

Benjamin Conrad: Loyalitäten, Identitäten und Interessen. Deutsche Parlamentarier im Lettland und Polen der Zwischenkriegszeit. Mainz University Press – V&R unipress. Mainz – Göttingen 2016. 218 S., 18 Ill. ISBN 978-3-8471-0562-6. (€ 40,-)

After the end of the First World War the political landscape in Europe, especially in the Baltic Sea region and Eastern Europe, was vastly different from what it had been in 1914. A number of new states had come into existence and the power relationships between different ethnic groups, or nationalities, had dramatically changed. Benjamin Conrad takes a closer look at two such examples, namely the newly formed Latvian and Polish states and their respective German minorities, in his study of German members of parliament in Latvia and Poland during the interwar period.

The book's focus is on the loyalties, identities and fields of politics of the German members of parliament in Latvia and Poland and to what extent these changed over time. Using a type of source material that has not been overly utilized previously, namely shorthand minutes from the Latvian *Saeima* and the Polish *Sejm*, he provides new and detailed information. He also critically assesses what has previously been written in the field. C.'s full statistical analysis of all the shorthand minutes from both parliaments shows, among other things, the number of times German *Saeima* and *Sejm* members spoke before the parliament, which will undoubtedly make this book an important source of information for future researchers.

C. describes his work as a contribution to the research about the interwar period, but also hints that it could be seen as a contribution to the knowledge about Eastern Europe with regard to democracy, social history and nationalism (p. 12). Given the empirical findings presented, this is clearly achieved. However, the somewhat descriptive format, as well as a certain lack of historical background and context, probably makes the narrative difficult to follow for the uninitiated reader. This unfortunately makes the impact of this research somewhat limited in scope as it presupposes knowledge about the two empirical cases. For instance, a reader who is mainly interested in the problems facing democracy during the interwar period would find it difficult to understand the Latvian and Polish cases and therefore the value of C.'s contribution.

A more consistent dialogue with previous research would have been desirable. It is mostly done, and interestingly so, with regard to the Baltic Germans. An elaborated discussion relating the results to current research on other minority groups in Latvia and Poland, the majority population and their political representatives would have been interesting.¹ One would get a better understanding of the actions and strategies of the German members of parliament if they were more consistently related to the societal context.

C.'s comparative stance draws on a number of similarities between the German minorities in Latvia and Poland, such as the size of the groups, the unwanted affiliation to the new state, and their history as, or as part of, a ruling elite (p. 13). Nonetheless, there are also differences between the two German minorities: their historical connection to the area, and the proximity to or distance from the German state. The book would have benefited from a more in-depth discussion of these differences both generally and in connection to the results. This is done in some instances, for example in the case of the higher level of participation in parliamentary work among the Baltic Germans in Latvia, but could have been done more consistently. However, an interesting point is that the level of participation among the German *Sejm* members in Poland varied according to which part of Poland they came from (pp. 158-160).

C. presents a number of interesting results. The language question is especially fascinating as it highlights the issue of loyalties and identities. This was one of the fields of

¹ For example a number of contributions in ZVI GITELMAN (ed.): *The Emergence of Modern Jewish Politics. Bundism and Zionism in Eastern Europe*, Pittsburgh 2003, focuses on interwar Poland

politics that C. identifies, and was much more important for the Baltic Germans in Latvia than the Germans in Poland. The German *Saeima* members in Latvia could also, in contrast to their counterparts in Poland, speak in German before the parliament. They chose to exercise this right, even when symbolically it may have been prudent to use Latvian. Unlike the Russian *Saeima* members in Latvia, the Baltic Germans never made the symbolical gesture of declaring allegiance to the Latvian state before the parliament in the Latvian language.

Overall, the promised comparison falls somewhat short. The book consists of four parts: an introduction, two separate parts on each case, and a short final comparative discussion. Regrettably, the final part does not even count five full pages. Still, it has the beginnings of a fascinating analysis using Rogers Brubaker's *Triadic Nexus*. This opens up for a discussion not only about the relationship between a state and a minority group but also a second state's influence, in this case the German Reich (pp. 165-169).

C.'s very careful and conscientious empirical study gives very important and detailed information about the number of, and actions (or inactions) by, German members of parliament in Latvia and Poland during the interwar period. It will undoubtedly be of significant use to researchers interested in questions of democracy, minority rights, and nationalism in Latvia and Poland during the interwar period. But it will also in all probability inspire further research, since it creates such a stable and valuable point of departure.

Södertörn

Christina Douglas

Dušan Janák, Zdeněk Jirásek: Z historie československých vystěhovaleckých družstev v Sovětském svazu 1923-1939. [Aus der Geschichte ausgewanderter tschechoslowakischer Genossenschaften in der Sowjetunion 1923-1939.] Slezská univerzita v Opavě. Opava 2014. 241 S., Ill. ISBN 978-80-7510-038-2.

Die vorliegende Untersuchung zur Auswanderung tschechoslowakischer Genossenschaften in das sowjetische Russland analysiert einen eher seltenen Aspekt von Wanderungsbewegungen: die von den Regierungen des Herkunfts- wie des Aufnahmelandes gemeinsam geförderte, organisierte und von Anfang an auf klar definierte Formen der Erwerbstätigkeit gerichtete Migration. Für Prag sollte die Auswanderung von Genossenschaften nach Russland in den 1920er Jahren vor allem einen Beitrag zur Erschließung von Absatzmärkten des neuen Staates leisten. Moskaus Interesse an der Immigration tschechoslowakischer Genossenschaften (und an vergleichbaren Initiativen aus anderen Ländern) gründete darin, dass der Wiederaufbau der durch Revolution und Bürgerkrieg zerrütteten wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse und die Industrialisierung des Landes ausländischer Hilfe bedurften. Die Neue Ökonomische Politik (NEP) setzte daher im Zuge wirtschaftlicher Liberalisierung und der teilweisen Wiederherstellung von Marktbeziehungen auch auf Impulse, die von der Ansiedlung ausländischer gewerblich-industrieller und landwirtschaftlicher Musterbetriebe ausgehen sollten.

Der politische Aspekt der Einwanderung wurde in Moskau deutlich hervorgehoben, abzulesen etwa an den Verlautbarungen der Kommunistischen Internationale, die die werktätige Immigration als Akt des „proletarischen Internationalismus“ beim Aufbau des Sozialismus feierte. Auf der anderen Seite wollte sich die Prager Regierung bei allem Interesse an wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen zu Moskau nicht selbst eine ideologische Laus in den Pelz setzen und „bolschewistischer Propaganda“ Vorschub leisten. Anträge auf Bewilligung einer Reise in das sowjetische Russland mussten nach 1922 ein langwieriges behördliches Verfahren durchlaufen, in das Polizei- und Verwaltungsorgane sowie das Außen-, Innen- und Sozialministerium eingeschaltet wurden. Ablehnungen betrafen dabei sehr oft diejenigen Antragsteller, die Mitglied der Kommunistischen Partei der Tschechoslowakei (KPTsch) waren.