


## ARTICLE

## Rethinking the Postwar International Migration Regime from the Global South: Venezuela in a Global History of White Immigration

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### Abstract

Between 1947 and early 1952, the International Refugee Organization (IRO), which was established within the framework of the United Nations to “solve” the so-called European refugee problem after the end of the Second World War, resettled one million European refugees—victims of Nazism as well as East European refugees who escaped the Red Army—all over the world. The IRO’s resettlement project is regarded as a blueprint for the establishment of the postwar international migration regime, and it was the predecessor of later initiatives such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In this article I argue that the IRO’s history as well as the history of the migration regime after the Second World War has, thus far, mainly been written from the perspective of U.S. American and European history. Northern nations are considered agents in this history, while southern countries are considered as passive “destinations.” In the case of Venezuela, the article argues that the Global South’s active role in the migration regime must be taken into consideration to understand postwar migration. From the perspective of a connective approach to global history, it shows how Venezuela, as a political agent, was involved in shaping the migration regime; how it perceived itself as an agent within that regime; and how it intervened on a small scale to shape its form and function.

**Keywords:** international migration; post-Second World War migration; global migration regime; resettlement; International Refugee Organization; Venezuela

### Introduction

After—and indeed during—the Second World War, millions of people were either displaced or on the run throughout Europe and Asia.<sup>1</sup> Amongst others were victims of

<sup>1</sup> Given that Venezuela was involved in the resettlement of Europeans and not in migration in and from Asia, I will not discuss the Asian cases in this paper. For the Asian contexts, see Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press [2013] 2015), 178–96; Rana Mitter, “Relocation and Dislocation: Civilian, Refugee, and Military Movements as Factors in the Disintegration of Postwar China, 1945–49,” in this issue; and Vazira Fazila-Yacoubali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). For an overview of the general focus of historical migration research on the European and Australian contexts and the consequent marginalisation of the Asian and African contexts, see, for example, Adam McKeown, “Global Migration, 1946–1940,” *Journal of World History* 15:2 (June 2004), 155–89.

Nazi terror, slave labour, and the Holocaust; Eastern Europeans who had fled from the Red Army; former Spanish Republicans who sought protection from the Franco regime (mainly in France after March 1939); and many others who had fled or been kidnapped or deported.<sup>2</sup> The issue of displaced persons and refugees had been discussed in various different contexts since the 1930s. In a conference held from 6 to 15 July 1938 at Évian-les-Bains (hereafter referred to simply as the Évian conference), thirty-two states and several voluntary organisations discussed the possibility of rescuing especially Jews from the Nazis. While failing to arrive at a fundamental solution, the conference did lay the global foundations for the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR).<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the so-called European refugee crisis that emerged during the final stages of (and continued after) the Second World War, in November 1943, forty-four states from all over the world founded the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) to help refugees and the Displaced in Europe and Asia.<sup>4</sup> UNRRA's primary task was to provide them with food, clothing, and medical care. Subsequently, they were to be repatriated as soon as possible, as had been agreed upon by the Allies in the context of the foundation of UNRRA and as had been affirmed, especially regarding eastern European refugees and the Displaced, at the conference held by Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin in Yalta, February 1945.<sup>5</sup> In 1945, between six and seven million people returned to their countries of origin or were repatriated by the Allies and UNRRA. These repatriations were also carried out by force—which was especially dangerous for people who had to return to the Soviet Union, who risked further persecution.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The estimated numbers of refugees and those displaced thereby vary depending on the sources, when such estimates were made, and especially on the question of who was included in the estimates. Eugene Kulischer wrote about the issue on behalf of the International Labour Office in 1943, estimating 30 million displaced and refugees in Europe. See Eugene M. Kulischer, *The Displacement of Population in Europe* (Montreal: International Labour Office, 1943). Early surveys after 1945 suggested numbers in the region of 8 million refugees in Europe (International Refugee Organization, *The Facts*, 3); at least 8 million former prisoners of war and slave labourers in Germany (Eugene M. Kulischer, "Displaced Persons in the Modern World," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political Sciences* 262 (March 1949), 166–77, 168); 12 million refugees and displaced in Europe (Walter Dushnyck and William J. Gibbons, *Refugees Are People: The Plight of Europe's Displaced Persons* (New York: The America Press, 1947), 11); or respectively "the displacement of 30 million or more people during Hitler's rule over Europe [ . . . ] and another 25 million" after the end of the war (Eugene M. Kulischer, *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917–47* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 305). Peter Gatrell assumes at least 40 million displaced civilians in Europe after the war (Gatrell, *The Making*, 89). Gerald Daniel Cohen again refers to 8 million civilians in Germany after the end of the war who "qualified as displaced persons under UNRRA and Allied military directives: foreign workers, slave laborers, prisoners of war, and liberated concentration camp inmates" (Gerald Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press [2011] 2017), 5). Michael R. Marrus assumed that after May 1945, the Western Allies had to care for 7 million displaced persons and refugees, and the Soviet Union for a similar number (Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 299).

<sup>3</sup> Gatrell, *The Making*, 77; Marrus, *The Unwanted*, 170–1.

<sup>4</sup> Cohen, *In War's Wake*, 59–62. I use the term "the Displaced" here instead of "displaced persons," as the latter term has been used by different actors after the Second World War to name different specific groups—to the exclusion of others—within the overall group of the displaced. The term was introduced by Eugene M. Kulischer in the early 1940s to first describe "all kinds of war-produced population movements," Kulischer, "Displaced Persons," 169. However, the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) used it differently to its subsequent use by UNRRA, and the International Refugee Organization (IRO) changed the definition of "refugees" and "displaced persons" yet again. Even a Special Subcommittee of the U.S. Committee on Foreign Affairs noted in 1947 that different definitions of "displaced persons" were circulating in the mid-1940s. James G. Fulton, Jakob K. Javits, and Joseph L. Pfeifer, *Displaced Persons and the International Refugee Organization: Report of a Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Eightieth Congress, First Session* (Washington: United States Printing Office, 1947), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, *In War's Wake*, 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 5; Marrus, *The Unwanted*, 311.

Critical discussion of the repatriation programme began towards the end of 1945. UNRRA noticed that most of the then remaining refugees and Displaced refused repatriation, fearing persecution. Furthermore, thousands of refugees fleeing eastern Europe continued to arrive in western Europe.<sup>7</sup> As a result, both humanitarians and early-Cold War strategists increasingly argued against forced repatriation.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Economic and Social Council of the newly founded United Nations set up a Special Committee on Refugees and Displaced Persons in February 1946, to report on the “refugee problem” in Europe and to push for the foundation of an International Refugee Organization (IRO).<sup>9</sup> In December 1946, the United Nations General Assembly passed the constitution of the IRO against the wishes (and votes) of the USSR, the Ukrainian SSR, the Byelorussian SSR, Poland, and Yugoslavia.<sup>10</sup> Instead of forced repatriation, the IRO’s main task thus became the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons (DPs).<sup>11</sup>

Between 1947 and early 1952, the IRO managed the voluntary resettlement of over one million people globally. Within the current literature, the focus of research is disproportionately high on resettlement to the United States, Australia, Canada, Palestine/Israel, European countries, and Argentina, creating the impression that other countries did not play a major role. This is, however, not the case. People were also resettled in countries such as Cuba, Egypt, Ethiopia, French Guiana, Guatemala, Kenya, Pakistan, Syria, and Turkey.<sup>12</sup> While the active involvement of these countries in the resettlement programme remains largely unresearched, such examples reveal its truly global nature. Those being resettled came from across the globe. Eastern Europeans who had either been deported as concentration camp inmates or slave labourers by the Nazis during the war, or who had fled from the Red Army after the war, were the largest group, comprising mainly Poles, Balts, and Ukrainians.<sup>13</sup> Spanish refugees who had already fled after Franco’s victory in 1939, mainly towards France, also formed a large group.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, registered DPs or people who applied for assistance also came from countries such as Guatemala,<sup>15</sup> India,<sup>16</sup> Thailand,<sup>17</sup> and South Africa.<sup>18</sup> The stories of such people who also found themselves in Europe after the end of the war still need to be investigated. Finally, UNRRA already had permanent offices in China, the Philippines, Korea, and Ethiopia,<sup>19</sup> whilst the IRO was also responsible for refugees in Asia, its staff including people from Latin America, China, Egypt, Australia, Syria, Turkey, and South Africa.<sup>20</sup>

In this article, I use the IGCR as my starting point for what is referred to in the following as the migration regime after the Second World War. Whilst the issue of migration during the war was still the primary task of the committee, it also laid the foundations

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, *In War’s Wake*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–34.

