

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, 1570-7121; volume 43*), edited by Tomas Balkelis and Violeta Davoliūtė, Leiden, Boston, Brill/Rodopi, 2016, €99.00, 263 pp., ISBN 9789004314092 (hardback), 9789004314108 (e-book)

This edited volume on population displacement in 20th-century Lithuania consists of three parts and ten chapters. Two of the parts are demarcated temporally and one spatially: part I focuses on population displacement during World War One (WWI), part II on population displacement in the Klaipėda region, and part III on population displacement during World War Two (WWII) and its aftermath. Thereafter, some of the chapters are demarcated ethnically, such as Vitalija Stravinskienė's chapter on the repatriation of Poles from Lithuania during WWII, while others territorially, such as Theodore R. Weeks' chapter on repopulating Vilnius in the 1940s. This mix of spatio-temporal and ethno-territorial demarcations of the object of study reveals the difficulty of containing the movement of people within political and analytical boundaries. This is explicitly recognized by the editors of the volume in the introduction (p. 4). Yet, despite the elusive contours of the object of study, the editors claim that the parts and chapters of the book tell a story about how "a single society [...] was continually moulded by the movement of its population" (p. 5). Perhaps it would have been more precise to say that the volume shows the overlapping and conflicting attempts by a variety of 20th-century political actors to sort out the relationship between ethnicity and territory in relation to what is the current-day Lithuanian nation-state.

In part I, Andrea Griffante's chapter shows how during WWI Lithuanian refugee relief associations created relations of dependence between refugees and the associations as part of an emerging ethnic bureaucracy that preceded the establishment of the Lithuanian state. The chapter entails some great empirical detail—for example, it shows how extra layers of butter helped to make the refugees Lithuanian. It also illuminates tensions between the clergy and intellectuals in the formation of the Lithuanian bureaucracy. Tomas Balkelis' chapter continues the discussion of competing political orientations of those involved in the simultaneously ongoing refugee relief and nation-building efforts during WWI, but pushes further by inviting us to consider the moral dimensions of these efforts. Balkelis cites a teacher's letter that beautifully illustrates the moralizing rhetoric of relief workers-cum-nation builders (pp. 53–54). Nevertheless, I would have liked to see a more thorough discussion of the precise contours of the nation as a moral community that is emerging through the internally divided relief efforts. What are its underlying moral

principles, if any? Moreover, how do the competing political orientations that Balkelis identifies—imperial, nationalist, and socialist—overlap with competing moral imperatives? The concluding chapter of part I by Klaus Richter analyses population displacement caused by the rebordering of the newly formed Lithuanian state. It is the only chapter that focuses on the economic implications of the political chaos of rebordering for the residents of the borderlands.

Part II shifts focus from time to space and addresses population displacement in the Klaipėda region from 1919 to 1960. Vasilijus Safronovas argues that the self-identification of a significant number of residents of the Klaipėda region as Memellanders in the interwar years should be thought of as “situational” (p. 94)—namely, people navigated the competing German and Soviet citizenship regimes strategically in order to preserve their relationship to place. Ruth Leiserowitz provides another version of this story by focusing on how population movement amounted to ethnic homogenization of the Klaipėda region.

The theme of ethnic homogenization continues in part III that focuses on population displacement during and after WWII. For example, Theodore R. Weeks describes how Vilnius was emptied of its Polish and Jewish residents. However, contrary to the prevailing assumptions that it was subsequently Russified, Weeks argues that Soviet powers wanted Vilnius to be Soviet and Lithuanian (p. 152). Vitalija Stravinskienė analyses the repatriation of Poles from Lithuania from 1944 to 1947. She treats it as one instance of a phenomenon that was particularly common in Central and Eastern Europe. Violeta Davoliūtė’s chapter is one of the best in the book, connecting empirical work with theoretical reflections about the entangled histories and memories of the Gulag and the Holocaust. It is based on interviews with Jewish survivors of the Gulag and shows fascinating and gruesome similarities but also important differences between the narratives of Jewish and Lithuanian survivors. For example, Jewish longing for Lithuania as the left-behind homeland is severely undermined by the discovery of what happened to family members who had stayed behind. For many, Lithuania is thus lost as a homeland, and they move onward to Israel or the United States. Part III concludes with Arūnas Streikus’ chapter on religious practices among deportees and in their depopulated homelands, and Daiva Dapkutė’s chapter on the formation of Lithuanian diaspora in the West and its sense of mission with regard to restoring the Lithuanian state.

The breadth of scholarship on population movement and the formation of the Lithuanian nation and state is indeed impressive. This is partly due to the fact that some episodes of population displacement, such as Soviet deportations, have been particularly formative of the post-Soviet Lithuanian national narrative. As a result, there is a considerable amount of historical and popular literature on Soviet deportations not only in Lithuania but across the Baltics. Much of it is written in the spirit of counter-history, that is, as an alternative to the “official” Soviet version of history. But the volume impresses precisely by moving beyond the common focus on forced population movement during the Soviet period and taking a *longue durée* perspective that includes population movement during the initial stages of the Lithuanian nation-state formation at the beginning of the 20th century.

In the current historical moment, the writing of Lithuanian counter-history via narratives of deportation and the concern with population movement during earlier moments of nation-building encounter a world that is very interested in population movement and displacement. To propel Lithuanian scholarship and scholarship on Lithuania into the international limelight, the editors begin their introduction by saying that the volume contributes to “the rapidly growing field of ‘refugee studies,’ ‘forced migrations’ or ‘population displacement’” (p. 1). But it is precisely because the volume attempts to connect Lithuania-centered scholarship with broader analytical and political concerns that the chapters would benefit from making more explicit connections between their empirical material and related work on Eastern Europe, as well as on migration and population displacement elsewhere in the world. Quite a few of the chapters remain too inward focused, relying mostly on Lithuanian-language sources. At the same time, the introduction misses the opportunity to forcefully trace the arch of the specificity of the story that emerges through the diverse and divergent chapters. If the volume aims to tell a story of a “single society moulded by population movement,” then what are the most definitive tensions of these processes from a *longue durée* perspective? Moreover, what can the story of this “single society” contribute to our understanding of movement and displacement of people beyond Lithuania? Can it, for example, provide new perspectives on population displacement in Central and Eastern Europe in the 20th century?

Finally, insofar as this is a story about the making and unmaking of the Lithuanian nation and the state through population movement, the volume would have benefited from a conclusion or an epilogue that reiterates the volume’s main contributions as well as reflects on the contours and

implications of the ongoing population movement out of Lithuania, one that is allegedly occurring in conditions of freedom.

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