East Central Europe as a Place of Refuge in the Twentieth Century: Introduction to the State and Patterns of Historical Research

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"It is just impossible to write about refugees in the modern world without considering the history of East Central Europe, and vice versa," as the historian Peter Gatrell points out in a recent article. Gatrell also, however, sets the European "East" apart, identifying it with a distinct character of forced migrations: "Nothing in the modern wartime experience of Western Europe can compare with the mass deportations and population transfers that took place in Eastern Europe as well as the Balkans before, during, and after the two World Wars."[1] The region is therefore positioned as a space where refugee flows originate, triggering innovative responses from humanitarian and international organizations. His article poses the important question of how historians imagine, analyze, and interpret the complex subject of refugees in East Central Europe.

This thematic issue examines, through the eyes of historiography, East Central Europe as a place of refuge. It focuses on a region which has seldom been perceived and researched, at least not on a systematic basis, as a space in which individuals sought protection from persecution and war. More frequently, it has been discussed, in historiography or different forms of public history, as a source of emigration. This tendency is hardly surprising: starting in the nineteenth century, tens of millions of inhabitants moved westward to escape poverty or flee political oppression under nationalist, authoritarian, and totalitarian regimes or—finally—were displaced by war, redrawing of borders, and ethnic cleansing. As a result of the "great departure," masterfully described by the historian Tara Zahra, the freedom of movement and the movement to freedom has been more associated with going to the "West."[2]

The history of refugeedom has been studied primarily in terms of the East–West political, economic, and cultural cleavage. The "Eastern" failure to include refugees in national and regional histories has had its counterpart in linking refugee protection to the very nature of liberal democracy. The larger and paradigmatic part of the existing historiography on European refugees (such as the studies on the Nazi period) examines refugee policies as a "Western" question and also as a failure, criticizing the policies which controlled refugees and prevented them from coming to safety.[3] While historians have adopted a critical approach when addressing the "West" and its modern nation states and have held it to a high moral standard, they have rarely taken the "East" seriously as a viable refuge. The history of refugees during World War II is a good example:

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1 Peter Gatrell: East Central Europe and the Making of the Modern Refugee, in: Włodzimierz Borodziej, Joachim von Puttkamer (eds.): Immigrants and Foreigners in Central and Eastern Europe during the Twentieth Century, Abingdon et al. 2020, pp. 145–164, here p. 146.

2 Tara Zahra: The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World, New York 2016.

3 For instance: Frank Caestecker, Bob Moore (eds.): Refugees from Nazi Germany and the Liberal European States, New York 2010; Vicky Caron: Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933–1942, Stanford 1999; Louise London: Whitehall and the Jews, 1933–1948: British Immigration Policy, Jewish Refugees and the Holocaust, Cambridge 2000.

In contrast to a number of studies that examine the effects of nationalism and antisemitism, the administrative "paper walls" of quotas and visa policies, or strict border controls, only a few studies ask similar questions with respect to the countries east of Nazi Germany.[4] Only recently have historians "discovered" and started to systematically study the survival of hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews in the Soviet Union, a story which the post–World War II Western historical frameworks could hardly accommodate.[5]

The "Western" concepts of communist "totalitarianism" contributed to this perception of the "East." In the inter-war period, the very limited readiness of the USSR to open doors to communist refugees (and their often tragic destinies in cases where they did manage to get to the land of socialism) hardly fostered any consideration of these communist countries as places of asylum.[6] The unrelenting, if uneven, flow of refugees from communist countries to the "West" and images of people climbing the Berlin Wall, escaping in balloons, or leaving their Trabant cars in Prague to reach the West German embassy deeply informed the popular historical consciousness.[7] From this perspective, migration was a pathway to freedom and contributed to the undoing of state socialism.

Another deep historical layer has contributed to the perceived absence of refugees in East Central Europe: millions of people seeking better and safer lives departed from this region to western Europe or crossed the Atlantic to

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4 KINGA FROJIMOVICS: I Have Been a Stranger in a Strange Land: The Hungarian State and Jewish Refugees in Hungary, 1933–1945, Jerusalem 2007; JERZY TOMASZEWSKI: Auftakt zur Vernichtung: Die Vertreibung polnischer Juden aus Deutschland im Jahre 1938, Osnabrück 2002; KATEŘINA ČAPKOVÁ, MICHAL FRANKL: Unsichere Zuflucht: Die Tschechoslowakei und ihre Flüchtlinge aus NS-Deutschland und Österreich 1933–1938, Köln 2012.

