, the most prominent Austrian churchman in Rome, initially welcomed the rise of Hitler, even though their stance later became more ambiguous (Stefan 2002).

Johannes Österreicher (1904-93) and Leopold Ungar (1912-92) were two Austrian priests of Jewish origin whose experiences we may compare to those of György Kis. While Kis had been baptized as a child, the two Austrians made the decision to convert as young adults. Österreicher headed an organization advocating the conversion of the Jews and, in 1935, personally baptized Ungar, who entered seminary in Vienna the same year. Under the Nuremberg Laws, all three men were Jews. The clerical status of Kis protected him, but not the

Austrians. Österreicher and Ungar emigrated to France for their own safety. Österreicher then fled to the US, and Ungar to Great Britain.

For many contemporaries, religious conversion begged the question: was a baptized Jew still a Jew? Nazi racism insisted converts were still subject to persecution. During 1944, Kis was able to take leave of his rural parish to travel to Budapest and conduct religious instruction for Jews hoping to save themselves through baptism. Kis characterizes his ecclesiastical authorities as rigidly bureaucratic in their insistence on formal procedures for valid baptism, while he did not question the quality of religious conversion motivated in part by the fear of annihilation (Kis 1978: 90-108).

Unlike Kis, Leopold Ungar avoided direct confrontation with the Holocaust by emigration. He worked with prisoners of war while in Britain. With this experience, his law degree and fluency in French and English, the director of Vienna's archdiocesan aid agency Caritas, Jakob Weinbacher, hired him as his secretary after he returned to Austria after the war. This appreciation for a Jewish convert contrasted with the attitude of the Archbishop of Salzburg, Andreas Rohracher. During the war, writes one historian, "Jewry and paganism were both mortal enemies for Rohracher" (Liebmann 2010: 41). In August 1950, Rohracher formed an organization to provide support and rehabilitation for Austria's former National Socialists. When he requested financing from Caritas, Weinbacher declined (Hoppe-Kaiser 2010: 192). Later the same year, Weinbacher moved to Rome to replace the increasingly embarrassing Bishop Hudal – and Ungar moved up.

The promotion of Leopold Ungar formed part of a gradual reorientation of the Catholic Church in Austrian politics during the 1950s. No longer a reliable supporter of the ÖVP, it began to reach out to both parties. The first step was the rebirth in 1945 of the formerly right-wing, antisemitic Catholic newspaper, *Reichspost*, as the more centrist *Furche* ['The Furrow']. Its leading writer, the historian Friedrich Heer (1916-83), reported about the worker priest movement in France and challenged Austrian politicians to find common ground in the Cold War, even with the East. Heer's first influential works, *The Hour of Christians* (1947) and *Conversation between Enemies* (1949), called for a new Christianity that was open to collaboration even with socialists (Cited by Chappel 2018: 250).

Ungar and Heer show striking similarities in their public rhetoric. Ungar was a practical leader who wrote little for publication, while Heer was extraordinarily prolific as a scholar and publicist. Yet not only were they both advocates for a more open style of Catholicism in Austrian society, they also both saw their role as prophetic in the biblical sense, inspired by a responsibility to challenge their contemporaries with uncomfortable truths. Ungar's lifelong inspiration was Karl Kraus, the Jewish satirist who was a dominant cultural figure in pre-Anschluss interwar Austria (Hiti 1992, 44-67). Heer has been called the most influential intellectual of postwar Austria (Pelinka 2008: 11-19). The review of a 1955 collection of Heer's essays that appeared in *Furche* with the title "Prophet without Office" asserts that, "no one can deny the courage and vision of this Friedrich Heer" (Goetz 1955). Although Heer held a lectureship at the University of Vienna, fellow historians were mostly dismissive of his historical works. When a scholarly commentator called him a "prophet," he meant it pejoratively: deploying historical misdeeds for contemporary arguments incurred the scholarly sin of presentism (Ebach 2008: 65-77).

