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The Latecomers: Ethnic German Resettlers and Their Integration into West Germany, 1970-1990

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An abstract of

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Abstract

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By Stefanie Marie Woodard

This project examines the enduring presence of ethnic German identity in Silesia, a western Polish borderland, and how this identity evolved through contact with and migration to West Germany. Although scholars have frequently described Silesians as nationally indifferent or ethnically ambiguous during the first half of the twentieth century, the Cold War thrust them into the center of a clash over ethnicity and memory. Whereas the Polish government downplayed or denied the Silesians' German heritage, West German authorities cast these borderlanders as the last victims of World War II and as "sufferers for Germanness." Not simply the passive subjects of Cold War discourse, Silesians also catapulted themselves into the ethnicity debate. When emigration became possible in the 1970s and 1980s, many Silesians leveraged any ties to Germany—even involvement with Nazism—to secure exit visas. Drawing on diaspora studies and migration scholarship, my dissertation treats events on both sides of the border as a continuous process of ethnic-identity formation to answer this question: how did resettlers challenge and expand the perceived boundaries of the nation in West Germany and in Poland? Through interviews and extensive archival research in German and Polish archives, I argue that the resettlers' borderland context enabled them to invoke their German ethnicity to receive privileged-immigrant status in West Germany or, later, to lobby for cultural rights in Poland. This dissertation thus makes three core interventions. First, it reveals the legacy of national indifference and enduring malleability of ethnic identity in the latter half of the twentieth century. Secondly, this project establishes that, for resettlers from Poland, "Germanness" was not simply an identity to be experienced but also a status to be claimed. Thirdly, this study demonstrates that, by declaring their Germanness in significant numbers, Silesian emigrants questioned and ultimately undermined the Polish state's authority over them. In sum, by interpreting this migration as embedded in its Cold War context, this dissertation reveals how an ethnically-coded conflict over victimhood and memory shaped not only the lives of individual émigrés from Silesia, but also West German-Polish relations as a whole.

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Soli Deo Gloria.

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

AA	Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Office)
AHDPZ	Archiv des Hauses Deutsch-Polnischen Zusammenarbeit (Archive of the House of German-Polish Cooperation)
AIPN	Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej (Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance)
AIPN Ka	Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance, Katowice
AIPN Wr	Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław
AIPN BU	Biuro Udostępniania (Bureau of Provision), Warsaw
AMSZ	Archiv Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych (Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
APK	Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach (State Archives in Katowice)
APO	Archiwum Państwowe w Opolu (State Archives in Opole)
AWR	Association for the Study of the World Refugee Problem
BMI	Bundesministerium des Innern (Federal Ministry of the Interior)
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union in Germany)
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (Christian Social Union in Bavaria)
DM	Deutschmark
DPA	Deutsche Presse-Agentur (German Press Agency)
DRK	Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (German Red Cross)
DVL	Deutsche Volksliste (German Ethnicity List)
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany; West Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic; East Germany
IPN	Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (Institute of National Remembrance)
KC	Komitet Centralny (Central Committee)
KW	Komitet Wojewódzki (Provincial Committee)
MSW	Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych (Ministry of Internal Affairs)
MSZ	Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
PA AV	Politisches Archiv Auslandsvertretungen
PRL	Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa (Polish People's Republic; also abbreviated PPR)

PWRN	Prezydium Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej (Provincial Presidium of the National Council)
PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Roboticzna (Polish United Workers' Party)
RFN	Republika Federalna Niemiec (Federal Republic of Germany or West Germany; also abbreviated NRF)
SB	Służby Bezpieczeństwa (Security Service; Polish Secret Police)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
UB	Urząd Bezpieczeństwa (Office of Security)
UW	Urząd Wojewódzki (Provincial Office)

Introduction

On December 7, 1970, West German Chancellor Willy Brandt and Józef Cyrankiewicz, the Polish Prime Minister, met at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw. Here the two leaders signed the Treaty of Warsaw and thereby established diplomatic relations between the two countries—relations which had not existed since the end of World War II. Although the West German parliament did not ratify the document until May 1972, and even then, only by a narrow margin of 250 to 246, the Treaty was eventually recognized as a diplomatic victory and a crucial starting point for Brandt's Eastern Politics (*Ostpolitik*).[1] Although the Treaty itself—and Brandt's momentous "drop to his knees" (*Kniefall*) at the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial during his visit—stole the media spotlight in West Germany, a little-remembered accompanying document arguably played an even greater role in shaping bilateral relations over the next twenty years.[2] In the "Information of the People's Republic of Poland" (hereafter "The Information"), submitted alongside the Warsaw Treaty, the Polish government agreed to allow people of "indisputable German ethnicity" to emigrate to West Germany. Between 1970 and Poland's first entirely free elections in 1990, approximately 835,000 people left for West Germany.[3] These migrants, called resettlers or *Aussiedler*, are the focal point of this dissertation.

During these two decades, resettler migration was framed within an ethnically-defined sense of the nation on the one hand and by a polarized, Cold War conception of the world on the

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[1] Gottfried Niedhart, "Ostpolitik: Phases, Short-Term Objectives, and Grand Design," *GHI Bulletin Supplement* 1 (2003): 118–36.

[2] The event, which is usually referenced by its German name "*der Warschauer Kniefall*," polarized West German public opinion. A poll by the news magazine *Der Spiegel* showed that 41% of respondents approved Brandt's kneeling as "appropriate" while 48% found it unnecessary and "excessive." See Alexander Behrens, "'Durfte Brandt knien?' –Der Kniefall und der deutsch-polnische Vertrag," *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung OnlineAkademie* (January 2011): 9. Christoph Schneider has devoted an entire monograph to analyzing the *Kniefall*'s significance in German memory and German-Polish relations. See Christoph Schneider, *Der Warschauer Kniefall: Ritual, Ereignis und Erzählung* (Konstanz: UVK, 2006).

[3] Dariusz Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?: migracje z Polski 1949-1989* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2010), 480.

other. Repeated by policymakers, social workers, journalists, and the resettlers themselves, the migration narrative from the West German perspective followed a predictable pattern. Resettlers were innocent Germans who, for various reasons, had not managed to leave Poland after the war. The postwar expulsions (1945-1949) and Red Cross emigration (1955-1959) had then divided families across the border. Thanks to the Warsaw Treaty, resettlers could finally "return home" to "live as Germans among Germans." The suffering they experienced under communism and the discrimination they faced as Germans among Poles entitled the resettlers to special, even privileged treatment in West Germany. As "late expellees" or the "war's final victims," the *Aussiedler* were depicted as worthy immigrants, and it was concluded that virtually no expense should be spared in easing their transition and integration into West Germany's free society.

This narrative, though specific to resettlers in the 1970s and 1980s, is not altogether new. States have attached ideas to migrants for millennia. Nor is the resettler migration itself wholly exceptional. Although this framework casts the resettlers as unique within West Germany's Cold War migration history, in many ways their story embodies a classic (return) migration experience. The migrants left their homes and many belongings behind. Though they framed their decisions to depart in ethnic terms, material factors and the search for a better life remained the underlying motivation for most people. Adjusting to their new surroundings proved difficult for many resettlers, who frequently experienced culture shock, loneliness, and homesickness. Some newcomers struggled so intensely that they opted to return to Poland, having determined it to be their true home. As is common in cases of large-scale migration, resettlers relocated in predictable geographical patterns of chain migration. Shared bonds with family and friends encouraged those who initially stayed behind eventually to follow suit. Certain West German cities, particularly in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), became home to disproportionately large

resettler communities as a result. While these highly concentrated settlements could provide networks and support for resettlers during their initial adjustment, they often isolated the newcomers in the long run and consequently hindered their integration.

Chain migration, transnational networks, ethnic enclaves, diasporic return migration—none of these concepts is exclusive to the Polish resettler case. However, despite sharing so many features with other instances of migration, the resettlers' history does raise some exceptional questions. Why, for instance, did the Polish state consider the question of ethnic Germans within its state territory as so vital as to append a document about their emigration to the Warsaw Treaty? Why in 1975 and possibly again in 1980 did the West German government agree to pay Poland exorbitant sums of money to secure their emigration? Moreover, what prompted the West German state to spend millions of Deutschmark on resettler language, housing, and employment programs on the heels of economic downturn and directly after the 1973 cessation of guest-worker recruitment (*Anwerbestopp*), which cited financial burdens in encouraging foreign guest workers and their families to leave the country?[4] Finally, what does the influx of almost one million "ethnic German resettlers," most of whom spoke no German, reveal about the relationship between ethnicity, identity, citizenship, language, and belonging? While keeping these issues at the fore, this project's investigation centers on one core question: How did resettlers challenge and expand perceived boundaries of the nation in West Germany and Poland? The next section will tease out this topic by examining many resettlers' most differentiating feature, namely their origin in the Upper Silesian borderland.

[4] For a thorough analysis of policies and attitudes toward Turkish guest workers in West Germany, see Lauren K. Stokes, "Fear of the Family: Migration and Integration in West Germany, 1955-2000" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2016).

Upper Silesia and Germans: A Brief History

German presence in East Central Europe has a long history. As early as the Middle Ages, German-speaking coal miners began settling in Silesia and the Carpathian Mountains. Around the early thirteenth century, knights from the German Teutonic Order acquired territory in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, as well as East and West Prussia. Due to this expansion, German colonists established 120 towns in Silesia, forty-three in Pomerania, and another fifty-five in East Prussia by the early fifteenth century.[5] A second wave of migration began after the failed Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683, when Habsburg Emperors encouraged German settlements in Croatia, Northern Bosnia, Hungary, and parts of Romania and Serbia. Eastward migration continued under Maria Theresa and Joseph II in the mid- to late eighteenth century. Beginning in 1763, Catherine the Great sponsored a third wave of migration by offering tax incentives for German farmers to settle in Crimea and Ukraine. Germans continued moving eastward throughout the nineteenth century, so that by 1897 at least 1.79 million Germans lived in Russia.[6]

German presence east of the Oder and Neisse rivers took on new relevance with the nineteenth-century rise of nationalism. Influenced by Romantics like Herder, Humboldt, and Fichte, nationalists in East Central Europe came to see language as "the *most* important distinguishing characteristic of nationhood—indeed, its very soul."[7] According to this logic, "a

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[5] Connor, *Refugees and Expellees in Post-War Germany*; Stefan Wolff, "Introduction: From Colonists to Emigrants: Explaining the 'Return-Migration' of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe," in *Coming Home to Germany?: The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic*, ed. David Rock and Stefan Wolff (New York: Berghahn, 2002), 5; Marion Frantzioch, *Die Vertriebenen: Hemmnisse, Antriebskräfte und Wege ihrer Integration in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: mit einer kommentierten Bibliographie* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1987), 25.

[6] Connor, *Refugees and Expellees in Post-War Germany*, 9; Hans W. Schoenberg, *Germans from the East: a Study of Their Migration, Resettlement and Subsequent Group History since 1945*, (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971), 12; Walter Ziegler and Sabine Rehm, *Die Vertriebenen vor der Vertreibung: die Heimatländer der deutschen Vertriebenen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Strukturen, Entwicklungen, Erfahrung* (München: Iudicium, 1999), 710–11, 1000–1001.

[7] Stephen May, *Language and Minority Rights: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 61.

group speaking the same language is known as a nation, and a nation ought to constitute a state."[8] As scholars have shown, this seemingly straightforward relationship between language and nationhood proved complicated in the Central European borderlands, where populations spoke German, Czech, or Polish equally well.[9] Many of them even preferred the Silesian dialect, also known as *Wasserpolnisch*, a linguistic mix of German and Polish.[10] Furthermore, these bilingual residents identified more closely with their city or region than with their supposed "nation." Much to the frustration of the nationalist activists who flooded into the borderlands during the late nineteenth century to claim these liminal regions for the nation, these bilingual autochthons remained "nationally indifferent."[11]

Local apathy failed to dissuade eager German nationalists, who ramped up their borderland nationalization efforts at the turn of the nineteenth century. Inspired by Social Darwinian racial thought, German nationalist intellectuals like geographer Friedrich Ratzel began arguing for more suitable *Lebensraum* (living space) for the German *Volk* in Eastern Europe. Lobby groups like the H-K-T became increasingly aggressive in their anti-Polish and pro-German borderland campaigns, boycotting Polish businesses, offering tours of the border

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[8] Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993), 68. Quoted in May, *Language and Minority Rights*, 61.

[9] Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Nancy M. Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints: How the Bohemian Lands Became Czech* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

[10] For analyses of the Silesian dialect and its role in identity-construction historically and today, see Philipp Ther, "Caught in Between: Border Regions in Modern Europe," in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 485–502; Marius Otto, *Zwischen lokaler Integration und regionaler Zugehörigkeit: transnationale Sozialräume oberschlesienstämmiger Aussiedler in Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), 97–100; Justyna Kijonka, *Tożsamość współczesnych Górnoślązaków studium socjologiczne* (Katowice: Stowarzyszenie Thesaurus Silesiae - Skarb Śląski, 2016), 246–55.

[11] For insightful explanation of "national indifference" and its scholarly utility, particularly in studying Central Europe, see Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (April 1, 2010): 93–119.

region, and distributing maps that portended a Slavic demographic threat.[12] Despite their clamor, these expansionist *völkisch* (racial, folkish) groups remained on the cultural periphery until after World War I.

The Treaty of Versailles marked a turning point in Germany's relationship with Eastern Europe. Per the postwar settlement, Germany ceded parts of West Prussia, Silesia, Posen–along with seven million German inhabitants—to Poland and Czechoslovakia.[13] Although many *Volksdeutsche* responded by moving to Germany, a significant percentage stayed behind. The interwar experiences of these German populations varied greatly by location and background. For those formerly under Russian rule, the new Polish state represented a welcome change. Long accustomed to oppression, these Germans hoped the Polish government would offer them more freedom and rights. For Germans from the Habsburg territories in southern Poland, the governmental change mattered little; Polish elites had ruled them for many years. For Germans in western Poland, however, the border revisions were a rude shock. Accustomed to life as the ethnic majority in the German Empire (*Kaiserreich*), these Germans suddenly found themselves as ethnic minorities under the jurisdiction of the Polish state.[14]

Peace agreements after World War I escalated the nationalist contest for Upper Silesia. For the first time since its third partition in 1795, Poland existed again as a state. Yet where its western boundary should lie was not self-evident, especially in Upper Silesia. Based on the Wilsonian ideal of self-determination, residents should decide for themselves to which state they desired to belong. On March 20, 1921, Upper Silesians cast their votes with 40.6% (483,514

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[12] Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 20–23.
[13] Ian Connor states that seven million Germans were left outside of Germany's borders due to the Versailles settlement. Connor, *Refugees and Expellees in Post-War Germany*, 10. For an in-depth analysis of the Silesian plebiscite and its implications for German and Polish "national indifference," see Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*, 260–66; Annemarie Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914-1922* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010), 98–101.
[14] Winson Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3–4.

votes) going to Poland and 50.9% (717,122 votes) in favor of Germany. However, Germany's victory proved short-lived; dissatisfied Poles called for an armed uprising which escalated into a series of violent conflicts lasting until that July. The League of Nations responded by essentially reversing the original plebiscite results: Germany retained parts of Upper Silesia, including Gleiwitz/Gliwice, while the most economically valuable portions of the industrial district were given to Poland. Recognizing further that national minorities still existed in the new countries, the League also required the German and Polish governments to uphold a series of protections and rights for minorities in their respective countries.[15]

This "accidental diaspora" of Germans in the East played a critical role in territorial expansion before and during World War II.[16] Not only was "Upper Silesia […] the only region where the prescription of a plebiscite to resolve the territorial question was followed by an open war," but the contested division of the region planted seeds for future nationalist conflicts.[17] As Rogers Brubaker explains, the "sudden, traumatic movement of borders across people" caused diasporas to "crystallize." These diasporas contributed to what Brubaker calls "homeland nationalisms," as Germans stranded across the border provided the political and ideological basis for revisionist territorial claims.[18] After taking power in 1933, the National Socialists capitalized on these irredentist ideas. Expanding on principles from Darwinian racial science, Nazi thinkers used their supposedly abandoned co-nationals to justify the colonization and "Germanization" of

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[15] Mark Mazower, "Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe," in *Global Minority Rights*, ed. Joshua Castellino (London: Routledge, 2011), 47–63.

[16] Writing against the previous historiographical assumption that Germans in interwar Poland formed a cohesive group, Winson Chu has convincingly demonstrated major divisions among them. Not only were the Germans divided by geography, but infighting among *völkisch* nationalist groups characterized German minority politics. See Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland*. The term "accidental diaspora" comes from Rogers Brubaker's article "Accidental Diasporas and External 'Homelands' in Central and Eastern Europe: Past and Present," *Institute for Advanced Studies* 71 (2000).

[17] Peter Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory: A German-Polish Conflict over Land and Culture, 1919-89* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 9.

[18] Brubaker, "Accidental Diasporas and External 'Homelands' in Central and Eastern Europe," 1, 3, 11–12.

Poland.[19] After invading Poland on September 1, 1939, the Nazi occupiers wasted little time in making their utopia of a "Germanized" Poland into a reality.

Under the Nazis, national identification in Upper Silesia took on newfound urgency. Shortly after Poland's capitulation, Nazi authorities began categorizing the local population and ranking them on so-called "German Ethnicity Lists" (*Deutsche Volksliste*). Based on allegedly scientific markers of "Germanness," these lists included designations from one to four. "Ones" were considered the "most German;" they received preferential treatment, better jobs, and higher rations. "Twos" were viewed as "mostly German" but with slight ethnic tainting; they required re-education and training before qualifying as "wholly" German. "Threes" were viewed as a mix of German and Polish, and Fours stood at the highest risk of deportation for being considered Polish.[20]

Despite the Nazis' presentation of these categories as uniform and scientific, the application of the *Volksliste* criteria differed substantially by region and district. Some district leaders (*Gauleiter*) like Arthur Greiser in the Warthegau followed strict Germanization procedures, coupled with deportation and ethnic cleansing. Other *Gauleiter*, though, simply declared that their population had "become German." Greiser's rival Albert Forster took this approach in the Danzig-West Prussia district.[21] Disparate "Germanization" strategies led to

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[19] For a nuanced interpretation of colonialist discourse in German discussions of Poland at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Kristin Leigh. Kopp, *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012). For more on German anxiety surrounding the German-Polish border after World War I, see Sammartino, *The Impossible Border*. For more on Nazi efforts to "Germanize" Poland by resettling ethnic Germans from the East, see Valdis O. Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). Elizabeth Harvey provides an illuminating account of the "Germanization" campaign, its ideological underpinnings, and women's roles in it. See Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

[20] For an explanation of how Nazis created the lists and the Polish authorities then used them, see Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles: Communism, Nationalism and Ethnic Cleansing after the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 157–60.

[21] For more on the "Greiser-Forster rivalry," see Catherine Epstein, *Model Nazi: Arthur Greiser and the Occupation of Western Poland* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Volksliste that reflected varying degrees of agency versus coercion. In fact, in many cases residents were placed on the list without their knowledge.[22] Furthermore, even those people who advocated for their ethnicity may not have possessed strong German national convictions. As John Kulczycki argues, many borderlanders never gained "an irrevocable attachment to a nationality" even during the German occupation when "one's national or ethnic identity could mean the difference between life and death."[23] In other words, national indifference and malleability persisted, despite extreme pressures to the contrary.

Instead of Germanizing Poland, the end of World War II brought the long history of a German presence in Eastern Europe to a close. In addition to redrawing Germany's borders with significant territorial losses in the East, the Potsdam Agreement advocated the creation of "ethnically homogenous" states.[24] Although most ethnic Germans had arrived in Eastern Europe long before Hitler's rise to power, they paid dearly for the Nazis' crimes, as well as for the participation of some within their ranks. Despite the Allies' stated expectation that the expulsions occur in an "orderly and humane manner," violence, malnutrition, and disease prevailed, especially in the initial "wild" phase of forced migration. Angered by Nazi violence, Poles and Czechs often behaved brutally toward expellees, as evidenced by the Polish Second Army's instructions in June 1945 to "treat the Germans just as they have treated us" and "to execute our

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[22] For information about the Germanization process in Upper Silesia/Katowice, see Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, 151–59. For a concise analysis of forced migration after World War II, see Ther, Philipp, "A Century of Forced Migration: The Origins and Consequences of 'Ethnic Cleansing,'" in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948*, ed. Philipp Ther and Siljak, Ana (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2001), 43–72.

[23] John J. Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Polish-German Borderlands, 1939-1951* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 5.

[24] Though the idea of "ethnic homogeneity" was applied on a larger scale after World War II, its first application came after World War I with the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The subsequent Greek-Turkish population transfer resulted in approximately 1.1 million Greeks being moved to Greece and another 355,000 Turks resettling in Turkey. Pertti Ahonen, Gustavo Corni, and Jerzy Kochanowski, eds., *People on the Move: Forced Population Movements in Europe in the Second World War and Its Aftermath* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 3–10.

task with such harshness and resoluteness that the German scum will […] leave voluntarily."[25] Scholars estimate that 500,000 to one million of the expellees died of disease, malnutrition, and violence during their trek.[26] The approximately twelve million surviving expellees frequently encountered dire circumstances upon reaching Germany. Bombed-out cities offered little shelter; food and work were scarce, especially in the rural regions were most expellees were resettled.[27] Having fled the East with next to nothing, many expellees were homeless, penniless, and—especially in areas already overcrowded with refugees—unwanted.[28] Yet the expellees did not account for the entire "German" population in postwar Poland. Thanks to their ethnic ambiguity, many residents who might have previously identified as Germans were able to stay, particularly in Upper Silesia. This project investigates this remnant and their descendants.

As this brief historical overview suggests, most scholarship on modern Upper Silesia has tended to focus on three key phases or moments: the Silesian plebiscite and subsequent Silesian Wars in the early 1920s; the Nazi invasion and occupation from 1939 to 1945; and the expulsion of the Germans and "de-Germanization/re-Polonization" processes in from 1945 until Stalin's death in 1953. At each of these critical junctures, Upper Silesia's demographic makeup underwent substantial, even violent shifts as a result of oscillating state policies. Those native

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[25] Gregor Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wroclaw during the Century of Expulsions* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 63.
[26] R. M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2012), 1; Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe, 1945-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13.
[27] Connor, *Refugees and Expellees in Post-War Germany*, 19–39.
[28] Rainer Schulze, "Growing Discontent: Relations between Native and Refugee Populations in a Rural District in Western Germany after the Second World War," *German History* 7, no. 3 (July 1, 1989): 332–49; Albrecht Lehmann, *Im Fremden ungewollt zuhaus: Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in Westdeutschland, 1945-1990* (München: Beck, 1991); Andreas Lüttig, *Fremde im Dorf: Flüchtlingsintegration im westfälischen Wewelsburg 1945-1958* (Essen: Klartext, 1993); Andreas Kossert, *Kalte Heimat: die Geschichte der deutschen Vertriebenen nach 1945* (München: Siedler, 2008). Ian Connor's table of expellee resettlement by region provides a concise picture of regional distribution. Despite being severely damaged by the war, Schleswig-Holstein received an especially large influx of expellees, who accounted for 33% of the state's population in 1950. Connor, *Refugees and Expellees in Post-War Germany*, 18-20.

residents who managed to prevail through each of these phases—and still resided in the region in 1953—did so through a combination of luck, creativity, and resilience.[29] Significantly, the Upper Silesians' national indifference had provided the skills and characteristics needed to "pass" as German or Polish, depending on state borders. In other words, these people were able to leverage their historic indifference into plausible external belonging into whichever national group was deemed necessary at the time.

Interventions

In scholarship on Central Europe, national indifference has emerged as a critical if not paramount phenomenon, even a "category of analysis."[30] Scholars like Pieter Judson, James Bjork, Jeremy King, Tara Zahra, and others have illuminated ways that regional, local, and religious identities influenced the early twentieth century. While they differ in their important insights, their analyses focus on the same core time range, the so-called "eye of the nationalist storm" from approximately 1848 to 1948.[31] Although a few works, such as those by Brendan Karch and John Kulczycki, have extended their temporal reach to 1960, while Peter Polak-Springer's concluding section includes some developments leading up to 1989, these studies remain an exception.[32] Consequently, very little is known about if and how national indifference—a key feature of Central Europe during the early twentieth century—continued to shape the region after World War II. Based on the assumption that a phenomenon as crucial as

[29] cite
[30] Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities."
[31] Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*; King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*; Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities."
[32] Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*; Brendan Jeffrey Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*.

national indifference would not have simply vanished in 1948 or 1960, this project investigates the postwar reverberations of national indifference by studying the Cold War migration of people from Upper Silesia, a place that previous scholarship has identified as a core region where national indifference manifested itself.

Drawing a direct line between the historical national indifference of any individual Upper Silesian is difficult and, in most instances, impossible. As such, the goal of this study is less to demonstrate how national indifference affected individual lives and more to illuminate its continued influence on the region as a whole. Specifically, I argue that Upper Silesia's *history* of indifference, along with its past as a contested borderland, shaped encounters between (emigrated) residents with state bureaucracies and policies in Poland and West Germany. One's borderland heritage could be both a source of discrimination or of privilege, depending on the circumstances. This dissertation contends that Upper Silesians learned to leverage their national and individual histories as they navigated legal, political, and social systems before and after their migration.

Resettlers occupy an important but heretofore underexplored position in West German-Polish diplomacy during the Cold War. Part of *Ostpolitik* meant that the Federal Republic could now offer tangible, on-the-ground support to the German minority in Poland. This policy change created an ambivalent situation for Poland. On the one hand, the West German government now took responsibility for the needs of its ethnic co-nationals in the form of pensions and other material aid. Yet on the other hand, this transnational influence meant that Poland abdicated some of its sovereignty over its own citizens. Members of the German minority could now appeal to the West German embassy for assistance and also lodge complaints there against the Polish authorities. By turning the emigration-hopefuls into bargaining chips, the Polish

government received short-term benefits in the form of loans while simultaneously setting the stage for long-term problems. Like the West German policies of purchasing political prisoners from East Germany and of "buying" ethnic Germans from Romania, the position of resettlers in this international tug-of-war sheds light on the place of ordinary people in Cold War international relations.[33]

This study also speaks to ongoing debates about Germany's "ambivalent relationship" to immigration.[34] As Tara Zahra has argued, the Cold War context turned freedom of movement into a human right in western rhetoric.[35] By drawing upon an established binary rhetoric of oppression and freedom, resettlers and their advocates presented these newcomers as worthy migrants who sought to live in freedom.[36] This portrayal helped garner support for ethnic German newcomers in the 1970s at a time when West Germany was intentionally discouraging non-German immigration. By portraying resettlers as victimized co-nationals, the Federal Republic justified its responsibility to "care for its own" while simultaneously encouraging foreign guest workers to leave. Since the arrival of resettlers could be framed as a homecoming of sorts, these migrants were successfully kept out of the immigration rubric. Thus, West Germany could actively support incoming resettlers, while still maintaining the contemporary mantra that "Germany is not a country of immigrants."

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[33] Maximilian Horster, "The Trade in Political Prisoners between the Two German States, 1962-1989," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 3 (2004): 422. The per capita amount given to Romania increased substantially over the years. For instance, in 1978, the total was 5,000 DM per person; 7,800 DM in 1983; and 11,000 DM in 1988. See Kees Groenendijk, "Regulating Ethnic Migration: The Case of the Aussiedler," *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 23, no. 4 (1997): 465. Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, "Ostpolitik and Poland," in *Ostpolitik, 1969-1974: European and Global Responses* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 51; Hannelore Baier, Ernst Meinhardt, and Heinz-Günther Hüsch, *Kauf von Freiheit: Aussiedlung von Deutschen aus Rumänien 1968–1990* (Hermannstadt: Honterus-Verlag, 2014).

[34] Ruud Koopmans, "Germany and Its Immigrants: An Ambivalent Relationship," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 25, no. 4 (1999): 627–47.

[35] Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 5–8, 20.

[36] Ackermann traces a semantic shift in conceptions of "real refugees" in Volker Ackermann, *Der "echte" Flüchtling: deutsche Vertriebene und Flüchtlinge aus der DDR 1945-1961* (Osnabrück: Univ.-Verl. Rasch, 2003).

Resettler Historiography

Although scholarship on modern German history has increasingly made room for considerations of migration into Germany, native attitudes towards migrants, and related debates on German and migrant identities, historical literature about resettler migration from Poland remains sparse. Most works focus solely on West Germany while omitting Poland. The first body of scholarship, for instance, highlights integration challenges and demonstrates that resettlers' ethnic German status failed to bridge existing cultural gaps between them and local residents (*Einheimische*).[37] A significant subset of this literature concentrates on youth integration and contends that their struggles stemmed from their position as caught "between two worlds."[38] Notably, these studies about conflicts between resettler and local cultures echo earlier arguments about the "myth of speedy [expellee] integration."[39] Taking a related approach, Daniel Levy's dissertation shifts the perspective slightly to contend that debates about ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe shaped Germany's national identity and ethno-cultural understanding; however, he stops short of exploring how resettlers themselves contributed to these changes.[40]

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[37] See, for example, Ulrich Reitemeier, *Aussiedler treffen auf Einheimische: Paradoxien der interaktiven Identitätsarbeit und Vorenthaltung der Marginalitätszuschreibung in Situationen zwischen Aussiedlern und Binnendeutschen* (Tübingen: G. Narr, 2006); Dorothee M. Meister, *Zwischenwelten der Migration: Biographische Übergänge jugendlicher Aussiedler aus Polen* (München: Juventa Verlag, 1997); David Rock and Stefan Wolff, eds., *Coming Home to Germany?: The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002); Klaus J. Bade, *Deutsche im Ausland, Fremde in Deutschland: Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (München: C.H. Beck, 1992); Christoph Pallaske, *Migrationen aus Polen in die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in den 1980er und 1990er Jahren: Migrationsverläufe und Eingliederungsprozesse in sozialgeschichtlicher Perspektive* (Münster: Waxmann, 2002).
[38] Meister, *Zwischenwelten der Migration*.
[39] Paul Lüttinger, "Der Mythos der schnellen Integration. Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Integration der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis 1971," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 15, no. 1 (1986): 20–36.
[40] Daniel Levy, "Remembering the Nation: Ethnic Germans and the Transformation of National Identity in the Federal Republic of Germany" (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1999).

The second set of studies deals with shifting definitions of citizenship; this trend arose from changes in resettlers' legal status during the 1990s. To limit the Russian-German influx after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Federal Republic revised the "Late Resettler Law" (*Spätaussiedlergesetz*) in 1993 and introduced a language-competency requirement in 1997. Rainer Münz frames resettler migration within its longer legal context, and Amanda Klekowski von Koppenfels similarly posits that the existence of *Aussiedler* as a legal category reveals the continued influence of Cold War-era issues on German citizenship law.[41] Only occasionally have scholars looked at the Federal Republic's Cold War policies toward German minorities in Eastern Europe and Poland.[42]

Relevant literature on the Polish side of the migration has increased in recent years. Specifically, scholarship on the German minority in Poland in the interwar period and after World War II has grown; this rise in interest was likely prompted at least partially by the mid-1990s Silesian independence movement.[43] A second set of authors have focused on Polish nationalizing efforts after the War and attempts to claim Silesia and the other Recovered Territories. These scholars tend to emphasize the ways that Polish policies alienated the region's indigenous residents.[44] Lastly, Polish scholars have begun examining the impact of Cold War emigration on their country. Most notably, Dariusz Stola challenges the assumption of Poland's

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[41] Rainer Münz, Wolfgang Seifert, and Ralf E. Ulrich, *Zuwanderung nach Deutschland: Strukturen, Wirkungen, Perspektiven* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1999); Amanda Klekowski von Koppenfels, "Politically Minded: The Case of Aussiedler as an Ideologically Defined Category," in *Migration in erklärten und unerklärten Einwanderungsländern*, ed. Uwe Hunger et al. (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2001), 89–120.

[42] Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff, "Germany as a Kin-State: The Development and Implementation of a Norm-Consistent External Minority Policy towards Central and Eastern Europe," *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 2 (2007): 289–315.

[43] For the interwar period, see Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland*. For the recent Silesian independence movement, see Tomasz Kamusella, "Nations and Their Borders: Changing Identities in Upper Silesia in the Modern Age," *German History* 19, no. 3 (2001): 400–407.

[44] Service, *Germans to Poles*; Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*; Karl Cordell, "Memory, Identity and Poland's German Minority," *German Politics & Society* 27, no. 4 (2009): 1–23; Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*.

closed borders during the Communist era.[45] Other Polish scholars have taken this a step further to chronicle the impact of resettler emigration on Silesia; however, their work does not delve into the reasons behind this migration.[46]

To my knowledge, only two studies specifically consider both the Polish origins and West German destinations of resettlers. Mira Sczygiol Foster's dissertation analyzes oral history interviews of twelve resettlers from Poland and concludes that their identities were "shaped by the tension between a Polish past and the German present."[47] Marius Otto demonstrates the enduring presence of local and regional Silesian identities among resettler communities in North Rhine-Westphalia.[48] While both scholars look at Poland and West Germany, neither of them explicitly considers the development and trajectory of resettler migration.

This project expands on existing literature by treating resettler migration as a cross-border phenomenon. By looking at both the Polish and West German viewpoints and incorporating resettler perspectives, this study illuminates the whole arc of migration and reveals how policies about migrants and portrayals of them were intricately connected. Specifically, it demonstrates how 1970s and 1980s changes in Polish and West German resettler policy unfolded due to domestic pressures, international considerations, and the agency of the migrants themselves. In treating migration as a dynamic, transnational phenomenon, this project illuminates how people interacted with political systems—both international and domestic—and reshaped them in the process.

