H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Gerard Daniel Cohen. *In War' s Wake: Europe' s Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. viii + 237 pp. $34.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-539968-4.

Gregor Thum. *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wroclaw during the Century of Expulsions.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011. xl + 508 pp. $75.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-14024-7; $35.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-691-15291-2.

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Published on HABSBURG (November, 2012)
Commissioned by Jonathan Kwan

Of "Human Backwash" and Valorous Pioneers: Managing the Displaced in Postwar Europe

At first glance, Gregor Thum's *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions* (2011) and Daniel Cohen's *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (2012) appear to share little more than a concern with the issue of displacement in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. The premises of the two recently published pieces of research are indeed radically different: a local versus a supranational focus, attention to long-term changes versus short-term developments, and, last but not least, a cultural-historical versus a politico-institutional approach. Thum and Cohen do not even concentrate on the conventional theater of postwar displacement, Germany, but offer case studies that take the discussion of refugees into the less chartered territories of Polish and international history. Nonetheless, the two works converge and overlap in an interesting fashion. In fact, they both highlight the extent to which contemporary environments were shaped by the political imperatives of the early Cold War period. Moreover, as thorough and comprehensive pieces of work, both manuscripts deliver on their promise to reach beyond their narrow scope and make an important contribution to the study of population transfers in general.

Carried out under the supervision of the late Tony Judt, Cohen's *In War's Wake* sheds new light on the postwar refugee regime that gave birth to the category of Displaced Persons (DPs). His work is a fairly classic institutional history. Mainly drawing on the archives of the International Refugee Organization (IRO)–of which this is the only recent systematic assessment–Cohen is concerned with the "ambiguities of liberal internationalism of the late 1940s" which, he argues, under the aegis of the United States, "helped shape the unbalanced multilateralism peculiar to the postwar years" (p. 8).[1] As Peter Gatrell argues, Cohen therefore offers "substantive analysis" and brings to the field a "distinctive and significant voice."[2] With *Uprooted,* Thum offers a balanced, sensitive, and exhaustive analysis of the transformation of the German city of Breslau (considered a Prussian stronghold) into the Polish city of Wrocław after 1945. Aspiring to study the "sense of uprootedness" (p. 8), he draws on diverse sources, incorporates many visual materials, and relies on an innovative spatial approach inspired by the seminal work of his thesis supervisor, Karl Schlögel.[3]

Both authors tackle aspects of the postwar world that have attracted little attention until recent years. As Cohen argues, the DP crisis at the center of his work was long ignored by academics: "For several decades … scholars treated this lengthy crisis as a sideshow in the transition from war to peace in Western Europe" (p. 7). Similarly, as Thum points out, for a long time, the expulsions and the loss of the German East were considered highly sensitive topics in both Germany and Poland (p. 5). Studies free of political instrumentalization or from the vantage point of Poland in particular were lacking. With his use of Polish materials that were not accessible until 1989, Thum therefore offers a refreshing take on Poland's move westwards, which is representative of the work of a new generation of German scholars. Both authors argue it is high time displacement in postwar Europe be recognized as the monumental challenge it truly was to all concerned at the time.

Yet speaking of displacement in postwar Europe in general obscures important differences. In the midst of Europe's "demographic revolution" (Thum, p. 6), at least two main modes of population management can be dis-

tinguished: the first is the resettlement of foreign nationals to their assumed homeland for the purpose of ethnic homogenization–the so-called disentanglement of populations–involving, for instance, the evacuation of some ten million Germans from Eastern Europe and the resettlement of some three-and-a-half million Poles in western Poland. The other is the resettlement across the world of the "non-repatriable" foreign nationals remaining on European soil after the war. These were the so-called last million who stayed in 1946 after the rest of the eight million "foreign workers, slave laborers, prisoners of war, and liberated concentration camp inmates" (Cohen, p. 5) who qualified as DPs according the United Nations Recovery and Rehabilitation Association (UNRRA) and Allied military directives had been sent home. Therefore, if there was the shared experience of a confrontation with a new environment in which to start over and a complex relationship to the abandoned homeland relating to the experience of war, the assignation of a particular status–the Germans as "expellees," the DPs as "refugees," and the Poles as "repatriates"–concealed very different forms of treatment.

