

Andreas Kranebitter (Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz) and **Peter Pirker** (Universität Innsbruck)

GEORGIA ON THEIR MINDS GREGOR SEBBA'S SOCIAL RESEARCH ON EUROPEAN DPS IN THE UNITED STATES AFTER 1945

How did former European displaced persons live in the American provinces after 1945? What impact did their resettlement have on post-war American society? How did the experience of living through the National Socialist forced labor and concentration camps, as well as their experience of DP camps after 1945, shape their biographies? Hardly any other study explored these questions in such an innovative way as *Displaced Persons in Georgia* by the émigré Viennese social scientist Gregor Sebba (1905–1985). The study was written in 1954 for the Georgia Displaced Persons Committee in Atlanta. Sebba combined statistical analyses, based on secondary data and his own questionnaires with 1,200 previous DPs, with in-depth interviews with selected individuals, which allowed him to focus on psychological adjustment “problems”, such as a widely observable rebellion against paternalism among former DPs.

Born in Libau (Latvia) in 1905, Gregor Sebba studied political science in Innsbruck and moved to Vienna in 1929, where he organized social scientist discussion groups on diverse topics in the “extramural exile” and functioned as the editor of the *Wirtschaftliche Rundschau* for the Julius Meinel AG. As a Jew, Sebba fled Austria in 1938 and soon became employed by the British Secret Service Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS). As an SOE agent, he co-founded the Austrian exile organization *Austrian Action* with Ferdinand Czernin in 1941. After the war, he became professor of economics and statistics at the University of Atlanta, Georgia. The study to be discussed was done in this position.

The lecture focuses on the background, methods and central conclusions of the Atlanta study. For contextualization, we focus on the transatlantic diffusion of social science research methods and the reference to contemporary authors of the Humanities.

Dr. **Andreas Kranebitter**, political scientist and sociologist in Vienna and Graz, head of the Archives for the History of Sociology in Austria at the University of Graz. Most recent publication: Andreas Kranebitter/Christoph Reinprecht (eds.) (2019): *Die Soziologie und der Nationalsozialismus in Österreich*, Bielefeld: Transcript.

Dr. **Peter Pirker**, political scientist and historian, research assistant at the Institute for Contemporary History at the University of Innsbruck. Most recent publication: Peter Pirker/Matthias Breit (2020): *Schnappschüsse der Befreiung. Fotografien amerikanischer Soldaten in Tirol 1945*, Tyrolia: Innsbruck; regarding Gregor Sebba: Peter Pirker (2013): „Musst immer tun wie neugeboren“. *Zum politischen Denken und zur antinazistischen Praxis des Wiener Sozialwissenschafters Gregor Sebba*. *VOEGELINIANA*, No. 91 B, 64, Munich 2013.