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[45] Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*
[46] Robert Rauziński, *Wokół ludzi i zdarzeń: przesiedleńcy z dawnych Kresów Rzeczypospolitej w strukturze demograficznej i społecznej Śląska Opolskiego w sześćdziesięcioleciu 1945-2005* (Opole: Państwowy Inst. Naukowy, 2011).
[47] Mira Sczygiol Foster, "German Blood – Polish Mind? Exploring the Immigration Histories of Resettlers from Poland to West Germany, 1970s–1990" (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2012), 229.
[48] Otto, *Zwischen lokaler Integration und regionaler Zugehörigkeit.*

Studying Upper Silesia: Methods & Sources

In this project, I use the term "Silesian" to refer to the following groups of people: 1) those individuals whose families had resided in Silesia for multiple generations; these are the "old" Silesians. 2) Those people who moved to Silesia between the 1921 plebiscite and the 1939 Nazi invasion; these are the "plebiscite Silesians." As much as possible, I seek to differentiate between people who moved to Silesia from other parts of Poland directly after the war—designated as *napływowa* or "immigrants" in many Polish documents. However, such differentiations often become muddied, especially since biographical data is not consistently spelled out or made available; the documents themselves often fail to make these designations. Polish officials further sought to classify native Silesians by referring to them as "autochthons" or "autochthonous," a synonym for "indigenous." In contrast, West German sources tended to designate them as German or German-origin (*deutschstämmige*) or as "persons of German nationality" (*Personen deutscher Volkszugehörigkeit*).[49] Self-identifications among Silesians further complicate the terminology. Some residents referred to themselves as German, others as Polish, and still others as Silesian. Nor were such identities stable. As scholars of national indifference have argued, and my own archival research has confirmed, people's identifications could fluctuate substantially over time, depending on one's individual circumstances, or based on who was asking.

Rather than looking solely at the German minority in Poland, the integration of resettlers, and changes in West Germany wrought by this migration, my dissertation treats events on both

[49] For an example of a West German Foreign Office document that contains all three of these designations, see AA Politisches Archiv Auslandsvertretungen Neues Amt (hereafter PA/AV NA) 512/8922, Letter from the West German Embassy in Warsaw to the Foreign Office, "Betr.: Einbürgerung des polnischen Staatsangehörgien Dr. Jan Paweł Badkowski," September 4, 1975, p. 2.

sides of the border as a continuous process of ethnic-identity formation.[50] It argues that the resettlers' borderland context enabled them to leverage their German ethnicity for privileged-immigrant status in West Germany or, later, to lobby for cultural rights in Poland. Although many resettlers emigrated for economic reasons, ethnicity became central to debates and policymaking in both countries.[51] West German press and politicians, for instance, portrayed resettlers as the war's last victims, persecuted unjustly for their ethnic heritage. Polish officials, by contrast, sought to stop emigration first by promoting a Silesian, rather than German, ethnic identity. Only after this proved futile did they deny the German minority's existence. How resettler encounters with West German and Polish policies shaped their conceptions of ethnic Germanness lies at the heart of my dissertation.

I approach these issues with a methodology that combines two related frameworks. These are, first, a cross-border analysis of migration, and second, recent developments in diaspora theory. The cross-border perspective evaluates events on both ends of a migrant's journey. According to Robert Waldinger, one of the pioneers of this perspective, the cross-border framework "encompass[es] places of origin and destination and the flows of people, ideas and resources between them."[52] It stands in contrast to transnationalism, which focuses on migrants' international networks, and assimilation theory, which looks exclusively at post-arrival integration. Instead, the cross-border approach enables scholars to consider developments in sending and receiving countries as part of an interlinked process. I use my second framework—

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[50] For studies focusing on the German minority in Poland, see Karl Cordell, "Memory, Identity and Poland's German Minority," *German Politics and Society* 27, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 1–23; Stefan Wolff, *German Minorities in Europe: Ethnic Identity and Cultural Belonging* (New York, N.Y.: Berghahn, 2000). For analyses of resettler integration in West Germany, see Foster, "German Blood – Polish Mind?"; Otto, *Zwischen lokaler Integration und regionaler Zugehörigkeit*. For insights into how resettler migration affected West German society, see Levy, "Remembering the Nation."

[51] Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*

[52] Roger Waldinger, "A Cross-Border Perspective on Migration: Beyond the Assimilation/Transnationalism Debate," *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 43, no. 1 (2017): 3–17.

diaspora theory—to interpret cross-border events as they relate to ethnicity. According to diaspora theorists, minority groups often identify with a distant homeland, even one they have never personally visited, and consequently draw upon aspects of their culture, language, and history to differentiate themselves from what they consider to be a "foreign" host society.[53] I use these concepts as tools for tracing how emigration-hopefuls both constructed an ethnic German identity in Poland and then questioned this "homecoming" narrative after reaching West Germany. Thus, the combination of the cross-border perspective and diaspora theory results in a trajectory approach to migration history. By incorporating both the migrants' points of departure and arrival, this project traces the creation, transformation, and impact of resettlers' ethnic identity across time and space. This study reveals specifically *how* ethnicity is renegotiated not only in the sending and receiving communities, but through the very process of migration itself.

This project draws on a combination of written and oral sources. The first set of textual sources includes administrative documents, such as legislation, passport applications, and internal or international correspondence, compiled during research in sixteen German and Polish archives. Using administrative documents from federal and diplomatic archives in Poland and Germany, I reconstruct features of domestic and foreign policy decision-making. The second written source base is comprised of hundreds of articles from more than a dozen West German newspapers. Using these articles, which covered the years 1970 to 1990, I trace the press portrayals of resettlers and demonstrate that, over time, tropes about Polish oppression and West

[53] Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mannur, *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2003); Kim Knott and Seán McLoughlin, *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities* (London: Zed, 2010); William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83–99; Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 10, no. 2 (2001): 189–219.

German indifference reinforced the resettlers as a distinct ethnic subgroup, even after their arrival.

This project's third source base consists of interviews conducted in 2017 with eight members of the Upper Silesian German minority. Although these people all differed in background and age, each was somehow involved in the German minority movement in Upper Silesia. Most of them were prominent activists in the 1980s, but a couple of younger ones became involved more recently. Based on these interviews, I argue that differentiation from Poles became central to the ethnic German identity among those who preferred to remain in Poland rather than emigrate. Although these individuals viewed themselves as German—and in some cases faced tangible repercussions for openly being German—they manifested their identity less in a yearning for a foreign homeland in the West and more in the desire to preserve their German heritage in Silesia itself.

Outline & Chapter Descriptions

This project consists of five chapters. The first chapter demonstrates that Polish authorities increasingly understood the rise in *Aussiedler* migration as a failure to integrate indigenous Silesians after the war. The re-Polonization policies in the "Recovered Territories," including banning the use of German, alienated the borderland population. As a result, many people who could claim ethnic ties to Germany applied for exit visas in the 1970s and 1980s, despite belated Polish attempts to stem the emigration tide through their own "integration" programs. By failing to recognize the legitimacy of a regional Silesian identity after the war and by seeking instead to impose a Polish national identity, the state had created an irreparable rift with the area's original inhabitants.

Chapter Two investigates the impact of a little-known ancillary arrangement between West Germany and Poland in 1975. Negotiated in conjunction with the Helsinki Accords, this agreement stipulated that Poland would allow 125,000 ethnic Germans emigrate over a four-year period in exchange for substantial financial credit. Concentrating on the May 1976 "Special Program" (*Sonderprogramm*) for resettler integration and a 1977 awareness-raising campaign, I track a shift in West German policies toward resettlers and public perceptions of them. I argue that, through these initiatives, the Bonn government crafted and disseminated a positive image of *Aussiedler* as victimized co-nationals who were set to make valuable contributions to West German society.

Chapter Three illuminates the unintended consequences of the Helsinki emigration agreement and its effects on international relations, as well as the domestic situation in Upper Silesia. Despite its stated purpose of "Family Reunification," the Helsinki agreement created new family divisions which sowed the seed for continual, unstoppable emigration. Meanwhile, disagreements and miscommunication surrounding illegal emigration, so-called "Expellee IDs," and Polish passport policies deepened distrust between West Germany and Poland—problems that the declaration of Martial Law in Poland in December 1981 only exacerbated.

Chapter Four shifts the focus to resettler experiences in West Germany, paying particular attention to *Aussiedler* youth. Having grown up in Poland, these young people often felt no connection to West Germany and often complained when they arrived with their parents. Polish officials frequently publicized stories about these despondent teenagers to discourage further emigration. In West Germany, these youths occupied a precarious position. If integration failed and they fell into crime, these young people could threaten popular support for future resettler

immigration. With their vulnerability, young resettlers embodied the practical and high-stakes challenges of successful integration.

Chapter Five uses events in the 1980s to demonstrate that emigrant assertions of "Germanness" grew louder as they became more tenuous. To the frustration of Polish officials, who had hoped that emigration would end with the cessation of the Helsinki agreement in 1979, increasing numbers of people now declared in their exit visa applications that they "felt German" and demanded permission to "live as Germans among Germans." At the same time, self-described Germans and Silesians began clamoring for their own cultural organizations, raising the specter of past struggles over minority rights.[54]

In sum, this project examines the enduring presence of ethnic German identity in Silesia, a western Polish borderland, and how this identity evolved through contact with and migration to West Germany. Although Silesians were often viewed as nationally indifferent or ethnically ambiguous, the Cold War thrust them into the center of a clash over ethnicity and memory. Whereas the Polish government downplayed or denied the Silesians' German heritage, West German authorities cast these borderlanders as the last victims of World War II and as "sufferers for Germanness." Not simply the passive subjects of Cold War discourse, Silesians also catapulted themselves into the ethnicity debate: when emigration became possible in the 1970s and 1980s, many Silesians leveraged any ties to West Germany—even involvement with Nazism—to secure exit visas. Through interviews and extensive archival research in German and Polish archives, I demonstrate that, by actively deploying ethnic rhetoric to further their emigration aims, resettlers came to embody a struggle over memory, nationality, and territorial sovereignty. By interpreting this migration as embedded in its Cold War context, this dissertation

[54] During the interwar period, members of the German minority sought to destabilize the nascent Polish democracy. See Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland*, 63–113.

reveals how an ethnically-coded conflict over victimhood and memory shaped not only the lives of individual émigrés, but also West German-Polish relations as a whole.

Chapter 1

Keeping the 'Recovered Territories': Evolving Polish Attitudes toward Indigenous Silesians

In early 1967, the Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs (MSW) called for a comprehensive investigation into Upper Silesia's indigenous population. The MSW's inquiry, which primarily involved the Katowice and Opole voivodeships, boiled down to one core question: Had native Silesians "[yielded] to revisionist propaganda" from West Germany and, if so, to what extent?[55] The reasons for their fears were legitimate. Located in the so-called "Recovered Territories," much of Upper Silesia had belonged to Germany until the 1945 Potsdam Agreement awarded the region to Poland. In contrast to predominantly Protestant Lower Silesia, where most prewar residents had been expelled to Germany, the overwhelmingly Catholic population of Upper Silesia had been deemed sufficiently "Polish" and allowed to stay, although they did not officially receive citizenship until 1951.[56] Keeping this borderland population intact had been a strategic economic move by the Polish People's Republic (PPR); the residents provided the skilled workforce needed to keep this industrialized region viable. Yet the Polish authorities were not fully convinced they could trust the Upper Silesians. Would the locals remain loyal to the Polish state, or were they secretly hoping for the area's eventual reunification with Germany?

The decision to request information about the degree of integration in Upper Silesia reflected a sense of uneasiness within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. After gathering data on regional trends, authorities in Warsaw planned to identify strategies for "deepening the

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[55] Archiwum Państwowe w Opolu, hereafter APO. APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 4-8, "Tezy do informacji z zakresu zagadnień ludności rodzimej," February 8, 1967.

[56] As Kulczycki explains, the citizenship law of January 8, 1951, "severed the link between nationality and citizenship." Specifically, Article 3 stated that "the appropriate authority may recognize as Polish citizens individuals who do not fulfill the requirements of the previous article [i.e. verified as of Polish nationality] but nevertheless reside in Poland at least since 9 May 1945." Kulczycki concludes that, thanks to this provision, Polish authorities could force citizenship upon the more than 100,000 indigenous Silesians who had resisted national verification . Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 293–94.

integration process" in the borderland before the "disintegration" grew worse.[57] At first glance, however, the responses from Opole and Katowice appeared to indicate that Upper Silesians had successfully adapted to the new Polish majority. As leaders in both voivodeships or counties pointed out, records from 1964 and 1965 revealed that fewer babies were given German names than previously and that more Upper Silesian children began school already speaking Polish fluently. "Enemy actions," such as denouncing the Oder-Neisse Line, appeared to be on the decline. These changes suggested that Upper Silesia had transformed into a clearly Polish territory or at the very least was progressing in this direction.

Yet despite these positive observations, the voivode officials also echoed the MSW's worries about Upper Silesian loyalty. Even with the documented decrease in German names and the increase in Polish fluency, the administrators nonetheless believed that native Upper Silesians might still have maintained aspects of their former German identity. The MSW leaders feared that the Upper Silesians' residual Germanness made them ready targets for "succumbing to revisionist propaganda" from West Germany. The Opole administrators, in particular, warned that this German nationalist threat lurked right below the surface of outward adaptation. Nor were their concerns entirely unwarranted. In the mid-1960s, expellee organizations (*Landsmannschaften*) from the Federal Republic had begun promoting what the officials termed "the Germanness of Silesia." Specifically, expellee propaganda supported "self-determination" and the "right of indigenous residents to 'their' fatherland," either through migration to West Germany or the revocation of the Oder-Neisse Line.[58] In response to these perceived risks, the

[57] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 2-3, Letter from Józef Rusiecki to the Head of the Department of Social Affairs at the Office of Internal Affairs, Presidium of the Provincial National Council in Opole, January 18, 1967.
[58] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 30-51, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 3-4. The Polish phrase "ulegania propagandzie rewizjonistycznej" can be translated as "yielding" or "succumbing to revisionist propaganda."

Opole leaders proposed a set of "countermeasures" which they hoped would keep any potential rise of Germanness at bay. They further urged the MSW to take immediate steps toward coordinating Polish institutions and their efforts "to fight the manifestations of West German revisionism" in Upper Silesia and elsewhere.[59]

By tracing changes in Polish administrative approaches toward indigenous Silesians, this chapter makes three key arguments about the late 1960s and early 1970s in Poland. First, it contends that, by commissioning the 1967 investigation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs recognized that postwar "Polonization" efforts in Upper Silesia may have backfired. These officials further realized that, in order to combat the "disintegration" trends, government branches would need to act together, and quickly. Secondly, the chapter suggests that, although few Upper Silesians were engaging in openly anti-Polish activities by the late 1960s, Katowice and Opole administrators believed that (West) German influences and ideas still threatened Polish authority in the area. Accordingly, officials interpreted expellee involvement in the region as evidence of West German "revisionist" activities and goals. Lastly, this chapter argues that, in response to fears of chain-reaction emigration and West German infiltration, officials planned to bolster a *distinctly Silesian identity*, rather than a Polish one. In both the 1967 response to the MSW inquiry and a 1974 strategy-building document, Opole officials argued that strengthening the area's regional identity could counteract the "tendency toward disintegration" in Upper Silesia. This policy shift underscored an even greater point about Polish administrative attitudes toward this borderland population. Instead of treating native Silesian identity or ethnic ambiguity as a threat to Polish sovereignty, the indigenous heritage became an asset which could be leveraged to strengthen Polish control and weaken West German influence in the region.

[59] Ibid. p. 21.

Postwar Silesia and its Discontents

The postwar history of Silesia is full of upheaval, violence, and change; however, these transformations proceeded differently in Lower and Upper Silesia. After gaining control of these areas, the Polish state enacted separate policies in each region. These policies reflected both practical considerations and the regions' divergent national histories. Because Lower Silesia was primarily Protestant and fell within the borders of the 1871 German Empire, the Polish government chose to expel most residents to Germany.[60] Since the region had relatively little in the way of specialized industries, the population could be easily replaced with settlers relocated from central and eastern Poland. Upper Silesia, in contrast, was home to dozens of mines and related processing industries, each of which required a specialized, skilled labor force. Training new workers would take time and diminish the region's economic productivity in the interim.

Diplomatic considerations also factored into their decision-making. Should the international community ever decide to alter the German-Polish border, Poland would likely lose Upper Silesia. However, if it could be shown that native Upper Silesians were inherently "Polish," the country stood a better chance of keeping the region—and its lucrative mining industry. Based on these considerations, the Upper Silesian population was left largely intact; only 200,000 residents were expelled, while more than 1.33 million prewar residents were allowed to stay.[61] The economic, diplomatic, and ideological importance of the indigenous or "autochthonous" Upper Silesians meant they could remain; however, this privilege came at a

[60] Strong support for the Nazi party further seemed to confirm Lower Silesia's indelible Germanness; the election district including Breslau was one of only seven districts (out of 35 across Germany) where the Nazi party "achieved an absolute majority" in March 1933. Gregor Thum, "Bollwerk Breslau: Vom 'Deutschen Osten' zu Polens 'Wiedergewonnenen Gebieten," *Preussens Osten--Polens Westen: Das Zerbrechen einer Nachbarschaft*, ed. Helga Schultz (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2001), 227–52. Gregor Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wroclaw during the Century of Expulsions* (Princeton University Press, 2011), xviii.
[61] Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, 186, 189.

price: native residents *had to become Polish*; the future of the Recovered Territories—and Poland as a whole—was at stake.[62]

The fear of border revision and the ideological need to make Upper Silesia incontrovertibly "Polish" dictated postwar policies in the region. Starting in 1945, the regional government banned German language use in public and in private; people who failed to comply faced fines or internment in labor camps.[63] Polish names replaced the original German versions on street signs and storefronts. The names of German people were also "Polonized."[64] Richard became Ryszard; Peter, Piotr; Agnes, Agnieszka. For people with names like Reinhard or Wolfgang, which had no Polish equivalent, officials chose entirely different names at their own discretion; in at least one case, Wolfgang became Franciszek and Georg became Horst.[65] New labor regulations required adult Silesians to attend "re-Polonization" courses if they wanted to keep their jobs; these classes combined language lessons with cultural instruction to instill a sense of Polish national pride.[66] Re-Polonization policies even extended to land and property. In March 1946, lawmakers made it legal to seize indigenous property and redistribute it to

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[62] Strauchold comes to a similar conclusion about the ideological need for Polishness in his analysis of the Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Zachodnich (Society for the Development of the Western Territories or TRZZ) and its development in the 1950s and 1960s. Grzegorz Strauchold, "Deutsche oder Polen? Sog. Autochthone aus den westlichen und nördlichen Gebieten Polens in der theoretischen Idee der Gesellschaft für die Entwicklung der Westgebiete. Versuche der Erarbeitung einer wirksamen Integrationspolitik," in *Die Deutsche Minderheit in Polen und die kommunistische Behörden, 1945-1989*, ed. Adam Dziurok, Piotr Madajczyk, and Sebastian Rosenbaum (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2017), 158.

[63] Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, 209.

[64] For a detailed description of the postwar renaming process, see Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 233–36.; Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles: Communism, Nationalism and Ethnic Cleansing after the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 251–57.

[65] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 30-51, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 9. For the story about Wolfgang/Franciszek, see Sabine Reuter, "17 Anläufe, nach Remscheid zu kommen: Obwohl durch die Polenverträge die Ausreise für Deutsche erleichtert worden ist, erscheint viele das Verfahren noch als ein Lotteriespiel," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 15, 1976.

[66] For more information on the "verification" and de-Germanization process in Poland, see Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, 209-216; Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles: Communism, Nationalism and Ethnic Cleansing after the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); and Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*.

newcomers from eastern Poland.[67] In all these ways, the People's Republic of Poland sought to claim the language, land, and people of Upper Silesia as its own.[68]

Lastly, the influx of settlers from central and eastern Poland brought substantial changes to Upper Silesian society. Although most newcomers landed in Lower Silesia, where the expulsion of Germans had left a gaping demographic void, many still settled in Upper Silesia. While in some towns newcomers and natives managed to get along (or, at the least, ignore one another), encounters between the two groups often went poorly.[69] To the immigrants, the Silesians appeared to be "contaminated by German influences," while to Silesians, the "repatriates from beyond the Bug [River]" seemed to be "dirty and lazy, [and] inclined to steal." Their long contact with the East made the newcomers seem "Russian," or at least caused them to "[possess] few features of Polishness."[70] Desperate postwar circumstances in the Recovered Territories exacerbated intergroup tensions and strengthened these stereotypes, particularly as residents competed for limited resources.[71] Seeing newcomers placed in positions of regional authority rankled Silesian nerves even further and fueled the feeling that they were now strangers in their own homes.[72]

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[67] The March 1946 redistribution decree disproportionately affected indigenous Silesians, who faced unique discrimination as tainted Germans. Archive of the National Remembrance Institute, hereafter AIPN. AIPN BU 0825/9 t. (teczka) 9, fol. 2, "Informacja w sprawie ludności niemieckiej w Polsce," sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Interior Ministry, November 4, 1957. Some secondary literature lists the date as March 1945. See Tomasz Kamusella and Terry Sullivan, "The Germans of Upper Silesia: The Struggle for Recognition," in *Ethnicity and Democratisation in the New Europe*, ed. Karl Cordell (London: Routledge, 1999), 169–82.

[68] Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland*, 269–70.

[69] According to Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, 289, oftentimes "mutual hostility and suspicion dominated relations between the natives and newcomers."

[70] APO, KW PZPRwO 2667, fols. 1-104, "Informacja o stanie badań and procesami integracyjnymi społeczeństwa śląska opolskiego w latach 1945-1974." On page 51, Nowakowski is quoted as writing, "W oczach autochtona repatriannt zza Bugu to człowiek brudny, leniwy, skłonny do kradzieży, 'Rusek,' posiadający mało cech polskości." Unfortunately, the document neither makes clear where Nowakowski's quote ends nor its exact origin.

[71] Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland*, 288–89.

[72] In the words of Polak-Springer, the "locals' alienation from the new Upper Silesia remained a reality, fed by home searches and other forms of regime terror, but also by what they saw as newcomers lording over the natives." Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, 234.

While the de-Germanization policies and the influx of people from Eastern Poland indeed make the region look and sound more Polish, these developments did little to win the loyalty of the area's native population. Indeed, instead of bringing Upper Silesians into the Polish fold, these laws prompted many of them to retreat into what Brendan Karch has called an "internal exile, with old familial and friend networks reestablished among an Upper Silesian diaspora." Although officials and researchers noticed the "natives' self-exclusion" in the early 1950s and worried about their failure to integrate them, they "were hamstrung by politicized mythmaking into assuming the essential Polishness of this population."[73] The very ideology that made it necessary to claim and integrate the Upper Silesians as Polish had rendered it impossible to respond effectively to the real challenges they faced.

The situation for native Silesians improved slightly during the 1950s, as Stalin's death in 1953 and the establishment of Władysław Gomułka as First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) in 1956 brought a temporary "Thaw" across Poland. These developments directly affected the Upper Silesians. Notably, the "formerly taboo topic of German and autochthon discontent could now join a panoply of other issues to be publicly debated (within limits)."[74] Significantly, the January 1951 Law on Polish Citizenship had "eliminated the requirement of Polish nationality as a qualification for citizenship," thereby making it easier for indigenous residents to became citizens.[75] The state took this a step further in 1956 by enacting the "Decree of the State Council" (*Uchwały Rady Państwa*) Number 37/56. This unpublished law shifted the process by which "German" populations got Polish citizenship

[73] Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland*, 290–91.
[74] Karch, 291.
[75] Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 4.

and identity documents.[76] Among other things, Decree 37/56 had enabled people emigrating to West Germany to forfeit their Polish citizenship more easily, while also regulating travel documents and passports for people seeking permanent stays in West Germany, particularly through the Red Cross Family Reunification agreement.[77] In theory, this law also guaranteed and protected the emigrants' rights.[78] In November 1956, the Communist government in Opole even officially acknowledged the existence of a German minority in western Upper Silesia—a step that would have seemed impossible only a few years before.[79] Between 1956 and 1957, eight hundred people had their original German names officially restored. In April 1957, Polish authorities even granted permission to establish a "German Social-Cultural Association" with headquarters Wałbrzych/Waldenburg in Lower Silesia. However, because most Germans had been expelled from the region after the war, the group never reached more than 600 members.[80]

The Thaw also opened the way toward emigration and emigration-related changes for self-described Germans in Poland. In November 1955, the German and Polish Red Crosses established a "Family Reunification" program.[81] As the name suggested, the program's goal was to reconnect families that had been separated across national boundaries because of World War

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[76] AIPN BU 1594/211, fol. 2, "Informacja Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych o stosowaniu uchwał Rady Państwa zezwalających na zmianę obywatelstwa polskiego wyjeżdżającym do NRD, NRF i Izraela"; AIPN BU 07/5, fol. 11. These changes took place at the Third and Eighth Plena.

[77] Witold M. Góralski, *Polish-German Relations and the Effects of the Second World War* (Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs, 2006), 339.

[78] Decree 37/56 only applied to German emigres. A similar but distinct law regarding émigrés to Israel was instituted in January 1958. AIPN BU 1594/211, fol. 1, "Notatka: skutki proponowanego uchylenia Uchwał Rady Państwa," March 1970.

[79] Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 297.

[80] AIPN BU 1585/6781, fol. 10, Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Niemców, 1960-1970." For more information on the German Social-Cultural Association, see Stanislaw Jankowiak, "Die Normalisierung der Situation der deutschen Bevölkerung in Polen in den fünfziger Jahren," in *Die Deutsche Minderheit in Polen und die kommunistische Behörden, 1945-1989*, ed. Adam Dziurok, Piotr Madajczyk, and Sebastian Rosenbaum (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2017), 188–97.

[81] Bundestagsdrucksache 6/2056, p. 1-4. According to the West German Bundestag, between December 1, 1955, and the end of 1970, 368,824 Germans left Poland in conjunction with Family Reunification aims. For the impact on Germans of Gomułka's ascent to power, see Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, 237; Jankowiak, "Die Normalisierung der Situation der deutschen Bevölkerung in Polen in den fünfziger Jahren," 195.

II. After receiving permission from their respective country, people would relocate to join their relatives. Although the program was bidirectional in theory, most migration went from East to West; the few thousand who moved to Poland were men returning to their wives and children.[82] The response to the program was overwhelming. Between 1956 and 1959, more than 230,000 people left Poland for West Germany; approximately 49,000 of them hailed from Upper Silesia. While this figure may seem small—49,000 people equaled about 20% of the total emigrants from Poland during these years—the relatively high concentration of departures remains significant. About 6,100 of these émigrés came from the city Opole, while a further 7,100 left from the surrounding area. According to Karch, these numbers meant that departures from Opole fell "among the highest proportions [of emigration] of anywhere in Poland."[83]

The Polish state thus treated the program as a "release valve" for discontented autochthons in what basically "amounted to an exit door westward for the native population."[84] Rather than fixing the problems in Silesia or working to integrate the population better, the Polish authorities opted to export what they considered to be the problem. In April 1957, the Communist Party started granting emigration permission to "advocates of revisionism, consciously stirring up departure tendencies among the Polish autochthonous [indigenous] population." Approximately 10,000 of the 70,000 indigenous persons attempting to emigrate repeatedly emphasized their Germanness despite being Polish citizens; 259 of them had been labeled as "advocates of revisionism" by the MSW.[85] According to Kulczycki, Polish authorities saw Family Reunification as the perfect chance to remove these destabilizers and thereby

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[82] Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland*, 291. AIPN BU 1594/211, fols. 2-4, "Informacja: Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych o stosowaniu uchwał Rady Państwa zezwalających na zmianę obywatelstwa polskiego wyjeżdżającym do NRD, NRF i Izraela." This file contains a detailed explanation of how Polish emigration policies functioned in the 1950s and the ways that changes to Polish citizenship law impacted them.
[83] Karch, 291. See also Piotr Madajczyk, *Niemcy polscy 1944-1989* (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2001), 230.
[84] Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland*, 291.
[85] Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 297.

consolidate the state's power. Having identified the problematic people, Polish authorities took Family Reunification as "the occasion to get rid of them."[86] Warsaw also used the program as an excuse to restructure the area's demographic makeup. As Dariusz Stola explains, the Family Reunification program offered an opportunity to "rid the country of the elderly, sick, or otherwise unproductive Germans in the Western Territories."[87] In these ways, the state leveraged the emigration agreement to make Upper Silesia even more "Polish."

Yet not all residents with ties to West Germany opted—or were encouraged—to leave Poland during these years. Isolated pockets of "Germanness" persisted across the region as a result. Especially in rural communities, which had largely remained intact after the war, people continued to speak German with one another and maintain their own German identity, despite laws to the contrary. Ryszard Donitza, a native from near Gogolin, recounted how as a boy he only conversed in German with the village priest, who "spoke Polish only weakly" because he had first learned it as an adult. Like many older Germans, this priest ended up emigrating to the Federal Republic. Even for those people who mastered Polish, German remained the mother tongue; German words and phrases often slipped out. In stores, for instance, clerks still counted (perhaps subconsciously) in German when tallying receipts. Thus, whether as a means of resistance or a matter of necessity, "German always remained alive" in Upper Silesian villages.[88]

In sum, although the Polish state tried to use the Family Reunification program as a way to encourage decidedly-German people to leave, many German-leaning communities remained intact. As time went on, authorities began to wonder about the program's long-term effects on these areas. What had this widescale emigration meant for the Recovered Territories, both

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[86] Kulczycki, 297.
[87] Dariusz Stola, "Opening a Non-Exit State: The Passport Policy of Communist Poland, 1949–1980," *East European Politics & Societies* 29, no. 1 (February 2015): 102.
[88] Ryszard Donitza, interview by author. Krapkowice, Poland. July 13, 2017.

demographically and ideologically? Had the most clearly anti-Polish Silesians indeed left the country? And if so, did this mean that the hoped-for "integration" of Silesia finally taken place? Or did the 1950s emigration signal a greater problem, namely that Silesians felt displaced in their own region—and, even more significantly—that they still did not *feel* Polish? If this were the case, then what could the Polish state do about it?

Stabilized or on the Brink of Collapse? Evaluating Upper Silesia in the 1960s

The 1967 inquiry by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MSW) represented a clear departure from these early ideologically-driven approaches to the native Upper Silesians. By initiating the study, the MSW implicitly acknowledged that something had gone awry with the indigenous population. "Based on information from offices of internal affairs and our own data in the Social Administration of the Interior Ministry," the inquiry explained, "it is claimed that in some regions there has been increased evidence of the disintegration of the population of local origin." Attempting to emigrate to the Federal Republic, applying for pensions from West Germany, and trying to change legal names back to the original German all qualified for the MSW as "manifestations of disintegration" among Upper Silesia's native residents. Hoping to identify the scope and breadth of these problems, the MSW requested the voivodeships' statistics and qualitative data from 1965 and 1966. These reports would provide material for a March 1967 strategy meeting aimed at counteracting "disintegration" trends and "deepening the integration process" in the region.[89]

Before an analysis of the regional responses, it would be helpful to examine the types of questions that the Ministry of Internal Affairs posed. The inquiry provides a valuable window

[89] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 2-3, Letter from Józef Rusiecki to the Head of the Department of Social Affairs at the Office of Internal Affairs, Presidium of the Provincial National Council in Opole (PWRN), January 18, 1967.

into integration or, at least, how the Polish government understood it. Much of the questionnaire boiled down to socioeconomics and demography. The MSW wanted to know whether the indigenous population was clustered in specific areas. The officials were also curious about if the local population owned real estate and whether the legal situation with this property was in order. They had questions about schooling and education, for example, how many teachers came from the native population and in which subject areas they taught. The final question in this section focused on interactions between indigenous Silesians and "immigrants" (*napływowa*) from central and eastern Poland. Did the groups ever mix and, if so, what form did these social interactions take? With initial questions like these, the MSW aimed to determine basic facts about the local population.

Moving beyond demographic facts, the next set of questions focused on the population's *subjective experiences* in Poland and their ongoing *connections to West Germany*. The MSW hoped to establish, for example, what kinds of complaints the native Silesians had formally raised at the County National Council (PRN) and to which officials they had directed these concerns. The Ministry also sought to verify whether there was evidence of discrimination against the local people and what actions, if any, local administrators had taken to address these problems. Lastly, and most importantly, the MSW honed in on Silesians' ties to West Germany and exposure to its "revisionist propaganda." They asked how many care packages (*parcel akcji*) and letters native Silesians received each year and about Silesians' interactions with West German tourists. For example, when these visitors made anti-Polish statements or distributed pro-German brochures, how did Silesians respond?[90]

[90] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 4-8, "Tezy do informacji z zakresu zagadnień ludności rodzimej," February 8, 1967.

At their core, the MSW's questions boiled down to one main purpose: to ascertain whether native Silesians had "[succumbed] to revisionist propaganda" and, if so, to what extent? This "succumbing" could manifest itself in myriad overt ways, including returning to German pronunciation and spelling, giving newborns German-sounding names, or declaring German nationality on conscription forms. However, revisionism could also take more subtle forms. Continuing to keep church records in German, for example, could be interpreted as "revisionist," as could constructing tombstones with German-language epitaphs. Other revisionist behavior could be anonymous but equally insidious, such as when Silesians cared (often in secret) for Nazi-era graves, German-era monuments, and World War I memorials. Possibilities of "succumbing" were virtually limitless, and the MSW hoped to discover to what degree the so-called "revisionist propaganda" had infiltrated the Silesians' everyday attitudes and lives.[91]

The Opole and Katowice voivode leaders responded quickly with the requested information. In their opinion, "integration" showed signs of improving. They noted, for example, that only a handful of parents each year sought to give their newborns German names. Even though the authorities acknowledged that this trend had revisionist roots—by using such names, Silesian parents "want[ed] to emphasize their loyalty to German ideals" which were being "strengthened by pervasive revisionist slogans"—incidents of this kind remained few.[92] Tellingly, the years 1964 and 1965 showed the highest numbers of newborns given unambiguously or "only German" first names, but even these years showed a 146 German-named babies out of a total of 2,760 births. This meant that less than 5% of all babies born in this

[91] Ibid.
[92] APO, PWRNwO 224/5122, fols. 1-6, "Informacja z zakresu zmiany i nazwisk oraz nadawania imion noworodkom," June 24, 1966, p. 4. "z przedstawionego problem wynika, że są osoby pochodzenia miejscowego, które przez swe żądania chcą podkreślić swoją wierność ideałom niemieckim mocno jeszcze u nich pokutującym umacniane przez przenikające hasła rewizjonistyczne."

region received clearly German names.[93] The officials further pointed out that most children and youth were now fluent in Polish, which indicated that fewer parents were speaking German in the home. Moreover, preschool teachers had reported that their pupils started school already using Polish, thus suggesting that, within the younger generation, German was disappearing as the natural mother tongue.

