



Anja Kruke. *Zwangsmigration und Vertreibung - Europa im 20. Jahrhundert.* Bonn: Verlag J.H.W. Dietz, 2006. 240 S. EUR 24.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-8012-0360-3.



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Reconciling German and European Victimhood

In March 2004, at the height of the public debate on the need for the integration of German victimhood in German cultural memory, the SPD-affiliated Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) invited historians and other scholars from eight countries to discuss the European dimension of forced migration in the twentieth century. This book, edited by FES's Anja Kruke, collects the contributions of scholars who participated in this conference. According to the editor, the purpose of the meeting was to look into the state of international research, as well as to discuss the question of a didactic implementation of this issue within a European framework. In addition, the conference planned to create a list of the various transnational initiatives that deal with ethnic cleansing. Judging from the collection of essays in this book, the main goal was foremost to identify the ways in which the remembrance of forced migration could be Europeanized. One major result of the conference, albeit quite obviously prepared beforehand, was the call to create a "Europäisches Netzwerk gegen Zwangsmigration und Vertreibung im 20. Jahrhundert." This network was heavily supported by Germany's Secretary of Culture and Media at the time, Christiane Weiss.

It quickly becomes obvious in the introduction that the project "Europäisches Netzwerk" is clearly intended to be an alternative to or even in competition with the ideas of Erika Steinbach and her Bund der Vertriebenen (BdV), which have promoted the establishment of a "Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen" on German soil. However, some of the voices in this collection, especially that of Krisztián Ungváry, are much closer to the positions of Steinbach and the BdV than one would expect, especially in terms of the controversial question concerning the potential location of a proposed center for documentation. One of the strengths of this volume is that it provides the reader with a variety of views on this issue, which continues to be highly contentious among historians, sociologists, and Germanists, as well as in the wider public.

The book is divided in two major parts. In the first part, six German historians, one Austrian historian, and one French historian weigh in on the question of how European remembrance could be created and promoted and what this activity would achieve. After Bernd Faulenbach's introductory discussion of the plan of the European network, it is appropriate that Karl Schlögel, with

his basic yet crucial deliberations on the nature of national remembrance, prefaces the subsequent contributions. Schl  gel points out that the discourse on flight and expulsion usually refers to national trauma; yet, he sees a great potential for the inclusion and integration of the experiences of other countries as well. After all, these events have always entailed the transgression of borders. Therefore, a national narrative of ethnic cleansing will always include a transnational component. More wishful than descriptive is his statement that revisionism is dead and so would not create a major obstacle to a transnational approach. Schl  gel would prefer a central documentation of the expulsion of Germans in a museum that would go beyond the mere reliance on several "lieux de memoire." Schl  gel argues that the remembrance of flight and expulsion should be concentrated under the auspices of the Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM) in Berlin. It should be noted that Schl  gel is not referring to the exhibition *Flucht, Vertreibung und Integration* at Bonn's Haus der Geschichte, which had not yet moved to the DHM when Schl  gel wrote his essay. This exhibition, however, is mentioned later on in Kruke's edition. Knowing of its success, it is fascinating to read here about how Hermann Sch  fer and the Haus der Geschichte prepared the exhibition through meticulous preliminary research. It is also interesting to read what considerations, in terms of museum pedagogy, were necessary to bring about this exhibition.

In a more theoretical way, Peter Haslinger discusses the question of a didactic implementation of the European contextualization of flight and expulsion. It is undisputed that achieving such a goal requires transnational and interdisciplinary academic work. He proposes a critical description of events and protagonists from multiple perspectives. Haslinger assumes that paying attention to subjective and individual experience can break up preoccupations with dominant narratives. He also argues that a focus on regions could show the multifaceted experience of a single particular area that might have seen the expulsion of various groups. Certainly, these are viable ideas that call for comparison and contextualization. Haslinger, however, stops short of presenting ideas on how to implement these views once they have been prepared by the academic world. Can this be done at schools, by the media, or at other venues and occasions? On one hand, his ideas are apparently directed at other European nations as well, and this focus makes his essay important, given that there were numerous non-Germans at the conference. On the other, his discussion is too theoretical to suggest a viable didactic implemen-

tation. Since the editor mentions this as one of the main goals of her publication, one hopes for more ideas. The essay collection could have been more comprehensive had it offered concrete suggestions about how to utilize the arguably most important medium: television. Certainly, history courses in schools are important as well, but television has a different potential, one that goes beyond what, for example, Guido Knopp offers the German public. Still, Wolfgang H  pken's painstaking contribution is fascinating. H  pken looked into East and West German history text books from recent decades and reports several phases in the discussion of flight and expulsion in these books. Even so, the representations offered in these books are unsatisfactory.

Austrian historian Heidemarie Uhl reminds readers of two points essential to the discourse. The first has become ubiquitous in many recent publications: the discourse on flight and expulsion has never been subject to a taboo in Germany or Austria.[1] This important statement takes some of the counterproductive polarization out of the discussion. In addition, sensitized by the blunt FP   stance of equating the Holocaust with the expulsion of Germans, Uhl rejects the idea of a "Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen" in Berlin, since she fears the relativization of German guilt through the comparison of victims. Regardless of whether she interprets Steinbach's intentions correctly, she involuntarily points to a problem in historical research on the Third Reich and its aftermath: the explosive potential of comparison and contextualization, which became evident during the *Historikerstreit*. Still, it is a viable methodological tool that historians have apparently reclaimed. One month before this essay by Uhl was published in the *S  ddeutsche Zeitung*, Ute Frevert called for a careful contextualization and comparison with respect to German victimhood.[2]

