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Population Transfers to and from Lower Silesia after World War Two

Foreword

Compulsory migration, deportations and forced population transfers have taken place since the beginning of history. Forced transfers have often been implemented along with territorial changes, and the motivation for them is often long-standing racial, ethnic or ideological antagonism. At the core of forced transfers and territorial shifts, hate for the 'other' is usually present-with the 'other' defined as a foreigner who poses an alleged danger to the indigenous local community-and hate generates aggression. In recent centuries, compulsory mass migration has occurred at least partially as a result of the nation-building process, which along with the very persistence of the concept of the nation state, has been on ongoing source of nationalist sentiments.[1]

During World War Two, there was a dramatic increase in violence and terror with civilians paying the highest price. This was particularly true in Poland where every tenth Pole and every fifth German were forced to leave their home as a result of hostile military actions. Another consequence of the war was that the international community ended up tacitly approving population transfers as a necessary step in the creation of a new world order. The expulsion and transfer of millions was experienced throughout the whole of Europe.

The expulsion of millions of people from their homes could only be achieved through direct compulsion or situational pressure. It could either be implemented by the home country or by a foreign power. In the latter case, it was often linked to expulsion from a specific nation state. Population transfers were either implemented in the context of international agreements, in an allegedly humanitarian way, or could be the result of brutal force. Each option had its own profound consequences. It is not of minor importance which values form the foundation of the expulsion of people from their homes, but one thing is certain: in many of cases, expulsion was the only reality, the only option.

In geographical and chronological discussions of Europe during the later

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[1] Krystyna Kersten: *Przymusowe przemieszczenia ludności – próba typologii.* In: Hubert Orłowski, Andrzej Sakson (ed.): *Utracona ojczyzna.* Poznań 1996, pp. 13–29.

phases of World War Two and the late forties, the expulsion of autochthonous German-speaking communities from Lower Silesia is something that is rarely considered and, when it is considered, is viewed as insignificant. But the numbers speak for themselves. The total amount of German civilians transferred from their homes to somewhere else in Europe is close to 14 million and the transfers incurred some 2 million casualties. Approximately 9 million of the total were living in what is present-day Poland and roughly a third of all forcibly transferred Germans lived in the region between the Oder and the Neiße Rivers. From this data, it is clear that no other European region ever experienced such a massive population transfer. Take the case of Hungary. The American authority in Germany accepted in their zone approximately 130,000 refugees from Hungary, indicating that total expulsions from the country were less than a quarter of the people forcibly transferred from the urban area of Breslau alone.

In most European areas where forced population transfers took place, Germans represented only a fraction of the local population during the interwar period. They often were a national minority. In Lower Silesia, in contrast, the percentage of German-speaking natives during the interwar years was recorded at nearly 95%. The expulsion and replacement of such a large part of the local population was accompanied by the necessity of building a completely new community. Such circumstances caused many problems, the solutions to which often proved to be harsh and painful. What actually occurred in Lower Silesia was a multi-directional population transfer, and the expulsion of Germans was only the most visible process in the context of the total 'Polonization' of the area. While German-speaking locals were being expelled from Lower Silesia, several other population transfers were taking place in the region. Polish-speaking settlers were being moved from areas annexed to the Soviet Union; Polish Jews were moving in from several regions in the Soviet Union, and eventually, tens of thousands Ruthenians were deported from Carpathia during Operation Vistula, ostensibly undertaken as a measure against Ukrainian terrorists.

Most forced population transfers in Europe during the twentieth century consisted of the deportation of a more or less substantial population group that had formerly been in conflict with another ethnically-specific group that could be identified as the majority.[2] This means that compulsory transfers were generally characterized by hostility towards one or more autochthonous population groups, the presence of which was considered a destabilizing factor, if not a threat, to the political and economic hegemony of the majority. In the case of Lower Silesia, there had been no rupture in the peaceful coexistence of the population groups since the expelled group, 'the Germans', represented nearly the whole of the prewar local population. To the contrary, the group in charge of establishing the postwar order, 'the Poles', consisted almost entirely of immi-

[2] Terry Martin: *The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing.* In: The Journal of Modern History, 70.

grants. Sheer numbers prevented the Polish-speaking locals from playing any significant role in the 'Polonization' process.

Another issue needs to be considered that belongs in the category of political history. Most postwar population transfers were approved during the Potsdam Agreement of August 2, 1945 and the treaties that followed. These mostly related to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland. The attitude of these governments toward 'de-Germanization' varied. For instance in Hungary, the post-war government never actually supported any policy that emerged from the alleged collective responsibility of all Germans for Hitler's crimes. Instead, deportation was mainly restricted to active members of the Nazi Volksbund, and German oppositionists were somehow spared.[3]

In Czechoslovakia and Poland, the official attitude was decidedly more ethnocentric. In the case of Poland, nearly all political parties approved of the massive deportation of all German-speaking natives regardless of their past attitude towards Hitlerism. This position was shared by both the Moscow-friendly Labour and Socialist parties, and the Catholic nationalists. Former opponents of the Nazi regime were also considered to be enemies of the Polish nation, their mere presence in Poland considered a threat.

