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Nation, Identity, and German "Particularities"
The Case of the Ruhr, 1871-1908

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Abstract

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To Germans in the heavily industrializing region of the Ruhr, the creation of the German nation in 1871 was not merely an abstract vision that needed to be dealt with on a theoretical level, but a tangible reality that was taking a significant toll on the socioeconomic and cultural make-up of the region. Beginning in the 1860s and 1870s, industrialization would draw about 450,000 migrant workers of Polish ethnicity into the region by World War I. To the German nationalists of the empire, this apparent "Polonization" of the *urdeutsche* German "heartlands" was a cause of grave concern, and by the 1890s, they introduced the policy of Germanization to repressively assimilate the Polish newcomers and protect the local *Deutschtum*. While the plight of the Polish migrants has been examined extensively, this study directs its attention towards the indigenous population of the Ruhr and examines how the local Germans themselves may have reacted to Germanization. Can we assume that being "German" automatically translated into support for a German nationalist idea? Such a presumption favors the theory that there was widespread consensus on what it meant to be a German nationalist. During the late nineteenth century, however, that concept was anything but clear. This study then seeks to investigate how natives perceived an essentially alien nationalist policy, in what ways they challenged the measure with their own visions of a German nation, and how they came to support it eventually.

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Abbreviations

ADV	Alldeutscher Verband
Arbg.	Arnsberg
GCB	Gewerkverein Christlicher Bergarbeiter
Oberpr.	Oberpräsidium
OVG	Oberverwaltungsgericht
Reg.	Regierung
RhWZ	Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung
StaB	Stadtarchiv Bochum
StaH	Stadtarchiv Herne
STAM	Staatsarchiv Münster
WP	Wiarus Polskie
ZZP	Zjednoczenie Zawadowe Polskie

Translations

Unless noted otherwise, all translations of titles, statements, and quoted sources are my own.

Preface

Early in my career at Emory, a student from Germany approached me on campus and challenged my "Germanness," founding his accusation on the observation that I tended to converse with him in English rather than German. Informing me that I was somehow "Americanized," he proceeded to give me a list of characteristics that constituted a "real" German, few of which I seemed to possess. Born and raised in Germany myself, I was quite taken aback by such allegations. Despite the obvious absurdity of these remarks, however, I was also profoundly intrigued by the way in which the student seemed to define German national identity and belonging.

Motivated by this experience, as well as some of the insights of Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities," I set off to investigate what it meant to be "properly" German in today's Germany. Inevitably, this endeavor led me to catch what my adviser Astrid Eckert calls the "historian's disease:" my questions pushed me further and further back in time, leading me to abandon an examination of more contemporary concepts of German identity in favor of late nineteenth century ones. Here, as has been suggested by scholars, lie the roots to German national identity, the birth of Germany.

During my subsequent reading of Imperial Germany, I came across the policy of Germanization, which at first appeared only vaguely related to my inquiry. Germanization was designed to assimilate so-called foreigners into its ethno-cultural realm, ridding them of whatever previous ethnic and cultural affiliation they possessed. This objective, however, seemed to indicate that those who practiced and advocated Germanization knew exactly what it meant to be German. Like the German student whom I encountered, these "Germanizers" implied that a unique and well-defined form of German identity did exist.

Germanization hence became central to my research and fundamental to my attempt to answer questions regarding Germanness. While the policy was implemented all throughout the German Empire during the late nineteenth century, I became particularly interested in its development in the Ruhrgebiet. Here, unlike in other regions of the empire, Germanization was a new phenomenon that gained prominence only as late as the 1890s. Ruhr Germans must have found themselves in a position analogous to my own, in that they must have been perplexed by outsiders' attempts to Germanize the local population.

This thesis is thus motivated to a large extent by my own experiences with questions surrounding national identity. Still, it is also an attempt to arrive at more general conclusions about how we understand our place within a nation, an entity that remains a mere construction of one's imagination.

Introduction

There can be little doubt that the founding of the German *Kaiserreich* in 1871 should be considered a momentous event in European history. Germans, the "latebloomers" of Europe, had finally come together under the umbrella of a united Germany. Yet, a closer look at 1871 shows that this was the birth not of a nation, but merely of a state, characterized by what James Retallack and David Blackbourn have called the "external realities" of empire: boundaries, institutions, and political frameworks.[1] Indeed, this political structure of 1871 tells us little about the attitudes and expectations of the people who came to belong to the new Germany. It is their views of the German nation, at the local level, that are the object of this study.

For historians, the "hollow" German state of 1871 has been a rare opportunity to study the nation, nationalism, and national identity as "works-in-progress." Beginning with Benedict Anderson, who identified a kind of "long-distance nationalism" that connected Germans across space, class, and confession, research into that nation has spanned all aspects of life: from the economy (Harold James), to politics, to the press and "narration" (Kristen Belgum, Brent Peterson), to confession, and *Kultur* (Helmut Walser Smith). These works have been highly illuminating in understanding the nation and the mechanics of what Eric Hobsbawm called the "invention of tradition" on a nation-wide level.[2]

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[1] David Blackbourn and James N. Retallack, "Introduction," in *Localism, Landscape, and the Ambiguities of Place: German-Speaking Central Europe, 1860-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 3-39, 4.

[2] Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991); Kirsten Belgum, *Popularizing the Nation: Audience, Representation, and the Production of Identity in Die Gartenlaube, 1853-1900* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); E. J Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge; New York:

In an attempt to depart from overgeneralizations that often evolve out of the nation-wide approach, however, a growing body of literature has emphasized the importance of space in studying German national identity. Rather than examining one nation-wide identity and its various "layers," Retallack and Blackbourn suggest, "a better strategy is to take apart the pieces of a well (or not-so-well) integrated whole so that we can see how they came together (or didn't)."[3] In the German case especially, research on national identity has converged around the various ways in which Germans "imagined" the nation through their individual localities. This trend – to consider the nation from the perspective of each locality – can be seen in recent scholarship by Alon Confino, Celia Applegate, David Blackbourn, and Caitlin Murdock. These studies have explored how the "ambiguities of place" could be reconciled with the more abstract construct of the nation.[4] In what ways could a "unique" German region consort with a supposedly homogenous German nation?

While such an approach is useful to examine how local identity began to feature more "national attributes" (as far as these even existed), the particular cases that have been studied are less revealing than they might appear. Both Alon Confino and Celia

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Cambridge University Press, 1992); Harold James, *A German Identity: 1770-1990* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989); Brent Orlyn Peterson, *History, Fiction, and Germany: Writing the Nineteenth-Century Nation* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005); Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[3] Note the difference in the underlying assumption here. Blackbourn and Retallack, *Localism, Landscape, and the Ambiguities of* Place, 14-15.

[4] David Blackbourn, "'The Garden of our Hearts': Landscape, Nature, and Local Identity in the German East," in *Localism, Landscape, and the Ambiguities of Place: German-Speaking Central Europe, 1860-1930*, eds. David Blackbourn and James N. Retallack (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 149-165; Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley University of California Press, 1990); Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Caitlin E. Murdock, *Changing Places: Society, Culture, and Territory in the Saxon-Bohemian Borderlands, 1870-1946* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

Applegate, for example, examined regions with long histories and well-established local identities, places like Württemberg and the Pfalz. The founding of the empire in 1871, however, did not mean that the inhabitants of such localities suddenly began to debate the meaning of the German nation – simply because it was not very pressing for them to do so. While slight adjustments certainly had to be made, the new identity of being first and foremost "German" affected their self-concepts only to a certain extent. Few of these individuals may have even noticed their transformation into specifically "German" citizens. Such indifference would necessarily impede ascertaining a thorough examination of their opinions and attitudes towards the concept of a German nation.

This study offers a view on a region where the creation of "Germany" sparked more active discussion and reflection: the Ruhrgebiet. While small, rural and politically insignificant prior to the 1870s, this coal-rich region located in the western part of the German empire quickly rose to form the economic backbone of the new Germany. Indeed, the Ruhr's enormous wealth in natural resources lent the young empire the strength and legitimacy it needed, providing the basis for economic growth and the means for military greatness. Coal assumed such centrality in the *Kaiserreich* that the British economist John Maynard Keynes once suggested re-naming Bismarck's empire as one of "coal and iron, not blood and iron."[5] The onset of heavy industry and mining during the 1870s initiated sweeping economic and demographic transformations that would fundamentally change the face of the Ruhrgebiet. On the one hand, rapid industrialization erased the provincial and rural nature of the region, turning its villages and towns into urban metropolises. On the other hand, the enormous demand for labor quickly depleted

[5] Quoted in Norman Pounds, "Historical Geography," in *Imperial Germany: A Historiographical Companion*, ed. Roger Chickering (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1996), 19, 20-25.

the human resources of the scarcely populated region and initiated a period of intensive growth through a substantial influx of migrant labor. Consequently, the total population of the Ruhr grew dramatically: while in 1871 roughly 605,000 souls were living there, this number had more than quadrupled to 2,800,000 by 1910.[6]

As a result, Germans in this region experienced the creation of "Germany" like few others in the empire. Here, the nation was not merely an abstract vision that needed to be dealt with on a theoretical level, but a tangible reality that was taking a significant toll on the socioeconomic and cultural make-up of the region.[7] While Alon Confino's Württemberg or Celia Applegate's Pfalz were demographically stable and economically unchanged places that formed a "safe haven" for many locals, the Ruhrgebiet was a region in constant flux, continuously in the making.[8] Inhabitants of the Ruhrgebiet could not escape questions surrounding the nation. A study of this region thus becomes particularly interesting because its people *had* to voice their opinion on the German nation, whereas those living in regions marked by more stability may not have been as compelled to do so.

Moreover, a considerable majority of the immigrants were of Polish ethnicity.[9] Coming from the eastern territories of the German empire – Silesia, Poznania, West Prussia, and East Prussia – the migrant workers and their families came to make up such an extensive part of the population of the Ruhrgebiet that this previously homogenous region located in the heart of Germany suddenly resembled an ethnic borderland. All in

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[6] Richard Charles Murphy, *Guestworkers in the German Reich: A Polish Community in Wilhelmian Germany* (Boulder New York: East European Monographs; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1983),16.
[7] Ibid., 12.
[8] Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, 15-17; Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 1.
[9] A number of historians have referred to the migrant workers as "in-migrants" in order to distinguish between domestic migrants and "immigrants" from abroad. See especially Murphy, *Guestworkers*.

all, an estimated 450,000 *Ruhrpolen* ('Ruhr-Poles') had permanently settled in the Ruhrgebiet by the onset of World War I, compared to practically none in 1860.[10] To German natives, these migrants appeared foreign, for they spoke a foreign language and maintained their Polish culture and traditions. In 1903, for instance, one contemporary observer lamented the emergence of a new *Volksstamm* (tribe) that seemed to be supplanting the indigenous population.[11] Yet, with the founding of the empire, the Poles had acquired German citizenship and as a result could exercise the same civil rights as any ethnically German citizen.[12] This, in essence, was the new German nation – an entity that included people of various ethnicities and languages. In the Ruhrgebiet, such a paradox posed perhaps the greatest challenge to fathoming the new Germany.[13]

Worried by the extensive proliferation of citizens with Polish ethnicity in the Ruhrgebiet, German nationalists from throughout the empire began to fear the "Polonization" of the western, *urdeutsche* heartlands. Starting in the 1890s, they initiated

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[10] Note that "Polish" here serves as an umbrella term to describe a number of different Polish ethnic sub-groups. For instance, about 150,000 of the Polish migrants were Masurians who considered themselves at least partially separate from other Polish in-migrants. Christoph Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet, 1870-1945: Soziale Integration und nationale Subkultur einer Minderheit in der deutschen Industriegesellschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978).

[11] Johannes Victor Bredt, *Die Polenfrage im Ruhrkohlengebiet: Eine wirtschaftspolitische Studie* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1909), 6.

[12] An extensive literature has treated the complexities of German citizenship in the *Kaiserreich*, examining the relationship between *Staatsangehörigkeit* (citizenship) and *Volksangehörigkeit* (ethnic belonging) in Germany. I will discuss this issue in the context of the *Polenfrage* ("Polish Question"), which sparked discussions over the definition of German citizenship. See Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Dieter Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschliessen: Die Nationalisierung der Staatsangehörigkeit vom deutschen Bund bis zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001); Eli Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship in Germany: Ethnicity, Utility and Nationalism* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2004); Andreas Fahrmeir, *Citizenship: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Annemarie Sammartino, "After Brubaker: Citizenship in Modern Germany 1848 to Today," *German History* 27, no. 4 (2009), 583-599

[13] The "non-German German" paradox has been examined by Brian Vick with respect to the 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and their plans for a German nation. Vick concluded that "even with the best intentions, the [paradox] would have presented deputies with a nearly insoluble dilemma […]." With the founding of the Second Empire, however, the idea of "non-German Germans" transformed from a hypothetical contruct into a reality. How the general German populace reacted to this development is examined in this study. See Brian Vick, *Defining Germany: The 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and National Identity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 110-138.

a series of nationalist policies under the umbrella term "Germanization," in an effort to fortify the so-called *Deutschtum* of the Ruhrgebiet and expedite the assimilation of Polish-speaking citizens. The resulting interactions that took place between German natives and in-migrant Poles during the late nineteenth century have sparked an extensive body of scholarship by historians who sought to examine the socio-cultural dynamics involved in forced assimilation and integration of a minority group into a dominant culture. In 1948 Wilhelm Brepohl, for instance, posited a cultural "melting pot" in the Ruhrgebiet, a process by which a new and distinct Ruhr identity was formed through the growing friction between in-migrant and native culture.[14] Brepohl's theory has been countered by a younger generation of historians – in particular, Christoph Kleßmann (1978) and Richard C. Murphy (1983) – who maintained a greater extent of cultural pluralism in the Ruhr.[15] Both Kleßmann and Murphy concluded that the Polish in-migrant population managed to maintain a distinct and vital Polish community despite Germanization, in the form of what Kleßmann calls a Polish "sub-culture." Their findings were reaffirmed in subsequent work by authors such as Krystyna Murzynowska (1984), Valentina-Maria Stefanski (1984), and Hans-Jürgen Brandt (1987). Taken together, these works form an increasingly sophisticated body of scholarship on the Polish community in the Ruhrgebiet.[16]

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[14] Wilhelm Friedrich Brepohl, *Der Aufbau des Ruhrvolkes im Zuge der Ost-West-Wanderung: Beiträge zur deutschen Sozialgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Recklinghausen: Verlag Bitter, 1948). Brepohl is seen as the pioneering scholar on the Ruhrgebiet, although his work has been contested due to significant racial tendencies.

[15] Both draw heavily on the works of American sociologist Milton Gordon, who has been credited with founding the theory of "cultural pluralism." See Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: the Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (1964); Murphy, *Guestworkers*, 190; Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 1-10.

[16] The most important works on this topic are Brepohl, *Der Aufbau des Ruhrvolkes im Zuge der Ost-West-Wanderung*; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Die Polen im Ruhrgebiet bis 1918* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1961); Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*; Murphy, *Guestworkers*; Krystyna Murzynowska, *Die polnischen Erwerbsauswanderer im Ruhrgebiet während der Jahre 1880-1914* (Dortmund: Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa, 1979); Valentina-Maria Stefanski, *Zum Prozess der Emanzipation und Integration von Aussenseitern: polnische Arbeitsmigranten im Ruhrgebiet* (Dortmund: Rheinisch-

Surprisingly, however, these studies have focused almost exclusively on the Polish in-migrants and generally neglected to examine the native German population alongside them. Kleßmann's and Murphy's studies in particular have been based on the underlying assumption that all Germans were essentially united about the way in which to behave towards the Polish in-migrants. Although more recent work by John Kulczycki (1994) attempts to distance itself from this broad assumption, virtually no major study has considered reactions to Polish in-migration among Ruhr Germans.[17] Is it appropriate to presume that all Germans were convinced xenophobes who endorsed a hostile stance towards the Polish community?

This study attempts to reevaluate such an assumption and poses a question that has received strikingly little attention in the literature of the Ruhrgebiet: How did Germans themselves react to Germanization? Can we indeed assume that "being German" automatically translated into support for a "German nationalist" Germanization? Such a presumption favors the theory that there was only one "core" kind of German nationalism to which all Germans subscribed.[18] The concept of German nationalism, however, was anything but uniform. Many Ruhr Germans were just as new to the German nation as their Polish-speaking counterparts; in fact, Germanization itself had been rejected explicitly by "nationalists" at the 1848 Frankfurt Parliament. At that time, conceptions of German national identity were, according to Brian Vick, still

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Westfälische Auslandsgesellschaft e.V., 1984); Hans Jürgen Brandt, Josef Dransfeld, Karl Hengst, and Norbert Humberg, *Die Polen und die Kirche im Ruhrgebiet 1871-1919: Ausgewählte Dokumente zur pastoral and kirchlichen Integration sprachlicher Minderheiten im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1987); Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880-1980: Seasonal Workers, Forced Laborers, Guest Workers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990).

[17] John J. Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement: Xenophobia and Solidarity in the Coal Fields of the Ruhr, 1871-1914* (Oxford; Providence, RI: Berg Publishers, 1994).

[18] It is precisely this assumption that led contemporary nationalists to believe that they were acting in the pure interest of *Deutschtum*, a notion that has been perpetuated by studies that rely on similar points of departure. For a critical discussion of this assumption see Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1-19.

"flexible enough to allow a […] multinational nation."[19] This study then seeks to investigate how natives perceived an essentially alien nationalist policy, in what ways they challenged this policy with their own visions of a German nation, and how they came to support it eventually.

The discussion will be organized into two parts. The first part, which encompasses chapters one to three, provides a brief history of the economic, demographic, and geographic development of the Ruhrgebiet during the second half of the nineteenth century in chapters one and two; I then proceed to introduce the "Polish Question" in chapter three and outline how it affected the ethno-cultural character of the empire. As we will see, the "Polish Question" would become central to "Germanizing" an originally multi-ethnic state. The second part, which spans the remaining chapters, discusses first how the "Polish Question" entered the Ruhrgebiet and, in the fourth chapter, offers a categorization of the various ways in which Ruhr Germans perceived and reacted to the policy of Germanization. Chapter five traces the development of the debate among Germans on the issue of Germanization during the period between 1899-1908, a decade that was marked by social and political changes both in the Ruhrgebiet and the empire as a whole. It also offers some suggestions on what historians may learn about nationalism from a study of the Ruhrgebiet, and how further research may yield interesting insights into a number of German "particularities."[20]

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[19] Brian Vick, "Language and Nation," in *What is a Nation? Europe 1789-1914*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 161-162.
[20] David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford [Oxfordshire]: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Chapter I

The Ruhrgebiet during the Long Nineteenth Century: A Brief History

A view of the Ruhr river basin during the early nineteenth century would have few believing that this region would transform into one of the most urban and industrialized centers of Europe within a few decades. A tradition of subsistence agriculture that stretched back as far as the early Middle Ages defined this remote western corner of the Prussian kingdom. "For centuries," writes one al historian, the people of the Ruhr "had lived a serene life between crop and harvest."[21] The population was small; Dortmund, in 1800 one of the largest cities, had 4000 inhabitants while Bochum and Essen were home to barely half that number. The region appeared on the political maps of empires only because it was situated in proximity to a minor medieval commercial trading route, the *Hellweg*, along which practically all its larger towns were located. By the early nineteenth century, these villages had changed little, and according to Helmut Croon, "they remained medieval in aspect and even in function."[22]

During the 1790s, the first coal deposits were discovered – just below the surface and no more than a few hundred meters deep - and rudimentary mining activity began to take shape. Yet, this crude coal was not intended for export and usually replaced firewood for cooking and heating purposes (the first blast furnaces did not go into operation until the 1840s).[23] The deeper-lying, high-quality bituminous deposits (*Fettkohle*) remained largely untapped and even undetected, as mining continued to be

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[21] StaH Karton 50, 14.29, Bestand "Vereine": Leo Reiners, "Herne: Das Gesicht einer Industriestadt," in *Festschrift zum 50jährigen Bestehen des KKV Sapientia" in Herne am 6. Mai 1951*, 7.
[22] David F. Crew, *Town in the Ruhr: A Social History of Bochum, 1860-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 6.
[23] Pieper, Lorenz. *Die Lage Der Bergarbeiter Im Ruhrrevier*, (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1903), 12.

seen as a secondary economic activity, supplementing farmers' income during the off-seasons in the fields.[24]

It was not until the 1860s and early 1870s that heavy industry entered the rural Ruhr river basin and suddenly began to carve out a predominant economic role.[25] This, in essence, was the new Germany sweeping in, as policy-makers in Berlin began to explore the enormous economic potential of the Ruhr in unmistakable mercantilist fashion.[26] Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, policies were enacted in Prussia (and after 1871, throughout Germany) that encouraged a thriving steel and mining industry. In May of 1860, for instance, the *Freizügigkeitsgesetz* (Freedom of Movement law) was introduced in Prussia; the law helped liberalize labor markets by eliminating the *Direktionsprinzip*, which until then had prevented employers from hiring on the basis of free market principles and directed them to hire only local workers.[27] Numerous other measures followed, and after 1871, the central government would also devote significant resources to infrastructure projects, laying the first railroads and expanding the commercial ports in Ruhr cities near the Rhine, particularly in Duisburg.[28]

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[24] Murphy, *Guestworkers,* 120.
[25] For an overview of the economic developments in the Ruhr just prior to industrialization, see Köllmann, *Bevölkerung in der industriellen Revolution,* 208-28.
[26] For a discussion of the principle of mercantilism at work in the Ruhrgebiet, see Klaus Tenfelde, *Sozialgeschichte der Bergarbeiterschaft an der Ruhr im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, 1981), 104; Michaela Bachem-Rehm, *Die katholischen Arbeitervereine im Ruhrgebiet, 1870-1914: katholisches Arbeitermilieu zwischen Tradition und Emanzipation*, Vol. 33 Konfession und Gesellschaft (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), 20; Köllmann, *Bevölkerung in der industriellen Revolution*, 209-211.
[27] Historians have identified the *Freizügigkeitsgesetz* as crucial to the economic and demographic developments in the Ruhrgebiet. Köllmann, *Bevölkerung in der industriellen Revolution*; Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*, 22; Murphy, *Guestworkers*, 19; Bredt, *Die Polenfrage im Ruhrkohlengebiet,* 2-3; Wolfgang Jäger, *Bergarbeitermilieus und Parteien im Ruhrgebiet: zum Wahlverhalten des katholischen Bergarbeitermilieus bis 1933* (München: Beck, 1996), 14.
[28] It should be noted that these efforts were never completely mercantilist in nature. According to Klaus Tenfelde, the Prussian government after 1871 never directly controlled the economy; instead, it attempted to create a *laissez-faire* environment that would encourage certain economic ambitions. Bachem-Rehm, *Die katholischen Arbeitervereine im Ruhrgebiet, 1870-1914,* 20; Tenfelde, *Sozialgeschichte der Bergarbeiterschaft an der Ruhr*, 9-14, 104.