Despite these encouraging developments, however, the officials also recognized that not all indigenous Silesians were content in their postwar homeland. According to the authorities, the most common manifestation of discontentment was "insulting the Polish nation," with sixty-five incidents in 1965 and forty-five in 1966. The second most frequent was "preaching fascism," with twenty-two occurrences in 1965 and thirty-one in 1966. Overall, though, the number of "enemy actions" recorded each year remained quite small. In 1965, there had been 100 cases reported in the voivodeship; in 1966, the number dropped to ninety-two. The document further noted that the "intensity of [enemy] activity" corresponded clearly with changes in diplomatic relations, as well as the "concrete political and economic situation in West Germany."[94]

Some actions were intentionally revisionist, even if they remained relatively rare. For example, the Katowice Security Service considered "organizing [illegal] hostile political groups" to be "one of the most dangerous […] anti-Polish activities."[95] Such groups had apparently popped up in Chorzów, Gliwice, and Bytom—all within the Katowice voivodeship—during the early 1960s. However, since the Security Service could not find any concrete proof of their

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[93] APO, PWRNwO 224/5122, fol. 48. These statistics came from Krapkowice, Zdzieszowice, Gogolin, Zielina, Walce, and Dobra, which are all located within the Opole regional administration. The highest instance of German names was recorded in Krapkowice, where 32 of the 710 babies in 1964 and 39 of 791 babies were given German names in 1964 and 1965, respectively.

[94] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 10.

[95] AIPN Ka 030/188, t. 2, fol. 261, "Informacja dot. zagadnienia rewizjonizmu w woj. kat. zadania ZB," May 1966, p. 31. "Jedna z najbardziej niebezpiecznych form antypolskiej działalności—to organizowania wrogiego podzienia politycznego w postaci nielegalnych związków."

existence, the agents concluded that such groups were "not a mass phenomenon."[96] A few more troubling "revisionist activities" had also happened, some with potentially terrorist underpinnings. For example, a fifty-one-year-old man in Gliwice attempted to use his West German and U.S. connections to procure explosives. He had allegedly planned to blow up the People's Tribune (*Trybuna Ludu*) newspaper headquarters in Warsaw and was sentenced to six years in prison.[97] In 1965, a thirty-two-year-old man received the same sentence, this time for conspiring with a pro-Nazi newspaper in West Germany to implement "wide anti-Polish activity."[98]

Alarming though these cases were, the Security Service (SB) did not seem particularly worried. According to the SB's logic, engaging in subversive, anti-Polish behavior remained too dangerous and risky to become a mass phenomenon. Specifically, the "fear of large personal losses," likely including significant prison time, prevented people from engaging in blatantly revisionist activities. As a result, while isolated individuals certainly made threats and conspired against the Polish state, this phenomenon never gained a "mass character" (*masowość*). Voivodeship administrators in Silesia drew similar conclusions. Although the region had some anti-Polish/pro-German activists, they seemed to work independently and with very little impact. For instance, a self-proclaimed German national had ripped apart a Polish flag in the Katowice main square right before the 1962 parliamentary elections, but he did not successfully start an uprising or protest. [99] While such public displays of anti-Polishness were certainly not ideal, the

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[96] AIPN Ka 030/188 t. 2, fol. 264, "Informacja dot. zagadnienia rewizjonizmu w woj. kat. zadania ZB," May 1966, p. 34. "nie są zjawiskiem masowym, to jednak te, które pawstaja ze wzgledu na niebezpieczny charakter działania."
[97] The *Trybuna Ludu* was one of the largest, widely read newspapers in Communist Poland. It served as one of the primary propaganda outlets for the Polish Communist Party.
[98] Specifically, this man had been in contact with the *Deutsche National- und Soldaten Zeitung*. AIPN Ka 030/188 t. 2, fol. 264, "Informacja dot. zagadnienia rewizjonizmu w woj. kat. zadania ZB," May 1966, p. 34.
[99] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 11-12. AIPN Ka 030/212, fol. 24, Marian Kalfas, "Analiza działalności rewizjonistycznej-odwetowej i wywiadowczej za lata 1960-62 z terenu Zabrze," July 30, 1963.

officials were not overly concerned. Like the Katowice Security Service, they interpreted these actions as isolated incidents. By and large, Opole's administrators concluded that revisionist behaviors were declining and that integration in Silesia had proceeded smoothly.

Recommended "Countermeasures" for Upper Silesia

In addition to the report, the regional leaders included their own recommendations for cultural and structural "countermeasures." The changes they proposed were designed to help undermine any remaining German influences while reaffirming the area as Polish. Cultural programs, especially public lectures and regional tourism, formed the core of their first recommendations. According to the officials, the Silesian Institute's branches in Katowice and Opole had already proven the value of hosting educational events about "the Polishness of the Silesian territory." Most notably, the Institute had sponsored eighty public lectures in 1966 to commemorate the thousand-year anniversary of "Poland's baptism" or its conversion to Christianity.[100] Smaller regional associations had also found success in hosting similar events and collecting artefacts and documents that revealed "the historical truth about the land's Polishness."[101]

Travel and tourism comprised the second key cultural component. The Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society (*Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze* or PTTK) led excursions to historical sites in Silesia that revealed the region's "connections to the Polish past." One trip

[100] Traditionally, 966 A.D. is regarded as the year of "Poland's baptism," i.e. the nation's conversion to Christianity. However, since the Communist authorities did not officially endorse Catholicism, the state-sanctioned celebrations focused on the millennium's national, rather than religious, elements. For a recent analysis of the year 966 and the role of the Catholic Church in Polish history, see Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Catholic Church in Polish History: From 966 to the Present* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017). APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 19.
[101] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 20.

featured the Piast tower in Opole's town square, while another visited Paczków, whose medieval walls had earned it the nickname "The Polish Carcassonne." Other destinations such as St. Anne's Mountain (*Annaberg/Góra Świętej Anny*), however, served the dual function of emphasizing Polish historical events while simultaneously overwriting the German past. Already an established Catholic pilgrimage destination with its Franciscan monastery, basilica, and chapels, the town had attained Polish national significance with the Third Silesian Uprising in 1921. Poles commemorated this event in the 1930s with a colossal monument; Communist authorities rededicated the site in 1955. Yet the Germans also possessed their own nationalist ties to the space. During World War II, the Nazis built a separate monument to the 1921 Uprising's "Battle of Annaberg," where the German paramilitary Free Corps (*Freikorps*) troops defeated the Polish forces. The Nazis additionally constructed a massive outdoor amphitheater which could accommodate rallies of up to 120,000 people.[102] By organizing trips to St. Anne's Mountain, the PTTK sent a clear message: the area and its history were indelibly Polish. Thus, the lectures and excursions shared the common goal of cultivating a sense of Polish identity and national pride among the Upper Silesian population.

The second set of recommendations aimed to improve indigenous connections to Poland through bureaucratic and structural changes. First, the Opole leaders suggested fixing the native population's relationship with the local government. Although each town had an administrator responsible for the needs and concerns of indigenous Silesians, the position was usually treated as a bureaucratic entry point. As a result, the individuals who held this position were usually young and inexperienced. They rarely possessed the background knowledge or expertise to handle autochthon needs effectively, and they seldom stayed in the post long enough to make

[102] James Bjork and Robert Gerwarth, "The Annaberg as a German--Polish Lieu de Memoire," *German History* 25, no. 3 (July 2007): 372–400.

any meaningful changes.[103] Secondly, Opole officials advocated for a more streamlined process for handling name-change requests. They pointed out that, in the absence of clear guidelines, local ID offices made haphazard, case-by-case decisions when Silesians applied to regain their original German names. Along these lines, the leaders requested greater cooperation between the Silesian Institute and the Communist Party. Specifically, they asked that research about the indigenous population be made available to USW branches, in order to direct their activities more effectively toward native Silesians in each town. Along related lines, they recommended paying closer attention to challenges specific to the autochthonous population, so authorities could better address their needs.[104]

The last cultural suggestions involved a more thorough de-Germanization of the landscape. The authorities argued that, despite earlier purges of signs and inscriptions, "traces of Germanness" persisted in Upper Silesia, including almost 180 "German-era" World War I monuments in the Opole voivodeship alone.[105] Even though demolition would be expensive, the ideological gain from removing physical markers of German history would be worthwhile.[106] The officials' last structural recommendation was even more extreme. Leaders called for removing the remaining graves of German soldiers. Officials contended that, these Germans, though deceased, had created a physical and emotional connection to West Germany—a connection that continued to endure even two decades after the war's end. Moreover, these

[103] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 20-21. The severity of this issue varied by location. In general, the administrators in Kluczbork, Raciborz, and the Opole region had a "good understanding of the local people." In contrast, the problem was particularly pronounced in Kośle and Krapkowice.
[104] A later plan from 1973 also offered similar suggestions for addressing autochthons' needs. See APO, KW PZPRw 2579/2651, fols. 251-263, "Plan realizacji postanowień Egzekutywy KW PZPR w Opolu z dnia 16 sierpnia 1973 r. w sprawie dalszej integracji społeczeństwa województwa opolskiego."
[105] To expediate the demolition process, the officials included detailed descriptions of the monuments' locations; the list took up more than three pages of the document. APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967.
[106] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fol. 27, Ministry of Internal Affairs, March 10, 1967.

graves had tangible effects on locals' ties to West Germany; people from the Federal Republic frequently paid Silesian residents to care for the graves. Unless the headstones were removed and the soldiers exhumed, the spatial bond with West Germany would remain permanently strong. Eliminating the graves was the only solution.[107] In sum, by making structural changes, both in bureaucratic organization and in the physical landscape, authorities hoped to stop Upper Silesians from further "succumbing to revisionist propaganda" from West Germany.

Warnings about Western Influences

Both the MSW inquiry and the Opole response were predicated on the assumption that "revisionist propaganda" from West Germany had reached the Upper Silesians. Yet was there actually "revisionist propaganda" from West Germany, or were the officials' fears simply the product of Cold War-era paranoia? On one hand, evidence suggests that their concerns may have been overblown.[108] After all, aside from the more extreme expellee circles, by 1967 few leading or mainstream German politicians still called for revoking the Oder-Neisse Line. Furthermore, administrators in Zabrze, a city in the Katowice voivodeship, did not believe that "revisionist activities" by expellees were increasing. Even as late as 1972, the Zabrze leadership held that "no evidence was found that [expellee organizations] had given inspiration for the hostile activity" in the area.[109] While they recognized that their city had witnessed a "rapid increase in

[107] For an anthropological perspective on the symbolic role played by corpses, especially in times of political rupture, see Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
[108] Polak-Springer and Strauchold point out Polish statements showing their fear of "revisionism" and "propaganda" from West Germany in the 1960s. However, both scholars dismiss the Polish fears as deliberately overblown. Polak-Springer, for instance, contends that the Gomułka regime used a "conflict-ridden official history [of Upper Silesia] with servings of Germanophobia in the guise of the 'West German revanchist threat' in order to "legitimate the UB's (*Urząd Bezpieczeństwa*, Office of Public Security) continued surveillance, harassment, and even arrests of locals." Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, 238.
[109] AIPN Ka 030/212, E. Komander, "Analiza stanu pracy operacyjnek w zagadnieniu rewiz. zachodniemieckiego," January 10, 1972.

external manifestations of West German revisionism" after 1956, and that some instigators had allegedly participated in *Landsmannschaft* meetings in Essen, Zabrze's "Twin City" (*Patenstadt*), they did not think expellees were to blame.[110]

The Opole leaders had largely dismissed similar "revisionist activities" in their 1967 analysis. They pointed out that most people accused of "preaching fascism" or "writing propaganda" were students or youth; these young people presumably had minimal exposure to West Germany and no memory of living within German borders. As a result, the Opole officials dismissed the crimes as either being "inadvertent" (*nieświadomie*) or the product of peer pressure (*z namowy innych*); the youths "were not guided by their own political convictions."[111] In other words, while these young people might have trouble saying no to negative social influences, they were not actively trying to undermine the Polish nation.[112] Despite being located in Upper Silesia, these officials relatively unconcerned about West Germans and their potential influence in the area.

Yet even though Zabrze's leadership was not worried, the fact remained that expellees *did* have substantially more contact with Upper Silesians during the 1960s than previously. While these interactions most often came through care packages, a growing number of expellees had started coming as tourists, hoping not only to visit important sites but also to spend time with "Germans" still living there.[113] Along these lines, Opole officials considered care packages and material aid from West Germany as sources of legitimate revisionist threats, citing deliberate

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[110] Ibid.
[111] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 11.
[112] Ibid.
[113] AIPN Ka 030/188 vol. 1, fol. 50, Security Service of the Katowice Voivodeship, "Informacja dot. pracy po Zaganieneiu Rewizjonizmu Niemieckiego," February 25, 1963. AIPN Wrocław (hereafter AIPN Wr) 011/387 t. 7, fols. 13-19, "Wniosek o założenie sprawy operacjnego sprawdzenia na grupę osób kryptonim 'Paczka'," October 6, 1965.

changes in the strategies of expellee organizations. They contended that expellee groups had started recruiting members to pose as relatives and send packages to vulnerable Upper Silesians. The material aid clearly aimed to strengthen autochthonous ties with West Germany, and in some cases, the packages even contained anti-Polish propaganda.[114] Under the guise of material support, the West Germans thus sought to infiltrate the region with revisionist ideas.

The Security Service in Katowice shared the Opole officials' fears regarding rising German influence in the region. In 1963, agents had noticed that "pseudo-charitable organizations" from West Germany had started sending more mail to local-origin people in their area. Over the next few years, the number of care packages continued to increase; by 1967, indigenous people in the Katowice region received 300,000 packages from West Germany annually.[115] Like the Opolans, the Katowice agents believed the aid had political or revisionist underpinnings. Specifically, they thought that the Silesian *Landsmannschaft* was "seeking to create a broad base of people who support West German politics [and uphold] the impermanence of the western Polish [postwar] border." The agents further contended that expellees aimed to subvert the stability of Silesia by "sowing confusion and [a sense of] disbelief in the integration of the Silesian people into Poland."[116] The conclusion of their Security Service analysis connected the material help and revisionist goals even more clearly, stating that "this aid is one form of influencing the local population, in order to maintain the spirit of revenge or retaliation

[114] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 30-51, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 5.
[115] AIPN Ka 030/188 vol. 2, fol. 327, Z. Polczyk, "Kierunkowy plan pracy po linii rewizjonimu ZN na lata 1968-1969," December 20, 1967.
[116] AIPN Ka 030/188 vol. 2, fol. 327, Z. Polczyk, "Kierunkowy plan pracy po linii rewizjonimu ZN na lata 1968-1969," December 20, 1967. The West German government actively encouraged citizens to send care packages, known as "*Westpakete*," to people living in East Germany. See Konstanze Soch, *Eine große Freude? Der innerdeutsche Paketverkehr im Kalten Krieg (1949-1989)* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2018).

among people who advocate for the German nationality."[117] In sum, the expellees' ostensibly charitable actions carried a potentially serious threat, both to Upper Silesian stability and to Polish territorial sovereignty as a whole.

West German visitors to Upper Silesia compounded the problem further. Even before the 1970 Warsaw Treaty had simplified the process of traveling to Poland, expellees had already found ways to visit and remain connected to their former homeland.[118] Although it is difficult to say how many expellees visited Silesia during the 1960s, the Security Service diligently tracked the growing "homesick tourist" (*Heimwehtouristen*) phenomenon and its effect on the indigenous population. For example, Dorota Bijas and Elżbieta Stanowska, a mother-daughter pair with German nationality and Polish citizenship, attracted significant attention in 1965 when they began receiving packages from non-relatives in West Germany. Bijas then began hosting non-family visitors from West Germany, thereby raising even greater suspicion. Around this time, the pair helped organize the Brzeg-Goslar "Twin City" (*Patenstadt*).[119] These activities, along with poems supposedly expressing loyalty to West Germany, earned Stanowska a year-long jail sentence.[120] From the perspective of the Katowice Security Service, the care packages

[117] AIPN Ka 030/188 vol. 1, fol. 50, Security Service of the Katowice Voivodeship, "Informacja dot. pracy po Zaganieneiu Rewizjonizmu Niemieckiego," February 25, 1963. An inset in a 1965 issue of the *Kreuzburger Nachrichten* expellee periodical urged readers to "Always think about [Kreuzburg]! Send packages frequently, write often, and stick together!" The entire collection of the *Kreuzburg Nachrichten* is available at the Gerhard Hauptmann Haus in Düsseldorf.

[118] For instance, in 1967, the *Kreuzburger Nachrichten* expellee periodical began publishing practical information about visiting Kreuzburg/Kluczbork. Andrew Demshuk, *The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 185–231.

[119] For more on the Brzeg-Goslar *Patenstadt* pairing, see Demshuk, *The Lost German East*, 177–83. For an analysis of *Patenstadt* pairings between West German and East European cities more broadly, see Andrew Demshuk, "Godfather Cities: West German Patenschaften and the Lost German East," *German History* 32, no. 2 (June 2014): 224–55.

[120] AIPN Wr 011/387 t. 7, fols. 13-19, "Wniosek o założenie sprawy operacjnego sprawdzenia na grupę osób kryptonim 'Paczka'," October 6, 1965. The Security Service closely tracked connections between their population and West Germans. Agents made charts detailing individual people and their ties to West Germany through care packages, letters, and visitors. Dojas and Stanowska lived in Brzeg (Brieg), a town in the Opole voivodeship. AIPN Wr 011/387 t. 7, fol. 353 contains information from November 27, 1967, about Stanowska's jail sentence.

from non-relative, the visits from unknown West Germans, and the "Twin City" involvement all confirmed that Stanowska had "succumbed to revisionism."

While the Opole officials did not reference the Bijas/Stanowska case, their conclusions aligned with those of the Katowice Security Service agents. In their view, expellee organizations from West Germany were responsible for the "disintegration" taking place in Upper Silesia.[121] In addition to the "pseudo-charitable" aid and the visits from individual West Germans, the expellee *Landsmannschaften* appeared to be spreading explicitly anti-Polish propaganda across Silesia. Specifically, these groups had been "using radio and press [to] deepen and disseminate knowledge about German Silesia," as well as taking steps to "preserve and develop the Silesia spirit, habits, and customs."[122] Occasionally, tourists from West Germany even used their visits to stir up resistance against Polish control. For example, a man named Norbert Gawlytta apparently stayed in Krapkowice for two weeks in August 1964.[123] During that time, the twenty-eight-year-old contacted approximately thirty Polish citizens and urged them to leave for West Germany. Based on stories like these, the Opolans concluded that cooperation among administrative bodies offered the only means for combatting these subversive external influences:

> Experience of working with the native population indicates the need to actively involve all bodies of the [government] to fight the manifestations of West German revisionism

[121] In one part of their assessment, the Opole administrators seemed to suggest that these organizations acted with the support of the West German government, meaning that the Federal Republic's leadership were also to blame. APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 30-51, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 3.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Based on the report, it seems that Galwytta was an émigré from Poland. The note suggests that he was a former member of the "Free German Youth" (*Wolna Niemiecka Młodzież*), an illegal association in Poland. APO, PWRNwO 224/5123 fol. 7-9, "Naczelnik Wydziału III KWMO w miejscu," February 5, 1965, p. 2.

> [for] this work requires proper coordination […] with other organs and institutions involved in combating expressions of German revisionism.[124]

Although the voivodeship leaders made a number of concrete suggestions about how to combat residual Germanness, it is difficult to determine whether the MSW acted on the voivodeship leaders' recommendations; the archival record does not show conclusively if the measures were implemented or not. What is clear, however, is that concerns about Silesian integration continued to haunt Opole's administrators into the 1970s. Their fears about "disintegration" grew even stronger after 1970 when the Polish government declared its willingness to let people of "indisputable German ethnicity" emigrate. This announcement, which appeared alongside the Warsaw Treaty, caused the number of émigrés and emigration-hopefuls to skyrocket. In 1970, only 5,000 people left for West Germany; by 1971, the total exceeded 25,000. By late 1972, at least 1,700 families had registered to emigrate from Zabrze alone.[125] The numbers only showed signs of increasing as the decade continued. Efforts to instill a sense of Polish pride and identity in these émigrés had clearly and decisively failed.

The 1974 Strategy

With this growing emigration problem in mind, Opole voivode executives altered their approach to the autochthonous population, devising their own integration plan in February 1974. Significantly, this program shifted the focus away from Polish pride and sought to foster *a distinctly Silesian identity* instead. By supporting the regional identity of the "local-origin population," as it was called, the administration hoped to improve their "socio-political

[124] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 30-51, "Informacja o sytuacji wśród ludności rodzimej zamieszkałej na terenie województwa opolskiego," April 13, 1967, p. 21.
[125] AIPN Ka 0123/11, fol. 88, November 20, 1972.

integration" and prevent further emigration.[126] Along with other strategic measures, such as having "preventative conversations" with "valuable" emigration applicants while quickly issuing exit visas to the region's "immoral or criminal elements," Opole's integration program was part of a broader government initiative to strengthen and demographically transform Upper Silesian society. These alterations were both important and urgent, for as of early 1974, more than 38,000 area residents were actively seeking to leave for West Germany. By enacting these changes, especially in districts with high concentrations of exit visa applicants, Opole leaders hoped to counteract emigration's deleterious effects on their region.[127]

On the surface, the seventeen-part integration plan developed by Józef Gruszka, Secretary of the PZPR in the Opole voivodeship, looked like a reincarnated version of the postwar "re-Polonization" program. However unlike the re-Poloniziation initiatives, Gruszka's strategy clearly endeavored to instill a Silesian identity alongside a Polish one. The methods would be both cultural and educational. For instance, to promote "knowledge about the history of revolutionary fighting and the national liberation of the Silesian people," Gruszka recommended celebrating major regional anniversaries and significant historical dates at schools and universities. Hosting these festivities, along with increasing the number of Silesia-specific history texts at libraries and educational institutions, would give pupils and students the opportunity to learn about the Silesian past. Ideally, these informal scholastic encounters would strengthen the young peoples' emotional connections to the region. Gruszka also advocated for investing more resources into "dynamizing [Opole's] cultural politics." In addition to supporting music, art, and cinema, he recommended awarding regional prizes to local artists; the prizes

[126] APO KW PZPRwO 2579/2652, fols. 11-15, J. Gruszka, "Zabezpiecznenia realizacji zadań w sprawie integracji społeczno-politycznej ludności," February 26, 1974.
[127] APO KW PZPRwO 2579/2652, fols. 5-10, "Plan merytorycznego i organizacyjnego zabezbieczenia działań w sprawach emigracyjnych do NRF i Berlina Zachodniego, z województwa opolskiego," February 22, 1974.

would be named after prominent Opolans. Lastly, to promote further Upper Silesian involvement in culture, Gruszka proposed appointing local-origin people to leadership positions in the educational, cultural, and propaganda divisions of voivodeship government, suggesting that "every open post should be utilized" for this purpose.

Gruszka further recommended improving the area's civic education and advised expanding the humanities higher-education opportunities for local-origin youth, starting in middle school. This proposition aligned nicely with his goal of placing more indigenous Upper Silesians in places of leadership and influence.[128] His last suggestion aimed at dissuading potential émigrés, namely by spreading information about Polish immigrants' struggles in West Germany. Gruszka asserted that regional newspapers, such as the *Opole Tribune* (*Trybuna Opolska*), should reprint West German stories about Poles' negative integration experiences and distribute this information across the voivodeship. Opole-based and national journalists should write their own stories on this subject as well. Similarly, Gruszka advocated for utilizing regional presses like the monthly *Opole* journal to teach residents about Polish press traditions in Silesia, especially during the era of partitions. Through cultivating a sort of "regional nationalism," Gruszka's program sought to prevent emigration to West Germany, in the apt words of Peter Polak-Springer, by "[winning] the hearts and minds of the locals for Poland."[129]

Evidence suggests that Gruszka's 1974 integration program took effect in November that same year, but new international developments rendered its impact minimal at best.[130] The

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[128] APO KW PZPRwO 2579/2652, fols. 11-15, J. Gruszka, "Zabezpiecznenia realizacji zadań w sprawie integracji społeczno-politycznej ludności," February 26, 1974.
[129] Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, 239.
[130] First Secretary Andrzej Zabiński refers to the integration program as being put into place in November 1974. Although he does not mention Gruszka's name, it is unlikely that another wide-scale integration program would have been developed that same year, especially since the two had worked together on an earlier plan. APO KW PZPRwO 2579/2653, fols. 5-17, Andzrej Zabiński, "Informacja o realizacji postanowień dotyczących akcji 'łączenia rodzin' w województwie opolskim w latach 1975-1979," July 7, 1979. For a specific reference to the 1974 integration program, see page 2.

Helsinki agreement, in which Poland promised to allow 125,000 people of "indisputable German ethnicity" to emigrate between 1975 and 1979, effectively snuffed out Gruszka's integration strategy. As Opole First Secretary Andrzej Zabiński explained in 1979, once the Helsinki agreement began, the Opole voivodeship administrators lacked the resources needed to counteract the departures from Upper Silesia. Unlike West Germany, which offered the newcomers subsidies and compensation through the Equalization of Burdens Law (*Lastenausgleich*), Polish authorities could not coax people to stay through material incentives. In the absence of these means, Zabiński and others focused on improving the "ideological aspects of integration," starting with gathering more information about people seeking to emigrate.[131] This knowledge would become the basis of revised integration strategies in the future. Significantly, though, Zabiński did not mention a plan to cultivate a regional Silesian identity. In contrast to the Gruszka program, which focused on Silesians' "sociopolitical integration," Zabiński's strategy dealt with emigres' economic motivations—a wholly different type of problem to solve. The era of bolstering an explicitly Upper Silesian identity seemed to have ended.

Conclusion

Even though the Helsinki agreement essentially nullified Gruszka's 1974 program, its existence still reveals a significant shift in Polish administrative attitudes toward indigenous Silesians. Whereas after the war, Polish officials had viewed—and treated—the local population as "contaminated Germans," both the 1967 MSW inquiry and 1974 Opole plan exposed a concerned, even sympathetic interest in the autochthons. With these reports, government officials not only recognized that discrimination had occurred, but they also sought to ameliorate the

[131] Ibid. See especially pages 2 and 11.

enduring effects of this prejudice. Furthermore, instead of regarding native Silesians as innate threats to Polish sovereignty, the administration saw them as assets—and as essential for maintaining their authority in western Poland. In the twenty years since the war, Upper Silesians had taken on even greater value for Polish society, and their "disintegration" and emigration posed a serious hazard to the country a whole.

Yet even this sympathetic view of autochthons had its limitations, and some of the measures designed to bolster local loyalty clearly angered the indigenous population. The case of a "German-era" World War I memorial in Wieś Dobrosławice demonstrates this problem clearly. Built in 1920, this monument had fallen into disrepair; residents showed "no concern" for it and had long ceased placing flowers or candles at its base on holidays. The administration therefore decided in 1967 to tear down the memorial; however, since the demolition crew was slow to begin, there was time for word to spread in Dobrosławice. Residents quickly gathered in the village square, led by a writer named Hubert Maj, to protest the demolition. Once the crew saw the "disapproval about their actions," they decided to stop; after all, they lived in the surrounding villages and did not want to anger their neighbors. Demolition did not happen that day because the residents, "most of whom were autochthons," gathered to protest. Although the county officials still planned to tear down the memorial, it is significant that the people of Dobrosławice banded together to voice their discontentment.[132]

It is further noteworthy that the MSW's 1967 inquiry and the voivodeship reports both placed blame on West Germany and its "revisionist propaganda." The local people had not instigated these behaviors but had simply succumbed to outside influences. Moreover, the resulting "disintegration" stemmed not from the population's refusal to "become Polish," but

[132] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 27-28, March 10, 1967.

from the "insufficient countermeasures [enacted by] state administrative organs."[133] In other words, the Polish administration faulted themselves and their voivodeship leaders for not doing enough to halt the "disintegration" process. The combination of counterproductive actions and the lack of effective counteractions by the Polish authorities had, at least partially, left indigenous Silesians vulnerable to "revisionist propaganda." While the increased contact with West Germany after Helsinki made this "propaganda" virtually unstoppable, the earlier Polish attempts to counteract these outside influences showed at least a nominal, albeit utilitarian, appreciation for Silesian heritage and culture. When faced with rising West German and expellee pressures in their region, Opole authorities responded with an insightful, if not innovative, plan for local integration.

Ultimately, however, their decision to kindle a "Silesian" identity through cultural engagement proved ineffective, in part because this strategy was based upon the wrong assumptions. The Polish authorities devised cultural and sociopolitical solutions for the "disintegration" problem, but economic factors bore the greatest blame for emigration. Although almost 75% of resettlers cited living "as Germans among Germans" as their primary motive for coming to the Federal Republic, material factors often lay barely beneath the surface.[134] The Opole officials noted this problem in their 1967 report, stating that they had seen "many individual cases of [people] bragging that German [things] are better."[135] Most of these people had relatives in West Germany and regularly received packages from them. Visits to the Federal Republic strengthened the notion that life, at least from a material perspective, would be better in

[133] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fols. 2-3, Letter from Józef Rusiecki to the Head of the Department of Social Affairs at the Office of Internal Affairs, Presidium of the Provincial National Council (PWRN) in Opole, January 18, 1967.
[134] *Die Aussiedler im Spiegel polnischer Pressestimmen.* (Marburg a.d. Lahn: Johann-Gottfried-Herder-Inst., 1981), p. 113.
[135] APO, PWRNwO 224/5123, fol. 12.

Germany. Thus, in order to be effective in the long run, any anti-emigration efforts from the Polish side would need to address the resettlers' economic complaints.

Yet because Poland was not in a position to bribe Upper Silesians to stay, more and more indigenous Silesians in the 1970s began self-identifying as Germans to obtain exit visas. Those local-origin people who opted not to emigrate began more actively cultivating a German identity, with some becoming leaders in the German minority movement of the mid- to late 1980s. While pockets of people continued to consider themselves "Silesian" during this time, the idea of a distinctly Silesian ethnic identity only resurfaced again as a larger phenomenon after the fall of Communism—long after the 1974 attempt to rekindle this regional awareness had ended.

Chapter 2

Settling and "Selling" the Resettlers: West German Integration Programs

In early 1976, West German newspapers featured emotional stories about resettlers from Poland who, thanks to recent diplomatic developments, could finally "come home." Stefan K., for instance, had been detained in a camp with his family at the end of the war. In the years that followed, the Silesian man went hungry, lost his father and weathered many other challenges. Although Stefan eventually married, found a job, and started a family, he never felt at home in Poland. Then in November 1975, after twenty-one failed visa applications, the forty-six-year-old and his family at last received permission to leave for West Germany.[136] An Upper Silesian doctor shared a similar story. After six years of unsuccessful applications for exit visas, his family reached the West German transit camp at Unna-Massen early 1976. "We are content," the doctor commented, "and above all we are happy for our children, that they are finally in their German homeland."[137]

Although these two "homecoming" stories had unique elements, they also fit a broader narrative that matched thousands of resettler migration stories after 1975. After years—in some cases, decades—of trying to emigrate, ethnic Germans who had experienced discrimination in Poland now achieved their dreams of "coming home" to their relatives in West Germany. This happy, even triumphant turn of events was possible because of the signing of the Helsinki agreement in August 1975: Poland would permit 125,000 people of "indisputable German ethnicity" to emigrate from 1976 to early 1980 in exchange for 2.3 billion Deutschmark. This money would reach the Polish government partially as loans and partially as lumpsums to cover

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[136] Hans-Peter Sattler, "... weil ich als Deutscher unter Deutschen leben möchte," *Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 6, 1976.
[137] Heinz Bläser, "Meine Verwandten kämen zu Fuss, wenn sie dürften," *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, February 19, 1976.

pension costs and insurance claims of Polish citizens who had worked for German companies before and during World War II.[138] After 1980, both governments would evaluate and decide whether to renew the arrangement for a second term.

Though largely forgotten in Germany today, the Helsinki arrangement stirred up substantial controversy in both countries. Some far-right critics went as far as to accuse West Germany of "engaging in a modern form of human trafficking" (*Menschenhandel)* and that Poland had essentially demanded "a ransom payment for each emigrating person […] from the [West German] federal government."[139] These allegations, in turn, angered officials in Poland, who viewed the charges of "human trafficking" (*handel ludźmi*) as "slander" (*oszczerstwo*) on the part of the Federal Republic.[140] Leaders in neither state wanted to acknowledge the rather problematic notion that people were being purchased from one country to live in another.

Despite West German and Polish frustration with human-trafficking accusations, the charges were not entirely unfounded. Foreign Office records from both countries reveal a clear link between ethnic German emigration and the agreed-upon pension payments. A Polish memo from March 1975 states, for instance, that "in the case of 'resettlement' (*przesiedleń*) and our

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[138] "Polen-Verträge: Alle vier Jahre," *Der Spiegel*, August 11, 1975. The phrase *"unbestreitbarer deutscher Volkszugehörigkeit*" comes from the "Information of the People's Republic of Poland," a document published at Bonn's request alongside the 1970 Warsaw Treaty. In this text, the Polish government set forth "measures for solving humanitarian problems," especially those stemming from the remaining German population and families divided from the war and its aftermath. The phrase "indisputable German ethnicity" became a source of strife over the next two decades of emigration from Poland, as passport authorities repeatedly denied visas to those who seemed clearly to meet the German ethnic criteria. See Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, "Ostpolitik and Poland," in *Ostpolitik, 1969-1974: European and Global Responses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 43–44.

