

Migration History (Berlin 26.-28.10.2000)

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Bericht von: Pertti Ahonen (Sheffield University), Phil Triadafilopoulos (New School for Social Research, New York)

Assimilation - Diasporization - Representation

Historical Perspectives on Immigrants and Host Societies in Postwar Europe
Humboldt University, Berlin, October 26-28, 2000

This report summarizes the proceedings of a three-day workshop on post-1945 European migration history organized by the Working Group on European Migration History, in cooperation with the Research Group on the Comparison of Societies (Forschergruppe Gesellschaftsvergleich) and the Chair for Demography (Bevoelkerungswissenschaft) at Humboldt University. The workshop was generously sponsored by the Hertie Foundation, the Bundeszentrale fuer politische Bildung, Aussenstelle Berlin, the Forschergruppe Gesellschaftsvergleich, and Siemens Berlin. Workshop panels and roundtable discussions were held in the historic Main Building (Hauptgebäude) of Humboldt University, in Berlin. The workshop featured panels and presentations reflecting a variety of research interests, methodological approaches, and theoretical predilections. As a whole, the various contributions challenged much of the received wisdom in the field and indicated new directions for future research.

The workshop's first session examined post-1945 migratory movements and their determinants. Phil Triadafilopoulos' presentation compared the causes and consequences of compulsory population transfers, using the 1923 Greek-Turkish exchange of populations and the 1945 transfer of ethnic Germans as case studies. Triadafilopoulos emphasized the various factors that account for 'internationally sanctioned' forced population movements and concluded by noting that the two cases taken up in his paper cautioned against the

implementation of 'engineered ethnic unmixing' in the future. Catalin Turliuc discussed Jewish emigration from Romania between 1945-1965. Turliuc noted that a combination of political and economic factors propelled the flight of Jews from Romania to Israel during this period. The regulation of 'exit' by Romania's post-WWII communist regime was among the most important factors in structuring this migration. In the session's third presentation, Hill Kulu compared post-1945 migration in Western Europe and Estonia. Kulu noted that, like Western European countries, Estonia became an immigration area due to labor requirements generated by post-war economic reconstruction and expansion. Important differences in the two cases were also highlighted, the most important of which was Estonia's place in the former Soviet Union. This fact is critical in understanding the nature of post-1945 migration patterns in Estonia. Taken together, the three papers highlighted the intersection of political, economic, and country-specific factors that influenced the development of European migration movements in the post-1945 era. The concepts of identity and representation served as organizing themes for the workshop's second and third sessions. Presentations combined detailed historical research with theoretically informed considerations of identity and its determinants. This merging of more 'traditional' historical methods and 'state-of-the-art' theorizing on identity was among the highpoints of the workshop.

Volodymyr Kulyk examined the shaping of Ukrainian Displaced Persons' identities in Germany and Austria from 1945-1950. Kulyk's research involved a myriad of sources including a surprising number of newspapers written and printed by displaced Ukrainians in German and Austrian camps. Angelika Eder's ambitious study of Polish immigrants in Hamburg revealed the benefits of a diachronic study of a particular group in a specific context. Eder's presentation revealed the complex nature of this particular migrant group and the utility of combining ethnographic methods with historical analysis in making sense of this complexity. Similarly, Andreea Klimt and Isa Blumi's presentations shed much needed light on the lives of Portuguese

se and Albanian migrants in Western Europe while also reflecting critically on the utility of concepts such as 'diaspora', 'homeland', and 'national identity'. Judith Fai-Podlipnik's presentation on Magyar expatriates in Europe and North America exposed the degree to which an otherwise cohesive 'ethno-national' group can be fractured by ideological and political differences.

Laure Teulières presentation took up the difficult question of memory in France's immigration history. Teulières elegant and probing discussion exposed the tension inherent in 'remembering' the immigrant histories of particular groups in a country still influenced by a strong republican legacy that seeks to minimize 'difference'. Pertti Ahonen's presentation focussed on the public representation of expellees and the expulsions in West Germany between the 1940s and the 1970s, with a particular emphasis on how these representations affected the expellees' integration into West Germany's political and social structures. Ahonen reminded us of how important the 'expellee problem' was for West Germany's post-war political development. The presentations that constituted the workshop's fourth session, entitled „Labor Migration and Incorporation,” challenged some of the key arguments and assumptions of the existing literature on post-war labour migrations, including the periodization typically applied to the migrations and their social consequences. The prevailing wisdom holds that the presence of guest workers in countries such as West Germany did not become a widely discussed social problem until the early 1970s, at which point an economic downturn unleashed a wave of public agonizing about the seemingly permanent presence of the foreign workers and caused growing labor unrest even among the previously quiescent guest workers.

