AID TO EMIGRÉ PSYCHOLOGISTS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1933-1943: A RESEARCH NOTE (1)

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On April 7, 1933, the newly installed National Socialist regime promulgated the so-called "law for the re-establishment of the professional civil service". The infamous paragraphs three and four of that law authorized the release or forced retirement of persons from government service who were not of "Arian" descent or were associated with groups considered politically undesirable in the new German state. Since the vast majority of scientists and scholars in Germany were employed either in the state-supported universities or in government-financed research institutes, this measure and its successors led to an unprecedented wave of dismissals. Many of the people affected realized sooner or later that the threat was to their lives and not only their livelihoods, and emigrated. They were joined in some cases by the few "Arians" who protested, such as Wolfgang KÖHLER (HENLE, 1978).

The response outside Germany to the Nazi attack on science and learning was rapid. In New York, London and elsewhere organizations were founded and a vast array of *ad hoc* committees set up to aid the emigrants and at the same time to gather in the fruits that could be harvested for science and culture in other countries. Although this effort is now forty to fifty years old, its history is, as the prominent historian of the

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emigration Herbert STRAUSS has remarked, "as yet unwritten" (STRAUSS, 1983, p. 57). Its significance for both general cultural and intellectual history and the history of science in this century, though obviously great, remains unspecified. The following note is intended to be a modest contribution to that historiographical project. After a brief overview of the sources of aid available to refugee psychologists, I will present a more detailed account of one group, the Committee on Displaced Psychologists founded by the American Psychological Association in 1938.

SOURCES OF AID

Aid to refugee psychologists came from four sources, some better documented than others.

1.- The earliest responses were more or less organized acts of individual initiative. Perhaps the most famous ot these is the founding of the "University in Exile" at the New School for Social Research by its president, Alvin JOHNSON, in April, 1933 (JOHNSON, 1952, chap. 31; LACHMANN, 1976; SPRONDEL, 1981; LUCKMANN, 1981). Among the original members of this German university faculty in New York were Max WERTHEIMER and his friend and colleague, the ethnomusicologist and psychologist Erich von HORNBOSTEL. WERTHEIMER, who had already gone to Czechoslovakia before becoming one of the first academics forced into retirement by the regime, was officially invited to join the "University in Exile" in August, 1933, and began teaching in October. Von HORNBOSTEL was invited at his suggestion (for documentation see ASH, 1984a). Less famous and less organized, but in summation probably more significant were the uncounted acts of numerous psychologists and others who helped colleagues they knew or who were recommended to them. Examples include Robert OGDEN and Ethel WARING of Cornell University, who arranged an appointment at the School of Home Economics there for Kurt LEWIN in 1933 (MARROW, 1969, pp. 68, 74) (2).

2.- Such aid was soon supplemented by the first emigrés -"Mayflower immigrants", as Max WERTHEIMER called them and himself-, who used their positions and the contacts through which they had obtained them to help their colleagues. WERTHEIMER, responding to a query in 1939, estimated that he had seen and offered advice to twenty-two persons and tried to assist nineteen directly in their search for positions. He added, however, that his efforts had brought positive results in "only one case" (3). In this he was perhaps too modest. In fact, WERTHEIMER helped to bring a number of emigrés to the United States, either by furnishing the references required by American immigration laws or by carrying on extensive correspondence to make sure that the paper work and the passage to America went smoothly. He also wrote numerous letters of reference to help obtain positions or fellowships for emigrés after they arrived. Among those whom he helped were his former students and coworkers Erwin LEVY, Erich GOLDMEIER —the "one case" just cited-, Erika OPPENHEIMER (now Erika FROMM) and Rudolf ARNHEIM (4).

3.- Both the "Mayflower immigrants" and others made use, when possible, of the resources of larger, established institutions. The best known of these are the Society

for the Protection of Science and Learning in London, the Oberlaender Trust, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars in New York, and the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia (see, e.g. DUGGAN and DRURY, 1952). The person to whom this Festschrift is dedicated was "quite literally saved", as he put it, by the latter organization (5). The Emergency Committee and the Oberlaender Trust supported a number of emigré psychologists by underwriting either stipendia or teaching positions for short periods, usually one to two years. The specific circumstances of this support remain to be documented.