An example of this attitude can be found in an exchange of letters between the Bishop Stanisław Adamski and the minister Władysław Kiernik. The latter, a member of the Peasant Party, was by no means a communist. On July 27, 1945, Bishop Adamski wrote to the Ministry of Public Administration complaining about the methods by which the deportation of the German-speaking population was being carried out. At this time, no population transfer had been agreed to in Potsdam.

As a member of the Polish Catholic clergy, Bishop Adamski expressed his concern that Poland might earn an unreliable reputation in the international community because of the brutality with which German civilians were being compelled to leave their homes and belongings.[4] There is no indication what 'international community' Bishop Adamski referred to. It is highly possible that Adamski was thinking of Great Britain. A little over a month later, Prime Minister Clement Attle promised the Archbishop of York that the new Labour government would monitor the population transfers in Central Europe and provide some humanitarian aid to deported German civilians.[5]

On August 5, 1945, Minister Kiernik sent a personal reply to Bishop Adamski. He stated that the population transfers being implemented were being paid for by a nation that in the past deserved no special attention as they had never shown any for their neighbours. The understatement in the reply is pointed,

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3 István Bibó: *Miseria dei piccoli stati dell'Europa orientale.* Bologna 1994.

4 Both Bishop Adamski's letter and Minister Kiernik's reply can be found in: Archiwum Akt Nowych, Ministerstwa Administracji Publicznej, Gabinet Ministra, sygn. 758.

5 Hans-Åke Persson: *Rhetorik und Realpolitik: Großbritannien, die Oder–Neiße–Grenze und die Vertreibung der Deutschen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg.* Potsdam 1997.

based on the assumption that nations exist unchanged throughout history and they blindly adhere to their leader. Embedded in Minister Kiernik's understated reply is the notion that all civilians without exception are responsible for the actions of the political elite ruling them, even though in this particular case, the elite ruled in the context of a totalitarian system. Another element in Kiernik's letter is a sort of anti-morality emerging from the assumption that nations are bound to fight against each other through history, again ignoring the fact that the very idea of a 'German nation' had been an inconsistent one in modern times. Indeed it was still undergoing significant modification during Hitler's dictatorship.

Nearly all interpretations of the past refer to a defined set of values and ideas. In interwar Poland, the attitude towards the national past was strictly derived from politics.[6] The connection between national history and politics still played a key role in Poland after World War Two. Specifically, postwar Polish authorities tended to collapse the issue of forced population transfers into more general issue of the post-World War One restoration of national independence from Prussia and the eternal struggle against forced Germanization. This ideological link to interwar nationalist thought became a strategic issue in postwar Poland, as it was used to prove that the new ruling elite was patriotic and thus to defuse charges, widespread in the country at the time, that it cooperated too closely with Stalin's Soviet Union. In the case of Lower Silesia, the interwar nationalist heritage was used in a propaganda campaign, of which the typical elements were:

1. the equation of the area with other territories of the Third Reich in which the Germans had been a national minority (rather than the majority);

2. the equation of Lower Silesia with Polish territories that had been occupied by the Germans during World War Two.

A series of misleading definitions emerged from this general context. During the first postwar months, what is today western Poland (then part of Germany) were referred to as 'postulated lands': that is, territories to be assigned to Poland as compensation for the huge destruction caused by Nazi Germany. Later on, the definition changed and the same territories were named 'the recovered territories' despite the fact that they had not been Polish for centuries.

The inclusion of Lower Silesia into the 'recovered lands' has its own specificity within the general program of the postwar Polonization of what were once territories in the eastern part of German. Certain facts are undisputed: that the population transfer was not only enormous but it was the single largest in the whole of Europe; that it was a multilevel transfer, millions being moved into Lower Silesia from several areas of Eastern Europe; that a kind of social and political engineering was exerted from above with the aim of building a completely new society.

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[6] Markus Krzoska: *Die polnische Geschichtswissenschaft in der Zwischenkriegszeit.* In: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft, 1994, 5, p. 430.

A Digest of Facts

Observing the transfers of postwar German-speaking population out of what is today Poland, three different phases can be identified according to the agents ordering and possibly monitoring the forced migration.

1. The first population transfers took place in late 1944 and early 1945. They were mostly ordered by Nazi authorities because of the impending Soviet invasion. These evacuations rarely had a humanitarian character. Civilians were compelled to move to allegedly safer German areas so that the military would benefit from a more efficient supply system in cities that had been declared 'fortresses'. Evacuated people were given little or no help. They had to travel long distances on foot, often freezing and starving. This first phase ended with the German capitulation on May 9, 1945, though most refugees left their homes much sooner when the frontline was approaching.

2. The second phase took place between the Soviet conquest and the final Allied decision on population transfers, which took place on November 20, 1945. Transfers of German populations were foreseen in Chapter XIII of the Potsdam Agreement signed on August 2, 1945. It was also agreed in the treaty that the governments of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland would "suspend further expulsions" pending the examination of the transfer issue by the Allied powers.[7] But transfers were never suspended in Poland. Expulsions continued unabated through the second half of 1945. In spite of Allied controls, civilians were deported on a regular basis from their homes to the Soviet zone in Germany. Transfers that took place in this phase are known as 'wild expulsions'.

