

Czechoslovak Jewish emigrants in the clutches of Luxembourg pre-war migration bureaucracy

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Short abstract (1200 words)

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Methodological Introduction:

My contribution attempts to find answers to the following questions, among others: How did Luxembourg officials deal with Jewish refugees from Eastern European countries? Did the Luxembourgish authorities distinguish or give priority to citizens of particular nations? Who was involved in the approval process? Who played the most active role and collected the most controversial information about Jewish immigrants?

The alleged collaboration of Luxembourgish officials was largely elaborated in a report entitled *La collaboration au Luxembourg durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1940-1945)*, commonly known as the Artuso report.¹ This report came to the conclusion that the Luxembourg state administrative deliberately supported and collaborated with the Nazi regime. As a follow-up to this initiation, Denis Scuto, a professor at the University of Luxembourg and his team launched a new project, LUXSTAPOJE, to continue the research. The aim of the project is to systematize and extend the analysis of individual records held by the Luxembourg “Foreign Police” (*Fremdenpolizei*). It endeavors to link macro-historical studies with micro-historical or prosopographic studies on the Holocaust in Luxembourg. It focuses on a specific group of people who lived in a specific territory, i.e. foreign Jews who lived in Luxembourg in the late 1930s. The researched team has been investigating how exclusionary measures were accepted and what role was played by Luxembourg’s *Police des étrangers* (“Foreign Police”) and the Luxembourg Ministry of Justice in the process of denaturalization.

To analyze the revocation of citizenship in depth, I will present the detailed database containing several cases of refugees from Czechoslovakia who came to Luxembourg in the

¹ Viz : Artuso, Vincent. 2013. *La collaboration au Luxembourg durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1940-1945): Accommodation, Adaptation, Assimilation*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition.

1930s. I will illustrate the administrative process of denaturalization based on this sample of Eastern European immigrants from a transnational perspective.

The contribution will also demonstrate the phenomenon of emigration as Luxembourg's "destiny".² It is a phenomenon that has undergone both dips and periods of continuity, but one that overall has never stopped. For two centuries, foreigners have been arriving in Luxembourg to participate in the indigenous and open market and to work in agriculture and industry. Over the past hundred years, many have just passed through but others have settled permanently. The mobility of citizens has been a key feature of migration until the present day.³ What has changed is the major trends in migration and the economic sectors that are attractive to immigrants. The Czechoslovak Jewish workforce encompassed various professional backgrounds from iron ore miners to lawyers.⁴

My research mainly draws on data from individual Foreign Police files. This approach has enabled me to examine the interactions between the state, individuals and legal players. I have also explored the holdings of the Luxembourg National Archives, especially a number of invaluable files containing family portraits of Czechoslovak Jews who disappeared during the war. Thanks to these files and the meticulous work of the Luxembourg Foreign Police, we can piece together the portraits of people who came to Luxembourg for a variety of reasons. Unfortunately, their post-war destiny is unknown in most cases, but based on the existing material I can at least roughly predict their fate.

The individual files of Czechoslovak Jews, together with personal video testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation database, offer new insights into this segment of Luxembourgish Jewish pre-war history and allow historians to take a more multifaceted approach to this historical problem. My contribution will illustrate the remarkable military precision dedicated to applicants who wanted an identity card or a residence permit that would allow them to work and stay in Luxembourg before and after the war. I will also complete these data about personal documents such as photos, diaries and genealogies. It is evident that as the conflict drew nearer,

² Gloden, Marc. 2001. *Die Asylpolitik Luxemburgs Von 1933 Bis 1940 : Der Anspruch Auf Kontrolle*. Diploma thesis, Trier.

³ Scuto, Denis. 2012. *La Nationalité Luxembourgeoise, Xixe-XXie Siècles*. Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles.