French historian Thomas Serrier discusses the question of a European framework from a perspective usually missing in the discourse on the flight and expulsion of Germans. Obviously, the main protagonists in the debate on ethnic cleansing after WWII usually come from central and eastern Europe. It is therefore highly interesting to read about a "French position." Although it is not completely clear whether this "position" prevails in academia, policy, or public opinion—or is just Serrier's position—it is evident that it includes some understanding of the German need to engage in a discourse of German victimhood. This "French position" would not, however, accept a "Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen" in Berlin. Fascinating and innovative in Serrier's essay is his comparison of the expulsions to occurrences in Algeria during

decolonization. Creating connections between the fate of the *pieds-noirs* or the Algerian paramilitaries fighting for the French and the flight and expulsions of Germans suggests an interesting new perspective, following which the integration of observations from postcolonial research might impact our understanding of the workings of ethnic cleansing.

The second part of Kruke's book introduces representations of forced migration in national historiography and cultural memory in the Baltic States, Poland, the Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Italy. In it the reader is confronted with a multitude of perspectives and ways of dealing with the past. Here it becomes most evident that the main challenge but also the major chance of the "Europ isches Netzwerk gegen Zwangsmigration und Vertreibung im 20. Jahrhundert" would be the reconciliation of various national narratives.

In an excellent article, Claudia Kraft describes how local and regional historical institutions in Poland deal with the flight and expulsion of Germans from regions like Masuria, Upper Silesia, and the former East Brandenburg. She describes vividly the continuing difficulty in approaching this issue, as exemplified by the City of Wroclaw's initial rejection of a "Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen." Finally, the focus of the volume shifts away from German suffering to that of other nations. Gert von Pistolkohrs elucidates the plight of the German and non-German inhabitants of the Baltic states who fled before the advancing Red Army. In another essay, Polish historian Pawel Machcewicz lays out his view, which is also the view of the influential IPN, the Polish National Institute for Remembrance. He clearly prefers the "Europ isches Netzwerk" over the "Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen" and argues that a European network would need to have several administrative locations to underscore its international character. In another article on Poland, Krzysztof Ruchniewicz explains how a Polish commission set out to revise Polish textbooks in schools and how this group has worked effectively with German historians since the 1970s. Ruchniewicz detects an increased presence of the issue of forced migration in Polish textbooks and most notably the presence of a discussion of the fate of both Poles and Germans.

In comparison with the "Europ isches Netzwerk" itself as it has actually emerged from 2003 until 2007, Czech voices are (fortunately) not absent in this book. The Czech government has so far officially declined to participate in this project, although a lively academic co-

operation is in evidence, stemming from bilateral agreements between Germany and the Czech Republic since the German-Czech Declaration of 1997. In his contribution, Tomas Kafka lists an abundance of projects and events funded by the Deutsch-Tschechischer Zukunftsfond. Furthermore, he provides the reader with insights into Czech sentiments, which might help us to understand the Czech withdrawal from the officially supported "Europ isches Netzwerk." Kafka laments the deterioration of *Vergangenheitsbew ltigung*, which has turned into an athletic competition with one of its toughest and most competitive disciplines the debate on the Benes Decrees. The article helps us to understand the official Czech view and does not necessarily provide a solely ideological evaluation of the need for a "Europ isches Netzwerk." In the following article, Detlef Brandes and Jiri Pesek present some of their research on expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia. Some of this material will support the work of the research group of Detlef Brandes of the University of D sseldorf, where Swiss, Czech, and German historians are preparing a source collection with the title *Migration und Transformation. Dokumente zu Verlauf und Wirkung von Vertreibung, Zwangsaussiedlung und Neubesiedlung in den B hmischen L ndern*, possibly to be published in 2007. Another example in this collection of impressive historical research is Agnes Thoth's essay on the way Hungary deals with expulsion.

For the reader who has dealt extensively with the question of German victimhood and the official commemoration of flight and expulsion, the second, more internationally oriented half of the book is definitely more invigorating and fascinating. One can detect a great potential for international cooperation here. Ev  Kov cs and Maria Cataruzza employ a language common to all scholars dealing with the issue of the evolution of cultural memory. This language clearly constitutes a crucial prerequisite for the possible development of a European master narrative, which also requires the careful dissolution of the dogmatic dichotomy of victim versus perpetrator. Kov cs's background in Jewish Studies is also highly conducive to an understanding that could help arbitrate the ubiquitous uneasiness involved in developing a European discourse. The various national approaches to the re-evaluation of what to include in the usually normative cultural memory provide an interesting opportunity to examine the possibility of a European framework for the discourse on expulsion. Becoming familiar with this wide array of perspectives and contexts is crucial for all participants.

At first, it is surprising that some of these essays re-

semble op-ed newspaper articles discussing the political implications of historical research when solid historical or sociological research is expected. Political scientist Miroslav Kus's very emotional contribution, for example, reveals a strong relief at finally being able to tell the story of the treatment of ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia. According to Kruke and Friedhelm Boll, the co-author of the introduction, this choice to include various perspectives and approaches was intentional. And indeed, at the end of the day the reader notices that the combination of research, essays, and commentary lays a valuable basis for a reappraisal of forced migration in a

European context. Due to its implications for the very identity of individuals, nations, and Europe, this discussion is not taking place in academia alone.

Notes

[1]. Bill Niven, ed. *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

[2]. Ute Frevert, "Geschichtsvergessenheit und Geschichtsversessenheit revisited. Der jüngste Erinnerungsboom in der Kritik," *Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (September 29, 2003): 6-11.

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