

Fleck, Christian: *Etablierung in der Fremde. Vertriebene Wissenschaftler in den USA nach 1933*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag 2015. ISBN: 978-3-593-50173-4; 475 S.

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The Graz sociologist Christian Fleck has become one of the leading authorities on German and Austrian refugee social scientists in the United States during the Nazi era. After his admirable „Transatlantische Bereicherungen“<sup>1</sup>, he now follows up with an equally engaging and readable work about how refugee scholars established themselves in academe in the U.S. in the 1930s/1940s. Whereas his earlier work concentrated on the role of the Rockefeller Foundation and its funding of the most talented of German and Austrian social scientists (like Paul Lazarsfeld), who as a cohort helped to invent empirical data driven social research. He particularly presented a case study of Max Horkheimer's Frankfurt Institute of Social Research transplanted to New York City. Unusual for a sociologist, Fleck's research is animated by deep immersion in the relevant archives in both the U.S. and Europe. His first book was based on his work in the rich files of the Rockefeller Archives Center in Sleepy Hollow, NY, this book above all breathes the equally rich files of the „Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars“ [hereinafter referred to as EC] located in the New York Public Library.

„Etablierung in der Fremde“ is evenly divided between two lengthy chapters on the two principal aid committees for German and Austrian refugee scholars and four chapters that are in-depth case studies of „Austrian“ refugee scholars (Edgar Zilsel, Cracow-born Gustav Ichheiser, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and Joseph Alois Schumpeter). Fleck does not subsume the Austrians to be Germans as some prominent authors of refugee scholars do.<sup>2</sup> Soon after Hitler's seizure of power early in 1933, British scholars established the „Academic Assistance Council“ [AAC] in London. Remarkably, inspired by their director William Beveridge, the faculty of the London School of Economics taxed themselves to help refugee scholars find an initial footing at

the LSE and in Great Britain. Ironically, the idea to help German professors who were beginning to lose their jobs in 1933 may have been initiated in a Vienna coffee house by the economist Ludwig von Mises, who was meeting Beveridge and the LSE economist Lionel Robbins in Vienna in early April 1933 (pp. 29–31). Mises had the idea – Fleck ironically calls this a typical Austrian „Parallelaktion“ (p. 34) – but not the connections or the will to raise the necessary funds (p. 80). It was the Hungarian physicist Leo Szilard who became the initial driving force in the London AAC to assist victims of Nazi persecution (the AAC was renamed the „Society for the Protection of Science and Learning“ in 1936). In solidarity with their German colleagues, private donors raised thousands of British pounds to help a few dozen German scholars reestablish themselves in British academe.

In the U.S. it began to dawn on the „institutional men“ of the Rockefeller Foundation [RF] in the course of 1933 that their traditional scholarship program no longer worked in Nazi Germany. The RF set aside 140,000 dollars to aid American institutions who would accept German refugee scholars (p. 63). Alvin Johnson at the New School for Social Research in New York (founded in 1919) set up the „University in Exile“ as the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science to offer employment to refugee scholars. Johnson found a private philanthropist who financed the refugee scholars for the first two years. Johnson's remarkable creation of the University in Exile „killed 3 birds with one stone“, Fleck observes shrewdly: 1) he showed solidarity with his German colleagues; 2) with the hiring of famous German professor he immediately raised the reputation of his New School; 3) he also launched a visible protest against conditions in Nazi Germany (p. 69).

<sup>1</sup> Christian Fleck, *Transatlantische Bereicherungen. Zur Erfindung der empirischen Sozialforschung*, Frankfurt am Main 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise. German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America from the 1930s to the Present*, Boston 1983; see the chapters „Exile, and the Road into the Open,“ and „The 'Fourth Reich': The Effect of German Thought on American,“ in: Peter Watson, *The German Genius. Europe's Third Renaissance, the Second Scientific Revolution, and the Twentieth Century*, New York 2010, S. 699–742.

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In June 1933 the EC was founded within the context of the Institute of International Education in New York. The EC raised funds quietly and privately (table 12, p. 193, presents an overview of the donor philanthropies) to place German refugee scholars with cooperating American universities, paying their salaries for the first couple of years. Given that the Great Depression was raging in the U.S. and many universities had to fire faculty members, the EC felt it had to tread very gingerly in placing German refugee scholars, who on top of it were often Jewish. Many American universities still had quotas in hiring Jewish faculty members and admitting Jewish students at the time („the embers of anti-semitism were smoldering in the colleges [...] and we did not wish to set them ablaze“, p. 189). The EC declined to place Jews from Eastern Europe (pp. 159–62) but managed to connect famous scholars like the linguist Roman Jakobson with the New York Public Library.

Chapter 2 „The Praxis of the Emergency Committee“ is the heart and soul of the book. Fleck engages here in an in-depth analysis of academic hiring practices in the U.S. in the 1930s, driven by the data in the hundreds of personnel files of the EC. While some universities like Columbia and NYU were very cooperative, others like Harvard showed no interest at all (see Table 6, p. 108). While the EC with its very discrete approach as a „mediator“ (Makler) between refugee scholars and American universities had a high rate of success, some refugees were demanding and did not want to be placed at small provincial colleges or historically black institutions. Horkheimer's Institute of Social Research was particularly successful in using the EC as a source to finance refugee scholars within its circle, using (and abusing) the EC as a kind of „welfare fund“ for stranded scholars (p. 145), not all of them emanating from German universities (table 8, p. 156, gives a summary of successful and less successful placement of scholars by the EC).

