



# Sociology at the New School for Social Research, an intellectual and pedagogical history

Cherry Schrecker

## ► To cite this version:

Cherry Schrecker. Sociology at the New School for Social Research, an intellectual and pedagogical history. 2009. hal-01565855

**HAL Id: hal-01565855**

**<https://hal.science/hal-01565855>**

Submitted on 26 Jul 2017

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

# **Sociology at the New School for Social Research: An Intellectual and Pedagogical History**

By Cherry Schrecker

Senior Lecturer, University of Nancy, Research Laboratory LASURES/2L2S  
34, rue de Médreville  
54000 Nancy  
France

[cherry.schrecker@univ-nancy2.fr](mailto:cherry.schrecker@univ-nancy2.fr)

© 2009 by Cherry Schrecker

*Editor's Note:* This research report is presented here with the author's permission but should not be cited or quoted without the author's consent.

Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online is a periodic publication of the Rockefeller Archive Center. Edited by Ken Rose and Erwin Levold. Research Reports Online is intended to foster the network of scholarship in the history of philanthropy and to highlight the diverse range of materials and subjects covered in the collections at the Rockefeller Archive Center. The reports are drawn from essays submitted by researchers who have visited the Archive Center, many of whom have received grants from the Archive Center to support their research.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and are not intended to represent the Rockefeller Archive Center.

## **Report on research carried out at the Rockefeller Archive Center between May 1<sup>st</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008<sup>1</sup>**

The research conducted at the Rockefeller Archive Centre (RAC) is part of a project on the history of sociology at the New School for Social Research. In the troubled period leading up to the Second World War, finance provided by grants from the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) played an important part in the development of the Graduate Faculty at the New School. Numerous documents produced during this period are held at the RAC. They provide a fascinating insight into the itineraries of the individual refugee scholars who came to work at the New School. We learn about the difficulties linked to their rescue; the actions undertaken in face of these circumstances and the choices made in the attempt to make the best use of the limited funds available. RF grants also helped to support research projects carried out under

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the Rockefeller Archive Center for the grant which made this research possible and the staff of the Rockefeller Archive Center whose help and kindness rendered my stay both agreeable and productive. I would also like to thank the New School of Social Research, the New York Public Library and their library staff (in particular Carmen Hendershott) for access to their collections and for their help, which often went far beyond the bounds of duty.

the auspices of the New School which were designed to further an understanding of the situation in Germany before the war and of the mechanisms involved in wartime propaganda. The ultimate aim of this research was to promote peace.

I will describe the context and the corpus of documents consulted before presenting information relating to individual scholars, the New School, Rockefeller action and the collaboration between the Foundation and the New School.

### *Some elements of context*

The New School was founded in 1919 on the initiative of a group of dissident intellectuals, among them Charles Beard and James Robinson (who had recently resigned from Columbia University), Alvin Johnson, John Dewey, Herbert Croly (editor of the *New Republic*), Caroline Bacon and Thorstein Veblen. The objective of the New School was to provide an alternative to conventional American university education. Considerable emphasis was placed on academic and political freedom and on education as a means of social development. From the outset, the major objective of the school was to provide continuing education for adults, and it was considered important that the students have a share in determining the teaching program. The original team dispersed rapidly and Alvin Johnson took over as director in 1923.<sup>2</sup>

As from 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany, many Jewish scholars, divested of their teaching and research responsibilities, were forced to leave their home country. A similar situation arose later in many other European countries; two examples of importance for the history of the New School are those of Austria after the Anschluss in 1938 and France, occupied by the Nazis in 1940. Despite the threat which hung over Jewish intellectuals, and also Jews in general, many European countries were reticent about granting asylum. The

---

<sup>2</sup> Johnson Alvin (1952), *Pioneer's Progress*, New York, Viking Press, pp. 305 *et sequ.*

same was true of America, where immigration was limited by quota established on the basis of national origin and where anti-Semitic feelings were widespread.

It was in this context that Alvin Johnson founded the University in Exile, shortly to be renamed the Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science, at the New School for Social Research. The Faculty, at its opening in 1933, was staffed by émigré German scholars later to be joined by exiles from other European countries. With the support of private donors, the Rockefeller Foundation and other organisations, such as the Emergency Committee for Displaced Foreign Scholars, Johnson was able to bring to the New School 175 foreign (Jewish or anti-Nazi) scholars who were granted non-quota visas as teachers having obtained posts in a university institution.

Between 1933 and 1945 Rockefeller Foundation grants brought a total of 303 scholars to America,<sup>3</sup> of whom many were initially employed at the New School. The documents held at the archives concern the RF action and bear witness both to the internal functioning of the foundation and to its relationship with the outside world.

