

Destination Elsewhere: Displaced Persons and Their Quest to Leave Postwar Europe

By Ruth Balint. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021. Pp. xiii + 190. Cloth \$44.95. ISBN: 978-1501760211.

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As the Second World War ended, the sheer breadth of population displacement was staggering: 60 million worldwide, about one-third of those on German soil. For economic, political, and demographic reasons, an immediate aim of the Allies was to repatriate all those displaced by this brutal conflict, to homogenize populations within countries in Europe as much as possible. Ruth Balint's aim is a ground-up approach: to tell the individual stories of those who refused repatriation, set within the complex and often contradictory postwar world. She does so by closely examining the reasons they rejected return to their countries of origin, their creation of narratives to negotiate the existing system to achieve their aims, and the myriad ways in which this "last million" of unrepatriable displaced persons (DPs) forced the international community to act. This is a holistic examination of DPs in terms of nationality and ethnicity, gender, age, and health, moving scholarship on refugees forward to an intersectional examination of how all these factors combined to have an impact on their ability to emigrate as well as how immigrant nations saw DPs and responded to them. Therefore, it provides compelling evidence of how the system constructed then continues to impact current and future refugees.

Temporally, Balint's work focuses on 1947-1952, the years of operation for the International Refugee Organization (IRO), but it also harkens back to the interwar period, demonstrating how DPs often had experienced a longer period of uprootedness. It weaves together multiple strands of these postwar years: developing Cold War tensions, screening attempts to find Nazis and their collaborators, and the scramble by countries overseas to choose DPs to fill the labor gaps at home. She also delves into the world of denunciations, showing how DPs – because of their experiences during the war – knew who had done what, to whom, where, and when, and how they wielded this power after the war. Since these DPs would not return to their countries of origin and most did not want to stay in Germany, this is a transnational story, one that moves from individual and family stories to the larger, international picture. The author showcases how Australia recruited DPs and how the DPs envisioned and experienced Australia, often seen by them as a last resort. She also incorporates Europeans stranded by war in other regions of the world, especially Shanghai, broadening her geographic scope. Her work, echoing current scholarship, explains how this situation shaped the post-1945 definition of refugee, not only as one rooted in individual rather than group persecution but also as one *vis-à-vis* postwar (communist) rather than wartime (fascist) oppression. The distinctions made between economic migrants (less worthy) and those facing persecution (more worthy) defined the life paths for hundreds of thousands.

Among all the topics that Balint's work illuminates, two really advance scholarly understanding: how DPs purposefully crafted life histories to increase their emigration opportunities and mask their Soviet roots, and how women and children fared within a system that privileged the able-bodied, keeping families intact (unless a member had a disability), and anticommunists. Balint's close reading of application forms to the IRO and the official notes and decisions about individual DPs and their families shows how DPs massaged the truth, leaving out potential red flags that may have impeded emigration opportunities and resulted in loss of IRO assistance, and how members of the IRO review board evaluated

and called these narratives into question. Over time, DPs' personal stories reflected the values of the world they wanted to move to – one that saw them as worthy and as potentially useful citizens.

This is also a story deeply informed by both gender and age, aspects of DP experiences that scholars have addressed less often. Balint investigates how the status of women (single, married, widowed, divorced) dictated their emigration opportunities. Immigration policies categorized women according to their male protector, either their husbands or fathers. She demonstrates how this echoed the Allied determination to reunite families in order to stabilize postwar Europe. While refugee classification had moved from minority groups to individuals, as Balint astutely proves through many specific cases, this system considered women and children alike as dependents, under an individual male. If the oldest male relative had collaborated with the Nazis, then all women and children tied to him were also ineligible for emigration assisted by the IRO. If a German woman married a DP, she became eligible for IRO assistance and resettlement. Conversely, if a female DP married a German or a collaborator, she lost her IRO eligibility. In addition, when IRO review board members heard and read stories of male political agency, specifically anticommunism, they rewarded this, whereas with female DPs, this raised their suspicions, often classifying the women as opportunists. Unwed mothers did not fare well within this world and were often viewed with disdain. For unaccompanied children, postwar realities subsumed their “best interests.” Even in cases where the IRO had located biological parents, it allowed the migration of children overseas, often as “rescue efforts.” And yet, as Balint painstakingly evidences through multiple stories, for those with disabled children and/or older or infirm relatives, the IRO urged the able-bodied to leave the others behind, a pointed departure from the emphasis on family reunification.

This work rests on the intimate stories of DPs and those who offered them assistance. It draws on a vast array of archival sources from five countries (Australia, France, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States), a necessity in transnational scholarship. Balint's work is also constantly in dialogue with key monographs and articles, and she draws upon numerous films made about DPs, to illustrate how contemporaries imagined and portrayed their lives. The strengths of this slim book all stem from its methodology: a bottom-up approach to understanding the decisions and lives of refugees within a system designed for many purposes: European stability, anticommunism, ableism, and patriarchy.

doi:10.1017/S0008938923000171

Verfassungswidrig! Das KPD-Verbot im Kalten Bürgerkrieg

By Josef Foschepoth. Second edition. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021. Pp. 494. Hardback €50.00. ISBN: 978-3525311288.

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The trial to outlaw the Communist Party (KPD) in the early 1950s was a high point of the early Cold War era in West Germany. In August 1956, the Constitutional Court formally declared the party illegal. This decision did not have a large impact on the political landscape as by the mid-1950s the KPD had lost most of its political influence and communist activism was already drastically curtailed by a series of laws and decrees. However, the