[139] AIPN Ka 030/188 t. 3, fol. 135, "Polen '74" pamphlet, printed by the Gemeinschaft Junges Ostpreussen, Regionalgruppen West. The pamphlet began with the question, "Did you know?" followed by a series of claims. The fourth claim read, "Wussten Sie, dass… die Volksrepublik Polen mit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland modernen Menschenhandel betreibet, indem sie von der Bundesregierung für jede ausreisende Person ein 'Lösegeld' verlangt?"

[140] AMSZ, D. IV, z. 17/81, w-5, 0-NRF-21, fol. 174, "Ocena niektórych elementów polityki RFN i wnioski do dalszego działania w zakresie stosunków PRL-RFN," March 21, 1975. These accusations had apparently begun months before the Helsinki emigration negotiations. In March 1975, Polish officials accused the West Germans of slander or a "smear campaign" about human trafficking.

financial demands, we must hold to our current position."[141] A document from late August 1975 further confirmed the connection, explaining that, because of the promised payment of 2.3 billion Deutschmark, the "Polish side [would take] into account the various humanitarian aspects of the situations of families divided by the war." Specifically, the Poles "expressed willingness to give permission for permanent emigration to approximately 120,000 to 125,000 persons over the next four years."[142] In addition to the multiple letters and memos about meetings leading up to Helsinki, in a document from late August 1975 the Polish and West German governments recognized that the pension payments and loan had directly financed the resettler migration.[143] Thus, while critics chose the phrase "human trafficking" in order to be provocative, their observations were correct at the core. West Germany had indeed agreed to pay Poland a substantial amount of money to "buy" a quarter million emigrants.

The Helsinki agreement opened the way to substantial emigration from Poland and, with it, significant changes in West German integration policies. After the Red Cross's 1950s "Family Reunification" (*Familienzusammenführung*) program had concluded almost twenty years earlier, migration from Poland had consistently decreased. Even though Warsaw Treaty seemed to indicate that emigration might become easier—and in a brief gesture of "good will" Poland

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[141] Ibid. "w sprawie 'przesiedlen' i naszych postulatów finansowych należałoby potrzymać nasze dotychczasowe stanowisko, zawarte w dokumentach przekażanych Kancelerzowi RFN przy liście i Sekretarze KC PZPR we wrześniu 1974."

[142] AMSZ, D. IV, z. 17/81, w-5, 0-NRF-21, fol. 118 & 147, "[…] które propozycje w sprawie działalności informacyjno- […] propogandowej w kraju w związku z porozumieniem PRL-RFN w Helsinkach," August 22, 1975, p. 2. "[…] strona polska mając na uwadze różne humanitarne aspekty sytuacji rodzin podzielonych w wyniku wojny wyraziła gotowość pozytywnego rozpatrzenia wniosków o wyjazd na pobyt stały dla ok. 120-125 tys. osób w ciągu 4 lat."

[143] For multiple West German documents explicitly connecting the pension payments with resettler migration policies, see Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (Political Archive of the Foreign Office), Zwischenarchiv (hereafter PA/AA, ZA). PA/AA, ZA B42/116616, especially "Gesprächsführungsvorschlag. Betr: Ausreise von Deutschen aus Polen; Hier: Zahlung der letzten Rate der Rentenpauschale gemäss Vereinbarung vom 9.10.1975," May 19, 1978. Also see "Vermerk über eine Besprechung bei Staatssekretär van Well am 19.5.1978," May 26, 1978. For documentation regarding the Polish side, see AMSZ, D. IV, z. 17/81, w-5, especially MSZ "Pilna Notatka," January 14, 1975, and fol. 118 & 147, August 22, 1975.

permitted 34,000 people to emigrate from 1971 to 1972—this change proved short lived. In 1975, only 7,000 people received exit visas for West Germany.[144] Once the Polish government agreed to permit a specific number of exit visas over a defined period, West German authorities could prepare to integrate a known number of resettlers. Language classes could be funded, housing could be obtained, and the West German population could be mobilized to help their newly arrived neighbors.[145] The Helsinki agreement thus provided a watershed moment in migration policy and international relations. This chapter analyzes the international processes that made the Helsinki migration possible, as well as the domestic developments that sought to ease the transition of a quarter million ethnic German "resettlers" into West German society.

Mechanisms & Memories: Postwar Precedents

Although this "people-for-payments" arrangement was a new addition to German-Polish relations, the practice of trading immigrants for money had a longer history in West Germany. Starting in 1963, the Federal Republic began paying for the release of political prisoners from East Germany. Eventually, these "prisoner ransom payments" (*Häftlingsfreikauf*) became such a standard occurrence that East Germany included them as a guaranteed income source in the country's annual budget.[146] While the East German version of this practice differed from the Polish iteration in significant ways—most obviously, those "ransomed" from the GDR were political prisoners; whereas, *Aussiedler* were migrating from Poland based on ethnic-heritage claims—the existing practice with East Germany set an important precedent for West German

[144] In 1971, the first year after the Warsaw Treaty was signed in December 1970, the total number of immigrants from Poland jumped from 5,624 to 25,421. In 1972, the number dropped to 13,482. The total continued to decrease over the next few years, with 8,903 in 1973, 7,825 in 1974, and 7,040 in 1975. Thus, between 1971 and 1975, only 62,491 people received permission to emigrate legally to West Germany.
[145] Wolfgang Lanquillon, hrsg. *Dokumentation über die Eingliederungsarbeit für und mit Aussiedlern (1986-1991).* Stuttgart: Verlagsverk der Diakonie, 1992. S. 171.
[146] Horster, "The Trade in Political Prisoners between the Two German States, 1962-1989," 422.

approaches to migration from "closed" countries. Most significantly, the prisoner payments taught leaders in the Federal Republic that *money could move people across the Iron Curtain*. Beginning in 1968, the West Germans started applying this lesson to dealings with Romania. Shortly after establishing diplomatic relations, the Federal Republic agreed to pay Romania a fixed, per capita price for each ethnic German emigrant. While the specific amount per person depended on a variety of factors, such as an individual's age and education level, the total price stayed between 5,000 to 8,000 DM per emigrant during the 1970s.[147] It is estimated that from this secret program's inception in 1968 until its end in 1989, West Germany paid approximately one billion marks to Romania in exchange for émigrés.

A more recent financial development with Yugoslavia also played an important role.[148] In April 1973, West Germany agreed to give the Balkan country a loan of one billion marks as a form of "indirect reparations" for damages in World War II. Even though this arrangement, known as the "Brioni Formula" (negotiations took place on Brioni island), did not involve emigration, it directly influenced negotiations with Poland nonetheless. In fact, Polish representative Franciszek Szlachcic explicitly requested a Yugoslavia-like arrangement during his June 1973 talks with Egon Bahr.[149] Yet unlike the Yugoslav scenario, the Polish request was linked directly to West Germany's desire for emigration. Szlachcic made this connection clear,

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[147] The per capita amount given to Romania increased substantially over the years. For instance, in 1978, the total was 5,000 DM per person; 7,800 DM in 1983; and 11,000 DM in 1988. See Groenendijk, "Regulating Ethnic Migration: The Case of the Aussiedler," 465. Ruchniewicz, "Ostpolitik and Poland," 51; Baier, Meinhardt, and Hüsch, *Kauf von Freiheit: Aussiedlung von Deutschen aus Rumänien 1968–1990*.

[148] According to Ruchniewicz, SPD foreign policy expert Eugen Selbmann mentioned the "Romanian solution" of paying a set amount for each émigré as a possible option for moving forward with Poland. Schreiben des Vorsitzenden der SPD-Bundesfraktion Wehner an den Bundeskanzler Brandt, Bonn, June 13, 1973, DzD, 1973-1974, vol. 3/1, p. 190. Cited in Ruchniewicz, "Ostpolitik and Poland," 53.

[149] Ruchniewicz, 52. According to Ruchniewicz, the "indirect reparations" with Yugoslavia had already happened as early as October 1956, when Adenauer offered Belgrade DM 300 million as credit and restitution payments. This type of arrangement additionally became known as the "Brioni Formula" because the negotiations took place on Brioni island. Aware of the Yugoslav agreement, Polish representative Franciszek Szlachcic requested a similar arrangement during talks with Egon Bahr in West Berlin in June 1973. See also C. Goschler, *Shuld und Schulden: Die Politik der Wiedergutmachung für NS-Verfolgte seit 1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005), p. 315.

saying, “We are speaking here openly, seriously, and not officially on the record, so I declare on behalf of our leadership: resolution of one problem [financial reparations] will resolve the other [emigration].”[150] The message was clear. Poland wanted money; West Germany wanted emigrants. Surely they could reach a mutually-agreeable solution.

An answer, however, proved slow in coming. When Foreign Minister Walter Scheel offered a loan of DM 1 billion in October 1973, Polish representative Stefan Olszowski refused to accept it and made his own counteroffer. Bonn needed to give Poland DM 10 billion—three billion in financial credit and seven billion in investment credits. West Germans rejected this first request an amount which historian Krzysztof Ruchniewicz has called an “unusually large [sum] for loans to a communist country by a Western government.”[151] The West Germans also made it clear that “further talks on loans and on a badly needed pension agreement would be dependent on Warsaw’s release of a substantially greater number of ethnic Germans.”[152] Negotiations continued intermittently over the next two years; however, the unexpected resignation of Chancellor Brandt in May 1974 due to the Guillaume Affair put the conversation on hold until the final CSCE summit in Helsinki in July 1975.

Polish and West German leaders resumed their discussion of “the [question] of [Deutschmarks] and people” at the end of the Helsinki conference. On the evening of July 31, First Secretary Edward Gierek and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt spent eight hours getting “wound up […] in the question of how many Germans would be allowed to emigrate from the former Eastern Territories to the Federal Republic.” By the morning of August 1, the two statesmen had

[150] This quote from Szlachcic is recounted in Ruchniewicz, 52; however, the exact origin of the quote is not made clear. It seems potentially to have come from a note from Egon Bahr to Willy Brandt and Walter Scheel on July 7, 1973, in which Bahr reported on his conversation with Szlachcic. Yet Ruchniewicz’s footnote for and surrounding this quote are a bit ambiguous. See footnotes 40-42, Ruchniewicz, 52-53.
[151] Ruchniewicz, 54.
[152] Ruchniewicz, 55.

arrived at a preliminary arrangement, the details of which their associates ironed out a few days later in Bonn.[153] The Federal Republic agreed Poland 2.3 billion DM—one billion as a 25-year loan and the other 1.3 billion DM as a lumpsum payment for pension costs and insurance claims.[154] In exchange, Poland would allow 125,000 people of "indisputable German ethnicity" to emigrate from 1976 to 1980.[155] Officially signed on October 9, 1975, the agreement would thus "expire" in early 1980, at which point the states could decide whether to renew it.[156]

The announcement of the "Helsinki agreement" created an immediate stir in the West German media. News stories about Helsinki appeared across West Germany in early August, with articles in the *Bonner Rundschau*, *Der Spiegel*, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, and others almost universally praising the development as a breakthrough in international relations.[157] Even ethnic Germans living in Poland quickly heard the news, thanks to coverage on Radio Free Europe.[158] Furthermore, in contrast to the top-secret Romanian and East German deals, the public nature of the arrangement with Poland meant that reporters and critics could weigh in with their own opinions.[159] As soon as the news hit the press, detractors accused the politicians of engaging in "human trafficking." The critics had a point. Although the West Germans did not promise Poland

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[153] "Polen-Verträge: Alle vier Jahre," *Der Spiegel,* August 11, 1975, p. 22-24.
[154] PA/AA, ZA B42/116616, Letter from CDU Bundestag Representative Werner Marx to Genscher, April 14, 1978. The 1.3 billion DM would be transferred in three payments of approximately 430 million DM apiece, with the first in 1976 and the last in 1978.
[155] "Polen-Verträge: Alle vier Jahre," *Der Spiegel,* August 11, 1975, p. 22-24. West German Foreign Office State Secretary Walter Gehlhof and Polish ambassador Wacław Piątkowski negotiated the agreement's final version in Bonn.
[156] PA/AA, ZA B42/116616, "Vermerk über eine Besprechung bei StS van Well am 19.5.1978," May 26, 1978.
[157] See for example *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* on August 4, 1975; *Bonner Rundschau* on August 5, 1975; *Der Spiegel* on August 11, 1975; and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on August 20, 1975.
[158] Ryszard Donitza, interview by author. Krapkowice, Poland. July 13, 2017.
[159] Information about the arrangements with Romania and East Germany only came to light later. The East German arrangement was discovered somewhat accidentally when an audit in 1982 revealed that substantial sums of money had been disappearing annually from West Germany's Catholic charity Caritas. This money had been funneled through by Minister Egon Franke (SPD) to pay East Germany for political prisoners. See "Affäre Franke: Via Caritas," *Der Spiegel*, March 19, 1984. The Romanian arrangement when Heinz-Günther Hüsch, the man in charge of handling each payment and prisoner exchange, was interviewed about his involvement. See Baier, Meinhardt, and Hüsch, *Kauf von Freiheit: Aussiedlung von Deutschen aus Rumänien 1968–1990*.

a fixed amount for each émigré, both parties recognized that the agreement *depended directly* on emigration. If Poland did not let ethnic Germans emigrate, the country would receive no money. Conversely, if West Germany did not commit to the payments, no one would be allowed to emigrate. Thus, although neither side set an official per capita amount, by the very nature of the agreement, arithmetically speaking the Federal Republic pledged to give Poland *18.4 million DM per émigré* over a five-year period.[160] This amount vastly exceeded the arrangements with Romania and East Germany, where the individual émigré "price" never surpassed 10,000 DM per person. In other words, if spending indicates priorities, then the West Germans clearly valued ethnic Germans living in Poland and were willing to pay substantially for their "homecoming." Even the potential resettlers recognized this reality. "Why are you not finally pulling us out? Everyone knows that Poland is ready to sell humanity for cash," wrote a German man from Opole in a 1975 letter to Chancellor Schmidt.[161] Notwithstanding such accusations of "human trafficking," press and public responses to the Helsinki agreement were largely positive, at least in the Federal Republic.[162] Even if the amount of money may have seemed excessive, many West Germans welcomed the breakthrough in ethnic German migration.

With this diplomatic feat achieved, West German leaders now faced the task of making the Federal Republic feel like home to people who had spent the last three decades living in Communist Poland. Until the Helsinki migration, most resettler-integration programs had been rather piecemeal, enacted by state and local governments or by religious and non-profit

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[160] The total of 18.4 million DM per resettler comes from dividing the payment total of 2.3 billion DM by 125,000, the maximum number of Germans to whom the Polish government agreed to grant exit visas by the Helsinki agreement's conclusion in early 1980. The state of Israel instituted a similar policy to buy émigrés from the Romania. This practice apparently began shortly after Israel's founding in 1948. See Zahra, *The Great Departure*, 260–61.

[161] "Polen: Angst für Wölfen," *Der Spiegel*, August 25, 1975.

[162] For instance, an article in *Der Spiegel* pointed out the cases of individual resettlers who had successfully emigrated since the Helsinki agreement. "Polen: Angst für Wölfen," *Der Spiegel*, August 25, 1975.

organizations. While many of these programs relied on federal funds, no cohesive country-wide strategy for *Aussiedler* integration existed. Developing a new plan that could be applied across West Germany thus became a top administrative priority. Less than a week after the Federal Assembly (*Bundesrat*) confirmed their support for the emigration agreement on March 12, 1976, the Schmidt cabinet disclosed its plans to design a "Special Program" (*Sonderprogramm*) for resettler integration. The journey of incorporating 125,000 newcomers from Poland had officially begun.

Integrating the Resettlers

After plans for the resettlement plan were made public, Interior Minister Werner Maihofer pledged his commitment to handling "integration as unbureaucratically as possible and [ensuring] coordination with the federal states" to that end.[163] Maihofer himself would spearhead a team comprised of representatives from six federal ministries, as well as leaders from religious groups and non-governmental organizations.[164] Additionally, the Minister assembled a special taskforce "exclusively concerned with the problem of [resettler] integration."[165] To finance the new measures, the state designated a budget of 183 million Deutschmark for the remainder of

[163] Günter Fuchs, "Humanitäre Aufgabe unseres Jahrzehnts," in *Als Deutsche unter Deutschen leben*, ed. Egon Ludwig (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 1978), 41.
[164] These ministries included The Department of the Treasury; the Ministry for Economic Affairs; the Ministry for Regional Planning, Building, and Urban Development; the Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs; and the Ministry for Youth, Family, and Health. BArch B106/53790, Letter from Dr. von Köckritz to the above Federal Ministers, March 19, 1976. The Working Committee of Free Welfare Services, whose members included representatives from the German Red Cross and the Catholic and Protestant churches, were invited into the integration conversation. Lastly, the Working Committee of Refugee Administration and federal states with significant *Aussiedler* resettlement were also involved. For a detailed history of the refugee administration in the French occupation zone, see Andrea Kühne, *Entstehung, Aufbau und Funktion der Flüchtlingsverwaltung in Württemberg-Hohenzollern 1945-1952: Flüchtlingspolitik im Spannungsfeld deutscher und französischer Interessen* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1999). For a parallel study of the refugee administration in the American zone, see Sylvia Schraut, *Flüchtlingsaufnahme in Württemberg-Baden 1945-1949: amerikanische Besatzungsziele und demokratischer Wiederaufbau im Konflikt* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1995).
[165] BArch B106/53789, Letter likely from Maihofer to the Ministerbüro Herrn ORR Jauck, March 29, 1976; BArch B106/53790, Projektgruppe VtKI 933 900-1/1, "1. Interviewgrundlage für Pst Baum."

1976, while also making provisions for continued funding in future years.[166] Maihof announced the "special program" (*Sonderprogramm;* hereafter "May Program") on May 12, 1976. It was followed by a public relations campaign "*Bürgeraktion 77-Starthilfe für Aussiedler*" (Citizen Action 77- Start Help for Resettlers), which was launched that December. Through these measures, the administration aimed to establish a unified strategy for resettler integration into West Germany.

The *Sonderprogramm* and its related policies focused primarily on *Aussiedler* financial problems, language barriers, and issues related to cultural and social integration. More than simply setting up programs for integration, this plan crafted an image of resettlers as the worthiest immigrants. Having suffered for their Germanness—financially, linguistically, culturally—resettlers had proven their legitimate need and thereby deserved access to the Federal Republic's material and emotional assistance. The Plan designed and funded solutions to *Aussiedler* challenges, while also garnering support for the newcomers in broader West German society.[167] Furthermore, it is worth noting that the May Program was not a wholly new invention; rather, it drew on existing integration initiatives for expellees. Most significantly, each resettler, for instance, qualified for financial compensation for lost property through the 1952 "Equalization of Burdens Law" (*Lastenausgleich*), a measure originally enacted for expellees.

Financial Challenges

Most resettlers arrived in West Germany in a financially destitute condition since the Polish government imposed fees on emigrants whose resources were already strained—not least

[166] BArch B106/53789, Pressedienst des Bundesministerium des Innern, "Programm für die Eingliederung von Aussiedlern von Bundeskabinett verabschiedet," May 12, 1976.
[167] BArch B106/53789, Letter from Bundesvereinigung der kommunalen Spitzenverbände to Maihofer, "Betr: Programm für die Eingliederung von Aussiedlern aus Polen," May 18, 1976.

due to the economic downturn of the 1970s. For instance, to emigrate to a capitalist country, resettlers had to pay a hefty exit-visa fee; in mid-1973, the amount totaled 2,000 zloty per person. To put this in perspective, the average annual income of a Polish worker lay somewhere between 18,000 and 21,600 zloty.[168] For large *Aussiedler* families, the emigration process proved particularly costly. A June 1974 newspaper article highlighted one extreme, but not necessarily atypical, case in which an eight-person family paid 30,000 zloty to obtain exit visas.[169] While the West German government did reimburse these migration-related expenses, the émigrés still had to pay the visa fees up front.[170] For many people, the initial cost of emigration could be difficult if not prohibitive.

Those resettlers who commanded sufficient funds to secure exit visas still had encountered problems when transferring their assets to West Germany. Poland frequently froze bank accounts of émigrés, as many unfortunate *Aussiedler* discovered only after reaching the Federal Republic. To make matters worse, the Polish state outlawed the transfer of zloty to foreign bank accounts. As of August 1973, the West German embassy in Warsaw knew of only two cases in which Poles had successfully wired money to accounts in the Federal Republic.[171] This meant that *Aussiedler* needed to withdraw their life savings before emigrating and hope that the money safely reached the Federal Republic with them. However, due to the abysmal

[168] PA/AA, ZA B85/1327, Letter from the German Red Cross Suchdienst Hamburg to the Interior Ministry, "Betr: Ausreise aus Polen; Änderung der Passgebühren für Besuchsreisen," June 21, 1973. Contemporary journalist Wolfgang Meyer cites the average monthly income as between 1,500 and 1,800 zloty. Based on these figures, the average annual income for a Polish worker would have been somewhere between 18,000 and 21,600 zloty. Wolfgang Meyer, "Polnische Aussiedler warten oft drei Jahren auf Reiseerlaubnis," *General Anzeiger Bonn*, June 19, 1974.
[169] Ibid.
[170] PA/AA, ZA B85/1327, Letter from the German Red Cross in Hamburg to the Foreign Office, October 26, 1973.
[171] PA/AA, ZA B85/1327, Letter from West German Embassy in Warsaw to the Foreign Office, "Betr: Transfer von Sperrkonten," August 15, 1973; Letter from the President of the Bundesausgleichsamt to the Foreign Office, "Betr: Transfer von Zloty-Beträgen aus Polen in das Bundesgebiet," September 4, 1973.

exchange rate between the zloty and the Deutschmark in the early 1970s, these savings did not go far in the West.[172]

Conflicts with Polish passport authorities often compounded resettler financial woes. The visa application process was slow, and passport officials were often overwhelmed, corrupt, inept, or some combination thereof. As a result, many émigrés waited for months or years before receiving permission to leave. Such was the case for Ernest Kubocz from Głogówek/Oberglogau near Opole. After paying 20,000 zloty for an exit visa, Kubocz sold his home, liquidated most of his belongings, and quit his job. Instead of receiving his travel documents, however, he encountered an administrative run-around; his documents had somehow been "misplaced."[173] Writing to the regional administrative office in September 1976, Kubocz described himself as "at the end of [his] line and completely exhausted."[174] Whether he ultimately obtained his visa is unclear; however, if Kubocz did successfully emigrate, he would have reached West Germany worn out and likely broke. Many emigrants faced similar fates. The emigration process was costly, exhausting, and not for the faint of heart.

Resettler financial constraints had long been on West Germany's radar, and by the early 1970s isolated aid measures already existed to address them. For instance, starting in 1972, each adult resettler received 150 DM and each minor received 75 DM as "welcome money" (*Begrüssungsgeld*) after registering in West German border camps. While proponents argued that "welcome money" served as a "highly effective support in bridging the gap" for *Aussiedler* who often arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs, the petty-cash handout did not go

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[172] According to a 1976 article in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 200 zloty was worth approximately 15 Deutschmark. This means that the exchange rate was about 13.3 zloty per 1 Deutschmark. Sabine Reuter, "Aussiedlung aus Polen: Es ist wie eine ansteckende Krankheit," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 15, 1976.

[173] Some of this amount may have been a bribe intended to expedite the visa process. While the sources are not clear about this, the exorbitant visa fee makes this a plausible conclusion.

[174] APO KW PZPRwO 2663, fol. 93, Letter from Ernest Kubocz to First Secretary KW-PZPR A. Żabiński, September 2, 1976.

very far.[175] One newspaper put it poignantly, "The 'Zero Hour' for [resettlers] starts almost thirty years after the war's end with 150 DM of welcome money per person."[176] By linking *Aussiedler* arrival in the 1970s to the "Zero Hour" of German defeat in May 1945, this article intentionally invoked images of postwar suffering and hardship. As the defeated Germans were forced to rebuild their lives from nothing, so too must the incoming resettlers begin anew from scratch. This direct allusion to 1945 also underscored the idea that the resettlers were the war's last, albeit belated, victims. For their struggles, these latecomers deserved compassion, care, and financial assistance.

Costly Employment

Helping resettlers obtain jobs represented one crucial form of material support, and some programs were already in place to deal with this issue. For instance, between 1971 and 1972, some 7,500 resettlers received money to cover their job-related application fees, travel expenses, and moving costs.[177] Although funds like these were certainly helpful, they did not solve all the problems that resettlers faced when entering the job market. While in theory a business might want to hire resettlers, this choice might not be cost effective for employers. Not only did resettlers need job-specific training, they might also have trouble adjusting to aspects of capitalist work culture. Why would an employer opt for an investment-heavy *Aussiedler* when equally or more highly qualified non-immigrant workers were readily available? Occasionally, business

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[175] BArch B106/98788, "Entwurf eines Gesetzes über Eingliederungshilfen für Aussiedler und Übersiedler; hier: Anhörung der Herren Abteilungsleiter der zuständigen Länderressorts und des Herrn Präsidenten des Bundesausgleichsamtes (BAA)," June 15, 1982, p. 21. *Aussiedler* began receiving welcome money on October 1, 1955, but the total amount for each incoming person is unclear. From 1976 to 1985, 85,633,595 DM were given out to *Aussiedler.* Referat VtK 14, "Betr: Begrüssungsgabe der Bundesregierung. Ka 0640 Tit. 681 05," May 12, 1986.
[176] Mascha M. Fisch, "Entwurzelte Deutsche: Die Wirklichkeit zerstört die Träume der Aussiedler," *Deutsche Zeitung Christ und Welt,* March 7, 1975.
[177] Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, hereafter KAS, "Arbeit- und ratsuchende Aussiedler aus der Volksrepublik Polen bei den Arbeitsämtern im Jahr 1971," ANBA Nr.4/1973, p. 278.

owners might seek to employ resettlers out the goodness of their hearts—as was presumably the case with Friedrich Garenfeld, who reached out to Economics Minister Krischker to offer twenty jobs to *Aussiedler* in his business—but such instances were rare.[178]

Minister Maihofer and his associates thus faced a difficult question. How could the government encourage companies to hire resettlers? In late March 1976, the Equalization of Burdens Bank suggested offering businesses loans to support new jobs for resettlers. Qualifying employers could also receive compensation for 80% of a resettler's salary for up to two years. A similar program had been used for expellees from 1949 to 1956 "with good success."[179] Notably, these twelve-year loans would cater to smaller factories and businesses, rather than larger companies. Additionally, the Bank would set up a "model program for the creation of 1,000 jobs in trade and small-scale industry." For this "expanded financing of capital investment to create work places," credits of 20,000 to 25,000 Deutschmark were planned for each future position.[180] The decision to focus on smaller businesses had both a financial and a social angle. According to the board, "due to the unique situation of the resettlers, it [was] not advisable to place them in the anonymity of a large company." Instead, resettlers should work in smaller businesses "where conditions [were] accessible and personal relationships with bosses and coworkers [could] facilitate acclimatization into the new environment." Not only would resettlers benefit from the paycheck, but connections formed in the workplace could ease their social and cultural integration.

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[178] In the same letter, Mr. Garenfeld also expressed interest in building an apartment or a small single-family home for *Aussiedler,* so it could be "unconditionally avoided [that] resettlers should stay in emergency shelters under primitive conditions." BArch B106/53789, Letter from Friedrich Garenfeld to the Bundesminister für Wirtschaft, March 31, 1976. Letter from Krischker to Garenfeld, "Betr: Eingliederung der Aussiedler," April 12, 1976.
[179] Fuchs, "Humanitäre Aufgabe unseres Jahrzehnts," 42.
[180] "Der Bund stellt ein Modellprogramm auf zur Schaffung von 1000 Arbeitsplätzen im Bereich Gewerbe und Kleinindustrie. Die ergänzende Finanzierung von Investitionen zur Schaffung von Arbeitsplätzen wird eingeplant mit 20.000 DM bis 25.000 DM Kredit je künftiges Arbeitsplatz." BArch 106/53790, "Vermerk über Massnahmen für Spätaussiedler," March 26, 1976.

Although subsidies for business owners helped *Aussiedler* obtain blue-collar jobs, these measures did little for those with higher educational levels. Despite having faced some discrimination for belonging to the German minority, many resettlers had received advanced degrees and managed to work in Poland as lawyers, teachers, and natural scientists. Yet because academic degrees were not easily recognized in Germany, these resettlers often could not obtain jobs in their respective fields.[181] A 1977 report highlighted the challenges facing these resettlers, pointing out that after enough "vain endeavors" they "entered into resignation and a tendency […] to return to their place of origin."[182] Since return migration to Poland represented a financial, academic, and societal loss, as well as a loss of face, for West Germany, these valuable immigrants should be strongly encouraged to stay.

The May Program offered two solutions—one direct, one more ancillary—geared toward helping these resettlers. First, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs set forth new guidelines for simplifying and expediting the certification-recognition process. These changes were designed to minimize the bureaucratic steps to certify resettlers' academic and professional qualifications.[183] Secondly, the government would continue to partner with already successful institutions like the Otto Benecke Foundation (OBS).[184] In 1970, the OBS had established curricula to offer help to resettlers who needed extra job training. In 1973 alone, 1,695 resettlers completed the Foundation's "initial consultation" program.[185] With continued federal funding,

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[181] BArch B106/42854, Ausschuss für Bildung und Wissenschaft, "Betr: Förderung des Hochschulstudiums bei Zuwanderer, die das 35. Lebensjahr abgeschlossen haben," November 4, 1977.
[182] Ibid.
[183] BArch B106/97157, Interior Ministry, "Stand der Durchführung des Programms der Bundesregierung für die Eingliederung von Aussiedlern und Zuwanderern vom 12. Mai 1976," December 24, 1976.
[184] Established in 1965 to provide support to refugee students from East Germany and underwritten by the Ministry of Youth, Family, and Health (BMJFG), the OBS organized German language classes for resettlers, some of which will be discussed more in chapter four. Marianne Krüger-Potratz, *Integration stiften! 50 Jahre OBS - Engagement für Qualifikation und Partizipation* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2015), 14–15.
[185] Marianne Krüger-Potratz, *Integration stiften!*, 20; BArch B189/19902, Otto Benecke Stiftung, "Aktionsprogramm zur Integration der Spätaussiedler," March 1974.

the OBS launched a "Program for Academics" in 1978 aimed at providing support and supplementary classes for highly educated *Aussiedler* over age 35.[186]

Lastly, the *Sonderprogramm* assisted entrepreneurial *Aussiedler* who wanted to start their own businesses. In addition to receiving free consultation sessions, these resettlers qualified for special start-up loans. Craftsmen hoping to establish workshops could obtain public funds to cover almost 100% of their initial expenses.[187] Through these measures, the Federal Republic sought to give ambitious resettlers a head start in business and hasten their contribution to the West German economy. By highlighting and seeking to meet the employment needs of ordinary, educated, and/or entrepreneurial *Aussiedler*, the May Program made significant strides toward their financial integration.

With these economic measures, the Program reinforced the idea that *Aussiedler* were simultaneously vulnerable and strong. The Bank's recommendation that smaller businesses were more adept than larger companies at integrating *Aussiedler* and should therefore receive the bulk of loans revealed concern that resettlers might be overwhelmed by encounters in larger companies. At the same time, though, the *Sonderprogramm* recognized that resettlers could be determined and capable. Many had obtained advanced degrees in Poland or had immigrated with the commendably capitalist goal of starting their own businesses. Friedhelm Farthmann, the North Rhine-Westphalian Minister for Labor, Health, and Society, captured this positive image of resettlers in a February 1976 radio interview. When asked about *Aussiedler* job prospects, Farthmann stated that finding employment for them would be relatively easy "because they [brought] with them a high level of specialist aptitude." Even more importantly, resettlers were

[186] Marianne Krüger-Potratz, *Integration stiften!*, 20.
[187] Fuchs, "Humanitäre Aufgabe unseres Jahrzehnts," 42.

"ready and willing to work" and there had been "no difficulty [with job placements] to date."[188] In this somewhat paradoxical portrayal of *Aussiedler* as victimized yet capable, the May Program cast resettlers as ultimately valuable additions to the West German work force, even if hiring them required an up-front investment.

