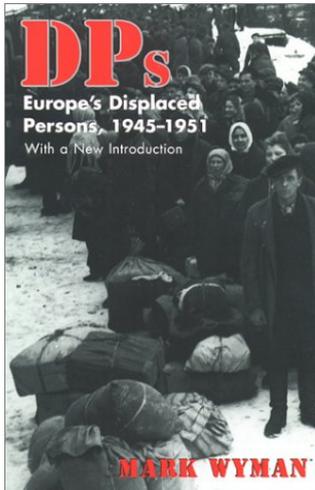


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**DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951 by Mark Wyman (1989), 257 Pages.**



This is the paperback reprint of a book originally published in 1980. An extensive Preface accompanies this new edition, which introduces younger readers to events that took place two generations ago and makes comparisons to contemporary refugee problems involving Croatia, Bosnia, Cuba, and others. Actually the saga of DPs is not entirely comparable.

Professor Wyman of Illinois State University made extensive use of written sources and conducted many interviews. Not being a witness himself, he leaves some gaps in his narrative and, on occasion, makes errors in his judgments. Still, it is a very commendable undertaking. The facts and statistics are these: when World War II ended in May 1945, no less than 7 million aliens were on the move within the borders of defeated Germany: fleeing, heading home, or just trying to survive. Add to this 8 million German soldiers just captured by the Western Allies. The enormity of human tragedies is overwhelming. By September 1945, two million Russians were "shipped" home, mostly POWs whose punishment by Stalin's henchmen was a foregone conclusion, so some preferred suicide; almost a million Poles pondered what to do, in addition to thousands in Great Britain or Italy; a quarter of a million Baltic nationals remembered With horror what had happened to an equal number dispatched to Siberia just a few years earlier. Thousands of Jewish survivors were also on the move, mostly en route to Palestine. British authorities were hoping that by Christmas of 1945 most DP's will be safely home. But Gen. Eisenhower began to worry that instead the refugees will begin to pile into hastily created camps, away from the German authorities. Yet Western experts should have known that their leaders caused most of these problems by signing the infamous Yalta agreements and giving away half of Europe to the Soviets.

Fortunately, American good will, similar to Hoover Mission in the 19.20s, soon formed an organization called UNRRA. The initials stood for United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, and one of its many divisions moved with great dispatch to Frankfurt in late summer of 1945. Here was the center of U.S. power in Europe, with Gen. Eisenhower's SHAFF Hq. next door. UNRRA is an integral part of the DP story: hundreds of fine social workers from all corners of the world opened a net of camps. All became caretakers of the immense variety of people, often with the considerable help from the U.S. or British military. True, complaints were heard because things were moving too slowly; many hated the designation DP, but it was the result of American liking of acronyms. After all, the soldiers who liberated them were called GIs; and these initials stood for a prosaic name, Government Issue.

The book presents a picture of moving humanity, with frequent scenes of chaos, so a short review cannot give justice to these complexities. But a satisfactory ending was obviously in sight when a massive emigration began. It was greatly facilitated by the special DP bill passed by the American Congress and by substantial help from the Canadian Government. Both countries ultimately accepted Polish residents of Great Britain. The emigration scheme was later taken over by IRO (International Refugee Organization), which covered both individual and mass movements. - - The book also relates stories of many other ethnic groups. It seems to me that special gratitude is due to various voluntary organizations which were of enormous help at that time, among them NCTJ (National Catholic Welfare Conference); CWC (Church World Services) which took care of the Protestant groups; and AJDC (American Joint Distribution Committee), actively assisting Jewish persons. Perhaps today these names mean little, but in the late 1940s they were of tremendous importance. Overall, one million refugees emigrated to 113 countries in 4 and a half years.

***George Suboczewski***