5 LAURA JOCKUSCH, TAMAR LEWINSKY: Paradise Lost? Postwar Memory of Polish Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union, in: Holocaust and Genocide Studies 24 (2010), 3, pp. 373–399; MARK EDELE, SHEILA FITZPATRICK et al. (eds.): Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union, Detroit 2017; MARKUS NESSELRODT: Dem Holocaust entkommen: Polnische Juden in der Sowjetunion, 1939–1946, Boston 2019; ELIYANA R. ADLER: Survival on the Margins: Polish Jewish Refugees in the Wartime Soviet Union, Cambridge, MA 2020; LIDIA ZESSIN-JUREK, KATHARINA FRIEDLA (eds.): Syberiada Żydów polskich: Losy uchodźców z zagłady [The Siberian Odyssey of Polish Jews: The Fate of Refugees from the Holocaust], Warszawa 2020. Representative of partial precursor studies: BEN-CION PINCHUK: Jewish Refugees in Soviet Poland 1939–1941, in: Jewish Social Studies 40 (1978), 2, pp. 141–158; DOV LEVIN: The Lesser of Two Evils: Eastern European Jewry under Soviet Rule, 1939–1941, Philadelphia—Jerusalem 1995.

6 See, for instance, BARRY MCLOUGHLIN, HANS SCHAFRANEK (eds.): Österreicher im Exil: Sowjetunion 1934–1945. Eine Dokumentation, Wien 1999; BARRY MCLOUGHLIN, HANS SCHAFRANEK, WALTER SZEVERA: Aufbruch—Hoffnung—Endstation: Österreicherinnen und Österreicher in der Sowjetunion, 1925–1945, Wien 1996.

7 JAKUB DOLEŽAL: Die ostdeutschen Flüchtlinge in der Tschechoslowakei im Herbst 1989, in: DETLEF BRANDES, EDITA IVANIČKOVÁ et al. (eds.): Flüchtlinge und Asyl im Nachbarland: Die Tschechoslowakai und Deutschland 1933 bis 1989, Essen 2018, pp. 321–343.

settle in the Americas. States in the region often spent considerably more resources on taming, encouraging, or directing emigration, rather than on protecting refugees and ensuring their welfare. Even today, the "brain drain" caused by outmigration continues to receive significant attention.[8] Historians have recently directed attention to the ideologies and techniques with which states aimed to control citizens' freedom of movement and noted that government attempts to guide migration often unfolded along ethnic lines, as minorities were encouraged to leave whereas migration of members of the "state nation" was more tightly controlled.[9]

Hence, as Gatrell indicates, when Eastern Europe figures in the historiography, it is mostly as a "refugee-producing" region. The focus on the political and cultural emigration of East Central Europeans and their organization in the "West" corresponds to this dominant view. Historians have researched how East Central Europeans created their own political communities in the West, examining groups such as Polish refugees in the nineteenth century, exile governments during both world wars, and anti-communist political movements during the Cold War era. Such exile is often treated as a link in a chain of national history and independence, continuing national institutions and culture while the homeland is occupied or oppressed. Migration westward is often examined as exile, a space in which original identities—cultural and political—are negotiated in new environments, and studies frequently focus on the exile of elites, such as writers.[10] In this framework, emigration can be rendered as a form of agency with which individuals defy authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. For instance, the introduction to a recent comparative handbook with overview articles on emigration after World War II describes the "captive nations" of Eastern and Southeastern Europe "voting with their feet" by fleeing communist regimes.[11] Even though it encloses these phrases in quotation marks, the volume still conceives of Cold War migration patterns as unidirectional, which obfuscates the story of refugees to state-socialist countries.

Most existing studies on the history of refugees to the region originate from the period after 1989. Yet, precisely in this period, historians in post-com-

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8 See, for instance, JADWIGA GAŁKA, SŁAWOMIR DOROCKI: Rola emigracji klasy kreatywnej w przemianach gospodarki innowacyjnej w Polsce [The Role of Emigration of the Creative Class in the Transformation of the Innovative Economy in Poland], in: Prace Komisji Geografii Przemysłu Polskiego Towarzystwa Geograficznego 23 (2013), pp. 91–103.

