German Historical Institute London
Bulletin

Migration and Migration Policies in Europe since 1945. Conference organized by the German Historical Institute London in co-operation with the London School of Economics and Political Science, held online, 30 June–3 July 2021. Conveners: Ulrich Herbert and Jakob Schönhagen (Forschungsgruppe Zeitgeschichte, University of Freiburg), and Christina von Hodenberg (GHIL).

What has migration meant to Europe since 1945? The starting point for this international conference, held digitally and organized by the GHIL, was the hypothesis that previous works on migration history have either stuck to the level of the nation, or focused exclusively on international organizations and processes. It is rare to find comparative and synthesizing studies that bring these levels together. By looking at migration processes in eleven European countries along with the migration policies of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), the conference aimed to identify overarching national similarities and differences as well as breaks in continuity, and to question common historiographical narratives and periodizations, thereby laying the foundations for further transnational and comparative work.

In his keynote lecture, Peter Gatrell (University of Manchester) enumerated the themes that a European history of migration after 1945 cannot ignore, and put forward his own proposal for periodization. For Gatrell, the history of migration even after the Second World War can only be understood as a history of not just conventional, but also structural violence. Migration, he said, was in many cases not only an 'escape from violence', in the words of Aristide R. Zolberg, but also an escape into violence.[1] Gatrell argued that migration history must take more account of three factors: first, the influence of the European empires;

[1] See Aristide R. Zolberg, Astri Suhrke, and Sergio Aguayo, *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* (New York, 1989), 29–36.

second, the various demographic policies of the European national states; and third, European diasporas (for example, of the Bulgarian people). He went on to propose a periodization for European migration policy. After the continuing violence after the war (1945–49), the high point of planned migration (1950–73), and the Schengen era following the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, Gatrell suggested that the European states found themselves in a crisis about the right of asylum and were in a panic mode that has still not passed. He concluded with a plea for the public debate to be pluralized, and pointed out that historians can make a contribution to this.

The first panel, which dealt with Western European nations, began with Matthias Waechter (CIFE, European Institute, Nice) discussing inconsistencies in French migration history. Since the nineteenth century, he said, the French government had pushed the image of a welcoming land (*terre d'accueil*), but in fact utilitarian considerations, demographic patterns, and industrialization dictated French immigration policy. If the baby boom in France after 1945 meant that the demographic factor was no longer so important, the *Trente Glorieuses*—the thirty years of strong economic growth from 1945 to 1975—were characterized by a consensus about the need for labour immigration, one which tolerated illegal immigration. But the high unemployment rates of the 1970s put an end to this too. Instead, the notion of a tolerance threshold (*seuil de tolérance*) gained ground, suggesting a maximum acceptable level of immigration. Balancing these views, Waechter proposed that Gérard Noiriel's description of the country as a 'melting pot' was still meaningfully provocative, as both the idea of France as a failed country of immigration and the French republican model continued to shape the public discourse in France.[2]

In her paper, Becky Taylor (University of East Anglia) analysed UK immigration legislation, pointing to the long shadow of the British Empire on the country's migration history. This can be illustrated by reference to the British Nationality Act 1948, which established a single status of Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies for residents of both the UK *and* its colonies, giving residents of the colonies

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[2] See Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity* (Minneapolis, 1996), 265–79.

a new nationality which did not depend on being born in Britain. The provisions of the act were increasingly limited by further legislation in 1962, 1968, and 1971, which made immigration into the UK from the African and Asian Commonwealth more difficult. The British debate on European immigration did not begin until the introduction of EU citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. At the same time, the British government tried actively to reduce the number of successful asylum applications by passing numerous asylum laws in the 1990s.

Summing up, Leo Lucassen (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam) identified three fundamental aspects of change in the post-1945 European migration regime beyond the ongoing phenomenon of labour migration—namely, decolonization, the positive revaluation of refugee status after 1990, and the entitlement to welfare rights for migrants. These developments have stalled, as decolonization can be considered over, the welfare state is at present largely closed to immigrants, and asylum law has come under strong political pressure.

Jenny Pleinen (University of Augsburg/GHIL) then presented a case study in which she analysed the scope for action which local authorities had in Belgium's migration regime. After 1945 the Aliens Police, based in the Ministry of Justice and numbering only fifty officers, decided whether new arrivals had the right to remain. As in France, the status of people who entered without a visa but could demonstrate that they had employment was retrospectively legalized in Belgium. Pleinen showed that despite Belgium's centralized immigration policy, local authorities could offer bureaucratic resistance to the Ministry of Justice by taking a long time to implement orders, not meeting formal requirements, or simply not consulting the Aliens Police. In the 1960s this scope for action, which de facto existed already, was formalized, and the administration was also decentralized.