### ***The documents consulted***

The holdings concerning RF action in aid of refugee scholars contain several types of documents. These include records of grants awarded; inter-office correspondence between RF officers; reports of interviews carried out by programme officers with various people, such as the scholars themselves, members of academic institutions or others able to provide information necessary for decision-making; financial documents such as accounts and budgets; hand-written notes; telegrams; letters between the RF officers and scholars or members of American universities, very often seeking advice as to the intellectual and scholarly capacities of potential émigrés or inquiring about the possibility of offering

---

<sup>3</sup> Thomas B. Appleget, "The Foundation's Experience with Refugee Scholars", March 5, 1946, Record Group 1.1, Series 200, box 47, folder 545A.

permanent teaching posts in their institutions; printed documents such as formal invitations, programs, publications, and newspaper extracts; research projects and reports; and officers' diaries. Card indexes giving the status of RF employees and members were also accessed. These documents have been meticulously preserved and classified by the Foundation, making them an extremely rich source of information.

It was RF policy to keep extensive records of all daily activity and of decisions made, and these have been maintained in the archives. Records may be more or less detailed, depending on the officers, and contain information ranging from records of routine activities to the officers' feelings about the situation and the people with whom they were in contact. Several documents may refer to one and the same situation, and a very comprehensive understanding of the circumstances can be gleaned by bringing together different sources and by comparing accounts of a situation and comments between the various interlocutors.

Methodological questions about the use of archival material came to mind whilst consulting the documents. I was particularly interested to observe that their comprehensive nature and the easy accessibility of the information influenced my view of the situation which came to revolve around RF action, even though my primary preoccupation had been that of the role of the New School. I became involved in the workings and organisation of the foundation itself and very favourably disposed towards it. This led me to develop my research in directions previously unplanned in order to obtain knowledge of the general principles behind RF action and of the way in which these were applied to the question in hand: that of the rescue of endangered intellectuals from Europe. Another point of methodological interest: I came to the archives with very little knowledge of the Rockefeller Foundation and of the situation of the refugee scholars and was surprised to observe the way in which the total situation was reconstructed (by myself) on the basis of diverse elements disseminated throughout the documents. This raises questions about the development of

implicit understanding of situations which I will not develop here. Suffice it to say that knowledge of a situation comprises not only factual elements clearly stated, but a large quantity of contextual information which one learns and accepts without being aware of it having been transmitted. It would be interesting to further explore this process which has been shown to be characteristic of real life situations<sup>4</sup> with reference to archival material.

### ***Preliminary results***

The contents of the files consulted relate to three interlinked subject areas. The first concerns the individual refugee scholars. Nominal folders, which exist for each individual who received a grant, are the primary source of information. These folders include most of the types of documents described above. They are complemented by the officers' diaries, which provide a larger view of the situation as well as details about individuals, their situation, and the contacts established with them. The second subject area is that of the New School for Social Research. Several files are held on this institution, which is also mentioned in many other folders concerning RF policy and the refugee scholars. The correspondence between Johnson and the RF program officers, contained in various folders, is quite voluminous and very informative on policy and on the relations between the two institutions. Some private correspondence between officers bears witness to their reservations about the New School and as to the motivations of Johnson himself. An idea of the more general academic context is also obtained from these documents. The third subject area is that of the Rockefeller Foundation itself. The files on program and policy give details of the general principles upon which RF policy is founded and which govern the choices as to concrete action. The principles outlined could be observed at work each time decisions needed to be made concerning the attribution of funds.

---

<sup>4</sup> See Jean-François Laé, *Travailler au noir*, Paris, Métalié, 1989.

Within each of these subject areas, processes can be observed on several levels, ranging from the more general and global to the specific and individual. The former comprises the international situation, which includes the fascist dictatorship, its ideology and political effects, and the policies of individual nations concerning emigration and the attribution of visas. On an intermediary level are the various institutions which implement these policies or try to counteract their adverse effects. Lastly, these actions are, of course, carried out by individuals who are directly affected by the circumstances and the actions undertaken. On this last point, I was struck by the way in which documents generated for official purposes reveal personal choices and feelings which are an essential part of the way in which circumstances are lived. As with the subject areas, these levels are complementary. On reading the documents one becomes aware both of the place of the various actors in their respective institutions and of their feelings with regard to the political situation and the people with whom they are in contact. These different levels of involvement can be observed, for example, in documents relating to Alvin Johnson, whose action arises from convictions concerning democracy, be this on a larger political level or as a fundamental principle of education. He also becomes personally involved with many of the scholars invited to teach at the New School.<sup>5</sup> The documents relating to humanities program officer John Marshall show that he develops friendly relations with several of the people with whom he is in contact on a professional level. An example is that of Paul Schrecker, who received several grants-in-aid from the Rockefeller Foundation. Marshall and Schrecker become well acquainted and continue to meet when Schrecker ceases to be a grantee. Personal implication is also evident in the diary of Alexander Makinsky, who declares, on hearing that Ernst Honigman is to be liberated: "This is one of the happy days of my life."<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> A letter from AJ to JHW bears witness at once to Johnson's affection for the scholars and to the nature of the relationship with this member of the Foundation : October 18, 1943, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 53, Folder 628.

<sup>6</sup> RG 12.1, Officer's Diaries, Makinsky diary, Friday, Feb. 7, 1941.

