



Sabine Voßkamp. *Katholische Kirche und Vertriebene in Westdeutschland: Integration, Identität und ostpolitischer Diskurs 1945 bis 1972.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 2007. 422 S. (broschiert), ISBN 978-3-17-019967-5.

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S. Voßkamp: *Katholische Kirche und Vertriebene*

Voßkamp's ambitious and comprehensive monograph explores the oft told and oft reworked history of the expellees from the particular perspective of the Catholic expellees and their organisations, focusing on integration, identity and Ostpolitik discourse. Within these main themes, her work covers a wide range of issues, taking in political, religious, societal and cultural perspectives. She investigates the relationship between the Church, politics, and Catholic assimilation and pluralisation processes in the post-war period, and, more widely, the problem of the integration of groups into larger systems and German constructions of identity. Voßkamp's central question is what role did the Catholic Church play in the integration process of the 5.4 million Catholic refugees and expellees into West German society, and in answering it, covers a wide range of issues, from the initial practical help offered by welfare organisations, such as the Caritasverband, to the intellectual response of the Church elite to the expulsion and integration issue and relationships with Poland.

She begins by looking at the history of the Catholics in the eastern territories and the areas of German settlement in south-eastern Europe. She points out that the Catholics in the former eastern territories cannot be looked at as a purely homogenous group (p. 25) and makes clear through her analysis that one cannot speak of a single 'Catholic response' to the expulsion and subsequent thoughts on religious integration and politics. Catholic expellees were influenced by a wide range of factors, including their background and the areas of West Germany where they ended up - Catholics in 'diaspora' areas often finding it more difficult to integrate into the local Church than those in homogenous areas. 'Integration' is also a problematic term and Voßkamp shows the different levels at which it operated. She also il-

lustrates how the views of Reichsdeutsche and Volksdeutsche frequently diverged on the issue of their hopes for the future of Eastern Europe; the latter favouring the idea of a federal Europe, whilst the former wished for a reinstatement of the old borders from 1937 (p. 239).

Voßkamp addresses the consequences of the waves of refugees and expellees for the West German dioceses, charting the tensions between the expellees and the Catholic Church at the local level. One central difficulty she discusses is reconciling the divergent aims to on the one hand protect the culture and traditions of the Heimat, and, on the other hand for expellees to integrate into the existing structures of the West German Catholic Church. Here, the integration processes of the 1950s are explored, as Voßkamp assesses the scope of action churches had to integrate and to take in the newcomers, the meaning of religious culture, and differences and similarities in the organisation of Catholic expellees. Although there were regional differences, conflicts with the 'local' Catholic Church included accusations of its putting pressure on Catholic expellees to assimilate, and conflicts over the establishment and then preservation of 'expellee pastoral care'.

The author notes how expellee Catholic church leaders were suspicious of the secular Landsmannschaften, viewing them as too worldly, too political and attempting to weaken the influence of the Church (p. 171). Expellee politics are also explored, as in the voting booths Catholic expellees had to decide whether their denomination or identity as expellees were to be decisive in their choice of votes. Catholic and secular authorities alike showed concerns that the refugees and expellees were vulnerable to radical - especially Communist - influence. The Kirchliche Hilfstelle saw the roots of radicalisation lying in

the fact that Catholic expellees didn't feel themselves taken seriously by either the locals or the Church, which was failing this section of its flock (p.171). At the same time, the lifting of the ban on the formation of new political parties was seen as a threat by Catholic refugee organisations. Rather than supporting the founding of the Bund der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten (BHE), many Catholic expellees became active and some achieved prominence within the CDU/CSU - and this was also generally reflected in voting patterns. However, in certain areas, the BHE and SPD were able to attract more support where denomination issues were seen as less pressing than social issues, or where the CDU/CSU was seen as too Protestant or too parochial. However, Voßkamp argues that in general, the expellees' fitting into the democratic system and in particular their political activities within the CDU/CSU also contributed to their integration.

Despite differences between the groups, Voßkamp asserts that one can speak of an 'expellee Catholicism', which tried on different levels to present itself as institutionally closed off, but at the same time protected its diversity through the different associations and publications (p. 146). However, as the 1950s wore on, this Catholic refugee work became increasingly isolated, due to decreasing interest in the issue from the Catholic Church, conflicts and communications breakdowns and decreasing participation from the expellees themselves, as they became more integrated into West German society. Voßkamp traces the changing relationship between the Catholic and secular expellee associations. The secular Landsmannschaften were initially criticised for being too nationalist. However, over the course of the 1950s the interests of the Catholic and secular expellee groups began to converge; as the expellee issue got overtaken in the public domain by other international issues, the Catholic expellee organisations grew increasingly political and the different groups increasingly worked

together.

The issue of identity is another key element to the book. Voßkamp argues that 'expellee Catholicism' promoted an ethnic group identity shaped by denomination and a belief in natural justice based on restitution, rather than a new national identity based around the Federal Republic. The fact that Catholic expellees saw themselves as 'double victims' - of National Socialism and the Expulsion - prevented many from constructively taking part in the discourse over coming to terms with the past (p. 239). Throughout the 1960s the expellee Catholic clergy and Catholic refugee organisations collided with issues, with which they could not adequately deal, including the changing of values and generational conflicts, and above all the West German Catholic Church and government's gradual steps towards understanding with Poland.

Voßkamp illustrates well the barriers that were in place, particularly for Catholic expellees, which delayed a smooth integration into the Federal Republic of Germany, or at least complicated their relations to the Catholic Church, society, politics and German-Polish relations. She highlights how there were many differences, not only between 'West German' and 'expellee' Catholicism, but also considerable cleavages between different expellee Catholic organisations. Whilst Catholic expellees managed to integrate on a number of levels into society and politics, on other levels they remained detached - partly willingly so - and the expellee Catholic world view became increasingly anachronistic. It is an indisputably well-researched book, using a broad range of sources and covering a huge amount of ground. However, one of its problems is arguably that it tries to pack in too many themes and issues, making it occasionally bewildering and difficult for the reader to always see the overarching argument and narrative. Despite these reservations it remains an otherwise impressive piece, bringing together many different threads of a far from simple topic.

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