3. The last phase of mass transfers took place under the auspices of Operation Swallow, when deportation trains were regularly sent into the Allied occupation zones of Germany. The number of civilians expelled from Poland under this programme was estimated to be three and a half million, of which two million were to be sent to the Soviet zone and one and a half million to the British zone. *Ex post* data indicates that number was smaller. Approximately three million people were actually transferred under both 'wild expulsions' and Operation Swallow.

Winter 1945

In Lower Silesia, civilians did not feel the impact of the war until the autumn of 1944. Direct combat actions were so uncommon that were considered exceptional events. This can be inferred from diaries kept by both Catholic and Protestant clergymen. For instance, a Catholic priest named Paul Peikert wrote down in amazement that the main railway station had been bombed on Novem-

[7] "Official Gazette of the Control Council for Germany", Supplement No. 1, 30th April 1946.

ber 13, 1941, reporting ten casualties and a score of wounded people.[8] According to Pastor Ernst Hornig, the death of 69 people in an air raid on October 7, 1944 was considered to be an extraordinary event.[9]

A large number of refugees from western parts of Germany came to Breslau in late 1944 because of the city's relative safety. The dramatic increase in the number of inhabitants is noted in comparing data from 1939 and 1944. In this period, the city grew from approximately 630,000 inhabitants to over a million. In addition to this number, prisoners lived in several facilities belonging to the Groß-Rosen concentration camp. The facilities were spread throughout the whole of Lower Silesia and some were also located in the Breslau metropolitan area. Prisoners were mostly Russian and Polish, and they were used as forced labour in stone quarries and ammunition factories in the Sudeten area,[10] or in workshops in the main camp.[11] The main camp also served as a transit facility for Jewish prisoners bound for the gas chambers of Dachau, Buchenwald or Auschwitz.[12]

On January 12, 1945, the Soviet winter offensive began. Lower Silesia was invaded by detachments of the Red Army's First Ukrainian Front. On January 19, German Gauleiter Karl Hanke ordered the 'stronghold regime in Breslau, which meant the immediate evacuation of all civilians. On January 23, several Soviet patrols were sighted on the hills around the town of Treibnitz. By mid-February the Soviet 6th Army had completely surrounded Breslau.[13]

Hanke's decision to evacuate German civilians was not motivated by his concern for their safety. It was a pragmatic issue, as the absence of civilians in a 'stronghold' would grant a greater freedom of manoeuvre to the troops as well as and more abundant supplies. This interpretation is supported by the order he gave to residents on the left bank of the Oder River. He ordered men to remain in their work places after evacuating their wives and children. Even the approach of hostile tanks would not be considered a reason to leave work. Hanke even stated that the purpose of the evacuation was not the women and children's safety, but that the men would fight more relentlessly without that 'burden'.[14]

At least three quarters of Breslau's metropolitan population was evacuated. According to communication between the German 17th Army Commander, General Friedrich Schulz, and Air Force General Ritter von Greim, there still

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8 Karol Jonca, Alfred Konieczny (ed.): *Paul Peikert: 'Festung Breslau' in den Berichten eines Pfarres.* Wrocław 1998.

9 Ernst Hornig: *Breslau 1945: Erlebnisse in der eingeschlossenen Stadt.* München 1975.

10 Bogdan Cybulski: *Aussenlager des KL Groß-Rosen im Eulengebirge.* Wałbrzych 1992.

11 Alfred Konieczny: *KL Gross-Rosen.* Wa³brzych 1987.

12 Aleksandra Kobielec: *Więźniowie Żydzi w KL Gross-Rosen: Stan badañ* Wałbrzych 1993.

13 The siege of Breslau in early 1945 was described in detail by German commanders, with a few chronicles also written by Polish authors. See for example: Hans von Ahlfen, Hermann Niehoff: *So kämpfte Breslau.* München 1956; Karol Jonca, Alfred Konieczny: *Upadek 'Festung Breslau' 15. II.–6. V. 1945.* Wrocław 1963.

14 "Schlesische Tageszeitung", 27th January 1945.

were only 143,000 people in Breslau on March 19, 1945, of which 6,411 were wounded.[15]

The winter of 1945 was exceptionally cold in Lower Silesia, with temperatures dipping as low as –20ºC in January. Hundreds of thousands had to leave their homes in horse carriages or on foot; most of them women and children, the old and the infirm. A number of railway transports were headed for Saxony and Hanover, but they were too few for everybody to find a place on them. People waited up to 48 hours for a place on a train. During the siege of the city, many railway lines had been severely damaged by bombings. By February 8, only two railway lines were still functioning in Breslau: from Freiburg Station to Görlitz, and from the main railway station to Schweidnitz via Zobten.[16] The extent of damage to railway lines can be found in postwar reports by Polish State Railway engineers. By the end of the war, only 128 kilometres of railways were viable. Some 139 railway bridges had been destroyed or heavily damaged.[17]

