

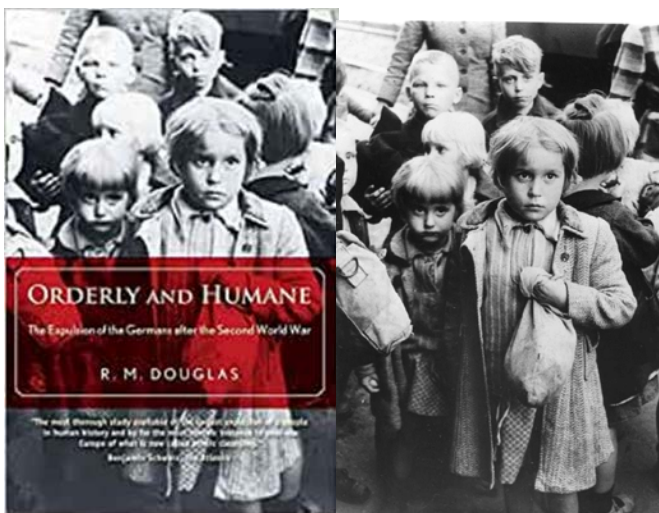
Aspects of Franconia

Refugees in Erlangen

In last month's "Aspects" article, I talked about Erlangen street names and mentioned a few that referred to the various groups of ethnic Germans forced to leave their homes and re-settle in Erlangen in the aftermath of the Second World War. These people were literally "driven out" out of Silesia, for example, Pomerania, the Baltic, Hungary and the former Czechoslovakia, so that we often talk about their "Vertreibung", as seen in this postage stamp issued in August 1955.



From the winter of 1944/45, millions of Germans fled westward to escape the approaching Red Army. And when the war was finally over, further millions were also forced to re-settle. Their suffering was immense and often indescribable, and in no way commensurate with the intentions of the Allies who had stipulated an "orderly and humane" evacuation of those affected (Potsdam Protocol, August 1945).



Children from Poland arriving in Germany, August 1948.

This forced evacuation took the lives of at least 500,000 people, and perhaps many more, who died while detained in former concentration camps, while locked in trains en route, or after arriving in Germany exhausted, malnourished, and homeless.

Just outside the Mauthalle in Nuremberg is a stark reminder of this “ethnic cleansing”, as it might be called today, with a plaque at its base listing the groups involved:

DEUTSCHBALTEN KARPATENDEUTSCHE

Baltic Germans - Carpathian Germans

OSTPREUSSEN UNGARNDDEUTSCHE

East Prussians - Hungarian Germans

WESTPREUSSEN DONAUSCHWABEN

West Prussians - Danube Swabians

DEUTSCHE AUS POLEN BANATER SCHWABEN

Germans from Poland - Banat Swabians

POMMERN SIEBENBURGER SACHSEN

Pomeranians - Transylvanian Saxons

SCHLESIER RUSSLANDDEUTSCHE

Silesians - Russian Germans

SUDETENDEUTSCHE ALLE OSTVERTRIEBENEN

Sudenten Germans - All people driven from their homeland



The stories of those driven from their homes in the wake of WWII has been the subject of numerous documentaries, films and novels. Nonetheless, this is a part of European history that can easily be forgotten as the years go by. Naming a street “Komotauer Street” is a small reminder of that past, but the real “remembering” comes from the activities of the many societies in Erlangen whose founders were those very refugees forced to leave their homes.

A group of young and happy “Pommeranians” performing in the Redoutensaal in 2014.



Frank Gillard

