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Review: Wegner, Sonja 2013. *Zuflucht in einem fremden Land: Exil in Uruguay 1933-1945*. ISBN 978-3-86241-407-9, 376 pages, Paperback, Berlin: Assoziation A.

Riveting like a crime novel, sparkled with details that bring history to life, and academically excellent: *Zuflucht in einem fremden Land: Exil in Uruguay 1933-1945* (Refuge in a foreign country: Exile in Uruguay 1933-1945) by Sonja Wegner is a rare gem. Following the chronology of events, Wegner begins her account by describing the lives of Jews under the Nazi regime in Germany. Her depictions resemble those of an ethnographer: she uses thick descriptions and vivid details to showcase just how different lives, and circumstances were for those affected. By this token she dismantles myths, stereotypes and monolithic assumptions about Jews in this era in Germany, and she is able to exemplify how sheer luck helped some, while sheer misfortune turned into a lethal trap for others. Following this line through she is able to demonstrate by way of examples how families and individuals attempted to deal with the increasing marginalisation, and the escalating violence. Her particular focus on attempts of emigration, paper work, and bureaucratic hurdles that came with it are well rounded off by specific cases such as the one of the Hirschfeld family from Hamburg. As it happens, the mistress of the Uruguyan consul was a customer of the Hirschfeld apparel store, and it was her, who convinced the consul to grant emigration visas to the family, who subsequently went on to start a new life in Uruguay. The Hirschfelds were amongst the lucky ones.

To offer an in-depth depiction of their, and other new lives in Uruguay, Wegner uses the second part of her book to present a short history of the country, including the meddling of the NSDPA foreign organisation in domestic affairs, and subsequent effects on German-Uruguayan relationship. She also engages with the reactions of Uruguayans towards the incoming Jews, which were, interestingly, rather neutral. A country with no surviving native population means that every Uruguayan comes from a family of emigrants. This, and the strict laicistic ideology of the country made Uruguay a convenient emigration country, and none where Jews suffered from anti-Semitism. This scenario supported the development of Jewish life in Uruguay, which stands at the centre of the third part of the book. The organised Jewish community had and has its centre in Montevideo, the capital, where most Jews settled. While Wegner dedicates space to the Montevidean Jewish community, she goes on to exemplify life outside of the capital. Again, like in the first part of the book, she uses an ethno-historic approach to depict some individuals, and families in depth. Drawing on a total of 51 interviews with emigrants Wegner is able to offer valuable insights in highly complex issues such as the experiences of Germany under the Nazis, flight, starting a new life, potential remigration to Germany – and the painful issue of intergenerational transmission in general, and specifically how to convey German language, and culture to the children who were born in exile. At this point of the book, Wegner's talent for historical analysis, and her prime skills as an interviewer come to the forth: her interview partners trusted her, and entrusted her with issues that cut to their very core identities; some of which

remained torn, and painful. It is to her great credit how well she connects world events, and various levels of policy to individual life-worlds. These link up to the fourth and last part of the book: the Globke Affair and its repercussions in Uruguay, as well as the hunt of Nazi perpetrators by the original exiles, and their descendants.

Wegner wraps her account up by offering a comparative perspective on the immigration of Jews to Uruguay, and other countries. Uruguay offers some specifics to the emigrants, which made it a favourable location for the arrivals from Germany: its openness, and laicism, which goes hand in glove with low rates of anti-Semitism. Compared to other South American countries Uruguay was – mostly – stable, yet, like other countries of the region it lapsed into being a dictatorship for a while, and it saw its share of economic upheaval. The latter provided the main reason for the emigration of Jews from Uruguay, with the prime destinations Israel, and the United States. Yet, while her interview partners perceived Uruguay positive, they reported being torn, and a substantial amount stressed that they felt doubly moored culturally, and linguistically, a phenomenon that has been reported for Jews in other emigration countries too. Yet, the identities of their descendants are strongly geared at being Uruguayans and Jews, with their German heritage being less pronounced than in other emigration countries. Thus, while some of the descendants possess German citizenship, which is seen as a useful tool for travelling, it does not serve the same function as with Israeli Jews. And it here, where Wegner points at an under-researched area: the developments of contemporary Uruguayan Jews, their relationship to the native countries of their grandparents, Israel, and Uruguay. Hopefully, this research will be conducted by a scholar with a similar talent for historically based, detailed, and catchy analysis as Wegner, if Wegner will not do it herself.