



**Matthew Frank.** *Making Minorities History: Population Transfer in Twentieth-Century Europe.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 464 pp. \$115.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-963944-1.

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During a visit to Moscow in December 1943, Edvard Beneš, the former president of the First Czechoslovak Republic and now *primus inter pares* of exile leaders in London, mentioned that 3.5 million Germans would have to be expelled from Poland. In response, the Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov remained unmoved. “That’s nothing ... That’s easy,” he answered (p. 261). One might be inclined to register Molotov’s answer as an expression of Stalinist cynicism. But one would be wrong. Such a view would ignore the enormous popularity of enforced population transfers in early and mid-twentieth-century Europe. These exchanges were favored as an instrument of state policy to fix the manifold problems that ethnic minorities seemed to represent for domestic as well as international peace, stability, and harmony.

Matthew Frank is not the first to recognize the popularity of population transfers in the twentieth century, of course. What his book adds to the existing body of literature on the resettlement of masses of people is the meticulous reconstruction of the diplomatic and intellectual history of the subject. He surveys postimperial Central and Eastern Europe from the late 1890s, when the idea was propagated by a few people who seemed like political fanatics but proved to be visionaries, to the early 1950s when the concept lost momen-

tum in the aftermath of the Second World War and due to the conditions of the Cold War. The key events of the book are the Balkan and Greek-Turkish population exchanges from 1913 to 1925; the 1939-41 *Heim ins Reich* resettlements from the Soviet Union and Italy to Nazi Germany; the East European, Soviet Union-guided population transfers between 1944 and 1947; the flight and expulsion of Germans from Central and Eastern Europe from 1945 to 1947; and the Hungarian-Slovak transfers between 1946 and 1948. Basing his work on research in thirteen countries and almost fifty archives, Frank tracks negotiations between state governments and their representatives to all major conferences and links them to the ideas of the major advocates and implementers of the concept, including well-known men, such as the Norwegian Fridjof Nansen, the Greek Eleftherios Venizelos, and the Czech Edvard Beneš, and less-known political journalists, such as the German Siegfried Lichtenstädter and the French George Montandon.

Frank highlights “five salient features” that shaped the concept of population transfer in the period under consideration (p. 408). First, it aimed to prevent violent conflicts, protect populations, and build and secure nation-states. It was, in other words, distinguished from coercive methods behind population movements and considered

constructive, rather than destructive. Second, it radiated a spirit of progress and humanitarianism. Crucial in this regard was the success in which the Greco-Turkish exchanges were considered internationally, thanks to the Friendship Treaty of 1930 between the two countries, the relaxation of domestic tensions, and an economic upswing in both countries following the exchanges. The positive capital the concept accumulated in the 1930s lasted through the end of the 1940s and inspired the exchange programs during and after the Second World War.

The third feature is the pan-European and cross-ideological spread of the concept of population transfer. In Frank's view, the concept originated in the European regions of the Ottoman Empire but had supporters all over Europe from early on. "Between 1913 and 1946," Frank states, "every major European power and every state in Continental Europe east of the Rhine (except for the Netherlands, Denmark, and Albania) was the signatory to at least one population transfer agreement; some states—Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Germany, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia—were signatories to several" (p. 411). As this list demonstrates, democracies as well dictatorships signed such treaties, and so the list of advocates ranges from the left to the right.

Not surprisingly, according to the fourth feature, the population transfers under consideration were never comprehensive. In practice, all the members of the targeted ethnic minority were not transferred (there were always exceptions). The policy was also limited in another, rather remarkable regard: while West European countries, most of them relatively stable democracies at a time of rising authoritarian regimes, agreed on population transfer elsewhere in Europe, they did not apply it at home—although Belgium, Switzerland, France, and others could have done so. In fact, the practice of population transfer divided the continent along an east-west line long before the Cold War started, and independent from it.

Frank adds an addendum on the "afterlives" of population transfers in Europe from the 1950s on (Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Bosnia) (pp. 356ff.). He argues that, by that time, the idea was considered "the option of last resort when minorities threatened again to become an international problem" but "never went beyond just that: an option" (p. 405). It was never again put into practice. That may be true, but Frank's vague explanation for this fifth feature of European population transfer—in the late 1940s, Europe "demanded a phase of consolidation, stabilization, and 'normalization'" (p. 414)—is not convincing, and the rise of human rights debates points to a structural flaw of the book. It aims to consider the problem of population transfers from the perspective of the states; "seeing like a state" is the formula coined by J. C. Scott that describes Frank's approach. This is legitimate, of course, and he is certainly right to argue that states that planned and executed population transfers often did not care much about "the voices of the population concerned" (p. 5). But that does not mean that these populations did not have a voice at all or that the suffering or benefits they experienced as a result of those transfers did not affect the political scenery.

What is left out of this detailed account of how states dealt with this phenomenon is the global, social, and violent historical context for population transfers. The broader field of genocide studies and the efforts of numerous scholars, such as Michael Mann (*The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* [2005]), Norman Naimark (*Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* [2002]), Roger D. Petersen (*Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth Century Eastern Europe* [2002]), Philipp Ther (*The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*, translated from German by Charlotte Kreutzmüller [2016]), and Benjamin Lieberman, *Terrible Fate: Ethnic Cleansing in the Making of Modern Europe* [2006], in synthesizing histories of

ethnic cleansing have shown that the “civilized,” allegedly humane and constructive side of enforced population transfers is only half the picture. The other half is filled with mass grievances over lost homelands, the destruction of cultural and collective identities, and, most of all, the unstable boundaries between civilization and barbarity. Population transfers in Europe may have been limited to the first half of the century but major advocates, such as the United States, had a long record of them in their own countries. Frank mentions the “Indian Removal” but quickly excludes it from his study as “a proto-population transfer” (p. 245), an arbitrary distinction that obfuscates the blurred boundaries between resettlement and genocide. Other experiences—for instance, German actions in German South West Africa and, more generally, European practices of segregating peoples in their colonies—are not discussed. True, Europe after the Second World War and after thirty years of total, civil, and genocidal war longed for normality, but it did so not just because of the experience of controlled population transfers but also because hundreds of millions of people had learned that those transfers all too often ran out of control.

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