9 DONNA R. GABACCIA, DIRK HOERDER, ADAM WALASZEK: Emigration and Nation Building during the Mass Migrations from Europe, in: NANCY L. GREEN, FRANÇOIS WEIL (eds.): Citizenship and Those Who Leave: The Politics of Emigration and Expatriation, Urbana 2007; ERIC LOHR: Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union, Cumberland 2012; ZAHRA.

10 See, for instance, JOHN NEUBAUER, BORBÁLA ZSUZSANNA TÖRÖK (eds.): The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe: A Compendium, Berlin—Boston 2009.

11 ANNA MAZURKIEWICZ: East Central European Migrations during the Cold War: A Handbook, Berlin 2019.

munist countries were preoccupied with other issues that were perceived as more pressing: the disputed revision of communist history writing as well as discussions about victimhood and complicity in the contexts of totalitarian regimes and the Holocaust.[12] The limited volume of scholarship on refugee reception can be contrasted with the much greater interest in population displacement as a result of war, nationality politics, internal colonization, and ethnic cleansing. Against the backdrop of war and ethnic cleansing during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, as well as the revival of the nation-state and the drawing of new borders, the post–World War II expulsion of most of the German-speaking population from Poland and Czechoslovakia seemed to be even more important. Access to archives formerly located beyond the Iron Curtain also catalyzed this research. Therefore, a large body of historiographic work—supported by the work of government-sponsored transnational historical commissions, as well—was informed by an interest in the multiethnic character of the region, the protection of minorities and lack thereof, forced migration, and ethnic cleansing.[13] Analyzing migration in East Central Europe was inseparable from its status as a historiographic laboratory of nationalism studies.

The introduction by Alfred J. Rieber, an expert on Russian and Soviet history, to a volume about forced migration in Eastern and Central Europe is a good example of how the region is imagined in contrast to modern-day Western Europe. From religious wars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries through the rise of modern nationalism and policies of totalitarian regimes, Rieber portrays the expulsion and flight as the result of unstable and non-natural frontiers which did not match ethnic divisions.[14] Similarly, Jan M. Piskorski's book,

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12 See, for instance, MICHAL KOPEČEK: Past in the Making: Historical Revisionism in Central Europe after 1989, Budapest 2008; SORIN ANTOHI: Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe, Budapest 2007.

13 Representative of a larger body of historiography: DETLEF BRANDES, HOLM SUNDHAUSSEN et al. (eds.): Lexikon der Vertreibungen: Deportation, Zwangsaussiedlung und ethnische Säuberung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts, Wien 2010; HOLM SUNDHAUSSEN: Bevölkerungsverschiebungen in Südosteuropa seit der Nationalstaatswerdung (19./20. Jahrhundert), in: Comparativ 6 (1996), pp. 25–40; RALPH MELVILLE, JIŘÍ PEŠEK et al. (eds.): Zwangsmigrationen im mittleren und östlichen Europa: Völkerrecht, Konzeptionen, Praxis (1938–1950), Mainz 2007; DIETMAR NEUTATZ, VOLKER ZIMMERMANN (eds.): Die Deutschen und das östliche Europa: Aspekte einer vielfältigen Beziehungsgeschichte, Essen 2006; ULF BRUNNBAUER, MICHAEL G. ESCH et al. (eds.): Definitionsmacht, Utopie, Vergeltung: "Ethnische Säuberungen" im östlichen Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts, Berlin 2006; JOCHEN BÖHLER, WŁODZIMIERZ BORODZIEJ et al. (eds.): Legacies of Violence: Eastern Europe's First World War, München 2014; NORMAN M. NAIMARK: Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe, Cambridge, MA 2001; PHILIPP THER: Die dunkle Seite der Nationalstaaten: "Ethnische Säuberungen" im modernen Europa, Göttingen 2011; ANA SILJAK, PHILIPP THER (eds.): Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948, Lanham et al. 2001.