As a result, coal production increased dramatically during the 1870s, as new mines mushroomed throughout the Emscher and Lippe zones, north of the Ruhr River. Coal production in the Ruhrgebiet stood at 11.8 million tons for the year 1870; by 1880, it had doubled to 22.5 million tons per year. Production would continue to rise spectacularly, reaching approximately 60 million tons during the year 1900.[29] Ranked only fourth in output among the world's leading industrial nations in the 1870s, by the First World War the German empire had surpassed two of its most formidable competitors, France and Britain, and become the largest producer of coal and steel in Europe.

The emergence of large-scale mining created an enormous demand for labor. In 1850, mines in the Ruhrgebiet employed just under 13,000 men, barely a quarter of the workforce of 1870. Twenty years later, in 1890, 127,749 men worked in Ruhr coal mining, and their number increased to a staggering 406,944 in 1913.[30] Thus, beginning in 1870, a true mass migration began to take place, during which most of the cities in the Ruhrgebiet saw their population double and triple within only a few years. Over the next decades, the province of Westphalia – into which much of the Ruhrgebiet extended – would experience the largest population growth of any German province.[31]

The demographic transformation that resulted from labor migration was staggering. Richard Murphy estimates that the total population of the Ruhr increased by a dramatic 362.9% over the course of four decades after 1871, from 605,000 to 2.8 million in 1910. Of these, an overwhelming 1.5 million were born outside the Ruhrgebiet census

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[29] Pieper, *Die Lage der Bergarbeiter im Ruhrrevier*, 12.
[30] Stanislaus Wachowiak, "Die Polen in Rheinland-Westfalen" (Borna: R. Noske, 1916), 10-11.
[31] Crew, *Town in the Ruhr*, 8.

districts.[32] Many towns saw their populations explode, turning them into cities within only a few decades. The town of Herne, a village of just 1,000 souls in 1843, had 4,000 people in 1870, 14,000 in 1890, and by 1910, it was home to 57,000.[33]

Until the 1850s, the indigenous population of the Rhineland and Westphalia still provided the overwhelming bulk of the workforce. Soon, however, local manpower sources were exhausted and for the next two decades, mine owners began to recruit from adjacent regions, especially the Rhineland, Hesse, and the Sauerland. Due to the rapid expansion of deep-shaft mining,[34] especially to the north and northeast, however, labor demand continued to exceed the regional supply.[35] Since the coal was still being extracted predominantly by hand – even well into the twentieth century – mine owners felt obliged to recruit growing masses of workers. The *Verein für bergbauliche Interessen* (Organization for the Protection of Mining Interests), perhaps hoping to avoid large-scale investments in machinery, announced periodically throughout the 1870s and 1880s that due to the "unexpected and continuous growth" of the mining industry, unrestricted

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[32] Murphy, *Guestworkers*, 16.

[33] The town of Hamborn was similarly illustrative of this boom. Hamborn had grown from a small town to a city of 67,000 inhabitants by 1905, seeing its population rise to over 100,000 over the next five years. StaH Karton 50, 14.29, Bestand "Vereine": Leo Reiners, "Herne: Das Gesicht einer Industriestadt"; Susanne Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet: die Geschichte der Zuwanderung am Beispiel Herne bis 1945* (Essen: Klartext, 1997), 361; Murphy, *Guestworkers*, 22; Wachowiak, "Die Polen in Rheinland-Westfalen," 19-20.

[34] These larger "supermines" often commanded work forces exceeding 1,000. For a detailed discussion of Ruhr mining see Christoph Kleßmann, "Integration und Subkultur Nationaler Minderheiten: Das Beispiel der "Ruhrpolen" 1870-1939," in *Auswanderer, Wanderarbeiter, Gastarbeiter: Bevölkerung, Arbeitsmarkt und Wanderung in Deutschland seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts: Referate und Diskussionsbeiträge Des Internationalen Wissenschaftlichen Symposiums "Vom Auswanderungsland zum Einwanderungsland?" an der Akademie für politische Bildung Tutzing, 18.-21.10. 1982*, edited by Klaus J. Bade (Ostfildern: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1984), 487; Brian J. McCook, "Polnische industrielle Arbeitswanderer im Ruhrgebiet seit dem Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Enzyklopaedie Migration in Europa: Vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, edited by Klaus Bade, Pieter C. Emmer, Leo Lucassen and Jochen Oltmer (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schoeningh, 2007), 873.

[35] Metzner, Max. *Die soziale Fürsorge im Bergbau, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Preußens, Sachsens, Bayerns und Österreichs* (Jena: G. Fischer, 1911), 9; Bredt, *Die Polenfrage im Ruhrkohlengebiet*, 4; Pieper, *Die Lage der Berargeiter im Ruhrrevier*, 17; Brepohl, *Der Aufbau des Ruhrvolkes*, 64-65.

imports of labor were and would continue to be the only solution.[36] Upon such urgings, even workers from far abroad began to stream into the mines of the Ruhr, Emscher, and Lippe valleys, including migrants from far-off countries like Turkey and China entered the record books of immigration authorities.[37] By 1893, a total of 36 languages were represented in the Ruhrgebiet.[38]

Recruiting agents were sent especially to the eastern provinces of the empire, the regions of East- and West Prussia, Silesia, and Posen.[39] These overwhelmingly rural territories, formerly part of the Kingdom of Poland and now subject to the Prussian crown, were home to ethnic Poles. To the industries of the west, they represented an abundant source of willing and cheap labor. Lured by the promises of high wages and a better, more secure life in the west, many young men migrated into the western part of the empire, later sending for their families to follow them.[40]

Susanne Peters-Schildgen estimates that in 1861, a total of merely four Polish families resided in the Ruhrgebiet. Over the next few decades, beginning with the hiring of a few hundred Polish workers at the shaft called "Prosper" in 1871, thousands of residents from the eastern fringes of the empire entered the region. In 1890, an estimated 30,000 migrant Poles were living in the region.[41] Their numbers continued to rise dramatically so that by the First World War, according to historians' estimates a total of

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[36] *Der Verein für bergbauliche Interessen*, "Die Entwicklung des Niederrheinisch-Westfälischen Steinkohlenbergbaues," quoted in Bredt, *Die Polenfrage im Ruhrkohlengebiet,* 3; Tenfelde, *Sozialgeschichte der Bergarbeiterschaft an der Ruhr*, 239.
[37] See Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*, 26.
[38] Pieper, *Die Lage der Bergarbeiter im Ruhrrevier*, 241.
[39] For a detailed breakdown of the originating regions, see Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet,* 35-42.
[40] For a discussion of the reasons why Poles in large numbers left for the Ruhrgebiet, see Stefanski, *Zum Prozess der Emanzipation und Integration von Aussenseitern*, Murphy, *Guestworkers*, 26-40, Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet,* 23-44; Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*, 23-34; Joachim Boss, *Die Ursachen der Landflucht in Ostpreussen und die Mittel zu ihrer Bekämpfung* (Berlin: W. Müller, 1933); Wachowiak, "Die Polen in Rheinland-Westfalen," 4-15.
[41] Pieper, *Die Lage der Bergarbeiter im Ruhrrevier*, 17.

450,000 people of Polish ethnicity settled more or less permanently in the region. While the precise number remains uncertain, it is clear that the Poles as an ethnic group represented a significant minority that could not be ignored.[42] Poles made up about a fourth of the population in the Ruhrgebiet's growing communities; in Habinghorst, today part of Dortmund, 43.8% were Polish in 1910. In absolute numbers, the districts of Recklinghausen, Dortmund, Gelsenkirchen, Hamborn, and Herne were home to the largest numbers of Polish migrants. Not without reason did contemporary Polish observer Stanislaus Wachowiak emphasize that a stroll through the Ruhrgebiet around 1900 "could lead many to believe they were still wandering the streets of their eastern *Heimat*."[43] Even today, scholars point to the continued presence of etymologically Polish names throughout the cities of the Ruhrgebiet.[44]

Aside from these economic and demographic challenges to its regional identity, the Ruhrgebiet also faced the problem of lacking definite geopolitical boundaries that could help shape a people's self-perception and sense of belonging. Throughout its history, the Ruhrgebiet never enjoyed clearly defined political, dynastic or natural borders.[45] During the eighteenth century, its cities were spread across a number of different sovereignties, including the county of Mark, the arch-bishop elector of Cologne, and the elector palatine von der Pfalz. Some cities, such as Dortmund, were free imperial

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[42] Historians have settled on the approximate 450,000 figure. For numbers cited in the current literature, see Murphy, *Guestworkers*, 21; McCook, "Polnische industrielle Arbeitswanderer im Ruhrgebiet seit dem Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts," 871; Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880-1990*, 73; Kleßmann, "Integration und Subkultur nationaler Minderheiten," 489; Jäger, *Bergarbeitermilieus und Parteien im Ruhrgebiet,* 16-17.
[43] Quote by a recruitment agent in Wachowiak, "Die Polen in Rheinland-Westfalen," 13.
[44] Thorsten Klagges, *Trotz Cholera, Krieg und Krisen: Bochum: eine kleine illustrierte Stadtgeschichte* (Horb am Neckar: Geiger, 2000), 48; Wulf Schade, "Verkrüppelte Identität: Polnische und masurische Zuwanderung in der Bochumer Geschichtsschreibung," *Bochumer Zeitpunkte Nr. 23* (2009), 25-51.
[45] Hans Spethmann, *Ruhrrevier und Raum Westfalen, Wirtschaftskritische Ergänzung zu dem Werk "Der Raum Westfalen"* (Oldenberg i. O.: G. Stalling, 1933), 10.

cities and hence under their own political jurisdiction. Subsequent to French occupation at the turn of the nineteenth century, during which the entire region was assigned to the grand duchy of Berg, the Ruhrgebiet once again became subdivided and now spanned selected counties of the new provinces of Westphalia and the Rhineland, subject to the Prussian crown.

Even its name, which refers to the extended banks of the river Ruhr, is misleading.[46] Today, the region encompasses the river basins of the Emscher and Lippe, both to the north of the Ruhr; it extends just past the Rhine River to the west and is bound by the city of Hamm in the east. Some scholars also describe a "greater" Ruhrgebiet, which may include Wuppertal to the south, the city of Krefeld to the south-west, and Wesel county to the north-west.[47] Prior to the onset of heavy industrialization and large-scale extraction of coal during the 1860s and 1870s, few contemporaries even used the term "Ruhrgebiet" when describing their home; instead, they referred to it as the land between the provinces of Rhineland and Westphalia.[48] The discovery of immense coal deposits towards the latter part of the century changed this definition; with mining as an ever more predominant feature in the region's economy, historians now spoke of a *Ruhrkohlenrevier* or *Ruhrkohlenbecken* (Ruhr coal region basin), clearly emphasizing the centrality of coal in defining the region.[49] Economic activity came to define where and what the *Ruhrgebiet* was, and hence the definition of the region migrated across the map and expanded continuously throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

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[46] Spethmann, *Ruhrrevier und Raum Westfalen,* 10. Spethmann discusses an "inner" and an "outer" Ruhrgebiet, and argues about where it lies with regard to Westphalia and the Rhineland.
[47] Murphy, *Guestworkers,* 11.
[48] Bachem-Rehm, *Die katholischen Arbeitervereine im Ruhrgebiet, 1870-1914*, 19; according to Schwartz, the term "Ruhrgebiet" was not conventional until well into the 1920s. See Karin Schwartz, *Bürgerliche Selbstdarstellung im Ruhrgebiet zwischen 1871 und 1918: Die kommunalen Denkmäler einer Industrieregion* (Diss., Universität Trier, 2004), 7.
[49] Pieper, *Die Lage der Bergarbeiter im Ruhrrevier,* 1-2.

The struggles over the make-up of the local economy, sudden large influxes of foreign people, and the lingering questions concerning the geopolitical boundaries of the Ruhrgebiet are what distinguished the experiences of Ruhr Germans from those of many of their peers throughout the empire. For the historian studying German nationalism, these are precisely the conditions that make the Ruhrgebiet such a suitable region for examining Germans' attitudes towards the construct of the nation. Uprooted and stripped of a century long tradition of provincial life and rural environment (which one historian has described as "the unaltered jungles" of the Ruhr), locals saw their sense of belonging and identity as seriously threatened – not just in physical and economic but also in demographic terms.[50] How these Germans reacted to the new nation that in many ways was responsible for such changes is what this study is about.

[50] Spethmann, *Ruhrrevier und Raum Westfalen*, 5; see also Brepohl, *Der Aufbau des Ruhrvolkes*.

Chapter II

Origins of the "Polish Question" and Its Meaning for the German Nation

In order to fully appreciate the complexity of and impact that the "Polish Question" had on the Ruhrgebiet, it is necessary to examine its origins and history. By the time the "Polish Question" had entered the public debate in the Ruhrgebiet during the 1890s, it had been around for a century in the eastern provinces of Prussia. Such deep historical roots would have important repercussions for the development of anti-Polish attitudes and government measures in the Ruhrgebiet. Most importantly, the increasingly nationalist hue and cry about this "issue" would duly impact the discourse of national identity in the Ruhr.

Since the partitioning of the Kingdom of Poland from 1772 to 1795 by its three militarily superior neighbors, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Prussia, vast numbers of people of Polish ethnicity were living in territories subject to the Prussian crown. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the monarchy's position towards this significant ethnic minority was largely conciliatory, formulated by a liberal and reform-minded leadership that was hoping to foster a basic level of loyalty towards the Prussian state. In an address to the people of the newly acquired province of Posen, King Frederick William III announced, "You too have a fatherland and therewith a demonstration of my respect for your devotion to it. You are being incorporated into My Monarchy without having to deny your nationality … Your language is to be used along with German in all public

transactions."[51] Indeed, Polish would become the second official language in the territory and a Polish noble was appointed the first governor of Poznania. Only a few years later, the Prussian Minister of Culture, Karl von Altenstein, would reaffirm King Frederick William III's Polish policy, emphasizing the importance of "respecting and valuing" the Polish language and religion in order to "be sure of winning the hearts of [our] subjects."[52] Clearly, the overarching objective was to form a bond between lord and subject; membership in the Prussian state was defined, according to Richard Blanke, along "political rather than ethnic" lines.[53]

The next three decades were marked predominantly by efforts at "prussianization," that is, the political assimilation of ethnically non-German (or, more accurately, non-Prussian) subjects. However, such efforts remained confined to the Polish nobility, which was considered the main potential harbinger of a reestablished Polish Kingdom.[54] And indeed, the suspicions about a disloyal Polish nobility appeared to be confirmed after 1830, when two Polish rebellions (1830-1831 and 1863-1864) in the Russian portion of Poland as well as the Revolution of 1848 lent increased credibility to the threat of a revived Polish state.[55] In the wake of these uprisings, Prussia adopted what Geoff Eley has described as an "oscillating policy between a more conciliatory and a

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[51] May 15, 1815; as quoted by Richard Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire* (Boulder, New York: Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1981), 1-2.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire*, 12. In fact, according to Barbieri, "The hallmark of the German [nation-building] process is that its cultural and political aspects have been largely independent of one another." See William A. Barbieri, *Ethics of Citizenship: Immigration and Group Rights in Germany* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 11; for a comprehensive review of the literature, see Geoff Eley, *From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 200-228.
[54] Suspicion towards the Polish nobility could be traced back to the South Prussian uprising of 1806-1807, when the Polish nobility had joined the French in their defeat of Prussia at Jena.
[55] Although the rebellions of 1830 and 1863 took place in the Russian partition of former Poland (Congress Kingdom), they nonetheless were a cause of concern in Prussian circles.

more adversary approach."[56] For instance, policies advanced during the New Era in the 1840s by officials such as Eduard von Flottwell (*Oberpräsident von Posen*, 1830-1841), well known for their "cultural chauvinism," clashed with the more accommodating stance of statesmen such as Altenstein and Prussian Chancellor Karl August von Hardenberg earlier in the century.[57]

Still, efforts to assimilate the Polish people into *Deutschtum* along ethno-cultural and linguistic lines remained strikingly absent from Prussian policy. Even Otto von Bismarck, who would take more decisive steps against Poles during the 1860s ("Haut doch die Polen, dass sie am Leben verzagen"[58]) was primarily targeting the "Movement for Greater Poland," led first and foremost by a small Polish landowning elite and the nobility. Bismarck perceived this group to be the main culprit in a struggle for an independent Polish state, as well as a potential internal threat in times of military conflict with France or the Habsburgs. His focus thus remained on the political loyalties of the nobility, which he distinguished from the Polish peasant, whom he describes as a "faithful Prussian subject if he is not artificially led astray … through other influences."[59] Hence, the Polish common man remained largely unaffected by the politics of empire and continued to live in peace:

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[56] Eley, *From Unification to Nazism*, 204; Historians largely agree that from about 1830 to 1863, Prussian policy in the east would show signs of fluctuation. Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire*; William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Werner Conze, "Nationsbildung durch Trennung. Deutsche und Polen im preußischen Osten," in *Innenpolitische Probleme des Bismarck-Reiches*, eds. Otto Pflanze and Elisabeth Müller-Luckner (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1983), 96.
[57] Eley, *From Unification to Nazism*, 204-205.
[58] Bismarck in a letter to his sister Malwine, 26. März 1861; Reiner Pommerinn and Manuela Uhlmann, *Quellen zu den deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen 1815-1991* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), 60.
[59] Bismarck in a speech from 28 January 1886 in the *Abgeordnetenhaus* quoted in Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire (1871-1900)*, 83.

> "Ab und zu wurde diese behagliche Ruhe durch eine neue Regierungsverordnung etwas unterbrochen. Aber lebendig wurden dadurch eigentlich nur adelige Gutsbesitzer […], sonst niemand."[60]

With the wars of unification during the 1860s and the establishment of the German Empire in 1871, the new Germany began to undergo what Stefan Berger has called the "romantic ethnicisation of its national history." That is, over the last quarter of the century, the Prussian state would transform into a decidedly German one, adding a new layer of ethnic and cultural distinction to the definition of citizenship.[61] In practice, this required Poles and other ethnic minorities residing in the new *Kaiserreich* to devote not only their political loyalties to the Prussian state, but also to redefine their ethnic and cultural identities along the lines of an ethnically German empire.[62] As was to be expected, Polish leaders were enraged by this development, which directly contravened the tolerant approach first advocated by King Frederick William III.[63] In a tirade before the *Bundesversammlung* (national assembly) in 1867, Polish representative Kantak inquired,

> "Was um des Himmels willen haben wir Gemeinschaftliches in einem auf nationaler Grundlage gebildeten Bunde, den ein gemeinschaftliches deutsches Band umschlingen, der gemeinschaftliche Deutsche Interessen vertreten, wahren, pflegen und fortbilden, der einem gemeinschaftlichen deutschen Ziele entgegengehen soll?"[64]

Kantak fully understood the dangerous situation for the Polish people in a nation-state that sought to standardize and homogenize its subjects not only structurally, but also

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[60] Quote by Wachowiak, "Die Polen in Rheinland-Westfalen," 1; see also Conze, "Nationsbildung durch Trennung. Deutsche und Polen im preußischen Osten," 95-121.
[61] Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany Since 1800* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), 46.
[62] Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 61; Wehler, *Die Polen im Ruhrgebiet bis 1918*, 182-183.
[63] Unification also marked a growing sympathy with the *Nationalitätsprinzip* ("Nationality Principle"), first formulated by German poet Johann Gottfried von Herder. Herder described it as the right of all ethnic group to establish its own sovereign and (ethnically) homogenous state. In the context of 1871, the *Nationalitätsprinzip* was understood as the right to expel people of other nationalities from the new state.
[64] Kantak before the *Norddeutsche Bundesversammlung*, 18 March 1867 in Pommerin and Uhlmann, *Quellen zu den deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen 1815-1991*, 62.

ethno-culturally, for this meant a fundamental shift in the definition of citizenship. At the first *Reichstag* in April of 1871, Kantak's protests were once more reiterated:

> "Wir wollen, meine Herren, bis Gott anders über uns bestimmt hat, unter preussischer Herrschaft bleiben, aber dem deutschen Reich wollen wir nicht einverleibt sein."[65]

His pleas would not be heard. To be sure, Bismarck continued to insist on the political assimilation of the Polish people into what he still considered to be a primarily Prussian – not German – state.[66] He himself, however, did not seem to appreciate fully the extent to which this same state had acquired a *German*-national character, which in practice voided the political assimilation that he envisioned.[67] Thus, what would begin to distinguish the German empire from its western European counterparts was that following unification the hope for a homogeneous and united nation-state inaugurated a line of policy that, according to William Barbieri, "juxtaposes to the [territorial] state society a separate German membership determined partly through structural factors and partly through subjective identification."[68] The crux for the large population of Prussian Poles (and to a lesser extent, other ethnic minorities such as the Danes and the French) was this latter, rather vague "subjective identification" with a German community. Clearly, such subjectivity was open to interpretation and allowed a distinct German particularity - Richard Wagner's *Kulturnation* certainly comes to mind – to enter the

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[65] Quoted in Martin Broszat, *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik* (München: Ehrenwirth, 1963), 95.
[66] Historians have established that Bismarck remained cautiously distant from the German nationalism, an idea that was "always foreign to [him]." Eley, *From Unification to Nazism*, 201.
[67] Broszat, *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik*, 96.
[68] It should be noted that despite a growing nationalist rhetoric during the late 1860s and a national euphoria sweeping the empire subsequent to the military victory over France in 1871, the transformation from a multi-national, Prussian state to a decidedly German nation-state did not occur overnight. In fact, according to Barbieri, the concept of a truly "German" state was "the outcome of a long process of cultural and political inclusion and exclusion, of identification and differentiation – of, in a phrase, ethnic boundary making." In other words, subsequently to the establishment of a political framework for the German nation, which emerged primarily due to the supra-national nature of the Prussian state, it would take decades to formulate an exclusively ethnic-cultural nation-state. Barbieri, *Ethics of Citizenship*, 11-20.

methodology of German citizenship. The Poles, whether they were German citizens or not, would feature less and less in this shifting definition because they served as a useful "other" against which to measure "Germanness." Thus, the "Polish Question"[69] contributed to a process by which the Prussian empire would acquire an increasingly ethnic German character.

