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Ethnic Cleansing

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ANDREW BELL-FIALKOFF. *Ethnic Cleansing*. New York: St. Martin's, 1996. Pp. 346. \$45.00.

This book reviews the past and present of ten intractable ethnic conflicts and then proposes massive involuntary population transfers as their solution. Ideally, the transfers would include the entire ethnic group concerned and should be carried out speedily so as to shorten the period of hardship. The relocation of Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia to Germany in 1945 supplies Andrew Bell-Fialkoff with the model for returning Russians in fourteen former Soviet republics to Russia (p. 259). Bell-Fialkoff also proposes that the Tamils in Sri Lanka be resettled into an autonomous enclave at Trincomalee (fifteen percent of Sri Lanka's population packed into two percent of its territory), which then "could become a great trading and commercial center of some 2 or 3 million people, similar to Hong Kong" (pp. 189, 262). Similarly, all three million Arabs in Israel and the West Bank could be packed into the Gaza Strip to become another "dynamic hub of international trade" (p. 264). Cyprus? Resettle either all Turks or all Greeks to their respective mainlands. Ulster? Transfer minor areas to the Re-

public of Ireland and give the remaining Catholics a choice between resettlement there or in England. Bell-Fialkoff's preferred option for Bosnia requires that all Muslims be shipped to Turkey. Split Transylvania and Kosovo, with obligatory transfer of people to the proper side of the ethnic divide. Move all Karabakh Armenians to Nakhichevan and hand it over to Armenia. Carve a Tutsi ministate out of Rwanda and Burundi, and transfer the people.

This book starts out with a fairly decent historical overview of ethnic cleansing as state policy ever since ancient Assyria, with its brutal aspects well in evidence. The chapter on typologies of cleansing also makes sense. "Cleansing as a Metonym of Collective Identity" reads like the obligatory theory chapter of a social science dissertation: demonstrate that you know various theories, never to be mentioned—much less applied—in the subsequent chapters. It is nice to have items like a five-page history of the gay movement, which concludes that self-procreation difficulties preclude a separate gay polity any time soon.

Once past the introductory one-third of the book, the term "ethnic cleansing" rarely recurs. The central part presents sketches of the ten aforementioned conflicts, emphasizing their deep historical roots and the inadequacy of proposed solutions. The viewpoints of various sides are presented in a balanced way, except for "The Palestinian Problem," where nearly half of the endnotes refer to Benjamin Netanyahu's book and Arab views are absent. The outline maps attached to country chapters are confusing; they show none of the place names mentioned in the text but include mysterious border changes that receive explanation only much later, in the last part of the book.

This is where it first transpires that, when renamed "compulsory population transfer," one variety of ethnic cleansing becomes a useful gardening tool. A "resettlement index" is devised to determine whether, say, the Greeks or the Turks should be cleansed out of Cyprus. It is a textbook example of how *not* to construct an index, one of those exercises that give quantitative approaches an undeservedly bad name. Among other flaws, the operationalization of historic and geographic criteria is so fluid that, instead of all Palestinians being packed into the Gaza Strip, one could easily find that one has lent moral support for packing all Israeli Jews into a "Hong Kong-like" enclave around Tel Aviv.

This is a serious matter. As a measure of sorrowful last resort, one might consider involuntary population transfer in isolated cases, and thus it needs theoretical discussion. But the danger of opening a floodgate of misuse is huge. Bell-Fialkoff does acknowledge that "population transfers are no panacea and should be used with extreme caution" (p. 229), but he then throws caution to the winds. The liberal application to all ten cases discussed, with no

counter-examples, exudes too much panglossian lightheartedness.

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