4.- The chronologically latest but in some respects the most interesting form of assistance to emigré scholars in general came from committees formed by scientific and professional associations to aid emigrés in their fields. While the other forms of aid had existed since 1933, these groups were part of the popular outpouring of voluntary assistance that came in response to the occupation of Austria by German troops in March, 1938, and still more to the pogroms of the so-called "crystal night" in November of that year. One of the most active of these was made up of psychologists, though, as will be shown below, it did not limit its assistance of psychologists. This was the Committee on Displaced Psychologists of the American Psychological Association, also known as the "Burks Committee" in honor of its leading member, Barbara BURKS. The work of this group has been described briefly elsewhere (MANDLER and MANDLER, 1969, pp. 381-383). In the following sections I will draw upon additional documents and other material in order to place the story in historical context.

THE SOCIOPOLITICAL BACKGROUND: PSYCHOLOGISTS AND THE DEPRESSION

The effect of the Depression that was most relevant to the reception of emigré scholars in general, and psychologists in particular, was unemployment. In the case of psychology, however, we should perhaps speak of perceived unemployment. Statistics assembled at the time show not a decline but an increase in the number of psychologists employed at 350 institutions in the early Depression years, from 944 in 1929-1930 to 1, 131 in 1932-1933 (Report on Supply and Demand 1933, p. 649). However, the number of doctorates awarded in psychology in the same period was 538 (Historical Statistics 1975, vol. 1, Series H 776). The apparent over-supply of Ph.D.'s, combined with a loss of positions through budget cuts at some institutions, yielded a genuine employment problem. As there was no evidence that psychologists, once trained, were leaving the field at an increased rate, this meant that it took longer for graduate psychologists to find positions than before. The resulting pinch was felt even at elite universities, and it seems to have had an effect on the ability of some professors to aid emigrés. In May, 1933, E.G. BORING of Harvard University, for example, replied to Kurt KOFFKA's request for help in finding places for Kurt LEWIN and Max WERTHEIMER as follows (6):

> I feel so utterly helpless. Here at Harvard we are turning out more than our usual number of good Ph.D.'s this year, but there are no jobs for any of them. Every little bit someone is in to confront me with a very serious situation that is, so far as any effort of my part goes, insoluble. There are our men who are squeezed out by contracted budgets elsewhere. We are ourselves under pressure to contract, with notice served that we must look for further contraction in 1934-1935. I just do not see what America can do for LEWIN and WERTHEIMER.

As the Depression wore on, however, the number of unemployed psychologists became large enough to provoke a survey of the problem by the APA in 1935-1936. The survey reported a total of 214 unemployed psychologists, approximately ten per cent of the total membership of the APA at the time. This compared favorably with the unemployment level in the nation as a whole, and the investigating committee reported that none of the people surveyed was receiving welfare payments because "none was destitute" (Report of the Committee...1936, p. 702). Nonetheless, the issue had clearly become a cause of serious concern.

According to one recent study (FINISON, 1976), the proposed solutions to the problem divided psychologists into two camps. The "expansionist" group, primarily though not exclusively younger and politically more liberal or left-wing, advocated a shift away from an exclusive focus upon academic science and toward community social service projects which could satisfy or even create demand for psychologists' services. The "restrictionists", mainly older and politically more conservative, opposed tampering with what they took to be the laws of supply and demand, and feared a dilution of academic standards if the discipline became oriented to public service. The latter group had been in charge of the APA's affairs since the early 1920s. Intellectually, the generational shift was prepared from the late 1920s onward by increasing attacks upon hereditarian interpretations of intelligence test results and increasing concentration upon the role of the social environment (CRAVENS, 1978; SAMELSON, 1978). By the mid-1930s, the challenge of the "expansionists" had taken organizational form with the founding of groups such as the Psychologists' League and the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI). Both groups developed in part around the unemployment issue (FINISON, 1978).