The transformation began when in the early 1870s, Bismarck launched the *Kulturkampf*, a political struggle against the Catholic establishment within the empire.[70] Alarmed by a recalcitrant Catholic faction in the *Reichstag*, which demanded an equal distribution of Catholics and Protestants throughout all levels of government, he insisted that no religious faction deserved special rights in a state that explicitly professed confessional parity. Bismarck's rhetoric fell squarely in line with the progressive anti-clericalism that had been so characteristic of Prussia throughout the century; in 1872, he insisted, "Every confession [in Prussia] must enjoy complete … religious freedom."[71] Thus, the chancellor hoped, in Geoff Eley's words, to release a "dynamic German society" from the grip of "archaic institutions" like the Catholic Church.[72] Importantly, such a struggle against the Catholic establishment would also put the government on an unavoidable collision course with Prussian Poles, who, aside from the Protestant Masures, were overwhelmingly Catholic.

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[69] Note that at this stage, the "Polish Question" still concerned mainly the Polish nobility, and to increasing extent, Polish clerics. Both were thought to be the central agitators for a revived, independent Poland.
[70] For a detailed outline of the policies and measures adopted during the *Kulturkampf*, see Ronald J. Ross, *The Failure of Bismarck's Kulturkampf: Catholicism and State Power in Imperial Germany, 1871-1887* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 4-12; Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*; Broszat, *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik*; Otto Pflanze and Elisabeth Müller-Luckner, *Innenpolitische Probleme Des Bismarck-Reiches* Schriften (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1983); Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire*, 17-25.
[71] Original text: "Jede Konfession [muss] bei uns die volle Freiheit ihrer Bewegung, die volle Glaubensfreiheit haben." Wende and Schlotzhauer, eds., *Politische Reden II 1869-1914*, 106.
[72] Eley, *From Unification to Nazism*, 206.

Historians have debated whether Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* was designed specifically with the Poles in mind.[73] The most recent consensus is that the Catholic Church and the "Polish Question" were closely interconnected issues that in Bismarck's mind posed grave dangers to the state's security. Richard Blanke suggests a two-fold relationship: "[The Church] sought to frustrate the policy of gradual [political] assimilation of Prussian Poles and it seemed to be the potential medium for an anti-German coalition of Catholic powers [i.e. France and Austria]."[74] Such worries remained unrelated to fears over the ethnic and cultural differences between Germans and non-Germans. Bismarck continued to be primarily concerned with the security of the state, its unrestricted influence in the secular sphere, and the political loyalty of Prussian subjects, "whatever the language of this people may be."[75]

Geoff Eley and others, however, have criticized Blanke for making Bismarck the sole combatant of the *Kulturkampf* and have identified another advocate of an anti-Polish agenda: the national liberals.[76] According to Eley, the national liberals, "armed with a vision of progress, driving for the cultural unification of the people-nation," were central to the nationalist coloring of the *Kulturkampf*: "Next to Bismarckian ideas of strategic and domestic security, equally significant was the contribution of the National Liberals, who staffed the apparatus of the *Kulturkampf* and provided the most consistent parliamentary support for the anti-Polish legislation."[77] Given their passionate secular

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[73] For a review of debate among historians over how central the Poles were to the *Kulturkampf*, see Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire*, 16-17 and the literature that is cited there.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Bismarck before the *Reichstag*, 1 April 1871 quoted in Pommerin and Uhlmann, *Quellen zu den deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen 1815-1991*, 65.
[76] It it important to note that Blanke did not make Bismarck responsible for an anti-Polish feeling. Eley, *From Unification to Nazism*, 200-231; Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*; Hans Rothfels, *Bismarck, der Osten und das Reich* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960).
[77] Eley *From Unification to Nazism*, 206.

ideology, the national liberals welcomed an opportunity to fight the Church and quickly allied with Bismarck.

The intensive involvement of the national liberal establishment in the late 1870s marked the decline of a Bismarckian "prussianization" in favor of an ethno-linguistic "germanization." This shift is important in terms of the construction of the German nation, for it embodied the transition from a Prussian state to a more German-national one.[78] While during the 1870s, the focus had been the Catholic Church, beginning in the 1880s the containment of the "polonization" of the eastern *Deutschtum* became the central objective. It began with sweeping expulsions of non-citizens (some 30,000) to Russia and Galicia and was characterized by continued efforts to subdue non-German languages by way of removal of much of the Polish clerical establishment and a settlement policy designed to strengthen the German element in ethnically "foreign" corners of the empire. Those policies turned a political conflict into an ethnic struggle between nationalities.[79] The eastern territories Poznania, East Prussia, and Silesia became the central battlegrounds: here, the Germanization of large parts of the populace appeared especially important to defending a "German" – not Prussian – state. Moreover, whereas Bismarck had been targeting primarily the nobility and upper classes, Germanization was an attack on the Polish people in general. In his 1916 work on Polish history, Stanislaus Wachowiak remarked on the spread of Germanization to the common Pole,

> "Der gleichgültige Bauer, Häusler, und Arbeiter kam aus seiner Ruhe, als sein Pfarrer fliehen musste oder verkappt in später Abendstunde in einem entlegenden Bauernhause seine Leute zur Andacht versammelte … Allmählich änderte sich die Gelassenheit der polnischen Masse."[80]

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[78] Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire*, 24.
[79] Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire*, 66; Eley, *From Unification to Nazism*, 208.
[80] Wachowiak, "Die Polen in Rheinland-Westfalen," 1.

With a decided turn towards efforts to Germanize the wider Polish populace, the concept of a multi-national Prussian state truly began to fall by the wayside.

By examining the evolution of the "Polish Question," the process of constructing the German nation-state becomes much clearer. With unification, a political framework had been created and its creator, the Prussian state, provided a cultural and political environment flexible enough to allow the empire to transform into an ethnically German nation-state. Throughout its rule, Prussia refrained from imposing a Prussian identity onto the inhabitants of the empire; in fact, for most of the nineteenth century, she even tolerated foreign languages, customs, and feelings of national belonging. Yet, she remained insistent on the political loyalties of her subjects, and the importance of submission to the crown would always be a priority in Prussian policy.

The "Polish Question" proved extremely conducive to the growth of a German nation within this ethnically loose political framework. This was because the question spoke to the causes of nationalism: wherever the "Polish Question" arose, nationalists had found a cause. Through it, they were able to dramatize their endeavors and raise the issue over the German nation to an empire-wide debate. The discussion inevitably gravitated towards attempting to define Barbieri's "subjective identification" of *Deutschtum*, a membership realm delineated by ethno-cultural and linguistic boundaries. This of course was the process of "ethnic boundary making," which would be necessary for the construction of the nation. Naturally, the Poles (and all other ethnicities for that matter) were excluded from the definition. Paradoxically, however, so was Prussia, as one contemporary political scientist observed:

> "Berauscht von seinen militärischen Erfolgen, täuscht sich das Preußentum nicht nur über seine Befähigung zur Lösung der deutschen Frage, sondern es sieht nicht

> einmal, wie es durch die Stellung, die es seitdem in Deutschland eingenommen und die ihm zunächst als eine außerordentliche Machterhöhung erscheint, *vielmehr seine eigene Existenz untergräbt* [my italics]."[81]

Indeed, forced to rely increasingly on the support of German nationalist politics to maintain its hegemonic role in Germany, the Prussian state would shed much of its Prussian hue by the turn of the century.[82]

[81] Constantin Frantz (1817-1891) in an essay entitled "Deutschlands Doppelnatur," quoted in Gilbert Krebs and Bernard Poloni, *Volk, Reich und Nation: Texte zur Einheit Deutschlands in Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft 1806-1918* (Paris: Université de la Sorbonne nouvelle, 1994), 178-179.
[82] Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship in Germany*, 1-17; Katharine Anne Lerman, "Bismarckian Germany," in *Imperial Germany 1871-1918*, ed. James Retallack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 31.

Chapter III

The "Polish Question"and Germanization in the Ruhrgebiet

Since the late 18th century, the "Polish Question" had been an issue confined to the eastern provinces of Prussia. These territories had been the primary targets of governmental Germanization efforts, and rarely were they applied as methodically to other ethnically diverse regions of the empire (for instance, both North Schleswig and Alsace-Lorraine [after 1871] held large minorities of Danes and French, respectively).[83] By 1890, however, contemporary observers began to note the spread of the "Polish Question" to the west. This was specifically the case in the rapidly industrializing Ruhrgebiet. Labor migration from the eastern (and predominantly Polish) territories had gradually accumulated into a sizable Polish population, and intensifying migratory trends during the mid-1890s[84] prompted selected locals to voice complaints about a dangerous new development: the possibility of a Polonisierung des Westens, or the "Polonization of the West."[85] Soon, in 1898, speculation would turn into reality for some. According to Dortmund's railroad director Heinrich W. Beukenberg,

> "Es unterliegt keinem Zweifel mehr, dass wir es mit einer Polonisierung unserer urdeutschen Kreise Bochum, Gelsenkirchen, Recklinghausen und Dortmund zu thun haben, von der wir uns noch vor wenigen Jahren nichts träumen ließen."[86]

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[83] According to historian Roger Chickering, "The policy of Germanization was pursued with varying degrees of intensity and applied inconsistently [to Poles, Franch, and Danes]." Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 28.

[84] Internal migration into the Ruhrgebiet reached new peaks between 1890 and 1910 in both the Rhineland and Westphalia. See Köllmann, *Bevölkerung in Der Industriellen Revolution*, 229-234.

[85] Annette Krus-Bonazza, *"Wir kommen doch alle aus denselben Verhältnissen..." Aus der Geschichte der Arbeitseinwanderung in Dahlhausen von 1880 bis heute* (Essen-Steele: Antiquarische Verlagsbuchhandlung Steeler Antiquariat, 1990), 22-23.

[86] From an article in the magazine "Ostmark" (1898), quoted in Wolfgang Grubert, "Über 100 Jahre Einwanderer in Gerthe," in Die drei großen Herren und die anderen. Aufstieg und Niedergang der Zeche

It was not mere coincidence that Beukenberg's rhetoric was strikingly similar to that employed by nationalists in the eastern provinces, where by this time a vicious national struggle was emerging between Germans and Poles.[87] Indeed, the fears in the Ruhrgebiet over the "Polish Question" and the resulting Germanization measures that arose around the turn of the century did not originate locally.

Historians have long described the 1890s in the *Kaiserreich* as a fundamental shift in imperial politics, the German public sphere, the economy, as well as arts and culture.[88] Importantly, the 1890s also marked a new climate of German nationalism, accompanied by intolerance and xenophobia, which grew in response to such transformations. Roger Chickering has suggested that this nationalist upsurge was in part made possible by Otto von Bismarck's descent from chancellorship in 1890, for Bismarck had long frustrated the wishes of many German nationalists (particularly those of the German Colonial Society during the 1880s) in expanding the empire.[89] With Bismarck's departure extra-governmental nationalist organizations began to mushroom throughout the 1890s, beginning with the *Deutscher Verein für das nördliche Schleswig* (1891), the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Verband* (1891), and the *Deutschnationaler Handlungsgehilfen-Verband* (1893).[90] These were followed by two far more militant and anti-Semitic organizations, which were founded in response to the liberal policies of chancellor Leo von Caprivi

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Lothringen und die Geschichte der Einwanderung im Bochumer Norden, ed. Bochumer Kulturrat e.V. (Bochum: Katzer & Bittner, 1999), 164.

[87] See previous chapter for a discussion of the development of the "Polish Question" in the East. Kleßmann, "Integration und Subkultur Nationaler Minderheiten: Das Beispiel der "Ruhrpolen" 1870-1939," 494.

[88] Geoff Eley went so far as to describe the entire post-1890 period as a time of "far reaching political change, in which the entire structure of the public domain was reordered." Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change After Bismarck* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), cited in Matthew Jefferies, *Contesting the German Empire, 1871-1918* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2008), 90-97; Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany: A Historiographical Companion* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1996); Tipton, Frank B Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany Since 1815* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 184-186.

[89] Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German*, 36-40, 46-53.

[90] Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German*, 44-62.

(1890-1894): first, the *Alldeutscher Verband*, or ADV (1894), a viciously nationalistic spin-off of the original *Allgemeiner Deutscher Verband*, and second, the equally nefarious *Deutscher Ostmarkenverein* (1894), also known as the *H.K.T.-Verein*.[91]

Both the ADV and the *H.K.T.-Verein* were founded exclusively to protect German interests in the "Polish Question" in the eastern territories of Silesia, Poznania, West-Prussia, and East-Prussia. Supported by an increasingly sympathetic Prussian government after Caprivi[92], the two organizations grew quickly and contributed notably to the radicalization of the ethnic conflict between Germans and Poles in the east. Emboldened by early successes, the organizations soon made it their responsibility to represent German interests elsewhere in the empire, and by the mid-1890s, they expressed concern over the "dire" demographic trends in the Ruhrgebiet.[93] In effect, their fears over the "Polish Question" had spilled into the Ruhrgebiet.

The introduction of this nationalist propaganda would mark a decisive shift in local attitude and the end of two relatively conflict-free decades of immigration; for since the onset of Polish migration in the 1870s, newcomers had been subject to only very minor manifestations of local xenophobia. Considering the extensive changes to the

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[91] The *Deutscher Ostmarkenverein* (German Society for the Eastern Marches) is also known as the *H.K.T.-Verein* after the initials of its three founders: Ferdinand von Hansemann (1861-1900), Hermann Kennemann-Klenka (1815-1910), and Heinrich von Tiedemann (1840-1922). I will refer to this organization as the *H.K.T.-Verein* or simply the "Hakatists" for the remainder of this study.

[92] The fact that the Prussian government viewed the efforts of the Hakatists and other radical nationalists with increasing sympathy highlights the extent to which Prussia was shedding its Prussian character. This may have been due in part to a lapse in popularity of the Prussian state subsequent to the brief rule of the more tolerant Chancellor Leo von Caprivi (1890-1894). Caprivi's unpopularity during the 1890s "decade of nationalism" sparked his replacement by other, more nationalist-minded officials, including Chancellor von Bülow (1900-1909), an exceptionally strong advocate of the activities of the Hakatists and others. See Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German*, 44-62.

[93] Neither the *H.K.T-Verein* nor the ADV ever acknowledged the irony that the "polonization" of the *urdeutsche* western territories was in part due to their own actions in the east, where they made life uncomfortable enough to make relocation for many Polish-speaking citizens an attractive undertaking. Georg Wagner, *Der Polenkoller: Skizze vom "Kriegsschauplatz" in den Ostmarken* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Friedrich, 1899), 63.

demographic and economic make-up of the region, these were to be expected. A contemporary observer noted,

> "… dass die Vermischung einer so großen Masse fremder Elemente mit der deutschen Bevölkerung des Ruhrrevieres, von der sie solche Gegensätzte, wie Bildungsstand, Lebenserhaltung und Sprache trennen, nicht leicht und spurlos vor sich gehen konnte, liegt auf der Hand."[94]

The accounts of many contemporaries even point towards a peaceful coexistence of Germans and Poles in the Ruhr during the earlier stages of migration. Many in the Polish community were participating in German *Vereine* and Polish children visited schools taught in German. A special harmony existed within the Catholic community, where German priests went to great lengths to respond to longings for services in Polish. Initially, German priests would even learn Polish, as cleric Vogt in Neuenherse did; by the 1880s, the Church was hiring Polish clergymen to provide adequate spiritual care to the Polish community.[95] In 1885, Catholic Center party official Julius Bachem announced proudly, "you Poles are united with us in the same faith … you are and remain our Catholic brothers." Bachem also reminded his listeners that it was their due right to speak their language and preserve their ethnic identity, a right that "no one in the whole world is justified to take away."[96]

Beginning in the 1890s, however, this amicable attitude would give way to an increasingly hostile perspective on the Ruhr Poles. Hakatist propaganda had descended on the region. Although both the *H.K.T-Verein* and the ADV had little formal political say in the region, their position as non-governmental "parallel action groups" provided those in power (political parties such as the National liberals) "with a set of

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[94] Franz Schulze, *Die polnische Zuwanderung im Ruhrrevier und ihre Wirkungen* (Bigge: Josefs Druck, 1909), 48-49.
[95] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 57-58.
[96] Quotes taken from Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 57-58.

organizational auxiliaries" for mobilizing mass constituencies. Hence, despite their non-governmental nature, they succeeded in introducing the "Polish Question" by providing "a reservoir of activists and ideologues" for nationalists in government to tap into.[97] These activists knew well how to utilize the German press, by now a powerful influence on German politics, to spread their agenda and dominate local politics and the public sphere in the Ruhrgebiet.[98] Ultimately, government officials on regional and local levels also contributed to the targeting of the Ruhrpoles as both political and ethno-cultural aliens in the "German nation."[99]

The mass media played a central role in introducing the "Polish Question" to Ruhr Germans. By the late nineteenth century, newspapers, as both mirrors and creators of popular ideas and opinions, were able to shape identities both on a regional and a national level.[100] In many cases the media had even grown powerful enough to impact the outcome of trials, and coerce public officials into a certain ideological camp.[101] A contemporary observer, Georg Wagner, wrote

> "Das Märchen von der 'Zurückdrängung des Deutschtums in den Ostmarken' hat bereits Aufnahme in das nationale Glaubenbekenntnis vieler meiner Mitbürger gefunden; eine solche Wirkung war nur durch eine systematische Bearbeitung der öffentlichen Meinung mit der Druckerpresse zu erzielen."[102]

Important here is the emphasis on the "systematic" amending of opinion. Nationalist agitators did not shy away from falsifying and sensationalizing reality as a

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[97] Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 332; see also Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 83.
[98] Georg Wagner writes, "Ist es doch mit Hilfe der Druckerschwärze ungeheuer einfach, die Mitwelt über die aussergewöhnlichen Vorzüge dieses oder jenes 'staatserhaltenden' Mannes, der bisher wie ein Veilchen im Verborgenen blühte, aufzuklären." Wagner, *Der Polenkoller*, 3.
[99] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 83-93.
[100] The more recent work includes Peterson, *History, Fiction, and Germany* and Belgum, *Popularizing the Nation*. For a concise review of the literature treating the press of Imperial Germany, see Eleanor L. Turk, "The Press of Imperial Germany: A New Role for a Traditional Resource" in Central European History, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1977), 329-337.
[101] Benjamin Hett, *Death in the Tiergarten: Murder and Criminal Justice in the Kaiser's Berlin* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004), 5.
[102] Wagner, *Der Polenkoller*, 1.

useful scare tactic.[103] Their press regularly misinterpreted facts, and often invented the headline stories in order to forge a pessimistic narrative about the repression of Germans in the East.[104] Wagner has described the Hakatists as one of the most successful extra-governmental groups to make their concerns heard in this way: "Geschickte Drahtzieher verstehen es ausgezeichnet, … das Urteil eines ganzen Volkes über die eine oder andere politische Frage zu verwirren."[105]

The fact that in 1896 the Hakatists were still a numerically negligible group (only 6,132 members) highlights their overwhelming success on the empire-wide stage.[106] In August 1897, a popular Ruhr daily called the *Tremonia*[107] reported that the *H.K.T-Verein* had successfully extended its influence and acquired a new foothold in the western provinces of the empire. According to the article, the organization had taken advantage of the widespread unfamiliarity among Ruhr locals about the "Polish Question" in the east and had managed to conceal many of its true intentions while falsely highlighting the imminent danger of a Polish uprising.[108] In doing so, the Hakatists had generated a nationwide atmosphere of panic and urgency. The scare was further reinforced by an inevitable feedback mechanism: as a result of declaring the entire empire vulnerable to Polonization, Germans living in the west (including the Ruhrgebiet) and south grew even

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[103] Towards the late nineteenth century, sensationalism was becoming a popular journalistic technique. Editors readily falsified reality and took on an overly dramatic tone to grab their readers' attention. Sensational stories were used to stir emotions as well as provoke political opponents to engage in wider debate on a given issue. This was especially the case with anti-Semitic dailies such as the *Staatsbürgerzeitung*, which had numerically small readerships and longed to bring their ideologies onto the national stage. Similarly, the *H.K.T.-Verein* had a small membership and thus looked for other means to reach wider audiences. Barnet P. Hartston, *Sensationalizing the Jewish Question: Anti-Semitic Trials and the Press in the Early German Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).
[104] For examples, see Wagner, *Der Polenkoller*, 44-55.
[105] Wagner, *Der Polenkoller*, 3.
[106] Wagner, *Der Polenkoller*, 19.
[107] The *Tremonia* was a center-Catholic newspaper.
[108] IfZD, *Tremonia*, "Ein Beitrag zur Pastorisierung polnischer Katholiken in deutschen katholischen Pfarr- und Missionsgemeinden," 12 August 1897.

more concerned. Since the "Polish Question" had traditionally been confined to the eastern territories, the mere possibility that even the *urdeutsche* regions of the empire could now be at risk of being "polonized" caused heightened concern there. According to an article in the *Tremonia* from 12 August 1897,

> "Wenn selbst manche in den ursprünglich deutschen Landen nervös werden und das Vaterland ihnen gefährdet erscheint, sobald zugezogene Polen im Verkehr untereinander sich der Muttersprache bedienen, so kann sich jeder Unbefangene ein ungefähres Bild davon machen, welch' hohes Mass von Angstmeierei der H.K.T-Verein … anwendet, um leicht erregbare Gemüter vor der angeblichen Bedrängung des Deutschtums durch die Polen, die aber nicht einmal in den ehemals polnischen Landesteilen aufzufinden ist, gruselig zu machen."[109]