<sup>9</sup> “International Refugee Organization,” *International Organization* 1:1 (February 1947): 137.

<sup>10</sup> Marjoleine Zieck, *UNHCR and Voluntary Repatriation of Refugees* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1997), 59.

<sup>11</sup> For the IRO’s definition of “refugee” and “displaced person,” see “Constitution of the International Refugee Organization as approved by the General Assembly, December 15, 1946,” printed in *International Organization* 1:3 (September 1947), 577–90.

<sup>12</sup> Louise Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization: A Specialized Agency of the United Nations: Its History and Work, 1946–1952* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 433.

<sup>13</sup> Cohen, *In War’s Wake*, 5–6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>15</sup> AEF (Allied Expeditionary Forces) DP Registration Record, Roberto Asmus, n.d., 3.1.1.1/ 66453635, Arolsen Archives, Bad Arolsen (hereafter cited as AA).

<sup>16</sup> AEF DP Registration Record, Shakuntala Aggarwal, n.d., 3.1.1.1/ 66402607, AA.

<sup>17</sup> AEF DP Registration Record, Komon Kamonnawin, n.d., 3.1.1.1/ 67574675, AA.

<sup>18</sup> PCIRO Application for Assistance, Errol Gates, n.d., 3.2.1.2/ 80373391, AA.

<sup>19</sup> Cohen, *In War’s Wake*, 62.

<sup>20</sup> Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*, 100.

for the international organisations that would go on to become its technical and administrative centres. UNRRA complemented the IGCR, before both in turn were replaced by the IRO, which was to become the most efficient and most influential institution within the postwar migration regime. Whilst the concept of the migration regime is mostly state-centred and focussed on legislators, in the definition by Christoph Rass and Frank Wolff, it applies equally well to the subject under discussion here.<sup>21</sup> According to Rass and Wolff:

As a conflict-based contact zone, the migrations regime heuristically allows us to uncover interaction, hierarchies and contested developments, which range from verbal communication and public mobilization to the formation of alliances and manifestations of violence. [. . .] A migration regime, we argue, gravitates around and is shaped by actors who, from their standpoint and according to their setting in the power formation, enter the “arena” to represent their intentions, rules, norms and values, etc. [. . .] Also there is no power without a claim to it. While these claims and effects differ according to (changing) structural framing, positions, intentions and identities, all actors involved are nevertheless equipped with agency in regime formation.<sup>22</sup>

Taking this call to conceptualise a migration regime as an arena that several actors have the power to shape, in the following I argue that the historiography of the migration regime that followed the Second World War has so far omitted too many actors. In this essay, I focus on Venezuela as an example of such an omission. Regarding Venezuela’s involvement in IRO’s institutional history and in the resettlement programme, I argue that from the beginning, the accepted historiography has marginalised the role of several actors from the Global South in the global migration regime that followed the Second World War.<sup>23</sup> If we pay attention to those actors, writing them into the history of the migration regime, we can reveal many facets of its creation, outcome, and the power struggles within it that would otherwise remain hidden. Inclusion of Venezuelan history, actors, and interests adds to the understanding of the resettlement programme’s development from the perspective of global history by counteracting the view of “Europe [and the United States] [. . .] [as the only] knowing subject[s] to an object of global history.”<sup>24</sup>

This article looks at Venezuela’s role in the IRO resettlement programme in three ways. First, I will resume the writing of the history of the IRO and its resettlement programme. I argue that from the very beginning, the dominance of political actors from the Global North shaped this historiography conceived above all as the story of a committed Global North that first marginalised and later ignored actors such as Venezuela. Second, I argue that whilst in many studies the IRO lies at the centre of the birth of the late twentieth-century migration regime, when we see it from the Venezuelan perspective, it becomes simply a chapter in a totally different history of global migration in the 1940s and early 1950s. My argument is that the IRO not only knew how to integrate

<sup>21</sup> Christoph Rass and Frank Wolff, “What Is a Migration Regime? Genealogical Approach and Methodological Proposal,” in *Was ist ein Migrationsregime? What Is a Migration Regime?*, ed. Andreas Pott, Christoph Rass, and Frank Wolff (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018), 19–64.

<sup>22</sup> Rass and Wolff, “What Is a Migration Regime?,” 45.

<sup>23</sup> The term “Global South” is used here instead of terms such as “developing countries,” “Third World,” or “periphery,” as the article does not focus on aspects such as income differences, cultural differences, or the subdivision of the world—first, second, and third—in the context of the Cold War, but rather on geopolitical power relations in the execution of the migration regime in the 1940s, as well as in its historiography after the 1940s. See for example, Jonathan Rigg, *An Everyday Geography of the Global South* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Maxine Berg, “Global History: Approaches and New Directions,” *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. Maxine Berg. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1–18, 5.

Venezuela into its resettlement programme, but that Venezuela also knew very well how to integrate the resettlement programme into its own immigration policy (which existed prior to, and would ultimately outlive, the IRO) and how to use the IRO within its own infrastructure. Third, the IRO and the individual receiving countries of the resettlement programme are often seen as two different actors. Whilst this observation does not count for the United States or Great Britain, acknowledging instead their “dual position,” it especially holds true for actors from the Global South who are overlooked as constitutive agents in the creation of the migration regime. Venezuela, however, was not only one amongst many peripheral receiving countries; it was also a member of, and an actor within, these international organisations, and was thus well able to express its voice within these international power structures.

### The IRO's Historiography: Constructing Euro-American Hegemony during the Cold War and Beyond

The Euro-America-centric manner in which the IRO's history was—and continues to be—written reveals a lot about how the IRO's history was intended to be perceived. Writing it was not the idea of later historians. Rather, it almost immediately became part of the discussions that took place about and within the institution itself. The U.S. Displaced Persons Act of 1948, for example, made provision for a report to be written at the end of the U.S. Displaced Persons Commission's term. As this report states: “The Commission very early decided that the report should be more than a perfunctory statement of the accomplishments of the organization, but rather an actual analysis and a look to the future. The chief historian reported for duty in November 1951.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, providing a historiography of the migration regime was already the United States' plan in the late 1940s.

Donald Kingsley, the IRO's (U.S. American) Director-General, had already published a history of the organisation in a rather essayistic and subjective style. His book focussed on preserving for posterity the technical aspects of the IRO's work in 1951, and despite the IRO's responsibility for refugees in Asia, he gave his book the remarkable title *Migration from Europe*.<sup>26</sup> A Briton, L. Michael Hacking, then became the IRO's chief historian, and was charged with writing a more knowledgeable and extensive official history. In addition, the IRO's Historical Unit employed U.S. Americans John Barth and Spencer Mapes and the then stateless, formerly Polish Michel Potulicki as historians, as well as several additional assistant historians from the United States, France, the Netherlands, and Austria.<sup>27</sup> The aim of the Historical Unit was to write “an objective study of the Organization's activities, the origin and development of its policies and practices, as well as the final result and achievements.”<sup>28</sup> Hacking, who planned a three-volume history modelled on George Woodbridge's 1950 history of UNRRA,<sup>29</sup> started writing a first draft, sending chapters to former IRO senior staff and government officials from the United States, Great Britain, France, and other countries.<sup>30</sup> In the meantime, the U.S. Displaced Persons Commission relied on Hacking's research for their *DP Story*, which was primarily intended for a U.S. audience and (as stated in the preface) billed as “the history of a

<sup>25</sup> United States Displaced Persons Commission, *The DP Story: The Final Report of the United States Displaced Persons Commission* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 110.