By the late 1930s the "expansionists", or at least the liberal wing of that group, had apparently gained the upper hand. A clear indication of this was the incorporation of their program into the structure of the APA in the Committee on Personnel, Promotion and Public Relations, founded in 1939. Another was the successive election of two leading liberal expansionists, Edward C. TOLMAN and Gordon ALLPORT, to the presidency of the APA in 1937 and 1938 (7). Still further evidence of the shift were the protests of the Midwest Psychological Association, the New York Branch of the APA and finally the APA itself against the plan to hold the twelfth International Congress of Psychology in Vienna after the German occupation of Austria in March, 1938 (8). However, the protest resolutions did not pass without opposition. As Luton ACKERSON, a Chicago psychologist and one of the leaders of the resolution campaign, wrote to Michigan professor J.F. SHEPARD (9):

> It was conspicuous that (at the Midwestern Psychological Association meeting) the 'older' or established psychologists, such as 'heads of departments' tended to vote in opposition, while the 'younger' psychologists tended to favor the resolution. The vote was quite close and the discussion very vigorous.

Clearly, tensions remained just below the surface of liberal consensus.

THE BURKS COMMITTEE

The appointment of the Committee on Displaced Foreign Psychologists, which occurred at the same meeting of the APA, in September 1938, at which that body adopted its protest resolution against holding the International Congress in Vienna, also reflected the political and generational shifts in psychology. Incoming APA president Gordon ALLPORT organized the committee and persuaded Barbara BURKS to serve as secretary (10). BURKS, a student of Lewis M. TERMAN who was then working at the Carnegie Institution's Department of Genetics in Cold Spring Harbor, New York, was a young psychologist who combined a research interest in the role of genetic factors in the development of intelligence and a strong commitment to social justice. BURKS was at first, like many other non-Jewish Americans, somewhat naive about the sensibilities of the people her committee was to help . She confessed sheepishly in a letter to ALLPORT that she had scheduled a meeting with representatives of the National Coordinating Committee, a leading refugee aid group, on Yom Kippur, the most important Jewish holy day (11). However, she learned quickly, and soon became so deeply involved in the committee's work that she was named chairman in February, 1939 (12). From then on the group was informally known as the "Burks Committee". BURKS remained in charge until her suicide in 1943, after which the committee, its work largely done, was disbanded. In addition to BURKS and ALLPORT there were eight other committee members: Luton ACKERSON of the Institute for Juvenile Research in Chicago, Professors W.E. BLATZ of the University of Toronto, D.B. KLEIN of the University of Texas, Gardner MURPHY and A.T. POFFENBERGER of Columbia University, G.D. STODDARD of the University of Iowa, outgoing APA President TOLMAN and Max WERTHEIMER. Günther STERN, the son of William STERN and himself a philosopher with many contacts in emigré circles, served as "an invaluable collaborator" (BURKS, 1939, p. 188). ALLPORT solicited WERTHEIMER's involvement especially persistently, and consulted him on the group's membership (13).

The committee members realized from the outset the constraints under which they had to operate. As ALLPORT wrote to APA Secretary Willard OLSON, the group was to be an investigative body only, and was "no authorized to aid individual cases" (14), In the committee's reports BURKS continually reassured the APA that positions found for emigrés were nearly always "'created' jobs", i.e. non competitive with those of American psychologists (BURKS, 1939, p. 188; Report of the Committee...1941, p. 843). Such statements indicated the committee's sensitivity to both the situation of unemployed psychologists and the sentiments of conservative APA members, who feared that the discipline would be overrun by incoming immigrants. The group's budget was correspondingly small. Its appropriation from the APA was $ 50.00 the first year and $ 200.00 yearly thereafter. From regional psychological associations came $ 100.00 in the first and $ 125.00 in the second year (Report of the Committee...1940-1942) (15).

The committee's first action was consistent with its investigative role. It assembled a list of 111 potential or actual emigrés, with information about their age, training and experience, which was circulated confidentially to 500 APA members in 1939. Yet

even at this point it was clear that the group was going beyond its assignment. Though the people who provided names and references for this list were psychologists, among them WERTHEIMER and Wolfgang KÖHLER, many of the people recommended were not. Of the 220 persons for whom curricula vitae were collected during the committee's first year, 112, or 50.9 per cent, were psychologists. Of the 78 contacted who were already in the United States, the percentage was higher -two-thirds rather than one-half (16). Nonetheless it is clear that the "Burks Committee" was developing, under the pressure of events, from an investigative organ into a genuine immigrant aid organization.