14 ALFRED J. RIEBER: Repressive Population Transfers in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe: A Historical Overview, in: ALFRED J. RIEBER (ed.): Forced Migration in Central and Eastern Europe, 1939–1950, London—Portland 2000, pp. 1–27.

which can be seen as a parallel to Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands*[15] on migration history, present a dark view of European history focused on the Eastern and South-Eastern European experience. The book reads as a continuous and fateful series of population transfers, starting with World War I and focusing on the tendencies to national homogenization and the two totalitarian regimes.[16] Such a historiographic framework also makes it possible to integrate the history of the Holocaust and racial policies during World War II, as well as that of the displaced persons camps in postwar Germany and Austria. Even in a recent overview article on migration in East Central Europe, Theodora Dragostinova and David Gerlach focus on its impact on the multiethnic character of the region, on labor migration, and, for the twentieth century, on wars and ethnic cleansing.[17] Despite their reflection on the region's troubled history and these two respected authors' research on population movement and ethnic cleansing,[18] this thematic filter leaves out other perspectives and histories.

Mapping the State of the Field

Refugees were an important, and—as we argue—underestimated, part of the history of East Central Europe in the twentieth century. The articles in this issue all originate from the discussions and research in the European Research Council's Consolidator project "Unlikely Refuge? Refugees and Citizens in East-Central Europe in the 20th Century." The project team is systematically examining the forms and dilemmas of assistance to refugees in the Habsburg Empire during the First World War and in nation-states which were formed, figuratively speaking, upon its ruins—namely, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and their successor states. It explores connections between citizenship and refugeedom in a region characterized by nationalism and ethnic homogenization, spaces of entanglement between refugees, government officials and aid workers, and neglected histories of local humanitarianism and its interactions with international organizations.

The "Unlikely Refuge?" project is a part of a growing research interest into Eastern and Central Europe as a space encompassing diverse types of immigration, as a recent edited volume by Włodzimierz Borodziej and Joachim von Puttkamer illustrates. Recognizing the limitations imposed when scholars con-

15 Timothy Snyder: Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin, New York 2010.

16 Jan M. Piskorski: Die Verjagten: Flucht und Vertreibung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts, München 2015.

17 Theodora Dragostinova, David Gerlach: Demography and Population Movements, in: Irina Livezeanu, Árpad von Klimó (eds.): The Routledge History of East Central Europe since 1700, London 2017, pp. 126–175.

18 Theodora K. Dragostinova: Between Two Motherlands: Nationality and Emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900–1949, Ithaca—London 2011; David W. Gerlach: The Economy of Ethnic Cleansing: The Transformation of the German-Czech Borderlands after World War II, Cambridge—New York 2017.

sider the region only as "countries of origin," the editors highlight how "the experience of mass emigration is closely intertwined with developing notions of belonging, citizenship, ethnic and racial hierarchies, and purity."[19] The present issue aims to stimulate this developing research field and, in turn, to bring more attention to East Central Europe and the integration of this region's history with global research on refugees.[20] To support the research community, the project also makes its work-in-progress bibliography accessible online.[21]

The researchers in the "Unlikely Refuge?" project first conducted in-depth studies of historiography, trying not only to map the available publications and thematic gaps, but also to uncover patterns and paradigms in how refugees coming into these countries were discussed by historians and other researchers who deal with refugee history. The articles examine the current state of research (as of 2021) concerning the individual countries, without respect to the nationality or affiliation of the researchers whose work they analyze. Even though each individual article is structured around the specific historiographic debates in the respective countries and the author's interpretation, a number of similarities testify to shared ways in which refugees are brought into the history of East Central Europe. This introduction aims to provide a comparative perspective and point out possibilities for a transnational and relational approach to refugeedom in East Central Europe.

Unstable Terminology

This thematic issue focuses on a specific type of migration and a distinct group of migrants: the refugees who came to the region rather than those who left it. By doing so, it re-focuses the historiography on the reception, categorization, provision of protection, and aid to refugees in the specific conditions of East Central Europe. But how to define refugees, the subject of this research? The variety, instability, and confusion in the choice of terminology describing forced movement of people troubled historians. No less than fourteen labels have been used in Polish to address forced migrations (see Lidia Zessin-Jurek's article). Or, for instance, Alfred J. Rieber complains that social scientists and historians have not been able "to agree upon a language with which to analyze" repressive population movements. Interestingly, of the terms he defines in his introduction, such as "population transfer," "expulsion," "resettlement," "eth-

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19 Włodzimierz Borodziej, Joachim von Puttkamer: Introduction, in: Borodziej/von Puttkamer, pp. 1–6, here p. 2.