## *The Refugee Scholars*

Thomas B. Appleget points out in his 1946 report<sup>7</sup> that the nature of RF aid to refugee scholars varied at different periods. He divides the help accorded into three stages which span two time periods. During the first period, which ranges from 1933 to 1939, a Special Research Aid Fund for Deposed Scholars was created to help intellectuals displaced “for political and racial reasons,” first from Germany and subsequently from other European countries.<sup>8</sup> Finance was granted to institutions in the United States and Europe who were prepared to offer temporary or permanent positions to deposed scholars. The grants were accorded for a length of time which varied from one to three years, and covered half or less of the total amount required to finance the post. Around 1934 the institutions were asked to give some assurance that the post offered could become permanent. An enquiry on the results of the action revealed that by 1939 the majority of scholars had found posts which were permanent (61%) or were likely to become so (21%). Most seemed well-adjusted to American life and academia. To a great extent individual personality seems to have been an important factor for successful integration, but larger contextual factors also played an important role. Although many universities were “glad to do [their] share in an emergency,”<sup>9</sup> some reservations were expressed concerning the action. It was often considered inappropriate to give priority to émigrés over Americans of similar ability. The danger of reaching a saturation point was sometimes evoked, and in some cases the émigrés had come to form an exclusive group rather than entering into university life. This was certainly the case as far as the Graduate Faculty was concerned; many years later, Arthur Vidich recorded

---

<sup>7</sup> Thomas B. Appleget, “The Foundation’s Experience with Refugee Scholars” (March 5, 1946), Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Record Group 1.1, Series 200, box 47, folder 545A.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas B. Appleget, “Report on the Special Research Aid Fund for Deposed Scholars”, 1933 – 1939, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Record Group 1.1, Series 717, Box 2, Folder 8, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.



his feeling of exclusion from the “departmental club”.<sup>10</sup> Even though the scholars were largely considered to have had a positive effect on American cultural life, the problems mentioned were exacerbated by the time the second wave of émigrés arrived, rendering more difficult the finding of permanent positions. Subsequent action – designated by Appleget as the second stage – involved the continuation of this program at a reduced rate between 1940 and 1945 under the title Aid for Deposed Scholars.

In 1940 the situation in Europe became more urgent as Nazi troops occupied the Netherlands, Scandinavia and France. The third stage of action was instigated as an answer to the dangers inherent in this situation. To save individual scholars, many of whom were already known to RF officers, the Emergency Program for European Scholars was brought into being. Under this plan, aid was extended via universities for the rescue of specified individuals. University professors could obtain non-quota visas if offered a teaching post; teaching experience was thus one of the elements taken into account during the selection process. The New School agreed to serve as a relay for a majority of the scholars who would be guaranteed posts on arrival and for whom permanent placement would subsequently be sought. An important role in recommending those in need of help was played by the Emergency Committee for Displaced Scholars.<sup>11</sup> This organisation also played a major, if rather unsuccessful, role in seeking universities prepared to offer permanent posts to scholars after their arrival in the United States.

In all, 52 scholars arrived in the United States under the Emergency Program, of whom 60% came to the New School. An important criterion for selection was that of intellectual distinction, which would seem to be an indication of the scholar’s potential “usefulness to

---

<sup>10</sup> Vidich Arthur, *With a Critical Eye, An Intellectual and his Times, 1922 – 2006*, unpublished manuscript, p. 399.

<sup>11</sup> I have consulted the archives of The Emergency Committee for Displaced Scholars, which are held at the New York Public Library.

this country”.<sup>12</sup> Invitations were thus extended to distinguished intellectuals who had established a solid reputation in their field; certain partners were reticent about taking on “younger men merely of promise”.<sup>13</sup> Though younger scholars might adapt more easily to American life, it was feared that they would be in competition with American scholars of the same age, many of whom did not as yet hold a university position.<sup>14</sup> As a result the “rescue” of individuals under 35 years of age was fairly exceptional. At the other end of the scale, scholars over 55 years of age were usually considered as ineligible, as it was considered unlikely that they would find a permanent placement in an American university after the initial period of two years served at the New School. Among the other factors restricting selection was the fact that the candidate was unlikely to obtain permission to leave Europe or that they did not seem to be in any particular danger.<sup>15</sup>

The grants, which covered salary and living expenses, were limited to a period of two years, after which it was assumed that the refugees would have moved on to other American institutions. It is explicitly stated in several documents that at the end of this period the various organisations involved would accept no further responsibility for the scholars, the New School reserving the right to keep on those who would continue to be useful to them. In practice, grants were frequently renewed if permanent employment had not been found.<sup>16</sup> No funds were advanced before visas had been obtained (these include exit and transit visas for Europe and entry visas for the United States). Of the many intellectuals in danger, only a small number were offered posts under this program and several of those selected either

---

<sup>12</sup> R.G. 1.1, Series 200, Box 52, Folder 621, September 27, 1940.

<sup>13</sup> Alain Gregg, Memorandum of interview with Bernard Flexner, October 8, 1940, R.G. 1, Series 200, Box 52, Folder 622.

<sup>14</sup> RG 1.1, Series 717, Box 12, Folder 12, Inter-office correspondence, February 27, 1936.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, R.G. 1.1, Series 200, Box 53, Folder 624, undated letter from Alvin Johnson to unidentified correspondents.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

chose to remain in Europe or, more commonly, were unable to fulfil the conditions necessary for departure.