Despite its tiny budget, the committee became something of a vocational guidance bureau and placement agency for refugee philosophers, neurologists, psychoanalysts and general psychotherapists as well as psychologists. In addition to establishing contact with emigrants and potential emigrants in the United States and Europe and collecting their curricula vitae and references, the members interviewed them when they arrived and organized orientation seminars on American Psychology in New York and Boston in 1940 and 1941. All this was consistent with a broadened version of the committee's mandate. But it did more, passing along the names of emigrés to other aid organizations and maintaining contacts for this purpose with a wide range of groups and individuals. These included Lawrence KUBIE, head of a similar, though less formal group from the American Psychoanalytic Association, Horace FRIESS, a Columbia University professor in charge of a parallel committee of the American Philosophical Association, Julia DEMMING, who helped with the placement of emigrés in hospitals and clinics, Lutz GRUENEBAUM of the Joint Distribution Committee (a Jewish aid group), and the emigrés Paul LAZARSFELD, Eduard HEIMANN, Paul TILLICH and Friedrich POLLACK, the latter three representing a group called "German Self-Help" (17).

This expanded activity went hand in hand with a high estimation of the committee's potential effect. Though there may be a scarcity of positions for psychologists, BURKS wrote, "in terms of research, education and community needs, there is no oversupply of psychologists". The hope was that the presence of highly qualified immigrants and the committee's work with them would eventually become "a stimulus toward a rational plan for supporting, distributing and conserving talent" (18). To achieve this, and to assure that helping immigrants would not hurt unemployed Americans, BURKS put the committee completely behind the -unsuccessful- effort of Indiana University professor Edmund S. CONKLIN to establish an employment bureau at the APA in 1940 (19). In these words and deeds the group's affiliation with the liberal "expansionist" viewpoint in the discipline was evident. So, too, were the limitations of that viewpoint. The assumption that the mere presence of numerous highly qualified foreign psychologists could produce a planning orientation within the discipline when that of 241 unemployed American psychologists had not was questionable, to say the least. Nor does there seem to have been much open discussion in the committee, about the ideological and political changes required to make such planning seem reasonable or necessary to those outside psychology with the power to bring about such changes in society at large.

Inevitably, such a perspective encountered difficulties in reality. One of these was noted laconically by BURKS in a reference to the often "unrealistic expectations"

of many immigrants, which the committee hoped to counter with its orientation seminars. One example of that problem was, ironically enough, also the committee's most prominent success. In September, 1938, ALLPORT learned from the Viennese psychologist Egon BRUNSWIK, who was already in California, and from Charlotte BÜHLER that Karl BÜHLER, just released from internment by the Nazis, had only a short time to choose between emigration and forced retirement in Austria. ALLPORT and BURKS immediately wrote to the committee seeking help (20). Committee member Luton ACKERSON found a position for BÜHLER at St. Scholastica College, a small Catholic institution in Duluth, Minnesota. From there BÜHLER moved to St. Thomas College in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1940.

However, efforts to obtain a position nearby for Charlotte BÜHLER proved more complicated. She taught briefly at St. Catherine's, a women's college in St. Paul, but then accepted a position at Clark University at Worcester, Massachusetts. As she later recalled, neither she nor Karl BÜHLER felt that they "fit in" in the Midwest (BÜHLER, 1972, p. 35). In 1939, the primary hindrance seems to have been the unwillingness of some psychologists in the Midwest to cope with her strong personality. Richard M. ELLIOTT, chairman of the department at the University of Minnesota, later wrote to ALLPORT that although the psychologists at St. Catherine's were "extremely enthusiastic" about her work, they found her "too formidable and aggressive for their placid environment" (21). Such conflicts often arose when people who had enjoyed international reputations and leading positions in Europe's hierarchically structured universities were required to adjust to the at least outwardly more democratic style of American academic life. Perhaps such disapproved behavior was even less tolerated in a woman.

In this intertwining of personal and professional exigencies the BÜHLERS' story was not unique. For most emigré psychologists regular employment came only after a long period of struggling from one short-term research, teaching or clinical position to another. Some, for example Georg ICHHEISER, were forced to leave the field altogether despite good recommendations from ALLPORT (22). Long-term employment in the academic sector was possible, if at all, only at smaller colleges and most often after the Second World War, when the economic boom and the rapid institutionalization of clinical psychology brought about a major expansion in the discipline.