<sup>26</sup> International Refugee Organization, *Migration from Europe: A Report* (Geneva IRO, 1951).

<sup>27</sup> Don Pryor, *Work and Plans of the History Unit*, Inter-Office Memorandum for J. Donald Kingsley, 18 October 1951, AJ 43/ 91, Archives nationales, France (hereafter cited as AN).

<sup>28</sup> Pryor, *Work and Plans*.

<sup>29</sup> George Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950).

<sup>30</sup> AJ 43/ 91, AN.

unique and most significant experience in American foreign policy.”<sup>31</sup> In this report, published in 1952, the authors emphasised the dominant role of the United States in the IRO: “The United States leadership in the IRO programme included financial contribution as well as operational direction.”<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, Alan Dudley from the British Foreign Office expressed his disinterest in the official history’s publication by the IRO’s Historical Unit, and U.S. officials even began to attack Hacking’s work. For example, George Warren, the U.S. delegate to the General Council of the United Nations, called Hacking’s first draft “profoundly anti-American.”<sup>33</sup> According to Hacking, Warren was critical because the manuscript did not credit the extraordinary role played by the United States in the history of the IRO. Furthermore, he “was completely uninterested in the second draft; a redraft to meet the United States point of view was impossible; and in any event, as the first draft was so evidently anti-American, I [Hacking] was incompetent to produce anything better.”<sup>34</sup> Although ultimately Hacking’s official history of the IRO was never published due to the conflicts over its alleged bias, in 1956, the political scientist Louise Holborn finally published a history of the IRO. In her preface, she stated that documents “collected and sifted by the History Unit” formed the basis of her book.<sup>35</sup> Amongst others, Holborn explicitly thanked George Warren for his contribution, whilst Hacking remained unmentioned.<sup>36</sup>

Discussions about how to tell the IRO’s history and whom to highlight became a fight about how to tell the story correctly—indeed, a fight about power, prestige, and the production of knowledge. Given the context of the Cold War, this production of knowledge was heavily driven by the need to legitimate American, and more broadly Western bloc, interventions in the making of the postwar international order. Whilst Holborn’s book contains chapters about the main recipient countries of the resettlement, the chapter on Venezuela deals purely with the country’s history, stating, for example, that “[i]n November 1948 the Department of Immigration was reorganized. During this reorganization the admission of immigrants, and consequently the admission of refugees was restricted. Furthermore, the Instituto Técnico de Inmigración Colonización [sic] was replaced by the new “Instituto Agrario Nacional.””<sup>37</sup> In fact however—and Holborn leaves this unnoticed—Venezuela had not only replaced one institute with another, but in November 1948, the military had also overthrown the country’s first elected government in a coup.<sup>38</sup> Yet the purpose of these observations is not a general critique of Holborn’s book. Rather, the point I want to make is that whilst the IRO’s history was a global history, it was not written earlier from that perspective. Some political actors and receiving countries became little more than (rather inaccurate) footnotes in a book that to this day stands as the IRO’s main historical reference.

Another major reference work about the history of the migration regime after the Second World War is Jacques Vernant’s 1953 work *The Refugee in the Post-War World*. Gerrit Jan van Heuven Goedhart, the first UN High Commissioner for Refugees, had asked the French scientist to write a general survey about the global refugee situation in 1951.<sup>39</sup> In writing

<sup>31</sup> United States Displaced Persons Commission, *The DP Story*, v.

<sup>32</sup> United States Displaced Persons Commission, *The DP Story*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> L. Michael Hacking, Letter to Arthur N. Rucker, 27 April 1953, AJ 43/ 91, AN.

<sup>34</sup> L. Michael Hacking, Letter to William Hallman Tuck, 24 April 1953, AJ 43/ 91, AN.

<sup>35</sup> Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*, iii.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

<sup>38</sup> Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press [2011] 2017), 138–47.

<sup>39</sup> Jacques Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-War World* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), iix. Of course, other authors also wrote about the refugee experience in the first half of the twentieth century, for example

about Venezuela, Latin America, and the Global South, Vernant displayed not only a general disinterest, but even an overtly paternalistic attitude, which was partly based on a racist heritage of thinking about European colonialism. “[i]nspired by humanitarian motives as well as by their need of manpower,” Vernant wrote, “the Latin American countries contributed to the solution of the refugee problem by admitting during the lifetime of the IRO [. . .] about 100,000 refugees among the million or so immigrants from Europe.”<sup>40</sup> According to Vernant, one reason for this participation was also “the awareness of the desirability of introducing fresh blood into a population which has had little renewal of stock since the conquest.”<sup>41</sup> “Venezuela is a rapidly developing country,” he stated, but “[n]evertheless, it is still a pioneer country. Before leaving for Venezuela the ordinary unskilled refugee without capital should make inquiries about conditions there and think things over.”<sup>42</sup> Vernant could not completely free himself from the legacy of European racialised thinking about the supposedly revitalising nature of white-European blood.

Although many of Vernant’s statements about Venezuela were indeed accurate—for example, when he stated that living costs were quite high in the country due to the oil boom—Vernant’s text also clearly shows his position regarding who should organise, plan, and be in charge of the migration regime. According to Vernant, “serious problems for refugees [clearly talking about IRO refugees here] and for Venezuelan workers had resulted from the way that the country had opened its doors to a ‘large number of Italians’ in 1949—a situation that ‘gave rise to competition.’”<sup>43</sup> However, Vernant concluded: “The fact remains that Venezuela ranks third on the list of Latin American countries that have received refugees since the war and has thus made a generous contribution to the solution of this heart-breaking human problem.”<sup>44</sup> The point I wish to make here is that Vernant’s book shows who should define global problems and who should solve them. The only time Venezuela had decided its own course of action by receiving Italian (non-IRO) immigrants, Vernant called it a mistake, causing problems for refugees. Nevertheless, the country contributed to the solution of “the heart-breaking human problem,” which was, however, in this gaze, a European problem—one defined by European and North American politicians and intellectuals.

Apart from the politically motivated books mentioned earlier, the history of the migration regime after the Second World War remained largely unstudied until the mid-1980s,<sup>45</sup> when the German historian Wolfgang Jacobmeyer and his Canadian colleague Michael R. Marrus reinvigorated research into the topic.<sup>46</sup> Since then, its history has been studied intensively with at least four main foci.

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(and previously cited) Eugene Kulischer. Another author writing at that time was Malcolm J. Proudfoot, who had served in the displaced persons branch of SHAEF during the war. In his book, he especially emphasised the role played by the U.S. Army in their handling of the “refugee problem.” Malcolm J. Proudfoot, *European Refugees, 1939–1952: A Study in Forced Population Movement* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1956). Yet another influential work was written by John G. Stoessinger, who had fled from Austria during the war and later became a professor and an important politician in the United Nations. Like Vernant and Proudfoot, Stoessinger focussed on the work of the IRO, its predecessors, and successors, arguing that a strong and permanent international refugee organisation was needed. John G. Stoessinger, *The Refugee and the World Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956).

