

Klartext

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Bade, Klaus J. *Homo Migrans: Wanderungen aus und nach Deutschland—Erfahrungen und Fragen*. Stuttgarter Vorträge zur Zeitgeschichte, 2. Klartext, Essen, 1994. 128 pp. Notes. DM 19.80: öS 155.00: sFr 20.80 (paperback).

HOMO Migrans is a short essay in which one of the leading German scholars in the field outlines German experience of migration and draws conclusions pertinent to the present-day situation. Apart from a brief outline of migratory movements involving Germans and the German lands, the book provides a guide to the author's own and other recent work on the issue.

For Klaus Bade, who is head of the Institute for Research into Migration and Intercultural Studies at Osnabrück University, historical research into migration is a necessary contribution to a contemporary debate. Fear and rejection of newcomers are common; however, Bade argues that they are neither caused by the immigrants nor anthropologically founded, but rather rooted in crises and problems experienced by the fearful themselves. To teach these natives that many of them also have an immigrant background, Bade draws a line from the Huguenots to the post-1945 refugees. On the other hand, Germans were also emigrants ranging over time from the so-called 'Saxons', who in fact left the regions of the Rhine and Moselle (not Saxony) to seek a better future in the Hungarian kingdom of the twelfth century, to more than five million Germans who, in the century before 1914, left their home countries for America.

There are interesting references to lesser-known emigrants, such as the 'Hollandgänger' who, during the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, earned their living further West as grass-mowers or peat-cutters, and the German alley-sweepers in Paris.

A second basic migratory experience which Bade illustrates is that of Germany as a labour-importing country. To meet the need for additional labour and, at the same time, to contain the paranoid fear of Germany being inundated by foreigners, a sophisticated system of rotation and controls was developed in the 1880s. It is one of the astonishing chapters in modern German history that only ten years after the end of the Nazi regime the recruitment of foreign (initially Italian) labour could resume without a critical review of past experience, and in particular of the Nazi system of exploitation which affected up to eight million foreign and forced labourers.

Post-war labour migration has resulted in a *de facto* immigration of non-German nationals, currently totalling more than six million: this is the starting point of the second half of the book, which is devoted to politics. As their situation and problems are in several respects similar, Bade links the labour immigrants with the post-1945 German refugees and expellees (whose alleged harmonious integration is one fundamental lie of West German history), the later ethnic German immigrants and even the newly incorporated population of the East German state: in this way migration and integration appear as basic experiences of a large part of Germany's population. At some points, such as when he writes about hostility towards immigrants, Bade prefers to indicate the lack of a compact explanatory model rather than presenting his own argument. That such a consistent explanatory model might ever be developed is probably an unrealistic expectation. The author is, however, in no doubt as to the nature of the major problem: the refusal, on the part of the political leadership, to accept and shape the reality of immigration. Repeatedly he attacks the perceived 'inability to act' (p. 80) which is coupled with a negative attitude to immigration. Marked by a remarkable confidence in the formative power of the state, the argument focuses on the demand for conceptual politics, for a positive and active approach. Apart from the active protection of minorities or new laws regulating immigration and access to German citizenship, Bade's principal demand is for an institutional centre of migration policies and for 'big', comprehensive and clear conceptions. We might not yet know what shape these concepts should take, but the political will to develop them and thus to accept immigration as a positive challenge would, in Bade's view, be a crucial step forwards.

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