Evacuation under such circumstances resulted in the death by freezing or starvation of many refugees. According to German estimates, civilian casualties ranged from 90,000 to 200,000. Polish sources state that as many as 700,000 people left Lower Silesia during that period.[18]

The Red Army took Berlin on May 2, 1945. On Sunday, May 6, 1945 Karl Hanke fled the 'stronghold' of Breslau in a Stork aircraft. It is believed that he was later convicted and executed in Czechoslovakia.[19] A few hours after Hanke fled, Infantry General Hermann Niehoff signed the German capitulation.[20]

'Wild expulsions'

On June 25, 1941, Lavrenty Beriya, People's Commissioner for Internal Affairs ordered Soviet NKVD troops to participate as second-line support in the Red Army's military operations. NKVD personnel and border guard detachments were ordered to support frontline fighters and to secure prisoners of war. Initially, POW camps were administered by the GULag authority which reported to the NKVD. But by early 1945, there were so many Axis soldiers captured by the Red Army and a special agency was created within GULag to manage POWs. This agency was called Glavnoye Upravlyeniye po delam Voyennoplennykh i Internirovannykh and later became known by its acronym: GUpVI. By the end of the war, GUpVI administered as many as 170 POW detention facilities.[21]

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15 Karol Jonca: *Oblężenie.* In: Odra, 1995, 5, pp. 8–12.
16 Peikert, p. 29.
17 Wrocław State Archive, Urząd Wojewódzki Wrocławski, file I/41.
18 Bolesław Dolata: *Wyzwolenie Polski.* Warsaw 1974, p. 333.
19 Karol Jonca: *Ostatni lot gauleitera.* In: Odra, 1995, 5, pp. 2–7.
20 Marek Czapliński: *Śląsk od pierwszej po koniec drugiej wojny światowej.* In: M. Czapliński (ed.): *Historia Śląska,* 2002, p. 424 – cfr. E. Hornig, *op. cit.*
21 Stefan Karner: *Im Archipel GUPVI: Kriegsgefangenschaft und Internierung in der Sowjetunion 1941–1956.* München 1995.

Numeric data about German POWs comes mostly from a 1955 report of the German Red Cross. In this report, one reads that the Red Army captured approximately 800,000 German soldiers in the area between the Vistula and Oder Rivers from January 12 to May 9, 1945. After the German capitulation, approximately 600,000 were deported to 650 concentration camps in the Soviet hinterland. Another 100,000 died before deportation. In Lower Silesia, German POWs were numerous. Here the GUpVI took over former German POW camps in the Breslau suburbs of Fünfeichen and Hundsfeld. The number of German prisoners in these two facilities reached a peak of 300,000 at one time. Other large camps were located in Lauban and Sagan. Approximately 70,000 convicts were housed in these facilities. By 1950, some 15,000 were dead.[22]

The GUpVI did more than just manage POW camps. According to an NKVD order dated February 22, 1945, the agency also established detention facilities for civilians who were to be 'politically verified' and possibly sentenced to forced labour in the Soviet Union. Former Nazi party members, factory managers and even journalists belonged in this category. Civilian prisoners were separated from POWs.

In early June 1945, there were over 100,000 German civilians in Soviet concentration camps east of the Oder River. Only a few thousand had actually been accessories to Nazi war crimes. Regardless of the results of the 'political verification' process, most civilian prisoners were sent as forced labour to Soviet-owned farms in Poland.

Many other people suffered from various forms of violence. Civilians who were not convicted were driven away from their homes, according to the procedure called 'wild expulsion'. According to the accounts of those expelled, NKVD troops were the main perpetrators of this process.[23] Unfortunately, the remaining documentation is insufficient to even approximate the number of German civilians expelled from Lower Silesia during that period.

Meanwhile, Polish-speaking settlers were arriving in Lower Silesia. Transfers were formally supervised by the State Bureau for Repatriation (PUR). Nonetheless, there were a number of other Polish agencies conducing so-called 'repatriation', most of them political parties and trade unions.

In Breslau, soon renamed Wrocław according to Polish phonetics, an old Cracovian Socialist named Bolesław Drobner became the first mayor. His job was to build up the first Polish civilian municipal authority. A special settlement department was established in the framework of the new municipal authority. Ultimately, the settlement of the new Polish-speaking population became the primary task of the entire civilian administration.[24]

What happened in this first phase of Polish settlement is difficult to recon-

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22 Manfred Zeidler: *Kriegsende im Osten.* München 1996.