Very few details on the individuals placed under the first plan are to be found in the RF archives, due to the fact that the majority of these scholars were already in the United States at the time they first received Rockefeller aid. The folders on scholars who came over as part of the third stage, many of them from France, with the assistance of the RF contain more extensive information and give an insight into the trials faced and indications as to the situation in Europe. Of the folders consulted, those on Paul Schrecker were the most extensive. The dates covered range from 1933 when Schrecker was dismissed from his post in Germany, until 1949, when the RF is last contacted on his account. Although my primary interest was in sociologists, it is worth giving a fairly lengthy description of these folders, which give an idea of the circumstances encountered by many of the refugee scholars.

When his dismissal<sup>17</sup> from the Prussian Academy of Sciences became effective in September 1933, Schrecker moved to Paris,<sup>18</sup> where he found employment under the auspices of the Ministre de l'Education Nationale at the Institut des d'Histoire des Sciences Techniques at the University of Paris. In 1935, a first grant was accorded by the Rockefeller Foundation to enable the Institut to pay his salary. The grant was renewed several times, a final grant being approved on the January 26, 1940.<sup>19</sup> In the meanwhile on January 12, 1939, Schrecker had been naturalised as a French citizen. After the occupation of France by the Nazi troops in 1940, he fled to Bordeaux before moving on to Toulouse. Great efforts were made to trace him and on August 6, 1940, Alvin Johnson confirmed that he would be offered

---

<sup>17</sup> The reason given for his dismissal on the form filled in for the Emergency Committee for Displaced Scholars (Box 113, Folder 42, Paul Schrecker) is "als Nichtarier", but Albert Einstein affirms in a letter of recommendation to Alvin Johnson dated August First 1940, that he "left his brilliant position at the Academy of Sciences in Berlin voluntarily in protest against the practices of the German authorities." RAC, Record Group 1.1, Series 200, Box 54, Folder 649.

<sup>18</sup> Curriculum Vitae: New York Public Library, Emergency Committee for Displaced Foreign Scholars, Box 113, Folder 42, Paul Schrecker.

<sup>19</sup> Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 1.1, Series 500R, Box 19, Folder 200.

a place at the New School. A grant from the Rockefeller Foundation was accorded beginning September 1, 1940.<sup>20</sup> In a letter written on September 16 Schrecker informed the RF foundation that he no longer received his salary from the University of Paris and that he and his family were destitute. Once confirmation arrived that the necessary visas had been obtained, travel expenses were advanced by the RF. Letters and telegrams exchanged between Schrecker and the Foundation bear witness of the complexity of the situation and to the difficulties encountered. As is the case here, the proceedings were often drawn out and complicated (delays in obtaining exit permits and visas constituted a major source of uncertainty) and in many cases result in failure. Communication difficulties due to the war often created confusion, adding to the anxiety experienced by the scholars, who sometimes failed to receive confirmation concerning the attribution of visas or the advance of travel costs which had been sent by Rockefeller officers.

Schrecker arrived in New York on December 31, 1941<sup>21</sup> and began teaching at the New School. He is listed in the 1942 bulletin of the Ecole Libre des Hautes Etudes and in the Graduate Faculty Catalogue for the academic year 1942-43.<sup>22</sup> In 1942, despite his own efforts and those of RF officer John Marshall, who had contacted a large number of university professors on his behalf,<sup>23</sup> he had no offers of posts from other universities and as yet no permanent teaching position at the New School. For this reason a grant-in-aid was awarded for a further period of two years. It was renewed in October 1944 for another year in order to enable him to finish a manuscript on American history, after which no additional financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation was given.<sup>24</sup> Despite widespread agreement on the value of Schrecker's contribution to philosophy and the interest expressed by several

---

<sup>20</sup> Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 1.1, Series 200, Box 54, Folder 649.

<sup>21</sup> Letter Paul Schrecker to Alexander Makinsky, January 2, 1941 and Alvin Johnson to T. B. Appleget, January 8, 1941, RC, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 54, Folder 649.

<sup>22</sup> The Graduate Faculty Bulletins are held in the archives at the New School.

<sup>23</sup> Rockefeller, Record Group 1.1, Series 200, Box 54, Folders 650 and 651.

<sup>24</sup> Rockefeller, Record Group 1.1, Series 200, Box 54, Folder 651.

universities during 1943 and 1944, no permanent place was found for him. Reasons evoked were the absence of funds and the difficulty of getting colleagues to agree to accept foreigners, and particularly Jews, on faculty.<sup>25</sup> In 1945 Schrecker was appointed at the New School as visiting professor, but he fell ill and needed hospitalization. In view of these exceptional circumstances a new grant-in-aid was awarded on February 1, 1946, in order to finance secretarial assistance for his study of American thought.<sup>26</sup> A post outside the New School was at last forthcoming in 1947 when Schrecker joined the staffs of Bryn Mawr, Haverford and Swarthmore as a visiting professor. In 1949 Haverford and Swarthmore converted this into a permanent appointment. Schrecker later transferred to the University of Pennsylvania, where he finished his career.

