

Imogen Bayley

**FIGHTING FOR A FUTURE:
POSTWAR MIGRATION POLICY AND THE DISPLACED OF THE BRITISH ZONE
(1945-1951)**

Abstract

Far from sites of bare survival, the Displaced Persons (DP) camp universe that emerged at the end of the Second World War represented a lively world of debate and activity. Fundamentally, this thesis explores the interaction between migration policy and the migration strategies of those Displaced Persons (DPs) who populated the DP camp universe of Occupied Germany from 1945-1951. It demonstrates in particular how the policies of the British Zone impacted DPs' itineraries after 1945 and aims to highlight the structural factors that constrained the lives of postwar displaced persons, while examining the ways in which DPs own migratory strategies adapted to, negotiated and even challenged those constraints.

At the DP level, this thesis systematically compares the migratory experiences of Polish and Jewish DP communities. It examines how both communities made sense of displacement after 1945 and the ways in which DP nationalism may be said to have guided different DP communities' decision-making with respect to migration. As much as ethno-national distinctions gained currency in the DP camps, Polish and Jewish DP communities hardly constituted a unified or coherent group. Importantly, the systematic ethno-national comparison between Polish and Jewish communities offered in this study is also tested against the individual account. Particularly where resettlement abroad was considered, it is this project's contention that alternative identifications gained primacy and, to some extent, challenged notions of solidarity as DPs looked forward. As much as the experience of displacement is shaped by diverse structures, including—but not limited to—social class, gender, age and religion, so too were the imagined and realized visions of the future outside the displaced persons camps. Of central concern, therefore, is where it was, exactly, that DP individuals saw their futures, if anywhere, and how these visions were affected and adapted.

The flesh of this study are the Care and Maintenance Files (CM/1 Forms) of individual DPs, accessible through the records of the International Tracing Service

(ITS) archive. Although official in setting, ITS records go a long way to evidencing evolving DP strategizing with respect to migration and are at the heart of this research as a body of sources not yet actively engaged with in scholarship on migration out of Displaced Persons camps.

While the past few decades have seen a steady stream of scholarship devoted to DPs in the aftermath of the Second World War, there is today a new wave of interest in chronicling the voices of the agencies and governments who came into contact with them and in particular, of the DPs themselves. In its exploration of the relationship between formalized collective pressure and individual migratory considerations, and its juxtaposition of the individual and the collective, this research offers a fresh analysis of the migratory experiences of Displaced Persons after the Second World War and what this can reveal about displacement more generally. While the life of the refugee was constrained by very real structural factors, displaced subjects with specific experiences sought to modify their circumstances by making choices and acting upon them.