Perhaps one of the most powerful Ruhrgebiet newspapers of German nationalists was the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* (RhWZ). Its editor in chief, Theodor Reismann-Grone, was one of the founders of the ADV. Reismann-Grone was a committed ethnic nationalist and intent on subduing or at least "Germanizing" Poles throughout the empire. Under his leadership, the RhWZ became one of the principal advocates of and catalysts for the introduction of eastern-style Germanization policy into the Ruhrgebiet. The paper not only contributed to a general sense of fear about imminent Polonization in the region, but it also nagged and criticized government officials for their "lenient" supervision of the Polish community.[110] In July 1898, for instance, the RhWZ was instrumental in announcing the wishes of the ADV that the Dortmund mining authority keep accurate records on the number of miners of "Polish background."[111] Another local daily, the *Dortmunder Zeitung*, complemented the efforts of the RhWZ by calling for an anti-Polish vigilance among the general Ruhr populace. For example, in the morning edition of the

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[109] Ibid.
[110] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 88.
[111] Alldeutscher Verband, *Die Polen im rheinisch-westfälischen Steinkohlen-Bezirke mit einem statistischen Anhange, einer Sammlung polnischer Lieder und zwei Karten* (München: Lehmann, 1901), 8-9.

paper on 5 September 1904, the lead article urged middle-class Ruhr Germans to recognize the danger emanating from the Polish community:

> "Fürwar, es ist Zeit, dass auch hier in Westfalen und Rheinland der deutsche Mittelstand sich der Gefahren bewusst werde, die ihn inmitten der deutschen Marken, seitens des Polenelements bedrohen!"[112]

Aside from the contributions of nationalist newspapers to the *Polenkoller* (literally: "delirious phobia" of Poles), nationalist literary figures such as Clara Viebig also indirectly fed local suspicions about Poles. Through her novel *Das schlafende Heer* (1904), Viebig was able to lend the threat of Polonization a chillingly realistic quality.[113] Viebig describes the journey of a Rhenish peasant family that ventures to the eastern territories of the empire as settlers. The well-intentioned family encounters brutal violence, deception, and constant harassment by the indigenous Polish population, which resents the family for its professed German nationalism. After three years, the disappointed but bravely patriotic family returns to the Rhineland. In doing so, they allow an ominous prediction by a Polish shepherd named Dudek to come true: the Polish 'sleeping army' will rise up there to drive out the "foreign" invader. Viebig's work colorfully juxtaposes the essentially warmhearted and devoted Germans against the inherently hostile-minded Poles. She thus helped to foster what Wagner calls an "unbridgeable antagonism" between the two nationalities ("…als ob eine sogennante 'Erbfeindschaft' zwischen den beiden Nationen bestehe…") that would justify the frenetic supervision of Polish citizens.[114] Since the main characters of the story are from

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[112] STAM Oberpr. Münster 6166, Bl. 13, *Dortmunder Zeitung*, "Die nationalpolnische Bewegung im Rheinisch-Westfälischen Ruhrgebiet," 5 September 1904.
[113] Clara Viebig, *Ausgewählte Werke V, Das Schlafende Heer, Roman* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1922). Between 1904 and 1910, 27 editions were published.
[114] Wagner, *Der Polenkoller*, 7. The polarizing view was also increasingly prevalent in the Prussian government. By 1890s, officials tended to divide the empire into two main groups, the *Reichsfeinde* and the *Reichsfreunde*. See Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 118-120.

the Rhineland, many locals in the Ruhrgebiet could identify particularly well with the German suffering and disappointment illustrated by Viebig.

Finally, beginning in the 1890s, Hakatism and its underlying nationalist ideology came to be represented in government officialdom and policy. Perhaps most illustrative of this trend was Heinrich Konrad von Studt, who served as *Oberpräsident* of Westphalia from 1889-1899. Von Studt was what could be considered a "veteran" with regard to the "Polish Question." Born and raised in the southern part of Silesia - a predominantly Polish province - von Studt had developed a firm anti-Polish mindset at an early stage. Before assuming his position in Westphalia, he had been a *Landrat* in the predominantly Polish province of Posen (1867-1876), had served as a *Hilfsarbeiter* in the Ministry of Interior, and ultimately became *Regierungspräsident* in Königsberg (1882-1889).[115] His record in these administrative jobs left no doubt that he was an avid supporter of the forcible assimilation of Polish citizens into *Deutschtum*. Upon entering office in Westphalia, von Studt was convinced of the value of his "experience" in confronting Poles and he quickly proceeded to implement some of the Germanization techniques that had been in use in the eastern provinces:

> "Scharfe Überwachung der Agitation und Vereinsthätigkeit, Fernhaltung nationalpolnischer Geistlicher, Beschränkung des Gebrauchs der polnischen Sprache in öffentlichen Versammlungen … das werden die Mittel sein, mit denen das Polenthum im Westen der Monarchie dem Einfluss der deutschfeindlichen Agitation entzogen und der Germanisierung zugeführt wird."[116]

In general, von Studt believed that the assimilation of the Polish community could occur naturally and swiftly, if only the German authorities would be able to successfully

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[115] Dietrich Wegmann, *Die leitenden staatlichen Verwaltungsbeamten der Provinz Westfalen, 1815-1918* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1969).

[116] Quoted in Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 83; see also John J. Kulczycki, "The Prussian Authorities and the Poles of the Ruhr" in The International History Review, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1986), 593-603.

shield the Polish-Prussian citizens from any form of Polish culture and identity.[117] Such a mindset practically predetermined an aggressive policy towards all manifestations of Polish identity, for failure in its view indicated not that the policy was fundamentally flawed, but that it had just not been applied assertively enough. In 1899, Eberhard Freiherr von der Recke succeeded von Studt and continued the policy of forcefully suppressing all manifestations of Polish culture and language.[118] Just like von Studt, von der Recke had gained ample experience in the national fight against *Polentum*, having practiced law in Berlin and Bromberg and having served in a number of government offices in the eastern provinces, including as *Regierungspräsident* in Königsberg. Like his predecessor von Studt, he sought to fight the Polonization of the Ruhrgebiet through suppression, and throughout his tenure would place special emphasis on educating Polish children in properly German ways. Von der Recke was joined by *Regierungspräsident* of Münster, Jadislaus von Jarotzky (1903-1913), who also brought the anti-Polish perspective he had acquired in previous government positions in the eastern territories to his new position.[119]

Not all officials who began advocating an aggressive approach towards the Poles during the late 1890s had extensive administrative experiences in the eastern Provinces. In some cases, political affiliation could also be a strong motivator, as was the case with *Regierungspräsident* Wilhelm Julius Reinhard Winzer (1889-1901). Winzer was a faithful member of the national liberal party and had a strong German nationalist mindset, which he channeled into an actively anti-Polish administrative policy. Although not a member of the nationalist ADV, Winzer revealed through his systematic approach

[117] StaB A W 107, Letter to the *Landräte* in Arnsberg, 15 Febuary 1900.
[118] As seen in various correspondences in StaB LA 1311, Bl. 20-47, 72, 101.
[119] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 83-85.

towards the "Polish Question" that he had taken to heart the organization's detailed instructions on how to administer "effective" Germanization.[120]

What were the central tenets of Germanization in the Ruhrgebiet? William Hagen has defined the goal of Germanization as the "suppression of Polonism," and to that end it was the government's main function to prevent agitators[121] from spreading nationalist sentiments among the Polish community: "The more politically passive the [Polish] population, the more secure the province."[122] The principle identified by Hagen was certainly applied in the Ruhrgebiet, where authorities worked to thwart any group of unruly agitators.[123] Yet, the kind of Germanization policy that migrated into the Ruhrgebiet during the late 1890s was driven by much more than political fears. Von Studt, von der Recke, and others actually had little concern for the security of the state and did not worry about the ethno-cultural implications of the Polish population for *Deutschtum*. In 1901, even the ADV announced that the Ruhrgebiet was relatively safe from being "polonized," as long as the right measures were taken:

> "Eine Besorgnis, dass die polnische … Rasse im rheinisch-westfälischen Industriebezirk um sich greifen und deutsche Bezirke und Bevölkerungen

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[120] Alldeutscher Verband, *Die Polen im rheinisch-westfälischen Steinkohlen-Bezirke*, ix-xi.

[121] Up until the late 1880s, there was very little manifestation of Polish nationalism in the Ruhrgebiet. However, as the government began to adopt a more German nationalist stance during the 1890s, Polish nationalism began to flare up among the Polish community as well. Some of the most outspoken proponents of fostering Polish nationalism were Polish priests, most prominently Franz Liss (who was expelled from the Ruhrgebiet in 1893 due to his "nationalist tendencies"). Liss was succeeded by figures such as Anton Brejski, the editor of the Polish newspaper "Wiarus Polski," which would become the flagship of Polish nationalism after 1900. See Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*.

[122] Hagen's definition of Germanization emphasizes the targeting of political loyalties among Prussian subjects and is closely related to what I call "Prussianization." Moreover, Hagen discusses Bismarck's belief that the majority of Prussian citizens were obedient, and that Germanization should only target a select few "agitators." See Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 121. For further insights into Bismarck and official Prussian policy, see Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire (1871-1900)*, 82-86.

[123] Polish nationalism was by no means a fictitious invention of German nationalists. In the eastern provinces, an extensive Polish press advocated aggressively the maintenance of Polish culture and national identity. For instance, by the turn of the century, the statutes of many Polish clubs stated that their primary purpose was to "raise a national consciousness and awaken sense of citizenship." In the context of their activities, it became clear that they meant an explicitly *Polish* national consciousness. See StaB A L-D 71, "Statut des Turnvereins 'Sokól' in Dahlhausen-Ruhr," § 1c.

> polonisieren könnten, braucht *bei richtiger Behandlung* [my italics] der Polenfrage nicht gehegt zu werden."[124]

Hence, Germanization in the Ruhrgebiet was not as much a direct struggle against the Poles as it was a preventive measure. Certainly, policies were designed to suppress any manifestation of Polish identity; yet more importantly, they were meant to actively re-educate Poles and expedite their cultural assimilation into *Deutschtum*. Nationalists thus played off the cultural prejudices so prevalent among many Germans during the second half of the nineteenth century, emphasizing the need to lift the Poles out of an inferior cultural existence.[125] In a memorandum from 1898, von Studt argued that Poles should in fact welcome Germanization because it replaced an "inferior and questionable element" with an "economically and ethically superior" *Deutschtum*.[126] In sum, nationalists pursued two goals with Germanization: on the one hand, they hoped to subdue – and if possible, eliminate - the Polish "element", while on the other hand they endorsed what Wilhelm Brepohl has called the *Umvolkung* of Poles into proper Germans.[127]

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[124] 1901 survey of the "Polish Question" in the Ruhrgebiet by the Ruhr-Lippe chapter of the ADV, Alldeutscher Verband, *Die Polen im rheinisch-westfälischen Steinkohlen-Bezirke*, ix.

[125] In 1911, mining historian Max Metzner writes, "The cultural level of the Poles … is far lower than that of the German worker." Such statements pervade the literature of the time. See Metzner, *Die Soziale Fürsorge im Bergbau*, 10; Alldeutscher Verband, *Die Polen im rheinisch-westfälischen Steinkohlen-Bezirke*, 41-51; Bredt, *Die Polenfrage Im Ruhrkohlengebiet*; Pieper, *Die Lage Der Bergarbeiter Im Ruhrrevier*; Spethmann, *Ruhrrevier und Raum Westfalen*; Brepohl, *Der Aufbau des Ruhrvolkes*; Grubert "Über 100 Jahre Einwanderer in Gerthe." The idea of cultural superiority as a special characteristic defining "Germanness" is examined in Brian Vick, "The Origins of the German Volk: Cultural Purity and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Germany," in *German Studies Review*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (2003), 241-256.

[126] Memorandum from 8 October 1898; cited by Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 63.

[127] During the earlier part of the twentieth century, Wilhelm Brepohl (1893-1975) was one of the most influential historians examining assimilatory processes in the Ruhrgebiet. Throughout his career, Brepohl continued to revise his theories on the Ruhrgebiet as a "melting pot" of ethnicities and cultures. During the 1930s, many of his arguments took on a very racial character, perhaps allowing him to continue his research on the Poles under the Nazi regime. Brepohl is best known for his theories on *Umvolkung*, the process by which a national and racially defined people gradually assumes a new national and even racial identity through intermarriage and immersion. See Wilhelm Brepohl, *Die Eindeutschung der Polen im Ruhrgebiet: deutsche Arbeit verwandelt fremdes Volkstum* (Gelsenkirchen: Forschungsstelle, 1939). For a

Policy-making in the Ruhrgebiet reflected this dual objective. Although only very little official discriminatory regulation occurred – only one ordinance and one law - it pertained almost exclusively to suppressing the Polish language and replacing it with German. The first was a mining police ordinance issued by the *Oberbergamt Dortmund* (chief mining authority of the Ruhrgebiet) on 25 January 1899. Designed to enhance safety in the workplace, it abolished the use of foreign languages and non-German signage in all Ruhr mines.[128] Since Poles were the overwhelming majority of non-German speakers, they became the primary targets of the mining ordinance, which according to John Kulczycki was a prime example of officials' policy to "adapt the principles behind [anti-Polish] measures already in use in the east to the circumstances in the west."[129] The second regulation, the *Reichsvereinsgesetz* of 1908, also addressed issues related to language by forbidding the use of all foreign tongues in public gatherings, discussions, or meetings. On the surface, the *Reichsvereinsgesetz* had a political motivation, as it was designed to protect the state from political radicalism that could threaten or undermine its legitimacy. In practice, it effectively abolished the Polish language from the public sphere and forced the use of German. Thus, the purpose of both regulations officially was security; yet, in reality they served to attack the Polish community suppressing its language.

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comprehensive overview of Brepohl's work, see Grubert, "Über 100 Jahre Einwanderer in Gerthe," 261-268.

[128] There has been some debate about whether to interpret the mining police ordinance of 1899 as an intentional measure of Germanization. Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 63-64; Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*; Wehler, *Die Polen im Ruhrgebiet bis 1918*, 234-235; Manfred Grieger and Claudia Schmidt, "'Der Verein hat seit seinem Bestehen überhaupt noch kein Fest oder sonst was gefeiert': Zur Migrantenkultur der Polen in Bochum vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Struktureller Wandel und kulturelles Leben: politische Kultur in Bochum 1860-1990*, eds. Peter Friedemann and Gustav-Hermann Seebold (Essen: Klartext, 1992), 203-204.

[129] Kulczycki, "The Prussian Authorities and the Poles of the Ruhr," 596.

The relatively limited scope of official measures was supplemented by extensive efforts to secretly undermine manifestations of Polish nationality.[130] Officials such as von Studt and Winzer issued vast amounts of "top-secret" decrees to local authorities encouraging them to discriminate against citizens of Polish background whenever possible. Their orders even asked officers to continue this behavior when off-duty, claiming this to be a necessary step towards strengthening the German *Nationalbewusstsein* (national consciousness).[131] While individual migrants were not extensively put under surveillance until after 1900, larger Polish organizations (*Vereine*) – choirs, religious communities, and sport clubs to name a few – soon became a principal target. These were deemed to be important breeding grounds for Polish national agitation and by the late 1890s, they were continuously subjected to §2 of the *Vereinsgesetz* of 1850, which forbade all "political" organizations. Although the Polish *Vereine* usually explicitly denied a political purpose in their statutes, they were nevertheless accused of "influencing public affairs" and thus being "political."[132] Moreover, to enforce the close monitoring of Polish activity, local police authorities were required since 1897 to regularly submit detailed reports on the "Polish movement."[133] Mayors often sent for expensive out-of-town police officers who were fluent in Polish, in order to effectively monitor gatherings of Poles.[134] When officials did not come up with any evidence of Polish organizations breaking §2 of the *Vereinsgesetz*, as was often the case, they were

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[130] For a detailed analysis of the discriminatory activities of local authorities in Herne and Wanne-Eickel, see Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*, 137-146.
[131] StaB Zeitungsbestand, *Täglicher Anzeiger Sonderausgabe der "Westdeutschen Volkszeitung" für Witten und Langendreer*, "New Germanization Decree" 14 April 1898; see also various government correspondences in StaB LA 1311, LA 1310, A L 356, all marked "Secret!".
[132] Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*, 137.
[133] StaB A W 107, *Regierungspräsident* Arnsberg to *Landräte des Kreises*, "Geheim!", 10 March 1897. For a general overview, see Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 85-89.
[134] StaB A W 107, *Regierungspräsident* Arnsberg to *Landräte des Kreises*, "Geheim!", 6 December 1897; LA 1310, Bl. 479, *Amtmann* Weitmar to *Landrat* Bochum, 15 June 1904.

reprimanded and told to monitor the Poles more attentively. In March of 1901, for instance, *Regierungspräsident* Wilhelm Winzer wrote a letter to the *Landrat* in Bochum voicing his disappointment that local officials had not been able to find any incriminating evidence against a Polish "Sokól" *Verein*. Winzer went on to ask for an even "harsher surveillance" of the organization in order to get at the roots of its "actual effect and purpose."[135] Such exhortations led authorities to take ever-bolder steps in crossing legal boundaries in order to fill their report sheets, and oftentimes even to overstep ethical limitations as well. For example, according to a correspondence in Langendreer from 12 December 1901, officials had even listened in on a confession made by a Polish member of the local Catholic Church, discovering that a certain cleric named Brülsky had received confession in Polish.[136] Such actions were deemed legitimate in producing evidence that certain individuals were agitators in the Polish national movement. Even more important for the local police authority, such stories were precisely what satisfied the demands of supervising officials such as Winzer and von Studt.

Finally, in order to stay alert about the movement, local authorities were also regularly supplied with press digests from the Polish nationalist press organs in the east, which were considered to be the "most eager carriers of the pan-Polish idea" and, according to some officials, influenced "the minds of the masses through their daily legwork … and tireless agitation."[137] After 1900, authorities were increasingly required to maintain registers of forbidden Polish songs, flags, and other "nationalist"

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[135] StaB LA 1310, Bl. 176, *Regierungspräsident* Winzer to *Landrat* Bochum, 14 März 1901.
[136] StaB A L 356, *Regierungspräsident* Arnsberg to *Landräte* and *Bürgermeister des Kreises*, 12 December 1901.
[137] StaB LA 1310, Bl. 403-405, Baukau *Amtmann* Dr. la Roche to *Landrat* Bochum, 14 September 1903.

paraphernalia that might stir nationalist sentiments among the Polish community.[138] Moreover, local authorities were instructed to be unyielding whenever possible with regard to requests by Poles to hold public festivals, found new organizations, or open kindergartens.[139] For instance, after many failed attempts to secure permission from police authorities for a Polish song festival in Herne, the Polish vocal society "Cecilia" finally resorted to moving the celebrations to Winterswyjk in nearby Holland.[140] Although local police officials frequently appeared all too willing to implement their orders, many of them were not always fully convinced of the threat posed by the Poles. We will examine their reactions more closely in subsequent chapters.

In conclusion, concerns about the dangers of the "Polish Question" in the Ruhrgebiet were clearly fabricated and did not originate there. Nationalist extremists did know all too well how to utilize a powerful press to advance their agenda, even if this only meant "raising awareness" about the dangers of Poles among common Germans and in particular the rising middle class in the Ruhrgebiet. The fact, however, that over a span of almost 15 years, from 1895 to 1909, only two discriminatory laws went on the books in the Ruhrgebiet strongly indicates that an ethnic type of Germanization was unpopular among locals.[141] Discriminatory regulations tended to result from initiatives of convinced nationalists; and for the most part, Germanization policy was conducted in extreme

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[138] STAM Reg. Arbg 14142, *Landrat* Gelsenkirchen to *Regierungspräsident* Arnsberg, "Betrifft die Bestrafung des Händlers Anton Musielak zu Wanna wegen Aufreizung zum Klassenhass," 28 April 1906; STAM Reg. Arbg 14142, Excerpt *Gelsenkirchener Zeitung*, 27 April 1906; StaB LA 1310, Bl. 220, *Regierungspräsident* Arnsberg to *Landrat* Bochum, 8 October 1901.

[139] StaB Zeitungsbestand, *Täglicher Anzeiger Sonderausgabe der 'Westdeutschen Volkszeitung' für Witten und Langendreer*, "Ein neuer Germanisierungserlaß," 14 April 1898; StaB LA 1310-1312.

[140] StaB LA 1311, Bl 101, 106, *Polizeiverwaltung* Herne, 21 July 1905/ 21 August 1905.

[141] This seemed to be the case at least initially during the 1890s. In addition, many correspondences between officials often ended with a recommendation to "refrain from publicizing the contents" of a given ordinance or order, highlighting the popular indignation this was expected to cause. I will examine the existence of opposition in greater detail in the next chapter. See StaB A L 356, A W 107, LA 1310-1312.

secrecy, and was triggered primarily by repeated urgings of higher-level government officials.[142] Such men, very much in control of the administration of the province acted either on the basis of their direct administrative experience in the east, or in response to ideologies they had acquired through affiliation with traditionally nationalist political parties or associations. In the following analysis, I will examine how Ruhr Germans felt about and participated in the struggle against an alleged Polonization.

[142] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 86-88.

Chapter IV

Germanization: Its Supporters and Opponents

How can historians assess the reactions to Germanization among those Ruhr Germans who were not directly affiliated with the Hakatists or other nationalist groups? What did Ruhr Germans think about the way the authorities were treating the Polish workers and their families? In economic terms, decisive steps against the Polish community could be detrimental to the continued growth of the region. From an ethno-cultural perspective, a large Polish community of "lower cultural and ethnic" quality threatened to depress the cultural "value" of the Ruhr people and introduce the unwanted "Slavic element" to an *urdeutsche* region. Politically, the organization of the Poles in *Vereine* and associations could be of serious concern, and many adopted the Hakatists' fears about Poles somehow establishing a "state within the state."[143] How did Ruhr Germans reconcile these various contradicting considerations concerning the Polish community?

Given the above range of factors that could affect a local German's opinion on Germanization, it becomes clear that Ruhr Germans did not necessarily form a coherent, xenophobic and anti-Polish bloc. In what follows, I will attempt to classify Ruhr Germans into three categories based upon how they behaved towards an aggressive kind of Germanization. Germans in two of the categories essentially agreed with the policy, yet disagreed on its implementation, while those in the third category were either indifferent to the "Polish Question" or had interests transcending German nationalism.