Individual folders also exist on sociologists such as Georges Gurvitch, Karl Ernst Winter, Arvid Brodersen and Gottfried Salomon (sometimes considered a political scientist), whose trajectory is similar to that of Schrecker. Many of the letters contained in the Gurvitch folders<sup>27</sup> show the difficulties encountered before immigration – fear of not being able to leave Europe - and after arrival when fears about the non-renewal of grants and the difficulties of establishing a reputation or meeting like-minded scholars are often overwhelming. During my research, I have often found the attitude of the refugee scholars cited as a factor which could hamper communication with intellectuals in the country of destination.<sup>28</sup>

The case of Arvid Brodersen<sup>29</sup> is rather different from the persons already mentioned. Brodersen was a Norwegian whose German wife supported the Nazi party and from whom he

---

<sup>25</sup> RC, RG 1.1, Box 54, Folder 651, James H. Hanford to John Marshall, Sept 14, 1943/July 18<sup>th</sup> 1944.

<sup>26</sup> RC, RG 1.1, Box 54, Folder 650, January 31, 1946.

<sup>27</sup> RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 50, Folders 585 and 586.

<sup>28</sup> See for example, AJ to RFE, February 7, 1943, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 50, Folder 586.

<sup>29</sup> R.G. 1.1, Series 200, Box 48, folder 558, 1940-41. RG 1.2, Box 539, Folder 4611, New School Brodersen, Arvid (USSR study) 1957-1959.

separated in 1938.<sup>30</sup> Brodersen, who had already spent a year in the States in 1935 studying labor relations and whose liberal views potentially endangered him under the Nazi regime, was invited to teach at the New School and awarded a grant-in-aid on December 10, 1940, but he was unable to leave Norway, and this grant was later cancelled.<sup>31</sup> He nevertheless survived the war and was integrated into the teaching staff of the New School in 1949. There are, of course, as many different histories as there are individuals, and documents relating to individual scholars are held by archives in universities and other institutions throughout the world.

### ***The New School for Social Research***

In 1940 Thomas Appleget affirmed that the New School “is acting on our behalf as a sort of combination refuge, warehouse and showroom for these academic personnel.” He added that, “It is not intended that the bulk of scholars settled temporarily at the New School will find permanent places there.”<sup>32</sup> The length of stay was variable and the scholars were placed in diverse teaching and research units. The first of these was the New School proper, which continued as a centre for adult education. Some of the refugees, such as Gottfried Salomon, were never incorporated into the other structures, whilst others, for example, Hans Speier and Nino Levi, gave classes in the adult education section as well as at the Graduate Faculty. The positions of Claude Levi-Strauss and Georges Gurvitch were similar: the two men taught both at the New School and the Ecole Libre des Hautes Etudes.

The Graduate Faculty was founded as a university department whose goal was to provide European-style teaching in the social sciences. Its aim was to uphold the principles of

---

<sup>30</sup> RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 53, Folder 623, Refugee Scholars – New School for Social Research January-February 1941, letter to Mr. Solon from TBK, January 20, 1941.

<sup>31</sup> R.G. 1.1, Series 200, Box 48, folder 559, 1942, AJ to TBK, January 15, 1942.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas B. Appleget to Dr Henry Wriston, September 18, 1940, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 52, Folder 261.

democracy and academic liberty (Graduate Faculty Bulletin, 1933-34).<sup>33</sup> “Academic liberty” referred as much to external conditions - the German scholars recruited were no longer free to express themselves in their home country - as to the internal functioning of the Faculty, which was to be entirely managed by the scholars themselves. It took the form of an interdisciplinary department which provided an opening for American students to the social sciences as they were conceived of and taught in Germany. As such, it built on the tradition in American sociology for students to spend some time in a European university. Over and above the humanitarian aims which certainly inspired its foundation, Johnson’s ambition was also to increase the prestige of the New School, which was largely financed by private donors and student tuition. Despite its initial success, the Graduate Faculty and most of its members did not become fully integrated into the American university system.

RF aid to the Graduate Faculty, in response to a request formulated by Alvin Johnson, was rapidly forthcoming. On September 11, 1933 the Foundation agreed to contribute \$3000 to cover half of Max Ascoli’s salary. Over the next seven years, a total of \$63,000 was contributed in the form of grants-in-aid towards the salaries of ten deposed scholars. Between 1940 and 1945 the RF contributed \$238,486.35 for the support of 33 refugee scholars as well as \$65,589 towards the central administration of the New School.<sup>34</sup>

Plans for the establishment of a French institution at the New School were first discussed in 1941. The aim of the Ecole Libre de Hautes Etudes, to be composed of French scholars already receiving Rockefeller support, was to provide classes in French; the publication of a French language review was also envisaged. Academic qualifications obtained by students would be valid in France. One of the advantages for the French scholars was that this institution would enable them to continue working and living in New York. Many of the

---

<sup>33</sup> The Graduate Faculty bulletins are held at the archives of the New School for Social Research.

<sup>34</sup> Report by Norma S. Thompson, June 3, 1947, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 338, Folder 4030.

opportunities which had already been made available to them involved moving far from the New York area to universities such as Tulane.

