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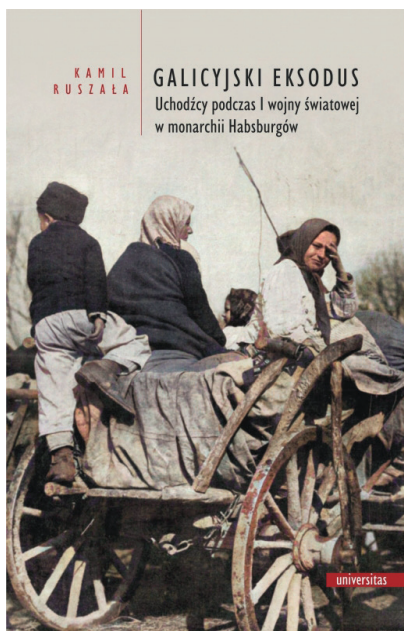
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[Review of]: Kamil Ruszała. Galicyjski eksodus. Uchodźcy podczas I wojny światowej w monarchii Habsburgów. Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS. Kraków, 2020. 480 s. +17 illustrations+folding map



The experiences of the first wars of the twentieth century, including hundreds of thousands of refugees, were overshadowed by the horrors of the Second World War. These events are evoked in their works by scholars dealing with the social history of the First World War. This strand, which analyses various aspects of everyday and uncommon life between 1914 and 1918, has become increasingly prominent in the public space and, above all, in historiography in recent years*. Nevertheless, it still contains a wealth of unexplored issues. It is precisely the issue of refugees in Austria-Hungary during the First World War, which is absent from popular memory, literature and historiography** that Kamil Ruszała has devoted his work to.

The reviewed publication is based on a doctoral dissertation defended at the Faculty of History of the Jagiellonian University in April 2018. It consists of five chapters in which the author discusses, in problem-chronological order, particular issues related to

* The development of interest in the First World War has been noticeable for years, but accelerated with the centenary of its outbreak in 2014.

**The problem of oblivion is even more apparent if we compare it with the state of research on the issue of refugees during the First World War on the Western Front, which the author discusses in the *Introduction*.

refugee themes in the Habsburg monarchy. He begins by outlining the mood of the first days of the war, the growing panic and the first spontaneous escapes, followed by a detailed analysis of the evacuation of three cities – Lviv, Przemyśl and Krakow. In the following chapters, he discusses all the refugee waves, analysing in detail their distribution in each of the Crown Countries, including quantitatively relying, among other things, on official statistical data. He outlines the process of establishing and operating refugee camps and refugee communities. He also describes everyday life (rightly described by the author as ((un)usual) and the relations arising between the population living in the areas where the refugees arrived and the refugees themselves. He devotes a separate space to a discussion of the successive legal acts regulating the problem in Austria-Hungary, and discusses the financial background of the entire relief operation organised by the state authorities and by various committees formed by private individuals and the refugees themselves. The final chapter discusses the process of return to the Galician territories, as well as the extremely complicated problem of the refugees' identity and self-identification in the face of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The layout of the book itself is well thought out and allows one to easily learn about the fate of the successive refugee waves. Also important is the explanation of the term refugee in the *Introduction*, where, importantly, the author cites a discussion among the interested parties themselves, who were searching for a Polish word to describe themselves. The citation of the discussion in the press between 1914 and 1915 is extremely interesting and provides an adequate introduction to the level of complexity of the subject matter addressed. While the layout of the book itself does not raise any major objections, it seems that the legal basis of the refugee problem in the Habsburg monarchy could have been discussed to a greater extent already in the first parts of the book. The reader does not become more familiar with the issue until the fourth chapter, making some of the earlier passages confusing as they repeatedly refer to, only briefly mentioned in the *Introduction*, legal acts.

The book is the result of a rich search in Polish, Ukrainian, Czech, Austrian and Slovenian archives. The result of this, as the author himself describes it, 'archival tour' (P. 37), was the acquisition of an extremely rich source base. This made it possible to create a narrative describing the life of the refugees from the perspective of the administration (central as well as the lowest level), of themselves, but also of the autochthones living in the places they reached. The sheer variety of sources that the author acquired during the research process is awe-inspiring. These include not only documents produced in the course of the state administration's activities, but also the press or book publications issued by the refugees themselves. The author has also not overlooked memoir literature, written in several languages. Use was also made of seemingly unobvious materials such as police records in Prague, which provided interesting case studies of the lives of Galician residents outside their crown land. The access to letters written by the refugees themselves, in which they described their fate, often demanding an improvement, should also be appreciated. They contain an enormous emotional charge and provide invaluable testimony of those days. The author's comment underlining the importance of these testimonies is accurate, pointing out that they were written by people for whom writing them was a great difficulty, resulting, among other things, from a lack of familiarity with the written word. On the other hand, such source material may raise objections of one-sidedness. Collected, it only presents the perspective of people brought to the brink and forced to fight to improve their lot. This is particularly true of the relationship with the indigenous population, since in the records of the administration, the police or the letters of the refugees themselves, one will rarely find

information on relations that were going well, as such did not require the intervention of these authorities. This fact is realised by the author himself, who is cautiously research-oriented when analysing these egodocuments, and cites examples of selfless help and compassion. It is also interesting to analyse the changing attitudes of both refugees, indigenous people and the administration over the course of increasing war fatigue and rampant overpricing.