23 Maria Podlasek: *W skórze Niemca.* In: Polityka, 15th May 1993.

24 Andrzej Kwilecki: *Migracje pionierskie na Ziemiach Odzyskanych.* In: Studia Socjologiczne, 1986, No. 1, pp. 17–18.

struct as documents are scarce and often unclear. It is difficult, for example, to know with any certainty how many civilians charged with being part of the Nazi system were summarily executed. Execution without trial was very frequent, as indicated by security service reports. For instance, on May 17, 1947, the UBP commander in Trzebnica wrote that all suspected SS and Gestapo members had been 'liquidated' long ago.[25]

During this first phase of Polish settlement in Lower Silesia, conditions were highly insecure for the Polish settlers as well. They were often compelled to spend weeks at a time on the outskirts of Wrocław waiting for housing and employment. Poor sanitary conditions were a constant feature of these settlements and there were frequent outbreaks of epidemic diseases.[26]

The "removal of Germans from Poland"[27] was finally formalized at the Tripartite Conference in Berlin on August 2, 1945. At the same time, the Polish Provisional Government was requested "to suspend further expulsions pending the examination by the Governments concerned of the report from their representatives on the Control Council."[28] But not until November 20, 1945 was the decision made regarding the number of German civilians to be 'removed' and the schedule for their 'removal' established. Two million were to be transferred to the Soviet occupation zone in Germany, and another one and a half million to the British zone. The transfer operation was called Operation Swallow because it was to be completed before the swallows came back to Germany in mid-summer 1946.

Despite the decision in Potsdam, deportations from Lower Silesia were never suspended. The government in Warsaw ordered the establishment of concentration camps in every *powiat*, the collection of Germans civilians in these camps, and their ongoing expulsion to the Soviet zone on the other side of Poland's western border. Orders from the ministries in Warsaw made it clear that expulsions were to be carried out as soon as possible.[29]

Civilians slated for deportation were moved from various concentration camps to agañ, and from there to the border checkpoint at Forst where they were taken over by Soviet detachments and escorted to Mecklenburg. As stated above, these compulsory transfers took place despite the decision to suspend expulsion in the Potsdam Agreement. There was only a short lull from October 30 to November 6, 1945, but otherwise at least 42,000 civilians were expelled during this period.[30]

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25 Instytut Pamiêci Narodowej, Wrocław Section, file 053/862.

26 Wrocław State Archive, Urząd Wojewódzki Wrocławski, file IX/95.

27 "Official Gazette of the Control Council for Germany", Supplement No. 1, 30th April 1946.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Bernadetta Nitschke: *Pierwsze zorganizowane wysiedlenia ludności niemieckiej z Polski po konferencji poczdamskiej*. In: "Sobótka", 1997, 3–4, pp. 351–365.

30 *Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny w latach 1945–1948 na Dolnym Śląsku*, PUR, Wrocław, 1948.

Recently, a Polish scholar attempted to estimate the number of forced transfers of German civilians in the second half of 1945. Including 'wild expulsions' and the first organized deportations to Mecklenburg, it is estimated that a total of nearly half a million people were forcibly driven from their homes in Lower Silesia before the Potsdam decisions were officially enforced.[31]

Operation Swallow

According to the Polish census, 1,934,791 people lived in Lower Silesia in February 1946. Of that number, 1,234,425 were Germans and 680,000 were Poles. However, such data proves to be unreliable when compared to official statements by the State Bureau for Repatriation. According to the latter, some 1,295,000 Germans were expelled from Lower Silesia during the period between February and December 1946, and few of them were not autochthonous.[32] Taking into consideration classified data from a Warsaw ministry,[33] 92,833 Germans still lived in Lower Silesia on August 20, 1947. Thus, the total numbers of Germans in February 1946 must have totalled about 1,377,000.

The totals from February 1946 are important because the first agreement between Poland and the United Kingdom concerning the enforcement of Operation Swallow (i.e. the transfer of civilians to the British zone in Germany) was signed on February 14.[34]

During Operation Swallow, civilians were to be deported to both the British and the Soviet zones. Two delivery points where the occupying authorities in Germany would take charge of the transports were established. The first, in Tuplice, would deliver transports to the Soviet zone only. The second, in Kaławsk, would deliver transports to the British zone. Several convoys bound for the Soviet zone went through Kaławsk as well.

The population transfers officially began in late February 1946 and were suspended in December. They started again the following April and continued without interruption until October 21, 1947. General estimates for the period from February 1946 through October 1947 indicate a total of some 770 transports, transporting no fewer than 1,300,000 German civilians deported from Lower Silesia.[35]

A case study: Wałbrzych

Accounts of postwar events in the Wałbrzych mining area indicate that transfer of German-speaking locals from Lower Silesia was sometimes implemented

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31 Beata Ociepka: *Niemcy na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1970.* Wrocław 1992, p. 20.
32 *Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny w latach 1945–1948 na Dolnym Śląsku, op. cit.*
33 Archiwum Akt Nowych, Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych, file 564.
34 Ociepka, *Niemcy na Dolnym Śląsku,* pp. 20–21.
35 *Ibid.,* p. 22.

in a way very much at odds with the plan agreed upon by the Allied powers in Potsdam. In this area, transfers were the consequence of a political project aimed at a social transformation that would pave the way to a centrally-planned economy.

Three main factors that prevailed in this area make it distinctive. First, the geographical position of Wałbrzych and Nowa Ruda in the southwest part of Lower Silesia meant that they remained virtually untouched by military action during the Soviet offensive of early 1945. Proof of this can be found in data from May 1, 1945, only a week before German capitulation. At that time, there were as many as 2,558 farms in the district. None of them reported damage more severe than 15% of its value.[36]

The second factor was the peculiar structure of the local economy. The main income source was not from agriculture but coal mining. Coal mines were a strategic natural resource in the area of energy production as were power plants to process the fuel.