In 1941, however, the dark side of the picture was more visible. The limited nature even of 'successes' such as the BÜHLERS' led BURKS to draw negative conclusions about the committee's work. In her first report in September, 1939, BURKS had already stated that of 76 contacted emigrés who were in the United States, only "about half have found at least temporary employment...but this employment is usually very inadequate and poorly paid in terms of the ability and preparation of the incumbents. In only five or six cases have positions been obtained that are appropriate" (23). This estimate included the positions for the BÜHLERS. In the committee's second report, BURKS wrote that the committee now knew of 134 emigrants who were in the United States. Of the 86 of these for whom the Committee possessed data, 48 were in paid professional positions, including part-time work and some positions with poor salaries. Eleven held internships, had become students or were doing volunteer work; six were employed outside the profession, and twenty-one were unemployed (Report of the

Committee...1940, p. 717). Of the 159 emigrants who had reached America by 1941, when Germany's declaration of war on the United States closed the borders to all but a few, only 54 had been able to obtain employment or research stipends with the committee's help. And, as BURKS summarized, "only a small proportion of the group either in this or other countries are in jobs commensurate with their training and experience" (Report of the Committee...1941, p. 843).

Clearly, the fears of some psychologists that the discipline was about to be overwhelmed by a wave of immigrants were unfounded. Compared with the membership of the APA in 1940 -2,739- the total number of psychologists on the "Burks Committee" lists -155, or 5.7 per cent- seems small indeed. Yet despite the strenuous and time-consuming efforts of BURKS and her associates, only one-third of these had been shown to a productive place in the discipline with the committee's help. Such results must have been particularly disappointing in view of the high expectations expressed at the start. It had been the committee's hope that the immigrants would, by their very presence, promote awareness of the need for psychologists' services and stimulate the APA to become more involved in the rational use of human resources. In fact, it was the American war effort, not the presence of the emigrés or the hopes of liberal psychologists, that led to greater concentration on the rational planning and distribution of human resources and on the problem of morale. And it was by their participation in the war effort that American psychologists demonstrated most clearly their willingness to help solve such problems. But that is another story.

CONCLUSIONS

The biograhies of the people aided by the "Burks Committee" are not known in detail (24). Conclusions about the place of this history in the history of the intellectual migration can therefore be only tentative. However, this much can be suggested. The various forms of aid to refugee scholars and scientists described at the beginning of this note were all extended to members of many disciplines. This is also true of the assistance offered by disciplinary groups of which the "Burks Committee" is an example. But a different complex of countervailing pressures was at work in each discipline, which shaped the reception of emigré scholars and scientists in various ways. In mathematics, for example, an established, expanding discipline integrated a limited number of immigrants from Europe, though not without opposition in which anti-Semitism was mixed with talk of maintaining standards (REINGOLD, 1983). In the case of psychoanalysis, a younger discipline established in America with the help of Central Europeans, many of them Jews, who had emigrated before 1933, the field expanded enormously and its training centers were built up, often organized and staffed, by post-1933 emigrés (FERMI, 1971, Chap. 6; HALE, 1978).

Psychology seems to be located between these two poles. Perhaps its story thus reflects more clearly the factors involved to a greater or lesser extent in other disciplines. Certainly the tension noted here between "expansionists" and "restrictionists", with its political overtones, was present in other disciplines as well. It would have been strange if this had not been so, such tensions were and still are pervasive in American society and culture. But the notion that emigrés could be a lever or wedge to raise the

consciousness of social responsibility in a discipline may have been unique to psychology, a special feature of its development in this period from an academic discipline into one of the "helping professions". We will know this for certain only after similar studies have been carried out for the other social sciences. In any case, it ought to be clear that the issues involved in this history are more complex than has often been thought. Even the most humanitarian acts cannot be separated from their social and political contexts.

NOTES

(1) This research was supported by the German Research Council (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft). Project Nr. FR 132/16-1 "Psychologie im Exil" (Project Director: Prof. Dr. Werner D. FRÖHLICH, Psychological Institute, University of Mainz). Quotations from unpublished documents and letters by permission of the holders, which is here gratefully acknowledged.

(2) See also Ethel WARING, Oral History, pp. 188 ff., 243 ff. Dept. of Manuscripts and University Archives, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York; and Robert OGDEN to Kurt KOFFKA, 8 June and 21 June 1933. Kurt KOFFKA papers, Archives of the History of American Psychology, Akron, Ohio. Box M376, Folder "Ogden".