<sup>40</sup> Vernant, *The Refugee*, 582.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 579.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 696.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 687.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> There are a few notable exceptions, such as Jean I. Martin, *Refugee Settlers: A Study of Displaced Persons in Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1965).

<sup>46</sup> Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum heimatlosen Ausländer: Die Displaced Persons in Westdeutschland 1945–1951* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1985); Marrus, *The Unwanted*. In April 1953, a German student

First, the history of the IRO as an institution, and the discussions that led to its creation and subsequent activities, gained interest. Kim Salomon located the IRO in the context of the Cold War,<sup>47</sup> while Gerald Daniel Cohen studied the IRO as a “seminal case study in the post-1945 international history.”<sup>48</sup> Although both authors rightly emphasise that through the IRO, “the United States assumed unchallenged leadership on the regulation of Cold War migration flows,” the receiving countries did not play a major role in either Salomon’s or Cohen’s otherwise outstanding studies.<sup>49</sup>

Second, emphasis has been placed on the DPs themselves. In the 1980s Mark Wyman studied the history of the migration regime after the Second World War from the perspective of the Displaced, focussing on their lives in the camps and their struggles in postwar western Germany.<sup>50</sup> A great merit of Wyman’s book is that he interviewed many former DPs and refugees in the United States, and in doing so underlined their agency. As a result, the lives of the Displaced (mainly in western Germany) were researched with renewed rigour<sup>51</sup>—not least by placing greater emphasis on Jewish victims of Nazi terror.<sup>52</sup>

Third, studies examining specific ethnic groups amongst the Displaced followed. The specific role played by the Displaced and refugees of the Baltic states was investigated, as was that of those from Ukraine.<sup>53</sup> As valuable as each of these studies and many other similar ones are, by fragmenting the history of the migration regime after the Second World War into ever smaller units, its global character became less defined.

The fourth main focus of study was the admission and resettlement of DPs and refugees by specific states, namely, Australia, the United States, Canada, and Palestine/Israel.<sup>54</sup>

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of history from the University of Hamburg, Olaf von Wrangel, later a member of the German Bundestag for the Christian Democratic Union and journalist for Northern German Broadcasting, intended to write a PhD thesis about the IRO’s contribution to the German “DP problem.” Olaf von Wrangel, Letter to G. Krause, Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, 17 April 1953, AJ 43/ 91, AN. However, no one actually wrote about the IRO until the mid-1980s.

<sup>47</sup> Kim Salomon, *Refugees in the Cold War: Towards a New International Refugee Regime in the Early Postwar Era* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1991).

<sup>48</sup> Cohen, *In War’s Wake*, 8; Gerald Daniel Cohen, “Between Relief and Politics: Refugee Humanitarianism in Post-War Europe,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 43:3 (July 2008), 437–50.

<sup>49</sup> Cohen, *In War’s Wake*, 9.

<sup>50</sup> Mark Wyman, *DPs: Europe’s Displaced Persons, 1945–1951* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1989).

<sup>51</sup> See for example, Anna Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism: Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011); Stanislaus Stepień, *Der alteingesessene Fremde: Ehemalige Zwangsarbeiter in Westdeutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1989).

<sup>52</sup> See for example, Susanne Dietrich and Julia Schulze-Wessel, *Zwischen Selbstorganisation und Stigmatisierung: Die Lebenswirklichkeit jüdischer Displaced Persons und die neue Gestalt des Antisemitismus in der deutschen Nachkriegsgesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1998); Soggie Fetthauer, *Musik und Theater im DP-Camp Bergen-Belsen: Zum Kulturleben der jüdischen Displaced Persons 1945–1950* (Neumünster: Bockel, 2012); Atina Grossmann, “Trauma, Memory and Motherhood: Germans and Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-Nazi Germany, 1945–1949,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 38 (1998), 215–39; Anne-Katrin Henkel and Thomas Rahe, eds. *Publizistik in jüdischen Displaced-Persons-Camps: Charakteristika, Medien und bibliothekarische Überlieferung* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014); Angelika Königseder and Juliane Wetzels, *Lebensmut im Wartesaal: Die jüdischen DPs (Displaced Persons) im Nachkriegsdeutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2005); Hagit Lavsky, *New Beginnings: Holocaust Survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British Zone in Germany, 1945–1950* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002); Margarete Myers Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945–1957* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>53</sup> See for example, Jan Hinnerk Antons, *Ukrainische Displaced Persons in der britischen Zone: Lagerleben zwischen nationaler Fixierung und pragmatischen Zukunftsentwürfen* (Essen: Klartext, 2014); Christian Pletzig and Marianne Pletzig, eds., *Displaced Persons: Flüchtlinge aus den baltischen Staaten in Deutschland* (München: Martin Medenbauer, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> See for example, Alexander Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch: Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2004); Henriette Holleuffer, *Zwischen Fremde und Fremde: Displaced Persons in Australien, den USA und Kanada 1946–1952* (Göttingen: V & R



Later, Argentina also garnered some attention, firstly because of its long history of Jewish immigration, and secondly for its notorious role as an escape route for Nazis after the Second World War via the so-called ratline.<sup>55</sup> These states were selected mainly because they received the most DPs and refugees in the IRO's resettlement programme. Furthermore, countries with historiographies based on immigration probably attracted attention first (not least as being "plausible" cases for resettlement) because, due to their histories, migration research was well established in such countries. The role they played as active designers in the global migration regime that followed the Second World War is however underemphasised, with the notable exception of the United States. The perspective offered is mostly that of national historiography, rather than global history.

With the notable exception of Peter Gatrell's *The Making of the Modern Refugee*,<sup>56</sup> which emphasises the global character of the migration regime before and after the Second World War (by looking not only at Europe, but also at the "bigger picture"), global history did not play an important role in historical studies about the migration regime after the Second World War. Attempts to locate Latin America's role repeatedly fell back on the pioneering work of Holborn and Vernant without sufficiently reflecting on the political bias of those studies. Henriette von Holleuffer's 2002 article about the resettlement of European DPs in Latin America serves here as an example.<sup>57</sup> One merit of the article lies in the fact that Holleuffer was one of the first authors to pay attention to the issue of resettlement within Latin America. However, the principal witnesses to her statements about the role of Latin America in the migration regime after the Second World War were, once again, Holborn and Vernant. Along with historical sources and some historical articles exclusively from the United States, these sources together failed to reflect the Latin American perspective and the active role it played, repeating instead politically biased knowledge from the Global North. One goal of historical scholarship must therefore be to leave behind the methodologically nationalist as well as northern-oriented paradigms of historiography or, at the very least, to add a southern perspective, where the south is seen as foundational to the making of the global migration regime. In foregrounding the Global South, and in highlighting the racial nature of the migration regime, this essay also takes inspiration from postcolonial studies perspectives.<sup>58</sup>

### Development, Labour, and Race: Venezuelan Immigration Policies in the Mid-Twentieth Century

Whilst international relations, international organisations, and the international community were important themes in politics and the social sciences in the United States and Europe in the late 1940s and 1950s, nation- and state-building was the dominant political paradigm in Venezuela, as well as the question of power. From 1908, Venezuela had been a

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Unipress, 2001); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *White Russians, Red Peril: A Cold War History of Migration to Australia* (Carlton: La Trobe University Press, 2021); Martin, *Refugee Settlers*; Jayne Persian, *Beautiful Balts: From Displaced Persons to New Australians* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2017).

<sup>55</sup> Gerald Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run: How Hitler's Henchmen Fled Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Gatrell, *The Making*.

<sup>57</sup> Henriette von Holleuffer, "Seeking New Horizons in Latin America: The Resettlement of 100,000 European Displaced Persons between the Gulf of Mexico and Patagonia (1947–1951)," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 39 (2002), 125–61.