⁴ Scuto, Denis. "Histoire Des Immigrations Au Luxembourg (XIXe-XXIe Siècles)." In *D. D. I., OGBL (Ed.), 25 Ans D'action Pour L'immigration, 1985-2010*. p. 12-38.

the bureaucratic screws were tightening and the number of applications that were declined increased considerably. Here is one example for all:

“Lydia Strobel⁵ will be officially asked to leave the Grand Duchy once she ceases her artistic activities. The unprecedented growth of artists in Luxembourg leads us to the conclusion that we must reduce the number of permits for this category. In the future, our officials will only issue work permits with a limited expiry date. We must be aware of the rising number of artists, especially “mediocre” musicians who are staying in our country with documents past their expiry date. They have to find a job somewhere else because they serve no purpose for our society.”⁶

Each record contains a memorandum indicating the significant dates in chronological order and the declaration of arrival, which was compulsory for all foreigners over 15 years old. Foreign Police reports were as detailed as possible. They included information about living conditions, citizenship, physical and mental health, and finally yet importantly they informed civil servants about taxes and rent. I was also able to uncover the destinations where people settled after leaving Luxembourg.⁷

The records contain many other confidential documents such as applications to renew ID cards: these forms appeared in 1936, when the first ID cards had to be renewed. The files also contain work permits, official decisions by the Ministry of Justice in Luxembourg, Foreign Police reports on the suitability of applicants issued by different states, interventions of lawyers, personal correspondence, reports from ESRA etc.⁸

The datasets drawn from the Foreign Police reports are an invaluable treasure for scholars. They provide meticulous details about the Czechoslovak applicants who intended to extend their stay in Luxembourg and apply for a new ID card. These reports represented the first stage in the bureaucratic process to obtain the coveted permission from Luxembourgish authorities. People who intended to apply for repatriation after the war then had to complete a

⁵ Lydia Strobel, a Czechoslovak artist who arrived in Luxembourg from Switzerland.

⁶ (Archives Nationales de Luxembourg) ANLux, MJ-Pet 239609, Alien Police Report 6. 2. 1939.

⁷ Scuto, Denis. "Identifier, Contrôler, Réprimer : L'effet De 14-18 Sur La Circulation Des Personnes." *Mutations : Mémoires Et Perspectives Du Bassin Minier*, 10, 2018. p. 133-143.

⁸ Fuchshuber, Thorsten. 2014. *Emancipation, Écllosion, Persécution: Le Développement De La Communauté Juive Luxembourgeoise De La Révolution Française À La 2E Guerre Mo. Modulaires européennes.* p. 36.

long and detailed questionnaire about their relationship with Luxembourg, their physical and mental health, and lastly but importantly their financial situation.⁹

The third stage took place at the Ministry of Justice, which had the task of examining all applications submitted by both individuals and state authorities. In the event of a positive decision, the applicant received an official letter signed by a Government Adviser, then a Luxembourgish ID card. Negative decisions issued by the Ministry of Justice indicated that the application had been irrevocably rejected. These decisions involved consulting the Public Prosecutor's Office to determine the deadline that would be granted to each immigrant to leave Luxembourgish territory. From 1938 onward, the Ministry of Justice often dealt with urgent applications from Jews wanting to unite their families stranded in Germany or Austria.

My research also explored a few unfortunate Czechoslovaks who were deported forcefully from Belgium or France to the Litzmannstadt and Theresienstadt ghettos, which slightly increased their chances of survival in comparison with those (mostly Polish) Jews who were deported to extermination camps in Poland. My research also revealed a very exciting case of Antoine Slunecko, a Jewish tailor born in Sezimovo Usti who had managed to survive the war in Luxembourg and after few attempts, he received the Luxembourg citizenship by naturalization in 1953.¹⁰

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⁹ (Archives Nationales de Luxembourg) ANLux, MJ-Pet 251955; ANLux, MJ-Pet 250191.

¹⁰ CERF, Paul, *L'attitude de la population luxembourgeoise à l'égard des juifs pendant l'occupation allemande*, in : *La présence juive au Luxembourg du Moyen-âge au XXe siècle*, Luxembourg: B'nai Brith, 2001, p. 71-74.

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[Jakub Bronec](#) is a PhD candidate at the University of Luxembourg. After his Bachelor degree, he studied Media Science and Journalism at Charles University in Prague (Czech Republic) and completed his Master in 2016. His personal interest in social history, oral history and history of journalism inspired him to embark on a comparative PhD on the cultural and educational activities of the Jewish minority in Czechoslovakia and the Francophone regions of Luxembourg and Alsace-Lorraine after the Second World War. His approach particularly involves conducting and maintaining interviews with members of Jewish populations born in the post-war period. He is now working on an internal research project entitled “[Luxembourg State Policy Towards Jews \(1930s to 1950s\)](#)”. This project analyses continuities and turning points in the attitudes and policies of Luxembourg state authorities towards Jewish refugees in the country before, during and after World War II. The project aims to analyze and describe the migration trajectories and uncertainty of individuals who had to face stringent state authorities.

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