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[143] All quotes from Bredt, *Die Polenfrage im Ruhrkohlengebiet*, 6-7; STAM Oberpr. Münster 2847a, Bl. 77, *Rheinisch-Westfälisches Tageblatt* quoted in *Rheinisch-Westfälische Arbeiterzeitung*, "Niedriger hängen!", 7 July 1899.

The idea that Ruhr Germans as a more or less monolithic block were enthusiastic about German nationalism has been a simplifying assumption adopted far too often in the relevant literature. Christoph Kleßmann, for instance, often pooled authorities, local churches, political parties, the general German public, and even labor unions into one group exhibiting xenophobic tendencies towards the Poles.[144] However, presupposing that German nationalist ideas (i.e. an uncompromising and aggressive Germanization policy) were universally appealing to Germans ignores the complex ways in which German nationalism was received and incorporated with existing beliefs – or rejected. In the Ruhrgebiet, there certainly was a significant group of locals that agreed with the official Germanization policy, a group that was motivated by a myriad of economic, political, and ethno-cultural and xenophobic concerns. This group has been relatively simple to identify and track, given its tendency to voice its opinion on the "Polish Question" loudly and relentlessly. As a result, it has often been adopted as representative of the entire Ruhrgebiet.

Not all Ruhr Germans, however, were convinced by a nationalist policy such as Germanization. Pieter Judson, in a seminal work on language frontiers in late nineteenth century Austria-Hungary, recently highlighted the fact that the reactions of most people to an incoming nationalist ideology are more difficult to classify than one might think. Judson doubts that many locals in so-called "national borderlands" responded well or even at all to the incoming nationalist rhetoric. Instead, he argues that very frequently

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[144] Admittedly, studies such as Kleßmann's focus primarily on the Polish migrants, and hence they are forced to forego a detailed discussion of the German population. And while Kleßmann acknowledges to an extent the complexity of this group ("Germans were affected by the 'Polish Question' in their own right"), he still runs the risk of oversimplifying. Klessmann "Integration und Subkultur nationaler Minderheiten: Das Beispiel der "Ruhrpolen" 1870-1939," 486, 494; Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 16-17. Other historians of Ruhr, in particular Richard Murphy, Krystyna Murzynowska, Valentina-Maria Stefanski, and Wilhelm Brepohl have applied the same assumption (albeit to different degrees).

nationalist activists were greeted with widespread indifference among locals, "nationally opportunist behaviors," and on some occasions even hostility towards the national cause.[145] The Ruhrgebiet presents a similar case. As we have seen, the Ruhr very much showed the characteristics of a "language frontier" such as Habsburg Bohemia: it was an ethnically diverse region in which two or more nationalities lived side by side and enjoyed the same legal rights and protections. Although the Ruhrgebiet did differ in some important respects – most importantly, in that biculturalism was a new phenomenon to Ruhr Germans – examining how Germanization was received among many local Germans may yield results similar to those of Judson.[146] And indeed, while some Ruhr Germans agreed with Germanization, there were many others who disagreed subtly on the ways it was being carried out and still others who chose to ignore the presence of a large Polish population altogether.[147] In what follows, I will classify these differing attitudes toward Germanization into three groups.[148]

The first group included those locals who were in full agreement with a repressive application of forced Germanization (and whom I call "the supporters"). They not only embraced the ethno-cultural objective of *Umvolkung* – that is, eliminating the Polish element – but also supported the suppressive, *alldeutsche* method advocated by eastern

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[145] Among several Habsburg provinces, Judson examines Bohemia and Styria. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*, 2-5, 18-21.

[146] By contrast, in Bohemia Czechs and Germans had been living together for centuries already, which made the coexistence of two nationalities "normal." In the Ruhrgebiet, biculturalism was considered anything but "normal."

[147] It should be noted in advance that it is unlikely that humanitarian reasons were one of the primary motivations (or even a motivation at all) for opposing the actions of nationalists and the government. This thesis is not so much an attempt to white-wash a region's history than to point out some of the complexities that have been ignored in prior research.

[148] As will become clear, there existed significant overlap between these different categories, making it a problematic task to define precisely which group or political entity tended to fall in what category. According to Kirstin Belgum, "As paradoxical as they may seem, these varied, even contradictory, perspectives on the nation provide us with a more accurate sense of what the 'nation' is, and how it operates in a historical moment, than would any list of typical national attributes." Belgum, *Popularizing the Nation,* xxii.

nationalists and implemented by government authorities there. Furthermore, this group generally bought into the fear of Polonization and often associated the numerous negative transformations of an industrializing Ruhrgebiet solely with the Polish migrants. Not surprisingly, the "supporters" tended to come from the national liberal and conservative strata of German society, were of predominantly Protestant background, and were motivated primarily by the hope of preserving and extending ethno-cultural homogeneity within the German empire.

The next group, whom I will refer to as the "critics," was politically more diverse, with Catholics probably constituting its largest part. These Germans did not, in Brian Vick's words, "adopt a purist xenophobic stance but turned to an ideal of assimilation."[149] They shared the conviction of the "supporters" in the cultural superiority of Germans over Slavs, and maintained that "lifting" the Poles culturally was beneficial not just to Germany as a nation, but also to the Polish community. As a result, they agreed with the assimilationist aspect of Germanization and merely objected to the prevailing method. Germans in this category had a wide range of possible motivations for their belief: some disagreed because they saw their true "German" values violated by a decidedly "un-German" policy that had hijacked the good reputation of the German *Volk*. Others advocated different ("more effective") methods of assimilation, and a significant part of the German Catholic population exhibited sympathy with their confessional counterparts and shared a common contempt for German Protestants.[150]

The third group included those who were largely indifferent to an ethno-cultural notion of German statehood – for various reasons – and thus showed little enthusiasm for

[149] Vick, "The Origins of the German Volk: Cultural Purity and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Germany," 251.
[150] Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany Since 1815*, 229-234.

Germanization or nationalist propaganda (henceforth "indifferents"). This mindset was particularly widespread among the working classes of the Ruhrgebiet, who by virtue of a certain extent of class-consciousness tended to associate more strongly with their Polish counterparts as fellow workers than other Ruhr Germans.[151] Still, the "indifferents" did not belong exclusively to the region's mining workforce, nor did all German workers form a special class-related bond with the Polish migrants. Contemporary Hugo Ganz observed that for some ambitious German officials Germanization served as a "nice opportunity to gain distinction" and oftentimes, "the national conviction [of many] … subsides with money matters."[152] Hence this group also generally encompassed the unprincipled and opportunists of the region.

For many inhabitants of the Ruhrgebiet, the nationalists' warnings about the Polonization of their lands became an increasingly plausible concern during the late 1890s. Until then, many of the changes in the economic and demographic make-up had been seen as the necessary evils accompanying the tremendous growth of the coal and steel industries. Moreover, since the nationality composition of the migrant workers was still fairly diverse until the early 1890s, locals had rarely associated changes to their environment with the threat of Polonization. Upon the repeated urgings of nationalists, however (who avidly pointed to the visual transformation of many cities in the Ruhr), such a connection appeared ever more likely. For instance, Lorenz Pieper, upon looking back at the turn of the century in the Ruhrgebiet, recalled the increasingly foreign

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[151] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 16; the extent of working class solidarity in the Ruhr mines has been examined especially in Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*.
[152] Hugo Ganz, *Die Preußische Polenpolitik; Unterredungen und Eindrücke* (Frankfurt am Main: Literarische Anstalt Rütten & Loening, 1907), 57.

appearance (*fremdartiges Gepräge*) of the streets of Gelsenkirchen, Herne, and Wattenscheid:

> "Überall sieht man slawische Gesichter und hört slawische Laute an sein Ohr schlagen. Die glattgescheitelten Frauen und Mädchen halten zum Teil noch an ihrer bunten Tracht, die anderen wenigstens an einigen Eigentümlichkeiten der Kleidung fest. Die durchweg nach unserer Sitte gekleideten Männer und Burschen (eine Eigentümlichkeit der letzteren ist das in die Stirn gekämmte Haar) durchschlendern in der freien Zeit gern einzeln oder truppweise die verkehrsreichen Straßen, mustern die Läden und Schaufenster oder pflanzen sich an den Straßenecken auf; zum Teil begleiten auch die Männer ihre Frauen bei den Einkäufen […]. Es haben sich überall auch schon zahlreiche polnische Geschäftsleute und Handwerker im Ruhrrevier niedergelassen."[153]

Many of Pieper's observations were not atypical for a person living in a region exposed to a heavy influx of foreigners (in practice, the Poles were all but considered foreign). Much of the native population cast a skeptical, disapproving eye on the external appearance and "odd" customs of the newcomers.[154] Pieper's belittling references to the colorful appearance of Polish women or the hair style of Polish men were quite common, and they continued to be embedded in the minds of many local Germans well into the twentieth century.[155] The obsession with the demeanor of Poles becomes all too clear in an article in the *Kölnische Zeitung* from Juli 1899, in which the editors reported:

> "Der Pole spricht selten leise; dies und seine äussere Erscheinung, besonders der stiere, oder verschlagen forschende Blick lassen ihn auffallen. Die polnischen Frauen und Mädchen, die fast immer neben ihrer Ehehälfte oder ihrem Liebsten

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[153] Pieper, *Die Lage der Bergarbeiter im Ruhrrevier*, 241.
[154] Aytac Erylimaz and Martin Rapp, "The History of Migration in Germany" (presentation at "Inventur Migration" conference, Oberhausen, Germany, June 22-23, 2009).
[155] In the editorial section of a 1909 article in the *Linden-Dahlhausener Tageblatt*, a contributor commented how urgently the Poles could use "some civilization and a piece of green soap." In addition, phrases such as "Rot und Blau, Pollacksfrau" or "Stanislaus aus Polen, mit Stiefeln ohne Sohlen" were quite popular in many German circles. StaB A L-D 69, unknown newspaper excerpt, 1914; Krus-Bonazza, *"Wir kommen doch alle aus denselben Verhältnissen …"*, 29-33. Note that the reference of soap in particular was almost certainly not coincidental, as this was a period during which terms such as *Kolonialseife* ("colonial soap") freely roamed German circles. For insights on the contemporary conceptions of soap and civilization, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

> auftauchen, haben nichts von der reizenden Schüchternheit oder anmutenden Liebenswürdigkeit der deutschen Frau und des deutschen Mädchens."[156]

Pieper's description of the streets, however, suggests more. He seems uneasy at the presence of the Poles, harboring an anxiety triggered by more than mere clothing: there is a hint at an *occupying* presence of the Poles, who are literally "planting" themselves along street corners and can be seen strolling the streets "in troops." Moreover, references to the growing numbers of permanently settling Polish artisans and businessmen further underscore this fear.[157] Pieper's observation is made in response to the increasingly long-term nature of the migrants' stay around the turn of the century. Although many young Polish men initially entered the Ruhrgebiet intending to temporarily earn high wages and return home after a few years,[158] by the late 1890s an increasing number of them chose to stay. This was in part due to shorter working days, higher salaries, and concurrently, superior living standards in the west. One contemporary observer in Dahlhausen notes:

> "Dann ist der Mann erst mal vorgefahren. Der Gedanke, mal zwei, drei Jahre im Bergbau […] zu arbeiten. Dann haben die gesagt, wenn wir jetzt wieder zurückfahren, die Zukunft dahinten ändert sich ja auch nicht. Also lassen wir lieber die Familie nachkommen, anstatt dass wir wieder zurückfahren. […] Nachdem die hier mal ein bisschen Blut geleckt hatten, sagen wir das mal so, wollten viele bleiben."[159]

In addition, the intensifying nationality struggle in the eastern territories – where the Prussian government was devoting immense financial resources towards the purchase

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[156] STAM Oberpr. Münster 2847a, Bl. 84, *Kölnische Zeitung*, "Die Arbeiterunruhen in Herne," 30 July 1899.
[157] The editors of the *Dortmunder Zeitung* jumped on the fact that after 1900, the Polish community established its own Bank and a number of mining and business collectives, coining this to be clear evidence for the creation of a "Polish State" in the Ruhrgebiet. See STAM 6166 Oberpr. Münster, Bl. 13, *Dortmunder Zeitung*, "Die nationalpolnische Bewegung im Rheinisch-Westfälischen Ruhrgebiet," 5 September 1904.
[158] According to Bredt, "there prevails a constant back and forth migration between east and west." See Bredt, *Die Polenfrage im Ruhrkohlengebiet*, 49; Wachowiak, "Die Polen in Rheinland-Westfalen," 4-7.
[159] Krus-Bonazza, *"Wir kommen doch alle aus denselben Verhältnissen …"*, 23.

of land from Polish landowners – had raised the cost of property in the east. This made a return very unappealing to many migrants, and, given the far better living conditions in cities of the Ruhrgebiet, many of them decided to settle indefinitely.[160] Finally, with the passing of the *Ansiedlungsnovelle* in 1904, which put in place legal barriers for purchasing land in the east, any ambitions to return to the eastern territories were squelched.[161]

With no choice but to stay, the Polish community began to swell more rapidly than it ever had since the 1860s – and to contribute to many native Germans' growing fears of Polonization.[162] Soon, observers began to grow suspicious of the preference of many Poles to live in proximity to their countrymen and thus form small Polish enclaves throughout the Ruhrgebiet.[163] Upon being hired in the east by traveling mine agents, many migrants were channeled into so-called *Zechensiedlungen* (mining colonies) that had been erected close to the mines in which they were working. The first of these *Zechensiedlungen* was constructed in 1878 in Gerthe; it housed almost exclusively Polish migrants.[164] With the increasing influx of workers, mine owners saw themselves forced to expand such colonies. Given the tendency of newcomers to cohabit with previous migrants, due to what Stanislaus Wachowiak has called an "unusually well-developed

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[160] Bredt, *Die Polenfrage im Ruhrkohlengebiet*, 42-43; Eley, *From Unification to Nazism*, 208; Broszat, *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik*, 112-115.

[161] Grieger and Schmidt, "'Der Verein hat seit seinem Bestehen überhaupt noch kein Fest oder sonst was gefeiert'," 206; Although a return to the eastern provinces was not appealing, there continued to be a significant number of workers leaving the Ruhrgebiet for other opportunities within the empire. For instance, out of a total workforce of 2500-2700 in the town of Köflach, approximately 300 workers left the local mine in 1899 to work elsewhere in Germany. See Pieper, *Die Lage der Bergarbeiter im Ruhrrevier*, 17.

[162] According to Kleßmann, the 1890s and 1900s witnessed a true "mass migration" of ethnic Polish citizens into the Ruhrgebiet. See "Integration und Subkultur nationaler Minderheiten: Das Beispiel der 'Ruhrpolen' 1870-1939," 489-495.

[163] Wachowiak, "Die Polen in Rheinland-Westfalen," 4-7.

[164] Grubert, Wolfgang. "Über 100 Jahre Einwanderer in Gerthe," 165.

sense of community" among Poles, these colonies often formed ethnically homogeneous enclaves.[165] As one observer from Dahlhausen remembered years later,

> "Wenn man da in den Ruhrort reingeht, da sind doch drei schwarze Häuser. Da haben in meiner Kindheit eigentlich nur polnische Familien gewohnt … Die wollten am Anfang alle zusammen wohnen."[166]

Provided with subsidized meals, small yards, facilities for some livestock, workers and their families rarely ventured beyond the immediate vicinities of their apartments.[167] As a result, much of the Polish community did not have extensive contact with the local population, inevitably creating an ethnically divided residential pattern that would still be visible well into the 1930s.[168] According to one famous Polish motto, Poles in the Ruhrgebiet were to "live in harmony with the Germans, but stay amongst ourselves."[169]

Initially, such division was only a cause of concern for the Ruhr-Lippe chapter of the *Alldeutscher Verband* (ADV), which warned that the "pooling" of Polish citizens lent great strength to the Polish national cause.[170] As these colonies grew rapidly after 1895, however, such concern also spread among many other indigenous Germans. For example, in 1902, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*[171] wrote:

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[165] It is important to note that these were not Polish "ghettos" per se, for Poles were free to live anywhere in the Ruhrgebiet. Nor were the colonies exclusively inhabited by Poles; due to their proximity to the workplace and relative low cost, the colonies remained attractive quarters for all mine employees. Murphy notes that by 1910, most *Zechensiedlungen* housed no more than 85% ethnic Poles, and even this number may have been an exaggeration. Nonetheless, many contemporary scholars and observers described these colonies as "operation grounds" for a national Polish agitation. See Schulze, *Die polnische Zuwanderung im Ruhrrevier und ihre Wirkungen*, 49; For the recent historiography, see Murphy, *Guestworkers*, 197; also Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 45-47;

[166] Quote taken from Krus-Bonazza,"Wir kommen doch alle aus denselben Verhältnissen...", 28.

[167] For a detailed analysis of housing patterns in the Ruhrgebiet, see Murphy, *Guestworkers*, 119-145.

[168] Kleßmann has argued that in the long run, the creation of Polish 'subculture' actually facilitated the integration of the newcomers. See Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 190

[169] StaB LA 1310, Bl. 27, "Übersetzungen aus dem Wiarus Polski," 17 October 1899.

[170] Alldeutscher Verband, *Die Polen im rheinisch-westfälischen Steinkohlen-Bezirke*, 15-20, 28-29.

[171] Despite it being stationed in far-off Frankfurt, the *Frankfurter Zeitung* was a popular newspaper in the Ruhrgebiet.

> "Von den polnischen Einwanderern sind mindestens 60% in den Kolonien dem ständigen Verkehr mit den Eingesessenen entzogen […]. Wer sich davon überzeugen will, gehe hin, er wird glauben, in 'Großpolen' zu sein. Nicht nur Erwachsene, auch die Kinder auf der Straße sprechen polnisch. Diese ausgedehnten Werkskolonien sind also polnische Enklaven auf deutschem Boden."[172]

To many local Germans who were exposed to the nationalist rhetoric propagated by extreme nationalists and newspapers, such developments reaffirmed claims that the nationality struggle in the East had apparently also become a reality in the Ruhrgebiet. Thus, in light of the growing number of Poles in the Ruhrgebiet, some Germans did come to profess sympathy with Germanization and the need to take decisive and unambiguous steps towards keeping the "Polish element" in check. In a letter to the editor of the *Linden-Dahlhauser Tageblatt*, entitled "Ein trauriges Zeichen der Zeit," a concerned local wrote:

> "Unser liebes deutsches Vaterland gibt sich alle Mühe, in den Ostprovinzen die polnische Sprache auszurotten and dafür die deutsche Sprache allgemein eintreten zu lassen. Diese Einführung paßt den dortigen Polen natürlich nicht, weshalb sie ihr Bündel packen und nach dem schönen Westfalen auswandern. Kaum hier warm geworden … es werden Polen-Vereine gegründet. Für mich entsteht die Frage: *Mußte die Behörde* den Verein genehmigen? Wenn hier wirklich ein Muß vorliegt, so frage ich weiter: Hat man hierfür noch Worte? und antworte: Nur noch 6:
> *Ein wirklich trauriges Zeichen der Zeit*."[173]

Clearly, the kind of Germanization conducted by authorities was accepted and even condoned by locals of the above persuasion. Such urgings were mainly based on linguistic discrepancies (note the observer's satisfaction with the "elimination" of the Polish language in the eastern territories), yet also rested on a strong belief in the need to

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[172] *Frankfurter Zeitung*, "Wochenblatt Nr. 35," 1902 as quoted in Pieper, *Die Lage der Bergarbeiter im Ruhrrevier*, 242.
[173] StaB A L-D 69, excerpt unknown newspaper (presumably *Linden-Dahlhausener Tageblatt*).

protect a superior German culture.[174] This can be seen in the vile ethno-cultural slurs referencing the ethnic differences between German and Polish speakers in many national-minded newspapers in the Ruhrgebiet and among contemporary historians. In July 1899, for instance, the *Kölnische Zeitung* reported that there could be no doubt that the Rhenish-Westphalian industry had literally been *durchseucht* ("contaminated") by Poles.[175]

Much historiography has aligned the German population in the Ruhrgebiet with locals such as the Dahlhausener author of *Ein trauriges Zeichen der Zeit* (with what I define as the "supporters"). Such lack of differentiation calls for further examination of the effects of nationalism, for indeed, not all Germans swiftly jumped on the bandwagon of nationalist propaganda and enthusiastically supported Germanization. Many appeared more reserved about the issue, and although certainly receptive to the "Polish Question," expressed skepticism. Historian Johannes Bredt described the Poles more as a "factor to be reckoned with;" others were mindful of the importance of the Polish workers in economic terms.[176] One contemporary observer recalled years later,

> "Wenn die Pollacken nicht im Ruhrgebiet gewesen wären, wäre das Ruhrgebiet nicht hochgekommen, mit der hiesigen Mannschaft, mit den Rheinländern nicht."[177]

A recent study by John Kulczycki stressed the extensive class-consciousness and solidarity between German and Polish workers, at least until the turn of the century.[178]

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[174] Franz Schulze, Max Metzner, Lorenz Pieper, and Viktor Bredt all discuss the "higher cultural level" of Germans over Poles in their examinations of the Ruhrgebiet.
[175] STAM Oberpr. Münster 2847a, Bl. 84, *Kölnische Zeitung*, "Die Arbeiterunruhen in Herne," 30 June 1899.
[176] Bredt, *Die Polenfrage im Ruhrkohlengebiet*, 1-9.
[177] Quote taken from Bernhard Parisius, *Lebenswege im Revier: Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen zwischen Jahrhundertwende und Kohlenkrise - Erzählt von Frauen u. Männern aus Borbeck* (Essen: Henselowsky Verlag, 1984), 29.
[178] Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*.

Finally, it should be fairly obvious that the mine owners and industrial elite in the Ruhrgebiet presumably showed some reluctance to disgruntle Polish workers and thereby jeopardize an abundant source of cheap and willing labor.