20 See also Ulf Brunnbauer: Introduction to the Special Issue: Migration and East Central Europe: A Perennial but Unhappy Relationship, in: The Hungarian Historical Review 6 (2017), 3, pp. 497–501.

21 "Unlikely Refuge?" bibliography, https://www.zotero.org/groups/4731282/unlikely_refuge_bibliography/ (2022-09-07).

nic cleansing," and others, "refugees" is the only label which refers to social actors rather than to a wider phenomenon.[22]

The terminological instability also results from the lack of clear definitions employed in national legal systems throughout the period under examination and of the only marginal impact of international law or international organizations. The defining role of inter-war high commissions for refugees under the auspices of the League of Nations remained limited and only Austria and Yugoslavia joined the 1951 Convention (the real impact in the latter country still remains to be examined). The categorization of refugees in East Central Europe in the twentieth century is a history of ad hoc definitions. This, admittedly, is not specific to this particular region but its history of nationalism and the belated adoption of the 1951 Convention significantly contributed to this inconsistent use of terminology.

Beyond a common-sense notion of refugees as people forced to leave their homes by factors beyond their control, while also recognizing their agency, the studies published here do not adhere to a narrow definition of what constitutes a "refugee"—a disputed endeavor in any case. Instead, we aim to historicize this term, considering it more important to understand how a diversity of historical actors conceived of refugees, whether those actors were states, humanitarian workers, or the refugees themselves. Furthermore, historians of the region play an important role in how "knowledge" about refugees and their protection is produced and interpreted. When they make decisions about how to use terminology and categories, historians establish and contribute to hierarchies of victimhood and legitimacy. Each of the authors in this volume here deconstruct and analyze the labels, but at the same time struggles with the choice of terminology and production of categories. While Roger Zetter, in a frequently cited article,[23] analyzes how refugees are labeled in the context of practices of public policy, the articles collected here analyze and engage in the same process for historians. In a broader sense, we ask how historians take part in the discussion about immigration and in the transformation from emigration into immigration countries.

Labels are not only unsettled, but also knowingly used to promote competing interpretations. For instance, Francesca Rolandi and Pieter Troch examine the terminological dichotomy in the labeling of Italians from Yugoslavia after World War II: Italian historians used the term *esuli* (exiles, with the biblical connotations), while their Croatian and Slovenian counterparts used *optanti* (optants). In the regional context, the term "refugee" often carries meanings that do not easily fit international definitions, such as those embedded in the first inter-war documents of the high commissioners of the League of Nations or the 1951 Refugee Convention of the United Nations. Zessin-Jurek shows how the history of unstable borders produced unstable terminology and argues

22 RIEBER, Repressive Population Transfers, p. 2.

23 ROGER ZETTER: Labelling Refugees: Forming and Transforming a Bureaucratic Identity, in: Journal of Refugee Studies 4 (1991), 1, pp. 39–62.

that the normative definition of a refugee as a person who crossed national borders complicates investigation into what she calls "native refugees"—those who moved within Poland's shifting borders—through the same prism.

Ágnes Kelemen argues that precisely this terminological variety can be turned into an advantage by deploying the tools of the conceptual history (or *Begriffsgeschichte*) in order to "scrutinize the shifting meaning of the concept of 'refugee' over time and place." While in the Polish and Hungarian context "political" refugees play only a marginal role in research and public history, the terminological and other differentiation between the co-ethnic and other "political" or "international" refugees drive the Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, and Austrian historiographic discourse. For instance, in Czechoslovak usage, the term "refugee" often denotes passive victimhood in a terminological positioning against the *emigré*, who migrates on a national or political mission. Often, the label "refugee" was used in reference to ethnic Czechs or Slovaks rather than those who arrived from abroad due to persecution.