Both these prophets of open Catholicism contributed articles to the guide accompanying the first major Catholic gathering of postwar Austria, the four-day Catholic festival (*Österreichischer Katholikentag*) in Vienna in September 1952. The festival's announced theme

was "Human Freedom and Dignity." The lead article asserted, "Whoever does not believe in the uniform, divine origin of the human race will divide the races into master and slave races, into superior and inferior human races and under the pretext of saving the world from evil destroy millions like vermin. Freedom is a part of human dignity and truly not its least significant one" (Mauer 1952: 5). Our two prophets called on readers to transcend partisan loyalties and Cold War tensions. Ungar asserted that, "The work of peace in society and internationally is the task of the Catholic laity," (Ungar 1952: 44) while Heer challenged visitors from Austria's provinces to recognize in Vienna "a broad, rich, and young Catholicism that wishes to grow with Christians of other faiths, with non-Christians, semi-Christians, quarter-Christians, faithless, enemies of the church, and not least with Catholics who think, feel and pray differently than us" (Heer 1952: 54).

Ungar and Heer made stirring speeches about the connection between Catholic faith and international peace. Ungar organized a peace congress of Caritas in Vienna in December 1952, giving a keynote address that even got the attention of the *AZ*, which pronounced Ungar, "one of the cleverest figures in Austrian Catholicism" (Cited in *Furche*, December 13-14, 1952). At the Pax Christi Congress in Cologne in August the next year, Heer spoke on "The Detoxification of Public Opinion: Nationalism and Catholicism," whose excerpts appeared prominently in *Furche*. He asserted that, "Catholics have presented inadequate resistance to the establishment of nations as substitute churches...indeed they silently identified that nation with the church. Even today this dreadful confusion has not been overcome." Open Catholicism should aim at the transformation of enmities into partnerships (Heer 1953: 1-2).

Criticized by Heer, provincial Catholic piety received a different challenge when the Jewish press made a scandal of the ritual murder beliefs associated with the church in Judenstein, a section of the village Rinn in Tyrol. The Jewish community of Vienna complained in September 1954 to Austrian bishops about the annual performance of a play based on the local tradition that a boy had been murdered by Jews. The authors remarked sarcastically that, "the number of six million innocent murdered Jews in the Nazi years appears to be too small to the holders of power in the church if they are still seeking to foment antisemitism by ritual murder plays." The Jewish press agency called on church authorities to end performance of the play, otherwise one might call the state prosecutor into action. The Austrian bishops' press agency responded that the murder was a fact, the victim had been beatified by the church, and "in all passion plays Jewish persecutors play a role. It is simply a matter of historical truth."⁶ This statement was misdirection because the play in question was not about Christ's passion.

Neue Welt reported in December that after the Jewish community addressed leaders of the church in various countries, including Cardinal Spellman of New York. Finally, the Apostolic Administrator of Innsbruck, Paul Rusch, instructed the priest in Rinn to call a halt to the performance of the play for five years. *Neue Welt* concluded that, "It is time to end the

⁶ "Überflüssige Aufregung über "Ritualmord-Festspiele,"" in *Kathpress: Katholische Pressezentrale* (September 24, 1954), p. 2. The microfilm in the Austrian National Library, Vienna, appears to be the only set accessible to researchers.

Middle Ages also in Rinn" ("Ritualmordspiele in Rinn verboten" 1954). The Catholic press agency had no further comment. Friedrich Heer and the Vienna scholar Friedrich Schubert weighed in, however, with a piece in the journal of Vienna Caritas, *Die Begegnung*. They asserted, "there is no evidence for ritual murder." This was not the private opinion of Paul Rusch. Still, he discreetly proposed that the celebration of the alleged victim, Blessed Anderl, be removed from the church calendar, and this happened in 1956 (Fresacher 1998: 35-9).

Austrian majority culture rarely touched on Jewish issues and the Holocaust. In April 1955, Friedrich Heer published an essay in the Vienna journal *Kontinente*, "Judaism and Austrian Genius," that later appeared in a collection of his essays (Heer 1958). He stated that, "the provincialization of current intellectual life in Austria... is a direct result of the annihilation and expulsion of the Jews from Austria." In the view of a later commentator, this was "a provocation... breaking a tabu" and departing from the contemporary Austrian consensus. Heer compounded the provocation by dedicating the article to an admired Jewish teacher from his high school days, concluding that, "He taught me to be humane" (Scheichl 2008).

After an agreement between Jewish representatives and the Austrian government in June 1955, the latter created a "relief fund for political victims living abroad." The law made no explicit mention of Jews, identifying its intended beneficiaries as those persecuted for "political reasons of any sort, including ancestry, religion, or nationality." It named Leopold Ungar and Fred Ziegellaub as members of the fund's board (Künstlinger 1956).