Uprooted is in some sense a study of the processes of (re)-Polonization and de-Germanization. Thum first concentrates on the physical appropriation of the city by Poles–the movement of people and their environment: the evacuation of the Germans, the settlement of new residents, and the management of reconstruction. In the first instance, then, Thum opposes the infrastructural, organizational, and ideological challenges faced by the local authorities to the residents' own pragmatic responses, for which he draws on memoirs and diaries. In the second instance, Thum turns to the "politics of the past." Here, he refers to the "invention of tradition" by "engineers of collective memory" (p. 218). For this, he looks at the propagandist attempts at cultural appropriation as reflected in political, popular, and academic discourses about the past and the urban environment. As far as possible, he also seeks to consider the reception of these narratives and therefore their effectiveness. Thereby, Thum evidences the lasting sense of insecurity, what he calls "the psychosis of impermanence" (p. 189), derived from the "dual tragedy": the uprooting of the city's inhabitants and their replacement with settlers, who themselves were uprooted. Eliminating traces of Germanness, describing the area as timelessly Slavic, the western territories as "recovered," and the newcomers as valorous pioneers and "repatriates" was not enough. Thum argues that the commemoration of displacement took place despite its prohibition under communism and that places of origin continued to matter lastingly despite memory's amputation from above.

With the help of numerous and relevant illustrations, Thum's account produces a truly visual history of the transformation of Wrocław in the postwar period which does resemble the Geertzian "thick description" to which he aspires (p. 13). By treating the city as text, he not only shows how a city considered inherently German in 1945 was gradually transformed into a flourishing Polish provincial capital, but also demonstrates the degree to which the cityscape reflects and shapes experience. The use of space is an indicator of changing ideological stances, shifting economic realities, and sociopolitical circumstances. His insights thus not only reach into the present and the rediscovery and revival of German heritage in Poland over the last two decades but also prove transferable to a number of other contexts.

Approaching the issue of displacement from a very different perspective, Cohen's book argues that the DP crisis in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War can be viewed as a prism through which to understand many of the larger issues faced by postwar governments and politicians. Further still Cohen contends that, in many respects, the solutions put forward to deal with what has been described as the "human backwash" (p. 6) of the war constituted a precedent. This issue therefore had a major impact on the shape of the postwar world and beyond (p. 163). Cohen convincingly argues that the opposing attitudes in East and West to the repatriation of the "last million" were indicative of the nascent and growing Cold War antagonism between the two blocs, that modern international humanitarianism was born out of the challenge of finding a solution to the DP problem, and that the case of Displaced Persons was instrumental for the individualist direction taken by the so-called Human Rights Revolution. In his last chapter Cohen argues that Jewish DPs, the so-called surviving remnants, held a particular position within these debates relating to their specific form of suffering under Nazism and their extraterritorial status. In this context, he contends that the visibility of the DPs in Western Europe was instrumental in gaining Western support and Soviet acceptance of the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. However, possibly the most novel aspect of the study is Cohen's analysis in the fifth chapter of the attitude of European states to the presence on their territory of refugees whose idleness spurred fears of labor surplus and overpopulation. Here Cohen offers insight into early postwar and pre-"economic miracle" visions of European society, which bear interesting resemblance to present-day concerns about immigration.

Despite his concentration on the five years of the IRO's operation (1947-52) Cohen also makes reference to the intellectual roots of the machinery of international relief and modern humanitarianism. He considers interwar debates about statelessness and collective minority rights, and the acknowledgement of the League of Nations' shortcomings after 1945. Although he argues that the "unique terrain" (p. 59) of DP camps laid the basis for the "new face of humanitarianism," he shows how the experiences of the IRO's predecessor, the UNRRA, and other international aid agencies operating in wartime Europe were instrumental for the type of multilateral global governance that came about in the later postwar. His study thus cleverly contextualizes what he calls "the golden age of European refugees" (p. 150). It brings together intellectual debates, political realities, and their practical repercussions and legacies. Adopting a supranational perspective, this work is therefore a great addition to the existing scholarship on the situation DPs in postwar Germany.[5]