That *Aussiedler*-employment policies were particularly generous becomes even clearer when contrasted with the situation of foreign guest workers in West Germany. Even as resettlers received material aid and help with professional certifications, guest workers from Turkey encountered increased systematic marginalization. Not only were adults offered no access to career-specific training, but their children were denied entry to higher levels of education. This discrimination greatly threatened their long-term socioeconomic wellbeing. In a 1979 comparative study of education policy in Bavaria and Berlin, researcher Ray Rist found that only 0.0046% of guest-worker children living in the Federal Republic were studying in academic high schools (*Gymnasium*). In contrast, twenty-two percent of native German youth reached *Gymnasium*. Rist concluded that "if the organizational and pedagogical practices [of German education were] allowed to continue as they [were] presently constituted, they [would] ensure that the children of the guest workers for several generations to come [would] be relegated to the underclass position now occupied by their parents." In Rist's view, this bigoted education policy would guarantee "the deliberate perpetuation from generation to generation of a prejudicial and discriminatory social system." Whereas foreign guest workers were being forced to remain "on

[188] KAS, BPA- Abt. Nachrichten WDF FAZIT. Interview with Prof. Friedhelm Farthmann, Minister für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales in NRW, "zur Problematik der Aufnahme von Aussiedlern aus Polen—hier in Nordrhein-Westfalen," February 15, 1976.

the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder," the May Program ensured that ethnic German *Aussiedler* received an educational—and, with it, financial—leg up.[189]

Integration through Housing

Helping the *Aussiedler* obtain adequate and affordable housing was a second core feature of the May Program. Some nationwide housing policies existed prior to 1976, but these had become inadequate. For instance, a 1957 revision of the Equalization of Burdens Law had placed a cap of 1,700 DM on compensation for the loss of household goods and possessions, but as Maihofer's task force pointed out in April 1976, for a family of four—a frequent accounting unit in these matters—this amount was "not even remotely sufficient."[190] The waiting time between arrival in West Germany and finding permanent housing was also problematic. Most *Aussiedler* ended up in a sort of temporary-housing limbo for one to two years after reaching West Germany, slightly more stable than a transit-camp setting but not yet a place to call their own. In Bavaria, for instance, only ten percent of *Aussiedler* immediately found permanent housing.[191] Those who left the camps often ended up staying with relatives, but this too was a short-term solution at best. Of the *Aussiedler* who arrived in 1975 and early 1976, almost 75% belonged to families larger than four people. This number was significantly higher than the West German average, in which only 39% of families fit this description.[192] While *Aussiedler* with relatives

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[189] Ray C. Rist, "On the Education of Guest-Worker Children in Germany: A Comparative Study of Policies and Programs in Bavaria and Berlin," *The School Review* 87, no. 3 (1979): 244–45.
[190] BArch B106/53789 Letter from the leader of the Projektgruppe "Eingliederung von Aussiedlern und Zuwanderer" to the Head of the Directorate (*Unterabteilungsleiter*), "Betr: Eingliederung von Aussiedlern," April 1, 1976.
[191] Das Bayerische Staatsministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung, "Aussiedler in Bayern," July 7, 1976, p. 4. According to this report, as of 1976, Bavaria had fifteen transitional housing areas (*Übergangswohnheime*) and one *Aussiedler* camp with a total capacity of 3,600.
[192] BArch B106/97157, Die Werbe, "Aktion Gemeinsinn 1977, Hilfe für Aussiedler: Eine Empfehlung zum Kommunikationskonzept," p. 7.

might be better off in some ways than their counterparts in temporary housing, their quarters could still be quite cramped.

Lack of permanent housing could prove detrimental for *Aussiedler* integration, as it prevented their full adjustement to West German society. For this reason, the Interior Ministry's *Aussiedler* task force report considered housing one of the "most urgent immediate measures for the integration of the resettlers."[193] Friedhelm Farthmann of the North Rhine-Westphalian Labor Ministry came to a somewhat less dramatic, but similar conclusion. When asked in February 1976 whether *Aussiedler* ghettoization was occurring, Farthmann gave a qualified "no." He stated that the temporary housing units (*Übergangswohnheime*) were not necessarily ghettos and many resettlers chose to stay there for a few years in order to save money. At the same time, though, his office received many complaints about conditions in the temporary housing sites.[194] For both Maihofer and Farthmann, getting the *Aussiedler* settled into permanent homes in West German communities became a priority.

Yet while planners agreed that housing was important for integration, they did not necessarily see eye to eye about how to proceed. In discussions surrounding the May Program, Housing Minister Karl Ravens argued against providing extra funding for *Aussiedler* accommodations. Ravens pointed out that the government made billions of Deutschmark in grants and loans available to federal states to support the construction of social housing projects for the approximately 34,000 East Germans, resettlers, and other evacuees expected that year.[195]

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[193] "Eine solche Eingliederungshilfe ist eine der vordringlichsten Sofortmassnahmen zur Integration der Aussiedler." BArch B106/53789, Letter from the leader of the Projektgruppe "Eingliederung von Aussiedlern und Zuwanderer" to the Head of the Directorate (*Unterabteilungsleiter*), "Betr: Eingliederung von Aussiedlern," April 1, 1976, p. 2.
[194] KAS, BPA- Abt. Nachrichten WDF FAZIT. Interview with Prof. Friedhelm Farthmann, Minister für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales in NRW, "zur Problematik der Aufnahme von Aussiedlern aus Polen—hier in Nordrhein-Westfalen," February 15, 1976.
[195] BArch 106/53789, "Wohnungsbau für Aussiedler und Flüchtlinge, Wortlaut einer im Bulletin der Bundesregierung vom 10.4.1976 veröffentlichten Erklärung."

Only if the number of annual arrivals exceeded 44,000 people should the government provide additional funding.[196] In a similar vein, Ravens advised against special treatment for *Aussiedler* in housing allowances (*Wohngeld*). Rather than giving more money to resettlers, which other displaced groups in West Germany would consider unfair, Ravens recommended focusing on matching the housing locations to the job opportunities. In his view, once resettlers started earning a paycheck, they would no longer need *Wohngeld* subsidies anyway.[197] Instead of granting more federal funds for "public supported social housing," Ravens urged states to "ensure that existing dwellings are made available to *Aussiedler* and refugees to the greatest possible extent."[198]

In keeping with these suggestions, the May Program earmarked new funding and arranged for aid from other sources. Specifically, the West German government set aside 170 million DM annually for *Aussiedler* housing in addition to the money already slated for "social housing" (*sozialer Wohnungsbau*) for incoming resettlers. The amount could later be increased to reflect the expected number of people.[199] When 57,762 people came in 1976 alone, for example, the government increased their allocation to approximately 244 million DM. Additionally, the federal government provided discounted rates on *Aussiedler* loans by offering interest subsidies and covering the costs of refinancing. Individual states likewise committed

[196] BArch 106/53790, Projektgruppe "Eingliederung von Aussiedlern und Zuwanderern," March 25, 1976; "Niederschrift über die Ressortbesprechung auf Abteilungsleiterebene über Eingliederungsmassnahmen für Aussiedler im Bundesministerium des Innern am 25.3.1976," p. 9.
[197] Ibid.
[198] BArch 106/53789, "Wohnungsbau für Aussiedler und Flüchtlinge, Wortlaut einer im Bulletin der Bundesregierung vom 10.4.1976 veröffentlichten Erklärung;" BArch 106/53790 Projektgruppe "Eingliederung von Aussiedlern und Zuwanderern," March 25, 1976. "Niederschrift über die Ressortbesprechung auf Abteilungsleiterebene über Eingliederungsmassnahmen für Aussiedler im Bundesministerium des Innern am 25.3.1976," p. 9.
[199] BArch B 106/53789, Letter from Maihofer to Dr. Bernhard Vogel, President of the Central Committee of the German Catholics, May 24, 1976.

almost 200 million DM for resettler housing.[200] Institutions in the private financial sector also offered support. For instance, the Frankfurt Mortgage Bank pitched a plan to fund 20 million DM's worth of mortgage loans to expellees and refugees.[201]

Lastly, the May Program arranged "set-up help" (*Einrichtungshilfe)* for resettlers.[202] These low- or no-interest loans were designed to offset the costs of starting a household in West Germany. Resettlers who had arrived since January 1, 1974, were eligible for up to 3,000 DM individually or 10,000 DM per family, depending on the number of members.[203] With this consumer credit, resettlers could more easily purchase furniture and appliances to outfit their new West German homes. Apparently, resettlers responded eagerly to this financial aid.[204] After noting these "loans [were] in far higher demand than was originally expected," the State Refugee Administration requested more funds from Maihofer in October 1977.[205] Individual state governments in Hamburg, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, and Schleswig-Holstein created their

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[200] Hessen, for example, promised 60 million DM to provide approximately 1,000 new housing units annually to *Aussiedler*. Similarly, in October 1977, Baden-Württemberg pledged to set aside an additional 120 million DM annually to fund *Aussiedler* housing construction. BArch B106/53789, "Der hessiche Sozialminister Mitteilungen für Vertriebene, Flüchtline, Kriegssachgeschädigte, Evakuierte, Heimkehrer, Politische Häftlinge," Heft 24, April-June 1976, p. 2; BArch B106/97123, "Plenarsitzung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesflüchtlingsverwaltungen," October 18, 1977, p. 13.

[201] The Interior Ministry and the *Aussiedler* task force both recommended partnering with the bank, noting that a relationship with the largest private mortgage bank in West Germany would make it much easier for *Aussiedler* to receive housing loans. BArch B106/53789, Letter from Projektgruppe VtK I to MinDirig. Fuchs, "Betr: Einschaltung des Wiedereingliederungsfonds des Europarates (sic) bei der Gewährung von Darlehen für den Wohnungsbau an Aussiedler," September 20, 1976. BArch B106/53789, Projektgruppe VtK I, "Betr: Einschaltung des Wiedereingliederungsfonds des Europarats bei der Gewährung von Darlehen für den Wohnungsbau an Aussiedler," September 24, 1976.

[202] "Länder, Wohlfahrtsverbände und andere Stellen fordern immer wieder nachdrücklich eine 'Einrichtungshilfe,' die es den Aussiedlern ermöglichen soll, die erforderliche Wohnungseinrichtung zu beschaffen."
BArch B106/53789, April 1, 1976 letter from the leader of the Projektgruppe "Eingliederung von Aussiedlern und Zuwanderer" to the Head of the Directorate (*Unterabteilungsleiter*), "Betr: Eingliederung von Aussiedlern.'

[203] BArch B106/53789, Pressedienst des Bundesministeriums des Innern, "Programm für die Eingliederung von Aussiedlern von Bundeskabinett verabschiedet," May 12, 1976, Anlage 2, p. 4.

[204] BArch 106/97157, "Ansprache des Bundesministers des Innern, Professor Dr. Werner Maihofer, anlässlich der Präsentation der Kampagne 'Starthilfe für Aussiedler' der Aktion Gemeinsinn e.V. am 21. Dezember 1976 in Bonn," p. 3.

[205] BArch 106/97123, "Plenarsitzung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesflüchtlingsverwaltungen," October 18, 1977, p. 9.

own versions of the set-up loans.[206] These measures showed that, not only did both the state and federal governments agree that *Aussiedler* were worthy of assistance, but they understood that affordable, permanent housing was crucial to their social and financial integration. Moreover, counteracting resettler "ghettoization" tendencies was essential. To be German, the *Aussiedler* needed to live among their fellow West Germans and not in a separate, "Polish German" enclave.

"Germans" Learning German: Language Barriers & Classes

Helping resettlers overcome language barriers was another top priority of the May Program. Although most resettlers were technically "ethnic Germans" and hailed from formerly German areas of Poland, few of them spoke German fluently by the mid-1970s. A combination of Polish policies and largescale emigration of German speakers, especially during the 1950s, were to blame. As explained in the previous chapter, after receiving large sections of eastern Germany through Potsdam Agreement's border restructuring, Poland began aggressive "re-Polonization" efforts both in the area's physical landscape—such as through destroying German inscriptions on buildings—and among the area's remaining population. These measures included cracking down on the use of German, especially in the "Recovered Territories" of Upper Silesia, where thanks to their Catholicism and their expertise in local industry, many Germans managed to avoid expulsion.[207]

[206] BArch 106/97123, "Plenarsitzung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Landesflüchtlingsverwaltungen," October 18, 1977, p. 13.
[207] Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory*, 189; Service, *Germans to Poles*. For a thorough explanation of the initial expulsion process and its continuation through the late 1940s in the Lower Silesian city Wrocław/Breslau, see Thum, *Uprooted*.

Anti-German policies were especially harsh in Upper Silesia. One reason could be traced back to the 1921 plebiscite when 59.4% of the ethnically ambiguous Silesian population voted to remain with Germany. [208] Provincial Governor Aleksander Zawadzki likely had the Silesian's pro-German tendency in mind when he decided in 1946 to ban German in the Opole region and to instate harsh punishments for German usage in 1947.[209] These policies extended to the private sphere, which meant that people technically could be fined for speaking German in their own homes.[210] While this law was certainly stricter on paper than in reality—for instance, older Germans continued to use their native tongue, and younger ones often learned the language from their parents—the ban largely achieved its desired effect: fearing reprisals, many parents no longer spoke German with their children.[211] As a result, by the time of the *Aussiedler* emigration of the 1970s, many young ethnic Germans had only rudimentary knowledge of their parents' mother tongue. [212]

That being said, some West German employment agency representatives did give positive feedback about *Aussiedler* German-speaking abilities. For instance, according to the 1973 Federal Labor Office report, career counselors who had met individually with resettlers concluded that 89% of these newcomers understood German well enough to work in the Federal Republic. However, the report also warned against taking these relatively glowing assessments at face value. Because career counselors communicated were accustomed to appraising people who

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[208] James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).
[209] Service, *Germans to Poles*, 237–56. Page 241 discusses the ban on German in the private sphere.
[210] Service, *Germans to Poles*, 241.
[211] This could differ greatly from family to family. For instance, Rudolf Urban, born in 1980 and current editor of the *Schlesisches Wochenblatt* newspaper in Opole, grew up speaking German with his family. In contrast, Zuzanna Donath-Kasiura, born in 1972, learned German only as an adult. She attributes her parents' decision to no longer speak German to their fear of reprisals by the Polish authorities. Zuzanna Donath-Kasiura, interview by author. Opole, Poland. July 14, 2017.
[212] KAS, "Arbeit- und ratsuchende Aussiedler aus der Volksrepublik Polen bei den Arbeitsämtern im Jahr 1971," ANBA Nr.4/1973, p. 271.

spoke limited German, their expectations for "mastering" German were low. Moreover, since these assessment conversations focused on work-related topics, they only required a limited vocabulary. Accurately evaluating a person's holistic German comprehension in this context was a difficult task and, arguably, not the goal of the career counselors' assessments.

Insufficient German mastery created significant problems for resettlers after arriving in West Germany. Another 1973 report, this one by compiled by the State Refugee Administration, estimated that one third of all incoming *Aussiedler* could not understand colloquial German. The group posited that the statistics were likely even more dismal when one considered that resettlers sought to hide their language deficiencies. By relying on a handful of stock phrases and limiting their conversations with native Germans, resettlers tried to hide the fact that they were linguistic "outsiders."[213] Yet their language struggles remain clear in the archival record. Error-ridden letters written to the embassy and to individual politicians reveal widespread grammatical, usage, and spelling problems in resettler German usage. Indeed, even when *Aussiedler* declared their nationality by stating that they "felt German," they opted to use their actual mother tongue, proclaiming in Polish, "*czuję się Niemcem.*"[214]

These language problems were especially acute among younger and working-age immigrants. Those born after 1940, who accounted for more than half the *Aussiedler* from Poland, could speak and understand very little German. Even those from the older generation might experience trouble with language comprehension, especially regarding current-day colloquialisms. An amusing anecdote in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* underscored this

[213] KAS, "Arbeit- und ratsuchende Aussiedler aus der Volksrepublik Polen bei den Arbeitsämtern im Jahr 1971," ANBA Nr. 4/1973, p. 271. See also Minister für Arbeit, Gesundheit und Soziales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (Hrsg.): Probleme der beruflichen Eingliederung der Aussiedler, a.a.O. pg. 28

[214] See for instance AIPN Ka 030/212, fol. 24, "Analiza działalności rewizjonistyczno-odwetowej i wywiadowczej za lata 1960-62 z terenu Zabrzu," p. 27.

reality. "*Halbtagsarbeit*?" asked a confused resettler, "I don't know what that means." A half-day's work, or at least a German term for it, apparently did not exist in Poland.[215] Humor aside, everyday instances of linguistic confusion like this one could present very real barriers to integration. While resettlers may not initially need to speak German fluently to find work—after all, most foreign workers had only a limited knowledge of the language—German mastery would be essential for longt-term social and economic advancement.[216]

In view of these problems, *Aussiedler* language training emerged as a major priority of the May Program. As with jobs and housing, the Plan built on existing initiatives. The Goethe Institute, for instance, could already accommodate 17,000 resettlers annually, and they expressed willingness to increase their capacity. Beginning in 1973, the Otto Benecke Foundation organized *Aussiedler* intensive language boarding schools, often equipped with high-tech language labs. Additionally, the government pledged 87 million DM annually to fund six months of German language classes for approximately 12,000 resettlers each year.[217]

The May Program continued to support initiatives such as these, while also spearheading significant changes, particularly for non-working adults. Whereas previous funding plans had focused exclusively on resettlers who would be joining the work force, the May Program added free language classes for elderly people, stay-at-home mothers, and those unable to work for other personal reasons.[218] Because such individuals lacked regular exposure to West German society through school or work, they stood at particular risk of "social isolation," as Dr. Rolf

[215] Sabine Gerbaulet, "Umsiedler aus Polen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 12,1972. Quoted in KAS, ANBA Nr. 4/1973, p. 269.
[216] KAS, "Arbeit- und ratsuchende Aussiedler aus der Volksrepublik Polen bei den Arbeitsämtern im Jahr 1971," ANBA Nr.4/1973, p. 272.
[217] BArch 106/53789, Letter likely from Maihofer to the Ministerbüro Herrn ORR Jauck, March 29, 1976.
[218] Bundestagsdrucksache 7/5788, p. 22.

Meinecke of the Committee for Education and Knowledge, pointed out.[219] By funding their language courses, the Program sought to counteract their natural tendency toward marginalization.

The planners stood by their commitment to older *Aussiedler*. When funding obstacles arose in subsequent years, the Federal Ministry for Youth, Family, and Health (BMJFG) agreed to allocate funding for supplementary education for resettlers between the ages of 35 and 50. These changes would ideally keep these in-between-aged newcomers from falling through the administrative funding cracks.[220] Updated learning materials further reflected this commitment to non-working adults. Beginning in 1977, the Goethe Institute published a *Deutsch für Aussiedler* series with textbooks for a "language and information program directed toward adult resettlers who [were] not yet employed," especially housewives. With simulated conversations with bureaucrats and copies of actual forms to complete, the textbook aimed to combine language with social integration.[221] The decision to create such books specifically for non-working resettlers shows a recognition of their unique needs and a commitment to meeting them.

Employment-related language training for *Aussiedler* also significantly improved with the May Program. A July 1976 amendment to the Labor Promotion Act (AFG) provided additional funding for resettler language courses. Employees who needed to learn German for their "occupational integration" could receive an allowance as well as compensation for all additional costs associated with the language class, including transportation, textbooks, and course fees. During this time, they were also eligible for an allowance of 80% of their potential

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[219] BArch B106/42854, Ausschuss für Bildung und Wissenschaft, "Betr: Sonderprogramm für 35 jährige Zuwanderer. Hier: Beschlussvorschlage für den Ausschuss für Bildung und Wissenschaft," November 9, 1977.
[220] BArch B106/42854, BMI, Gemeinsames Ministerialblatt, Ausgabe A, July 26, 1978.
[221] The introduction of the *Deutsch für Aussiedler* textbook highlighted the dual purpose of language instruction and integration for adult German classes. The book's six thematic sections dealt with different aspects of daily life in West Germany: cars, money, shopping, living/housing, illness, and job applications. Walter Lohfert, *Deutsch für Aussiedler* (Munich: Hueber, 1979).

earnings.[222] Youth and young adults up to age 35 who required German to continue their higher education would likewise receive support.[223]

The language courses supported by the *Sonderprogramm* further endorsed the idealized resettler image by portraying them as victimized Germans. Prevented from speaking their ancestral language, these immigrants needed instruction in their own linguistic heritage. That the planners chose to fund language courses for older and non-working adults underscores the notion that, as oppressed co-nationals, *Aussiedler* warranted special treatment. Even if a resettler could not contribute to West Germany through traditional employment, he or she was a valuable member of society by virtue of being a resettler. Through supporting existing language programs and funding new ones, the *Sonderprogramm* reaffirmed the idea that *Aussiedler* truly were "coming home" to West Germany. From the Federal Republic's perspective, postwar history and Polish policies, rather than the absence of German heritage or the mutability of ethnicity, were to blame. By 1976, the image of resettlers as victimized ethnic Germans was so solidly established that nothing, not even the obvious inability to speak or understand German, could shake this notion of their national belonging.

Social Integration & *Patenschaften*

The need for jobs, housing, and language courses all presented real obstacles for the *Aussiedler*, but these problems paled in comparison to the challenges of social integration. As numerous newspaper articles pointed out, many resettlers did not feel at home in West Germany. A May 1976 feature in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* explained that resettlers frequently

[222] BArch B106/97157, BMI "Stand der Durchführung des Programms der Bundesregierung für die Eingliederung von Aussiedlern und Zuwanderern vom 12. May 1976," December 24, 1975, p. 3.
[223] Bundestagsdrucksache 7/5788, p. 22.

experienced alienation and "injured feelings of self-worth."[224] A *Spiegel* article from that March highlighted the frustrations of Peter Heidenberger, a resettler from Breslau. Despite earning 1,300 DM per month as a bus driver and living in a brand-new, three-room apartment, Heidenberger remained unhappy and wanted to return to Poland. As he explained in a letter to the Polish embassy in Cologne, "Even after just a few months in the Federal Republic of Germany, I was convinced that I made a mistake [in coming here]. Apart from the [German] language, there is nothing tying me to West Germany." Heidenberger, like many other resettlers, wanted permission to go back to Poland.[225] Significantly, West German officials tended to interpret Heidenberger's story as an admonition for the native population to help more with integration, rather than as an indicator that the "living as Germans among Germans" itself rhetoric might be flawed. In the policymaker's view, establishing personal connections held the key. If the newcomers could simply build relationships with their fellow citizens, they would feel more at home in the Federal Republic.

Cultural differences, however, also contributed to *Aussiedler* feelings of foreignness. Experiences under the communist state, particularly negative encounters with the Polish government, had deeply affected the resettler psyche, as a 1973 Federal Labor Office report pointed out. "Because 'the State' had largely presaged the fate of individuals in many areas," the report explained, "resettlers are often not accustomed to making decisions on their own authority."[226] This inexperience with agency complicated the resettlers' adjustment to the democratic and individualistic Federal Republic, where everyday decisions often seemed daunting. Some organizations set up initiatives to help ease this transition. Churches and

[224] "Spätaussiedler in einem fremden Land," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 15, 1976.
[225] "Polen-Aussiedler: wie ein Schiffbrüchiger," *Der Spiegel*, March 19, 1976.
[226] KAS, "Arbeit- und ratsuchende Aussiedler aus der Volksrepublik Polen bei den Arbeitsämtern im Jahr 1971," ANBA Nr.4/1973, p. 269.

community organizations implemented "set-up weeks" (*Aufbauwochen*) earlier in the 1970s. During these retreats, resettlers learned about life in West Germany, received tips for navigating bureaucratic mazes, and commiserated with newcomers in similar positions.[227] Some border camps also appointed "special advisors" to offer resources and insight to the resettlers.[228] However, if the newcomers were to find their political and economic footing in the West, additional guidance would be necessary. Sponsorship pairings (*Patenschaften*) between resettlers and West German volunteers, publicized with the help of the federal government, emerged as the best possible solution.

Although the May Program discussed the need for better social integration, the administration took its first concrete steps several months later by initiating a public-awareness campaign on behalf of resettlers. Organized with a non-profit group called "Action Community Spirit" or "*Aktion Gemeinsinn*," the campaign officially began in December 1976 and ran until January 1978.[229] The initiative targeted distinct segments of the West German population through a series of strategic advertisements which drew attention to resettler-specific challenges and recruited West German citizens to volunteer as "start helpers" (*Starthelfer*) to ease their transition to life in the Federal Republic. Similar pairing initiatives already existed within individual political parties or organized by different charity organizations, but this campaign represented the first nation-wide, centrally-organized attempt to recruit volunteers to help the *Aussiedler*.[230] These ads appeared in 300 newspapers and fifty magazines across the Federal

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[227] Landeskirchliches Archiv Hannover E70/2, "Konzeption für Aufbauwochen mit Umsiedlern. Entwurf der Trägergruppen der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland," July 20, 1976.
[228] An April 4, 1976, article in the *Mainz Allgemeine Zeitung* highlighted some of these steps being taken in Hesse.
[229] Founding in 1957, *Aktion Gemeinsinn* organized dozens of socially-oriented public awareness initiatives. For a complete history of *Aktion Gemeinsinn* and list of campaigns, see *Gemeinsinn: vom Mutmachen sich einzumischen. Aktion Gemeinsinn, 1957-2015.* (Wuppertal: Nacke, 2015).
[230] For CDU recruited *Patenschaften*, see KAS 04-015-019/2, "CDU Informiert: Mitteilungen für Heimatvertriebenen und Flüchtlinge," September 14, 1976; *Das Ostpreussenblatt*, "Die Aussiedlung: Glück und Katastrophe," 27/19, April 17, 1976. About the German Red Cross: BArch B106/53789, Red Cross letter from June

Republic, but they focused geographically on North Rhine-Westphalia, where 54% of all *Aussiedler* settled.[231] Because over half of all resettlers came from Upper Silesia, many publications appealed directly to expellees from that region.[232] Along with these advertisements, the campaign also distributed an informational pamphlet titled "Start Help for Start Helpers" (*Starthilfe für Starthelfer*), which contained practical tips for West Germans to assist their newly arrived neighbors.[233]

Since the campaign's overarching goal was to arrange sponsorship pairings between local West Germans and newly arrived *Aussiedler,* each ad contained a questionnaire which interested citizens could complete and return. *Aktion Gemeinsinn* representatives then passed this information along to local charities and religious organizations, who matched the "start helper" to resettler individuals or families. These volunteers walked alongside the newcomers, both figuratively and literally, as they settled into life in the Federal Republic. By helping resettlers through the practical steps of their adjustment—such as registering with the city, steering clear of shady housing contracts, and learning how to shop in West German grocery stores—these sponsors could help transform *Aussiedler* integration from a lofty ideal into a lived reality.[234]

The choice of the word "*Patenschaft*," which in religious contexts denotes the godparent-godchild relationship, underscores the personal, even paternal nature of these pairings. More than just a guide through a bureaucratic maze, the sponsor would ideally become the resettler's first

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15, 1976. In April 1976, SPD Federal Commissioner Holger Boerner called for his fellow party members strive for better "humanitarian contact" with *Aussiedler* by inviting the newcomers into their homes. See KAS, DPA, April 14, 1976. For the FDP, see "FDP fordert verbesserte Eingliederung der Aussiedler," DPA, May 11, 1976.

[231] To put this percentage in perspective, Baden-Württemberg, the "second-place" state for *Aussiedler* resettlement, only received 10.4% of the newcomers. BArch B106/97157, Die Werbe, "Aktion Gemeinsinn 1977, Hilfe für Aussiedler: Eine Empfehlung zum Kommunikationskonzept," p. 9.

[232] BArch B106/97157, Die Werbe, "Aktion Gemeinsinn 1977, Hilfe für Aussiedler: Eine Empfehlung zum Kommunikationskonzept," p. 5.

[233] BArch B106/97157, "Aktion Gemeinsinn- 1958 bis 1978," p.5.

[234] BArch B106/97157, Projektgruppe VtK I- 933 900-3/0, August 18, 1976.

friend in West Germany and thereby offer a critical step toward social belonging. Maihofer expanded on this concept in a letter to the chairman of a charity organization, saying, "every resettler family and individual should have a local *Paten* family, who from the beginning can be there for their 'godchild' and make his or her problems their own."[235] Yet Maihofer was also quick to point out that resettlers were not charity cases needing German goodwill; these migrants brought their own experiences, cultural insights, and expertise from which the local population could directly benefit. Thus, in recruiting "start helpers," the campaign emphasized what resettlers could *contribute*, not just what they lacked. To the lonely, for instance, resettlers could offer friendship. For clubs with dwindling participation—especially expellee organizations and other East-oriented groups—resettlers could revitalize membership. Resettlers could even serve as surrogate family members, as one ad pointed out, "Since becoming start helpers, we have an *Oma* (grandmain the family again."[236] While the specifics differed, the core message of the advertisements remained consistent: resettlers could enrich the lives of those who welcomed them.

Even as print ads sought to recruit "start helpers", the campaign also worked to make *Aussiedler* aware of support available to them. *Die Werbe*, the Essen-based marketing agency hired to design the campaign, chose to brand the initiative with a green anchor. This symbol appeared on all resettler-related pamphlets and in the "Pathfinder for Resettlers" (*Wegweiser für Aussiedler*) brochure that each newcomer received in the transit camps. Additionally, the campaign distributed green anchor stickers and buttons, which West Germans could post in their windows, on their doors, or wear on their clothing to designate themselves or their businesses as

[235] BArch B106/53789, Letter from Maihofer to Prof. Dr. Erwin Krämer, Vorsitzender des Deutschen Paritätischen Wohlfahrtsverbändes, April 9, 1976.
[236] BArch B106/97157, Die Werbe, "Aktion Gemeinsinn 1977, Hilfe für Aussiedler: Eine Empfehlung zum Kommunikationskonzept," p. 40.

"*Aussiedler*-friendly." Ideally, resettlers would recognize the anchor and would feel comfortable asking for help.[237] Through both the anchor and the advertisements, the campaign aimed to bridge connections between resettlers and citizens who could assist them. These pairings would then provide the crucial link between the *Aussiedler* and their new environment in small, but no less significant ways. As Maihofer explained, "Often it is the littlest things that can make the start of a resettler's life in our midst decisively easier. The resettler must understand how shopping works here and to what one must pay attention when doing business. He must see that completing paperwork is not rocket science. And above all else, he must come to understand that the authorities in our country are here to help the citizens," in contrast to the untrustworthy communist state.[238] By accompanying the newcomers, the *Paten* could make intimidating tasks into innocuous errands, and the resettlers could finally start feeling settled and at home.

Public Relations and Public Opinion?

Maihofer officially announced the *Aktion Gemeinsinn* campaign on December 21, 1976, and advertisements appeared in the press starting in January 1977. Though the initiative's direct impact is difficult to gauge, at least 35,000 copies of the "Start Help for Resettlers" brochure reached the hands of interested West Germans before the campaign's completion in January 1978. Moreover, 1,150 West German citizens offered to become start helpers during this time, and local charities paired them with approximately that many individual *Aussiedler*.[239]

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[237] BArch B106/97157, Die Werbe, "Aktion Gemeinsinn 1977, Hilfe für Aussiedler: Eine Empfehlung zum Kommunikationskonzept," p. 21, 30.
[238] BArch B106/97157, "Ansprache des Bundesministers des Innern, Professor Dr. Werner Maihofer, anlässlich der Präsentation der Kampagne 'Starthilfe für Aussiedler' der Aktion Gemeinsinn e.V. am 21. Dezember 1976 in Bonn," p. 5.
[239] KAS, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, Bulletin Nr. 16, "Dank an Aktion Gemeinsinn," February 24, 1978.

That so many West Germans volunteered to help resettlers is significant. Yet the campaign's *existence*, rather than its quantitative results, is far more intriguing. As the February 1976 survey showed, 77% of adults surveyed said that resettlers from Poland were "welcome" and had "a right to their homeland." Because "they [experienced] an especially difficult fate, […] one should help them."[240] These survey responses suggest that many West Germans felt compassion toward resettlers and viewed their needs as legitimate. Yet if this was the case, then why did Maihofer believe that a public relations campaign on behalf of the resettlers was necessary? Put differently, what does the campaign's existence reveal about the image of resettlers in West German society?

Assessments by Maihofer and *Die Werbe* suggest that, rather than automatically embracing the resettlers, many West Germans often felt disdain toward them. According to the marketing experts, "a large section of the population [lacked] openness and tolerance toward people who qualif[ied] as a minority […] This [lack of tolerance was] the case with guest workers, but it [was] also true of resettlers to a certain extent." While the marketers recognized that ignorance about the resettler situation and a general state of apathy were partially to blame, they concluded that negative stereotypes about *Aussiedler* lay at the root. Only by targeting these prejudices and improving the public perception of resettlers could the campaign convince people to help. *Die Werbe*'s marketing strategy explicitly contrasted these images:

> "The resettlers should not be presented as helpless old people, as sick people, or as vagrants. Resettlers are brave individuals who were not scared off by 12 [exit visa] applications. Resettlers are powerful people who [once] had homes, property, careers, and incomes and will have them again. Resettlers can share life experiences. The problem

[240] KAS, "Polenverträge: Polenaussiedler sind bei Bundesbürger willkommen," DPA, February 27, 1976.

> of resettlers must be normalized, made positive, so that a helping hand can be more easily extended and the 'fear of contagion' (*Angst vor der Ansteckung*) [can go] away."[241]

Such unfavorable conceptions of *Aussiedler* were apparently far-reaching. During his 1976 Christmas speech, Federal President Scheel urged his fellow citizens "not to treat the Germans coming to us from the Polish sphere of control and from other Eastern European states as foreigners because many of them have not mastered the German language."[242] The aforementioned survey detected some condescending views of resettlers; a quarter of the respondents said that resettlers had come "too late" and that "West Germany itself [had] too much unemployment and other economic problems." They concluded that it was better to "leave them where they are at home," thereby implying that the Federal Republic was not their true home.[243]

To counteract these negative stereotypes, *Die Werbe*'s marketing strategists intentionally emphasized the newcomers as assets. Resettlers could offer new perspectives on West German culture. They could become best friends to young children. They could even become part of the family. In other words, *Aussiedler* could enrich the lives of ordinary West Germans who embraced them, if only these people would move beyond their apathy, ignorance, and hostility.[244] As with employment, where resettlers were seen as valuable financial investments, the campaign cast them as *worthwhile social investments*. These immigrants could enrich the Federal Republic not just economically or culturally but personally, but their fellow Germans

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[241] BArch B106/97157, Die Werbe, "Aktion Gemeinsinn 1977, Hilfe für Aussiedler: Eine Empfehlung zum Kommunikationskonzept," p. 24.
[242] "Scheel fordert zu größerem Verständnis für Umsiedler auf," *Die Welt*, December 24, 1976. Quoted in Jannis Panagiotidis, "Aussiedler/Spätaussiedler," Online-Lexikon zur Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa, 2015.
[243] KAS, "Polenverträge: Polenaussiedler sind bei Bundesbürger willkommen," DPA, February 27, 1976.
[244] BArch B106/97157, Die Werbe, "Aktion Gemeinsinn 1977, Hilfe für Aussiedler," p. 17.

must be willing to welcome them. Their suffering on behalf of the nation qualified them for substantial aid upon "returning home," and their presence could enhance West German society.

