

## REMOVING PEOPLES: FORCED MIGRATION IN THE MODERN WORLD (1850–1950)

Conference at King's Manor, University of York, April 20–22, 2006. Jointly organized by the Department of History, University of York, the GHI Washington, and the GHI London. Conveners: Claudia Haake (University of York) Richard Bessel (University of York) and Dirk Schumann (GHI). Supported in part by a grant from the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, Germany.

Participants: Bain Attwood (Monash University), Donald Bloxham (University of Edinburgh), Detlef Brandes (University of Düsseldorf), Mark Copland (Griffith University), Donald Fixico (Arizona State University), Tim Alan Garrison (Portland State University), Christian Gerlach (University of Pittsburgh), Joanna de Groot (University of York), Mark Jenner (University of York), Kiera Ladner (University of Western Ontario), Paul Lovejoy (York University), Alf Lüdtke (Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte, Göttingen and University of Erfurt), Benny Morris (Ben Gurion University of the Negev), Shane O'Rourke (University of York), Raquel Padilla (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia), Gyanendra Pandey (Emory University), Indra Sengupta (GHI-London), Andrea Smith (Lafayette University), Ronald Suny (University of Chicago), Ian Talbot (University of Southampton), Gabriella Treglia (University of Durham), James Walvin (University of York), Benjamin Ziemann (University of Sheffield), Jürgen Zimmerer (University of Sheffield).

The goal of this three-day conference was to address the problem of forced "mass" migration, which in its scale, according to the convenors, was the peculiar feature of a particular era, roughly from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. The convenors especially highlighted the role of colonialism and war behind forced migration in the modern world. The conference focused mainly on the period 1850–1950 and sought to examine the phenomenon in a global comparative framework, but with constant reference to individual cases. By bringing together scholars working on the history of forced migration on five continents and drawing on their regional expertise, it tried to identify analytical and conceptual categories for a general understanding of forced migration in the modern world. The conference was divided into an introductory section, four regional panels, a section on postcolonial migrations, and a concluding panel and discussion.

The introductory panel "Conceptualizing Forced Migration" addressed some fundamental conceptual questions, including those of terminology, relating to forced migration. The first paper, by Alf Lüdtke ("Explaining Forced Migration"), addressed some of the fundamental problems associated with the subject of the conference. Disavowing any claims to explaining forced migrations, as the title of his paper suggested, Lüdtke instead posed the question, "Is the claim to 'explain' historical events and processes legitimate and adequate?" He drew on recent research on the subject in various regional studies and emphasized the need to examine forced removals not just at the macro level of policy, but to pare the phenomenon down to the micro level of practice on the ground, or what he called "face-to-face settings and figurations." He emphasized the need for more focused research on emotion (covering a huge and complex range and including perpetrator, bystander, survivor, and indeed all other involved parties) and violence in order to better understand forced migration. He drew attention to the nature of the states that forced people out and suggested that it was not only strong states but also weak ones that were involved. He also drew attention to the need to study the precise links between state-organized and -sponsored violence for the sake of creating a homogeneous nation-state and the readiness of people to accept such violence as their own agenda. In this context, he urged the need to learn from studies of massacre. Finally, Lüdtke pointed out the inadequacy of terms such as "forced migration" for conveying the emotional charge that the process entails, and urged a rethinking of the terminology for "tracing the emotional dynamics."

Claudia Haake's paper "Breaking the Bonds of People and Land" argued for the need to distinguish between the question of land and that of nation-building by focusing on the relocation of Native Americans following the Relocation Act of 1830 in the United States. Drawing comparisons between the forced migration of the Delawares in the United States and the Yaquis in Mexico, which occurred simultaneously, she argued that land appropriation was the dominant agenda of such removals and a product of colonization. In the case of the United States, she argued, this economic agenda of land grabbing remained a covert one, as the official and more widely-publicized reason was to "turn the Delawares into Americans," but it far outweighed the rhetoric of cultural assimilation and racial ideology.