The third factor was indisputably political. In spite of its large population and flourishing economy, the Wałbrzych area was not an important administrative centre in the former German state. For this reason, it had little symbolic value. If the assertion of Polish sovereignty in Breslau or Liegnitz, for example, had a high strategic value for the postwar Polonization policy in Lower Silesia, Wałbrzych's minimal international renown meant that the area had low symbolic value and therefore the expulsion of the German-speaking population was not as crucial as it was elsewhere.

These factors taken together allowed the new Polish authorities to preside over an industrialized area undamaged by the war and with little symbolic importance in international politics. It turned out to be the best possible solution for accelerating collectivization with no need to find a replacement for cheap German labour.

Criteria for the determination of nationality were far from clear in the first postwar period.[37] Owing to vague laws and a number of acts granting nearly absolute and arbitrary power to local committees, the naturalization of Lower Silesian autochthones turned out to be a matter of selective opportunity. A large number of German-speaking locals became Poles for the sake of the coal mining facilities, that is to prevent cheap labour from being deported into Allied zones and keep it at work where it was needed.

From a demographic point of view, Wałbrzych's prewar population had a typically industrial structure. In 1939, more than 54% of the population worked in industry and handicraft, only 15.5% in services, and a mere 1% in agriculture. Such data is even more meaningful when compared to neighbouring re-

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[36] Wojewódzki Urząd Statystyczny i Urząd Miejski w Wałbrzychu, *Ludność Ziemi Wałbrzyskiej 1945–1985*, Wałbrzych, 1985 (LZW).

[37] Grzegorz Strauchold: *Autochtoni polscy, niemieccy, czy... Od nacjonalizmu do komunizmu (1945–1949)*. Toruń 2001.

gions. According to the 1925 German census, in Lower Silesia as a whole there were nearly 600,000 peasants, some 36% of the local working population. Approximately 622,145 residents worked in "industry, mining, and building", or 37.5% of the total (German: *Industrie, Bergbau, Baugewerbe*).[38]

In early May 1945, Wałbrzych was taken by the 21st Army of the First Ukrainian Front after a short and fairly uneventful batttle with the German 17th Corps. After the German defeat, Soviet Major Pakhomov took authority. On May 22, a 34-man team of Polish officials were working on creating a civil administration.[39] On May 28, Red Army officers formally surrendered authority to Polish Plenipotentiary Piaskowski following orders received from the First Ukrainian Front Headquarters in Radebeul near Dresden.[40]

The very first Polish settlers in Wałbrzych were former prisoners from the Groß-Rosen concentration camp.[41] Soon more settlers came from central Poland and by the end of June 1945, the total Polish-speaking population stood at about 500. Thereafter, Polish refugees from the Soviet Union began to arrive until the number of Poles reached around 2,800 at the end of August, an extremely low number compared to the total of nearly 200,000 inhabitants, with more than 71,000 living in the conurbation around Wałbrzych and Nowa Ruda.[42]

Because of the ethnic ratios, Polish authorities were not in a position to replace German miners and workers with Polish labour. This was true also for administrative clerks. Until the end of the forties, a large number of Germans remained and even worked in some instances at the lower levels of the Wałbrzych municipal government.[43]

By the end of 1945, area Plenipotentiary Eugeniusz Szewczyk ordered the suspension of the settlement of refugees from the Soviet Union. Allegations in the local press stated that the decision was forced on him by the local Coal Authority.[44] The influx of refugees meant homes and jobs had to be granted to them, though they had no experience or qualifications for work in the coal mines. In order to keep the coal mines efficient, German workers remained employed.

Local law gave the Coal Authority certain powers. The corporation was directly controlled by the cabinet's economic committee. Coal Authority managers therefore had the same powers as officers of the state. They directly decided who received government-owned flats. Area plenipotentiaries could do nothing but approve the decisions.

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38 *Wirtschaft und Statistik,* 1927, p. 410.

39 LZW.

40 Stanisław Czajka: *Samorząd Wałbrzycha w latach 1945–1950.* In: Kronika wałbrzyska" 1981, p. 6.

41 Dorota Sula: *Filie KL Gross-Rosen (wybór artykułów).* Wałbrzych 2001.

42 LZW.

43 Wrocław State Archive, Section Boguszów Gorce, Zarząd Miejski w Wałbrzychu, Sprawy osobowe.

44 *Urządzamy gorników,* Trybuna Dolnośląska, 1st October 1945, 8.

The suspension of refugee settlement also had a political background. In many government-owned farms in Lower Silesia, managing positions had been taken over by former Armia Krajowa soldiers who were suspected of being anti-Communist. Evidence of this can be found in the local archives of the Public Security Office, a secret service in charge of counter-espionage and political intelligence. In Public Security Office documents in Bolesławiec, former Armia Krajowa soldiers are accused of the "expression of right-wing ideas".[45] As a result, they were not allowed to settle in locations strategically important from a military or economic point of view. Therefore, former Armia Krajowa soldiers were transferred mainly to the 'reconquered lands' along with refugees from the Soviet Union.