It may seem odd to use a cautionary "presumably" in arguing that there were some Germans who disagreed with Germanization. However, the historian's task of defining more definitively those who did not think highly of, were indifferent to, or even rejected a German nationalist agenda is hampered by the fact that such people tended to be more reserved about their opinions. There was an important reason for this. Most importantly, since Bismarck's last years in office during the late 1880s, officials in the empire tended to assign all subjects of the empire into one of two categories: *Reichsfeinde* and *Reichsfreunde* ("enemies of the state, friends of the state").[179] Such a classification tended to foster a divisive political atmosphere in which national liberals, conservatives, and other pro-Bismarck factions readily – and quite effectively – ousted their opponents as "enemies of the state." Members of the *H.K.T-Verein* and the ADV were particularly keen on this strategy because it was extremely difficult for their opponents to refute such accusations.

If the written traces produced by individual Germans are disappointingly scarce, the paper trail left by the government offers a wealth of material. The state archive in Münster alone holds an impressive collection of no less than 26 files exclusively on the activities of the Polish community in the cities of Herne and Wanne-Eickel.[180] While it is difficult to gauge exactly what people thought about the activities of the authorities and why they may have opposed their politics on the basis of these files, they nonetheless

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[179] Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews*, 119-120.
[180] Peters-Schildgen draws almost all her conclusions about the interactions between Germans and Poles from governmental files. Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*, 137.

indicate that opposition did exist. Merely by virtue of their proximity to local communities, many officials such as mayors or police officers tended to be sensitive to the various opinions of their townspeople. These officials were asked to administer and enforce Germanization, while maintaining a close relationship with the local population (of which they themselves were a part). As a result, the ways in which they carried out their duties was not merely reflective of their own opinion, but to a certain extent also embodied the wishes of many locals.

Under such circumstances, it is no accident that a vast majority of the correspondences, ordinances (*Verfügungen*), and reports on Polish activity were explicitly labeled secret or top-secret. In many cases, the supervising official also added an emphatic "Eigenhändig!" (personally written) or "Persönlich!" (personal) in the subject line, further underscoring efforts to keep discriminatory activity as clandestine as possible.[181] Certainly, part of the reason for doing so was to make the surveillance of Polish life more effective. For example, determining whether a Polish cleric was preaching Polish nationalism or the Sunday sermon to his community did require secrecy on behalf of the monitoring police official. Much of the Polish community by now had grown well aware of the fact that the authorities were looking for any opportunity they could find to levy fines, break up meetings, or ban organizations.[182] Though intent on maintaining a "subculture" of their own, Poles knew they had to adjust in certain ways in order to avoid the scrutiny of the authorities – making the task of surveillance even harder for German officials.

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[181] For examples, see StaB A W 107, *Regierungspräsident* Arnsberg to the *Landräte*, 10 March 1897, 6 December 1897, 6 November 1900, 8 November 1901; StaB A W 107, *Landrat* Bochum to the *Amtmänner* of the district, 27 December 1901, 3 January 1902; see also StaB A L 356; StaH IV/176 (b); StaH IV/176 (c); STAM Oberpr. Münster 3833, Bl. 14-15, 16-21.
[182] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet,* 94-109.

A more important reason for the extreme secrecy was that the anti-Polish measures of the authorities were simply unpopular among many local Germans. This included officials and townspeople alike. Many of the police reports submitted to the *Landrat* or *Regierungspresident* appear half-hearted, and frequently officials were asked to complete their reports more thoroughly and resubmit them.[183] In addition, the repeated orders from higher-ranking officials to monitor the Polish activists "more closely" indicated a certain level of reluctance or disinterest in the surveillance (given that the police official was not inept at filling out reports). In some instances, local police even discouraged their subordinates from exuberantly issuing heavy fines, outlawing Polish *Vereine*, or continuously breaking up Polish meetings. Such actions were to be strictly reserved for instances in which the Poles were unmistakably pursuing political endeavors that could threaten or disturb public order.[184] In general, many local police officers were more concerned about completing their duties than containing the threat of Polonization.[185]

The reluctance to pursue anti-Polish actions on the part of some officials is perhaps best exemplified by an incident involving the mayor of Herne, Hermann Schaefer (1887-1907). Asked on 14 November 1901 to suspend a public meeting in his district if participants decided to speak Polish instead of German, Schaefer refused. In a letter to his supervisor in Bochum, *Landrat* Karl Gerstein, he explained that he could not warrant taking such action, which he understood as breaking the law:

> "Nach meiner Auffassung geben die gesetzlichen Bestimmungen mir nicht die Berechtigung, zu solcher Auflösung zu schreiten, und dies umsoweniger, als

[183] StaB LA 1310, Bl. 327, *Regierungspräsident* Arnsberg to the *Landräte*, 2 Januar 1903.
[184] StaB A W 107, Bochum *Landrat* to *Amtmänner des Kreises*, "Geheim!", 27 December 1901.
[185] StaB LA 1310, Bl. 452, Werne *Amtmann* to Bochum *Landrat*, 17 November 1903.

> bereits das Oberverwaltungsgericht den nämlichen Standpunkt eingenommen hat."

Schaefer was right: only a few years earlier, on 5 October 1897, the *Oberverwaltungsgericht* (Supreme Administrative Law Court, OVG) had in fact issued a landmark decision declaring it illegal to dissolve public meetings on the basis of §2 of the *Vereinsgesetz*, when the only justification for doing so was that a language other than German was used.[186] Gerstein was indeed well aware that his orders were against the law, and on 14 November he ordered Schaefer to refrain from making public the fact that he, as the supervising official, had ordered the suspensions. Ten days later on 24 November, Schaefer received yet another ordinance reprimanding him for his inaction and asking him to break up a Polish meeting. This time, the mayor yielded to the demands of the *Landrat*, and reluctantly proceeded to dissolve the meeting. As a result of doing so, however, Schaefer complained that his integrity as a mayor had suffered:

> "Diese Maßnahme … erregt in den betheiligten Kreisen naturgemäß Aufsehen. *Das Vertrauen zu der Zuverlässigkeit meiner Erklärungen und somit auch meine Autorität leiden hierunter* [my italics]. Unter diesen Umständen werden Ew. Hochwohlgeboren nichts dagegen zu erinnern finden, wenn ich gegebenen Falles erkenntlich mache, daß ich am 24. dieses Monats bei der Auflösung in höherem Auftrage gehandelt habe und fortan handeln werde."[187]

Schaefer's correspondence with his supervisor in Bochum highlights the fact that there were cases when discriminatory policy towards Poles proved to be very unpopular and politically detrimental. Neither the *Landrat* nor Schaefer seemed willing to assume responsibility for the policies they implemented, for both feared a loss in status and respect among the German population of their district.

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[186] Hans-Jürgen Wichardt, *Die Rechtsprechung des Königlich Preußischen Oberverwaltungsgerichts zur Vereins- und Versammlungsfreiheit in der Zeit von 1875 bis 1914: ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung des materiellen Rechtsstaates in Deutschland* (Univ., Diss. Kiel, 1976), 44-50; for a discussion of the role of the OVG, see 39-42.

[187] Both quotes in StaB LA 1312, Bl. 31-32, Herne mayor to Bochum *Landrat*, 26 November 1901/ 14- 24 November 1901.

While Schaefer certainly was an anomaly among the overwhelmingly nationalist administrative machinery in the Ruhrgebiet, his case was by no means an isolated one.[188] Even districts with more discriminatory mayors or police officials, such as that of gendarme Dr. la Roche (Baukau),[189] showed considerable outrage over unreasonable anti-Polish actions by the police. In September 1902, a similar case as in Herne developed in nearby Baukau, where the local official dissolved a Polish gathering solely because the language spoken there was not German. Although the authorities maintained extreme secrecy over the ordeal, the incident soon leaked out to the local press. Once again, it became clear that the local police had acted on the secret orders by *Landrat* Gerstein. A few months later, the *Westfälische Volkszeitung* reported indignantly,

> "Wir haben also das Schauspiel, daß der Landrat des Kreises Bochum unbekümmert um das Oberverwaltungsgericht … die ihm unterstellten Behörden strikte anweist, Versammlungen, in denen nicht deutsch gesprochen wird, einfach aufzulösen.
> Wie ist ein solcher Zustand möglich? so fragen wir erstaunt … Wir meinen, es ist die höchste Zeit, daß hier Wandel geschaffen wird; sonst ist es sehr erklärlich, wenn die Polen den Glauben verlieren, daß das Recht in Preußen regiert."[190]

Clearly, there was extensive disagreement on how the authorities were proceeding against the Polish community. Although the outrage appeared to be based more on the breaching of the law than any direct sympathy with the Poles, many Germans were undoubtedly unhappy with how Germanization was being carried out. Given this perspective among many locals, it comes as no surprise that much of the correspondences and ordinances of the government were classified as "secret."

The dissolving of public meetings of Poles sparked not only discontent about the behavior of the authorities, but also ushered in an interesting debate about what it meant

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[188] Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*, 138.
[189] Ibid.
[190] StaB LA 1312, Bl. 85, *Westfälische Volkszeitung*, "Landrat und Minister," 3 February 1903.

to be "German." Local Catholics and members of the Center Party, for instance, tended to be critical of the government's forceful actions against the Poles, deeming such efforts to be counterproductive. In an article entitled "Different times, different Poles," the center-leaning *Dortmunder Tageblatt* reminisced about the founding years of the empire, when Germans and Poles alike were afforded the right to pursue their "national peculiarities" and "planted their cabbage side by side" in mutual peace. With the introduction of the policy of Germanization, however, things changed altogether. The paper argued that as a result of the growing nationalist rhetoric among Germans, many Poles had begun to respond with their own devotion to Polish nationalism.[191] Thus, instead of applying forceful and repressive action, the authorities should remain tolerant of the Polish language and cultural practices to allow for a gradual and effective assimilatory process.[192] According to the *Dortmunder Tageblatt* any forceful approach would only worsen the resistance among Poles against assimilation into their German environment.[193] The outright prohibition of the Polish language in public meetings was seen as particularly detrimental and counterproductive; on 11 July 1899, the Münster-based *Westfälischer Merkur*, in an article entitled "Die Polenfurcht" ("The Fear of Poles"), suggested:

> "Man muss eben besonders darauf bedacht sein, [die Polen] zu belehren, und in dieser Hinsicht ist es ein grosser Fehler, wenn man dort polnische Versammlungen zu verhindern oder aufzulösen versucht, statt dafür zu sorgen, dass in diesen Versammlungen den Leuten in ihrer Muttersprache das Richtige gesagt wird."[194]

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[191] This response mechanism has been extensively documented by Christoph Kleßmann, Richard Murphy, and Susanne Peters-Schildgen.
[192] IfZD, *Dortmunder Tageblatt*, "Andere Zeiten, andere Polen," 1 April 1902.
[193] Schulze, *Die polnische Zuwanderung im Ruhrrevier und ihre Wirkungen*, 48-49; Pieper, *Die Lage der Bergarbeiter im Ruhrrevier*, 245-247; IfZD, *Dortmunder Tageblatt*, "Tagesbegebenheiten," 28 December 1901.
[194] STAM Oberpr. Münster 2847a, *Westfälischer Merkur*, "Die Polenfurcht," 11 July 1899.

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* formulated the problem more bluntly when it reported:

> Der Zersetzungsprozess innerhalb der polnischen Einwanderung hätte sich ungestört vollzogen, wenn nicht die … 'alldeutsche' Hetzerei einsetzte. Was ist denn dabei, wenn etliche hundert-Tausende neben der offiziellen Landessprache noch ihre besondere Nationalsprache kultivieren? Daran geht niemand zugrunde. Jetzt aber wacht erst recht der aufgehetzte Pole über seine nationalen Besonderheiten …"[195]

Both articles indicate that such opponents of Germanization still believed in the need to teach the Poles proper "German" ways, and in this regard, they should not be distinguished too much from those who pushed for the ethno-cultural *Umvolkung* of Poles. In terms of their position on Germanization then, such Germans fall mostly into the category of "critics."

The *Westfälischer Merkur* as well as the *Tremonia* did not merely offer suggestions on how to improve assimilatory policy, but they also considered the authorities' repressive policy as a direct insult to *Deutschtum*. Germanization – that is, as it was practiced in the Ruhrgebiet – was criticized as unrepresentative of the German national character and as casting ridicule on a national-oriented policy ("…toying with German forthrightness."). While the *Westfälischer Merkur* still propagated cultural superiority to a certain extent ("… dass den Leuten in ihrer Muttersprache *das Richtige* [my italics] gesagt wird."), the *Tremonia* went further, denouncing all German cultural chauvinism as "un-German through and through" and as detrimental to the concept of a German fatherland.[196] Such chauvinism, mainly propelled by a "repulsive" and "ugly" Hakatism, was seen as directly degrading the integrity and strength of the German *Volk*: how could a few hundred thousand Polish migrants in any way endanger the *Deutschtum* in the Ruhrgebiet? According to the *Westfälischer Merkur*,

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[195] *Frankfurter Zeitung*, "Wochenblatt Nr. 35," 1902 as quoted in Schulze, 49 and Pieper, 244-245.
[196] IfZD, *Tremonia*, "Nationale Gesinnung," 25 January 1899.

> "Wenn die deutsche Bevölkerungsmehrheit nicht die Kraft hätte, eine Einwanderung von 10 oder auch 20 Prozent langsam und sicher zu assimilieren, so stände unsere liebe Nation überhaupt vor dem Austerbe-Etat … Das ist ja überhaupt der Ärger für jeden richtig fühlenden Deutschen, daß die Hakatisten unsere Nation und Kultur als schwächlich, wehr- und lebensunfähig hinstellen … und aller Welt verkünden, daß das Deutschtum nicht bestehen könne, wenn es nicht alle möglichen Zwangs- und Unterdrückungsmittel anwende."[197]

Similar concerns were voiced by a range of local papers who responded with disbelief and indignation anytime another incident of a repressive Germanization policy became public.[198] Finally, the *Dortmunder Tageblatt* indicted the authorities' efforts at *Zwangsgermanisierung* (forced Germanization) not only as unreasonable politics, but also as an affront to humanity.[199]

As noted earlier, the "critics" were predominantly Catholic, and indeed, the *Tremonia* even went so far as to pronounce Germanization a disguised form of "Protestantization."[200] Yet, the *Tremonia* catered to far more than a purely Catholic audience, as is evidenced by the unusually large readership it boasted – despite the fact that Catholics formed a minority in most of the Rhineland and Westphalia. In 1902, the newspaper's circulation stood at over 21,000; only a few years later that number had risen to 33,000 and the paper proudly announced that it was the most widely read daily in the province of Westphalia. Indeed, its readership matched if not outnumbered the popular German national RhWZ, which also had a circulation of approximately 21,000 in 1902. Similarly, both the *Westfälischer Merkur* and the *Dortmunder Tageblatt* (both Center party leaning newspapers) outpaced their national liberal competitors, the Bochum

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[197] STAM Oberpr. Münster 2847a, *Westfälischer Merkur*, "Die Polenfurcht," 11 July 1899.
[198] See for example StaB Zeitungsbestand, *Täglicher Anzeiger Witten Langendreer*, "Der Fortschritt des Polenthums im Osten," 14 November 1898.
[199] IfZD, *Dortmunder Tagblatt*, "Tagesbegenheiten," 17 March 1902.
[200] IfZD, *Tremonia*, "Die Kehrseite der Medaille," 16 April 1902.

Märkischer Sprecher and the *Westfälische Zeitung*, in readership.[201] Hence, center party newspapers at this time reached an audience beyond the traditional Catholic constituency, indicating the existence of an increasingly diverse group in the category of the "critics" around the turn of the century.[202]

Finally, there was a significant segment of the German population that belonged into the category of the "indifferents." These Germans were far less concerned about national differences, or national rhetoric in general, and took an indifferent stance towards Germanization. Most widely represented in this group were the German miners, who due to the dangerous nature of the work underground felt a special bond of solidarity with many Polish-speaking workers.[203] Miners often shared deep superstitions about the hostile world underground, in which powerful demonic forces worked to level ethnic and national differences. Literary works by Paul Zech (1881-1946), a famous Ruhr poet and author who experienced life in the mines first-hand, are illustrative of the common plight workers faced underground.[204] Moreover, contemporary observers noted that their work in the mines simply left no time to ponder ethnic differences in the workforce:

> "Man mußte ja arbeiten. An den Formtischen hat man gar keine Zeit gehabt, über die unterschiedliche Herkunft nachzudenken. Es mußten ja alle mithelfen. Die sind genauso in der Reihe gestanden wie wir auch. In den Pausen hat jeder sein

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[201] Josef Kürschner, *Handbuch der Presse für Schriftsteller, Redaktionen, Verleger, überhaupt Alle, die mit der Presse in Beziehung stehen* (Berlin: Hermann Hillger Verlag, 1902), 934, 1094, 1165.

[202] This certainly reflects the empire-wide efforts of the Center Party to reach out to voters beyond the Catholic party around the turn of the century. In March of 1906, Julius Bachem called for the opening of the Center Party to non-Catholics, announcing, "We must leave the tower!" See Christopher Clark, "Religion and confessional conflict," in *Imperial Germany 1871-1918*, ed. James Retallack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 94; Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany Since 1815*, 233-234; Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany: A Historiographical Companion* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1996), 304-305.

[203] Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*, 43-45.

[204] In a serious of short tragedies collectively called *Der Schwarze Baal* (1917), Zech describes vividly the common fear of workers of a greater demonic power that ruled underground. He makes no reference to the different national backgrounds of the workers, many of who obviously were of eastern European descent.

> Butterbrot am Formtisch gegessen. Eine Viertelstunde, das war alles. Du warst froh, wenn du dein Butterbrot aufkriegtest."[205]

While xenophobic expressions were certainly not entirely absent among the "indifferents", they usually tended to be related to the Polish workers' *Lohndrückerei* ("rate-busting") or strike-breaking.[206] However, such worries were hardly related to the "Polish Question" per se, and should be seen more as an outgrowth of natural competition in the workplace. Recent work by John Kulczycki has attested to the fact that at least until the turn of the century, the Polish workers contributed significantly to the major strikes of the 1880s and 1890s and joined the German workers in class solidarity.[207] They thus tended to place the common experience in the mines ahead of an ethno-cultural consciousness.

In sum, the German population in the Ruhrgebiet did not respond nearly as unanimously to Germanization as has been suggested previously. While almost all Germans believed in their cultural superiority, they often strongly disagreed on how to spread and transfer this higher culture to their fellow citizens of Polish ethnicity.[208] For the historian examining the development of nationalism in the Ruhrgebiet, perhaps the most interesting group of Germans are the "critics", who represent a somewhat unstable standpoint on Germanization. On the one hand, these Germans were no less convinced than the national liberal "supporters" that they had to assimilate the Polish community

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[205] Contemporary observer from Dahlhausen, quoted in Krus-Bonazza, *"Wir kommen doch alle aus denselben Verhältnissen..."*, 26.

[206] There has been discussion over whether the Poles really were strike-breakers and depressed wages. John Kulczycki concludes that neither were true in the case of the Polish migrant workers. For insights into the earlier discussion on this subject, see Pieper, *Die Lage der Bergarbeiter im Ruhrrevier*; Bredt, *Die Polenfrage im Ruhrkohlengebiet*; Schulze, *Die polnische Zuwanderung im Ruhrrevier und ihre Wirkungen*.

[207] Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*, 60, 259-263.

[208] In October 1899, the liberal politician Friedrich Naumann (1860-1919) stated explicitly, "Wir scheuen uns nicht, Polen … nach Kräften zu entnationalisieren. Über die Methode, wie dies am besten geschieht, streiten wir uns, in der Sache aber sind wir uns einig." Quoted in Krebs and Poloni, *Volk, Reich und Nation*, 221.

and do away eventually with Polish culture and language. On the other hand, they vigorously opposed the government's actions and were willing to introduce their criticisms into a debate on Germanness. Yet locals did not act primarily in defense of the Poles themselves, nor for humanitarian reasons; instead, they appeared far more concerned with maintaining the rule of law or furthering their political ambitions that were altogether unrelated to the "Polish Question." Mayor Hermann Schaefer, for instance, seemed reluctant to carry out his superior's orders primarily because doing so had been explicitly declared illegal by the OVG. Furthermore, the fact that the editors of newspapers like the *Tremonia* opposed the actions of the Prussian authorities may have been heavily motivated by a political struggle along confessional lines. Hence, there were in fact few "critics" who genuinely supported the Polish cause, and much of their opposition rested almost entirely on reasons more or less unrelated to the Polish community. This made their opposition to Germanization very fragile and inclined to evaporate eventually, resulting in a dispersal of the members of this group into either the category of the "supporters" or of the "indifferents." In what follows, I will examine the outcome of this unstable set of opinions on the policy of Germanization over the subsequent years from 1899 to 1908.

Chapter V

Convergence Along National Lines and Insights into German "Particularities"

On 25 January 1899, the *Oberbergamt Dortmund* (Dortmund Chief Mining Authority) instituted mining ordinance 172 "regarding the employment of foreign-speaking workers" in the Ruhr's mines. According to § 1 and § 2, workers would henceforth be required to be able to speak and read German in order to be eligible for being hired. Mining officials justified the new regulation by arguing that the overwhelming influx of foreign-speaking workers had caused a serious safety hazard underground. Concerns had been raised that workers incapable of speaking German "are not able to follow the instructions of their German supervisors properly." Even those who may have been able to speak German still were unlikely to be able to read it as well.[209]

The fact that this ordinance carried strong political overtones becomes quite evident considering that such safety issues could easily have been solved through the use of bilingual signage, as was the practice in mining regions of other countries.[210] Moreover, statistics on the relationship between accident rates and lack of knowledge of German only started to be collected two years *after* the ordinance had been implemented.[211] Clearly, the primary objective of the regulation was to discourage or at least slow the influx of migrant workers of foreign tongues. The German mining unions recognized the political motivation behind the measure, and only hesitantly accepted it as "the good instead of the better" and a "small advance towards better protection of the life

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[209] StaB, "Amtsblatt Arnsberg 1899," 65-66.
[210] By comparison, the mining regions, such as Pennsylvania in the United States, already required signage to be posted in a foreign language once that language was spoken by at least ten workers. Pieper, *Die Lage der Bergarbeiter im Ruhrrevier*, 148-149.
[211] Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*, 91.

and health of the worker." In taking a relatively neutral stance on the ordinance, these unions hoped to contain the political damage it could potentially cause.[212]

However, while the actual effect on enhancing mine safety was negligible, its political ramifications were more significant than the unions had expected. The ordinance marked one of the first open attacks on foreign – and especially Polish – workers and according to Christoph Kleßmann, initiated a wider trend of declining relations between the Polish and German communities.[213] Indeed, over roughly the next decade (1899-1908), an aggressive approach towards Germanization would resonate with growing segments of the German population. For as a result of policies such as the mining ordinance, Polish workers grew increasingly suspicious of local Germans and sought to distance and protect themselves through joining and expanding their own organizational networks of *Vereine*.[214] Thus, in light of increased national tendencies among the Polish community as a whole, many Germans who had previously defended the rights of Polish migrants and had expressed discontent with the ways in which their assimilation into *Deutschtum* was being undertaken by the authorities began to retreat from their earlier views. Was this a sign that such Germans were taking a more nationalist stance? Had the nationalist extremist groups, the core supporters of aggressive Germanization, been able to arouse nationalist sentiments among previously unconcerned Germans?