(3) Typewritten draft of a letter from Max WERTHEIMER to Barbara BURKS, 12 June 1939. Max WERTHEIMER papers, private collection (holder: Prof. Michael WERTHEIMER), Boulder Colorado. In a handwritten draft of the same letter, WERTHEIMER states that he answered letters from an additional ten emigrants, bringing the total of persons advised to thirty-two.

(4) Erwin LEVY to WERTHEIMER, 6 October, 3 November and 26 December, 1933, 25 January 1934; WERTHEIMER to LEVY, n.d. (answers letter of 26 December); WERTHEIMER to Bernhard SACHS, 26 January 1934; (re: GOLDMEIER) Cecelia RAZOVSKY to WERTHEIMER, 26 January 1937; WERTHEIMER to RAZOVSKY, 30 January 1937; Erika OPPENHEIMER to WERTHEIMER, 14.11.1934; Erika OPPENHEIMER FROMM to WERTHEIMER, 26 November 1938; Rudolf ARNHEIM to WERTHEIMER, 4 November and 6 November 1938; (re: ARNHEIM) Max ASCOLI to WERTHEIMER, 30 December 1940; WERTHEIMER to ASCOLI, n.d. (answers letter of 30 December. Max WERTHEIMER papers).

(5) Josef BROŽEK, personal communication, 17 October 1983.

(6) E.G. BORING to Kurt KOFFKA, 2 May 1933, E.G. BORING papers, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

(7) It should be noted that ALLPORT's liberal views were rooted less in secular political thinking than in his interpretation of Christian obligations. See ALLPORT 1978.

(8) See the contribution by Ulfried GEUTER to this Festschrift.

(9) Luton ACKERSON to J.F. SHEPARD, 31 May 1938, copy in D. KOPEL papers, Archives of the History of American Psychology, Akron, Ohio. Box M1204.

(10) Willard OLSON to Gordon ALLPORT, 17 September, 13 and 14 October 1938; ALLPORT to OLSON, 12 October 1938. Gordon W. ALLPORT papers, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

(11) BURKS to ALLPORT, 7 October 1938. ALLPORT papers.

(12) OLSON to BURKS, 4 February 1939. ALLPORT papers.

(13) ALLPORT to WERTHEIMER, 19 and 21 September 1938; WERTHEIMER to ALLPORT, 26 September 1938. ALLPORT papers.

(14) ALLPORT to OLSON, 30 September 1938. ALLPORT papers.

(15) See also "Report of the Committee on Displaced Foreign Psychologists" (1939). Willard OLSON papers, Archives of the History of American Psychology. Akron, Ohio. Box M371, Folder "Committee". The text of this "Report" is not identical with that of BURKS 1939.

(16) "List of Displaced Foreign Scholars: Confidential Memorandum Issued March 1939", OLSON papers; "Report of the Committee", p. 3. OLSON papers.

(17) List assembled from the ALLPORT-BURKS correspondence. ALLPORT papers.

(18) "Report of the Committee" (1939), p. 4. See Note 15.

(19) "Memorandum to the Members of the Committee on Displaced Foreign Psychologists", 14 October 1940; BURKS to Edmund S. CONKLIN, 14 October 1940. Copies in WERTHEIMER papers. See also OLSON to BURKS, 28 September 1940, OLSON papers.

(20) BRUNSWIK to ALLPORT, 30 September 1938; BURKS, memorandum to the committee, 7 October 1938. ALLPORT papers.

(21) Richard M. ELLIOTT to ALLPORT, 4 December 1942; cf. ALLPORT to ELLIOTT, 8 December 1942; BURKS to ALLPORT, 10 February 1939; ALLPORT to BURKS, 14 February 1939; ALLPORT to Horace KALLEN, 27 September 1939. ALLPORT papers.

(22) Georg ICHHEISER to ALLPORT, 3 April 1943; ALLPORT to ICHHEISER, 8 April 1943. ALLPORT papers.

(23) "Report of the Committee" (1939), p. 3. See Note 15.

(24) The papers of Barbara BURKS, which probably contain the files of the "Burks Committee", have not yet been located.

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