

Population Displacement in Lithuania in the Twentieth Century. Experiences, Identities and Legacies (On the Boundary of Two Worlds. Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics, 43). Ed. by TOMAS BALKELIS and VIOLETA DAVOLIŪTĖ. Brill Rodopi. Leiden and Boston 2016. XIII, 263 S. ISBN 9789004314092.

This collection of articles consists of ten individual papers, which discuss different cases of forced demographical change in Lithuania during the first half of the 20th century, starting from the First World War and continuing until the 1960s. It is quite symbolic that the book appeared in the Brill/Rodopi series *On the Boundary of Two Worlds*, which is dedicated to the explorations of the Baltic states, their history, sociology, demography, culture and other aspects of this Central, East and North European borderland region. The “inbetweenness” metaphor is well suited to the main theme of the collection, as it illustrates a range of disasters that affected the life of the society throughout almost fifty years. Dramatic political changes, massive population losses, the appearance of new enemies and overlords occurred thanks to the conflicts between the “two worlds” that surrounded them. Thus, the history of population displacement in Lithuania can be seen as one of the paradigmatic examples from the wider “borderland” region that is East Central Europe.

The articles of the volume are arranged mostly following chronological and, to some extent, geographical order. The First World War and the early years of Lithuania’s independence are covered in the first part of the book, in the contributions written by Andrea Griffante, Tomas Balkelis and Klaus Richter. They look at three different modalities or manifestations of traumatic experience related to the displacement of the population: Lithuanian relief organisations, life of Lithuanian refugees in Russia during the war and the adaptation of people to the new geopolitical situation after the establishment of the Lithuanian state. The second part of the volume deals with a more specific geographical region – the Klaipėda or Memel district (Vasilijus Safronovas and Ruth Leiserowitz). Even though both texts focus on the same group of people – the Germans – Safronovas gives a more comprehensive overview of the history of the region during the interwar period, and until the 1950s; whereas Leiserowitz in a more essayistic manner primarily touches upon the personal experiences of the Klaipėda refugees (the so-called “Memelanders”) during and after the Second World War. The third part, the largest of the volume, consists of five articles written by Theodore R. Weeks, Vitalija Stavinskienė, Violeta Davoliūtė, Arūnas Streikus and Daiva Dapkutė. These texts collectively tackle different cases of population displacement during the Second World War: the Poles (Weeks and Stavinskienė), the Jews (Davoliūtė) and the Lithuanians (Streikus and Dapkutė). This part of the volume illustrates especially well the “inbetweenness” of Lithuania, as representatives of all

three nationalities were forcefully deported or fled the atrocities of war to the East or to the West. All the texts of the volume present new or little-known material for English-speaking audiences and collectively they brilliantly illustrate the “dark side” of the country’s history.

One of the main goals of the collection of the articles can be found in the introductory chapter:

“(…) by examining how transnational forces have shaped a particular territory and population, we hope to uncover the ‘entangled’ dimension of the history of population displacement that neither the ‘case study’ nor the ‘comparative approach’ is capable of disclosing. (...) The entangled histories approach adopted in this volume is focused on the investigation of interactions as opposed to making comparisons” (p. 8).

The so-called “entangled” dimension is both a strength and weakness of the approach, and the editors realise that. Even though officially distancing themselves from case studies and comparisons, the volume nonetheless relies heavily on the investigation of particular ethnic or national groups, stories of their forced migration. The adopted multi-layered dimension cannot be easily overcome by a collective of authors, each of whom addresses a specific topic in their own way. The presented stories are “entangled” geographically (they present different displacement cases from the same geographical region – Lithuania), but each paper comprises an individual story, which even though connected with the others, nonetheless appears as a separate text. This, by no means, should be seen as a deficiency: it is hard to imagine what other way could have been employed for the analysis of such a complex topic. Still, it is not difficult to understand that the geopolitical situation of Lithuania “between the two worlds” immanently presupposes the “entanglement” of its society and peoples, thus in one way or another, connecting all their histories. It would seem that this is self-evident and does not require a specific theoretical approach.

Perhaps a small remark should be made regarding certain incongruences of the thematic division of the articles. By focusing on the large-scale deportations, emigration and displacement during the two global conflicts, little information can be found about the interwar period (with the partial exception of Safronovas’ article). It is known that the rightist regimes (led by the Christian Democrats before the coup of 17 December 1926 and by the *Tautininkai* after it), which largely governed the state between the two world wars, practiced low-scale forced displacements of people who did not comply or criticised policies of the authorities. The disobedient were forcefully moved or uprooted from their home environment to some other part of the state, often with little means for survival. In the official parlance, this was called “deportation” (*deportacija*). They had to try to re-establish themselves in the new and strange environment. To some extent, this could be compared with the displacements and deportations discussed in the volume, although the Lithuanian authorities did it on a much smaller scale and mostly targeted specific individuals.