Heer issued a still sharper provocation in the Spring of 1956. In his praise for Khrushchev's secret speech before the Soviet Central Committee, he suggested optimistically that the communists may be ready to "spring over their shadow," that is, to risk a dramatic change of direction. If this were possible, he added, when would the holy Roman Catholic Church answer the challenge by springing over its shadow and becoming "Catholic, universal, responsible to all of humanity?" An unnamed Salzburg newspaper rejected the suggestion indignantly, insisting that the world's two camps were incompatible. Heer responded in a second editorial, juxtaposed with the Easter peace message of the Pope. He rejected "insulting cannonades about crypto-Communism and cultural bolshevism," concluding that, "Pentecost follows Easter... As Catholics we believe in a European Pentecost" (Heer 1956a, 1956b).

Austria's Catholic bishops were also taking a step back from religious and social isolation. In May, the Holy See appointed the historian of religion Franz König as Innitzer's successor, then in September the bishops took a conciliatory tone in their pastoral letter on faith and society (Wodka 1959). The letter, to be read in Austrian churches on November 4 and 11, rejected both liberal capitalism and communism.⁷ These events set the stage for interconfessional and international collaboration during the refugee crisis.

The Austrian bishops' letter coincided with the outbreak of the Hungarian refugee crisis to which we now return. Catholics constituted a majority of Hungarian refugees, an even larger majority of Austrians, and their aid agencies had a prominent role in refugee resettlement. It may be indicative of the deficit of trust between the religions that Fred Ziegellaub did not include König or Ungar among his addressees in the letters with which we began this essay. Still, many

⁷ "Fragen der sozialen Gerechtigkeit. Ein sozialer Hirtenbrief der österreichischen Bischöfe," *Kathpress* (October 31, 1956). Austrian National Library.

Christian and Jewish NGOs consulted in regular meetings about the care of the refugees including the Joint, Caritas, and the World Council of Churches. These meetings included seventeen in Geneva and similar ones in Vienna, New York and other resettlement countries (Niessen 2017: 586-7).

During one of Ungar's inspections of a refugee camp, he encountered Oskar Helmer and denounced the inadequate conditions in the camp, saying "the soft heart of the Austrian population and the soft head of the Minister of Interior have created a situation that characterizes the catastrophic nature of refugee care." Helmer, known among colleagues in the Austrian government for cracking antisemitic jokes at times, responded well to the challenge from Ungar, and the insult: the two men developed a positive relationship (Wolf 1993: 46; Hiti 1992; Reiter 1994).

Ziegellaub informed Grubhofer that 3600 Jewish refugees were being housed outside camps at the expense of the Jewish community in order to avoid incidents. The Ministry of Interior rejected an appeal for financial support of this outside housing, stating that more was needed than the list of names they provided.⁸ Christian leaders (both Catholic and Protestant) also strove to remove refugees from the camps. Ungar stated in an interview dated November 9 that refugees should be pulled out of the camps: by providing private housing, Caritas wants to free them of the "camp psychosis" he had observed in 1945, including the moral pressure to escape the camps by too-hasty resettlement before they had a chance to consider all options.⁹ Ungar's ambitions for the private housing program exceeded the fundraising ability of his own branch of Caritas and alarmed the other Caritas directors in Austria. Consequently, the director of *Caritas Internationalis* in Rome felt it necessary to rein him in.¹⁰

Caritas eventually supported private housing for several thousand Catholic refugees but could not afford to do more. Ungar praised the Austrians' generous reception of the refugees in a radio address on February 15, although there were exceptions: "Many thousand people who are not Catholic acted in a Catholic manner, but a few Catholics pharisaically," making ungenerous judgements based on the bad behavior of a few refugees. Now the challenge was to maintain good comportment as the enthusiasm for freedom fighters was fading.¹¹

The president of the German Caritas Federation, Alois Eckert, was a correspondent of the Roman *Caritas Internationalis* who was elected chairman of its commission for the Hungarian emergency in February 1957. In advance of its session in Vienna that month, he heard a lot of complaints about Ungar's disregard for financial realities and for the limits of his jurisdiction as well as his openness to dealing with the new regime in Hungary about relief there. Archbishop König insisted on Ungar's presence at the meeting and assured the president of *Caritas Internationalis* that Ungar enjoyed his full support.¹²

⁸ Ziegellaub to Grubhofer, November 29. JDC Archives.