The expectations of the British and American aid committees were that the Nazi spook would be short-lived and scholars did not need to be placed permanently. This proved to be an illusion as new waves arrived in 1935

after the passing of the Nuremberg Race Laws as well as after the Anschluss and the Munich Agreement on Czechoslovakia in 1938 (p. 167). Now the EC expected cooperating institutions to hire refugee scholars permanently after an initial bridge-financing over 1–2 years. The Rockefeller Foundation acted as the EC's „Siamese twin“ and co-financed many of these scholars (pp. 176ff.). More than one third of the scholars co-financed by the RF were social scientists (see table 9, p. 179).

Fleck also analyzes whether German refugee scholars displaced American academics from their jobs. After a careful study of academic labor markets he comes to the conclusion that in the worst years of the Great Depression the influx of German professors might have contributed to a 1–2 percent additional unemployment among university staff. With the expansion of the American university system during World War II the German and Austrian refugees could easily be absorbed (p. 201). Overall the EC financed 613 professors from Europe (a third of them Germans) and 288 additional refugee scholars. Fleck does issue a mild critique of the EC – they were too „self-limiting“ – being concerned about placing too many Jewish scholars and not doing enough PR to advertise their valuable work, fearing a backlash from American professors (pp. 248f.).

Fleck's case studies are illuminating and fascinating at the same time. The very innovative philosopher of science Zilsel had bad luck and never managed to find a mentor or partner university in the U.S., so he committed suicide. Ditto Ichheiser, the psychologist and pupil of Karl Bühler. In incredible sleuthing Fleck pieces together a scholarly life in America that was quite productive but ends in the mad house and eventual suicide too. Rarely do we learn about such spectacular cases of failure. Usually we only hear about the success stories such as Lazarsfeld's. Here Fleck contrasts Lazarsfeld's own autobiographical text about his beginnings in the U.S. with the actual archival evidence. After his first year as a Rockefeller fellow, Lazarsfeld essentially enters the U.S. illegally as a penniless immigrant but quickly falls on his feet with a bit of luck and strong mentors and embarks on a spectacular career ending

at Columbia University, where he eventually becomes the doyen of American sociology. So many factors contributed to success – mentorship being a crucially important one. Fleck insists that Schumpeter was not a refugee but was hired at Harvard University in 1932. He left the University of Bonn before Hitler came to power. In Schumpeter's case Fleck adumbrates how early and vigorously the famous economist supported German and Austrian colleagues in helping them finding a new foothold at American institutions. Schumpeter wrote countless letters on behalf of his colleagues and thus acted as „Makler“ in a one-man refugee organization.

With these individual case studies Fleck presents a broad spectrum of opportunities being available to German and Austrian (refugee) scholars coming to the U.S. Some like Schumpeter made it on their own reputation and did not need the support of aid organizations. Others like Lazarsfeld made it on their own too with the good fortune of being chosen as a Rockefeller fellow and kind mentors, as well as incredibly hard work and a drive to succeed. Zilsel and Ichheiser failed to find mentors or welcoming academic institutions. They floundered. Fleck does not consider E. Wilder Spaulding's famous yet dated „quiet invader“ thesis that Austrian immigrants to the U.S. tended to assimilate quickly and successfully.<sup>3</sup> In his case studies Fleck presents persuasive material to contest the „quiet invaders“ paradigm.

Fleck's is not a work of immigration history as such but a study of the factors of establishing oneself professionally in a new academic culture. He hardly deals with the issue how these refugee immigrants adapted to American society and culture in general. While he frequently refers to the difficulties of refugees getting American visas (quota and non-quota visas), he only superficially touches upon the changing American immigration regime after World War I („the era of restriction“, replacing the „era of regulation“ and the previous „era of the open door“), which established national quotas for immigrants (pp. 195–98). These Quota Laws made it difficult in the 1930s to enter the United States.<sup>4</sup> Fleck does not seem to be familiar with the complex literature of migration studies in the U.S. and dismisses

traditional concepts and tools of getting established in a new environment such as assimilation, acculturation and integration (p. 403). He thus ignores the complex process of „negotiation“ between newcomers and natives, „where acceptance and opportunity often come at great cost.“<sup>5</sup> The Viennese refugee Henry Grunwald has usefully summarized this process of negotiated assimilation.<sup>6</sup> For the historian this missing dimension distracts from an otherwise brilliant study. Fleck's discerning work should be available in every research library.

On top of it the book is unusually well written. Fleck does not allow himself to get caught up in the extensive theoretical discussions that usually characterize Teutonic works of social science; instead he delves deeply into the archives and engages in rich empirical discourse. He does not shy away from some pointed observations such as unlike many who stayed at home, most of the refugees „did not convert to misanthropy“ (p. 222); or, „the voice of scientific reason“ was only „marginal“ in some of the decisions of the EC (p. 223); as to the reputation of the University of Kentucky and Texas, he wryly remarks that they were not the „first addresses in the country“ (p. 241).

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<sup>3</sup> E. Wilder Spaulding, *The Quiet Invaders. The Story of the Austrian Impact upon America*, Vienna 1968.

<sup>4</sup> Fleck cites the somewhat dated *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom / Ann Orlov / Oscar Handlin, Cambridge, MA 1980, but not crucial entries such as „Assimilation and Pluralism“, or „Immigration: History of U.S. Policy,“ pp. 150–160, 486–508.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Foreword to Paperback Edition, in: Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton 2004, Pb. ed. 2014, pp. xxi–xxx; see also Alan M. Kraut, *Doing as Americans Do: The Post-migration Negotiation of Identity in the U.S.*, in: *Journal of American History* 101 (2014), S. 707–725 (citation p. 711).

<sup>6</sup> Henry Grunwald, *How to Become an American*, in: Peter Weibel / Friedrich Stadler (Hrsg.), *Vertreibung der Vernunft. The Cultural Exodus from Austria*, Vienna 1993, S. 338–342.