Methodological Nationalism

It might appear contradictory to challenge the locking of refugee histories into national histories, or their absence herein, by examining those very same national historiographic frameworks. Does this not constitute a historiographic form of "methodological nationalism" outlined by Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller for the social sciences as a form of naturalizing of the nation-state?[24] Should a project pursuing transnational research not challenge such borders rather than move within their confines? In fact, challenging, extending, and transcending national historiographic frameworks requires an understanding of the narratives that structure them. As Wimmer and Glick Schiller note, too, ignoring the nation-state and its effects on both migration itself and subsequent research on the subject might be as much a form of "methodological nationalism" as its essentialization. Whether we like it or not, most historians operate within national frameworks, and most consumers of history, including students, engage with the subject as part of national curricula. Integrating refugees into national histories can be a first step toward encouraging more transnational perspectives.

From their different angles, the authors of the articles in this issue analyze and critique the "methodological nationalism" which structures the writing about migration generally and refugees specifically. Rolandi and Troch, for instance, identify "[t]he underlying assumption [...] that there was natural harmony in the relationship between the Serbian state and its refugees." In contrast to what Wimmer and Glick Schiller critique in the social sciences, there has

[24] ANDREAS WIMMER, NINA GLICK SCHILLER: Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology, in: International Migration Review 37 (2003), 3, pp. 576–610.

been no lack of interest in the workings of the nation-state and nationalism in historiography. The other way around: "The study of the rise of nationalism and the nation-state, of ethnonational wars of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe was relegated to history."[25] Most research on refugees is related to traumatic moments in the history of East Central European nations, including occupation and domination, territorial changes, and mass displacement. Often the existing historiography not only accepts the nation-state as a natural order but also adopts languages of identification with the refugees.

Narratives of suffering contribute to the appropriation of refugee histories and their valorization for the nation. Rolandi and Troch highlight the choice of biblical terminology, which invested the nation with a divine mission and lent meaning to its tribulations—for example, in the case of the "Albanian Golgotha," the Serbian deadly mass escape during World War I. They draw our attention to how, more broadly, the sense of mission underlies the usage of the term "exile" and its variants (such as "exodus"), framing refugeedom as a diaspora bound to the one and only homeland and anticipating an eventual return. Moreover, the country studies show how the histories of disputed borderlands contribute to the focus on an ethnically defined nation and its refugees. Given the instability and movement of the territorial borders of the nation state, it is the ethnic refugees who contribute to the construction of national history. The article by Zessin-Jurek on Poland reveals a striking similarity to how the mass population movement during and especially after both world wars is handled in the historiography.

On the other hand, state-building also emerges as one of the avenues for integrating refugees into national histories. For instance, Zessin-Jurek claims that "the returning refugees played a role in the crystallization of the idea of a Polish national community as variously imagined by key discourse producers in the newly independent Poland." Similarly, Ágnes Kelemen argues that the hundreds of thousands of "Trianon refugees" who fled after World War I from the territories Hungary lost "had such an impact on society that the term 'refugee' came to be associated with ethnic Hungarians." The celebration of the (alleged or real) hospitality toward refugees, especially in the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918–1938) and the restored post–World War II Austria, has served a similar purpose as historians have adopted tropes demonstrating solidarity and humanity, democracy, and international cooperation. In contrast, the Czechoslovak refugees after the Munich agreement long remained under-researched because they did not serve a function in narratives of nation-building.

Co-ethnic refugees populate foundational histories and represent the desired unity of the nation and its territory. Yet, "methodological nationalism" also underlies the histories of other ("political" or "international") refugees who are imagined within their own national frameworks and whom historians subordinate to the service of their own nation. For the same reason, the interpretations of emigration which belonged to the often researched experience of East Cen-

[25] Ibid., p. 578.

tral Europe impacted the writing about refugees to the region. My analysis of historiography on political refugees to Czechoslovakia like Rolandi's and Troch's analysis of Yugoslavia shows that the experience of refugee groups continues to be imagined as a form of exile, a continuation of the national projects which expect the restoration of the homeland.

Against the Grain

Historians should be more reflective about how the nation-state has been inscribed into the structure and language of the bodies of sources on which they base their findings. Research in colonial archives provides inspiration for gaining analytical distance from the construction of evidence and the effects of the practices of state bureaucracies. Ann Laura Stoler explores how anthropologists and historians are challenged to identify "the conditions of possibility that shaped what could be written, what warranted repetition, what competencies were rewarded in archival writing."[26] The studies in this issue indicate that sociological approaches thrive where state aid was provided on a large scale. States were more likely to produce sources and knowledge about the social and economic conditions of refugees when those refugees were co-ethnics, be it post-Trianon refugees to Hungary,[27] post-Munich to Czechoslovakia, Serbian migrants in late state socialism, or Hungarian refugees from Romania. The Czechoslovak Russian Action, exhibiting elements of pan-Slavism while supporting refugees from a distance, fits this pattern, as well.