The effects of the Coal Authority's policies can found in employment data for the Wałbrzych area. At the end of December 1945, only 20% of nearly 20,000 miners were Poles. Even fewer were employed in other sectors. On December 31, 1945, there were 112 factories in Wałbrzych, in which china, glass, fabrics, and garments were produced. The total workforce was 29,714, of which Germans comprised 24,682 or 83%.[46]

With the beginning of Operation Swallow in early 1946, the local economy faced the threat of losing almost all of its workers. Planned transfers were delayed, with the first deportation train leaving as late as April 30, 1946. At that point, the German-speaking population in the urban area was 72% of the total, indicating that the German population was proportionally higher in surrounding areas. The total figure for Lower Silesia was 63%, though in other urban areas of similar dimensions the percentage was lower. For instance, Germans in Schweidnitz comprised only 57% of the total population, in Hirschberg 43%, and in Liegnitz 38%.

There had been virtually no 'wild expulsions' from the Wałbrzych area before November 1945. Instead, German-speaking locals were naturalized in large numbers. Theoretically, the naturalization process was regulated by the Parliament Act of April 28, 1946, "On Polish citizenship to be granted to Polish nationals living in the reconquered lands."[47] The National Verification Committees were mostly made up of members appointed by local plenipotentiaries and enjoyed nearly complete and arbitrary authority. They could use any piece of evidence they wanted to support an individual's 'Polishness'.

The indirect results of the activities of the Wałbrzych National Verification Committee can be found in the Polish census of February 13 to 14, 1946. In that census, only 51,997 inhabitants out of a total of 72,789 living in the conurbation were classified as Germans.[48] This number is surprisingly low when the fol-

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45 Instytut Pamiêci Narodowej, Wrocław Section, file 053/710.

46 LZW.

47 Dziennik Ustaw R.P., 1946, 15, pos. 106.

48 Wrocław State Archive, Section Boguszów Gorce, Zarząd Miejski w Wałbrzychu, Wydział Ogólny, Referat Statystyczny, Powszechny spis ludności na dzień 13.–14. II. 1946.

lowing facts are considered: the prewar German population was well over 64,000 people;[49] during the war, there was no evacuation of civilians; in early 1945, German refugees fled in large numbers to Wałbrzych from bordering areas invaded by the Soviets. This means that several thousand Germans were missing from the 1946 census. At the same time, the census showed as many as 19,716 'nationally verified' Poles.

Studies from the late nineteen-sixties confirm these facts. Data on the ethnic origin of postwar inhabitants of Lower Silesia is shown in the following table:[50]

	% Wałbrzych	**% Lower Silesia**
Autochthones	15.8	5.5
From other Polish areas	54.2	53.6
Refugees from the USSR	18.2	35.0
From Western countries	10.7	4.8
Other	1.1	1.1
Total	***100***	***100***

The autochthones figure is three times larger than the Voivodship average, while the number of refugees from the Soviet Union is about half the average in Lower Silesia.

Conclusions

1. The westward shift of the postwar Polish borders was important to Soviet interests and was consolidated when Poland became part of the Cold War eastern bloc. This does not mean that only Polish Communists approved of such a solution. On the contrary, non-Marxist political groupings also accepted the border shift. Indeed, it was formally accepted by the Allied powers in Chapter IX, Paragraph B of the Potsdam Agreement.

2. In Lower Silesia, the demographic situation was exceptional, as the prewar German-speaking population was over 95% of the total.

3. The authoritarian regime supervising population transfers caused unspeakable suffering to both Germans being deported and Poles coming to settle from central Poland and other areas in the east that had been annexed to the Soviet Union.

4. In a few areas of Lower Silesia, for instance the conurbation of Wałbrzych and Nowa Ruda, population transfers presented an opportunity for the nationalization of natural resources and the introduction of a planned economy.

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[49] Stanisław Czajka: *Repatriacja ludności niemieckiej z ziemi wałbrzyskiej w latach 1946–1948.* In: Kronika wałbrzyska, 1981, p. 47.

[50] B. Chruszcz: *Osadnictwo i przeobrażenia społeczne w Wałbrzychu ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem zagadnienia małżeństw mieszanych w latach 1945–1955.* In: Studia Śląskie, 1969, 16, p. 187.

5. In the period when most population transfers took place i.e. in the second half of the nineteen-forties, a completely new society was created in Lower Silesia. Important components in this process were the temporary settlement of a significant Jewish community and the deportation of thousands of Ruthenian civilians from the Carpathian area, the latter being the outcome of Operation Vistula targeting Ukrainian nationalists.

