

The Long Road Home – The Aftermath of the Second World War by Ben Shephard.
Bodley Head 2010.

Many books have been written about the Second World War, and those that are best known may probably be collected under two headings, Military and Holocaust; there were, however, many other aspects to the worst of the 20th century's many conflicts and it is one of these, the plight of refugees, that *The Long Road Home* highlights.

This meticulously researched and engagingly written book takes as its starting point the conversations between the Allies while the war still raged about how they would manage the peace and particularly how they would put in place the necessary international structures to minimise the repeat of the catastrophic famine and disease pandemic that followed the ending of the First World War.

The structure that they created was called UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, the first such international body to be under the United Nations auspices, before the latter umbrella body even came into existence. The challenges faced by UNRRA were immense and extraordinarily complex, played out over many devastated European countries with vast numbers of people on the move.

These people were called Displaced Persons, (DPs) and this was a catch all title that did not differentiate between Holocaust survivors (a nomenclature not adopted at this stage), imported workers from previously occupied countries, slave labourers, prisoners of war and many who found their country of birth occupied, notably by the Soviet Union, and wanted a home in another nation.

The Long Road Home is rich in first person accounts, both from aid workers and DPs, and it is clear that some of those who worked in the field were extraordinary human beings, not least the redoubtable Kay Hulme and Rabbi Abraham Klausner.

Shephard considers the geo-political implications of the DPs, notably the Jewish concentration camp survivors and their impact on US policy towards Zionism, the deep anti-Semitism of some of those working for UNRRA, the way the efforts of the Western Allies in countries such as Poland were thwarted by the contrary intentions of the Soviet Union, the impact on their war weary native populations, of some nations' aid to refugees and the anger it engendered, the thoughtlessness and casual inhumanity of the allied authorities, notably over the repatriation or resettlement overseas of orphaned children, and national willingness or otherwise to take in refugees.

Ben Shephard has put an immense amount of research into *The Long Road Home*, and it shows; he has also sought to juxtapose the preparatory work of the Allies on behalf of refugees in the 1940s with the lamentable lack of planning for the aftermath evinced by the Americans and others following the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The Long Road Home focuses on a hugely important aspect of the Second World War that has been, by and large, ignored in comparison with the acres of written pages on most other aspects of that conflict. It is a hugely important contribution to Second World War studies and, by and large, an eloquent testimony to human strength in adversity.

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