

Sternberg, Jan Philipp. *Auswanderungsland Bundesrepublik. Denkmuster und Debatten in Politik und Medien 1945–2010.* Paderborn, 2012

Sternberg² does not seek to describe comprehensively the emigration movements of post-war Germany in this historiographical investigation, but he focuses on the first 15 years of the young Federal Republic. Furthermore, this book is also different to previous research,³ because authors' intention is not to identify the original causes of emigrants or is not searching for reasons why they are leaving their countries.⁴ Sternberg explains more exactly what he aims to investigate in his research approach: "to put the perception of the migratory reality of post-war Germany in focus, to search for thinking patterns in politics and media by dealing with emigration, ask about the influence of these thought patterns, and about the conceptions of the German Federal Republic in this policy area." (p. 13) Thus, it becomes obvious that Sternberg is also interested in the other end of the story of migration (immigration) as he wants to find out how emigrants and immigrants have been viewed in public.

Author focuses on the history of German refugees, displaced people, migrant workers and Eastern European refugees in the period from 1945 to 1961. Sternberg also examines which were the major emigrational concepts of politicians and journalists between 1945 and

² Jan Philipp Sternberg was born in 1974. He studied history, political science and German literature in Freiburg, Berlin and Ann Arbor. Sternberg is a historian (PhD), newspaper editor and author. Today he lives in Potsdam. Source: <http://www.imis.uni-osnabrueck.de/PUBLIKAT/shm.html>, accessed on 01.04. 2013

³ Please consider a short quotation in this respect: "We also find that an outflow of unskilled workers would lower growth and welfare. In this case, the lowered supply of unskilled workers lowers the relative wage of the skilled and thus reduces the incentives for higher education among skilled workers." - in Lundborg, P., Rechea, C. (2002): Will Transition Countries Benefit or Lose from the Brain Drain?, in: International Journal of Economic Development, 5, 3, p. 17; Opinion polls have been conducted by the IOM in 1998 and by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in 2002; For example the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions estimated that around 1% of the EE population between the age of 15 to 65 would be ready to emigrate into EU-15 states in the next 4 years

⁴ It has to be considered that there is no comprehensive research on the emigration history of the early 2000s, and if data is needed from this period, one must rely primarily on different statistics of the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees or EUROSTAT.

2010 in Germany. Sternberg puts following questions during his analysis:
⁵ How was the subject of emigration reflected by politics and media in the Federal Republic of Germany? Which ideologies and traditional lines were active by dealing with emigration? How these attitudes have been modified between post-war Germany and the 21-Century?

Structure

The book has 253 pages and it is divided into following parts: preface, introduction, six main chapters and an Appendix. The titles of the main chapters are by numerical order:

1. Movements: European and German migrants 1945-1961;
2. Traditions and changes by dealing with emigration in the field of politics and media;⁶
3. Between fear and usefulness - across different periods of thinking and debate of > talking about emigration;⁷
4. Restricting and excluding: specific debates of the German post-war period;⁸
5. The Federal Republic and the emigration from the mid-1950s to the 2000s;
6. Concluding remark;
7. Appendix: pages 235-253.⁹

The book is well organized and that strong structure (balanced main chapters with specific subunits) enables a quick orientation by reading. This observation is also true for the Appendix, because through its clear structure and content, author can show a variety of historical and

⁵ Source: the abstract from the backside of the book.

⁶ Subchapters of chapter 2. are the following: 2.1. Lines of tradition of German emigration policy; 2.2. The new and the old role of the state: Political actors in the post-war period; 2.3. The media of the post-war years and its references to the topic of emigration.

⁷ The subchapters of chapter three are: 3.1. Overpopulation; 3.2. The fear because of shortage of skilled workers; 3.3. The dream of settling.

⁸ The subdivisions of chapter four are: 4.1. > Common destiny <Germany and the fundamental right to emigrate; 4.2. Refugees and displaced persons: inclusion and exclusion processes in post-war society; 4.3. Emigration of women; 4.4. The horror scenario of foreign legion.

⁹ The subdivision of the Appendix is: 7.1. Abbreviations; 7.2. Archive collections; 7.3. Printed sources; 7.4. Newspapers, radio broadcasts and periodicals; 7.5. Literature.

medial sources. He exploits following items as sources: political debates, draft papers of referents (department of emigration), reviews of daily and weekly newspapers, essays of professional journals, articles of business magazines, reports of conferences charity institutions (mainly ecclesiastical, but even national and other are present) and different memorandums. Sternberg's study also involves important references to recent and current research literature.¹⁰