Povzetek

Preseljevanje prebivalstva v Spodnji Šleziji po 2. svetovni vojni

Vprašanje preseljevanja prebivalstva v vzhodni in srednji Evropi po drugi svetovni vojni znanstvenikom še dandanes ne dopušča objektivne poglobljene analize posameznih dogodkov. To velja še posebej za Poljsko, saj je ta država med in po vojni poleg množičnih preselitev prebivalstva doživela tudi precejšnje ozemeljske spremembe. Med letoma 1939 in 1940 so bila prostrana območja zahodne Poljske priključena Tretjemu rajhu, kar je povzročilo prisilni prehod okoli milijona prebivalcev z germaniziranih območij pod "Generalno gubernatorstvo". Po drugi strani je bilo območje okoli 140.000 km^2 vzhodno od t.i. Curzonove meje, vključno z zgodovinsko poljskimi mesti, ko sta Lvov in Vilna, priključeno Belorusiji, Litvi in Ukrajini. Avgusta 1945 je bila na tripartitni konferenci v Berlinu sprejeta odločitev, da se Poljski kot nadomestilo za sovjetizirana območja na vzhodu dodelijo predvojna nemška območja spodnje in srednje Šlezije, Pomeranije in delno Prusije, skupaj v obsegu okoli 100.000 km^2 ozemlja, ki je pred letom 1937 pripadalo Nemčiji.

Neposredno po vojni so bile te ozemeljske spremembe predmet močne ideološke kampanje, katere namen je bil upravičiti tako nasilno preseljevanje prebivalstva kot ozemeljske spremembe. Medtem ko so bile selitve predvsem nemškogovorečega civilnega prebivalstva z zahoda in poljskega prebivalstva s sovjetiziranih območij še nekako legitimne na podlagi odločitev zavezniških sil, pa je bilo ozemeljske spremembe precej teže razložiti. Že pozno poleti leta 1944 je Nacionalni odbor za osvoboditev Poljske (PKNW) sprejel Stalinov načrt o teritorialnih menjavah. O vzhodnonemških območjih, ki naj bi se priključila Poljski kot nadomestilo za sovjetizirana območja, se je že takrat začelo govoriti kot o "postuliranih območjih" in to je objektivno opredelilo tudi razmere ob koncu vojne. Potsdamski sklepi iz avgusta 1945 so ta območja preimenovali v "ponovno osvojena ozemlja". Takšna definicija je bila precej nenavadna, saj to območje vse od 14. stoletja nikdar ni pripadalo Poljski. Poleg tega so na nekaterih delih tega območja, predvsem v Spodnji Šleziji, Nemci predstavljali več

kot 95% vsega prebivalstva. A ta posebna oblika nacionalizma je kljub temu pripeljala do uveljavitve ideološke dogme o "ponovno osvojenem ozemlju".

Ta dogma živi še danes. Poljska je danes del Evropske unije, a kljub dvostranskim dogovorom z združeno Nemčijo na začetku devetdesetih let 20. stoletja se poljski zgodovinarji le redko lotevajo raziskav degermanizacije in polonizacije spodnje Šlezije brez neke vrste *excusatio non petita* glede povojnih priključitev in preseljevanj prebivalstva. Zdi se, kot da bi objektivna rekonstrukcija tega vprašanja lahko ogrozila današnje poljske interese. To velja še posebej za nekatere definicije. Tako v poljskih publikacijah ne bomo nikdar našli izraza "polonizacija" spodnje Šlezije, temveč vedno "ponovna polonizacija", kot da se od časa dinastije Piastov iz poznega srednjega veka do današnje Tretje poljske republike ne bi zgodila nobena sprememba. Izraz "degermanizacija" je le težko sprejemljiv in se lahko uporabi le kot nasprotni pol izrazu "nemška okupacija". Tako se omenjene preselitve prebivalstva le redko proučuje same po sebi, pač pa pogosto v povezavi s Potsdamsko konferenco. Takšna ideologizacija resno zavira regionalno zgodovinopisje.

V tem prispevku predpostavljam, da so vsi nacistični zločini, med njimi tudi prisilne preselitve poljskega prebivalstva na območje "generalnega gubernatorstva" in deportacije poljskega civilnega prebivalstva na prisilno delo v Nemčijo, zgodovinska resnica, ki je dokazana in o kateri se je tudi veliko poročalo. Prav tako predpostavljam, da so bile odločitve, sprejete na tripartitni konferenci v Berlinu leta 1945, zadostna legitimizacija tako povojnih prisilnih selitev nemškega prebivalstva z današnje zahodne Poljske kot tudi ozemeljskih sprememb glede na situacijo pred vojno. S tem prispevkom torej ne nameravam relativizirati nacističnih vojnih zločinov niti ni moj namen primerjati povojne Poljske s Hitlerjevo Nemčijo. Namen tega prispevka je predstaviti nekaj posebnih, ne le splošnih vidikov preseljevanja prebivalstva spodnje Šlezije, vključno s preseljevanjem nemškega civilnega prebivalstva, ki je bilo odobreno v Potsdamu, naseljevanjem poljskih državljanov iz Belorusije in Ukrajine, začasno imigracijo poljskih Judov iz Sovjetske zveze in deportacijami ter prisilnim naseljevanjem civilnega prebivalstva ljudstva Lemko z območja Karpatov v poznih 1940-ih letih, kar je bil stranski učinek vojaških operacij proti ukrajinskim nacionalistom.

Prispevek v glavnem temelji na virih iz varšavskega arhiva *Archiwum Akt Nowych* in lokalnih arhivov Spodnje Šlezije, upoštevana pa je tudi poljska in nemška literatura.