

Nicht hinreichend sichtbar werden hingegen Frauen nationaler Minderheiten sowie auch ältere Frauen.

Dem Autor:innen-Quartett ist ein richtungsweisendes Überblickswerk zur Geschichte der Frauen in Polen 1945–1989 gelungen. Die solide Publikation sollte jedes historische Seminar zur Nachkriegsgeschichte Polens unbedingt berücksichtigen. Es ist zu wünschen, dass die in dem Band nachgezeichneten gesellschaftlichen Prozesse und Diskurse bald dem deutschsprachigen Lesepublikum zugänglich gemacht und damit breiter rezipiert und die Ergebnisse in transnationaler Perspektive diskutiert werden können.

Hannover

Elzbieta Kassner

Andrejs Plakans: *The Reluctant Exiles*. Latvians in the West after World War II. (On the Boundary of Two Worlds, Bd. 45.) Brill – Ferdinand Schöningh. Paderborn u. a. 2021. 721 S. ISBN 978-3-506-76028-9. (€ 149,-)

Latvia lost up to a quarter of its population due to World War II through various factors, such as death, deportation, or fleeing the country. In absolute numbers, the population losses were about half a million, of which nearly 180,000 citizens fled to the west in the autumn of 1944. There has been a fair amount of research on the Latvian refugee community, but no one had attempted to write comprehensive overview of the history of this community. Andrejs Plakans, Professor Emeritus at Iowa State University, has now written such a monograph.

P.'s work is quite extensive—over 700 pages—but so is the subject of research: it covers all walks of life in the Latvian refugee community and the entire post-World War II period. The clear focus, however, is on the Cold War era; eight of the nine chronological chapters deal with it, and about half of the book covers the period from 1944 to the mid-1950s. The last chapter, which takes up about 15 percent of the total work, deals with the last three decades 1992–2021.

The reasons behind the structure of the work are understandable. While they reflect the author's own expertise, they also reflect how the Latvian refugee community developed in the decades following the end of World War II. In the refugee community, political and cultural activities peaked in the early postwar years before they gradually began to wane in the 1960s and beyond.

The broad perspective of the work is one of its strengths. Previously, smaller specialized studies focused on Latvian communities either in a particular country, or over a shorter period of time, often in the late 1940s or 1950s. The scientific level of previous research has differed, and non-academic studies make up a fairly large portion of the research. P. has done an extensive job, having gone through a very wide range of works written on this subject over the past 70 years. The references section is comprehensive, and it does not lack any essential printed material.

The broad thematic scope of the work is also positive. Most of the previous research has focused either on political work to restore Latvia's independence, or on the cultural aspects of certain exile communities. P.'s work takes into account the different spheres of life fairly equally. The author also draws attention to the development of the identity formulated by Latvian refugee communities, and the challenges posed by the definition of their identity, the preservation of the mother tongue, the adaptation to new homelands, and the pressures of acculturation and assimilation.

It is precisely the Latvian diaspora with all its variations that clearly emerges from this work—a group of exile communities that were divided into many sub-communities. Although these refugees were united by a common homeland and a desire to return after the restoration of Latvia's independence, the same ideologies and many other distinguishing factors remained among them as in any state or society. Geographical fragmentation posed additional challenges, since significant Latvian refugee communities existed in Western Europe, North America, and Australia.

The previous literature on the subject has been extensively traced and put to good use. The same applies to printed materials from the references section. However, the work does not use the archives of local Latvian communities around the world. The author rightly points out that these archives are fragmented and partly unorganized; going through them would be a huge task, not least due to the geographical distances involved. The omission of such archives is therefore understandable and acceptable. It can nevertheless be said that in this sense, the considerable scope of the research on this subject presents disadvantages as well as advantages.

The methodology used in the study consists of critiquing historical sources while emphasizing contextualization. The author states that the work is “a group biography,” but the actual theories of biographical research have not been applied. The work cannot be considered methodologically or theoretically ambitious, but the solution found is also understandable, considering that it is a matter of producing a comprehensive overview. P.’s work is at its best in that approach. The work is a combination of research analysis and the preparation of a handbook. Achieving completely new results is not at the center of the work, as seen in the fact that there is not a separate chapter on conclusions at the end.

Nevertheless, the work can be considered innovative. Careful “close reading” has been applied in the work. The author also considers causes and consequences, drawing a wealth of conclusions that are evenly placed throughout the nine chapters. Thus, a great deal of good analysis and new results can be identified in the work, but they have not been specifically highlighted, and thereby require careful attention from the reader. The text is generally fluent and easy to read. It is enlivened by abundant quotes from memoirs that illustrate many details and shades of interpretation. The citations would have provided an opportunity for further analysis, especially from the perspective of biographical research and the study of rhetoric and narratives. Of course, it would have meant a considerable amount of additional work, and a substantial increase in the scope of the volume if such methodological and theoretical options had been exercised.

Historical research on exile communities in East Central Europe has recently been on a clear upward trend, and much still remains to be done. One recent parallel example is Pauli Heikkilä’s monograph, published in the spring of 2022,¹ as it deals with the activities of Estonian refugees in a political umbrella organization called “The Assembly of Captive European Nations.” It represents more traditional research regarding Europe’s political history and is by its nature a special study based on original (primary) sources. However, different perspectives have their place; in that complex field, P.’s research represents a slightly different viewpoint from Heikkilä’s work.

Taken as a whole, P.’s work on the development of the Latvian exile community after World War II is a solid, carefully crafted overview that provides a complementary contribution to the study of East Central Europe during the Cold War era. The work provides a clear and diverse picture and serves as an excellent reference point in comparing the history of other exile communities from different nations with the case of Latvia.

Oulu

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¹ PAULI HEIKKILÄ: *Estonia as a Captive Nation: International Cooperation in Exile within the Assembly of Captive European Nations, 1954–1972*, Paderborn 2022.

Erik Radisch: Der Rat für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe als Konsensimperium (1949–1971). (Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa, Bd. 94.) Franz Steiner Verlag. Stuttgart 2022. 414 S. ISBN 978-3-515-13273-2. (€ 64,-)

In seiner über 400 Seiten umfassenden Monografie untersucht Erik Radisch die imperialen Beziehungen zwischen der Sowjetunion und den Staaten Osteuropas innerhalb des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (RGW). Dabei stehen die Machtverhältnisse in Entstehung und Frühzeit des RGW, also den 1950er und 1960er Jahren, im Mittelpunkt.