Why Help the Resettlers? Ideological Underpinnings

The tropes used to describe *Aussiedler* as "worthy" of help had longer-term antecedents, particularly in the rhetoric surrounding POWs returning from Soviet camps in the mid-1950s. As Frank Biess has demonstrated, the POWs' "homecoming" caused a significant shift in West German discourse. Instead of victims of Soviet imprisonment, these returnees were cast as "survivors of totalitarianism." These words were far more than a simple semantic change; this statement reframed the abused, emasculated victims of communism into living martyrs for Germany and the "free West." Having suffered in Soviet camps on behalf of the German nation, the returnees arrived as heroes—weakened, yes; in need of care, yes; but heroes all the same. According to Biess, the resulting notion of "survivors of totalitarianism" served a vital function in West Germany's societal reconstruction in the 1950s.[245]

Though this type of narrative lay dormant in the following decades, it never fully died. After the Warsaw Treaty's nod toward a Polish emigration policy, the image of the victimized-survivor reawakened in West Germany. Politicians and reporters alike drew upon the established rhteoric about ethnic German suffering on behalf of the nation, and these images bore striking similarities to the POW case twenty years prior. As the captured soldiers had suffered for the German nation, the resettlers had suffered for their Germanness. Whereas POWs had been "unmanned" and physically beaten, resettlers had experienced discrimination and cultural

[245] Frank Biess, "Survivors of Totalitarianism: Returning POWs and the Reconstruction of Masculine Citizenship in West Germany, 1945-1955," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 57–82.

repression, unable to achieve their full potential or openly practice their ethnic heritage. Finally, the reframing of the POWs was based on a "redemptive interpretation of Soviet captivity"—according to the original narrative, the reconstruction of the individual soldier would propel the "rechristianization" and reconstruction of West German society[246]—the resettlers' arrival too promised a salvific sort of function. Though victimized by communism, when integrated, the resettlers could positively transform their communities and, ultimately, the entire Federal Republic. As the "most worthy immigrants," the *Aussiedler* embodied the victim-to-victor narrative that had belonged to POWs decades earlier.

By framing the resettler influx as a "homecoming," West German officials sidestepped contemporary questions related to immigration. In contrast to guest workers, who were increasingly excluded in the 1970s, ethnic German migrants were considered entitled to belonging or as "having a right to their homeland."[247] Their immigration and integration, framed in terms of their disproportionate suffering after the war, made the *Aussiedler* into an easy rallying point for West German authorities and citizens. As the war's belated victims, persecuted for their German ethnicity, resettlers had a special moral claim to West German aid and care in ways that guest workers did not. This discussion harkened back to an old but robust debate about citizenship and Germanness, one in which the ethnic "right of the blood" clashed with and in many ways triumphed over the "right of the soil."[248]

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[246] Biess, 66.
[247] Stokes offers a thorough examination of guest worker policies and changing conceptions of the family in her recent dissertation. Stokes, "Fear of the Family: Migration and Integration in West Germany, 1955-2000." KAS, "Polenverträge: Polenaussiedler sind bei Bundesbürger willkommen," DPA, February 27, 1976.
[248] For recent contributions to the established *ius soli* vs. *ius sanguinis* debate, see Geoff Eley and Jan Palmowski, *Citizenship and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press, 2008); Sammartino, *The Impossible Border*; Dieter Gosewinkel, *Einbürgern und Ausschließen: Die Nationalisierung der Staatsangehörigkeit vom Deutschen Bund bis zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland.* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

As is typical of collective national memory, both the POW and resettler narratives entailed a measure of selective forgetting.[249] Many soldiers returning from Soviet camps were war criminals who had committed atrocities on the Eastern front. Yet they re-entered a "de-Nazified" society, with West Germany at the geographical and geopolitical heart of the Cold War. In this changed political climate, the need for a strong, rebuilt Germany outweighed any calls for justice. The collective memory thus began in 1945, deftly side-stepping questions about crimes during the war. With this truncation, the West Germans could present POWs not as war criminals but as camp survivors. The resettler story, too, began after the war. In highlighting oppressive Polish "de-Germanization" policies and discrimination against the German minority, the narrative conveniently overlooked the Nazi treatment of Poles during the war. By starting the narrative in 1945, West Germans could portray the resettlers as "sufferers for Germanness" while avoiding the long-term causes for that suffering, namely wartime destruction and the Polish desire for retribution.

The arbitrary role of "fate" in the resettler portrayal likewise echoes postwar collective memory surrounding expellees and other "war-damaged" groups. According to Michael Hughes, West Germans leveraged the suffering of these people to present the entire population as innocent. Through this re-framing of memory, West Germans could portray themselves "as a morally admirable community: not the thoughtless or vicious proponents of a barbaric ideology but the resilient victims of forces beyond their control."[250] This rhetorical sleight-of-hand

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[249] In his 1882 address at the Sorbonne, Ernest Renan famously noted, "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation." See Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?," reprinted in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[250] Michael L. Hughes, "'Through No Fault of Their Own': West Germans Remember Their War Losses," *German History* 18, no. 2 (2000): 210. See also Robert Moeller's study of the "Germans as victims" narrative based on POWs and expellees. Robert G Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Robert G. Moeller, "Germans as Victims?: Thoughts on a Post—Cold War History of World War II's Legacies," *History and Memory* 17, no. 1–2 (April 1, 2005): 145–94.

enabled Germans to avoid blame while advocating for aid. Fate, not the actions of people, had caused their plight.[251] In the same way, the resettlers' presence on the wrong side of the Oder-Neisse-Line, rather than the Nazi war of aggression, had caused their sorrows. The resettlers were victims of an arbitrary fate, and like the expellees and other war-damaged folks they had suffered "through no fault of their own."[252] As innocent victims of fate, resettlers had a moral claim in appealing for West German material assistance.

In sum, the May Program and subsequent campaign set forth a specific, occasionally paradoxical image of resettlers. On the one hand, *Aussiedler* became helpless victims of World War II and Polish communist oppression, in need of material aid and sociopolitical reeducation. Yet the trope about "survivors of totalitarianism," originally used to describe returning POWs in the 1950s, also applied to resettlers.[253] Within this dual framing, the newcomers were depicted as not only prized immigrants to West Germany, but also ethnic German brothers and sisters who deserved special treatment now that they had finally "returned home." These immigrants were thus cast as brave individuals with courage, pluck, and agency, people who were poised to make valuable and unique contributions to West German society. The May Program and subsequent public relations campaign bolstered both conceptions of *Aussiedler*—as vulnerable victims and as worthwhile contributors—and translated them into government policy.

Conclusion

Beyond simply implementing a list of integration measures, the May Program and advertising campaign together called the West German government and citizens to a sense of

[251] Hughes, "'Through No Fault of Their Own': West Germans Remember Their War Losses," 203.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

collective responsibility. The *Sonderprogramm* recognized and sought to ameliorate the financial, linguistic, and cultural struggles of the resettlers. In this sense, the Program should be viewed as a belated and ethnic German form of reparations (*Wiedergutmachung*), in which the Federal Republic recognized and actively took responsibility for the newcomers' postwar hardships. While a handful of dissenters questioned whether resettlers were "too late" to qualify for these war-related benefits, a conviction of their unjust suffering as Germans ultimately prevailed.

The establishment of the May Program indicates that resettler suffering, real or imagined, had become a source of social capital. After *Aussiedler* had successfully leveraged their ethnic roots to obtain an exit visa from Poland, they could "exchange" their presumed suffering for the German nation for material benefits like subsidized housing, supplementary education, and preferential job treatment. The Federal Republic was willing to invest vast sums of money to affirm the resettlers' privileged stance, first giving billions of Deutschmark to Poland for their emigration and then offering millions more to finance their integration. These advantageous policies continued despite the recent economic downturn and ongoing unemployment. Even when funding for guest-worker dependents was cut and these foreign laborers were encouraged to leave, resettlers remained welcome. The message of these collective development remains clear: thanks to their German ethnicity, the late-coming resettlers possessed a unique "right" to immigration and integration in the Federal Republic.

Yet even with all these government programs, resettler belonging could remain elusive. While the *Aktion Gemeinsinn* campaign sought to fix this with sponsorship pairings, appealing to West German goodwill was simply not enough. Resettlers had to be cast as valuable newcomers, deserving of help. Only once the negative *Aussiedler* image was replaced with a more positive

perspective would the West German public fully embrace the newcomers. As North Rhine-Westphalian leaders pointed out, resettlers had a right to belong in their homeland, and their fellow citizens must step up to help make this a reality. "The admission and integration of the expatriates is a matter for us all. If resettlers are to have a home and existence with us, as they rightly expect, then everyone is called upon to open the churches, the organizations, the associations and the clubs […] and to help this work succeed." Making resettlers feel welcome was the responsibility of every West German, for "this aid is to be understood as a debt to the emigrants [which West Germans owed] to our [fellow] countrymen and new citizens."[254] Together, the May Program and the public relations campaign sought to overcome the negative stereotypes and help the resettlers belong in West Germany, their "rightful home."

The combined rhetorical power of ethnicity and guilt in these above examples should not be overlooked. Unlike guest workers, who were seen as foreigners, the resettlers were framed as "brothers and sisters." Their arrival in the Federal Republic was cast not as immigration but as a homecoming. This distinction is important, for it was used to reinforce a sense of collective moral responsibility. In contrast to guest workers, whose real homes were said to lay elsewhere, *Aussiedler* belonged in West Germany. The Federal Republic was their true home, and the West Germans were their family members. Sometimes this was literal—as the "family reunification" program underscored—but more often this family bond was metaphorical. The ethnic Germans and the West Germans had different postwar experiences, but they ultimately belonged to the same broader German family. Because of this shared ethnic heritage, slippery and ill-defined though it often was, West Germans had a moral responsibility to help the resettlers adjust to their new "ancestral" homeland.

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[254] Landesarchiv NRW Rheinland, "Erklärung der Landesregierung zu dem Antrag der Fraktionen der SPD und FDP zur Eingliederung der Aussiedler aus Polen," May 1976.

Chapter 3

Distrust and Unraveling after Helsinki, 1978-1982

For those ethnic Germans awaiting exit visas, the Helsinki agreement seemed like a dream come true. Finally, they could be reunited with their long-lost family members in West Germany, "live as Germans among Germans," and start new lives in the freedom of the West.[255] For Poland, Helsinki was equally significant; after years of negotiations with West German leaders, the country would finally receive much-needed loans in western currency. The agreement also meant that West Germany was taking the Polish state seriously; détente and *Ostpolitik* in the early 1970s had allowed Poland to take its rightful place on the European stage, and the Helsinki agreement of 1975 appeared to confirm the newfound equal footing.[256] For West Germany, too, the emigration agreement with Poland represented a diplomatic victory, as the sustained ethnic emigration which Poland had promised in 1970 could finally take place. After years of an uncomfortable or elusive diplomatic situation, West Germany appeared to be moving toward a working relationship with its nearest Slavic neighbor.

Yet as the end of the 1970s and the emigration arrangement drew nearer, it became increasingly clear that Helsinki's legacy would be mixed. In western Poland, an unrelenting population drain had already started taking its toll on the region's long-struggling economy.[257] For individual émigrés, the agreement's looming expiration date created a sense of urgency and panic; many people resorted to illegal emigration rather than being permanently stuck on the "wrong" side of the border. The agreement also seemed to produce negative effects on

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[255] Tara Zahra interrogates this Cold War narrative of freedom in the West in *The Great Departure*. See Zahra, *The Great Departure*.

[256] For an in-depth account of the loan-negotiation process between Polish and West German leaders, see Ruchniewicz, "Ostpolitik and Poland."

[257] Regional leaders in Opole had already observed the negative economic effects of emigration in a May 1976 report. APO, PWRNwO 2656, fol. 54, "Notatka w sprawie wyjazdów emigracyjnych do RFN z terenów województwa opolskiego," May 26, 1976.

international relations, as the Helsinki emigration arrangement opened the way for misunderstandings, suspicion, and distrust—problems which Poland's imposition of martial law in December 1981 only exacerbated. Focusing on the years 1978 through 1982, this chapter examines Helsinki's lasting impact on West German-Polish relations and argues that the agreement's unintended consequences in both diplomatic affairs and individual migrants' lives served to undercut Polish sovereignty in Silesia. This erosion of authority set the stage for the ascent of the German minority movement in the mid-1980s, a phenomenon at the heart of Chapter Five. While Poland's declining power in its westernmost region had multiple causes, Helsinki sparked an unstoppable form of "humanitarian"-coded emigration which indelibly weakened Polish control over the indigenous population of Upper Silesia.

Helsinki's Unintended Consequences

The Helsinki "credits for people" arrangement was never intended as a long-term answer to the emigration problem. When West German and Polish representatives negotiated the agreement in 1975, finding a workable solution was their primary goal. Ever since the Warsaw Treaty of 1970, the path forward had been rocky. Between the lack of bipartisan support for the treaty in West Germany and Poland's extreme reparations demands—the initial request was for DM 10 billion—the discussions had made only halting progress on the emigration issue.[258] Only in early 1974 when the Federal Republic made it clear that further financial discussions with Poland "would [depend] on Warsaw's release of a substantially greater number of ethnic Germans" did the ball start moving forward.[259] Although Willy Brandt's unexpected resignation

[258] Ruchniewicz, "Ostpolitik and Poland," 54.
[259] Ruchniewicz, 55. According to Stola, a somewhat reversed situation had enabled the earlier emigration of ethnic Germans in the 1950s Family Reunification program. Although Stola does not specify how much money West Germany offered and paid in exchange for emigration, he says that, "West German representatives continued their

in May 1974 slowed the negotiation process down, both sides managed to reach a final agreement in August 1975.[260] Yet this breakthrough, though long in coming, was still viewed as temporary. Poland would allow 125,000 people to emigrate in exchange for 2.3 billion Deutschmark, but there was no guarantee for the time after the deal's expiration in 1980.

At the most basic level, the Helsinki agreement had achieved its intended goal. Over the course of the four years from early 1976 to 1980, Poland annually granted passports to approximately 30,000 "indisputable Germans," for a total of 125,000 émigrés. In turn, West Germany transferred to Poland 2.3 billion Deutschmark in pensions and loans. From a diplomatic standpoint, the agreement also represented an important step toward trust and future cooperation between the two countries.[261] Because it helped Poland and West Germany take steps toward a positive, mutually beneficial relationship, many contemporary observers hailed the Helsinki agreement as a bilateral success.[262]

Emigration & The Economy

Behind the Polish border, however, the situation soon showed signs of unraveling. While the Helsinki agreement had indeed provided Poland with much-needed capital, demographic experts argued that the exodus from Upper Silesia was problematic. The arrangement had

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pressure, using the carrot of credit offers and the stick of trade restrictions." These efforts resulted in the 1955 and 1956 increase in emigration quotas and ultimately the first Family Reunification program. Stola, "Opening a Non-Exit State: The Passport Policy of Communist Poland, 1949–1980," 103.

[260] Ruchniewicz, "Ostpolitik and Poland," 56.

[261] Before the third and final pension payment in November 1978, Bundestag representatives expressed concerns that Poland would halt emigration once the last 430 million Deutschmark payment went through. Yet the Polish state proved unexpectedly cooperative: when West German representatives noted in 1978 that Poland was not on pace to reach its emigration quota, passport authorities responded by approving more applications. PA/AA, ZA B42/116616, "Betr: Ausreise von Deutschen aus Polen. Hier: Zahlung der letzten Rate der Rentenpauschale gemäss Vereinbarung vom 9.10.1975," May 19, 1978. The West German government recommended that Poland solve this problem by retroactively "legalizing" resettlers who had overstayed their tourist visas, but this solution was rejected.

[262] For contemporary diplomatic assessments of the Helsinki agreement, see Patrick G. Vaughan, "Zbigniew Brzezinski and the Helsinki Final Act," in *The Crisis of Detente in Europe: From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975-1985,* ed. Leopoldo Nuti (New York: Routledge, 2009), 11–15.

sparked a potentially dangerous "population drain" in the already-weakened western portion of the country. Ever since World War II, Upper Silesia had struggled to maintain a population sufficient for its economic viability. Between 1956 and 1970, approximately 80,000 people had already left the region for West Germany; another 40,000 emigrated during the 1970s.[263] By late 1979, Opole officials were keenly aware that Helsinki had taken a massive toll on the region's economic and social infrastructures. Robert Rauziński, an economist at the Silesian Institute in Opole, summarized the problem in 1979, stating that the "migration processes [had] caused permanent and irreversible changes in the demographic and socio-professional structure of the indigenous population." Moreover, because émigrés were disproportionately young, their exodus had disrupted the "natural movement of the population and growth of the labor force," particularly because so many young people had left.[264] These socioeconomic consequences were not without some irony: in the Helsinki negotiations, Polish representatives had originally argued that the DM 2.3 billion in credits would go toward building up the country's infrastructure, especially in the western territories. That the Helsinki emigration had severely damaged this region's economy was a highly unfortunate unintended consequence.[265]

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[263] APO, KZ PWPRwO 2653, fols. 5-17, "Informacja o realizacji postanowień dotyczących akcji 'łączenia rodzin" w województwie opolsim w latach 1975-1979," p. 5; APO, KZ PWPRwO 2653, fols. 30-46, Robert Rauziński, "Migracje do RFN z województwa opolskiego w świetle badań demograficznych w okresie od stycznia 1975 do czerwca 1979," p. 1-2. According to Rauziński's report, 13,300 people left Opole between 1971 and 1975, and approximately 27,180 emigrated during the Helsinki years.

[264] APO, KZ PWPRwO 2653, Robert Rauziński, "Migracje do RFN z województwa opolskiego," p. 2. "Procesy migracyjne spowodowały trwałe nieodwracalne zmiany w strukturze demograficznej i społeczno-zawodowej ludności miejscowego pochodzenia. Tak duże migracje stanowia istotny czynnik wplywający na zaburzenia w ruchu naturalnym ludności oraz w zakresie przyrostu zasobów pracy."

[265] Krzysztof Ruchniewicz argues that Polish representatives included economic development in their arguments for financial credits in exchange for emigration. "The Polish authorities linked any increase in emigration with the FRG's willingness to finance credits, justifying this stance with the need to compensate for the loss of skilled labor resulting from the emigration of thousands of ethnic Germans and their families. The loss could be offset, so the argument went, only by the automation of production, which Poland could not finance by itself." Ruchniewicz, "Ostpolitik and Poland," 49.

Rauziński and other experts feared that this population drain would cause irreparable long-term damage to Opole's economy. They pointed out that emigration entailed not only the loss of the current workforce, but also a drop in the region's future capacity to maintain its population. Furthermore, because more than half of the working-age émigrés were "highly skilled" and many had worked in their professions for a decade or more, their emigration represented a loss of institutional knowledge and a drop in overall work output and quality. If left unchecked, Silesian emigration could trigger a self-perpetuating, never-ending downward economic spiral. As the area's situation deteriorated, employers would have trouble attracting and retaining a high-quality work force. Resettler emigration thus signified more than a straightforward population decline; it could be the death knell for Opole's already struggling economy. An August 1975 article in *Der Spiegel* recognized the problem as well, explaining the economic problems that would result from the emigration of miners, many of whom lived in Upper Silesia. "Already in early 1974, the industrial lobby warned the Politbüro that the exit of approximately 6,000 trained miners would cost the Polish state alone one billion zloty (140 million Deutschmark) over three years."[266]

To the Polish economist, the answer seemed simple. Poland should halt the demographic drain by putting an end to emigration.[267] However, the solution was not quite so straightforward: the Helsinki agreement and the international obsession with family reunification as a "humanitarian right" had planted seeds for perpetual emigration. As Rauziński explained, a renewal of Helsinki would result in a "further process of family break-up" that could "be used to

[266] "Polen: Angst vor Wölfen," *Der Spiegel*, August 25, 1975.
[267] First Secretary Andrzej Zabiński ended his thirteen-page analysis from July 1979 with a recommendation to end the process of family reunification in 1979, except in the "factual cases of connecting the closest of relatives." APO, KW PZPRwO 2653, fols. 5-17, "Informacja o realizacji postanowień dotyczacych akcji 'łączenia rodzin' w województwie opolskim w latach 1975-1979," July 7, 1979, p. 13.

create a continual migration process"—a problem he believed would only worsen over time. According to Rauziński's estimates, every 100 emigrants to West Germany left behind at least 125 close relatives in Poland. Based on the precedent of family reunification, these relatives could qualify for exit visas in the future. *Der Spiegel* confirmed this reality, noting that "behind the already-difficult German problem is the Warsaw leadership's fear of another mass emigration: every fourth Polish family has direct relatives in the West." Unless significant political, sociological, and diplomatic changes were made, relatives of today's resettlers would become tomorrow's emigrants constant process of chain migration.[268]

Nor did current emigrants cause problems by simply creating cross-border families. Once they arrived in West Germany, they received substantial aid from the Federal Republic—aid which they recounted to their relatives still living in Poland. This transnational contact directly impacted the desire to emigrate. According to one West German study, 69% of resettlers had developed their ideas about the West through communication with relatives and friends who had already emigrated.[269] Dariusz Stola corroborates this connection, stating that West Germany's "generous and effective programs for the *Aussiedlers'* integration into German society" was directly related to "the expansion of emigration tendencies and identity changes in the Polish-German virtual borderland."[270] Poles traveling abroad also witnessed this West German generosity for themselves. In 1977 or 1978, for instance, Alfred Juraszek from Dębska Kuźnia visited the Federal Republic and ostensibly saw "[West German] authorities' interest in people

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[268] APO, KW PZPRwO 2653, Robert Rauziński, "Migracje do RFZ z województwa opolskiego," p. 3. "Nastepuje też dalszy proces rozbicia rodzin, gdyż na 100 emigrantów pozostaje w kraju ponad 120-130 najbliższych krewnych. Proces ten może wskszywać na ciąglość w czasie procesów migracyjnych." A 1975 article in *Der Spiegel* made a similar observation about Poland's potential emigration as a chain-reaction process. "Polen: Angst vor Wölfen," *Der Spiegel*, August 25, 1975.

[269] Wilhelm Arnold, ed., *Die Aussiedler in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Forschungen der AWR Deutsche Sektion. 1. Ergebnisbericht* (Wien: Braumüller, 1980), 34.

[270] Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*, 475.

coming from socialist countries" and the "material help that the authorities provide." Shortly after returning to Poland, the thirty-nine-year-old applied to emigrate. Polish authorities deduced a connection between witnessing western wealth and the subsequent desire to leave; however, Juraszek himself apparently admitted to his economic motivations, supposedly stating "that he saw better living conditions" in West Germany and wanted to move there.[271]

As Juraszek's story demonstrates, the post-Helsinki rise in temporary visits to West Germany also posed a threat to Polish interests, not only in the minds of the authorities but also in reality. Initially, the Polish government recommended combatting this problem by letting people travel west with tourist visas. The authorities hoped that, after seeing the challenges of integration firsthand, potential emigrants would feel more content in Poland. This strategy frequently backfired.[272] As passport officials in Opole lamented, dozens of their residents had been "working tirelessly" to emigrate ever since returning from temporary visits to West Germany.[273] To the authorities' chagrin, these Polish tourists had noted the better standard of living instead of witnessing the immigrants' integration struggles. Such was the case for Marta Knosala from Czarnowąsy, who after returning to Poland from a visit to West Germany, recognized that "everything [was] becoming more expensive [in Poland], and there [were] supply shortages." The lack in Poland stood in stark contrast to West German abundance and, not surprisingly, Knosala soon submitted her exit visa application. Like Alfred Juraszek and many others, Knosola concluded that emigration was the best choice for her material security.[274]

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[271] APO, KW PZPRwO 2658, fols. 35-41, "Informacja w sprawie sytuacji w wyjazdach stałych do RFN i Berlina Zachodniego w wojew. opolskim," January 4, 1979, p. 6. Juraszek also apparently noted that "there [were] so many goods on the [West] German market that there [were] no problems with purchasing whatever one wants."
[272] APO, KW PZPRwO 2661, fols. 59-60, "Informacja o przebiegu 'akcji łączenia rodzin' w. woj. opolskim w 1976 r.," January 13, 1977.
[273] The report included four pages of names. APO, KW PZPRwO 2658, fol. 35, "Informacja w sprawie sytuacji w wyjazdach stałych do RFN i Berlina Zachodniego w wojew. opolskim," January 4, 1979.
[274] APO, KW PZPRwO 2658, fols. 35-41, "Informacja w sprawie sytuacji w wyjazdach stałych do RFN i Berlina Zachodniego w wojew. opolskim," January 4, 1979, p. 2.

Emigration & Emotional Well-Being

In addition to heightening the region's economic problems, the rise in emigration ruptured traditional relationships and social structures in rural Silesian communities. Ryszard Donitza, a self-described German living in a village near Opole, experienced these emotional transitions during his childhood. After Donitza's neighbor, a baker, received permission to emigrate, the family shipped their belongings to West Germany. A month later, the baker and his family traveled by wagon to the nearest train station in Gogolin for their final westward departure. As the family "drove through the village, [all residents] came and stood along the streets" to wave goodbye. Because the decision to leave was final and "the trip only went in one direction," everyone knew "there was no coming back" for the baker or anyone else. As neighbors departed on this one-way trip, a sense of sadness spread throughout the village; the remaining residents keenly felt the loss.[275] Although Donitza chose to stay in Poland, he recognized that emigration negatively had impacted his community. As more and more people moved away for good, the number of native Silesians declined—and their communal bonds with it. Emigration took a heavy emotional and social toll on Upper Silesia, and residents like Donitza bore the brunt.

Furthermore, because Helsinki was technically temporary, it sparked a sort of widespread panic in Upper Silesia as its 1980 expiration date approached. In early 1979, five-hundred additional families from Opole submitted surveys to the West German embassy, stating their intentions to leave permanently for the Federal Republic; these numbers continued to multiply as the year went on.[276] Authorities at the central passport office in Warsaw noted the same trend,

[275] Ryszard Donitza, interview by author. Krapkowice, Poland. July 13, 2017.
[276] APO, KW PZPRwO 2658, fols. 35-41, "Informacja w sprawie sytuacji w wyjazdach stałych do RFN I Berlina Zachodniego w wojew. opolskim," January 4, 1979, p. 6. This report says that the West German ambassador had 500 surveys of Opole families wanting to leave Poland. PA/AA, ZA B42/133060, Memo from the Embassy in

particularly highlighting a rise in first-time applicants. According to their 1979 report, "As the end of the [Helsinki agreement] draws nearer, the tendency to emigrate to the Federal Republic is not only not getting weaker, but in many regions of the [Opole] voivodeship is actually getting stronger."[277] Resettlers arriving in West Germany described this heightened sense of distress as a "closing-time panic" (*Torschlusspanik*), literally a panic caused by a gate being shut.[278] A man from Chróścice summarized his decision aptly, saying, "Better late [to emigrate] than never."[279]

Rumors and misinformation about changes in Polish passport policies compounded the sense of urgency. In a letter requesting a "permanent stay" invitation from relatives in West Germany, Walter Blaut from Gogolin mentioned "rumors [in Poland] that [emigration] documents would only be accepted through December 1978." Monika Peal from Prężyna similarly wrote to family abroad, asking for an invitation and voicing fears based on a rumor she had heard about Kolanowice, a town fifty-four kilometers to the north. So many land-owning people had apparently left that area that the government chose to establish "collective farms" (*kołchoz*) there. Peal, fearing that the same thing would happen in Prężna, urged her relatives to help her leave Poland.[280] Getting out of the country seemed to be her best option, and the rise in applications suggests that many other resettlers shared her opinion.

Warsaw to the Foreign Office in Bonn, "Betr: Ausreisen nach dem Ausreiseprotokoll. Hier: Ausreisesituation," January 21, 1980. According to the Foreign Office, the German Red Cross received twenty to thirty new emigration registrations daily.

[277] APO, KW PZPRwO 2658, fols. 35-41, "Informacja w sprawie sytuacji w wyjazdach stałych do RFN i Berlina Zachodniego w wojew. opolskim," January 4, 1979, p. 6. "Miniony rok, a szczególnie jego IV kw. potwierdza, że mimo zbliża nia się do terminu kończenia wyjazdów w ramach ustaleń 'Zapisu protokolarnego' tendencje emigracj do RFN nie tylko nie słabną lecz w wielu rejonach województwa zwiększają się."

[278] *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 13, 1980.

[279] APO, KW PZPRwO 2658, fols. 35-41, "Informacja w sprawie sytuacji w wyjazdach stałych do RFN I Berlina Zachodniego w wojew. Opolskim," January 4, 1979, p. 2.

[280] APO, KW PZPR #2658, fols. 35-41, "Informacja w sprawie sytuacji w wyjazdach stałych do RFN i Berlina Zachodniego w wojew. Opolskim," January 4, 1979, p. 6. Unlike other Eastern Bloc countries, Poland did not adopt a policy of forced agricultural collectivization after the war; as a result, small, independently owned farms accounted for most agricultural production in the 1970s and 1980s. For a contemporary American perspective on Polish farming, see Paul Lewis, "Peasants vs. State in Poland," *The New York Times*, October 10, 1981.

The uncertainty about the future of emigration policies continued into 1980, even though West German and Polish diplomats successfully reached a new agreement at Poland's Hela peninsula in August 1979. Unlike with Helsinki, for which the credits and "human trafficking" received substantial press coverage, the news articles announcing the Hela agreement did not mention a financial component. A May 1979 story in *Der Spiegel* noted that the Polish government had requested 750 million Deutschmark to continue the emigration; however, subsequent articles did not clarify whether West Germany had agreed.[281] Still, the new arrangement made clear Poland's pledge to allow between 120,000 and 125,000 ethnic Germans to emigrate over the next four years.[282] Yet despite this major development—after all, the Hela arrangement meant that emigration would continue after Helsinki—this second agreement received virtually no attention in the Polish or West Germany press.[283] As a result, the rumors about an impending stop to emigration and the accompanying "*Torschlusspanik*" continued well into 1980.[284] If the "gate" between Poland and West Germany was going to close permanently after Helsinki, people did not want to be stuck on the "wrong" side of the border. In the words of one resettler, "Of course no one wants to be the last [to leave]."[285]

[281] "Aussiedler: Ernste Mahnung," *Der Spiegel*, May 28, 1979.
[282] KAS, *Saarbrücker Zeitung*, August 11, 1979. *Kölner Stadt Anzeiger*, August 20, 1979. Edward Gierek and Helmut Schmidt agreed to extend the emigration terms in a meeting on August 17, 1979, at the Hela peninsula on the Baltic Sea. Between 120,000 and 125,000 resettlers would be allowed to emigrate in the next four years. After that, Bonn hoped that they could transition to a "normal emigration process" of 10,000 or so people annually.
[283] After researching in multiple press archival collections, the only press references I found about this agreement were in the *Saarbrücker Zeitung* on August 11, 1979, and the *Kölner Stadt Anzeiger* on August 20, 1979.
[284] PA/AA, ZA B42/133060, Memo from the Embassy in Warsaw to the Foreign Office in Bonn, "Betr: Ausreisen nach dem Ausreiseprotokoll. Hier: Ausreisesituation," January 21, 1980.
[285] KAS, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 13, 1980. "Wie die Stadtverwaltung Paderborn jetzt mitteilte, hat die Angaben der Aussiedler des Auslaufen der Vereinbarungen zwischen den Regierungen auf beiden Seiten unter den Aussiedlungswilligen zu einer 'Torschlusspanik' geführt. 'Natürlich will keiner der letzte sein.'"

West German-Polish Relations: Misunderstandings & Growing Distrust

The resettlers' rising panic paralleled the growing tensions between the two countries—tensions stemming mainly from misunderstandings and lack of communication, rather than from intentional offenses. Here again, Helsinki's unintended consequences were at least partially to blame. Because emigration applications had risen so dramatically in 1979, understaffed passport offices in western Poland struggled to keep up with the paperwork. Unaware of these logistical problems, West German authorities interpreted the exit-visa lag as a deliberate Polish effort to stall ethnic German emigration. Meanwhile, more Poles opted to leave the country illegally, usually by traveling to West Germany via other countries or by simply refusing to return once their tourist visas expired. Rather than sending these illegal émigrés back, however, the West German state offered them housing, jobs, and, in many cases, citizenship. Though consistent with western countries' policies toward asylum-seekers from communist countries during the Cold War, this practice of welcoming illegal émigrés did not sit well with Poland. The situation strengthened the Polish conviction that, despite diplomatic agreements, financial credits, and other external gestures of good will, West German leaders were deliberately undermining Poland's sovereignty over its citizenry. In both the passport issues and the illegal emigration problem, Helsinki acted as catalyst. For although these challenges had existed for years, the Helsinki agreement raised the stakes and brought these problems—and the distrust resulting from them—inescapably to the fore.

The Polish Passport System

Even at its most efficient, the Polish passport system did not inspire confidence in Poland's citizens or in its West German observers. At each stage of the long and complicated

process, the cards were stacked against passport seekers. Every aspect of an applicant's life was scrutinized, as administrators looked for reasons to reject the application. Jobs, age, or party membership could ruin one's emigration chances. Applicants "of working age" or employed in a key industry, such as mining, rarely received exit visas without excessive attempts; some never received them at all. If a person's job gave him "access to state secrets," particularly related to technology or the military, he would likely never be allowed to emigrate, even if he argued that he was not dangerous or was not privy to sensitive government information.[286] In later years, officials cracked down on university students and graduates, whose emigration was seen as contributing to the country's "brain drain" (*drenażem mózgów*). Their education had cost the state a great deal of money and their emigration amounted to the loss of this investment, authorities reasoned. If nurses, doctors, lawyers, etc. wanted to emigrate, they needed to reimburse the state for their educational expenses first.[287] Clearly, the Polish Passport system was not designed to encourage migration. In fact, it aimed to do just the opposite. In the words of Dariusz Stola:

> The Passports Bureau (PB) and its *modus operandi* were designed not to issue passports but to refuse them […] The institutional design of the passport regime made all its personnel, from lowest level clerk to senior Security office […] into enemies of the

[286] At least by 1970, passport officials had started including questions about applicants' access to state secrets. A survey used to help determine whether a person should receive a visa explicitly asked, "Does the interested [applicant] have access to information constituting state secrets (*tajemnice państwowe*) based on the nature of work, military service, or place of residence?" AIPN Ka 030/21 t. 1, fol. 25-36.