In spite of the difficult subject matter, Kamil Ruszała's book is written with an extremely light touch. Its reading is engaging. The author has made use of an unusually rich source base to create a convincing analysis of the facts, recreates the most important processes without inundating the reader with an excess of individual facts. In many places, he limits himself to discussing a few selected examples representative of the phenomenon. This allows the reader to become familiar with the most important processes without artificially lengthening the narrative. He does so, for example, when analysing the camp system by discussing in detail the appearance and functioning of one of them – in the Lower Austrian Gmünd. It thus becomes a «model» of sorts, enabling the reader to form a picture of how similar institutions functioned throughout the Habsburg monarchy. The author's use of case studies does not merely enrich the narrative. Their skilful weaving into the content of the book, using the micro-historical method, is an element in the analysis of wider local phenomena. This is particularly true of the role of the stereotype, strongly present in the lives of refugees and the autochthons who encounter them.

In addition to his great meticulousness in recreating refugee life in the hinterland of Austria-Hungary, the author's extremely interesting reflections on the identity of the participants in the successive waves moving into the multinational state should also be highlighted*. It is intriguing to note the thesis that it was the First World War that provided the first opportunity for the inhabitants of the Monarchy to meet each other and to get to know areas that were culturally, economically and scenically distant from each other. It is certainly research intriguing to reflect on the change that took place in the world view of the inhabitants of the district towns and villages, who often, only in the face of war, left their home areas for the first time. In these difficult circumstances, there was contact between Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, Jews and other nationalities living in Galicia and the inhabitants of the rest of the Crown Lands. Interestingly, as the author demonstrates, the whole range of reactions generated by the presence of refugees was not necessarily linked to membership of a single nationality group. Stereotypes present long before the outbreak of the Great War only revived with renewed force in 1914. It often turned out that even in their own country, people felt like strangers. This applied not only to the Ruthenians, who, wrongly accused of treason, were incarcerated in the Thalerhof camp, but to the Jews of Galicia, among others. The example of the latter is most illustrative. It was they who, when fleeing across the Carpathian Mountains to Hungary, met with indifference and even hostility from Hungarian Jews. Viewing the newcomers as strangers – 'challahs' – shows that the relations between the locals and the refugees were not a simple resultant of the relations between nationality groups. An analysis of these issues would be worth supplementing in the future with a consideration of the class differences in the various refugee waves and their distribution within each nationality. The author's slant on this extremely complex and difficult issue is to be appreciated. The level of analysis means that the theses put forward

* He discusses it primarily in two subsections – *Who are we? On the breakdown of identity* and *Autumn 1918 – Citizens of which country?*

by the author provide new insights into the decline of the multinational Habsburg state. Difficult relations and often rejection by citizens of the same state, and even obstacles created by the state administration (including the conflict between the authorities in Budapest and those in Vienna) meant that refugees lost their state bond and raised questions about their own identity. At the same time, the author does not stop at 1918, analysing the lives of refugees during the formation of the successor states. In the face of heated nationalisms, questions of identity resounded with renewed force.

Kamil Ruszała's book is a successful reminder of events overshadowed by the horrors of successive wars of the twentieth century. Due to the breadth of the subject matter dealt with, it is understandable that it deals to a limited extent with issues well described in the existing literature on the subject. Among other things, minimal mention is made of the experience of the inmates of the Thalerhof internment camp. In addition, one has to agree with the author's argument that this case is unique in that it is difficult to consider those placed there as refugees. The memory of the injustice that befell Ukrainians and Ruthenians during the First World War was and is still alive today. However, the author effectively recalls the forgotten experience of the thousands of refugees from eastern Galicia who stayed inside the Austro-Hungarian Empire for an extended period of time. Appreciated here is, among other things, a detailed analysis of the functioning of the refugee camp in Gmünd, which was overwhelmingly dominated by the Ukrainian population. The discussion of the experience of Polish and Ukrainian politicians is also interesting. It is puzzling that even in the face of a common fate, long-standing conflicts dating back to the pre-war years prevailed.

It should be added that the reader is also given the opportunity to see the fate of the refugees in photographs which form an integral part of the book (placed in the insert, on chalk paper). They were obtained by the author from several archives and libraries of the countries where the refugees stayed more than a century ago. Their selection is very impressive, providing a visual record of these events. All of them, combined with the very meaningful photograph on the cover, are a valuable, visual, addition to the narrative.

An appendix containing a dozen or so tables presenting data on, for example, the number of Galician refugees or refugee aid committees in the various crown countries should also be appreciated. It is worth noting, by the way, that tables and graphs illustrating the processes discussed in the book are placed within the narrative. They are easy to read, and their placement is justified, enabling immediate reference to the data analysed, without the need to look for them, for example, in the appendix. The book is accompanied by a map of Austria-Hungary on which the refugee camps are marked. This idea is to be appreciated, making it possible to check the location of the phenomena discussed in the field, without having to leaf through the book.

In conclusion, Kamil Ruszała's work *Galiczyjski eksodus. Uchodźcy podczas I wojny światowej w monarchii Habsburgów* is an interesting and well-documented analysis of the process of war refugees from Galicia within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is a pioneering work on the Polish publishing market, enriching our knowledge of the social history of the First World War and the first months after its end.