Content

The book is based on the author's doctoral thesis of 2009 presented at the University of Osnabrück in Germany. Sternberg presents the emigration of displaced persons (DPs), concentration camp survivors and forced labourers¹¹ by focusing on the period from 1947 to 1952. The Americans and the British mainly organized this undertaking. Author introduces and outlines the facts related to this organized emigration in the first chapter, but he does not mention them in the following chapters. Certainly, the focus of the book is on "German emigrants" and guest workers, and on those German ethnics, who were classified by the Nazis as the "German people" ("Volksdeutsche") in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union too. This kind of description makes sense when it should be shown, as here, how politicians and media was reacting on the emigration of people with whose fate the population of Germany felt by some means tied.¹² Nevertheless, DPs were not among those who could enjoy the fellow feelings of the people of Germany. However, the chapter suddenly ends here, before the topic could have been deepened. Even if the mentioned interpretation is mainly introduced and it is not critically analysed, it can be considered as an interesting insight about post-war Germany. Similar findings of Sternberg will follow further on in this study.

There is an overview on emigration concerning the outflow of people from the country in the early years of the Federal Republic before chapter two really begins. After this overview, author refers to the attitude (national and foreign affairs) of the respective authorities and opposition.

¹⁰ These are mainly published in the mid-2000s because before 2000 there were only brut statistics and various social questionnaires, but (with certain international exceptions) there was no professional German literature on migration).

¹¹ They were predominantly from Eastern European countries.

¹² For example: at various national levels.

Sternberg also mentions some arguments of the overseas countries;¹³ because these were the prime target territories preferred by German emigrants ever since the Federal Republic of Germany was founded; –as presented in the second chapter. Furthermore, author introduces the reader to certain fears and facts concerning overpopulation, as well as the viewpoints of associations of expellees and various churches on the topic of emigration. Then Sternberg explains how “the fear of shortage of skilled workers” (p. 98) was officially treated in Germany, because a number of well-qualified emigrants just followed their dreams to immigrate into overseas countries; -as described in chapter three.

The following chapter (four) contains a clear analysis of the political reactions to the emigration events. Here author focuses on the period from 1945 to 1952. After that, it follows an evaluation of media reactions to emigration, where Sternberg treats the periods of the early 1950s and 2000s. (Nevertheless, this is already the material of chapter five.) In the fifth chapter, author dedicates himself to the 1960s, when the shift happened: the Federal Republic transforms from an emigration country to an immigration target. Sternberg presents these developments up to the early 2000s in a short comparative outlook.

The written press is taken into account from both periods in the comparative outlook, thus, in the 1950s, also the radio and in the 2000s in addition the television. In this respect author mentions the low quality of emigrant-soap operas:¹⁴ TV crews follow current German emigrants on their happy or unhappy way into a new life. Therefore, emigration history of the 2000s and its reception in the media are outlined in parallel in chapter five. Author effectively shows the parallels between the media reception of the emigration in the 1950s and 2000s. Furthermore, the reader finds out that “even the fear of the brain drain” (p.110) has its origins in the post-war period. Indeed, author lists an impressive number of headlines of the 2000s. Consequently, the “widespread fear of losses - especially against the loss of skilled workers and specialists” (p. 98) is a proven circumstance.¹⁵

Sternberg dedicates the topic of female emigration one separate subsection (4.3. Emigration of women). A closer evaluation of the book Authors’ analysis of the reception of emigration in the media succeeds much better than the reception of emigration events in politics. Therefore, Sternberg’s media category (as studied research unit) is more developed,

¹³ Sternberg means here particularly the U.S.A., Canada and Australia.

¹⁴ You can consider this on page 218-220 (chapter 5).

¹⁵ Please visit page 199- 202 in order to see the connections.

than the political one. Author categorises newspapers and magazines according to their political directions of then.¹⁶ Moreover, there is an interesting comparison of different perspectives of politics at one side and concerning media views, on the other side. Therefore, the reader meets not only the German macro perspective on the topic, but also can read specific individual views about migration. Consequently, emigrants have had the possibility to speak often for themselves. The population received very well their explications until the following argument was activated: German national economy seems to be in danger because of migration flows. This was a kind of bad sign in debates because from that point, almost all politicians and the media expressed the same opinion: they repeatedly refused to see emigration as positive trend and were speaking against it.

Chapter three and four are the core of Sternberg's work. He manages to write it surprisingly and even if information and data is rather dense in the middle of the book, the facts and circumstances presented here are in a well-structured chronological context. Furthermore, author points out the enthusiasm, naivety or even the incomprehension of political actors. Therefore, the West German official mentality was highly charged with stereotypes vis-à-vis mass emigration processes in the early 1950s. It seemed so, that certain politicians used it as tactical manoeuvring and for their own image building, because sometimes they praised migration processes and when public mood changed, they just cursed it. In combination with the imperialist-style settlement projects that still existed at that time,¹⁷ makes possible to suppose the imprudence of political decision makers by dealing with migration in the early years of the Federal Republic. Indeed, political actors often ignored to learn from those vast experiences that Germany, as a country of mass emigration, already gathered in the 19th and early 20 Century.

