

A “Kanadist’s” View of Canadian History



Frauke Brammer is writing her Ph.D. dissertation at the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at the Free University Berlin, where she is actively involved in the Canadian Studies program and teaching B.A. courses on Canadian history. Here is her report:

If you ask German students why they might be interested in the study of Canada, the most frequent answer you will probably get is, “I somehow like Canada, but I don’t know anything about it.” To be a “Kanadist” in Germany is often considered to be nothing more than engaging in niche studies. To me, the study of Canada is more than some extravagant quirk.

One of my major academic interests is the study of nationalism - and it is here that Canada with its multitude of nationalisms, regionalisms, and (often contested) identities proves to be a fascinating object of study. This is why I decided to write my graduate thesis on one of the most controversial groups in Canadian history - the separatist Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ). “Le Québec est une colonie,” they stated in their first manifesto in 1963, being ready to fight against the “arrogant domination of Anglo-Saxon capitalism” and the political, social, cultural, and economic imperialism of the “gouvernement colonialiste d’Ottawa”. The FLQ called for revolution, the overthrow of the federal and the provincial government, the province’s independence from Canada and, ultimately, the establishment of a more just society. Their actions climaxed in the 1970 “October Crisis” when British Trade Commissioner James Cross and Quebec Minister of Labour Pierre Laporte were kidnapped, the latter being “executed” by the terrorists.

I analyzed their political ideas in a transnational perspective, trying to trace the emergence of a radical terrorist group in the context of the Cold War, processes of “Third World” decolonization as well as rising Western protest movements during the “long Sixties.” FLQ intellectuals saw their own struggle for independence “linked to the many peoples’ wars that are developing in the four corners of the world,” as Pierre Vallières wrote. The re-evaluation of complex and often dialectic FLQ concepts like nationalism and internationalism, imperialism and colonialism, capitalism and socialism, geographic, ethnic, cultural and social space, the role of the “avant-garde” and the construction of the “Other” proved to be extremely interesting when reconstructing the organization’s legitimizing strategies for applying radical violence to boost their political demands.

Related to this research, I also pursued studies on Quebec intellectual thought in the 1960s, i.e. how history was employed in order to construct a distinct Québécois identity, and how this shaped the political discourse at the time of the “Quiet Revolution.” A number of Quebec intellectuals identified resemblances between the 1837/38 rebellions in Lower Canada and the contemporary “colonial” situation under federal Canadian rule. Rising interest in the rebellions went hand in hand with a re-writing of the historical narrative, constructing the **Patriotes as the first spearhead in the fight for independence** in a continuous anti-colonial struggle of French Canadians - viable only with slight alternations to past events.

I am also very much interested in German-Canadian post-war diplomatic relations, especially within the North Atlantic Alliance, with the Federal Republic and Canada being two “middle powers” both carrying a unique role in the post-1945 framework - one because of its position at the frontline of the Cold War, the other as the second and only other North American partner within the Atlantic Alliance. In this context, the study of Canada is fascinating as it helps broadening perspectives on the transatlantic partnership that has too often been exclusively focused on the United States.

The Chair in German-Canadian Studies was established in 1989 with grants from the Secretary of State’s Program for Canadian Ethnic Studies and a group of private philanthropists within the German-Canadian community of Winnipeg. It is located in, and affiliated with, the History Department at the University of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Chair promotes the teaching of, and research into the history and culture of German-speaking immigrants and their descendants in Canada. It interacts with the German-Canadian community in Winnipeg, Manitoba and the rest of Canada through public lectures and the newsletter. The Chair promotes regional, national and international research through conferences, publications and grants.

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Submissions of articles, news, reports, and reviews as well as artwork and photos for publication in this newsletter are welcome.



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Moving West: “Collective Biography” of Postwar German Immigrants

Christian Lieb has completed a dissertation that investigates German immigrants’ experiences in British Columbia between 1945 and 1961. His dissertation, completed at the University of Victoria, is entitled “Moving West: German-Speaking Immigration to British Columbia, 1945–1961.” Before going to Victoria, Lieb received M.A.s from the University of Maine (1999) and Gerhard-Mercator-Universität in Duisburg (2001). His research was partially funded by a German-Canadian Studies Research Scholarship from 2005 to 2007. Here is his report:



Germans are among the largest ethnic groups in Canada and in British Columbia. Nevertheless, neither nationally, nor provincially, has this group received much academic attention for the period after the Second World War. My dissertation is a “collective biography” of German-speaking immigrants to Canada, based on the life stories of fifty persons interviewed in British Columbia, published biographies, and archival records from Germany and Canada.

My dissertation covers a series of migrations westward that started in Eastern Europe as part of Nazi Germany’s resettlements of ethnic Germans to forcefully change the ethno-demographic realities in Poland. The volume of migration rapidly increased as the Red Army swept a major wave of ethnic German refugees and German nationals in front of it. Together with the expulsions of German-speaking populations from parts of Eastern Europe, this left a population of about twelve million refugees in occupied Germany by 1950. From the destroyed and economically depressed postwar Germany, a new migration wave crossed the Atlantic to arrive in Canada.

