

den USA. Lesern, die sich für die Sichtweisen von Experten auf die politische Geschichte ausgewählter Länder sowie für methodisch-theoretische Problematik von Ethnisierung des Politischen interessieren, ist die Lektüre des Sammelbandes zu empfehlen.

Anmerkungen:

- 1 Selbst die Fragestellung eignet sich nicht gleichermaßen für die Beschreibung aller theoretischen Perspektiven. Je nach diskursanalytischem Verständnis lässt sich diese Frage aus dieser Perspektive überhaupt nicht beantworten. Die Fragestellung wird dennoch hier verwendet, um auf genau diese Unterschiede aufmerksam zu machen.
- 2 Im Folgenden wird auf diesen Diskussionszusammenhang mit ‚Politisierung von Ethnizität‘ Bezug genommen, ohne dass alle Autoren ihre Diskussionsbeiträge selbst so benennen würden.

**Philip Graf: Die Bernheim Petition 1933. Jüdische Politik in der Zwischenkriegszeit (= Schriften des Simon-Dubnow Instituts Bd. 10), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008, 342 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Natan Sznaider, Tel-Aviv

Philip Graf has written an important book about the theory and praxis of Jewish politics. On first sight, this is a very detailed study about a very particular case of Jewish politics which occurred in 1933 just after the Nazis seized power. The book deals in detail with what is called “The Bernheim Petition.” This was a petition submitted to the League of Nations in May 1933. Franz

Bernheim – the official signature on the petition – was a Jew of Upper Silesia, which was a part of Germany covered by the minority rights system put into motion at the League of Nations as part of the new order following the end of World War I. The petition was drafted by a group of Jewish trans-national diplomats working for Jewish organizations like Leo Motzkin, Nathan Feinberg, Emil Margulies and others. These were representatives of a liberal version of Jewish nationalism trying to combine Zionist aspirations on the one hand and minority rights for Jews in the diaspora on the other one. Graf reconstructs these efforts and situates them in a larger political context of what it means to be acting in the name of the Jews.

For some few weeks in 1933, it looked like Nazi Germany could be countered by the international system of the League of Nations. More than that, the specific case study serves Graf to discuss the deeper meaning of the term “Jewish Politics” and he succeeds to explore the ethnic particular case studies in order to discuss the transition from a system of minority rights to one of human rights (following the end of World War II after 1945). Thus Graf succeeds to write Jewish history as general history, which, of course is part of the intellectual self-understanding of the Simon-Dubnow Institute in Leipzig, of which Graf is part of. His study shows how the particular Jewish contribution for the protection of fellow Jews is part of a larger effort of what will much later be called efforts of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to fight for the rights of other people.

The book is written not as a teleological story of failure of a few naïve Jewish dip-

lomats who believed that the Nazi attack on the Jews could have been countered by international legal arrangements. The book is written from the point of view of 1933 (and not 1945) and this is exactly its strength. It gives, therefore, enough intellectual and political space for those Jewish actors who in 1933 believed that something can be done against Hitler and that Jews are not helpless victims but have the international legal order – like the minority rights system – on their side. It is a book about a time which starts in 1919 and ends in 1933 – a short interval after the fall of the European empires and the rise of Nazi Germany. And Graf succeeds in reconstructing this time which is usually over-shadowed, and how it cannot be, by the year 1945. Graf reconstructs step by step how the principal actors operated, how they had to maneuver the interests of sovereign states but not only that, how they had to maneuver between different Jewish self-perceptions. Should Jews fight as a Jewish collective? And would the demand for minority rights for German Jews not turn them automatically into Jews in Germany and re-enforce Nazi perceptions that Jews are a minority and not part of the German nation? The Nazi persecution of the Jews laid wide open the internal Jewish divisions between a Western European model of assimilation and an Eastern European understanding of collective fate. That is why it is no co-incidence that the intellectual spirit of Hannah Arendt is hovering over this book. Arendt was constantly concerned about the possibility of Jewish political action, which she also could conceive outside the nation state. And she wrote extensively about minority and human rights. As Arendt observed in

her “The Origins of Totalitarianism” (and Graf takes this as his point of departure), the greater ties between nation and state were further sanctioned in the aftermath of World War I when, after the collapse of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires in Central and Southern Europe, ethnic minorities sought state protection. The collapse of the European order created a new category of people, the ethnic minority living in midst of a nation-state’s borders. When the nation state (a Western principle) was introduced in the former territories of 19th century empires throughout Eastern, Central and Southern Europe, the existence of large contingents of minorities became inevitable. This becomes crucial for the fate of the Jews, the minority group par excellence, in this region. A system of protection was imposed on these new states – a feature resented from the start by new entities such as Poland and Czechoslovakia. This is the background for the Bernheim Petition. The rights of minorities were not protected by national states, but rather by a newly constituted international institution, the League of Nations, which was envisioned as an international utopia based on the equality of nations under international law. The minority rights protections system contained a moral impetus, namely the desire to make international relations conform to a higher morality rather than be governed by amorality. But as the Jews had to find out rather quickly, the primacy of national sovereignty trumped the rights of minorities and the League of Nations had few instruments to enforce compliance of any sort. As Arendt put it: “The nation had conquered the state.” Behind this lies a clear-cut notion of sovereignty which does not allow for external restraints

to dictate how states should regulate their internal affairs. For Arendt this also meant that Jews had to take their protection into their own hands. In 1964, she told the German journalist, Gunter Gaus in an interview that “if one is attacked as a Jew, one has to defend oneself as a Jew. Not as a German, not as a world-citizen, not as an upholder of the Rights of Man, or whatever. But: What can I specifically do as a Jew?”

Graf's book is an attempt to answer this still relevant question. He shows the reader the work of the Parisian Comité des Délégations Juives, a delegation of Jewish representatives which came to Paris in 1919 to represent Jewish demands for minority rights. In the period before World War II, Jews constantly experienced the tension between universalism and particularism. Jews had to be diplomats without a country, paradigmatically defining a kind of de-territorialized politics of rights. The end of World War I meant constant threats for the Jews as an ethnic minority in times of nation state formation. This threat to Jewish existence has now largely vanished from the memory of the Jews and others, subsumed by memories of World War II. The Jews as a collective became Europe's paradigmatic minority. However the international system created in 1919 could not protect them from the atrocities and their destruction experienced only two decades later. This tremendous failure of minority protection became one of the more significant catalysts for the Human Rights Regime to emerge out of the ruins of World War II. It was a particular memory of a particular group, which became constitutive of an entire rights consciousness after World War II. Graf has done well to show

that minority rights are no heroic precursor to what is called today “human rights” and that the framer of the Bernheim Petition were, therefore, no precursors to human rights activist. Minority and human rights are two different things. Graf's study shows clearly that debates on minority rights must be grounded in history and concrete events. If we do not want to confuse debates on minority and human rights, we have to avoid a-historical considerations that treat minorities in abstract and/or structural terms. This is why Graf's study is not only important to students of Jewish history, but also to students interested in the emergence of the current human rights system and its historical connections to the minority rights system of the time between 1919 and 1933.

**Holger Stoecker: Afrikawissenschaften in Berlin von 1919 bis 1945. Zur Geschichte und Topographie eines wissenschaftlichen Netzwerkes, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008, 359 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Katja Geisenhainer, Leipzig

Mit dem im vergangenen Jahr erschienenen Werk von Holger Stoecker liegt nun ein beachtlicher Meilenstein in der Erforschung der Geschichte der deutschen Afrikawissenschaften vor. Stoecker, Historiker und Mitarbeiter am Seminar für Afrikawissenschaften der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, hat mit der vorliegenden Arbeit