However, as Anne von Oswald, Karen Schoenwaelder and Barbara Sonnenberger convincingly argued, these assumptions need to be re-examined. Public discussions about the long-term implications of post-war labor migration in Western Europe became noticeable already in the 1960s, well before the economic crises of the early 1970s, and so did labor unrest among the guest workers. Another ma-

nor oversight in the existing literature has been the tendency to ignore the diversity of the incoming labor migrants, particularly in gender terms. As several papers, including those by Eleanore Kofman, Umut Erel and Esra Erdem, made clear, the old stereotype of the typical guest worker as either a single young male or a married man whose wife was confined to economic inactivity in the domestic sphere simply does not hold up. Gender roles in many guest worker families were in fact much more complex than previously acknowledged, and considerable numbers of women were actively engaged in the migrant labor force from an early stage. The role of women in the postwar labor migrations therefore requires much closer and more sophisticated study than it has so far received. Overall, the various contributions thus brought forward a variety of new challenges to the established understanding of the dynamics of post-war labor migration, which future scholarship will have to tackle head-on. Similar challenges were also evident in two further sessions that focused on a related problem, the nature of European political responses to the post-war migrations, an issue addressed by several participants, including Damir Skenderovic, Hallvard Tjelmeland and Matthias Beer.

Contrary to widespread belief, the rise of fearful, xenophobic reactions to foreign immigrants in post-war Europe does not correlate causally with either major economic downturns or particularly large levels of immigration. The key determinant of political action appears instead to have been a popular perception of threat and crisis, typically fanned and exploited by opportunistic politicians and media elites. Accordingly, in Switzerland anti-immigration political forces scored striking successes as early as 1970/1971, at a time of rapid economic growth, and in Norway, in similar economic conditions and around the same time, the arrival of a few hundred Pakistani immigrants was enough to provoke panicky public discussions that soon induced the government to impose tight restrictions on further immigration. Far from being rooted in objective realities, political responses to immigration have thus been largely shaped by shifting, perceived exigencies of the moment, although certain longer-term

continuities have also been in evidence, particularly in the rhetoric of the political right, which in Switzerland, for example, has employed the same kinds of racist terms and concepts through most of the twentieth century. A special session organized in the form of a panel discussion moved beyond specific problems in post-war migration in Europe and sought to analyze the field of migration studies as a whole, identifying methodological and political challenges for future work in this area. The centrality of gender as an analytical tool was stressed again in this context, as was the importance of comparative studies and perspectives. One of the presentations and much of the discussion in fact moved beyond the geographical confines of Europe, emphasizing the need to integrate migrations and their various consequences fully into the global history of the twentieth century. This project of bringing one of the central developments of the twentieth century to its rightful place would obviously serve scholarly purposes, but it could also have beneficial political consequences. As Rainer Ohliger pointed out in his contribution, the incorporation of the experiences of migrants into the various national narratives that still dominate education and public discussions in most countries, in Europe and beyond, could work as an instrument of inclusion, giving a stronger voice to groups that are all too often left to languish on the margins of national experience.

The workshop also featured a presentation by Patrik Veglian on *Les Etrangers en France*, a guide to public and private archival sources dealing with immigration to France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, produced and published by the French NGO Génériques (<http://www.generiques.org>). Following Mr. Veglian's presentation, workshop participants discussed the possibility of similar publications for other immigration countries, such as Germany. A consensus emerged regarding the importance of such projects and the need to encourage their production and publication in the future. The workshop showcased the utility of historically focussed research methods in making better sense of Europe's post-1945 immigration experience. Participants learned from each other, challen-

ged one another's assumptions, and established important scholarly and personal contacts. It was, in short, a successful meeting on many levels, and the publication of selected contributions in the near future will undoubtedly do much to promote fruitful debate in the field of migration studies as a whole.

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