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[212] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 64-65.
[213] Ibid.
[214] More recent historiography on the Ruhrgebiet has emphasized the extent to which such organizational activity increased among Poles at this time. Kleßmann argued for the emergence of a distinct "sub-culture" in response to harsher Germanization policies, a culture that was fully separate from the German organizational life. In doing so, Kleßmann refuted earlier conceptions of Polish life in the Ruhrgebiet, particularly by Hans Ulrich Wehler, who believed that Germanization had actually been very successful in assimilating the Polish in-migrants. For a detailed overview of the organizational network and various *Vereine* within the Polish community, see Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*.

The change in German-Polish relations that was prompted by the mining ordinance of 1899 had two important facets. On the one hand, by 1908 almost all Germans either supported or did not object to an aggressive policy of Germanization, as oppositional sentiments declined steadily. As could be seen above, those who had voiced opposition to the discriminatory and oppressive tactics of local authorities did so primarily due to concerns over the violation of the Poles' rightful *staatsbürgerliche Rechte* (civic rights) and fears that existing laws were being ignored or circumvented.[215] However, during the period between 1899 and 1908, nationalists made repeated attempts to amend existing laws to allow for more decisive action against Polish culture and language. Between 1900 and 1903, for instance, authorities were asked to step up their (illegal) surveillance activities to force a new ruling by the *Oberverwaltungsgericht* (OVG). When in March of 1903 the courts reaffirmed their 1897 ruling, nationalists continued their battle by lobbying the *Reichstag* for a new law. These efforts culminated in the *Reichsvereinsgesetz* of 19 April 1908, which effectively legalized the anti-Polish activities of the authorities.[216] With the passage of this amendment, officials such as Herrmann Schaefer in Herne were less likely to fear a backlash from German citizens; if the law permitted it, such Germans were willing to comply with harsher Germanization measures.

On the other hand, the "Polish Question" precipitated a divisive internal debate among Germans (as we saw in chapter four). Discussions on the "Polish Question" and "proper" German ways of handling it invariably heightened the political, class, and

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[215] STAM Reg. Arbg. 14323, unknown newspaper, "Rückblick auf die Streikwoche in Herne," 3 July 1899.
[216] In the context of this analysis, the passage of the 1908 law represents a logical endpoint to a period of ambivalence about the proper approach to Germanization in the Ruhrgebiet, which continued to be contested and unclear until this point. After 1908, however, an aggressive Germanization became mostly accepted as legal and even desirable.

confessional tensions among Ruhr Germans. Indeed, in the course of the period between 1899 and 1908, the German population became increasingly fragmented along traditional socio-political lines, separating into what political scientist Karl Rohe identified as the three *Lager* ("camps") of German politics: the nationals, the Catholics, and the Socialists.[217] Germans in the Ruhr exemplified with stunning clarity the wider socio-political trends that engulfed German society in the post-1900 *Kaiserreich*, a world in which "everyone keeps to his social class … and anxiously clings to his individual *Vermögensabstufung* ("proprietary grade")."[218] Within this inner fragmentation amongst Germans, the Poles were reduced to a mere political liability and political weapon, tossed back and forth between contending parties of different socioeconomic classes.

Hence, the period between 1899 and 1908 was marked by a somewhat ambiguous convergence and divergence of German society in the Ruhr region. Although German nationalism became increasingly accepted among locals as a new common identity, the same period also exposed the abject reality of a people divided due to political opportunism and legal positivism. Certainly, Germans converged in terms of how they

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[217] Rohe's work, which built upon M. Rainer Lepsius' static model of four distinct "milieus" in German political culture, re-confirmed the existence of sharp divisions along class and confessional lines. Rohe's model still stands (with some modifications) and is used by historians to characterize the "democratization" of German political culture during the 1890s and 1900s, a period during which increasing segments of the population were becoming involved in politics. Christopher Clark, for instance, argues that by 1900 it had become clear that the traditional conservative establishment needed to reconcile some of its differences with previously excluded groups, which had "gradually entered into a relationship of conditional collaboration with the administration." Karl Rohe, *Wahlen und Wählertraditionen in Deutschland: kulturelle Grundlagen deutscher Parteien und Parteiensysteme im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992); Martin R. Lepsius, "Parteiensystem und Sozialstruktur. Zum Problem der Demokratisierung der deutschen Gesellschaft," in *Wirtschaft, Geschichte und Wirtschaftsgeschichte. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Friedrich Lütge*, edited by Friedrich Lütge and Wilhelm Abel (Stuttgart: G. Fischer, 1966), 371-393; Mark Hewitson, "Wilhelmine Germany," in *Imperial Germany 1871-1918*, ed. James Retallack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 46; Clark, "Religion and confessional conflict," 94. On the political culture of Imperial Germany, Thomas Kühne, "Political culture and democratization" in *Imperial Germany 1871-1918*, ed. James Retallack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Edward R. Dickinson, "The bourgeoisie and reform," In *Imperial Germany 1871-1918*, ed. James Retallack (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Chickering, *Imperial Germany*; Tipton, *A History of Modern Germany Since 1815,* 224-240; see also Geoff Eley, *From Unification to Nazism*, 42-85.

[218] Hugo Ganz, 54-55

defined the German nation, that is, as one that was ethno-cultural in character and hence excluded the Polish population.[219] Yet, far from contributing to the success story of German nationalism, the developments in the Ruhrgebiet (as touched off by the "Polish Question") in fact accentuated the social and political rifts that permeated society throughout the German empire. Hence, the Ruhrgebiet resembled a microcosm of what Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn have called the "self-activation of the subordinate classes," or in other words, the politicization of the various social groupings in German society.[220]

Only a few months after the mining ordinance was passed, a bloody strike erupted in June of 1899 in the town of Herne, one of the Ruhrgebiet's most Polish-speaking cities. Although the mining ordinance has not been considered a direct cause, the strike nevertheless reflected some of the suppressed frustrations of many Polish migrants.[221] Indeed, many historians have described the events as the *Herner Polenkrawalle* ("Polish Riots of Herne"), thus casting them more as a revolt or social conflict than an organized

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[219] In this way, the Ruhrgebiet resembled the empire as a whole, departing from an earlier Prussian (and more multinational) character to a decidedly ethnic German one. We observed this trend in chapter two with regard to the "Polish Question."

[220] Historians Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn were among the leading challengers of the 1970s' "new orthodoxy" (also called *Sonderweg*) in German historiography, advanced in particular by Hans-Ulrich Wehler. Wehler suggested that Imperial Germany's elites and state institution assumed a central role in mobilizing and manipulating the masses. According to Eley and Blackbourn, however, "The pressure from below was greater than often assumed." The findings here echo and expand on this perspective, in that I argue that social and cultural "threats" to local identity expedited the process of politicization. For a review of the *Sonderweg* debate among historians, see esp. Chris Lorenz, "Beyond Good and Evil? The German Empire of 1871 and Modern German Historiography," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1995), 729-765; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871-1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973); James Retallack, "Social History with a Vengeance? Some Reactions to H.-U. Wehler's 'Das Deutsche Kaiserreich'" *German Studies Review*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (1984), 423-450; Blackbourn and Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History*.

[221] A report by the *Oberbergamt* noted that the mining ordinance may have been indirectly responsible for some of the tensions that transpired during the strike. See STAM Oberpr. Münster 2847c, Report by the *Oberbergamt* Dortmund, 8 September 1899.

worker's strike.[222] Furthermore, discontent had been building up since April, when a new set of pension regulations (*Knappschaftsstatut*) was introduced that raised the deductions of probationary members more than twofold. Since these probationary members were typically very young workers (haulers and brakemen), a demographic that in turn was composed largely of Polish migrants, it is understandable that Polish-speaking workers were overrepresented among the strikers.[223] Given their average wage of 2.60-2.80 marks per shift, discontent with the new regulations could be expected, and even *Oberpräsident* Konrad von Studt (who likened the events in Herne to an attempt at reestablishing the Kingdom of Poland) admitted that a pay raise "may have been necessary."[224] In any case, on 23 June 1899, workers struck at shaft "von der Heydt" and within a few days the upheaval reached every mining shaft in the district of Herne; in total, the strike would last eight days.[225]

For the purposes of this thesis, it will not be necessary to reconstruct the discourse of the strike in great detail.[226] What distinguished this strike from other workers' strikes, however, was that soon after the conflict had started clashes between workers and authorities turned unusually bloody, leaving four dead and twenty badly injured. Such a tally was shocking and unheard of for the local population. The discussion that ensued in German circles about the events is very illustrative of how Germans reacted to the

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[222] For treatment of the revolts as a social conflict, see Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet,* 74-78. See also Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*, 105 and the literature cited there.
[223] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 75.
[224] Quoted in Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*, 108.
[225] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 76.
[226] In fact, the strike was so erratic and "wildcat" up until it ended in July that it becomes extremely difficult to reconstruct the chain of events. For insights into the perspective of the authorities on the events, see a detailed report by the *Regierungspräsident* in Arnsberg in STAM Reg. Arbg, 14321, *Regierungspräsident* Arnsberg to *Oberpräsident* in Münster, 17 July 1899; for an extensive analysis see also Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*, 104-153.

violence initiated by the Polish newcomers.[227] As we will see, the Herne revolts contributed to an increasing separation between the Polish and German communities along ethnic lines. Yet, paradoxically, the revolts also helped develop a hostile social and political climate amongst Germans.

Not surprisingly, the authorities and other nationalist-minded Germans saw the events in Herne as an affirmation of their earlier warnings about the Polish community. For the RhWZ, the Herne strike offered a wealth of material as the newspaper reported, "the brutality … of the Poles has once again been reaffirmed by the riots in Herne."[228] Throughout the strike week, the RhWZ reported on the events in the most racially inciting manner. The Poles, it claimed, were characterized by a severe *Blutgier* ("bloodthirstiness") and *Rohheit* ("barbarism"). German officials chose to use less vulgar words, yet agreed with the list of alleged ethnically inherent characteristics ("Volkscharakter") of the Polish strikers:

> "Ich kann darin der vom Landrat in Bochum geäusserten Ansicht nur zustimmen, daß es die im polnischen Volkscharacter eigentümliche Eigenschaft, eine Reihe von guten Tagen und menschenwürdige Behandlung nicht ertragen zu können, gewesen ist, die die schnelle Umwandlung der Bewegung zu einem Aufruhr gezeigt hat, in dem nur die wachsende Begehrlichkeit, Pflichtvergessenheit und der Hass gegen alles Deutsche die leitenden Beweggründe sind."[229]

For nationalists, the Herne events offered a wonderful opportunity to instill fear in the German population, and to paint the Poles as unapproachable *Radaumacher* ("rowdies") intent on disturbing the peaceful quiet of the Ruhrgebiet. Such efforts were indeed successful, and beginning in late 1899, the Poles gradually began to be isolated (as

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[227] It should be noted that the violent turn of events has in part been attributed to the actions of the Herne police authorities. After close examination, Christoph Kleßmann argues that brash police officers transformed a relatively calm strike into a bloody conflict. I will return to this issue in more detail below. See Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 76-77.
[228] STAM Reg. Arbg. 14321, *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, "Lokale Nachrichten", 30 June 1899.
[229] STAM Oberpr. Münster, *Regierungspräsident* Arnsberg to *Oberpräsident* in Münster, 17 July 1899, 19.

well as isolate themselves) from the native population. According to Kleßmann, instances such as the Herne strike were a "drastic example" of what he described as the failure of social integration in the Ruhrgebiet, and the subsequent seclusion of the Polish community into a "national sub-culture."[230] Indeed, the number of wholly Polish organizations began to rise dramatically, as evidenced in particular by the numerous foundings of *Sokól Vereine* ("hawk") in 1899, which were exclusively Polish gymnastics organizations that had a strong Polish nationalist undertone. Only a few years later, in 1903, the 17 *Sokóls* in the Ruhrgebiet already matched the number in the ethnically Polish eastern territories. Within a few months, they even surpassed their eastern counterparts both in breadth and membership.[231]

In November 1902, the Polish workers took further steps that would be seen by historians as a dramatic split of worker solidarity in the Ruhrgebiet: they created a Polish union, known as *Zjednoczenie Zawadowe Polskie* (ZZP).[232] The establishment of the ZZP marked the end of a long and largely harmonious relationship between the German Catholic union *Gewerkverein Christlicher Bergarbeiter* (GCB) and the Polish workers. Some scholars, such as Stephen Hickey, have interpreted this split as the natural result of inter- and intraregional migration, religious divisions, and ethnic differences.[233] According to Kulczycki, however (who criticized such a perspective as "hypocritical"),

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[230] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 11-22, 78-79.
[231] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 98-101, Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*, 128.
[232] Kulczycki has questioned the idea that the ZZP alone split the labor movement in the Ruhr, highlighting the fact that the German workers were equally divided amongst themselves: "The ferocity of the conflict between the GCB and the *Alter Verband* throws a hypocritical light on [historians'] condemnations of the ZZP for supposedly splitting the working class." However, for purposes of this thesis the creation of the ZZP remains highly significant because it marked a split along ethnic and national lines. See Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*, 185.
[233] Stephen Hickey, "The Shaping of the German Labour Movement: Miners in the Ruhr," in *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany*, ed. by Richard J. Evans (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 215-240.

the Polish workers only responded to increasingly xenophobic and "nationalist" attitudes within the German workforce. Indeed, since the late 1890s, the two largest German unions, the GCB and the *Alter Verband*, had maintained a very unyielding stance towards their Polish-speaking members. For instance, not until 1906 (long after the ZZP had been founded) did the GCB employ a Polish-speaking organizer, despite the fact that it had an estimated 5000-6000 Polish-speaking members by the end of the 1890s.[234] Yet, the GCB showed little "inclination … to take into account the needs and wishes of Polish-speaking miners."[235] While it remains difficult to determine exactly how much of this behavior was due to rising nationalist and xenophobic sentiments, it is safe to say that occurrences such as the Herne strike played a significant role in widening the ethnic gap within the Ruhrgebiet's workforce.

After 1900, conflicts between Germans and Poles abounded throughout the Ruhrgebiet – not just between nationalists on either side, but astoundingly, within confessional bounds as well. According to Christoph Kleßmann, during the 1900s an already wary relationship between German and Polish Catholics started to disintegrate completely. Kleßmann argues that this was due to the growing willingness of the German bishoprics in Paderborn and Münster, as well as the archbishopric of Cologne, to cooperate with the authorities in withholding pastoral care conducted in Polish. Indeed, an agreement among these leading clerics in 1904 reaffirmed an already on-going practice in local communities to hold communions and confessions exclusively in German.[236] The Poles who were increasingly agitated by such refusals to provide "adequate" spiritual care in their mother tongue (although certainly, Polish nationalism

[234] Heinrich Brauns, quoted in Kulczycki, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 85.
[235] Kulczycki, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 85.
[236] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 91-93.

was a factor as well) were ready to take a more confrontational stance. For instance, on 16 February 1903, the *Rheinisch-Westfälisches Tageblatt* published an article entitled "Eine Polnische Dreistigkeit" (A Polish Brazenness), which reported on the disruptive behavior of a group of Poles at a German teacher's wedding in Königssteele:

> "Indem nun der Geistliche die Trauung in deutscher Sprache vollzog, besaßen mehrere Polen die Dreistigkeit, mit den Füßen zu trampeln, die Kirche zu verlassen, und die Türen mit voller Wucht zuzuschlagen."[237]

Tensions continued to accumulate, driven primarily by nationalist rhetoric on both sides. In 1907, the *Wiarus Polskie* (WP) reported,

> "Das polnische Volk kennt die Herren Deutsch-Katholiken sehr gut und sagt von ihnen, jeder Deutsche ist ein versteckter Lutheraner."[238]

The WP's reference to Lutherans and Germans indicates the extent to which confession and nationalism had become entwined – for both groups. Germans were no less vicious in their accusations, as made particularly illustrative by a German Catholic priest named "Ax" who described his Polish parish as "those stinking Polacks who contaminate my Church."[239] Such statements were particularly indicative of the extent to which German Catholics, previously the Poles' strongest allies, had begun to adopt a language laden with ethnic and racial connotation.

Besides division along national lines, however, the Herne strike also provoked a politically divisive debate within the German community. Readily used accusations such as *Ausbeutertum!*, *Unternehmertum!*, *Scharfmacher!*, *Anarchisten!, Nationales Gesindel!*, and others reflected just how much Germans were divided into distinct socio-economic

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[237] StaB Zeitungsbestand, *Rheinisch Westfälisches Tageblatt*, "Eine Polnische Dreistigkeit," 15 April 1903.
[238] Quoted in Johannes Altkemper, *Deutschtum und Polentum in politischkonfessioneller Bedeutung* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1910), 239.
[239] StaB A L-D 67, Report by Königsteele *Polizeiwachtmeister*, 14 July 1907.

groups. More precisely, the debates that were sparked by the Herne Strike once more confirmed the existence of Karl Rohe's distinct political "camps" or spheres.

For many German observers, the events in Herne during the summer of 1899 had strikingly little to do with the Poles, even despite their strong representation among the protesting workers. Post-strike investigations into the exact causes for the outbreak of violence pointed towards questionable conduct by the police authorities who, critics argued, were at least partially responsible for the more extreme violence.[240] Such criticism of the government was highly reflective of wider political trends throughout the empire after 1890: this was the process of "political mobilization," the democratization of the German body politic. As part of this development, argues historian Thomas Kühne, parties from across the political spectrum were "increasingly willing to challenge the … government."[241] Social democrats were particularly keen to use the events in Herne to go on the offensive against authorities. For instance, on 8 July 1899, the *Deutsche Berg- und Hüttenarbeiter Zeitung Bochum* (*Glückauf* for short) reported in vivid detail on the brutality employed by the police:

> "Wir wollen nur mitteilen, dass die Gendarmen über das Trottoir ritten und immer mit der Klinge loshieben auf alles, was im Wege stand … [Die Gendarmen] sollen sogar in die Fenster hineingehauen haben! Ein Kind soll das halbe Ohr verloren haben; noch am Donnerstag sahen wir das geronnene Arbeiterblut an den Mauern kleben."

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[240] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 76.

[241] The term "democratization" should be taken with slight caution, for this did not mean that the *Kaiserreich* was transforming into a liberal democracy. Still, despite the decidedly authoritarian government structure, more democratic features on various levels of government did emerge beginning in the 1890s (see chapter three for insights into the changing sociopolitical landscape of the 1890s). The paradox of a "democratic authoritarian state" has generated an extensive debate among historians of the Bismarck empire, who have struggled to specify just how "democratic" it really was. Matthew Jefferies offers a useful review of this literature in Jefferies, *Contesting the German Empire, 1871-1918*, 90-126; see also Kühne, "Political culture and democratization," 188.

Meanwhile, the newspaper pointed out the one-sidedness of the violence, noting that by some "miracle" almost none of the police officers had been injured. How could this be possible, given the ascribed ferocity of the strikers and the "apparent hail of rocks and fire"? More importantly, the author of the article hardly mentions the Poles, who instead appear more as "fellow workers" experiencing the full wrath of the "exploitationist establishment."[242] In other accusations against the authorities, the paper argued that not the *Knappschaftsstatut* but the general prohibition of public meetings was the true cause for unrest in Herne: the civic rights of all honest German workers had been violated. Once again, not the Poles were the subject of these complaints, but fellow Germans.

Finally, the *Glückauf*, as well as the *Volksblatt Bochum* warned their readers to refrain from participating in the strike, which would only "benefit the *Ausbeutertum*."[243] Many Social Democrats thus welcomed the opportunity to victimize the Poles, in the hope of gaining their support as potential voters and political allies. According to another worker newspaper, the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Arbeiterzeitung*,

> "… fällt die räudige kapitalistische Pressemeute über die Wehr- und Schutzlosen her. Was diese Presse in den letzten Tagen an Beschimpfungen der Polen als solche geleistet hat, ist geradezu unglaublich."[244]

The *Volksblatt Bochum* commented similarly on its opponents when noting

> "Die Katze [earlier: bürgerliche Presse] lässt das Mausen nicht und kaum sind die unüberlegten Krawalle polnischer Arbeiter in Herne ausgebrochen, als die Clique auch schon tätig ist, die Vorkommnisse zu fruktifizieren … Man ist zwar im

[242] IfZD, *Deutsche Berg- und Hüttenarbeiter Zeitung Bochum*, "Die Herner Krawalle und ihre wahren Ursachen," 8 July 1899.
[243] STAM Reg. Arbg. 14323, unknown newspaper, "Rückblick auf die Streikwoche in Herne," 3 July 1899.
[244] STAM Oberpr. Münster 2847a, Bl. 77, *Rheinisch-Westfälische Arbeiterzeitung*, "Niedriger Hängen!", 7 July 1899.

> Kampfe mit der Ausbeuterpresse etwas gewöhnt, aber diese unerhörte Frechheit übersteigt alles Maß."[245]

Emphasis should be placed on the newspaper's reference to its "battle" against its political adversaries, for in essence, this communicated the relatively low significance of the Poles and the importance of politics surrounding the Herne strike. Indeed, Social Democrats also attempted to *distance* themselves from the "unorganized" Polish workers when it seemed politically expedient to do so. The same newspaper (*Bochumer Volksblatt*) that had defended the Poles against the fabrications of the *Ausbeuterpresse* on June 30 had warned its readers on June 29 to keep away from the "chaotic" Polish-Catholic workers. According to the paper, such "impudent" Catholic folk was simply "not to be had for our organization."[246] Thus, just as with many national liberals (and those among the "supporters" for that matter), Social Democrats readily decried the Poles' Catholicism in situations when an alliance with Polish miners appeared to jeopardize their own movement.