The second session, "Colonialism and Removal: Removal in the Americas," moved on from theoretical concerns to the specific studies of the subject in North America. Many of the issues raised by the first session, such as war, colonization, the nation-state, and modernity, were addressed with respect to individual case studies. The papers were dedicated to an understanding not only of policy-making but also the per-

ceptions of the “removed” in the context of white colonization of America and the making of the nation-state in the United States, Canada, and Mexico from the eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century. Thus, multiple narratives were used to reconstruct events in order to attempt to understand forced removal from the point of view not only of the policy-makers but of the removed as well. In this context, the panel also raised the issue of material and psychological benefits associated with self-perceptions of suffering of affected communities. Finally, the panel extended the idea of forced removal from war to the long-term “vanishing” of peoples. Tim Alan Garrison’s paper “Rationalizing Removal: The Southern Strategy for Dispossessing American Indians” illustrated how an essentially cultural and racial ideology of white moral superiority and civilizing mission infused the legalistic arguments made by the supreme courts of the southern states to dispossess American Indians of their right to land. Garrison stressed that while these arguments in no way reflected the situation on the ground and while they were forms of “rationalization” or “strategies” of appropriation, nineteenth-century white southerners were convinced of the righteousness and morality of these arguments to exert claims to possession of Native American land.

In his paper “The Federal Indian Relocation Program of the 1950s and the Urbanization of Indian Identity,” Donald Fixico spoke about the emergence of a specifically urban Indian identity in the wake of the voluntary relocation of Native Americans returning from military service to American cities such as Los Angeles, Denver, and Salt Lake City from 1952 to the early 1970s. The relocation program offered by the U.S. government, argued Fixico, had behind it the cultural agenda of fashioning Americans out of American Indians and persuading them to give up not only their traditional lifestyles but also the “native ethos.” In the long run, urbanization weakened this ethos, but it also led to the new development of “urban Indianization.” While Native Americans have embraced Americanization, they have also retained elements of tradition, in what Fixico calls an urban Indian identity or a “new urban tribalism.”

Kiera Ladner’s presentation “Canada: Where did all the ‘Indians’ go? Living with the Results of Relocation” approached the subject in the form of the narrative of the dispossessed, as she openly eschewed theory and talked “about the community.” Emphasizing the divergent notions of land held by the white settlers, for whom land was associated with national boundaries, and the Cree Indians of Canada, to whom land represented sacred space, she spoke about the gradual erosion of the latter’s right to self-determination and land control since the colonization of Canada in the eighteenth century. Thus, the history of the Canadian nation was, in Ladner’s view, the story of the “vanishing Indian.”

In the final paper of the session, "Slavery and Suffering: War and Deportation According to Yaqui Narrative," Raquel Padilla examined Yaqui narratives of the experience of their deportation from Sonora to Yucatan in and shortly after 1900. She juxtaposed these with official accounts of the event to focus on the discursive meaning and use of the term "slavery" by the Yaquis to describe their experiences in Yucatan. The reasons for such a perception of their status in Yucatan in Yaqui memory and the continued use of the term "slavery" in their oral narratives may be attributed, argued Padilla, both to the advantages it must have brought them from the revolutionary government at that time, as well as to the fact that the narrative of their enslavement in the past may serve as a symbol of "their capacity to overcome and prevail" and hence a source of self-esteem for present Yaqui generations.

The subsequent panel focused on the regions of Africa and Australia. The themes of traumatic experience and the operative aspects of forced removal, national identity, the resistance to forced removal, the role of law, the importance of various kinds of narratives, and the need to study displacement on a global scale were some of the issues addressed in the section. Paul Lovejoy in his paper "The Slave Trade as 'Forced Migration'" conceptualized the phenomenon of forced removal in the context of not merely the transatlantic but also the inland slave trade in Nigeria. Speaking at length about inland slavery, Lovejoy emphasized the difficulty of finding a common pattern on the slave trade in African history, concluding that there was no "normal" or "typical" pattern of forced removal, but highlighting the long-term consequences of such removal in Nigeria.

Mark Copland's paper "Calculating Lives: The Number and Narrative of Forced Removals in Queensland 1859-1972" and Bain Attwood's paper "Land and Removal in British Settler Societies" returned to the question of colonization and forced migration in white settler colonies. Copland focused on the suffering and trauma of the removed aboriginal people by referring to their own testimonies or those of their family members. He emphasized the huge discrepancy between the real and stated reasons for large-scale removal of aboriginal peoples. He pointed out that, while the rhetoric of forced removal was dominated by a concern for the physical and mental health of the aboriginals and untrue assumptions about the aboriginals' ties to land and family, the real reasons were more closely related to the needs of a dominant society to discipline indigenous peoples and acquire their lands. Bain Attwood took a comparative approach that included the cases of the aboriginal peoples of Australia and the Maoris of New Zealand, but he also drew parallels with the colonization of North America. Emphasizing both material conditions as well as discourse, Attwood attempted to provide an analytical

