



The Long Road Home

Ben Shephard

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At the end of World War II, long before an Allied victory was assured and before the scope of the atrocities orchestrated by Hitler would come into focus or even assume the name of the Holocaust, Allied forces had begun to prepare for its aftermath. Taking cues from the end of the First World War, planners had begun the futile task of preparing themselves for a civilian health crisis that, due in large part to advances in medical science, would never come. The problem that emerged was not widespread disease among Europe's population, as anticipated, but massive displacement among those who had been uprooted from home and country during the war.

Displaced Persons, as the refugees would come to be known, were not comprised entirely of Jews. Millions of Latvians, Poles, Ukrainians, and Yugoslavs, in addition to several hundred thousand Germans, were situated in a limbo long overlooked by historians. While many were speedily repatriated, millions of refugees refused to return to countries that were forever changed by the war—a crisis that would take years to resolve and would become the defining legacy of World War II. Indeed many of the postwar questions that haunted the Allied planners still confront us today: How can humanitarian aid be made to work? What levels of immigration can our societies absorb? How can an occupying power restore prosperity to a defeated enemy?

Including new documentation in the form of journals, oral histories, and essays by actual DPs unearthed during his research for this illuminating and radical reassessment of history, Ben Shephard brings to light the extraordinary stories and myriad versions of the war experienced by the refugees and the new United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration that would undertake the responsibility of binding the wounds of an entire continent. Groundbreaking and remarkably relevant to conflicts that continue to plague peacekeeping efforts, *The Long Road Home* tells the epic story of how millions redefined the notion of home amid painstaking recovery.

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