Hence, the West German policy was caught between two major fears regarding emigration: overpopulation and lack of skilled labour. German politicians were not able to develop effective strategies on migration. Example: overpopulation was described in 1950 as "social nuclear bomb" (p.94) by certain political actors (Federal Transport Minister, Seehofer) in the early Federal Republic.¹⁸ Seehofer argued

¹⁶ This is mainly true for the 1950s.

¹⁷ This were mainly in South America.

¹⁸ This was the formulation of the Federal Transport Minister Seehofer, (from the German Party), at the day of the Sudeten Germans in 1950. Seehofer was an active supporter of the association of the Sudeten.

against emigration and Sudeten Germans were rather for it. Further, despite of the fact that there were two lost world wars, there were still certain people, who dreamed of German settlements outside the Federal territory. It is interesting that such dreamers were never in focus of public debates. However, there were several power-political considerations in the background, which would seem surely incomprehensible for a viewer of our times.

The problem of “Reichsdeutschen” and “Volksdeutschen” according to Sternberg, West German policy makers have thought very different about emigration of refugees and DPs. Better examples are the interpretations on “Reichsdeutschen” and “Volksdeutschen” in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Politicians differentiated between those, who lived before the war began on old German territories in 1939, and those who lived then, for instance in Czechoslovakia and Romania. The Nazis have declared the latter Germans to ethnic Germans (Volskdeutsche). Concerning the “Reichsdeutschen” it is to point out that “there was cross-party consensus in the early Bonn Republic to hope for the return of the territories east of the Oder and Neisse at least, thus it was not opportune to demand a mass emigration for ‚Reichsdeutsche‘ (...)” (p. 163) Concerning the situation of “Volksdeutsche”, this was totally different to “Reichsdeutsche”, because politicians, who ostracized this groups just demonstrated their own move away from Nazi definitions. Probably it became a beloved party-political tool because author states: “[...] And the more a foreign group was perceived as such, the easier it was to make them to emigrants with the help of collective attributions on the drawing board.” (p. 163)

There were severe problems because of high unemployment and lack of housing up to the beginning of the 1950s in the Federal Republic. That animated DPs, refugees or other potential candidates of emigration to choose the path of exodus. This was the destiny of (about) 13 million persons in the early post-war period. Author describes that politicians failed to offer viable solutions and integration policies to possible candidates for emigration.

Sternberg’s analysis on the representation of the political reception of emigration is incomplete, because there are no real connections to the basis of politicians: the large groups of different voters. This important factor coins different debates on emigration, because politicians are not simply discussing among themselves, by choosing what they want to talk. They have to work hard in order to convince their voting public. Thus, Sternberg’s presentation on political reception related to

“Reichsdeutsche” and “Volksdeutsche” in the late 1940s and early 1950s involves a deeper socio-political context. It is quite unclear who thinks what? Does the long established German public really share these political views? Who was lobbying against whom and in what kind of group constellations did that happened? Generally, it will be clear "the extent to which policy-makers and media debate participants were influenced by traditions" (p.228). According to Sternberg, traditional patterns influenced intellectuals and political staff in a large timespan. This reaches from the German Empire, Weimar Republic and National Socialism up to the early years of the Federal Republic.

There is another gap as well, because there is no information about the exact role of „Volksdeutschen“ in politics and society. Additionally, the reader cannot see data about how these expatriated groups influenced a certain phase of the political discourse at a specific time. This is also true if considering emigrants who migrated in the 2000s, as it is unclear, how they reacted to current media debates. This was a new generation, in comparison to the German emigrants of the 1950s. The new generation grew up in a democratic society and without the experiences of dictatorship, warfare and Holocaust. As a journalist and historian, author misses to clear a dilemma concerning current media platforms: are these really reproducing the patterns of thought of the general population in today's Germany?

Conclusions

Sternberg shows the reception of politics and media by dealing with the issue of migration in the Federal Republic. Agents of politics and media are coined by the fear of losing something important in dealing with migration. This fear is not in a scientific relation with emigration and immigration processes. There are invalid traditional patterns in combination with the topic of migration. The political and media debates about the emigration flows of the 1950s and 2000s are well analysed and correlated. Moreover, author shows a parallel to the debates about immigration that are similarly marked by different fears. Therefore, the reader is introduced to both sides of migration.

The study clearly proves that immigration and emigration are correlated processes. A deeper reading of the book shows that statistical sampling does not back certain statements of the author. There is an imbalance between the analyses of the reception of emigration events in politics and the reception of emigration events on the media. The latter

part is more developed as the first one. Other than, the subtitle might imply, Sternberg is particularly interested in the first fifteen years of post-war Germany as the country was predominantly coined by emigration flows.

This is an original work in the German migration research and it has the potential to produce noticeable impulses for further study by the reader.

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