Members of the Center party were similarly eager to utilize the Poles in a number of ways to assert their opposition to the government and to the interpretations of their political foes. The focus lay not on the Polish strikers – whose actions tended to be discarded as the result of "adolescent stupidity and rowdiness" and the effect of perhaps too much *Schnaps* – but on how the authorities had handled the riot.[247] These Germans criticized the vast conspiracy theories alleged by more nationalist newspapers and government officials, who attributed the violence to "outside agitators" from among the

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[245] StaB Zeitungsbestand, *Volksblatt Bochum*, "Die Scharfmacher an der Arbeit," 30 June 1899.
[246] StaB Zeitungsbestand, *Volksblatt Bochum,* "An die Bergleute!", 29 June 1899.
[247] STAM Reg. Arbg. 14323, *Westfälische Volkszeitung Bochum*, 4 July 1899.

Catholic community, the social democratic movement, and of course, Polish nationalists.[248]

It was precisely due to outside threats such as the "Polish Question" (embodied by the Herne strike) that we see a profound politicization of Ruhr Germans after 1900. The Herne crisis helps us understand what one contemporary Polish observer meant when he remarked on the German people:

> "Ihr habt kein individuelles Selbstbewußtsein, ihr habt nur Kasten- oder Standesbewußtsein. Wäret ihr keine Kleinstädternation, es gäbe gar keine Polenfrage."[249]

Important here is the term *Kleinstädternation* (literally, "small-town nation"), which referred first and foremost to Germans' adherence to their specific social, economic, and confessional milieus. The word summed up brilliantly the unusually deep divisions that were emerging between Germans in the Ruhrgebiet, as opposing "camps" identified and utilized the "Polish Question" as a political device. Meanwhile, such a division was occurring within an increasingly *cohesive* group of Germans with regard to German nationalism, for the author's use of *Kleinstädternation* also denoted the Germans' growing ethnic chauvinism. The less Germans could agree on most political issues, the more united they became with regard to the "Polish Question."[250]

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[248] STAM Oberpr. Münster 1205.9, Bl. 378, *Verein für die bergbaulichen Interessen im Oberbergamtsbezirk Dortmund, Essen a. d. Ruhr*, "Bericht über die Lage der niederrheinisch-westfälischen Steinkohlen-Industrie während der Zeit vom 1. Oktober 1898 bis 1. Oktober 1899"; Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*, 113-117.

[249] As quoted in Hugo Ganz, *Die Preußische Polenpolitik*, 54.

[250] Interestingly, historians have described the years between 1907-1909 as a turning point in Imperial German popular politics as well. During this period, many extra-governmental opposition groups became "reabsorbed into the mainstream political culture" through a process of "political mobilization." As a result of better representation through political parties and the loss of the "outsider" status, opposition to governmental activities declined markedly. This general decline in government opposition coincided with the diminishing resistance among Germans to harsh Germanizing measures. Brett Fairbairn, "Political Mobilization" in *Imperial Germany: A Historiographical Companion*, ed. Roger Chickering (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1996), 335.

Events such as the Herne strike thus proved crucial in moderating the opposition to an active, aggressive policy of Germanization, inching those in the category "critics" ever closer to the "supporters."[251] However, the breakdown of opposition to and concomitant rise in enthusiasm for Germanization was also catalyzed by yet another underlying "trait" of Ruhr Germans: *Rechtspositivismus* (legal positivism).

The principle of legal positivism has been the subject of German historiography for years. Scholars have defined legal positivism in a multitude of ways; in the German case the principle has served primarily as the backbone of an apologetic literature during the 1950s and 1960s. In 1958, H.L.A. Hart composed a famous essay, in which he described legal positivism as the distinction between law and morality and the idea that "correct legal decisions can be deducted by logical means from predetermined legal rules without reference to social aims, policies, [or] moral standards."[252] While legal positivism has been used predominantly in studies examining justice systems, in many ways it was an attitude that could also be found among the general populace of the Ruhrgebiet. That is, those who opposed the activities of the authorities did so primarily because they understood them as an infringement upon the natural rights of (ethnically Polish) citizens. The period after 1900 in the Ruhrgebiet was indicative of just how important it was to many local Germans to maintain law and order, and conversely, how difficult it remained for nationalists to carry out an agenda that lacked proper legal sanctioning.

The decisions by the *Oberverwaltungsgericht* (OVG) from 26 September 1876 and 5 October 1897 (as discussed in the previous chapter) posed an immense obstacle to devoted Germanization enthusiasts, for both rulings essentially pronounced illegal the

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[251] See my categorization of Ruhr Germans in chapter four.
[252] As cited by Hett, *Death in the Tiergarten*, 4; see H. L. A. Hart, "Positivism and the Separation of Law and Morals," *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 71, No. 4 (1958), 593-629.

break-up of public meetings in a foreign language.[253] Such jurisdiction was seen as highly detrimental to the German national cause, and in November 1901, deputy Dr. la Roche of Baukau lamented the "growing self-consciousness of Poles in recent years" and described the OVG's rulings as a "formidable weapon … that has helped advance the Polish national cause."[254] La Roche's warnings found significant support among his superiors, particularly by the *Landrat* in Bochum and the *Regierungspräsident* of the district of Arnsberg. For the next months, these officials pursued a policy of purposefully ignoring the legal limitations imposed by the OVG in order to provoke another case on the issue, "with the hope that the court would depart from its previous rulings." In awaiting a new decision, all complaints about the actions of the authorities during the strike were to be rejected.[255] However, such plans met with resentment among some Germans, as one citizen wrote in a letter to the editor of the *Dortmunder Tageblatt*,

> "Die Polizeiverwaltungen einzelner kleinerer Orte untersagen den Gebrauch des Polnischen, angeblich in der freundlichen Absicht, dem Oberverwaltungsgericht Gelegenheit zu einer Änderung seines Erkenntnisses zu geben. Um dies zu unterstützen, sollen die Polen überall auf ihr Recht verzichten?"[256]

Similarly, the *Westfälische Volkszeitung* in Bochum disapprovingly reported on another similar occurance in 1903,

> "Man fragt sich bei diesen Ausführungen doch erstaunt, wozu wir denn eigentlich ein Oberverwaltungsgericht haben, wenn trotzdem die unteren Verwaltungsbehörden – also auch jeder Schutzmann – nach ihrer Rechtsauffassung handeln können."[257]

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[253] Ruling quoted in a letter by the Minister of the Interior in STAM Oberpr. Münster 3833, Bl. 1-4, 10 July 1905; see also Wichardt, *Die Rechtsprechung des königlich preußischen Oberverwaltungsgerichts,* 50-51.
[254] StaB LA 1310, Bl. 3-5, Baukau *Amtmann* Dr. la Roche to *Landrat* Bochum, 12 November 1901.
[255] StaB A W 107, *Landrat* Bochum to *Amtmänner* of the district, 3 January 1902; StaB A L 356, *Landrat* Bochum to Herne mayor and *Amtmänner* of the district, 7 October 1903.
[256] IfZD, *Dortmunder Tageblatt*, Letter to the editor, 18 March 1902.
[257] StaB LA 1312, Bl. 85, *Westfälische Volkszeitung*, "Landrat und Minister," 2 February 1903.

Clearly, the debate that came to evolve around the dissolving of public meetings assumed a strong legal connotation. In fact, even ethno-cultural nationalists such as Dr. la Roche sought to justify their actions primarily through the rhetoric of legalism. These officials understood well that legal arguments proved far more convincing to many Germans than any ethnic German slur, which ran the risk of being discarded as "extremist." Thus, la Roche relied heavily on the writings of contemporary constitutional jurists such as Philipp Zorn and Hans Paalzow, who vehemently argued that forcing the German language on all subjects of the empire did not violate the rule of law.[258] In his controversial work from 1903 entitled *Die Deutsche Staatssprache* ("The German State Language"), Zorn concluded that the lack of specificity concerning the official language in the Prussian constitution pointed towards the irrefutably fact that German was the only rightful language of the empire:

> "Das Schweigen der beiden Verfassungsurkunden über die Staatssprache beruht auf der Voraussetzung, daß im preußischen und deutschen Staate die *deutsche Sprache allein die Staatssprache ist*. Dieser Satz wurde also so selbstverständlich betrachtet, daß Niemand für nöthig fand, ihn in der Verfassungsurkunde auszusprechen."[259]

Zorn's statements were stretching the constitutional provisions with regard to language substantially. Indeed, his line of reasoning could be used to deduce fairly anything from the constitution (even more mind-boggling was the fact that Zorn dismissed the 1897 ruling by the OVG for "lacking sufficient grounds").[260] As a

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[258] Philipp Zorn, *Die Deutsche Staatssprache: Zwei Abhandlungen* (Berlin: Heymann, 1903); Hans Paalzow, *Zur Polenfrage: der Gebrauch der polnischen Sprache in politischen Versammlungen: die polnischen Postadressen: zwei Rechtsgutachten* (Berlin: Liebmann, 1902).

[259] Emphasis by Zorn; see Zorn, *Die Deutsche Staatssprache,* 4-6.

[260] Zorn's arguments were not completely unfounded, for the constitution did provide for German to be the official language of government. His interpretations were a gross overstatement of this provision. They also highlight the fact that the debate over *Staat* and *Volksstamm*, a dilemma that troubled many Germans since the earlier part of the century, was still being carried on. People like Zorn thought the two to be synonymous whereas others believed in a more neutral definition of the *Staat*. For an examination of this

professor of constitutional law, however, Zorn wielded tremendous clout with German nationalists who were in desperate need of legal justification. Although among other contemporary scholars Zorn's writings (and to a lesser extent, Paalzow's) found limited support, they were readily used as hard evidence by legally untrained men like Baukau official la Roche. In his correspondences with superiors, in which he regularly complained about the "disappointing legal environment," the deputy readily cited Zorn's work, noting that he "had subscribed to the interpretation of Dr. Prof. Zorn, by which my measures against [the Poles] seem appropriate."[261] Nationalist organizations, such as the *H.K.T.-Verein* employed a similar line of reasoning: in its periodical report on the "Polish Question" for instance, the organization attempted to de-legitimize the "soft" principle of national toleration put forth by King Frederick William III at the Congress of Vienna in 1815.[262] According to the Hakatists, such proclamations technically had become void with the creation of the empire in 1871 and were "superceded" by other Prussian laws. These arguments, however, always relied on the imaginative interpretations of Philipp Zorn.

By 1903, the Ruhrgebiet authorities had succeeded in prompting the OVG to reconsider its 1897 decision. To their great disappointment, however, the court once again rebuked their longings and issued a ruling that closely mirrored its earlier position.[263] Still, efforts were renewed again over the next few years, as more and more local officials began to demand better legal means to make possible a "proper

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debate in its earlier stages (during the *Vormärz*), see Vick, *Defining Germany*, 110-138; Zorn, *Die Deutsche Staatssprache,* 4-6.

[261] StaB LA 1310, Bl. 3-5, Baukau *Amtmann* Dr. la Roche to *Landrat* Bochum, 12 November 1901.

[262] "Der Polenspiegel" Page xiv-xv

[263] OVG ruling #43, 20. März 1903, cited in Wichardt, *Die Rechtsprechung des Königlich Preußischen Oberverwaltungsgerichts*, 52.

surveillance" of the Polish community. By 1905, the Prussian ministry of the interior was in regular correspondence with the Ruhrgebiet's leading officials about a draft bill that would allow authorities to force the use of German in all public events and gatherings. The enthusiasm with which such an initiative was received can be seen in the ample material now held at the state archive in Münster. The files are replete with enthusiastic edits, suggestions, and additions to the proposal by officials in the Ruhrgebiet and thus are witness to the rising support of anti-Polish policy among local officials.[264] Although the *Reichstag* never passed the bill itself, such efforts nonetheless testified to the importance of formally legalizing the repressive measures against the Polish community. Legal support remained central to winning over those Germans who remained opposed to a tough policy of Germanization.

On 19 April 1908 the *Reichstag* passed the *Reichsvereinsgesetz*, a law which did not settle the issue of language in the empire completely, but which still included many of the provisions that authorities had sought after. Opposed by Polish representatives Radziwill and Chozanowski in the *Reichstag* as an "unacceptable [measure] designed solely to rob Polish citizens of their mother tongue," the law required all public meetings, gatherings, and events to be conducted in German.[265] In practice, the ambiguity surrounding the policy of Germanization had been removed: whereas around 1900, it still had been possible to tone down aggressive Germanization – even to reject it as the OVG had done in 1903 – the overwhelmingly nationally-oriented authorities had finally

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[264] STAM Oberpr. Münster 3833, Bl. 1-5, 14-15, 16-21, Correspondence between Minister of the Interior, *Oberpräsident* in Münster, *Regierungspräsident* Arnsberg, *Regierungspräsident* Münster, 10 July 1905, 8 August 1905, 8 October 1905; StaB LA 1312, Bl. 121, *Polizeiverwaltung* to *Landrat* Bochum, 17 August 1905.

[265] In particular, §12 and §3 were key to issues surrounding the use of German in public meetings. See Wichardt, *Die Rechtsprechung des Königlich Preußischen Oberverwaltungsgerichts*, 56-57; Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*, 142.

received the necessary validation to continue and expand their activities. And indeed, they did: a year later in 1909, an official "Zentralstelle für Überwachung der Polenbewegung im Rheinisch-Westfälischen Ruhrgebiet," for short *Überwachungsstelle* (surveillance agency), was established in Bochum.[266] For officials like deputy Dr. la Roche or Dortmund police commissioner Goehrke, the *Überwachungsstelle* was the realization of a long held vision, a central location that gathered statistics with regard to the "entire living- and working space of the Polish community … and in particular its press, literature, organizations, celebrations, and gatherings."[267] According to Christoph Kleßmann, the agency thus formed the "end piece to an extended period of German-national language and nationality politics in the Ruhrgebiet."[268]

In many ways, the 1908 law sealed the position of the Poles as second-class citizens. Deprived of their right to exercise their language and culture freely, they no longer enjoyed the sympathies of those Germans who had been adamant about maintaining the civil rights of all German citizens. In essence, the approach to state-building had now fully retreated from the Prussian model earlier in the century. It had changed from "making the state fit the Germans" to "making Germans fit the state."[269] Hence, the *Reichsvereinsgesetz* of 1908 marked a fundamental step towards the nationalization of the state because it effectively excluded an ethnically non-German minority from enjoying full membership in the state through the right to practice its mother tongue and cultural heritage. German citizenship transformed from being a means of structurally integrating a diverse group of people to defining an ethnically exclusive

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[266] Read "Central Office for Surveillance of the Polish Movement in the Rhenish-Westphalian Industry District." The files produced by this agency today lie in archives in Berlin.
[267] Peters-Schildgen, *"Schmelztiegel" Ruhrgebiet*, 143.
[268] Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet*, 90.
[269] Barbieri, *Ethics of Citizenship*, 20-21.

group, a process that was aided in the Ruhrgebiet by an underlying legal positivist attitude.

The fact that the Polish community was increasingly excluded from the German "club"[270] is strongly evidenced by the way contemporaries composed their histories of the Ruhrgebiet. In the history books and *Heimat* histories written at the time, the Polish community was almost fully omitted and ignored. Thus when Paul Küppers of Bochum composed a nostalgic multivolume history of his hometown, he mentioned the Polish migrants merely in passing:

> "Die Industriestadt hatte immer mehr Arbeitskräfte nötig und es fand ein fortwährendes Zuwandern aus dem Lande der Stadt, aus den verschiedensten Landesteilen in den Industriebezirk statt. Aus Ost- und Westpreussen und Posen nach der Abstammung Polen und Masuren; aber auch Mitteldeutschland, Thüringen und das Hessenland, der Hunsrück und die Eifel und die Schwesterprovinz überhaupt geben ihren Überschuss an arbeitswilligen und arbeitsfrohen Elementen an Westfalen ab."[271]

A few lines later, the Polish community receives another one-sentence mention, which abruptly concludes its role in Bochum's history for the remainder of its 25 volumes, each boasting several hundred pages. By comparison, famous German industrialists such as Louis Baare, who owned and operated the Bochum steel industry, were given entire chapters because "one could not imagine Bochum during the second half of the previous century without Louis Baare."[272] The author could not have been speaking more accurately about the Polish migrants in the city of Bochum during the same time period.

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[270] For a discussion of the German *club* in a national sense, see Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 40-43.
[271] StaB NAP 60, *Nachlass Dr. Paul Küppers*, Volume 1 (1890-1910), 155.
[272] StaB NAP 60, *Nachlass Dr. Paul Küppers*, Volume 1 (1890-1910), 146-149.

While Küppers was a professed nationalist (he served as editor of Bochum's national liberal daily, the *Märkischer Sprecher*) and thus could have been expected to write a relatively one-sided narrative, his case was not the exception but the rule in local historiography.[273] Mayor Herrmann Schaefer, for instance, whom we encountered as taking a more hesitant stance towards Germanization, similarly ignored the Polish community and its merits in his "Festschrift zur Einweihung des neuen Rathauses zu Herne" (1912). Although Schaefer devoted more than just a few sentences to the Polish migrants, he framed their presence in a mostly negative light and neglected to discuss the economic significance and fortune that resulted from migration.[274] This striking absence of the Poles in German historiography has recently been examined by historian Wulf Schade, in an essay entitled "Verkrüppelte Identität" (Crippled Identity). In his review of the literature, contemporary and modern, Schade described his findings as "erschreckend" (alarming) at best: "With the exception of a very few, depictions of the [Polish immigration] tended to be shaped by omits or superficialities, and often negative stereotypes."[275] Schade hoped to raise awareness of this one-sided picture, urging historians to reconsider the histories of the Ruhr. John Kulczycki voiced similar concerns, noting "The responsibility for […] the total ignorance of the significant participation in the history of modern Germany of people they would label as 'foreigners' lies in part with historians."[276]

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[273] Kürschner, *Handbuch der Presse für Schriftsteller, Redaktionen, Verleger*, 691.
[274] Bibliothek des Ruhrgebiets, *Festschrift zur Einweihung des neuen Rathauses zu Herne* (1912), 16-17.
[275] Schade, "Verkrüppelte Identität: Polnische und masurische Zuwanderung in der Bochumer Geschichtsschreibung," 50-51.
[276] Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*, 4.

Conclusions

The findings presented in this study merely scratch the surface of what historians can learn from localities that had the character of *both* a German heartland and an ethnic borderland. This feature is important, for it differentiates this study from ones like Pieter Judson's examination of the Habsburg "language frontiers," which had for centuries been borderlands, with ethnic Germans living in more or less peaceful coexistence with various other ethnic groups.[277] Ruhr Germans, by contrast, only experienced such biculturalism with the advent of the German empire. This somewhat ambiguous situation is extremely useful for answering important questions regarding German national identity. For rapid industrialization caused socioeconomic havoc and threatened the very existence of a traditional "Ruhr-identity," forcing locals to confront the German nation and ponder its definition. The heavy influx of "non-German Germans" from the eastern territories begged the question of what it really meant to be a German citizen, and, mixed with competing definitions of "Germanness" from extreme nationalists like the *H.K.T.-Verein* or the *Alldeutscher Verband* ensured an interesting debate among locals on the issue. This was hardly the case in other, more stable regions and states of the empire, such as Württemberg, Bavaria, the Pfalz, or Saxony.

Above all, this study shows that scholars must depart from the assumption that an ethnic purist kind of German nationalism was readily accepted among all Germans. Indeed, Brian Vick once suggested that the concept of a "necessarily 'othered' category of [German] national identity" was anything but widespread during the earlier part of the nineteenth century and that instead, there existed an "assimilationist conception" of

[277] Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*.

German national identity that combined a sense of cultural chauvinism with "respectful assimilation."[278] This kind of attitude towards nationalism was still held by many Germans in the Ruhrgebiet in the late nineteenth century, especially by the "critics" who tended to oppose an aggressive kind of Germanization because they saw it as undermining an on-going process of assimilation. Only about a decade into the twentieth century (particularly after 1908), such opposition had dissipated in favor of a more exclusive, in Vick's words, "purist kind" of German national identity. But precisely when and why did this tranformation of identity occur?[279]

The Ruhrgebiet is a promising case for examining such a question. As a result of its unique amalgam of heartland and borderland characteristics, there was a brief period between 1890 and 1908 during which it was unclear how locals would stand on "purist" kinds of German nationalism – providing us with answers to the "when." The "why" requires a more nuanced investigation, and the findings presented here point to a number of possible causal explanations. For one, historians have long pointed to heavily industrializing regions as useful places to study the transformation of German nationalism because the usually large number of foreign workers in such regions could make the "xenophobic reorientation of national identity more explicable."[280] Although xenophobia certainly contributed to generating a more exclusive definition of German identity among Ruhr Germans, it was neither the only, nor the central catalyst.[281] As could be seen in this study, the politicization of the German body politic (accentuated by

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[278] Vick, "The Origins of the German Volk," 246.
[279] A growing literature has observed this trend towards a more ethnically defined form of German nationalism throughout the wider German empire in the late nineteenth century. Still, these scholars have struggled to explain precisely why, how fast, and to what an extent such a transformation occurred. See Vick, "The Origins of the German Volk," 248-252; Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*; Barbieri, *Ethics of Citizenship*.
[280] Ibid.
[281] Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement*.

the “Polish Question”) contributed tremendously to the abandonment of opposition to Germanization because it became more and more politically expedient to do so after 1900. Similarly, with the legal sanctioning of repressive Germanization policy in 1908, it appeared no longer necessary to oppose it as an unlawful measure. In many ways, this highlighted the fact that an underlying, almost sub-conscious agreement with an ethnically exclusive form of German citizenship had come into existence. Such findings rejuvenate some of the implications of the infamous *Sonderweg* thesis – at least with regard to national identity. Characteristics such as the intense legal positivism and the political opportunitism in the Ruhrgebiet do offer evidence of at least some divergence from the “western” equivalent in France, as well as continuity between the nineteenth century and National Socialism.

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