<sup>58</sup> See for example, "'Global History' und 'Area History': Plädoyer für eine weltgeschichtliche Perspektivierung des Lokalen," in *Area Studies und die Welt: Weltregionen und die neue Globalgeschichte*, ed. Birgit Schäbler (Vienna: Mandelbaum Verlag), 90–119.

dictatorship under the rule of Juan Vicente Gómez, until his death in 1935. In 1914, significant oil deposits were discovered and U.S. American oil companies began extraction. Oil exports commenced shortly afterwards in 1918. Ten years later, Venezuela had become the world's largest oil exporting country.<sup>59</sup> Gómez, who focussed rather more on his personal enrichment than nation- and state-building, used the (then low) oil revenue to pay the country's foreign debt and to initiate the first political and economic reforms,<sup>60</sup> simultaneously becoming the country's largest land owner and one of the continent's richest men. Most ordinary Venezuelans did not benefit from the oil revenue.<sup>61</sup> In the period following Gómez' death, and up to the early 1950s, three major regime changes marked the country's political development as well as its immigration policies. In the following section, I will argue that those regime changes had a profound influence on the form and functioning of the IRO's resettlement programme.

The first regime change was enacted via the takeover by direct successors of Gómez, initially General Eleazar López Contreras, who was president between 1936 and 1941, and subsequently, Isaías Medina Angarita, who ruled the country from 1941 until 1945. When Gómez died, a power struggle broke out between the right-wing military and politicians on the one hand, and the so-called Generation of 1928 (*Generación del 28*) on the other, the latter comprising young, more left-wing actors who, as a group of former university students and teachers, owed their name to a major protest they organised against Gómez in 1928.<sup>62</sup> In this particular struggle, the more powerful generals prevailed. Both presidents, General Elizar López Contreras and Isaías Medina Angarita, were far more interested in nation-building and national progress than in democracy.

As in other Latin American countries, political plans for future development gained importance, and the promotion of immigration became the main paradigm for the growth of the population, the promotion of agriculture (to reduce import surpluses), and the recruiting of skilled workers.<sup>63</sup> Under the rule of General Contreras, the Law on Immigration and Colonization was enacted in 1936.<sup>64</sup> In 1938, the Technical Institute for Immigration and Colonization (*Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización*, ITIC) was founded to organise rural development through the promotion of primarily agricultural immigration, but also the immigration of other professional groups deemed necessary.<sup>65</sup> European refugees and "overpopulation" would thereby play into this goal of a racialised immigration policy. Venezuela had sent a commissioner to Europe already in the mid-1930s, long before the idea of resettlement even came up.<sup>66</sup> The general aim was to promote white immigration from Europe and to prevent non-white immigration from the neighbouring Caribbean countries and from Asia wherever possible. The institute was very explicit in its racialised ideas. Desirable European immigrants should be selected

<sup>59</sup> Coronil, *The Magical State*, 70.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 70–1.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>63</sup> Susan Berglund and Humberto Hernández Calimán, *Los de Afuera: Un Estudio Analítico del Proceso Migratorio en Venezuela 1936–1985* (Caracas: CEPAM, 1985), 19; Adela Pellegrino, *Historia de la Inmigración en Venezuela: Siglos XIX y XX* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de Ciencias Económicas, 1989), 7. For the exceptional chances for academics in Latin American countries in the early twentieth century see also Linda Erker, "Grete Mostny and the Making of Indigenous Archaeology: European Immigration, White-Racial Hegemony, and Chilean Nationalism," in this issue.

<sup>64</sup> Berglund and Hernández Calimán, *Los de Afuera*, 43–4.

<sup>65</sup> Juan Carlos Rey González, *Huellas de la inmigración en Venezuela: Entre la historia general y las historias particulares* (Caracas: Empresas Polar, 2011), 100.

<sup>66</sup> Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría, *Memoria que el Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría presenta al Congreso Nacional en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1938* (Caracas: Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría, 1938), lxxix.

based on “race, which of course, must be white (not Semitic) and strongly assimilable to our climate and our population.”<sup>67</sup>

In contrast to many other Latin American countries, Venezuela did not complain vigorously about Jewish European refugees. For example, the country took in Jewish refugees who left Europe in 1939 on the SS *Caribia* and SS *Königsstein*—refugees who had already been barred from entering other Latin American countries and the British colonies of Trinidad and British Guiana.<sup>68</sup> However, the immigration policy was not completely open either. The Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización pleaded for a “fair policy”<sup>69</sup> of limited Jewish admission. Thus, Venezuelan immigration policy was highly racialised and also based on the international anti-Semitic discourses of the 1930s and 1940s.

In 1940, the institute sent a commissioner to Europe to report back regarding the current emigration situation—specifically if Venezuela would be able to embark on large-scale recruitment of European migrants.<sup>70</sup> The commissioner reported that “the emigrable groups” were mainly Spanish refugees in France and Jewish refugees, with Spaniards probably being the more suitable group for cultural and religious reasons, and because of good experiences with such immigrants in the past.<sup>71</sup> The observation reveals a latent anti-Semitic bias. In 1940, the commissioner reported that he was able to select 2,651 Europeans for emigration to Venezuela: 32 percent peasants; 29 percent mechanics; the rest with a variety of vocational skills. Only the transport to Venezuela was difficult due to the war.<sup>72</sup> The commissioner’s report is one amongst many sources that prove Venezuela had well-established and advanced plans for a self-organised mass emigration from Europe long before either the IGCR, UNRRA, or the IRO started their activities.

Following Contreras, between 1941 and 1945, President Medina Angarita pursued a similar path. Due to the strategic importance of Venezuelan oil for the United States during the Second World War, Medina Angarita was able to renegotiate the extraction conditions of the Venezuelan oil with the U.S. government and the U.S. American oil companies. As a result, the country received a larger share of the revenue, boosting the state treasury reserves. Venezuela now had greater resources to carry out its development plans, including mass immigration.<sup>73</sup> Thus, a soft challenge to U.S. political-economic hegemony and the pursuit of nationalist development provided the broader context for the intensification of immigration.

During the Second World War, the transportation of European migrants became practically impossible. However, like other countries, Venezuela made preparations for the end of the war. In December 1944, the Venezuelan government created a Government Committee for Refugees (Comité Gubernativo de Refugiados) as a result of negotiations with the IGCR. Its task was to develop a plan for the admission of European immigrants after the end of the war, and to discuss Venezuela’s position and its interests with the

<sup>67</sup> Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización, *Memoria que el Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización presenta al Ejecutivo Federal por intermedio del Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría* (Caracas: Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización, 1940), 14; Rey González, *Huellas*, 91–3; Miguel Tinker Salas, *Oil, Culture, and Society in Venezuela* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009), 133–5.

<sup>68</sup> Rey González, *Huellas*, 96–7.

<sup>69</sup> Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización, *Memoria 1940*, 16.

<sup>70</sup> Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización, *Memoria que el Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización presenta al Ejecutivo Federal por intermedio del Ministerio de Agricultura y Cría* (Caracas: Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización, 1941), 168.

<sup>71</sup> Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización, *Memoria 1941*, 172–81.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 184–9.

<sup>73</sup> Coronil, *The Magical State*, 106–7; Rey González, *Huellas*, 91–102.

IGCR in London as well as with voluntary agencies.<sup>74</sup> Thus, whilst the IRO was yet to be conceived, Venezuela was already making preparations for mass immigration from Europe.

The second important regime change took place in 1945. In October, a few months after the end of the Second World War in Europe, members of the Democratic Action Party (Acción Democrática, AD)—a social democratic party that had been founded by the (previously mentioned) group known as Generation 1928—overthrew Medina Angarita's government, forming a governing junta, the so-called Junta Revolucionaria. They soon started preparing the country's first democratic elections—Venezuela's "nondemocratic path to democracy." In December 1947, Rómulo Gallegos from the AD was elected president, and would go on to govern the country until November 1948.<sup>75</sup> The Junta Revolucionaria and the Gallegos government were thus in power during the first phase of the global migration that followed the Second World War.