The second panel, on Eastern and South-Eastern European states, was opened by Emilia Salvanou (Hellenic Open University, Athens) looking at the consequences of the Greek Civil War (1946–9), during which up to 10 per cent of the population took flight. The removal of children by both sides in the Civil War, who transported them to Eastern European countries or to Australia and the USA, is still the central historiographical and political point of contention. While migrant

workers in the 1950s tended to move internally to cities in Greece or externally to the USA, by the 1960s they wanted to go to Europe—and to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in particular. The end of the Cold War was a turning point, after which immigration into Greece, especially from Albania, increased strongly. Although at present 7 per cent of the Greek population does not hold a Greek passport, the Greek nation still sees itself as ethnically highly homogenous and the *jus sanguinis*—the principle of nationality law by which citizenship is determined or acquired by the nationality or ethnicity of one or both parents—is anchored in Greek citizenship law.

Dariusz Stola (Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw) emphasized Poland's special position as the only state represented at the conference which was a former member of the Eastern bloc. Because Poland had very small migration figures during the Cold War—in 1954, a total of only fifty exit permits were issued—smaller-scale movements of traders and seasonal workers are also taken into account. In the early years of the Polish People's Republic, only Germans and Jews had special permission to emigrate. They were permitted to leave the country in two phases—around 1950 and between 1955 and 1959—for the GDR, the FRG, and Israel. Finally, the end of the Cold War and Poland's entry into the EU were decisive turning points. Thereafter emigration increased sharply, especially to the UK, as emigrants could fall back on existing networks of Poles who had emigrated before 1945, of Solidarity refugees, and of *Aussiedler* (Germans who had been living in Eastern Europe).

Marie-Janine Calic (LMU Munich) gave an overview of migration movements to and from Yugoslavia. In the immediate post-war period, population groups were repatriated by the state, and the Hungarian, German, Jewish, and Muslim populations emigrated or were expelled. More than 100,000 people left the country as labour migrants between 1945 and 1963, mostly headed for the FRG, although this was illegal. The Yugoslav government opposed this, and the status of Yugoslav migrants in the FRG remained precarious until a recruitment agreement was signed in 1968. By passing an Amnesty Act in 1962, the Yugoslav government enabled former Nazi collaborators who had fled the country to come back, and about half of them—around 50,000 people—returned to Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav wars

(1991–2001), finally, resulted in the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War, in the course of which 25 per cent of the population left the former Yugoslavia.

Johan Svanberg (Stockholm University) opened the third panel, which brought together further national case studies drawn from Northern, Central, and Southern Europe. Svanberg described Sweden's post-war path from taking in Second World War refugees to actively re-cruiting labour. With this aim, the Swedish government as early as 1947 concluded bilateral agreements with Italy, Hungary, and Austria, until the Swedish unions pushed through a more restrictive immigration policy in 1967. In the 1950s most migrants to Sweden still came from Scandinavia, encouraged by the establishment of a Common Nordic Labour Market in 1954. Svanberg questioned the master narrative of a switch from labour migration to refugees and family reunions after 1975, as this interpretation was based solely on the deteriorating labour market in Sweden. In fact, migrant workers often worked alongside refugees, with no distinction being made between them.

In the following paper, Ulrich Herbert (University of Freiburg) looked at what happened to displaced persons, guest workers, refugees, and *Aussiedler* in the post-war history of the FRG. The integration of more than twelve million German refugees (displaced persons) from Eastern Europe after the Second World War—a quarter of the FRG's population—can be seen as a success, despite initial resentments. From 1955, the FRG began to recruit Southern European migrant workers, and this trend strengthened when the Berlin Wall was built in 1961. These were known as guest workers, and their employment was at first seen as a temporary measure. As was the case in other Western European countries, asylum law played only a marginal role in the FRG in the first two decades of its existence. This changed in response to a judgement of West Germany's Federal Administrative Court in October 1975 which guaranteed an unlimited right of asylum. Contrary to representations in the media, which concentrated mainly on Black refugees in the 1990s, two-thirds of the 2.8 million asylum seekers between 1986 and 2006 came from Eastern Europe. Over the same period, roughly the same number of *Aussiedler* arrived in Germany. Like the displaced persons in the immediate post-war period, they were given preferential treatment.

Oliver Rathkolb (University of Vienna) emphasized the special features of Austria's migration policy by comparison with Germany's. He pointed out that the status of displaced persons in post-war Austria was very different from that in Germany. By 1946, several hundred thousand *Volksdeutsche* – ethnic Germans who had lived in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe until 1945 — had been expelled from Austria, but thereafter about 350,000 were integrated. In Austria, recruitment agreements for migrant workers from Spain (1961), Turkey (1964), and Yugoslavia (1966) were negotiated by the unions and employers. The strong focus on cheap labour and the neglect of educational programmes explain why to the present day education is not highly valued by these groups. But the integration of Bosnian refugees after the Yugoslav wars must count as a success story. The higher educational level of the refugees on average compared to that of other migrant groups, as well as a sympathetic response born of imperial nostalgia in Austria, contributed to this.