Johnson had a number of reservations concerning the establishment of the French University. Over and above the additional work entailed, he feared that it would encourage the formation of a segregated group and hinder the integration of the scholars into American universities.<sup>35</sup> He nevertheless supported the initiative, and the Ecole Libre des Hautes Etudes was inaugurated on February 14, 1942. The professors present constituted an impressive list of intellectuals, some already famous, others as yet unknown. Appreciations of the Ecole were varied: whilst for some it symbolised the triumph of intellectual freedom over Nazi barbarism, it was also criticised by some French scholars as being overly political. Appleget, who was present at the inaugural meeting, suggested that it “was more a political than academic manifestation”. As to the atmosphere, he described it as “tragically pathetic”. According to him the theme “France and French Culture must go on as the world cannot do without French thought and science” was much reiterated.<sup>36</sup> The initiative seems to have been successful, and a large range of courses in French were dispensed by several faculties and institutes until the end of WW II, at which point, unlike their German counterparts, a majority of the French scholars returned home. Of the few who remained in the United States most eventually moved on to other universities. Despite plans for its continued existence,<sup>37</sup> the link between the New School and the Ecole Libre was officially dissolved toward the end of 1946. The latter survived as an independent institution dispensing lectures on French culture.<sup>38</sup>

A third aspect of RF collaboration with the New School took the form of support for research projects carried out under the auspices of the Institute of World Affairs (IWA).

---

<sup>35</sup> Interview with John Marshall and D. H. Stevens September 19, 1941, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 54, Folder 633.

<sup>36</sup> Undated handwritten note, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 54, Folder 634.

<sup>37</sup> Interview John Marshall, Claude Levi-Strauss, May 17, 1945, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 53, Folder 630.

<sup>38</sup> Commemoration brochure, November 16, 1949, Archives of the New School for Social Research.



Suggestions concerning the founding of the IWA were formulated as early as 1941,<sup>39</sup> with the intention that it should be the research branch of the Graduate Faculty and would incorporate several projects already financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. In addition to the refugee scholars at the Graduate Faculty, the Institute would include American scholars, who would constitute half the work force. Research would be interdisciplinary; the IWA would thus constitute a platform for cooperation and integration between researchers of different nationalities and scientific disciplines. By associating students as research assistants, the Institute would also become an important aspect of their training. An official proposal formulated by Adolph Lowe, insisted on the importance of the future in the “mastering of world affairs”. He argued that: “Our country’s future welfare will depend on our knowledge and interpretation of the facts about foreign nations.”<sup>40</sup>

The inaugural meeting of the IWA took place on November 17, 1943.<sup>41</sup> Administrative costs for the first five years were to be covered by a donation from Doris Duke Cromwell.<sup>42</sup> Although an RF subsidy for the institution as a whole had not been forthcoming, several individual projects were financed. The first of these was a project coordinated by Hans Neisser on “The International Aspects of a Policy of Full Employment”, which received a \$7,500 grant-in-aid. Among the many other projects receiving RF subsidy and developed under the auspices of the IWA are: the study of “Totalitarian Communication in Wartime” directed by Hans Speier and Ernst Kris (as from 1941), “Religion in Germany Today” directed by Carl Mayer (as from 1953) and a large number of “War and Peace Studies” (involving a number of researchers, among them Max Ascoli, Arthur Feiler, Jakob Marschak, Hans Speier, Hans Staudinger, Frieda Wunderlich, begun in 1940 and continued under the

---

<sup>39</sup> Interview Thomas B. Kittredge avec Max Ascoli, February 4, 1941, memorandum on the reorganisation of the New School, Max Ascoli, March 10, 1941, both in RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 383, Folder 4526.

<sup>40</sup> Proposal for an Institute of World Affairs, Adolphe Lowe, June 23, 1943, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 382, Folder 4516.

<sup>41</sup> Inaugural pamphlet, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1943, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 383, Folder 4521.

<sup>42</sup> AJ to JHW, June 8, 1943, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 53, Folder 628.

IWA). Public reaction to the research was variable; letters can be found in the files which throw doubt on the objectivity of the European (mainly German) scholars and question the effect of their possible political and religious alliances.<sup>43</sup> Government agencies did not react in the same manner and certain scholars were offered employment in government agencies. This was the case of Hans Speier, who worked first (1942-44) for the Federal Communications Commission in Washington and later (1944-1947) for the Overseas Branch of the Office of War Information.

### ***The Rockefeller Organisation***

In an internal document dated May 11, 1942, in which he attempts to determine the modalities of a gradual withdrawal of RF aid, Joseph Willits summed up the objectives of the RF as he understood them in relation to refugee scholars: “the prime objective was to salvage for the world of scholarship anywhere the best of the refugee scholars. There may be a secondary specific purpose behind the program; namely, to broaden and make less provincial American scholarship by mixing in some of the best European scholars. At no time was the program intended as a relief program, although such considerations have undoubtedly had some weight in particular instances.”<sup>44</sup> That is to say that the principal criteria which motivated RF support for scholars who were victims of fascist regimes were scientific rather than humanitarian. This principle is clearly stated in a summary of proposed action drawn up on September 27, 1940: “The Foundation is not attempting to face up to the whole problem which Europe presents; it is simply trying to save a small part of what it considers to be the most productive and potentially useful section of the population. It is appropriate that the Foundation do this because it has worked with such men in Europe for many years, and also because the Foundation has a big stake in the preservation of international scholarship.