Refugees considered to belong to other nations and distant homelands, on the other hand, were documented more frequently through culture that transcended borders. As a prominent example, Russian refugees produced evidence and archives that constructed a "Russia Abroad," a vision of the nation bound by national culture and political mission spanning across state boundaries. While turning statelessness into a resource produces fascinating transnational documentation, it is also disconnected from the day-to-day experience and conditions in the places where these refugees lived. In addition, the examination of the historiography points to a limited and uneven inclusion of refugee voices in archival repositories. Following Stoler's insights, historians of refugeedom are well advised to read not only against the grain to challenge the hegemonic logic and language, but also along the grain in order to understand its "scripts" of the construction of archives.[28]

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26 Ann Laura Stoler: Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance, in: Archival Science (2002), 2, pp. 87–109, here p. 91.

27 Even though the documentary material of the National Office of Refugees were lost, its categorization and statistical evaluation had a profound effect on subsequent research. See Gábor Egry: Magyar Returnees and Political Radicalization in Post–World War I Hungary, in: Andrei Cușco, Flavius Solomon et al. (eds.): Migration and Population Politics during War(time) and Peace(time): Central and Eastern Europe from the Dawn of Modernity to the Twentieth Century, Cluj-Napoca 2021, pp. 253–270, here p. 257.

28 Stoler, p. 100.

The encapsulation of refugees in national histories contributes to the fragmentation of research along group boundaries, replicating the discussions, world views, and programs of politically active refugee groups. As a result, the diversity of trajectories and the agency of refugees themselves, as well as aid and reception in the nation-states, become sidelined. The uneasy approach to the state socialist period and refugees fleeing to the "East" contributes to this fragmentation. By splitting migration and refugee history into research endeavors centered around identity and group politics, historiographies also make it more difficult to meaningfully discuss continuities and long-term changes, as well as the role of historical knowledge in the shift from emigration to immigration societies.

Austria is the only "Western" country in the "Unlikely Refuge?" project and allows for an examination of the historiography on refugees in the context of the transformation to a country of immigration. For that reason, the research within the project and the article here focus on the post–World War II shaping of refugee policies which distinguishes Austria from other post-Habsburg countries. Maximilian Graf offers a critical reading of Austrian historiography and shows that, unlike in the post-socialist countries, the social processes of migration and the public discussions about it structured historiographic interest. No less than four different collective volumes, starting with *Asylland wider Willen* in 1995, have examined the continuities and changes in Austria as a site of (refugee) migration.[29] Yet, Graf argues that despite "a revisionist impulse sparked by the debates about asylum policy in the 1990s, historians have made only limited progress in revising the popular image of Austria as a role model of Cold War asylum policy." Like in other European countries, in the words of the historian Dirk Rupnow, "the history of migration and the experiences of migrants have not been integrated into the hegemonic version of Austrian history."[30]

The struggle of Austrian historiography for meaning and impact in migration and refugee studies also shows how difficult it is to build a productive link between historical studies and social science research. The analysis here shows much of the research in refugee history in East Central Europe remains methodologically conservative and still built around the concept of the nation-state, while anthropological, sociological, and other more innovative approaches are thriving in current migration and refugee studies. While excellent recent studies by Ulf Brunnbauer—on migration from Yugoslavia—or Annemarie Steidl—on the Habsburg monarchy—present a complex picture of (e)migration that is

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29 GERNOT HEISS, OLIVER RATHKOLB (eds.): Asylland wider Willen: Flüchtlinge in Österreich im europäischen Kontext seit 1914, Wien 1995; BÖRRIES KUZMANY, RITA GARSTENAUER (eds.): Aufnahmeland Österreich: Über den Umgang mit Massenflucht seit dem 18. Jahrhundert, Wien 2017; GÜNTER BISCHOF, DIRK RUPNOW (eds.): Migration in Austria, New Orleans—Innsbruck 2017.

