

# The Burgenland Jews on the Danube tug-boat. An eyewitness report

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## Edition

BeGrenzte Flucht. Die österreichischen Flüchtlinge an der Grenze zur Tschechoslowakei im Krisenjahr 1938

<https://begrenzte-flucht.ehri-project.eu/>

Herausgeber: Michal Frankl ; Wolfgang Schellenbacher

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Dear Sir –

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The revolting fate of 68 BURGENLAND *Jews*, driven from their home, received into no neighbouring country, nor allowed to return, has been commented upon throughout the international Press.

Now we receive the report, which we enclose, of distress still encompassing the persecuted, our authority being Mrs. M. SCHMOLKA, director of the Hicem Prague.

You are free to make such use of the report as you think fit. Mrs. SCHMOLKA, however, does not wish her name to be mentioned, nor, as usual, must we be named as your source.

Yours faithfully,

JEWISH CENTRAL INFORMATION OFFICE

Public Service Institute

THE BURGENLAND *JEWS* on the DANUBE TUG – BOAT

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## An Eye Witness Report

On April 16, 1938, the *Jewish inhabitants* of Kittsee and Pama, Burgenland, Austria, were ejected from their homes, robbed of what money and identity papers they had and, during the night, marooned on some small island in the Czech section of the Danube. On April 17, they were found by the Czech frontier guard and taken to Bratislava. That very same day they were expelled from Czecho-Slovakia and once again taken to the German border. On a narrow streak, "No-man's-land", somewhere between the borders of Czecho-Slovakia, Hungaria and Austria, they spent three days and nights, in the bitter cold, half starved, and without a roof over their heads, between the fixed bayonets of the sentries of all 3 countries which they were not allowed to enter. Some of them, 17 in all, managed to get back to Kittsee, where the old men and children were locked up in a cellar, and the grown ups, men and women, were made do hard *scrubbing work*. Exhausted from 3 days' starving, the poor people's strength threatened to fail, but ruthless beating put them to *work* again. During the night, after a 30 miles walk, they were taken back to the Czech frontier.

At long last the *Jews* of Bratislava found a temporary way-out. They hired a tug-boat, which landed on the Hungarian side of the Danube, near Royka, and received the people,

68 altogether, agricultural workers and merchants, infants and 80 years old men. No country along the Danube being prepared to grant the *refugees* leave on land, the Hungarian authorities extend the permit from week to week, hoping that the *Jewish organisations* will secure their *emigration* overseas. It is now three months that these people, smitten with despair, refused by every country, and even grudgingly the stay aboard the ship – it is now three months that they are thus kept in the vague hope of salvation.

Efforts were made to induce various countries overseas to receive these [Page 3] unfortunates. Though some of the inmates of the boat managed to *emigrate* to the United States, the majority could not be *emigrated*, being unable to comply with the requirements set up by the countries overseas. It was in full realisation of this plight of theirs that we went to see the *refugees* on the boat, on July 10.

We have seen their unspeakable mental distress, even increased by physical torture, as they either must stay in the narrow rooms downstairs which are infested with rats and vermin, or on the upper deck where they are left to the weather's mood.

There must be an end to this awful tragedy. It is not enough that *Jewry* must suffer all the humiliation that is being heaped upon it? Are we going to proclaim no, before the whole world, our utter helplessness, deliver up these poorest of the poor to the Gestapo, and allow a mass *suicide*? We have taken down all particulars of every one of these unfortunates, and in addition, worked out a plan to lead this problem towards its solution, it being in the last resort nothing more than a question of finance: 4.000 Pounds.

# Verweise

Themen: Juden, Jüdinnen und jüdisches Leben; Demütigung von Juden und Jüdinnen; Zwangsarbeit; Jüdische Flüchtlinge; Jüdische Organisation; Emigration; Selbstmord

Orte: Burgenland; Prag (Praha); Kittsee; Pama; Österreich; Tschechoslowakei; Donau; Pressburg (Bratislava); Deutschland; Ungarn; Ragendorf (Rajka); USA

Personen: Schmolka (Schmolková), Marie, geb. Eisner

Organisationen: Jewish Central Information Office; Public Service Institute; HICEM; Geheime Staatspolizei

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