---

<sup>43</sup> RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 383, Folder 4528.

<sup>44</sup> JHW to RFE May 11, 1942, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 53, Folder 626.

Fortunately in the New School for Social Research a mechanism has been found for preserving the Foundation's usual anonymity."<sup>45</sup>

The conditions which determined scholar eligibility for RF grants were (1) outstanding scientific activity, (2) the existence of a welcoming institution with adequate facilities for research, and (3) the guarantee of a permanent position in an American institution. In general the grant should not cover more than half of the required salary. Measures were taken to avoid taking on scholars who would be difficult to place or who might be seen as being in competition with those already present in American universities. Additional constraints were imposed by the State Department, which preferred to give priority to those who would be useful to national defence and preferred not to admit people who were likely to become politically active, even if their views were in line with U.S. views. For this reason they did not look too favourably on the Free French University in Exile.<sup>46</sup>

Since limited resources were available for the rescue of scholars, the criteria for selection tended to be stringently applied, often in the face of great distress. Numerous letters between Rockefeller officers bear witness to the choices which had to be made and to decisions to reject candidates who could not be considered as outstanding or who were unlikely to obtain exit, transit or entry visas. RF policy is based on what I have called the "Noah's ark principle": the rescue of selected representatives of the sciences and the arts in Europe aims to prevent their extinction, or rather the extinction of their knowledge. This knowledge could be transmitted to students in America and, once the war ended, brought back to Europe.

Just before and during the war period, we can observe a modification in the general policy. Previously priority had been given to general support for university research in the social sciences which involved the attribution of finance to selected institutional centres. This

---

<sup>45</sup> European Refugee Program (proposed action sheet), September 27, 1940, RF, R.G. 1.1, Box 52, Folder 621.

<sup>46</sup> Officer's Diaries, Makinsky, *op. cit.*, 1942.

was being replaced by support for more clearly defined projects and concrete actions, priority – though not exclusivity – being given to the fields of international relations, economic security and public administration. Though this is not particularly relevant for the explanation of help extended to individuals, which was part of the emergency programs, it does help to explain refusals to give blanket support to the New School and other institutions. It also justifies the funding of research programs designed to understand the mechanisms of war and peace, such as those proposed by the IWA. The funding of research designed to illuminate the process of peace and of post-war reconstruction<sup>47</sup> is central to the RF objective of building a better world for tomorrow, an objective which is furthered by support given to promising young researchers. After the war, considerable reflection was devoted to the question of how best to intervene in Europe: what actions should be given priority, in which countries, how to go about this, etc.<sup>48</sup>

The extract from the “Proposed action sheet” cited at the beginning of this section also mentions the requirement of anonymity, which was an important principle behind RF action. Failure to respect this principle, when, for example, a questionnaire about displaced scholars included a reference to RF involvement,<sup>49</sup> or when Johnson referred in press communiqués to RF participation,<sup>50</sup> elicited an unfavourable reaction on the part of the RF officers. Asked by Hans Fried if he should acknowledge RF aid for the completion of his book *The Guilt of the German Army*, Joseph H. Willits replied negatively, advising him to acknowledge the New School for the project<sup>51</sup> the School had financed with funds it received from an RF grant.

---

<sup>47</sup> TBK to SMG, October 21, 1939, RG 1.1, Series 700, Box 15, Folder 115.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Officers’ Conference, Monday, April, 7, 1947, RG 1.1, Series 717, Box 2, Folder 15, RSM to selected officers, November 20, 1947, RG 1.1, Series 717, Box 7, Folder 37.

<sup>49</sup> RG 1.1, Series 717, Box 2, Folder 13.

<sup>50</sup> RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 52, Folder 622.

<sup>51</sup> RG 1.1, Series 200 S, Box 383, Folder 4530, May 1942.

Over and above financial participation, any understanding of the RF's involvement in the refugee scholar programs needs to take into account the officers' role. This could be observed both before the scholars left Europe and after their arrival in the United States.

Numerous documents disseminated throughout the collection enable us to reconstruct activities in Europe. Most of these stem documents from communication between officers situated on the two continents, between officers and the scholars, or exchanges between officers or scholars and other people concerned, notably Alvin Johnson. Officers' diaries are also an important source of information. Among the actions undertaken were the tracing of scholars potentially in need of help (in cooperation with the Emergency Committee), help with getting entry and transit visas, reserving hotels and booking boats out of Lisbon, and reassuring the refugees and keeping them informed as to the circumstances. Sometimes, in emergency situations, no clear guidelines could be established as to the best course of action. On these occasions, officers were asked to use their judgement and ingenuity.<sup>52</sup>

In the United States, officers played an active role in the search for permanent placements for the exiled scholars or in finding publishers interested in including their works in their collections. Many officers knew a number of individuals prominent in their fields and did not hesitate to contact them for help and advice. Thus Makinsky, on his return to the United States, visited several American cities in order to consult people who were either in contact with the refugee scholars or who might be able to help them or give advice on future actions. Among others, he met several members of the State department and sociologists such as Louis Wirth and Everett Hughes of the University of Chicago.<sup>53</sup> Another example is John Marshall, who addressed enquiries about the quality of Paul Schrecker's manuscript to several people in October 1944 in order to decide how to proceed.<sup>54</sup> Tours of American

---

<sup>52</sup> TBA to AM, April 24, 1941, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 53, Folder 624.