[287] APO, KW PZPRwO 2660, fols. 130-138, Wydział zagraniczny KC PZPR, January 1983, "Informacja o aktualnych warunkach realizacji polityki paszportowej o problemach emigracji i wyjazdów na pobyt czasowy obywateli PRL za granicę, Załącnik Nr. 2." The exact amount that emigrants were expected to repay varied by education and profession. The lowest (40,000 zloty) was expected from nurses, while the highest (185,000 zloty) was required from doctors. Ideally, this policy would protect against potential "brain drain" (*drenażem mózgów*), "especially during the time of economic difficulty for the country." See especially fol. 138. The West German Foreign Office confirmed that this regulation existed. PA/AA, ZA B42/133060, Memo from West German Embassy in Warsaw to the Foreign Office in Bonn, "Betr: Verschärfte Bestimmungen für Auslandsreisen. Hier: Rückzahlung Studienkosten Ausreisebewerber," February 11, 1983.

> applicant. They did not have to be zealous Marxist-Leninists to take a negative attitude toward those who wanted to leave socialist Poland. They had strong reasons to behave this way simply to avoid problems with their superiors, to preserve their jobs, get promoted, or [obtain] a quarterly bonus.[288]

From the West German perspective, however, the Polish passport system after Helsinki seemed symptomatic of a new form of duplicity and dishonesty. That the process was complicated and slow was a known issue; resettlers often only received permission after applying multiple times over several years. However, as the agreement's end drew nearer, the process appeared to grind to a halt. According to the German Red Cross, local passport officials seemed to be deliberately obstructing the process in January 1980. Even though the Polish government had technically agreed to continued emigration at Hela in August 1979, this situation "gave the impression of a systematic, controlled effort" to slow down emigration through local bureaucracies.[289] The Bundestag, equally concerned by the delays, sent an inquiry to the West German embassy in Warsaw; the response from there echoed the conclusions of the Red Cross. Although the Polish state officially endorsed the *Aussiedlung*, lower level authorities "opposed the emigration impulse" and tried to "put the brakes" on the process by discouraging applicants from leaving.[290] In sum, official Polish policy may have supported emigration, but the people who actually exercised control over emigration, namely the regional and local passport authorities, had been actively sabotaging it.

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[288] Stola, "Opening a Non-Exit State: The Passport Policy of Communist Poland, 1949–1980," 100–101.
[289] PA/AA, ZA B42/133060, Memo from the West German embassy in Warsaw to the Foreign Office, "Betr: Ausreisen nach dem Ausreiseprotokoll. Hier: Ausreisesituation," January 7, 1980; Memo from Warsaw Embassy to Foreign Office, "Betr: Ausreisen nach dem Ausreiseprotokoll. Hier: Ausreisesituation," January 21, 1980. Passport officials "haben die Aussiedlung gebremst, so gut sie konnten. Dabei war man allerdings insoweit korrekt, als offene Diskriminierungen durch Staatliche Organe äusserst selten Warne."
[290] PA/AA, ZA B42/133060, Memo from the West German embassy in Warsaw to the Foreign Office, "Betr: Ausreisen nach dem Ausreiseprotokoll. Hier: Ausreisesituation," January 21, 1980. "Andererseits haben sich jedoch die polnischen Behörden auf allen Ebenen stets dem Drang nach Umsiedlung entgegenstellt."

These conclusions did not bolster West German trust in their Eastern Bloc neighbor. Either the Polish state was duplicitous—promising West Germany one thing regarding emigration and ordering the passport bureaucrats to do the opposite—or it was too weak to enforce its own policies across the whole country. Neither assessment fostered much confidence in Poland, its influence, or intentions. The West Germans thus recognized that, while Poland may have followed through on the Helsinki agreement, the best policy toward the country remained one of cautious suspicion. For if the Polish state did not want resettlers to emigrate, it could simply stop the process at the local level, as it already appeared to be doing.

Yet how legitimate were West Germany's concerns about the Polish passport system? Was the slowdown the product of a "controlled and systematic" effort, as the German Red Cross had posited? Were local bureaucrats genuinely trying to "put the brakes" on emigration, as the embassy had surmised? Although this may have been true in individual cases, the Polish archival record not only contradicts this conclusion but suggests that the opposite was true. Not only did the Warsaw authorities issue no order to slow down emigration in early 1980, they had taken active steps to improve the passport process instead. After seeking feedback from individual passport offices, the Director of the Central Passport Office in Warsaw submitted a set of recommendations in June 1980. He hoped that, by speeding up the decision-making and appeals process, by increasing the staff at individual passport offices, and generally improving the customer service at individual branches, the passport bureau could significantly reduce the number of complaints it regularly received.[291] Thus, rather than seeking to stall emigration by deliberately slowing down the passport process, the Director's statements suggest that local authorities were simply overwhelmed by the large number of applicants.

[291] AIPN BU 01169/146, Letter from Director of the Passport Office Wacław Szarszewski to Commander of the Province of Ostrołęka, June 20, 1980.

Anecdotal evidence confirmed the shortcomings of the Polish passport system. One would-be émigré named Herbert Piontek complained in a letter that the passport process was inefficient and that the offices were understaffed. He explained that, when he applied for a visa to Austria in 1978, he was person number 704 in line with other people from his "tormented [German] nation" (*z tym umęczonym narodem*)—despite having arrived at 2 a.m. to queue. Because the office only processed approximately forty applications a day and was just open four days a week, the chance of advancing to the front of the line was virtually impossible. The seemingly endless time waiting in line had an unexpected side effect, namely helping Piontek better grasp why so many people were seeking to emigrate. "At that time [of waiting in line]," he recounted, "I listened to hundreds of Silesians' conversations and finally understood why they were leaving their family homes and emigrating."[292] Piontek further lamented that, even after making it through the line, actually getting his passport then took an additional three months. In other regions, though, people got theirs in one to three weeks. For this reason, people in line with Piontek talked about traveling to these other parts of the country to get passports there, even though such action would have been illegal. Although Piontek did not resort to any of these means, it is conceivable that other frustrated applicants may have done so.

This backlogging problem grew worse at the end of Helsinki. Fears of being stuck in Poland after the emigration deadline led to a surge in exit-visa applications. This increase, in turn, caused a veritable traffic jam in the application system. Passport offices were already ill-equipped in general. Even well into the 1980s, the offices remained understaffed and poorly

[292] APO, KW PZPRwO 2660, fols. 107-110, Letter from Herbert Piontek to the *Trybuna Opolska*, March 10, 1982. "Przysłuchiwałem się wtedy setkom rozmów ślązaków i zrozumiałem ostatecznie dlaczego opuszczają swoją ojcowizną i wyjeżdżają."

supplied, often running out of basic supplies like paper and ink for stamps.[293] When the number of passport applicants remained consistently elevated at the turn of the decade—in December 1980, more than 86,000 were "actively trying to emigrate to West Germany," and all but 12,000 of these hailed from the Opole and Katowice voivodeships—officials could not keep up.[294] The lines were too long; like Piontek many people were forced to wait in line for hours or days to submit their passport paperwork. The waiting rooms were now too small to accommodate everyone. The process was inefficient, and the requirements were unclear.[295] What is important, however, is that all the complaints which appeared in the Passport Director's report, pointed less to subversion than to structural problems. The Polish passport system was simply not equipped to handle the latter stages of Helsinki emigration, especially in Upper Silesia, the home region of most applicants. Still, the Polish state was not going to admit to these shortcomings, West Germans interpreted the problems as evidence of possible Polish sabotage.

"Expellee IDs"

At the same time, West German policies concerning so-called "Expellee IDs" (*Vertriebenenausweise*) did not inspire the Poles' trust. Right after the war, the fledgling German government began issuing Expellee IDs as part of an effort to integrate the millions of displaced Germans expelled or having fled from Eastern Europe. By confirming one's legal status as an "expellee," these IDs guaranteed the impoverished newcomers access to the aid offered in the Federal Expellee Law (*Bundesvertriebenengesetz*) and the Equalization of Burdens Law

[293] AIPN BU 01169/146, fols. 16-18, PRL MSW Passport Bureau to the Deputy Head of the Voivodship Office of Internal Affairs for the Security Service, August 7, 1984.
[294] AIPN BU 1596/468, fols. 2-4, Passport Director Wacław Szarszewski, "Informacja dot. wyjazdów na pobyt stały do NRD, RFN i Berlina Zachodniego w listopadzie 1980 r." December 3, 1980.
[295] AIPN BU 01169/146, Letter from Director of the Passport Office Wacław Szarszewski to Commander of the Province of Ostrołęka, June 20, 1980.

(*Lastenausgleich*). Significantly, the West German government extended these expellee integration measures well beyond the wartime "experience generation" (*Erlebnisgeneration*). Children and grandchildren of expellees remained eligible for the identification card well into the 1980s. Even four decades after the war, expellee organizations encouraged members to register themselves and their offspring. Not only did Expellee IDs ensure these people continued access to financial benefit, but the registration documents also maintained the expellee population in official government statistics—an important concern for lobbying purposes.[296]

Although the IDs arguably benefited expellees and their descendants, they eventually became a source of tension with Poland. In late 1976, staff at the Unna-Massen transit camp began issuing Expellee IDs to resettlers arriving from Poland, despite their clearly *not* being expellees.[297] When Polish authorities caught wind of this development, they reached out to their West German counterparts. Their chief complaint was obvious. Resettlers had left Poland of their own free will; no one had "expelled" them. As such, the newest arrivals should not qualify for the IDs. Furthermore, that West Germany continued to issue Expellee IDs at all, even thirty years after the war's end, seemed nothing short of libelous. If Poland and West Germany were to exist on good terms, the latter needed to cease accusing the former of postwar violence. By continuing to distribute these IDs, West Germany had unnecessarily injected the expulsions into sensitive diplomatic dealings. As if this situation were not bad enough, the Poles had heard rumors that non-German spouses of incoming resettlers had also received the IDs. In sum, the

[296] See, for instance, *Kreuzburger Nachrichten*, July 1982, page 3.
[297] PA/AA, NA 26/270, "Der Bundesminister des Innern teilt mit: Neue Richtlinien zur vereinfachten Prüfung der Staatsangehörigkeit und Namensführung von Aussiedlern," December 13, 1976. This press release pecifically mentions the cards being issued at Unna-Massen, but it seems probable that other transit camps would have the same procedure.

IDs constituted a provocation for Polish authorities, and West Germany needed to stop distributing them.[298]

Polish Justice Minister Jerzy Bafia lodged an official complaint with West Germany's leadership in February 1977. While he did not mention the practice of issuing Expellee IDs to later generations, he did request that the name of resettlers' IDs be updated to reflect their voluntary emigration. Bafia's request eventually reached the Bundestag, where the Schmidt government moved to change the name to "Resettler IDs" (*Aussiedlerausweise*). In expressing his support for the move, Chancellor Schmidt largely echoed Bafia's desire to "move away from [the term] 'expellees'" so that immigrating "Germans from Poland [would] thereafter be called 'resettler.'" Anticipating backlash from expellee circles, Interior Secretary Andreas von Schoeler also pointed out that the law itself would remain unaltered. Resettlers would thus remain eligible for benefits from the Federal Expellee Law; only the name would be different.

Initially, the renaming appeared to gain some parliamentary traction. For instance, FDP representative and Social Minister of Saarland Rosemarie Scheurlen supported the change, despite her own background as an expellee from Lower Silesia. Scheurlen argued that the renaming made sense because the historical situation had changed. Although she recognized the "self-evident relationship between the expulsion measures following the war and the current resettlement," she also realized that the newcomers were "leaving their homelands east of the Odra and Nyssa [Rivers] under different circumstances and conditions from those who left in the years right after the war." The West German government had already recognized this distinction in practical ways for years; the name was simply being updated to reflect it.[299] Other politicians,

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[298] PA/AA, NA 26/270, "Betr.: Demarche des polnischen Gesandten Józef Chmiel in Abteilung 5 am 15.12.1976," February 16, 1977. The chief complaint dealt with the Polish spouses of German resettlers receiving Expellee IDs. The Polish representative accused German authorities of forcing these spouses to give up their Polish citizenship.
[299] KAS, *Saarbrücker Zeitung*, December 9, 1977.

though, proved less amenable than Scheurlen, especially in the Christian Democratic party. In addition to the usual detractors like expellee politician Hubert Hupka, who spoke out against the bill in July 1977, future Chancellor Helmut Kohl also warned against the name change.[300] He argued that, like the expellees, resettlers had been victimized by Poland just like the expellees; consequently, they should receive Expellee ID. While the parliamentary debate about the name change continued for the next several months, the bill eventually passed in January 1978. Newcomers from Poland would now receive "Resettler IDs."

The victory, however, soon proved pyrrhic. Even though the law had passed at the federal level, individual states could decide whether to enforce it.[301] Schleswig-Holstein, for instance, rejected the law. Karl Claussen, the state's Social Minister, accused the federal government of "seriously yielding to pressure from the Eastern Bloc." He then went a step further, arguing that, by passing the law, the Schmidt government was guilty of historical revisionism. Namely, Claussen contended that, by renaming the IDs, Schmidt "was seeking to suppress the reality of the expulsions from historical consciousness."[302] Claussen was not alone in his concerns, and he and the other detractors ultimately got their way. In September 1978—only nine months after the new Resettler IDs came into existence—the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*) voted to get rid of them.[303] Soon thereafter, the Foreign Office informed Poland that the Expellee IDs "served an important legal integrative function" and, as a result, would still be issued.[304]

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[300] Gesamtdeutsche Nachrichten, Nr. 22, "Helmut Kohl warnt vor Aberkennung des Vertriebenenstatus für Aussiedler," June 7, 1977.
[301] PA/AA, ZA B42/116616 contains a series of documents that trace the entire Expellee-ID discussion from February to November 1978. This took place as a result of Poland's initial request that the name be changed.
[302] "Landesregierung lehnt Aussiedlerausweis ab," *Kieler Nachrichten*, February 24, 1978. "…sieht in dem Vorhaben ein ernstes Nachgeben der Bundesregierung gegen Pressionen aus dem Ostblock […] der damit versuchen möchte, die Tatsache der Vertreibung aus dem Geschichtsbewusstsein zu verdrängen."
[303] "The federal government [in 1978] was not ready to change the name and as a result the ordinance failed in the Federal Council (Bundesrat)." Evangelisches Zentralarchiv (EZA) 87/1715. Prälat Binder, "Betr: Auskunft Frau Dr. Finke-Osiander," undated.
[304] PA/AA, ZA B42/116616, September 14, 1978.

Polish leaders were aggravated by this development, and they continued to bring up the IDs in official conversations over the next few years.[305] The Polish church even became involved in the discussion. During a July 1980 meeting between the representatives of the West German Protestant Church (EKD) and the Polish Ecumenical Council, the Polish leaders brought up the Expellee ID problem. They explained that "this ID designation [was] discriminatory" and requested help in changing it.[306] Sympathetic though the EKD officials were, they recognized that they were powerless to assist. For although these church leaders hoped for a better relationship with Poland—and they were aware that renaming the IDs represented a step toward an improved relationship—they also realized that domestic resistance toward the renaming was simply too strong. Prelate Binder put this well in his August 1980 letter to Church President Helmut Hild, saying, "You know my interest in improving Polish-German relations, but such an effort [of changing the names] stands very little chance of success."[307] Too many influential people in West Germany viewed the Expellee IDs as non-negotiable. Thus, despite discussions at the highest level of West German government, the ID policy remained in place.

It is also important to note, however, that the survival of Expellee IDs stemmed not from a deep desire to offend Poland, but rather from resistance by the expellee lobby and other political factions. A relatively small group of CDU politicians, including Hupka and Kohl, and the state-level leaders like Schleswig-Holstein's Social Minister Claussen had prevented the name change. Renaming efforts thus failed because of divisions in *domestic politics*, not because

[305] AMSZ D. IV, z. 44/84, w-6, Report by Passport Office MSW, Plk. W. Szarszewski, p. 5
[306] EZA 87/1715, Letter from Helmut Hild to Prälat Binder, July 15, 1980.
[307] EZA 87/1715, Prälat Binder to Helmut Hild. August 28, 1978. "Du kennst meine Interesse an einer Klimaverbesserung im deutsch-polnischen Verhältnis. Aber die Chance für einen Erfolg solcher Bemühungen stehen gegenwärtig nicht besonders gut." EZA 87/1715, Letter from Helmut Hild to Prälat Binder, July 15, 1980.

of a unified effort to anger the Poles. After all, Chancellor Schmidt had requested the change himself, and politicians from different parties had expressed their support for it.

From the Polish perspective, however, the end result rather than the internal dispute proved more important. The decision to keep the Expellee IDs seemed to confirm their suspicions of West German motives. Moreover, even with the name-changing debate, the Federal Republic chose to emphasize the expulsions and privilege the expellees in West Germany's legal code. Why should the Poles trust a country whose administration continued to accuse them of victimizing ordinary emigrants? Expellee IDs consequently offered another reason for Polish officials not to trust West German intentions.

Illegal Emigration

West Germany's handling of people who the Polish authorities considered to be illegal émigrés did not alleviate Polish mistrust of the Federal Republic either. Instead of deporting people who refused to return to Poland (*odmówić wrócić do kraju*) after their tourist visas expired, West Germany treated them like ordinary resettlers. These illegal emigrants received welcome money, transitional housing, and legal advice just like their "legal" counterparts. From the Polish perspective, the Federal Republic was actively undermining Poland's international sovereignty. As a result, the Polish government frequently "declined to answer the [West German] embassy's intervention requests" on behalf of illegal emigrants. Although about twenty-five percent of such cases ended up eventually being resolved, the other seventy-five percent remained an "explosive problem."[308]

[308] PA/AA, ZA B42/133060, "Betr.: Aussiedlung/Familienzusammenführung aus Polen," February 24, 1981. "Polen weigert sich in diesem Fällen weiterhin, Interventionsnotizen unserer Botschaft entgegenzunehmen. Obgleich sich nunmehr etwa 25 Prozent der der Botschaft bekannten Familienzusammenführungensanliegen mit 'Illegalen' durch Ausreise erledigt haben, handelt es sich hier um ein brisantes Problem. Einerseits müssen wir die Polen bitten, auch

Yet West Germany did not deserve all the blame. Certainly, the Federal Republic's unwillingness to deport the illegal émigrés was frustrating, but Polish visa policies also compounded the problem. For instance, Polish authorities never granted tourist visas to entire families at once; part of the family had to remain as a "guarantee" (*Pfand*) to ensure the relative's return to Poland.[309] This strategy often failed to work since many people left relatives behind in the hope of later invoking their "humanitarian right" to family reunification. The gender breakdown of illegal émigrés confirms this tendency. Of the sixteen "new illegal cases" that the West German Foreign Office recorded in March 1981, fourteen of the émigrés were men.[310] Oftentimes, these men brought one or more of their children with them, while the wife and other children remained in Poland.[311]

Polish authorities had little sympathy for people who refused to return to their country. Even though the émigré families were now divided, the cases did not qualify for "family reunification." Once resettlers realized this, they often appealed to the West German Foreign Office for help; however, because these people had left illegally, the German diplomats were usually powerless to do anything.[312] Polish authorities considered returning to Poland as the only way to solve the problems that illegal emigration caused for families.[313] Still, West German

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diese Fälle in pragmatischer Weise zu lösen, andererseits birgt ein zu starkes Insistieren auf diesem Punkt die Gefahr in sich, die relative liberale Besuchsreisenpraxis der Polen zu gefährden."

[309] The BdV's group in Hesse described the remaining family members as "*Pfand*" in their July 1987 newsletter.

[310] AA/PA, ZA B85/1595, Letter from Dr. Bachmann and the Bonn Caritas to Jestädt at the Foreign Office, "Betr.: Polnische Ausreisegenehmigungen," February 26, 1981. Bachmann wrote to Jestädt to request intervention on behalf of sixteen divided families. In fourteen, the father was already in West Germany, while the remaining family members were in Silesia.

[311] For examples of husbands leaving illegally and advocating for their wives and children to join them, see the documents pertaining to the Pahson, Krajn, Lebadil cases in AA/PA, NA 540/9081.

[312] The Foreign Office archive contains hundreds of illegal emigration cases, each with pleas for advice, intervention, and aid. For instance, see AA/PA, ZA B85/1595; AA/PA, ZA B85/1327; AA/PA, ZA B42/133060.

[313] AA/PA, ZA B85/1595, Letter from Jestädt to Bachmann, "Betr.: Aussiedlung von Deutschen aus Polen. Hier: Liste mit 16 'Illegalen'-Fällen," March 5, 1981. "Wie ich Ihnen bereits mehrfach angedeutet habe, stehen die polnischen Stellen auf dem Standpunkt, dass ein in ihren Augen 'illegales' Verbleiben im Ausland nicht zum Nachzug der Familienangehörigen führen dürfte. Nach wie vor lehnt es das polnische Aussenministerium daher entscheiden ab, hier Interventionsnotizen unserer Botschaft entgegenzunehmen."

officials advised these people not to give up. Although the Foreign Office's intervention requests in such cases were successful only about a quarter of the time, they encouraged emigration-hopefuls to continue appealing to their Warsaw embassy.[314]

The appeals in these "new illegal cases," as the Foreign Office dubbed them, generally followed a predictable pattern. The émigré often started with evidence of his or her Germanness. This national belonging usually involved concrete examples, such as service in the Wehrmacht completed by themselves or a family member. Next, the author showed that he or she had tried to emigrate legally but without success, hence the decision to overstay a tourist visa. The letters usually ended with a request for help with the emigration of specific family members left behind in Poland, often with emotional statements about psychological struggles or failing health.

Viktor W. from Opole is a textbook example of a "new illegal case." Born in 1921, he had served as a paratrooper in the Wehrmacht and was put in a British internment camp after the war. From 1960 to 1970, he had applied repeatedly and unsuccessfully to emigrate with his family. In March 1980, he came to West Germany with his son Roman on a tourist visa and never returned to Poland. A year and half later in September 1981, presumably after his wife's visa applications had been denied, Viktor wrote to the Foreign Office. His letter contained a perfect summary of his argument—and the argument of many illegal émigrés: "Because I am German and because I strove for [legal] emigration for a long time, I ask for help and support for my efforts," in this case, for the legal emigration of his wife Veronika. In other words, Viktor believed that the legal emigration system had failed him and thus forced him to take matters into his own hands and leave Poland illegally in March 1980. Now that he was in West Germany, though, he felt that the Federal Republic was obligated to intervene on behalf of his wife.

[314] PA/AA, ZA B85/1595, Letter from von Ploetz to Peter Clever, December 2, 1982.

Specifically, Viktor hoped that she would be able to come legally and as a result retain the right to visit their adult sons still living in Poland—unlike him.[315] Family separation could take a physical toll, and doctors were often asked to advocate for resettlers like Viktor and his wife. In April 1981, eight months after his initial letter to the Foreign Office, Viktor's doctor attested to the émigré's myriad health problems and concluded that, "because of his poor health condition," Viktor was "not in the state to run a household on his own and [was] desperately dependent on help" as a result. Whether these medical conditions were truly so bad that the sixty-year-old could not live alone is up for question; however, the doctor's note seems to have worked. Veronika received her exit visa six months later in October 1981.[316]

Although West German officials understood the restrictions based on Polish law and took pains to communicate these limitations, illegal emigrants like Viktor continued to appeal to the Foreign Office for help. The embassy in Warsaw regularly brought up individual cases during regular meetings with Polish officials. Similarly, the Polish side continued to insist that the best way to unite the families of illegal émigrés was for the offending party to return to Poland.[317] While West German intervention succeeded in some cases, this rarely happened immediately. More often than not—and much to West German frustration—Polish authorities held back family members for at least two or three years before granting them exit visas. In sum, the issue of "new illegal [emigration] cases" was a source of constant conversation and sometimes conflict during the 1970s and into the 1980s.

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[315] PA/AA, ZA B85/1595, Letter from Viktor W. to the Foreign Office, "Betr.: Familienzusammenführung aus Polen," September 20, 1981.
[316] AA/PA, ZA B85/1595, Memo from the Embassy in Warsaw, "Betr.: Aussiedlung von Deutschen aus Polen. Hier: W. Weronika," April 22, 1983.
[317] At one point, Robert Rauziński recommended Poland ask West Germany to refuse work permits for anyone who had emigrated illegally. While it is unlikely that this request was ever actually made, it does suggest that the Poles were frustrated by West Germany's welcoming attitude toward those who had improperly left their country. APO, KW PZPRwO 2666, fols. 22-24, "Uwagi w sprawie wyjazdów ludności z województwa opolskiego do RFN."

Challenges & Changes in the Early 1980s

In the early 1980s, however, the Polish government's biggest political challenge was not the German minority or emigration, but the Solidarity trade union. Founded in September 1980 in Gdańsk's Lenin Shipyard, this organization attracted unprecedented domestic support virtually overnight. By its first Congress a year later in September 1981, Solidarity's membership had swelled to approximately ten million people—one-third of Poland's working-age population. As the first independent trade union in the Communist bloc, Solidarity won the attention of the Western media, and people around the world eagerly followed its development and progress.[318] At first, the authorities sought to bring Solidarity under the state's control; however, once it became clear that these tactics would not work, the state resorted to more extreme measures. On December 13, 1981, General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law in Poland. According to the official party line, martial law was a preemptive, defensive move intended to avoid a Soviet invasion.[319] Poland remained under martial law for the next year and a half until July 22, 1983. During this time, thousands of dissidents and Solidarity members were forced into exile.[320]

Martial law drastically impacted all aspects of Polish life, particularly those related to international mobility. Whereas restrictions on travel abroad had relaxed in the early 1980s, allowing 1.2 million Poles to visit the West in 1981 alone, Martial Law "effectively sealed the borders and made most passports invalid."[321] Approximately 150,000 Poles who happened to be

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[318] Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980-1989. Solidarity, Martial Law, and the End of Communism in Europe* (Rochester: University of Rochester, 2015), 11–34; A Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 203–301; Maryjane Osa, *Solidarity and Contention: Networks of Polish Opposition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
[319] Jaruzelski maintained this stance during his trial eleven years later in 1992. He argued that martial law had saved Poland from Soviet invasion and prevented thousands of deaths. Tina Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land: Facing Europe's Ghosts after Communism* (New York: Random House, 1995), 178.
[320] Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*, 476. About 4,500 people were forced to leave Poland because of their involvement with Solidarity between December 1981 and 1988.
[321] According to Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*, 476, the 1.2 million westward visits in 1981 equaled more than all total visits to the West from 1949 to 1969.

abroad at the time were granted permission from Western governments to stay. Ultimately, however, the crackdown caused even greater emigration by weakening the country's economy and thereby increasing people's desire to leave. In the words of Stola, "As living conditions remained bad and prospects for economic or political reforms bleak, the desire for exit became stronger and more widespread than ever."[322] Until the end of the 1980s, the Federal Republic remained the permanent Western destination of choice.[323]

At first, "the resettler influx remained unbroken" and indeed seemed to have increased, thanks to another "*Torschlusspanik*."[324] Resettlers who had received their passports but were waiting to tie up other loose ends in Poland sped up their emigration plans. One family from Opole convinced a relative to drive them illegally to Wrocław, where they bought tickets for the next train to Germany. Another woman drove to the military office in Prudnik (Neustadt), where a militiaman told her, "If you are planning to leave [Poland] forever, go immediately; don't wait until tomorrow!" An hour later she and her two children were on a train from Wałbrzych/Waldenburg to Germany.[325] These families were not alone in their thinking; in the weeks following martial law, the number of illegal émigrés from Poland increased significantly. None of the incoming resettlers had received passports since the start of martial law, and Poland had unilaterally cancelled all tourist visas.[326] Although the Polish government had issued no

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[322] Stola, 476.
[323] Stola, 485. Stola's statistics compiled from the Passport Bureau and the MZIS show that West Germany continued to outrank other capitalist country destinations through 1988 (when his statistics end). Although emigration to West Germany dropped sharply each year from 1981 to 1984, no other individual capitalist country came close to West Germany's number; the United States was second. In 1981, West Germany received 22,320 immigrants from Poland; the USA received 1,959. In 1982, West Germany received 15,481; the USA received 2,100. In 1983, West Germany received 8,904; the USA received 3,063. In 1984, West Germany received 2,274; the USA received 1,669. The numbers stayed consistently in these ranges until 1988, when migration to West Germany spiked to 20,564 people.
[324] *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "Aussiedler-Zustrom aus Polen ungebrochen," December 19, 1981.
[325] Josef Schmidt, "Sofort fahren, nicht bis morgen warten," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 18, 1981.
[326] PA/AA, ZA B42/133060, Memo from the Warsaw Embassy to the Foreign Office, "Betr.: Aussiedlung und Familienzusammenführung aus Polen seit dem 13.12.1981," February 2, 1982. DPA, December 31, 1981. "Seit der

statement about halting emigration, all "new" migration from the country appeared to have ceased for the duration.

Martial law also drove a deeper wedge between the two countries. For instance, shortly after Jaruzelski's announcement, West Germany issued a series of economic sanctions against Poland; these remained in effect through July 1983. In response, Polish authorities stopped cooperating with the West German Foreign Office in individual emigration cases. In their March 1982 report, Foreign Office members pointed out that Poland had "no understanding" or desire to find solutions for emigration cases because of the economic sanctions.[327] Consequently, not only had martial law put the majority of new passport applications on hold, but West Germany was now all but powerless to intervene on behalf of thwarted or denied émigrés. This policy shift signaled a major change. At the start of the Helsinki emigration, Bonn intervened in one-third of all resettler cases.[328] Ethnic German emigration-hopefuls now found themselves caught in the middle. As long as martial law continued and the sanctions remained in place, their situation would remain unchanged. Moreover, unbeknownst to them, discussions at the highest echelons of the Polish government showed that the German minority situation would soon be complicated even further.

Amending Polish Citizenship Laws: Czyrek's Recommendations

Not only did martial law cause a reset of Polish emigration policy, but it also offered the state a welcome chance to adjust its approach to resettlers and the German minority more

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Verhängung des Kriegsrechts in Polen würden von den dortigen Behörden alle Besuchervisa annuliert und neue Anträge auf Aussiedlung weder bearbeitet noch angenommen."

[327] PA/AA, ZA B42/133060, Memo from the Warsaw Embassy to the Foreign Office, "Betr.: Aussiedlung und Familienzusammenführung aus Polen seit dem 13.12.1981," March 12, 1982.

[328] An article in *Die Welt* defined "intervention case" (*Interventionsfall*) as one in which emigration applications had been repeatedly rejected. The Bonn government, likely through the Foreign Office and Warsaw embassy, regularly requested emigration on behalf of specific people or families who fit this description. *Die Welt*, May 18, 1976.

broadly. This process of rethinking culminated in recommendations which Minister of Foreign Affairs Józef Czyrek shared with almost forty of the highest-ranking members of the Communist leadership in early 1983.[329] After outlining the problems caused by emigration, Czyrek offered a simple yet clever solution: repeal the law regarding Germans living in Poland. Specifically, by nullifying the "Decree of the State Council" Number 37/56 (*Uchwały Rady Państwa*), which had enabled people emigrating to West Germany to forfeit their Polish citizenship, Poland would not only turn emigration-hopefuls back into Polish citizens but also "legally confirm that there [were] no longer any people of 'indisputable German ethnicity'" in the country.[330] Changing Decree 37/56 would technically eliminate the German minority problem and, with it, invalidate applicants' legal claims to ethnically-based emigration.

Like Robert Rauziński, the economist at the Silesian Institute in Opole tasked with analyzing the effects of emigration, Czyrek believed that the population drain started by Helsinki would not stop by itself. As of late 1982, more than 80,000 people were attempting to emigrate from Poland, and the number could eventually double to 150,000. Nor would granting "exit visas to an additional 150,000 people […] bring about a conclusion either, rather the opposite." Such emigration, he pointed out, would simply "open new family ties [in West Germany] and give rise to another group of demanding permission [to emigrate]."[331] Illegal emigration had already exacerbated this problem of family reunification. In recent years, approximately 20,000 people

[329] AMSZ, D. IV, z. 7/86, w-3, RFN 0-30-4-82, fols. 1-9, "Notatka Informacyjna: Propozycje decyzji i działań w sprawie wyjazdów obywateli polskich na pobyt stały do RFN" by Józef Czyrek. The final list of recipients contained thirty-seven names, with General Jaruzelski at the top. The document itself is not dated, but the handwritten notes at the top indicate that it was probably received on January 13, 1983.
[330] Ibid., p. 5.
[331] Ibid., p. 2. "Z powyższego zestawienia liczbowego wynika, że zakrojona na szeroką skalę emigracyja nie przyniosła spodziewanego rozwiązania problem. Wyciągnać należy z tego wniosek, że kontynuowanie akcji wyjazdów do RFN w jej dotychczasowych formach i udzielenie zgód na wyjazd dalszych 150 tys. osób nie spowoduje zamknięcia sprawy, a odwrotnie, otworzy nowe powiązania rodzinne i da podstawy kolejnej grupie osób domagania się zezwoleń."

had refused to return to Poland after going to visit relatives in West Germany. Another "several dozen thousand Polish tourists"—i.e. not those claiming Germanness—had also traveled to West Germany since August 1980 and not come back. Worse still, family members remaining in Poland had become increasingly dogged in their own emigration requests. Women, especially those seeking to join their husbands, proved particularly stubborn, repeatedly appealing to passport officials until they received permission to emigrate.[332]

According to Czyrek, Bonn had supported emigration from Poland based on West Germany's own socioeconomic needs. The Federal Republic's low birth rate put the country at risk of severe demographic decline, but since guest workers could not "become German," Bonn was particularly interested in resettlers from Poland. Because of their historic connections to Germany, these newcomers represented a more easily "germanizable work force" than "people from Italy, Turkey, and Yugoslavia," even though many of them spoke no German.[333] The resettlers' supposed "Germanness" made them "more valuable" as immigrants than their South European counterparts, and as a result, West Germany continued to support their immigration. Even during the energy crisis when its national economy lagged and efforts were underway to curb migration from Turkey, the Federal Republic had arguably become even more assertive in recruiting resettlers, not only from Poland but Romania and the Soviet Union as well.