In December 1946, the IGCR sent a mission to Venezuela and in February 1947, the Venezuelan ambassador in London signed an agreement with the IGCR, setting out the conditions for the resettlement of European refugees and the Displaced in Venezuela. In 1947, Venezuela agreed to receive fifteen thousand European immigrants. Although this number was not reached, it does demonstrate that, from the beginning, Venezuela was prepared to receive large numbers of immigrants.<sup>76</sup> On June 26, a few weeks before the IRO's Preparatory Commission (PCIRO) had even started its activities, taking over the IGCR's tasks on July 1, the first group of European refugees and the Displaced persons resettled by the IGCR arrived in Venezuela.<sup>77</sup> Together with Belgium, Brazil, and Canada, which had accepted a group of close relatives of people already living in the country, Venezuela was one of the first countries to participate in the mass resettlement programme, which would officially start only weeks later.<sup>78</sup>

In October 1947, Venezuela sent three official missions to Europe to select immigrants amongst the refugees and DPs, and to represent Venezuelan interests. Armando Hernández-Bretón led the mission in Germany; Enrique Tejera París the mission in Italy; and José Padrón Irazábal led the mission in France. The three missions started working in November 1947.<sup>79</sup> According to the ITIC, in 1947 11,307 European immigrants arrived in Venezuela.<sup>80</sup> However, only approximately 4,250 of those immigrants were refugees and DPs resettled by the PCIRO.<sup>81</sup> In 1948, nearly 37,000 immigrants entered Venezuela.<sup>82</sup> Once again, IRO refugees and DPs were in the minority, but nonetheless, nearly 9,000 were resettled in Venezuela in 1948 via the IRO.<sup>83</sup>

The third regime change took place in November 1948, when the elected Gallegos government was overthrown by a military coup that would interrupt Venezuelan democracy for another ten years, until 1959.<sup>84</sup> While the new government did appreciate the

<sup>74</sup> Isaías Medina Angarita, "Decreto: Creación del Comité Gubernativo de Refugiados, 28 December 1944," in *Libro Amarillo de los Estados Unidos de Venezuela presentado al Congreso Nacional en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1945 por el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores* (Caracas: Tipografía Americana, 1945), 415–17.

<sup>75</sup> Coronil, *The Magical State*, 130–1.

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Dehn, "History of IRO Mission to Venezuela and Colombia, 1950," AJ 43/ 134, AN.

<sup>77</sup> "International Refugee Organization," *International Organization* 1:3 (September 1947): 528.

<sup>78</sup> International Refugee Organization, *Migration from Europe*, 22.

<sup>79</sup> Rey González, *Huellas*, 108.

<sup>80</sup> Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización. *Memoria y Cuenta del Ejercito 1947 y Plan de Realizaciones para 1948* (Caracas: Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización, 1947), 41.

<sup>81</sup> Dehn, "History of IRO."

<sup>82</sup> Rey González, *Huellas*, 115.

<sup>83</sup> Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*, 442.

<sup>84</sup> Coronil, *The Magical State*, 123.

importance of immigration, they briefly suspended organised immigration by the IRO in order that they might first reorganise the state. The ITIC was replaced by the National Agrarian Institute (Instituto Agrario Nacional, IAN), which took over the responsibility for the country's immigration policies.<sup>85</sup> One of the first measures of the new government regarding immigration was to increase the admission of Italian immigrants without IRO involvement. According to Alexander Dehn, a member of the IRO's mission in Venezuela, IRO resettlement dropped in 1949, whilst one thousand to fifteen hundred Italian immigrants entered the country every month.<sup>86</sup> In 1950, the Venezuelan government also received a German commission in Caracas to discuss the possibility of skilled German workers immigrating to Venezuela.<sup>87</sup> Immigration continued to play an important role in nation- and state-building policies. Between 1949 and 1951, Venezuela maintained its engagement in the IRO's resettlement programme, but the numbers of resettled refugees and DPs never again reached the levels of 1947 and 1948. According to Holborn, around 1,500 refugees and DPs were resettled by the IRO in Venezuela in 1949; 2,700 in 1950; and 1,280 in 1951.<sup>88</sup>

Had there not been a coup d'état in Venezuela in the middle of implementing the IRO resettlement programme, it is likely the country would have received larger numbers of IRO refugees and DPs. The high numbers of migrants admitted before the coup and the intention to receive more European immigrants make this clear. Immigration policies had played an important role after every regime change and coup since Gómez's death in 1935; in the civilian-military phase between 1936 and 1945; during the phase of democratisation under the rule of the AD between 1945 and 1948; and in the military dictatorship after November 1948. Successive regimes were certain that they could formulate a better immigration policy than their predecessors. "In the past 52 years, until 1936, not a single immigrant was recruited to the country, there was no organised immigration," the ITIC stated in its annual report for the government in 1940 in reference to the Gómez regime—despite its explicit aim to do so.<sup>89</sup> Further, the director of the Venezuelan mission in Italy between November 1947 and November 1948, Enrique Tejera París, remembered in reference to the post-1948 dictatorships that, "in the period 1945–1958, [. . .] our migration landscape was characterized by two policies: the massive, but humanitarian and selective one of the governments presented by Betancourt and Gallegos between 1945 and November 1948; and the dictatorship's 'open door' policy, between 1948 and 1958."<sup>90</sup> Armado Tamayo, who became the director of the ITIC (and afterwards of the IAN) after the coup in November 1948, stated in a newspaper interview that the democratic government of Gallegos had made bad immigration policy decisions and that the new government would do things better. When he was asked: "It is said you took over the ITIC in a state of real administrative disorder" by a reporter of *El Heraldo* for the issue of 1 February 1949, he replied that there were "[a]bsolutely no plans and [a] lack of organization."<sup>91</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Pellegrino, *Historia de la Inmigración*, 199.

<sup>86</sup> Dehn, "History of IRO."

<sup>87</sup> Ermila Troconis de Veracoechea, *El Proceso de la Inmigración en Venezuela* (Caracas Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1986), 266–7.

<sup>88</sup> Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*, 442.

<sup>89</sup> Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización, *Memoria*, 1940, 10.

<sup>90</sup> Enrique Tejera París, "Inmigración: De Panacea a Dolencia," *Boletín de la Academia Nacional de la Historia* 70:278 (April–June, 1987), 341–64, 341.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with A. Tamayo, *El Heraldo*, 1 February 1949, n.p.; translated from Spanish and cited by Vincente Meyer, Chief of the IRO Mission in Venezuela and Colombia, in a letter to the IRO Division of Resettlement in Geneva, 4 February 1949, AJ 43/ 634, AN.

