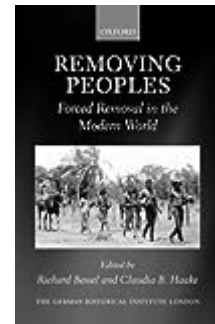


Richard Bessel, Claudia B. Haake. *Removing Peoples: Forced Removal in the Modern World.* London: Oxford University Press, 2009. 468 S. \$150.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-956195-7.



Reviewed by Pertti Aho

Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (November, 2010)

R. Bessel u.a. (Hrg.): *Removing Peoples*

This important and valuable volume, which comprises some of the contributions from a conference held at the University of York in the spring of 2006, sets out to provide broad, comparative perspectives on the study of forced migrations in the modern era, which is defined here as the period from roughly the early 19th century onwards. As the editors explain in their concise introduction, their intention is to bring together for concentrated, comparative study instances of forced population movements that have often been treated as distinct entities in the existing literature. The book aims to transcend the categories "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" that have dominated much of the relevant historiography. The two concepts have often been seen as two points on a continuum of forced migrations, distinguished primarily by whether or not "the intentional killing off part or all of an ethnic, religious or national group" was an integral part of the process. Norman M. Naimark, *Firestorm of Hatred. Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, MA 2001, p. 3. Here, the editors apply another, broader category, namely "forced removal", which they define loosely as "the [forced] displacement of people" which may take many forms, only one of which is their phys-

ical destruction" (p. 5). In their view, "forced removal" provides a framework for bringing together a wide variety of "practices that have previously been treated as distinct from one another" (p. 5), ranging from the mass expulsions associated with armed conflicts to the resettlements of native populations in various colonial settings and the less than voluntary departures of colonial elites from their areas of residence in the context of decolonization.

This is an ambitious agenda, which the volume pursues through seventeen chapters that cover a wide range of topics, both geographically and temporally, stretching from forced relocations of Native Americans in the early 19th century United States to anti-guerrilla military campaigns in the so-called Third World during the Cold War. Much about the volume works commendably well. A number of chapters stand out as particularly ambitious and broadly based analyses that provide precisely the kinds of fresh, comparative insights that the editors call for in the introduction. Donald Bloxham challenges the conventional framework for interpreting ethnic cleansing and genocide in twentieth century Europe.

Instead of focusing on the period of the two world wars in the continent's core areas, he presents the eastern crisis of 1875-8 in Ottoman lands as the start of a continuum of political violence that reached a conclusion of sorts at the end of the 1940s. Christian Gerlach, in turn, defies the Euro-centred thesis of the 1950-1990 period as a hiatus in processes of expulsion by analyzing the massive forced migrations that accompanied so-called anti-guerrilla warfare campaigns in various Third World settings throughout the Cold War. And Andrea Smith widens the scope of the volume further by examining the often rushed exits of million of members of former colonial elites from territories that acquired independence during decolonization as forced population removals of sorts, albeit ones whose victims still retained more agency than those of many other, even more violent and arbitrary kinds of forced migrations.

Such broad, comparative essays remain a minority within this volume, however. Most of the chapters are case studies of particular instances of forced population removal. The best of contributions are extremely useful, well-researched studies that provide an authoritative account of a particular forced migration while also keeping an eye on broader interpretative issues and debates. This is true of Ronald Grigory Suny's nuanced analysis of the evolution of the Armenian genocide, for example, and of Shane O'Rourke's reconstruction of the 1920 expulsion of Terek Cossacks, the first mass deportations in the history of the Soviet Union that served as something of a trial run for much bigger subsequent operations, as the author contends (p. 255). But some of the chapters do not go much beyond a detailed narrative of a particular forced migration. Some are also not new as such but repeat research findings that the authors have previously published elsewhere, typically in extended monograph form.

Questions could also be raised about the concept of

forced removal that underlines the book. Admittedly, it does allow a broad scope of coverage that is clearly one of this volume's strengths. But sometimes greater breadth can entail reduced precision. As explained above, forced removal is defined only in a rather expansive way in the introduction to the volume, and the various case studies included in the book are ultimately so far-ranging that one sometimes struggles to locate their common denominator. Does the federal relocation programme through which the United States government sought to induce Native Americans to move from reservations to major urban centres between the 1950s and the 1970s, for example, really have much in common with the massive expulsions that accompanied the end of the Second World War in Europe or the ending of British colonial rule on the Indian sub-continent, particularly from 1947 onwards? Arguably, greater differentiation within the rubric of forced removal would have been helpful. The chapter by Andrea Smith includes one possible way of making these kinds of distinctions. Drawing on a typology first introduced by Dirk Hoerder, she distinguishes between voluntary, coerced, and forced migrations as distinct points along an analytical continuum (pp. 412-413), and similar differentiation throughout the book might have increased the analytical precision of some of the individual contributions and of the volume as a whole.

Ultimately, however, this remains a timely and important book that will be relevant to many different fields of scholarship. Like most edited volumes, it presents a mix of different elements; a handful of conceptually ambitious interpretative essays sit alongside a higher number of specific case studies, and the latter types of contributions also vary widely in their approach and focus. It is to be hoped that this useful volume will help to fuel further research and thereby push the relevant historiography in new, innovative directions.

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Citation: Pertti Ahonen. Review of Bessel, Richard; Haake, Claudia B., *Removing Peoples: Forced Removal in the Modern World*. H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. November, 2010.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=31827>

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