Olga Sparschuh (TU Munich) explained that the usual account of Italy's migration history, which sees it change from a country of emigration to one of immigration in the 1970s, presents a more differentiated picture if internal migration is also taken into account. Between 1955 and 1971 about nine million Italians migrated within the country, which is more than left the country for Europe over the same period. Not only Munich, but also Turin was a destination for migrant workers from southern Italy. The year 1973, when for the first time more people immigrated than emigrated, marked the beginning of Italy's slow shift from a country of emigration to one of immigration. Until the 1990s, immigration was not legally regulated because of the low numbers. Several programmes were subsequently introduced to retrospectively legalize the status of immigrants.

In the first paper of the fourth panel, which looked at European and global aspects of migration history, Jürgen Bast (Justus Liebig University Giessen) explained that EU migration law now exerts a decisive influence on policy in the European national states. The path to this outcome can be explained by the close connection between EU constitutional and migration law. To start with, the Treaties of Rome established a split migration regime from 1958. This guaranteed freedom of movement within the European Economic Community (EEC),

but did not apply to immigrants from third countries and the French overseas territories. The Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into force in 1999, and the European Council meeting held in Tampere in the same year represented a turning point. The numerous guidelines sub-sequently adopted—on family reunification, for example—resulted in a common EU liberal asylum and migration policy for immigrants from third countries.

Michael Mayer (Academy for Political Education, Tutzing) then discussed a specific aspect of European migration history—namely, asylum in Europe. He started by looking at how international refugee law and the concept of asylum were shaped by the Western Euro-pean states and the USA in the immediate post-war period. At this time, the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention limited the concept of refugees to Europe and ignored refugee crises elsewhere. Mayer then emphasized what was different about the FRG in a European con-text—namely, that it anchored the right to asylum for those suffering political persecution in its constitution. The original aim of this clause was to help Germans who were being politically persecuted in the Soviet Occupation Zone, but it was made redundant as East Germans were automatically granted citizenship of the FRG.

Taking the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) as an example, Jakob Schönhagen (University of Freiburg) demonstrated that the UN did not identify refugee movements as a persistent political problem until the 1960s. Initially, the budget of the International Refugee Organization (IRO), which had existed since 1946, was savagely cut with the founding of the UNHCR in 1950 and the passing of the Geneva Convention on Refugees in 1951, and refugee policy was renationalized. Refugees were defined solely as European displaced persons—a problem unique to the past—and what Schön-hagen called 'a politics without future' was the result. It was not until the start of decolonization—with refugee movements during the Al-gerian War (1954–62), for example—that the UN gradually developed a more universal understanding of refugees, as codified in the New York Protocol of 1967. Schönhagen pointed out, however, that this more universal view was fragmented. While the UNHCR first co-ordinated comprehensive aid efforts in 1971 during the Indo-Pakistani war, it did not offer assistance during the war in Biafra or the Vietnam War.

The paper by Agnes Bresselau von Bressensdorf (Berlin Center for Cold War Studies) followed on chronologically from Schönhagen's presentation. She discussed the global refugee regime from 1970 in terms of the root causes debate in the UN and European practices in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The root causes debate—in which a German initiative of around 1980 suggested that preventing refugee movements in the first place should be prioritized over later humanitarian measures—was subsequently connected with the issue of structural inequality between the Global North and the Global South, something that had already been discussed for some time. Specifically, the member states of the European Community followed a strategy of regionalization for refugees from Pakistan and Afghanistan. By providing aid to refugees on the borders and involving the Turkish government, they attempted to keep refugee movements as far from European borders as possible.

Summing up, Ulrich Herbert suggested that a periodization pattern could be discerned for all the countries discussed. First there was the phase between 1944–5 and the mid 1950s, during which migration processes were shaped by the aftermath of war and decolonization. Second, in the West, the years between the mid 1950s and the early 1970s were marked by labour migration within Europe, while this did not apply in the political East with the exception of Yugoslavia. The third phase identified by Herbert, from the early 1970s to the years around 1990, was characterized in the West by a switch from labour migration to refugee and asylum migration. A great migration to the West began in the disintegrating Soviet empire, mostly by migrants seeking asylum, and in the special case of Germany as a destination, also the migration of ethnic German *Aussiedler*. After the fall of the Soviet empire, Western Europe began to close its borders to further immigration—with variable success—while eastern Central Europe saw refugees from the Global South seeking asylum for the first time.

Herbert also pointed out that the perspective of the refugees has found little consideration in the research, which is dominated by images of victims or pioneers. It has also become apparent that while mass migration has almost always resulted in significant challenges in the host countries, these were caused not so much by the immigrants themselves as by the reactions of the societies receiving them. While

Herbert personally favoured an analytical rather than an activist role for historians, he stressed the need for them to take a position in the current situation.

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