<sup>53</sup> Officer's diary, *op. cit.*, 1942.

<sup>54</sup> RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 54, Folder 651.

universities were organised by RF officers for refugees such as Paul Schrecker, Gottfried Salomon and Georges Gurvitch, to enable them to meet potential colleagues and employers.

Over and above the activities related to the war effort, a continued fundamental reflection on the nature and uses of the social sciences is the object of several exchanges between the RF officers making decisions on policy.<sup>55</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Collaboration between the Rockefeller Foundation and the New School (mainly via Alvin Johnson) was concluded in the 1950's. Though the two organisations shared the desire to save refugee scholars, some suspicion occasionally arose as to whether their immediate aims were compatible. As has been stated, the aim of the RF was essentially to preserve knowledge. Johnson too was interested in saving certain individuals in view of their academic excellence; indeed, he knew many of those first contacted, having worked with them previously on the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*.<sup>56</sup> But for him things were a little different: he was also motivated by a second interest, that of financing the New School and developing its potential. For this reason his choices seem sometimes to have been in conflict with RF policy. In several documents, whilst praising the action undertaken by Johnson, RF officers express suspicion that he is sometimes “not aggressively frank” with them.<sup>57</sup> Sources of concern revolve around the recruitment of scholars and the attribution of finance. As far as the first is concerned, Johnson was often suspected of trying to retain the best scholars at the New School instead of encouraging them to move on as stated in agreements with RF.<sup>58</sup> He is also occasionally suspected of arranging procedures so that scholars be assigned to the New

---

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, RG 3, Series 910, Box 1, Folder 4, Program and Policy 1937-1939.

<sup>56</sup> Johnson Alvin (1952), *Pioneer's Progress*, *op. cit.*, pp. 305 *et sequ.*

<sup>57</sup> Handwritten note by TBA on interoffice correspondence from DHS to TBA and JM, July 26, 1943, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 53, Folder 628.

<sup>58</sup> This factor is clearly stated by Makinsky in a letter to Appleget: October 24, 1941, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 53, Folder 624

School rather than to other academic institutions. In financial matters, it was sometimes felt that requests for support for projects (such as the IWA) were in fact disguised means of obtaining finances for the functioning of the New School. When confronted with this idea, Johnson admitted that the costs incurred by the University in Exile put a serious strain on the finances of the School and on Johnson himself, whose task it was to raise the necessary money.<sup>59</sup> While admiring his action, the concern formulated by the officers was that the Foundation perhaps took on long-term obligations which were out of line with policy and which may have engaged finances over and above the amounts allocated for the refugee programs.

Despite these differences of opinion, mutual respect was maintained between the two parties. In a letter to Appleget, in which he thanks him for a final grant-in-aid of \$2000, Johnson affirmed that: "Our association through the last years in the rescue and rehabilitation of scholars driven from their European posts has been one of the most inspiring episodes in my life." Appleget replied that he was proud to be associated with the project for the help of refugees: "It is an achievement which shines brightly in a dark world."<sup>60</sup>

As for the future of the scholars, some observers expressed concern about their assimilation into the American university system.<sup>61</sup> Whereas the majority of French scholars returned home at the end of the war, most of those of German and Austrian origin stayed in the United States. Some of them found positions at universities and other institutions in America, while others remained at the Graduate Faculty for the rest of their professional careers.

Apart from the information directly related to the situation, the consultation of the documents opens an interesting viewpoint on the development of the social sciences more

---

<sup>59</sup> JHW to TBA August 19, 1940, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 52, Folder 261.

<sup>60</sup> AJ to TBA February 14, 1944 and TBA to AJ February 18, 1940, RG 1.1, Series 200, Box 53, Folder 629.

<sup>61</sup> May 15, 1944, *Ibid.*

generally. This cannot be considered as a sort of organic process in which ideas exist in a vacuum and are somehow transformed over time. Their evolution is extremely dependent on other factors, such as world events and the actions of financing institutions, of which the RF is an example<sup>62</sup> and, of course, on the decisions of the individuals involved in these actions.

---

<sup>62</sup> Ludovic Tournès, among others, has shown very well the way in which policy can affect scientific institutions such as the London School of Economics and thus, more globally, influence the face of research. Loyer Emmanuelle et Tournès Ludovic, « Les échanges culturels Franco-Américains au XIX siècle : pour une histoire des circulations transnationales », in *L'histoire culturelle du contemporain*, Paris, Nouveau Monde éditions, 2005.