Narratives of Exile and Identity: Soviet Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States, eds. Violeta Davoliūtė, Tomas Balkelis, Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2018. 220 pp. ISBN 978-963-386-183-7

In 2018, the Central European Press brought out a book that is important for various reasons, *Narratives of Exile and Identity: Soviet Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States*. It is a revised and extended version of a book published in 2013 by the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, *Maps of Memory: Trauma, Identity and Exile in Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States*.

The editors of both books, Violeta Davoliūtė and Tomas Balkelis, have carried out a weighty task in gathering a group of acknowledged authors: the eight pieces were written by academics who are associated in one way or another with the Baltic States, but who are currently working at European or American universities or research institutes, and who have already made significant achievements in various spheres.

As the introduction to this anthology writes (on page 10):

A major conceptual goal of this collection is thus to bring out the diversity of the experience of Soviet deportation. The intention here is to grasp the multidimensional and multifaced view of the deportation rather than to construct an aggregate or master narrative of the event that currently dominates public discourse.

By revealing and reconsidering a variety of Soviet deportation experiences and their expression in historical and memory spheres, the authors of the articles in this book have achieved several aims: 1) the history of the Baltic States in the second half of the 20th century is still not very widely known outside the region, which is why the book serves as an ‘ambassador’, presenting the history and the historiography behind research; 2) paying attention to the interaction of history and memory makes it possible to record how the traumatic experiences of individuals and society influence their present-day existence; this approach is applied to research communication and cultural memory, history policy and identity formation in the Baltic States after 1990; 3) the three latter actions are carried out by using the existing historiography about the Baltic States, and declaring the need to react to trends that have formed in world historiography.

These aims determined the structure of the book. The first part seeks to answer the question how the Soviet deportations affected different groups in society in the Baltic States, children, adults, men and women. It also looks at how these experiences were expressed in various narratives and how the individual and collective identities interacted, and at the role traumatic experiences continue to play in the societies of the Baltic States. The latter questions are analysed in pieces by Alain Blum and Emilia Koustova, Tomas Balkelis, Aigi Rahi-Tamm and Aldis Purs.

The second part looks at how memories of deportation are preserved, and how they change and turn into various phenomena in the cultural memory field, incorporating them into the history policy being formed in 21st-century Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and the memory practices created by these countries. Dovilė Budrytė, Violeta Davoliūtė, Eglė Rindzevičiūtė and Aro Velvet focus on these questions.

How did the authors succeed in achieving their aims?

One of the most important theoretical provisions the editors made is stated in the introduction (on page 13): 'Interpersonal and intergenerational transference of memory is closely related to the question of the transmissibility of trauma.' This is without doubt a suitable reference point for researching the interaction of the history and memory of deportation.

In their research into the USSR's mechanisms behind the construction, repression, elimination from and return to social life of the 'enemy', and looking deeper into traumatic memory and the spread and transformation of narratives that it has inspired in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, the authors refer to rich and varied sources: documents kept in the Baltic States and the Russian Federation, the memories of deportees and their families that have been recorded in various ways, and interviews they conducted themselves. Through their work with this material, the authors have managed to identify five different processes: 1) an imagined group of people, created by a repressive Soviet institution influenced by the Stalinist way of thinking, which had to be deported; 2) the formation of a new collective identity of deportees living under special conditions, who constantly felt the effects of the strict rules that regulated every aspect of their lives; 3) the stigmatisation of people who returned from deportation, and their transformation into 'Others' in the eyes of most of their fellow countrymen; 4) the resurfacing in the public sphere of repressed memories in the 1990s, and their impact on the identity of Baltic societies; 5) the transformation of communication memory into cultural memory, and a history policy resource in the Baltic States at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Here are some examples of how the authors have achieved their goals and show the varied expression of narratives about deportation and deportation memories.

The piece by Tomas Balkelis ('Ethnicity and Identity in the Memoirs of Lithuanian Children Deported to the Gulag') presents the repressive formation process of the new deportee identity, and this identity's interaction with a person's ethnic and cultural identity. He studies the history of the survival of child deportees in the harsh, new reality.

Violeta Davoliūtė tackles the transformation of personal experiences and memories into narratives used by society to help form its identity ('... we are all deportees, removed from our land, our language, culture and history') in her piece 'We Are All Deportees. The Trauma of Displacement and the Consolidation of National Identity during the Popular Movement in Lithuania'.

Eglė Rindzevičiūtė, on the other hand, in her research into Lithuanian museums and their displays about deportation, questions the trend that has formed in historiography to assess the relationship of Lithuania and all countries in the Central East European region with traumatic history and memory themes only through 'state-sponsored ethnic nationalism', and shows that in most cases, memory preservation and interpretation institutions operate chaotically, rely exclusively on their own resources, improvise, and feel a constant lack of attention and funding from the state.

It is clear that the editors and authors of the pieces published in *Narratives of Exile and Identity* have performed a major task. Their book is one that authors of other articles and monographs will be able to refer to, checking and correcting statements about the formation of deportation history and memory, its expression, and interaction processes. At this point, it is worth recalling the astute observation by Leena Kurvet-Käosaar, one of the book's reviewers, who said that by choosing trauma as the most important point of reference, the authors have not made full use of the ideas and theoretical concepts clarified in the field of memory studies that analyse the transformation of traumatic experience into memory images, or the influence of traumatic memory on the lives of individuals and societies.¹

On the other hand, this is an opportunity for new research on the history and memory of deportations.

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