

## **Laudatio for the 2012 Hans Rosenberg Prize of the Central European History Society**

Prize Committee: Jonathan Zatin (Boston University), Pamela Swett (McMaster University),  
David Ciarlo (University of Colorado)

Winner: R. M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (Yale University Press, 2012)

With *Orderly and Humane*, R. M. Douglas offers a carefully researched yet impassioned critique of the expulsion of German-speaking civilians from neighboring European nations after the Second World War. In contrast to much that has been written about the millions of Germans forced out of Central and Eastern Europe, Douglas has constructed a balanced and engaging narrative that neither ignores the atrocities committed by Germans that preceded the expulsions nor glosses over the chaos and brutality that made these “population transfers” anything but orderly and humane. Douglas locates his account of the expulsions in the ethno-nationalism that plagued Europe well before the Nazi rise to power as well as the sadistic and genocidal occupation policies carried out under the Nazis, at times with the assistance of the local German population. By the same token, however, Douglas reveals the cynical uses to which local elites, as well as British and American policymakers, put outrage against Germans throughout Central and Eastern Europe. These politicians were all too ready to harness that outrage, which mixed fury at the brutal German occupation with ethnic enmity and economic envy, to construct a lasting peace based on ethnically homogenous nation-states. As Douglas recounts in chilling detail, the leaders of western democracies were more than willing in their pursuit of this peace to abandon millions of Germans living outside Germany to violence. In Douglas’s account, Europe experienced a fundamental rearrangement of its peoples, first through the organized murder of millions of non-Germans, and then through the forced relocation of millions of Germans. The latter catastrophe, which left hundreds of thousands dead, millions reduced to penury, and a

legacy of bitterness and recrimination, requires an equally fundamental reorientation of our moral compass.

The prize committee congratulates Professor Douglas on producing a major scholarly work on the policies and practices of “population transfers,” but also commends him for what is an elegantly conceived and beautifully written work of history. *Orderly and Humane* stands out for its synoptic perspective, which is enlivened through well-chosen case studies and telling anecdotes. The book is distinguished, moreover, by its tremendous scope: although it focuses on Czechoslovakia and Poland, it also incorporates the policies and practices of expulsion in the Soviet Union, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia. The result is an eloquent, judicious, and compelling book that is certain to recast our understanding of postwar European history and make politicians hesitate before adopting population transfers as a method for resolving ethnic conflict.