Thum and Cohen's work address questions of national identification, national sovereignty, and international legitimacy that were of fundamental importance in the unstable postwar world. Their research shows the urgency in seeking and developing solutions to monumental human and material problems. Both works highlight the degree of continuity with prewar discourses but also the degree to which the war transformed mentalities and practices. Inevitably, at times, some parallels can be drawn to the methods of population management employed by the National Socialists: in Cohen's work, this concerns the housing of DPs in camps, their selection and treatment as a commodity of labor, and even the issue of granting Jews a special treatment; in Thum's work, the similarities concern the attempts at Polinization such as the arguments employed by the intellectual movement "Western Thought" to justify historically Polish ownership over western Poland which are reminiscent of those of German *Ostforschung* that sought to do the same for the Germans before and during the war. However, both authors emphasize the major difference between these retrospective policies and ideas and those of the Nazis. Whereas the latter sought to conquer, oppress, and exterminate, the former were trying to justify a *fait accompli* of displacement, which benefited from international legitimacy. In this sense, both works are about breaks rather than continuities.

Both works show that the immediate postwar was a time of experimentation and that the discrepancy between ideals and their realization sometimes led to intriguing tensions and contradictions. While the Allies were concerned not to provide aid and relief to former Nazi criminals or supporters of the Nazi regime, Cohen shows how difficult it was to implement the screening of DPs in practice. Moreover, under the cover of antitotalitarianism, the geopolitical situation brought about an ideological shift from antifascism to anticommunism in the West. As a result, while the DPs refusing repatriation were suspect to the Soviets, the Western Allies flaunted their democratic credentials (p. 110). At the same time, east-west migration in this period already suggested how easily the line between refugees as "asylum seekers" fearing persecution in their homeland and "economic migrants" could rapidly be blurred. This hinted at a future challenge for Western democracies. In Thum's study, the most obvious contradictions resided in the People's Republic of Poland's simultaneous need for reconstruction and destruction because of the political imperative of the "removal of Germandom" (p. 214) despite the devastation of war. What these tensions reflect are the difficulties faced when thinking in terms of fixed categories and reified identities about areas and times characterized by flux and hybridity.

In conclusion, then, what brings both works together is their demonstration of the inseparability of ideology and practice: the way in which an environment reflects political choices, experiences shape narratives, and policies determine opportunities, with very real consequences for those involved. All the while, these dimensions are in permanent reciprocal interaction with one another. As Cohen argues, despite the attractiveness of its vagueness, the notion of uprootedness is nevertheless always contingent on a specific situation and therefore political (p. 157). In this sense, Thums ambition to capture a single "sense" of it may have been too ambitious. Similarly, the usefulness of the expression "century of expulsions," which appears in the subtitle to the English translation of Thum's work and suggests a possible generalization concerning the experience of displacement in this period, can also be questioned. On the contrary, what both these studies demonstrate is that more detailed, particular, and innovative studies are still needed. And in each case, even if they belong within what Peter Gatrell has called a "longer historical process of violence," their direct connection to the Second World War and its own multifaceted repercussions–long- and short-term; social, political, and economic; local and global–needs to be rightfully acknowledged.[6]

Notes

[1]. An existing study by the organization's official historian Louise Holborn dates from 1956.

[2]. Peter Gatrell, "In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order," *European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire* 19, no. 3 (2012): 476-478.

[3]. Karl Schlögel, *In Raume Lesen Wir Die Zeit* (München: Hanser, 2004).

[4]. See Jessica Reinisch and Elizabeth White, eds., *The Disentanglement of Populations: Migration, Expulsion and Displacement in Post-war Europe, 1944-49* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[5]. See Atina Grossman, *Jews, Germans, and Allies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); and the contributions of Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron in Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron, eds., *Warlands: Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet-East European Borderlands, 1945-50* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[6]. Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron, eds., *Warlands*, 1.

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Citation: Gaelle Fisher. Review of Cohen, Gerard Daniel, *In War' s Wake: Europe' s Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* and Thum, Gregor, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wroclaw during the Century of Expulsions.* HABSBURG, H-Net Reviews. November, 2012.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=36734

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