Immigration policies were an important issue for every post-1935 Venezuelan government and formed an important part of domestic politics. In 1936, president López Contreras had announced the country's first national development plan, including ideas to modernise the economy.<sup>92</sup> Subsequently, national development (instead of personal enrichment and satisfaction of the entourages of the national leadership) played a role in the national politics of all governments. In this context, increasing emphasis was placed on models of industrialisation and modernisation of agriculture.<sup>93</sup> Hence, immigration policies became an important topic for all post-1935 regimes. While there was severe dissent about the role of democracy and about how to rule Venezuela, there was overall elite political consensus about fostering the immigration of skilled labourers for industrialisation, for agricultural modernisation programmes, and for increasing population growth: especially through agricultural colonization in the country's peripheral regions. Of course, each government accused its opponents of having made poor decisions concerning immigration throughout this period; but this was more a rhetorical ploy to attack opponents, rather than because of any real lack of consensus about immigration policy.<sup>94</sup>

According to Vernant and based on data provided by the Venezuelan Ministry of the Interior, between May 1947 and 1 January 1951, a total of 83,466 immigrants came to Venezuela, of which most were Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, German, Russian, Hungarian, Yugoslavian, or Romanian.<sup>95</sup> Hence, the 17,277 European refugees and DPs resettled in Venezuela<sup>96</sup> by the IRO represented only a small proportion of the total number of immigrants admitted to the country. Seen through the lens of Venezuelan history, the IRO and its resettlement programme certainly played a role in migration to Venezuela, but from this perspective, it needs to be seen within a wider context of capitalist national "development." Venezuela always had its own immigration policy and thus determined its own role in the global migration regimes before, during, and finally after the Second World War. The country had not waited idly for the IGCR and the IRO to develop policies, and even during these activities it always pursued its own active immigration policy.

Thus, as I have demonstrated, both the IRO's resettlement programme and all European, U.S. American, or international initiatives were always only a piece in the puzzle of Venezuelan immigration policies. Even when the IRO came to an end in early 1952, European migration towards Venezuela continued to accelerate.<sup>97</sup>

## The Making of the Global Migration Regime: Venezuela as a Player in International Organisations

Venezuelan immigration policies in the 1940s and 1950s demonstrate that the migration regime after the Second World War was not solely managed or conceptualised by either the IGCR, UNRAA, or (especially by) the IRO. A look at the agency and power of Venezuela illustrates this point very clearly. Moreover, looking towards actors such as Venezuela redefines the image of the migration that occurred, which is often thought of as the history of a handful of international organisations and the Global North alone. Not only was

<sup>92</sup> Coronil, *The Magical State*, 126.

<sup>93</sup> Coronil, *The Magical State*, 136, 174.

<sup>94</sup> Whilst beyond the topic of this article, there were indeed severe problems in several areas throughout the 1940s and 1950s, from health issues to housing, employment, and other social issues. Dehn, "History of IRO."

<sup>95</sup> Vernant, *The Refugee*, 698.

<sup>96</sup> Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*, 442.

<sup>97</sup> Froilán José Ramos Rodríguez, "La Inmigración en la Administración de Pérez Jiménez, 1952–1958," *CONHISREMI, Revista universitaria Arbitrada de Investigación y Diálogo Académico* 6:3 (2010), 36–8, 457; Saskia Sassen-Koob, "Economic Growth and Immigration in Venezuela," *International Migration Review* 13:3 (Autumn, 1979), 455–74.

Venezuela an actor negotiating migration options with the IGCR, UNRAA, and the IRO, the country was also part of those organisations and perceived itself as an actor within them—another important facet through which to reconceptualise the historiography of the postwar migration regime.

When the IGCR and the IRO started the resettlement programme in 1947, Venezuela had already been active for at least ten years. Within the IGCR, UNRAA, the IRO, and even the United Nations, most prominently the United States, but also Great Britain and France were the main driving forces. However, these organisations were fundamentally global in nature, with member states from the Global South also possessing important voices. Regarding the participation of Latin American countries in the United Nations, Cohen states that within the United Nations, “Latin American delegations (representing twelve countries by the end of 1946) seldom participated in the debates. Their large number, however, gave them a pivotal role during decisive votes.”<sup>98</sup>

When U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt invited thirty-two states to Évian-les-Bains in France in July 1938 to discuss the possibility of accepting refugees from Germany and Austria who were fleeing the Nazi regime, Venezuela was as unwilling to help as any other participating country. Despite this reluctance, it participated in the international conference<sup>99</sup> and subsequently became a member of the IGCR (which was founded during this Évian conference). Venezuelan diplomats started attending the IGCR’s regular meetings and the country made its contribution to financing the committee’s administration.<sup>100</sup> Not only did Venezuela negotiate the resettlement agreement that was later handed over to the IRO, but the country was also part of the IGCR itself.

Independently of its involvement in the official migration regime’s diplomacy, Venezuela built its own immigration recruitment knowledge and infrastructure in Europe after 1936. In 1940, the Venezuelan immigration commissioner in Europe reported that there were basically two groups of potential immigrants in Europe at that moment: Spanish political refugees and Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. While the commissioner stated that most of the Spanish refugees were “socially sane” and of “good morality,” the Jewish refugees were not familiar with Latin American customs, temperament, culture, and language.<sup>101</sup> Thus, Venezuelan immigration ideas revealed deep-rooted racial-cultural bias. The horror of the Holocaust did not play a role in the commissioner’s report. Furthermore, Spanish refugees had a lobby among earlier Spanish immigrants in Venezuela, who stood up especially for the immigration of Basques.<sup>102</sup>

When UNRRA was founded in November 1943, Venezuela was again amongst the forty-four founding member states and financially contributed to the organisation, also providing advisory experts.<sup>103</sup> The country participated in the UNRRA’s policy-making council, which met six times during the tenure of UNRRA and accordingly, Venezuela’s voice received the same consideration as those of the other countries.<sup>104</sup> Thus, when the IRO

<sup>98</sup> Cohen, *In War’s Wake*, 20.

<sup>99</sup> Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Libro Amarillo de los Estados Unidos de Venezuela presentado al Congreso Nacional en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1939 por el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*, Tomo I (Caracas: Tipografía Americana, 1939), 137.

<sup>100</sup> Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Libro Amarillo de los Estados Unidos de Venezuela presentado al Congreso Nacional en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1939 por el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*, Tomo II (Caracas: Tipografía Americana, 1939), 158; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Libro Amarillo 1945*, 423.

<sup>101</sup> Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización, *Memoria 1941*, 170–6.

<sup>102</sup> Dolores Pla Brugat, “El exilio republicano en Hispanoamérica. Su historia e historiografía,” *Historia Social* 42 (2002), 99–121, 105.

<sup>103</sup> Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, *Libro Amarillo*, 1944, xcv–vi.

<sup>104</sup> UNRRA, *The Story of UNRRA* (Washington: UNRRA, 1948), 7.

started its operations, Venezuela was already a player on the diplomatic stage, together with many other Latin American, African, and Asian countries.<sup>105</sup>

When the foundation of the IRO was finally decided in 1946 in the United Nations, Venezuela again took part in this vote. When the IGCR handed over all of its tasks and finances to the IRO in the middle of 1947, Venezuela became one of the twenty-six members of that organisation. In Latin America, only Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala would finally ratify the IRO's constitution.<sup>106</sup> In the IRO General Council's first official session in September 1948 in Geneva, Venezuela was elected to the organisation's Executive Committee, together with Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, France, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Initially elected for two years, in its fifth session in March 1950, the country was re-elected to the Executive Committee together with all the other original members, except for China, which was replaced by Italy.<sup>107</sup> The task of the General Council was to "perform such functions as might be necessary to give effect to the policies of the General Council."<sup>108</sup> Venezuela thus assumed a position of power and responsibility within the organisation and in the migration regime more generally, not only as a trading partner, but also as a member with a significant amount of power. In Holborn's history of the IRO, the fact that Venezuela was an active member with the power to cocreate the postwar migration regime, not only as a receiving country, but also as an actor with agency within the organisation itself, is either overlooked or ignored.

