

# Refugees in Global Transit: Encounters, Knowledge, and Coping Strategies in a Disrupted World, 1930s–50s

Conference, February 13 & 14, 2025, Mumbai



Organized by Simone Lässig (German Historical Institute Washington), Sebastian Schwecke (Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies, Delhi), and Swen Steinberg (Queen's University, Kingston) in collaboration with Christoph K. Neumann (Orient Institute Istanbul), Maria Framke (University of Erfurt), and Jens Hanssen (Orient Institute Beirut)



Max Weber Forum  
FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

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# Programme

## **Thursday, February 13, 2025**

- 8:30 – 9:00 am      Registration / Coffee/Tea and cookies
- 9:00 – 9:30 am      **Welcome** address by Ute Frevert (President of the Max Weber Foundation)
- Introduction** by Simone Lässig (German Historical Institute Washington), Sebastian Schwecke (Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies, Delhi), and Swen Steinberg (Queen’s University, Kingston)
- 9:30 – 11:00 am      **Panel 1: Interactions and Illusions**
- Refugee Political Thought in Transit: The Interaction between Hindu Bengalis and Jewish Exiles in British Bengal, 1930s–40s  
Arnab Dutta (University of Groningen)
- End of Utopia: The Photographic Archive of a Disillusioned Refugee in Early Israel  
Julia Hauser (University of Kassel)
- Crossings of Faith: the Russian Orthodox Church and the Forced Migration of Russian Émigrés from China during the Cold War  
Karina Khasnulina (University of Leipzig)
- Moderator              Sebastian Schwecke (Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies, Delhi)
- 11:00 – 11:30 am      **Coffee Break**
- 11:30 – 1:00 pm      **Panel 2: Reimagination and Remembrance**
- Echoes Across Empires: Caribbean Refuge and the Reimagining of Holocaust Histories  
Rosa de Jong (University of Amsterdam)
- At Home in Transit: German–Jewish Refugees Remember Harbin, Manchuria, 1938–1949  
Susanne Hillman (San Diego State University)
- Out of the Camps: Hungarian Jewish Child Survivors between their postwar Swedish transit and their final destination  
Friederike Kind-Kovács (Hannah–Arendt-Institute at TU Dresden)

Moderator	Ute Frevert (President of the Max Weber Foundation)
1:00 – 2:00 pm	<b>Lunch Break</b>
2:00 – 3:30 pm	<p><b>Panel 3: Negotiating Precarity: German, Polish and Kazakh Refugees in colonial South Asia 1939-1950</b></p> <p>Humanitarianism and the Limits of Sovereignty: Polish Refugees in Kolhapur Pragya Kaul (University of Michigan, online)</p> <p>Humanitarianism in Action: Kazakh refugees in Bhopal Antara Datta (Royal Holloway, University of London)</p> <p>Barbed-Wire Humanitarianism? : The Internment of German Civilians in Second World War India (1939-1946) Suchintan Das (University of Oxford)</p>
Moderator	Maria Framke (University of Erfurt)
3:30 – 4:00 pm	<b>Coffee Break</b>
4:00 – 5:00 pm	<p><b>Panel 4: Refugees, Hosts and Settlers: The Levant from 1939 to 1951</b></p> <p>'Nothing to do but speculate about the future:' Jewish Refugees in the Beirut Quarantine, 1939 Mohamad El Chamaa (American University of Beirut)</p> <p>Civic Friendship, Hospitality and Repatriation in 1940s Palestine Jens Hanssen (Orient Institute, Beirut)</p>
Moderator:	Christoph K. Neumann (Orient Institute Istanbul)
5:00 – 6:00 pm	<b>Break</b>
6:00 – 7:15 pm	<p><b>Keynote: Atina Grossmann (Cooper Union, New York)</b> Introduction: Simone Lässig (German Historical Institute Washington)</p>
8:00 pm	Reception at the Residence of the Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Mumbai

**Friday, February 14, 2025**

9:00 – 10:30 am	<p><b>Panel 5: Shalom and Hello Bombay: German Refugees and Migrant Histories of Knowledge in an Indian Metropolis</b></p> <p>Ernest Shaffer’s discovery of India: Navigating networks and accumulating expertise in the life of a refugee Maria Framke (University of Erfurt)</p> <p>German Camera for an Islamicate Vision: Josef Wirsching, Kamal Amrohi, and the Making of Visual Affect in Bombay Cinema Razak Khan (University of Göttingen)</p> <p>“These guys don’t know anything”. Ambivalences from a German aristocratic labour emigrant in Bombay Jörg Zedler (University of Regensburg / LMU München)</p>
Moderator	Swen Steinberg (Queen’s University, Kingston)
10:30 – 11:00 am	<b>Coffee Break</b>
11:00 – 12:00 pm	<p><b>Panel 6: Internationalism and Anticolonialism between the Local and the Global</b></p> <p>“Global Transit” in a Colonized World: Internationalism in Colonial Bombay Ninad Pandit (The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art)</p> <p>Indian and Indonesian Anticolonialism in Transit: Wartime Colonial Subalterns in an Indian Ocean Anticolonial Moment, 1945–47 Naina Manjrekar (IIT Bombay)</p>
Moderator	Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka (Bielefeld University)
12:00 – 12:30 pm	<b>Final discussion</b> , moderated by Simone Lässig (German Historical Institute Washington), Sebastian Schwecke (Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies, Delhi), and Swen Steinberg (Queen’s University, Kingston)
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Lunch Break
3:00 – 6:00 pm	<b>Visit to the Jewish cemetery and other sites associated with the Mumbai Jewish community</b>
7:00 pm	Conference Dinner

**Event Website:**

<https://www.ghi-dc.org/events/event/date/refugees-in-global-transit-encounters-knowledge-and-coping-strategies-in-a-disrupted-world-1930s-50s>

**About In Global Transit:**

Website: <https://transit.hypotheses.org/>  
<https://www.ghi-dc.org/research/history-of-migration/in-global-transit>

**Photo Credit:** Polish refugee camp operated in 1943 by the Red Cross in Tehran, Iran, after the evacuation from the Soviet captivity in Siberia, *Source:* United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division