From the port of entry, the dissertation follows the immigrants’ various paths to British Columbia, where they settled looking for better work opportunities, an improved quality of life, or retirement in a place with a more moderate climate. Along the way, they started the process of adaptation and integration into Canadian society. Though the vast majority of these immigrants did not speak any English, or know much about their adopted country, except that it must be better than what they left in war-torn Europe, Germans along with other northern and western Europeans are generally ranked among the best integrated ethnic groups in Canada. Most of the immigrants I interviewed quickly learned enough

continued on page 3



Scholarship, Grant and Essay Prize Winners

The recipients of the 2009 German-Canadian Studies Research Studies Grants and Scholarships, funded by the Spletzer Family Foundation (Winnipeg), study post-World War Two German immigrants' experiences, German-Canadian missionaries in 1920s Northern Manitoba, and German immigrants in Canada who have chosen to return to Germany. Here are their reports:



Rebecca Strung is a Ph.D. student at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. For her doctoral work, she received the German-Canadian Studies Research Scholarship (Ph.D.).

Last fall I completed my comprehensive exams in Canadian history. I am now working on a dissertation under the supervision of

Ruth Frager that investigates the experiences of German immigrants who arrived in Canada from Eastern European countries during the interwar and immediate post World War II periods. My interest in this topic is both personal and academic. Part of a small ethnic German minority called the Donauschwaben, my paternal grandparents emigrated from Yugoslavia in the late 1930s, but their extended family was incarcerated in Tito's concentration camps at the end of World War II. Only my great-aunt Theresa survived; immigrating to Canada in 1948 after a protracted internment. My current project seeks to fill significant gaps in Canadian immigration history. Although almost 300,000 German immigrants came to Canada during these periods, mainly from Eastern Europe, their experiences have not been well represented in Canadian history. Yet as secondary migrants with multiple cultural backgrounds and hybrid identities, they provide an important challenge to dominant Canadian understandings of immigration. Often forced to leave their homelands by the exigencies of war, the WWII generation's experience also adds to the literature on forced migration and challenges the notions of unlimited agency animating analyses of economic migrations. My project also seeks to investigate questions provoked by the group's experience. For instance, why did ethnic Germans assert distinct German identities for centuries as ethnic minorities in Eastern Europe but assimilate within a generation in Canada?



Ulrike Pape is a journalist in Berlin. A former recipient of a German-Canadian Studies Research Scholarship for a study of recent German immigrants in Canada, her current study, "A Step Back or Forward? The Current Remigration of Germans from Canada" investigates return-migration.

In 2007, 111,000 German citizens returned to Germany from abroad, an increase of 8 percent according to the Federal Statistical Office (2006: 103,000). Regarding remigration from Canada, 1,544 Germans left the country towards Germany (2006: 1,101). In contrast to the risen emigration of Germans, the question if and why Germans move back to their native country has hardly been posed. Regarding public debate about so-called brain drain, and consequences of the financial and economic crisis, my aim is to explore those migrants who moved to Canada and recently went back to Germany. As a sociologist and journalist I will conduct face-to-face-interviews with remigrants within Germany and with experts in the field of migration. My previous study (*Masters thesis title: At Home Far Away: Socio-biographic Studies of the Motivation and Living-situation of German Emigrants in Canada from 1983 until today*), disclosed the impermanent character of present German emigration and the outlook on migration as a transit with open ending. The majority of the interviewees refused to consider returning to Germany as an option in the long run. This stance may reveal the notion of a personal step backward or a failure. In my new study, I will scrutinize how former migrants evaluate their experience in Canada and their move back to Germany from today's situation. Regarding concepts of transnationalism and circulating migration, I will also ask what moving to another geographic territory truly implies to them.



Kimberley Moore is an undergraduate student at the University of Winnipeg. She is working on an Honours B.A. in History. She is the winner of the German-Canadian Studies Undergraduate Essay Prize.

"Into the Unknown: The Memoirs of Luther and Augusta Schuetze" was

written about the personal documents of Luther and Augusta (Hoffmann) Schuetze, German-Canadians immigrants who migrated to northern Manitoba shortly before Luther accepted an offer to establish a United Church Mission at Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba in 1927. Using Luther's published memoir, *Mission to Little Grand Rapids: Life with the Anishinabe 1927-1938* (Vancouver, Creative Communications Publishing, 2001) and an unpublished booklet based on interviews with Augusta, this essay explores their life stories beyond the context of compiled anecdotes of personal experiences.

Beginning by exploring how the contributions of Luther and Augusta's two sons Ernest and Herman (and others) helped to shape these documents, the essay subsequently addresses the inherent differences between the narrative structure and themes of each life story, both despite and because of this mediation.

Because each of these personal documents is preserved differently, one being an oral interview transformed into a manuscript and one a written memoir, topics such as family oral tradition, the influence of gender and emotion in oral narratives, and the longstanding conventions present in autobiography, are presented in separate sections. Together these sections present an abridged version of each narrator's life story, as well as draw attention to particular questions that arise from each.

Moving West

continued from page 1

English to find secure employment and to integrate into Canadian society.

Demonstrating how government policies, humanitarian organizations, and chain migration influenced this migration movement, this study also questions the existence of a singular German immigrant identity in Canada. I argue that distinct self-perceptions of German nationals and ethnic Germans, as voluntary migrants and refugees respectively, based on their experiences in Europe during the Second World War, created striking differences in their patterns of immigration and adaptation to life in Canada. These patterns are still discernible after over half a century of settlement in North America. In contrast to most German nationals, many ethnic German immigrants had arrived in Canada as part of a larger pattern of family and chain migration that often connected the interwar migration from Eastern Europe with the postwar movement. Based on a more positive self-identification and no hope to return to their places of birth, ethnic German refugees were also more likely to attempt to recreate their lost homes in North America and soon became active in the establishment of ethnic organizations and German churches.

This dissertation, therefore, not only fills a gap in the historiography of postwar German immigration to Canada, but adds an important component to our understanding of the differences in self-perception within the German-Canadian community.