Venezuela was conscious of the active political role it played in the postwar migration regime. At times, the IRO's staff became quite concerned about the behaviour of members of the Venezuelan selection commissions. In June 1948, Orlando Shilts, the director of the Resettlement Centre at IRO Area 7, wrote a letter of complaint to the director of IRO Area 7 regarding Mr. Culmanaras, the Venezuelan mission's member who had come to Munich to select immigrants from amongst the refugees and DPs in the Funkkaserne DP camp. Although from the letter it would appear that Culmanaras was a difficult character, missing appointments, making one complaint after the other, for our purposes here the salient point is that Shilts and Culmanaras obviously had different opinions about who was in charge and who was serving whom. "Mr. Culmanaras never consulted with us about the documents which he would like us to prepare and present to him. He just took from OUR DOCUMENTS what he wanted to take, without any request," Shilts wrote.<sup>109</sup> According to Shilts, Culmanaras also threatened to cancel all visas already issued if Shilts would not accept Spanish refugees in the camp, to whom Venezuela had already issued visas outside of the IRO system. Generally, Shilts stated, the Venezuelan mission member had a preference for Spanish Republicans. While IRO refugees and DPs had to present their complete certificates of employment and education during the interviews, Spaniards who were presented to Culmanaras by an organisation other than the IRO did not: "HOWEVER, the large group of Spanish Republicans who had been gathered by the Spanish Republican committee for presentation did NOT have these documents, but they were accepted."<sup>110</sup> Finally, Culmanaras even selected people the IRO had not suggested for resettlement in Venezuela:

Mr. Culmanaras has introduced to us over 25 families and individuals he said he was "personally" INTERESTED IN REVIEWING. [ . . . ] In one individual case of unclear DP

<sup>105</sup> UNRRA, *The Story of UNRRA*, 48.

<sup>106</sup> Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*, 590.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 715, 740.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>109</sup> Orlando P. Shilts, letter to Earl Blake Cox, 24 June 1948, AJ 43/ 96, AN.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*



Status Mr. Culmanaras personally visited the Control Center Officer in an effort to p[ro]p[er]ly [sic] through the eligibility status of the person. [. . .] It had been made clear to Mr. Culmanaras what the IRO method of presentation is, but he continually presents persons by himself.<sup>111</sup>

This story is more than an anecdote. First, it reveals that the negotiations between the IRO and the national selection missions often differed from how historians and officials later reconstructed them while writing histories of the IRO. In fact, the attitudes and behaviour of national selection commissions, as well as the power relations between national selection committees and the IRO staff, have thus far not been given sufficient attention.

Second, the story introduces the so-called voluntary agencies that worked, not only all over Europe, but also internationally, to help specific groups of refugees: in this case, the Spanish Republican committee that Shilts mentioned in his letter. “Rarely, if ever, has a closer and more effective partnership between statutory and voluntary agencies been achieved than the co-operation of IRO and its associated voluntary agencies,” Holborn resumes in her history of the IRO.<sup>112</sup> Whilst this may have been true in most cases, the cited story reveals that both the national selection committees and voluntary agencies were able to “play the IRO” and still use its resources.

### **National “Development” in the Global South, and the Forging of the International Migration Regime: Towards a Global History**

U.S. American and European politicians and “experts” were surely the intellectual pioneers and driving forces in the design of the global migration regime of the mid-twentieth century. The United States and Great Britain indeed provided the “lion’s share” of the funds for the care and resettlement of the postwar refugees and DPs.<sup>113</sup> Yet the IRO and its resettlement programme were not only in the hands of the United States and Great Britain, but were a global project. Countries of the Global South such as Venezuela were part of the picture, not only as receiving countries, but also as actors who contributed to the form, function, and history of the migration regime. Whilst they did not always represent the loudest voices on the biggest stages, they were still able to adjust the small screws that helped determine the tick of the clock.

The history of the migration regime after the Second World War has, thus far, mainly been written from the perspective of U.S. American, European, and institutional history, starting with the pioneering studies of Holborn or Vernant, which made northern nations agents and southern countries objects of international intervention.<sup>114</sup> Northern authors incorporated Venezuela as a “destination”—an object—into their overtly northern historiography of U.S. American and British leadership. Thereby, Euro-American hegemony was writ large during the Cold War era.<sup>115</sup>

In contrast, I have shed light on Venezuela’s role in the migration regime from two historical perspectives. First, I compare the dominant historiography of the postwar migration regime and the role Venezuela played in that history, considering the

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Holborn, *The International Refugee Organization*, 145.

<sup>113</sup> Joseph Chamberlain, “The Fate of Refugees and Displaced Persons,” *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 22:2 (January 1947), 84–94, 194.

<sup>114</sup> Again, Peter Gatrell’s work is a noteworthy exception. See Gatrell, *The Making*.

<sup>115</sup> For the transnational history of international institutions, see also Glenda Sluga, “Editorial: The Transnational History of International Institutions,” *Journal of Global History* 6:2 (July 2011), 455–74.

immigration history of Venezuela and the respective positioning of the IGCR, UNRRA, and the IRO in that dynamic. I suggest that Venezuela be placed not only in the history of the IRO, but also vice versa—to place the IRO in the history of Venezuela. From the Venezuelan perspective, the IRO and the resettlement programme were simply footnotes in the history of European immigration, which Venezuela consistently designed itself and in which it cooperated with many actors. Whilst it participated in an IRO resettlement programme that was initially designed to help Nazi victims, it simultaneously negotiated German immigration with the young Federal Republic of Germany. It negotiated with voluntary agencies independently of the IRO, and also negotiated a more extensive immigration from Italy following the demise of the IRO, at which point immigration from Europe actually increased. And while the Western “engineers” of the migration regime based their actions on humanitarianism in the face of the Holocaust and geopolitics in the early Cold War, Venezuelan interests were rather driven by a racialised immigration policy in the face of agricultural expansion, industrialisation, and state- and nation-building.

Second, from the perspective of a connective approach to global history, I show how Venezuela, as a political agent, was involved in shaping the migration regime; how it perceived itself as an agent within that regime; and how it intervened on a small scale to shape its form and function.<sup>116</sup> Venezuela’s motivation for political participation in the migration regime was certainly primarily shaped by national interests, namely, the plan to bring many European migrants into the country. This, however, applied to all of the countries involved. Even if the history of the migration regime was portrayed primarily as a history of humanitarianism in very early texts, all the states involved acted primarily out of their own national interests. Here Venezuela’s role does not differ from that of the other countries. Humanitarian actors were individuals, such as Eleanor Roosevelt, rather than nation states as a whole.<sup>117</sup> Taking the interests of Venezuela into account in the political negotiation of the migration regime, however, again adds an important piece to the puzzle of the political history of postwar migration. Events such as conflicts regarding the question of who was in the higher position—who was the boss and who the helper—in the concrete execution of the resettlement, which we can read from Orlando Shilts’s letter to his superior, show that Venezuela acting within the IRO system first and foremost, displayed agency. It is this agency that should not be overlooked: Venezuelan actors, as well as actors from other countries from the Global South, also questioned and modified the rules and practices within the IRO.<sup>118</sup>

To conclude, this essay calls for a multi- or rather trans-scalar history of the postwar international migration regime: one where regional imperatives of economic “development” and nation-building dialogue with international cooperation about refugee resettlement. Such a global history also exposes the deep-rooted white-racial power structures that underlie the making of this migration regime.

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<sup>116</sup> Regarding the approaches of comparative history and connected history in global history, see Richard Drayton and David Motadel, “Discussion: The Futures of Global History,” *Journal of Global History* 13:1 (March 2018), 1–21; Katja Naumann, “Long-Term and Decentred Trajectories of Doing History from a Global Perspective: Institutionalization, Postcolonial Critique, and Empiricist Approaches, Before and After the 1970s,” *Journal of Global History* 14:3 (November 2019), 335–54.

<sup>117</sup> Regarding Eleanor Roosevelt’s engagements, see Cohen, *In War’s Wake*, 17.

<sup>118</sup> This argument concurs with the idea of the *histoire croisée*—that societies in contact with each other not only become interrelated, but also gradually come to modify each other. Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45:1 (February 2006), 30–50, 35.

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