

Jeffrey Herf: Chancellor Merkel in the summer of 2015 decided to allow about a million refugees from the Syrian civil war to come to Europe and Germany. And that was a very controversial decision. One of the issues that I have raised regarding it is that refugees from Syria will probably come with some very different emotions. One emotion will be a great deal of gratitude to Europe and to Germany for saving their lives when Bashar Al-Assad was trying to kill them. And they make come with the same gratitude that my father felt when he came to the United States in 1937 and escaped from Nazi, Germany, that this country saved his life. But people don't change overnight and if your father and your grandfather fought in wars against the state of Israel, and maybe your father or your grandfather died in the wars against the state of Israel, you might come with some hatred of the state of the Israel. And so the challenge for the Germans and the challenge for the Syrian refugees is the following: the Germans are going to have to say, "in this country because of our history we oppose anti-Semitism and we support the state of Israel as a matter of moral obligation. We may be wrong, there are people with other opinions but that's what this country is about because of our history. And now you have come to our country and you need to understand that that's part of the deal, that's part of the package of German citizenship. All the Germans are not angels, not everybody here is perfect, but that's one thing that our political establishment has agreed on. We will not support people who want to destroy the state of Israel. So you have come here and we welcome you but you need to understand that in this country, that's how we feel. And if you want to be a German citizen, then you have to reflect, as difficult as that might be, on why it is that your government for five or six decades was attacking a state that we support. So we don't want you to come here if you are going to bring the attitudes of the Al-Assad regime, the Baathists regime to Germany. And we think that you now understand with 300,000 to 400,000 people of your relatives and friends and fellow citizens who are dead because of this horrible regime in Damascus, you now understand what it was that was wrong about that regime for so many years."