30 DIRK RUPNOW: The History and Memory of Migration in Post-War Austria: Current Trends and Future Challenges, in: BISCHOF/RUPNOW, pp. 37–65, here p. 41.

not subsumed in national histories,[31] a similar shift in refugee studies in general remains outstanding. Joining a growing chorus from both sides of the disciplinary aisle,[32] all the articles here argue for working to connect this research with scholarship on current refugee situations and dilemmas. Nevertheless, in the case of East Central Europe, this seems to be indicative of more than just a communication gap between disciplines. Instead, it is symptomatic of a preconceived idea that historical refugees in the region have little in common with those encountered after the end of state socialism, or after 2015. Hence, for the region today, refugee history in East Central Europe might be considered an interesting and at times touching subject, but hardly one that possesses any explanatory power in the current world.

The articles in this issue were researched and completed before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but are published as post-communist countries in East Central Europe have turned into sites of refugeedom on a large scale. This reception of refugees in countries like Poland, Slovakia, and Czechia stands in stark contrast to the populist moral panic about migration and the stubborn refusal of these governments to accept even a small number of refugees from Asia or Africa in the preceding years. This selectivity of refugee reception and the discrepancies in how categories and state policies have been applied make refugee history in the region even more important. A critical assessment of how we examine and imagine refugee history also helps to understand which histories are made relevant and how solidarity is constructed and operationalized for refugee reception.

Toward a Research Agenda

Refugee history emerges in the historiography as a contested and easily politicized subject which plays a role in articulating national claims for recognition, territory, and victimhood. What differentiates the region is not the absence of refugees in the twentieth century, but an intensive experience of refugeedom. Therefore, reflecting on the history of refugees, and on the historical responses to them, has to become a part of a broader rethinking of the history of East Central Europe, looking beyond the East-West divide and the orientalizing and one-sided projections of backwardness, authoritarianism, and ethnic conflict. The research of forced migrations and ethnic cleansing is an essential aspect of coming to terms with the history of East Central Europe in the twentieth century. But this focus also perpetuates the "nationalization" of refugees as a re-

31 Ulf Brunnbauer: Globalizing Southeastern Europe: Emigrants, America, and the State since the Late Nineteenth Century, Lanham et al. 2016; Annemarie Steidl: On Many Routes: Internal, European, and Transatlantic Migration in the Late Habsburg Empire, West Lafayette 2021.

32 Tony Kushner: Remembering Refugees: Then and Now, Manchester 2006; J. Olaf Kleist: The History of Refugee Protection: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges, in: Journal of Refugee Studies 30 (2017), 2, pp. 161–169; Peter Gatrell: Refugees—What's Wrong with History?, in: Journal of Refugee Studies 30 (2017), 2, pp. 170–189.

search topic and largely precludes the study of reception and integration in the receiving countries, with the notable exception of co-ethnic refugees who were conceptualized as groups bound to a higher purpose of fighting for, establishing, or resurrecting the nation. Migration was therefore inherently linked to the troubled history rather than subjects like the rise of the welfare state or the development of civil society or a criticism of the attempts of nation-states to categorize, control, and limit refugee movement. There is also little research on the activity of international organizations and the impact of international agreements on refugees in countries like Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, or Hungary.

Without attempting to invent a better, more tolerant, and peaceful past or to erase any comparative differences, a new research agenda would require fresh questions, subjects, and methods. These would include a shift from researching the causes of human displacement and the suffering on refugee routes toward examining the conditions, debates, and inconsistencies of refugee reception. What did it mean for state authorities and societies in countries going through difficult times of their own to allow refugees to stay and to provide them with aid? What spaces of refugeedom can be identified and what interaction between refugees, state officials, and humanitarians did they produce? Imagining integration and its pitfalls would also be an important contribution to considering continuities and the shifts toward immigration societies. Methodologically, the research on refugeedom requires the integration of transnational approaches, a critical investigation of the structure of sources and genres of historical narration and a conversation across disciplinary gaps. In addition, such research agenda also holds a chance to complicate the history of refugeedom beyond the imagined "East" and to re-examine the reception of refugees beyond the legal, social and institutional framework of the "West." In this sense, the critique of the study of refugeedom in the "East" serves as a mirror to the selective filters of refugee history as linked to the "West." It offers a possibility to better think refugee protection without a priori associating it with political spaces governed by democratic values and human rights, democratic institutions, and the rule of law.

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