framework for understanding land dispossession of the indigenous peoples in the different British settler colonies. The starting-point of his comparison was that, unlike in the other settler colonies, the British in Australia never acknowledged aboriginal rights to land and consequently did not enter into treaties with them. Of central importance, argued Attwood, was the role of what he described as several "independent variables" in the early stage of colonialism. These ranged from ground realities such as the relative strength of white settlers, their economic relationship with the indigenous peoples, and the location of governmental authority in the colonies to cultural and discursive factors such as current British theories about sovereignty and property rights, especially regarding aboriginal land rights, as well as perceptions of aboriginal people, including their military capacity. Attwood argued that it was the situation on the ground in the colonies that gave force to the legal and cultural discourses and to laws, as settler colonialism required "new legal arrangements" regarding land. In this sense, Attwood suggested, the phenomenon of land rights and dispossession in the settler colonies "lies at the heart of the making of the modern world."

The following session, "War and Removal: Removal in the Middle East and South Asia," included four case studies. Benny Morris in his paper "Expulsion and Thinking About Expulsion in the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948" attributed the origins of the Palestine refugee problem not to what he described as a "preconceived master plan" or "governmental policy decision" on the part of either the Arab states or the Zionist leaders, as has been propagated in Zionist propaganda and traditional Arab historiography respectively. Instead, he asserted that it stemmed from a "mindset of transfer" that emerged from the war of 1948. While admitting the existence of a long-term "transfer thinking" among some Zionist leaders, Morris argued that it was the real threat of extinction of the Jewish settlers as a result of increasing Arab violence as well as the Holocaust from the 1930s on that led to the hardening of the expulsionist mindset, not just among the Zionists but also the Arabs.

Ronald Suny in his paper "Explaining Genocide: The Fate of the Armenians in the Late Ottoman Empire" carried the theme of forced removal a step further by focusing on genocide. He rejected the traditional interpretations of the Armenian genocide in nationalist, religious, or racist terms and emphasized instead the role of "affective experience" in understanding such phenomena that, according to him, social science had far too long neglected. Suny returned to the theme of the perpetrators' mindset, which in his opinion can be better understood with reference to emotions such as fear, pride, anxiety, resentment, and so on that in his view were associated with national or ethnic identity. It was

these “irrational” factors that Suny held led to the construction of the Armenian as the enemy of the Turkish people.

Gyanendra Pandey’s paper “A Forced Removal That’s Barely Noticed: The Case of British India’s Untouchables” approached the subject of forced removals in terms of forgotten histories of forgotten peoples, that is the disappearance or “flattening” of certain groups in historical writing on moments of extreme violence, in which, he argued, the historian too is culpable. Pandey urged the recovery of such histories. Describing the erstwhile “Untouchables” or “Dalits” as “nobody’s people” at the time of the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, Pandey dwelt on the economic motive of land-grab that he sees as the main reason for the removal of Dalits (90 percent of whom were agriculturalists) from their rights to land and the systematic policy of the post-Partition states to deny Dalits these rights. He also drew attention to the close link between homeland and history: The Dalits’ lack of land, or homeland, explains their disappearance from history. However, just as this was a story of land denial that needed to be told, Pandey asserted that Dalit struggles to acquire land and status must be seen as a means to find a place in a democratic order. Ian Talbot in his paper “Forced Migration and the 1947 Partition of India: A Comparative Study of Punjab and Bengal” pointed out the need to focus on the meta-narratives of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, which in his opinion had long been overlooked because of the need for a broad narrative. He highlighted the complex, politically driven and contested history of the phenomenon in the two partitioned arms of the subcontinent, namely Punjab and Bengal.