⁹ "Kein Lagerbetrieb—kein Kurzschlussreaktionen!," *Kathpress* (November 9, 1956). Austrian National Library.

¹⁰ Carlo Bayer to Alois Eckert, November 22, 1956, in *Auslandsarchiv*. 167: Caritas Diasporahilfe. +388.80. Ungarnhilfe, allgemein. Fasz. 4. Folder 1: Caritas Internationalis, Rom. German Caritas Archives.

¹¹ "Von der Stimmung zur Haltung. Die Stellung des Katholiken zu den ungarischen Flüchtlingen," *Kathpress* (February 16, 1957). Austrian National Library.

¹² Reports of the Vienna meeting of the commission and Archbishop Franz König to Monsignor Ferdinando Baldelli, February 3, 1957. In 193. Caritasverbaende in Europa. R 600. Zentrale Hilfsaktionen, allgemeines. Fasz. 01: 1956-1959. Zentrale Hilfsaktion; allgemeines. German Caritas Archives.

In December Eckert ordered an investigation of Foreign Legion recruitment and antisemitic incidents in the camps, sending a Hungarian priest, Sándor Sági, to visit camps in Germany and Austria. He met Ungar in Vienna and reported that Ungar requested a compilation of Sági's research about recruitment for the Legion. According to Sági, antisemitism was widespread in the German and Austria camps. He attributed this to the large number of Jews among police officers in Hungary and the advantages Jewish refugees enjoyed in resettlement.¹³

The Ziegellaub letters and their context contribute to an understanding of the transformation of Catholic teaching on the Jews that culminated in a declaration of the Second Vatican Council. Austrian and German theologians in emigration helped bring it about, including Johannes Österreicher. Alois Eckert sponsored the publication of the leading theological journal for Jewish-Christian reconciliation, the *Freiburger Rundbrief*, and Österreicher founded the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University in 1953 (Connelly 2012). Debate over the meaning of "the hope of Israel" in Paul's letter to the Romans was a guiding thread in this long debate among Protestants as well as Catholics. For those at the Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1954 who were disappointed by its vote on this issue, it "showed first that many did not recognize that the Jewish people occupy special place in the history of salvation, and second that some delegates were motivated by political considerations" (Krüger 1970: 40). This was also the experience for years of many Catholic advocates of a new approach to the Jews.

The leadership of Pope John XXIII brought change in the Catholic Church. Johannes Österreicher and Franz König were among the principal authors of the Catholic statement at the Council, *Nostra Aetate*, in 1965, that includes this passage: "the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone" (Vatican.va. 1965; Connelly 2012: 251-2; König 2002).

In 1967, Friedrich Heer published a far-reaching history of Catholic antisemitism, *God's First Love* (Heer 1967). It had the merits and flaws of his other books: an impressive vision and erudition, but also presentism and inconsistent care in the citation of sources. Adolf Gaisbauer's study of Heer's oeuvre demonstrates convincingly that Heer misstated key details of his wartime experiences and the chronology of his engagement with Jewish issues (Gaisbauer 2008). All the same, the advocacy of "open Catholicism" by both Heer and Ungar in Austria played a role in the evolution of Catholic teaching on the Jews.

The encounter of Catholics and Jews in the Austrian refugee camps occurred as Catholic contemporaries were becoming more sensitive to antisemitism. This transformation in attitudes made it possible for a convert priest, Leopold Ungar, to be one of the most prominent Austrian advocates for the refugees in 1956. A few years later, the priest who had baptized Ungar, John Österreicher (himself a convert) and Ungar's ecclesiastical superior, Cardinal Franz König, were the principal authors of the Vatican II statement on Christians and Jews.

¹³ Sági to Eckert, December 1956 and January 1957, in Freiburg, Archiv des Deutschen Caritasverbandes, Auslandsarchiv. 167: Caritas Diasporahilfe. +388.80. Ungarnhilfe, allgemein. Fasz. 4., section 7: Transporte, Auffangslager, Studentenseelsorge. German Caritas Archives.

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