Another set of cases that could be connected with the topic of the “entangled” histories can be found outside of geographical Lithuania in the émigré communities. For example, the extradition of the Russian subjects from Great Britain back to Russia in 1917 and to Lithuania just after the end of the war almost completely destroyed the large and strong Scottish Lithuanian community.¹ In parallel, one could also look at the hundreds of refugees of Russian, Jewish, German, Polish and other origin, who were not from the country, but who fled Russia after the Bolshevik coup and the outbreak of the civil war. Many found temporary shelter or even settled in Lithuania. There is no doubt that this “reverse” displacement had an impact on the country and the society during the interwar period. It can also be presumed that many post-WW I refugees constituted a part of the late 1930s – mid-1940s deportee and refugee groups. Therefore, if to use the “entangled” approach in analysing the population displacement of the “in-between” region, one should understand the complexity of in/out migration and not only look at the arbitrary bordered territory called “Lithuania”. Again, these remarks should not be seen as critique of the current volume. They merely indicate the difficult process of definitions that the editors had to consider in selecting and putting together *Population Displacement in Lithuania in the Twentieth Century*.

One of the paradoxical results of the traumatic experiences of the hundreds and thousands of displaced peoples was, in the words of Balkelis and Davoliūtė, the ethnic homogenisation of the Lithuanian nation-state: “The multi-ethnic society of the early century was reshaped into the largely mono-ethnic one that forms the core of the nation-state today. We aim to demonstrate that population displacement was a recurring feature that made this transformation possible in the course of time. In our view, ‘displacement’ may be conceived as a valuable analytical tool that helps us to understand how a society and a modern state can be reconfigured by the forced movement of its people” (p. 7).

The mechanics of the ethnic homogenisation of one state through forced ethnic and social reconstruction is one of the threads that connects all the articles. Looking from a constructivist perspective, this can easily be seen as an excellent example of ethno-social engineering.

However, the foreign powers, which, depending on their ideologies, removed different parts of the society and thus, in effect, produced the predominantly Lithuanian-dominated country after the Second World War, also left deep psychological scars within the remaining population. When discussing the impact of wars and other related violence over the civilian population, psychologists Elaine Hanson and Gwen Vogel noted that

¹ MURDOCH RODGERS: The Anglo-Russian Military Convention and the Lithuanian Immigrant Community in Lanarkshire, Scotland, 1914–20, in: *Immigrants & Minorities* 1 (1982), No. 1, pp. 60-88.

“the effect of war on civilians involves multiple traumas over time. Before fleeing the war zone, civilians are victims of extreme violence and witness extreme acts of violence directed toward self and others. (...) Psychological trauma and disease have been overlooked or minimised, leading these issues to become part of the psyche of a society that extends into future generations”.²

As research has demonstrated, the waves of violence that swept through Lithuania during much of the 20th century left deep scars that are still manifest in present-day society.³ Extensive exposure to psychological and physical coercion, massive losses of the local population resulted in the appearance of perpetuating (self-)victimisation, depression and different forms of post-traumatic stress disorder, which, arguably, became partly embedded in the Lithuanian national psyche. Perhaps the same can be said about other East Central European countries that also exist “on the boundary of two worlds”.

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Esimene maailmasõda ja Eesti [Der Erste Weltkrieg und Estland]. Bd. 2 (*Eesti Ajalooarhiivi Toimetised* = *Acta et commentationes archivi historici Estoniae*, 24 [31]). Hrsg. von TÕNU TANNBERG. Rahvusarhiiv. Tartu 2016. 536 S. ISSN 14060760.

Der Umstand, dass seit dem Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges hundert Jahre vergangen sind, hat auch in Estland dazu geführt, dass über die Bedeutung dieses Krieges wieder nachgedacht wird. In der Reihe der wissenschaftlichen Abhandlungen des Estnischen Historischen Archivs (*Eesti Ajalooarhiivi Toimetised*) sind zwei umfangreiche Sammelbände erschienen, deren

² ELAINE HANSON, GWEN VOGEL: *The Impact of War on Civilians*, in: *Trauma Counseling. Theories and Interventions*, ed. by LISA L. LEVERS, New York 2012, pp. 412-433, here pp. 412-413.

³ See, for example, different cases presented in *The Psychology of Extreme Traumatization. The Aftermath of Political Repression*, ed. by DANUTĖ GAILIENĖ, Vilnius 2005.