The papers in the panel “War and Removal: Removal in Europe” drew attention to the management and operation of forced removal, and raised the issue of ideology vis-à-vis contingency in this context. Detlef Brandes’s paper “National and International Planning of the ‘transfer’ of Germans from Czechoslovakia and Poland” dwelt on the planning and execution of the transfer of Germans in these territories beginning in 1941. Brandes pointed out that although at the end of the war alternatives to solving the question of minorities existed, in their treatment of German minorities both Poland and Czechoslovakia opted for a narrow definition of the nation-state. Following from this, they opted for ethnic cleansing and expulsion of their German population. Shane O’Rourke in his paper “Trial Run: The Deportation of the Terek Cossacks 1920” argued that the deportation of the Terek Cossacks by the early Bolshevik state in 1920—the first Soviet attempt at large-scale deportation—although not numerically significant, nevertheless contained many critical aspects of the organized deportations of the later Stalin period, or what O’Rourke describes as the “manifestation of a high modernist ideology.” Donald Bloxham’s paper “Forced Population Movement in Europe, 1875–1949”

identified the Great Eastern Crisis of 1875 and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as the starting point of what he described as a genealogy of mass removal. Stressing the role of contingent factors in forced removal, Bloxham highlighted the role of war as a vital contingent factor in the history of forced removal; for example, he said, population exchange or deportation was often resorted to in order to pre-empt war.

The panel "Post-Colonial Forced Migration," which was the only session organized not regionally but chronologically, consisted of two papers that stretched the analytical category of forced removal to include strategic removals for pacification and repatriation of once-privileged colonial elites. Christian Gerlach's paper "Sustainable Violence: Depopulation, Strategic Villages, and 'Development' in Anti-guerrilla Warfare" argued that anti-guerrilla strategic resettlement was a key factor behind endemic and sustained violence in large parts of the world. Drawing upon the example of such tactics employed by the Germans in the Soviet Union in World War II, Gerlach observed that this pattern of anti-guerrilla strategic resettlement since the 1940s had become a worldwide phenomenon, often in nations on the road to decolonization. While admitting that forced resettlement itself was nothing new, he nevertheless argued that the "newness" from the 1940s onwards was the offer of tangible material incentives designed to win sympathies of the resettled and their participation in the existing or emerging political system. The significance of this participation, Gerlach argued, lay in the fact that it drew citizens into conflicts, and the resultant "participatory violence" led to the creation of what he calls "extremely violent" societies.

Andrea Smith's paper "Sending the Colonists 'Home': The Peculiar Experience of Post-colonial Exile" used the category of home to analyze the sense of loss of home and homeland by the French colonial elite of the *Pieds-Noirs* in the wake of French decolonization of Algeria and their reluctant "return migration" to France. Smith admitted the difficulty of conceptualizing the experience of the *Pieds-Noirs* as forced migration, as they were obviously a privileged group compared to other dispossessed peoples, and were given preferential treatment in France. Nevertheless, she raised the question of whether the sense of being uprooted and homeless, even by a privileged group, was fundamentally different from that of the victims of forced removal.

The last session, "Explaining Forced Migration," which also included the final discussion, was conducted in the form of observations by Richard Bessel and Joanna de Groot on forced removal and on the products of the conference sessions. Bessel focused on certain themes that in his view would help to understand and conceptualize the problem. Underlying these themes, Bessel suggested, was the modern age and modernist ideology, which in his view provided the common thread between the sub-

ject of the conference in general and the individual papers. He drew attention to the specificities of the period 1850 to 1950: the availability of the technological means that enabled forced removal of people on a large scale; the increased contact of people with others; the growth of a modern state; the development of the conviction to produce homogeneous states, coterminous with scientific thinking and "nation-thinking"; and the emotions such as anger, fear, and resentment that characterized twentieth-century history. He also raised the question of the role of religion, especially in delineating groups and influencing civilizing ideologies, and ideology, both as "everyday practice" as well as informing policy-making, and reiterated concerns for the need to think about forced migration not just as policy-making but also as on-the-ground practice. Bessel also stressed the need to look more closely at the "voices of the removed," their memories, and the generational differences in these memories. Joanna de Groot suggested power and its many forms and modes as a conceptual framework for understanding forced removal. Power, she argued, could be that over human bodies, goods, and cultural power, including the politics of narrative and language, which for example could "erase people" through "epistemic violence"; or it could be power of memory, the power of institutions such as the modern state, and power as status-led or gendered.

The final discussion returned to many of the themes addressed in the course of the conference, and sought to conceptualize them in terms of the connection between modernity and forced migration and removal. The conference made a laudable contribution to global history by examining a global phenomenon of the modern world and trying to achieve a general understanding of it, but with the help of specific regional studies.

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