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[332] AIPN BU 1596/468, fol. 4-13, "Informacja dot. wyjazdów na pobyt stały do NRD, RFN i Berlina Zachodniego w 1980 roku," January 13, 1981, p. 3. As the Security Service noted, the family members of illegal emigrants had not given up on trying to leave. The wives of refugees in particular remained "increasingly insistent and decisive" in their complaints and attempts to emigrate and had been putting "pressure on the party administration."

[333] AMSZ, D. IV, z. 7/86, w-3, RFN 0-30-4-82, fols. 1-9, "Notatka Informacyjna: Propozycje decyzji i działań w sprawie wyjazdów obywateli polskich na pobyt stały do RFN" by Józef Czyrek, p. 3-4. "Stanowisko RFN w sprawie emigracji jest ważnym i stałym czynnikiem w bońskiej koncepcji polityki wobec PRL. Opiera się ono na przeslankach politycznych, ekonomicznych oraz prawo-doktralnych. Doplyw taniej siły roboczej dającej się germanizować w odroznieniu od Włochów, Turków, Jugosławian itp., ma to bowiem istotne znaczenie w sytuacji zerowego lub nawet ujemnego przyrostu naturalnego rodzimej ludności RFN."

In Czyrek's view, these facts provided further evidence of West Germany's growing "nationalist approach to protecting the interests of the so-called Germandom in the world."[334] According to Czyrek, Bonn had "treated the people living in the former German empire and their descendants as a German minority."[335] This phenomenon was particularly pronounced in the Recovered Territories. This transboundary sense of national responsibility underpinned West Germany's advocacy for exit visas, interventions in illegal emigration cases, and distribution of financial support through pensions and direct material aid. Support for resettler emigration had long been "an important and constant feature of Bonn's political posture toward Poland," but Czyrek feared that the West Germans were moving toward an even more revisionist stance.[336] Specifically, he pointed out that West Germany had been "threatening to activate [the German] minority politically" in order to "put pressure on [Poland]." By using the minority population as leverage, the West Germans hoped to coerce the Poles into meeting their emigration demands but without financial compensation.[337]

In Czyrek's estimation, his country had tolerated this "revisionist" view of the Western Territories and its native residents for far too long. West Germany showed no signs of stopping these efforts and instead appeared to be escalating them. He advocated for immediate action. As the Foreign Minister explained, Poland's policies toward resettlers had indirectly supported "new variety of Germanization" that validated West Germany's claim to speak on behalf of ethnic Germans living in Poland. Moreover, "by accepting the idea of the so-called incontestable

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[334] Ibid. p. 5. "… w nacjonalistycznym podejściu do ochrony interesów tzw. niemczyzny w świeciei wykorzystywanie tej sprawy w walce o pozyskiwanie poparcia w społeczeństwie."
[335] Ibid. p. 4. "Republika Federalna, zgodni że swym ustawodawstwem, traktuje ludność polska zamieszkałą na terytorium b. Rzeszy Niemieckiej i ich zastępnych jako mniejszość niemiecka."
[336] Ibid. p. 3, "Stanowisko RFN w sprawie emigracji jest ważnym i stałym czynnikiem w bońskiej koncepcji polityki wobec PRL. Opiera się ono na przesłankach politycznych, ekonomicznych oraz prawo-doktralnych."
[337] Ibid. p. 4, "Bonn stara się wywierać na nas nacisk groźbą politycznej aktywizacji tejże mniejszości w celach zrównoważenia naszych postulatów normalizacyjnych, bądź też dla umożliwienia tym osobom wyjazdu do RFN bez ponoszenia z tego tytułu świadczeń na rzecz Polski."

German ethnicity among Poland's citizens," the Polish side "had indirectly tolerated the Federal Republic's revisionist laws and political thesis about the existence of a German minority in Poland."[338] Although Czyrek did not explicitly reference the interwar period and the idea that the German minority had acted as a "fifth column" against independent Poland, he knew he could count on his readers to make the connection to this deeply engrained connotation.

For all these reasons, Czyrek called for the repeal of Decree 37/56. This unpublished—and presumably unpublicized—law had regulated Polish policies toward Germans living in and emigrating from Poland since 1956. As Chapter One explained, Decree 37/56 had, among other things, enabled people emigrating to West Germany to forfeit their Polish citizenship and regulated how travel documents and passports were issued to people seeking permanent stays in West Germany.[339] Czyrek explained that, by getting rid of this decree, Poland would turn emigration-hopefuls back into Polish citizens and, at least in a legal sense, get rid of the German minority problem. A few additional alterations could even make the policy change lucrative for Poland. For instance, the state could increase exit-visa and citizenship-change fees. Additionally, the administration could simplify the process of taking over emigrant property. In sum, by eliminating this law, Poland could address a wide variety of domestic problems, while thwarting West German aims in the process.

In Czyrek's view, repealing Decree 37/56 appeared relatively simple. Because the policy had never been published in the Polish Journal of Laws, a formal revocation process was not necessary. To initiate the change, the administration only needed to begin acting as if the

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[338] Ibid., p. 3, "Strona polska, godząc się na pojęcia tzw. bezspornej prynależności do narodu niemieckiego obywateli polskich pośrednio toleruje rewizjonistyczne ustawodowastwo i tezy polityczne RFN o istnieniu w Polsce rzekomej mniejszości niemieckiej i tzw obywatelstwie ogólnoniemieckim."
[339] Jacek Gorecki, "The Legal Status of Real Estate Abandoned by Persons Leaving Poland for the Federal Republic of Germany in the Years 1956-1989," in *Polish-German Relations and the Effects of the Second World War*, ed. Witold Goralski (Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs, 2006), 339.

unwanted law no longer existed. Furthermore, because the state was under no obligation to publicize the switch, West German leaders would simply discover the change on their own, rather than through an immediate legal briefing. In the meantime, Polish administrators could commission historians and legal scholars to prepare publications justifying Poland's new position.[340] By the time that Bonn realized the difference and lodged complaints, Poland would be prepared to defend the revised policy.

Of course, other diplomatic repercussions might not be solved by legalese, but Czyrek was not overly worried. Whatever the consequences—whether anti-Polish propaganda, increased pressure for emigration, or worsened bilateral relations—Czyrek considered the risk well worth the possible payoff. If the West Germans became frustrated enough about the resettler situation, they might offer Poland more economic compromises. As he made clear at the end of the report, "Our tactic should aim to make West Germany come up with proposed travel and economic solutions that are acceptable to both parties."[341] The Polish government acted on Czyrek's recommendation a year later on March 8, 1984. Resolution Number 26/84 repealed Decree 37/56, thereby transforming potential emigrants back into Polish citizens and legally voiding the German minority's existence.[342] As with the Helsinki agreement seven years earlier, resettlers and the (now legally non-existent) German minority had been transformed into leverage for international relations.

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[340] AMSZ, D. IV, z. 7/86, w-3, RFN 0-30-4-82, fols. 1-9, "Notatka Informacyjna," p. 9

[341] Ibid., p. 9. "Taktyka nasza powinna zmierzać do tego, aby RFN wystąpiła z propozycją znalezienia takich rozwiązań w kwestii wyjazdów i stosunków gospodarczych PRL-RFN, które byłby możliwe do przyjęcia przez obie strony."

[342] Muszyński, Mariusz, "International Law and the Citizenship of Germans Resettled or Repatriated from Poland," in *Polish-German Relations and the Effects of the Second World War*, ed. Goralski, Witold (Warsaw: Polish Institute of International Affairs, 2006), 241.

A Bavarian Litmus Test: The Hundhammer Problem

While Czyrek's strategy seemed logical, it also rested on the assumption that resettlers occupied an unquestioned and prominent position in West German foreign policy. In January and February 1982, shortly before Czyrek circulated his report, a controversy in the Bavarian parliament provided a timely window into West German attitudes toward resettlers. The conflict began during a parliamentary session on January 20, 1982, when Richard Hundhammer, a prominent member of the CSU parliamentary fraction, spoke out against resettler emigration and West Germany's continued support for it.[343] Although the CSU representative's exact words were not recorded, his core assertion was simple: supporting resettler migration to West Germany had been a mistake. He argued that, after being "torn from their surroundings" in the Eastern Territories, many resettlers were "desperately unhappy" (*todunglücklich*) in West Germany. In his view, "it would have been more humanitarian to have anchored stronger minority protections for this group into the Eastern Treaties, so these people could have stayed in their homelands."[344] Responses to Hundhammer's statement, as seen through intermittent news articles over the following six weeks, served as a litmus test for Czyrek's conclusions.[345] Was resettler migration as important to West Germans as Czyrek believed? Or had he based his 1982 recommendations on an inaccurate or overblown assessment of resettler significance? The Hundhammer controversy sheds light on possible answers to these questions.

Although Hundhammer likely intended his declaration as a throwaway remark—that his words were not recorded in the parliamentary minutes suggests that they were part of an offhand comment rather than a prepared speech—his listeners took his statement quite seriously.

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[343] KAS, "Kritik an Äusserung über Ostaussiedler," DPA, January 22, 1982. "Hundhammer mit Strauss konfrontiert," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 27, 1982.
[344] "CSU: Keine Werbung für oder gegen Aussiedlung," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 29, 1982.
[345] "Hundhammer mit Strauss konfrontiert," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 27, 1982.

Responding with vehemence, the FDP quickly pointed out that Hundhammer's opinion contradicted his party's established support for resettler immigration. "Was it not the CSU that first urgently called for using all possible means to pursue the emigration of hundreds of thousands of Germans from the Soviet Union when Breschnev visited?" asked the Free Democrats on January 22, two days after Hundhammer's remarks. "Do people trying to escape Communist dictatorships deserve to be villainized as economic migrants?"[346] Again pointing out the political inconsistency, the FDP even called Hundhammer a "chief witness (*Kronzeuge*) of the Communists" and accused him of "stabbing in the back" everyone who had striven for the emigration of resettlers, especially his own party.

Franz Joseph Strauss, CSU politician and Minister President of Bavaria, called for the state's government to distance itself from Hundhammer and his position. A few weeks later, representative Monika Hornig-Sutter (SPD) denounced Hundhammer's opinion as "poison" (*Gift*), while Dietmar Franzke (SPD) reprimanded Hundhammer for "brazenly" agitating the expellee population.[347] Bavarian Social Minister Franz Pirkl (FDP) publicly condemned Hundhammer's statement. Pirkl announced on February 17th that the government stance was "not in agreement" with Hundhammer and that the official welcoming posture toward *Aussiedler* "remained unequivocal and unchanged."[348]

The expellee population was indeed agitated. The Federation of Expellees issued an official statement in response to Hundhammer, calling his remarks "propaganda from over there" and the "diction of the Eastern bloc." One particularly harsh criticism came from an expellee

[346] "Kritik an Äusserung über Ostaussiedler," DPA, January 22, 1982.
[347] "Pirkl distanziert sich von Hundhammer-Äusserung: CSU Streit über Aussiedlerfrage geht weiter," *Münchner Merkur*, February 19, 1982.
[348] "Pirkl distanziert sich von Hundhammer-Äusserung: CSU Streit über Aussiedlerfrage geht weiter," *Münchner Merkur*, February 19, 1982.

named Dieter Berger, who published an opinion piece in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Berger argued that the resettler desire for emigration needed to be respected. While he agreed that it was important to support the minority rights of Germans in Eastern Europe, he contended that most ethnic Germans wanted to emigrate. "Despite the understandable disappointments the resettlers experience in their old-new [German] homeland," he explained, only 0.06% of resettlers actually returned to Eastern Europe. In all these ways, it became clear that Hundhammer's words produced serious backlash and "sharp criticism" that the CSU could not ignore.[349]

Hundhammer and the CSU leadership soon shifted toward damage control. While it might have been tempting to dismiss the renegade politician's statement as "private opinion"—as CSU Chairman of the Expellee Union Sieghard Rost initially claimed—the CSU could not simply take this route.[350] Hundhammer was too prominent and his opinions carried too much weight to be written off as marginal. After all, he and his father Alois Hundhammer had both helped establish the party. As such, his comments needed to be handled, and quickly, if the party were to save face. Thus, a week after making his initial comments, Hundhammer publicly explained and, in some ways, recanted his earlier statement. He asserted that, while he was not advocating that resettler migration be stopped, he did believe the West German government should take a more neutral approach toward it. He argued that, rather than encouraging ethnic Germans to emigrate, the Federal Republic should "make no advertisements for or against resettlement."[351] This change, he believed, would better serve the interests of the émigrés, who often "remain[ed] as foreigners," and as a result frequently "wanted to return to Poland."

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[349] "Aussiedler: Kritik an Äusserung über Ostaussiedler," DPA, January 22, 1982.
[350] "Aussiedler: Kritik an Äusserung über Ostaussiedler," DPA, January 22, 1982. "Es handele sich um die 'Privatmeinung' [Rosts] Fraktionskollege, die nicht durch irgendwelche Entscheidungen der Landtags-CSU gedeckt sei."
[351] "CSU: Keine Werbung für oder gegen Aussiedlung," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 29, 1982. "aufsehenerrengende Erklärung."

Sieghard Rost echoed these conclusions. Like Hundhammer, the CSU expellee representative argued that West Germany's foreign policy should prioritize the needs of ethnic Germans abroad. Without trying to sway potential emigrants in either direction, West Germany should try to "[make] the decision easier" when determining "whether to stay in the [Eastern] homeland or move to Germany." By improving support for Germans abroad, the Federal Republic could minimize the need for emigration, thereby sparing resettlers the emotional, social, and psychological upheaval of adjusting to a new country.

The CSU parliamentary fraction also released an official response to Hundhammer on February 13 in the form of three "unanimous assertions." First, in conjunction with Rost's comments, the CSU agreed that West Germany should not "advertise for or against emigration"; rather, Germans living in "Communist spheres of control" (*Machtbereiche*) should decide for themselves whether emigration was best for them. Secondly, the party asserted that West German foreign policy needed to guarantee cultural rights of German minority members where they lived while also supporting people wanting to emigrate. Thirdly, the CSU acknowledged the "psychological, social, and career difficulties" that some resettlers experienced after arriving. In response, the party would focus on "implementing diverse measures to ease the adjustment of this group of people." By ending with their commitment to integration, the CSU reaffirmed the resettlers' right to live in West Germany.

These vehement responses, both in the Bavarian parliament and among the wider public, reveal a great deal about the place of resettlers and the importance of their immigration in the West German imagination. By suggesting that these ethnic Germans would have been better off staying in Eastern Europe, Hundhammer had exposed a contradiction at the heart of resettler immigration. Namely, despite being ethnically "German," these co-nationals did not feel at home

in West Germany. This observation led Hundhammer to assert that, instead of encouraging these ultimately unhappy people to emigrate, the Federal Republic should work toward improving their minority rights; this change would allow them to prosper in their actual "home countries" (*Heimatländer*).[352]

Hundhammer seems to have strengthened the backlash by also casting doubt on resettler motives. According to one news article, the CSU leader's comments had "warned against the unrestrained influx of refugees" from the Eastern bloc and explained that "many of them were merely coming based on economic motives."[353] Not only did resettlers struggle after arriving, but many were likely freeloading opportunists, who immigrated for economic reasons rather than ethnic ones. Whether Hundhammer actually made such a statement is unclear; however, if he did, the comment would have directly conflicted with another core element of resettler discourse, specifically their status as victimized, worthy immigrants.

By suggesting that resettlers may have been better off in Eastern Europe (and by possibly asserting that they had economic motives), Hundhammer had clearly hit a nerve. West German foreign policy toward Poland operated under the assumption that resettler emigration was morally justified and that these ethnic brethren deserved to "return home" to West Germany. Although journalists had long reported about newcomers' challenges upon arriving, no one had questioned the resettlement policy as such. The impassioned responses from across the political spectrum reveal a great deal about resettler policy in the West German imagination. First, they demonstrate that Hundhammer's opinion was out of step with accepted political stances in early

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[352] "CSU: Keine Werbung für oder gegen Aussiedlung," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 29, 1982. "Selbst deutschstämmige Spätaussiedler seien nach ihrem Umzug in die Bundesrepublik aufgrund fehlender Sprachkenntnisse und sozialer Kontakte Fremde geblieben und 'todunglücklich.' Besser wäre es gewesen, diesem Personenkreis bei der Aushandlung der Ostverträge stärkere Minderheitenrechte zu verschaffen und ihnen so das Bleiben in ihren Heimatländern zu ermöglichen."

[353] "Aussiedler: Kritik an Äusserung über Ostaussiedler," DPA, January 22, 1982.

1982, not only in Bavaria. In early March, leaders at the national level also condemned his position. When asked to comment on Hundhammer's assertion that resettlers were better off remaining in their countries of origin, State Minister Corterier answered unequivocally that the Bavarian's opinion "in no way reflected that of the West German government."[354]

The heated responses to Hundhammer also point to the psychological weight attached to resettler immigration in West Germany. Possible reasons for this strong sense of emotional investment vary; however, they are likely linked to the social investment in and commitment to the ethnic German idea. Much of West Germany's immigration policy and, arguably, approach to Eastern Europe was still wedded to the concept of a German people or *Volk*. While the Cold War-era policies did not contain the nefarious racialized notions propagated by the Nazis, the idea of a distinctly German national body still existed. Resettlers occupied a key place in this narrative; their "indisputable Germanness" afforded them rights in West Germany and substantiated the Federal Republic's claim to represent Germans living in Eastern Europe. However, if resettlers did not feel at home in West Germany, their putative *Heimat*, then perhaps German culture was not so enduring; perhaps the ethnic ties of Germanness were not really that strong. Maybe the Bavarian politicians were angered by Hundhammer's comments because they intuitively understood the limits of ethnic rhetoric. Perhaps these politicians recognized that, by encouraging tens of thousands of people to uproot themselves, they had become complicit in their post-migration suffering. Whether the responses stemmed from these reasons or others, resettlers undoubtedly occupied a significant, even untouchable position in the West German mindset in 1982. By questioning their status, Hundhammer had discovered a divisive, and clearly loaded, issue.

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[354] Stenographischer Bericht, Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 9/88, March 4, 1982.

Conclusion

That debates such as these could reveal a great deal about the West German political climate, and specifically the attitudes toward resettlers, was not lost on observers like Czyrek. Although it is unclear whether the Polish Minister knew about the Hundhammer dispute, he was most certainly informed about similar resettler-based conflicts in West Germany. For years, Polish intelligence analysts had been tasked with tracking Poland-related developments in West German politics and media. Some reports paid especially close attention to newspapers, while others followed current events and public opinion.[355] Czyrek was thus undoubtedly observing the West German political climate, especially as it related to resettlers. The recommendations in his 1982 report were built on the assumption that West Germany was committed to resettlement at any cost. Understanding the German mindset was thus crucial to his strategy. By changing the citizenship law, Poland would effectively hold the German minority hostage until the Federal Republic agreed to their financial demands. Because resettler emigration was central to West Germany's foreign policy, Czyrek believed they would eventually give Poland the money they requested.

The Hundhammer controversy seemed to confirm Czyrek's assumptions. By 1982, the desire for resettlement was so engrained in the West German political psyche that questioning their status was anathema. Even Richard Hundhammer, one of the most prominent members of Bavaria's leading party, was castigated for suggesting that resettlers should remain in their home countries. The Hundhammer fallout therefore validates Czyrek's strategy of leveraging the German minority for Poland's diplomatic ends. Yet would this method work in reality? Or would

[355] Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach (hereafter APK), 592 SIN 1/187; "ilościowo najobszerniej informował o wydarzeniach w Polsce." For instance, one assessment by the Silesian Institute evaluated all major West German newspapers and analyzed how they portrayed Poland. Their report from the mid-1980s considered the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* to be the "most qualitatively informed about events in Poland."

Czyrek's suggestion ultimately backfire? Chapter Five will examine these questions in depth along with the actions of the supposedly nonexistent German minority in Poland, but first Chapter Four will evaluate resettler experiences in West Germany.

Chapter 4

The Not-So-Golden West: Integration Experiences in West Germany

"Yes, people have helped us, most of all in the village […] but we are still suffering from the cold-heartedness of people here in the West […] Next year we want to visit the *Heimat* [in Poland] […] Ever since we followed my siblings here [to West Germany], I am homesick every day," fifty-year-old resettler Maria explained in 1981 to the *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*.[356] She went on to say that she missed her house at the edge of the forest, along with her relatively simple life in Poland. Now her commute was at least an hour, and even with financial support from the state—including "child money" (*Kindergeld*) for each of her six children—her family still struggled to make ends meet. The conclusion of Maria's story was clear. Not only was life in West Germany difficult and complicated for this resettler, but her putative homeland did not necessarily feel like home.

While the details of Maria's experiences were specific to her, the implications about resettler integration were not. Despite tropes about the "Golden West" and its promises of health, wealth, happiness, and freedom, life in the Federal Republic proved disappointing to many resettlers.[357] Even with the May Program's allocations for language courses, housing, and material aid, many resettlers felt lost and abandoned after they arrived in their alleged ethnic homeland. As they soon learned, finding a job did not guarantee financial stability. Continued separation from family members still in Poland created emotional burdens which material support and abstract tax breaks could not lighten. Worse, native West Germans often failed to welcome the newcomers with open arms. Even with the 1977 *Aktion Gemeinsinn* public relations

[356] Katharina von Boxberg, "Aussiedler in Hamburg: Polen oder Deutsche? Mutter Marias Leben in der westlichen Welt," *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, May 3, 1981.
[357] For more on these tropes, see Zahra, *The Great Departure*, 234–40.

campaign on behalf of resettlers, as discussed in Chapter Two, newcomers frequently encountered prejudice from locals, who "put [resettlers] in a pot with foreigners."[358] This tendency toward discrimination grew more pronounced in the latter 1980s, leading to identity crises for many migrants. As one young resettler from Poland lamented, "Over there we were not Poles, [but] here we are not Germans."[359] The Protestant Church in Württemberg echoed this sentiment in their 1983 study of resettler integration. "The local [Germans] often view resettlers as unwanted foreigners, describe them as Russians or Poles, and shy away from all contact [with them]."[360]

Yet what made these co-national newcomers seem so different? Resettlers cited their customs and traditions, such as heightened religiosity, as distinguishing them from West Germans and alienating them as a result. However, after further investigation into their complaints and comments, their disorienting experiences seems to have stemmed less from divergent expressions of "German" culture than from typical encounters with culture shock. The relocation from East to West had caused an emotional and psychological rupture, which the struggles from the new and fast-paced life, "cold" or emotionally-distant neighbors, and complicated administrative and employment bureaucracies only heightened.[361] Encounters with the West German meritocracy also presented problems. As Wolfgang Lanquillon, one of the leaders in the Protestant *Diakonisches Werk,* observed, "Resettlers from Eastern and Southeastern Europe quickly realize that certain knowledge and skills are essential if they want

[358] "'Aussielder sind keine Asylanten': Wittmann: Landsleute nicht als Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge einstufen," *Unser Oberschlesier* Nr. 6, March 19, 1982.
[359] C. Graf Schwerin, "Wie junge Aussiedler ihre neue Heimat sehen," *Die Welt*¸ May 30, 1984.
[360] "Aussiedler unerwünscht," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, September 30, 1983.
[361] The resettlers' complaints about their "cold" reception in West Germany echoes the expellees' assessment decades earlier. Kossert, *Kalte Heimat*, 1–16.

[to function] like any other German in the workplace and everyday world."[362] Although resettlers should have welcomed this "meritocracy" in theory—after all, it meant they no longer needed to rely on party connections for favors or employment—few of them had received the necessary training in Poland for many of the new jobs available to them. This was especially the case for young women.[363] Furthermore, the competitive market and general capitalist "rat race" left many resettlers feeling disoriented and out of place. Moreover, this sense of competition existed not just between individual workers, but also between immigrant groups. As Marius Otto points out in his study of *Aussiedler* from Upper Silesia, many resettlers complained that they had been "subjected to strong competition (*Konkurrenzkampf*)," and not just with local Germans and other immigrant groups, but also between resettler communities.[364] All these factors contributed to the idea among resettlers that perhaps their migration had been a mistake.

What does it mean, though, that most of their experiences boiled down to "normal" culture shock, rather than encounters with different "German" characteristics? According to migration scholars Klaus J. Bade and Jochen Oltmer, this pattern suggests that, despite their privileged legal status, resettlers entered "culturally, mentally, and socially into a true immigration situation." This makes the term "resettler" nothing more than an "ethnonational euphemism," for resettlers were "simultaneously Germans and immigrants." On the one hand,

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[362] "Aussiedler leiden unter Arbeitslosigkeit," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, February 12, 1985. "Aussiedler aus den östlichen und südostlichen europäischen Ländern machten schnell die Erfahrung, dass ein bestimmtes Wissen und bestimmte Fähigkeiten nötig seien, wenn sie im Beruf und in der Alltagswelt ihren Platz wie jeder Deutsche ausfüllen möchten."

[363] In general, female resettlers encountered more education-related obstacles than their male counterparts, due to a combination of national variations in training systems and to disparate gender career norms in West Germany and Poland. As one 1981 report pointed out, "The career paths that [the young women] began in their country of origin do not correspond with professional roles for women in their [new] localities." As a result, many young women were forced to restart their training and pursue more "traditional female careers" instead; however, this directional switch did not guarantee them success, for "a scarcity of job and training opportunities for female-specific jobs still prevailed in West Germany." Ulrich Gintzel and Robert Krieg, *Junge Aussiedler in Nordrhein-Westfalen: Studie über die berufliche und soziale Integration von ehemaligen Sprachkursteilnehmern* (Düsseldorf: Min. für Arbeit, Gesundheit u. Soziales d. Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1981), 38–39.

[364] Otto, *Zwischen lokaler Integration und regionaler Zugehörigkeit*, 131.

their position as an "materially-privileged minority" guaranteed them financial aid and other integration assistance. Yet their privileged position could also work against them, for "their reception was made more difficult because people underestimated their problems and overestimated the binding power of ethno-nationalism."[365] In sum, although the resettlers' ethnic heritage enabled their migration in the first place and subsequently qualified them to receive benefits from the state, the assumptions about that ethnic status—that as co-nationals and fellow "Germans," resettlers should have a relatively easy transition into West German life—ultimately created barriers to their integration. Jasna Čapo Žmegač echoes this conclusion in her study of ethnic-return migration, observing that "cultural differences are not given the causative role in the creation of a separate identity of ethnic co-migrants." Instead, these differences are actually the result "of a *specific sociological situation*, itself a product of the encounter of ethnically privileged migrants with their 'ethnic homeland.'"[366] In other words, the experience of migration—both in the sense of uprooting and resettling—becomes foundational to the newcomers' identity and sense of self. This migratory biography, coupled with the indifference and even hostility from the local population, creates a new, differentiated identity based on "excellence and victimhood."[367]

Cultural contrasts were heightened by the major changes in West German society and politics during the 1970s and 1980s. Even for older resettlers who had spent at least part of their childhood in prewar Germany, the Federal Republic they entered in the 1980s was a wholly foreign place. The cultural volatility of 1968 combined with attacks by the Red Army Faction in

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[365] Klaus J. Bade and Jochen Oltmer, eds., *Aussiedler: deutsche Einwanderer aus Osteuropa*, 1st ed., IMIS-Schriften 8 (Osnabrück: Universitaetsverlag Rasch, 1999), 6–7.
[366] Jasna Capo Zmegac, "Ethnically Privileged Migrants in Their New Homeland," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18, no. 2 (June 2005): 210.
[367] Zmegac, 210.

the 1970s created a country marked by terrorism angst. Politically, West Germany had also undergone major shifts. The formation and rise of the Green Party challenged the two major parties and caused a reshuffling of seats and alliances in the Bundestag. The 1982 chancellor transition from Helmut Schmidt (SPD) to Helmut Kohl (CDU) after a constructive vote of no confidence ushered in what Kohl called a "spiritual-moral change" (*geistig-moralische Wende*) and attempted shift toward more conservative values.[368] In short, the culture the resettlers encountered in West Germany was diametrically opposed to the one they had left behind.[369] The resettlers' culture shock became even more pronounced when compared with that of East German refugees, who also emigrated from a communist state. In the words of Douglas Klusmeyer and Demetrios Papademetriou, "While both groups came from socialist systems and had to adapt to the conditions of a market economy, the historical and cultural backgrounds of the *Aussiedler* made the gap between the familiar and unfamiliar even wider after arriving in the FRG."[370] Feelings that the locals did not accept them as German compounded the issue. *Aussiedler* "doubted that their host society regarded them as 'German; and were inclined to see themselves as a minority rather than identify with the majority culture."[371] By the early 1980s, it became increasingly clear that the struggles resettlers faced in West Germany stemmed from disorienting experiences in a capitalist, western society with different bureaucratic structures,

[368] Klaus Stüwe, *Die Rede des Kanzlers: Regierungserklärungen von Adenauer bis Schröder* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005), 320; Peter Hoeres, "Von der 'Tendenzwende' zur 'geistig-moralischen Wende.' Konstruktion und Kritik konservativer Signaturen in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 61, no. 1 (2013): 93–119; Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, "Deutsche Kulturgeschichte," *Die Bundesrepublik–1945 bis zur Gegenwart,* (München: Hanser, 2009), 425–44.
[369] For more on West German cultural changes from the late 1970s and into the 1980s, see Andreas Wirsching, *Abschied vom Provisorium, 1982-1990*, 2006; A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[370] Douglas B. Klusmeyer and Demetrios G. Papademetriou, *Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany: Negotiating Membership and Remaking the Nation* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 84.
[371] Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, 85. The internal quote comes from Kohller 1994: 13.

social norms, and values from their own—all challenges which ethnic arguments or "homecoming" rhetoric could not solve.

This chapter sketches out the experiences of resettlers in West Germany and investigates integration programs while also evaluating the valence of "integration" as a category. By tracing the experiences of resettlers in West Germany, this chapter argues that, while the open-door policy toward ethnic Germans continued through the 1980s—and expanded in 1988—aid from the state failed to keep pace with the growing numbers of newcomers from Eastern Europe. Moreover, the ethnically-based rhetoric or the resettlers' privileged legal status proved insufficient to solve their problems, which were often rooted in post-communist culture shock, particularly among migrating youth. Awareness about resettler integration struggles increased throughout the decade, ultimately culminating in calls for increased governmental support for the German minority population still living in Poland. Consequently, what Hundhammer had been criticized for suggesting in 1982 had become a West German policy goal by the end of the decade.

Migration Changes in the 1980s: Illegal Émigrés & Doubts about Germanness

The 1980s witnessed major changes in the *type of migration* from Poland. Whereas most migrants in the 1970s had obtained exit visas, many resettlers in the 1980s were "illegal," meaning that they came temporarily as tourists and then refused to return to Poland. Fluctuations in illegal emigration often coincided with political changes in Poland. For instance, the number of illegal resettlers spiked drastically before the Polish elections in July 1981. Resettlers interviewed at transit camp Friedland explained that they feared a regime change would lead to

tighter visa restrictions, so they had opted to emigrate immediately with tourist visas instead.[372] This huge influx—of more than 300 people daily—filled Friedland to capacity and forced them to set up a temporary shelter at a nearby police school.[373] Over the next few years, the number of illegal emigrants increased steadily; more than 25,000 resettlers arrived illegally in 1986 alone.[374] Although the very nature of the illegal emigration—the lack of official Polish records, the circuitous routes people took to West Germany, etc.—make its exact scope difficult to determine, the phenomena was not small.[375] One 1986 report estimated that "around 100,000 resettlers in West Germany lived separated from their families," many as a result of illegal emigration. The rise in illegal migration added to resettlers' emotional difficulties, for newly arrived resettlers lacked the crucial emotional support network that a complete family would have provided.[376] Consequently, integration of the newest arrivals was full of "considerable tensions" and greater challenges than those experienced by the resettlers who had preceded them.[377]

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[372] For a thorough history of Friedland, see Sascha Schießl, *'Das Tor zur Freiheit' Kriegsfolgen, Erinnerungspolitik und humanitärer Anspruch im Lager Friedland, 1945-1970,* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016).
[373] "Im Lager Friedland ist einiges zu tun," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 13, 1981. Large numbers of expected, "legal" resettlers could also create logistical challenges with their luggage and cars. Émigrés often shipped their possessions westward by train. In 1981 alone, more than 900 cargo wagons arrived in Friedland, containing more than 34,000 "*Kiste*" belonging to resettlers. Although almost 90% of the 53,000 resettlers from Poland in 1981 traveled by train, the number of cars that year caused the camp's lots to overflow. According to the *Ostpreussenblatt,* 5,634 of the 52,710 resettlers who arrived in Friedland in 1981 came in their own automobiles. Trains were the only other form of transportation mentioned in this article, which suggests strongly that the other 47,076 resettlers came via the railway. This figure represented 89.3% of the 52,710 total. "Friedland: Einmal anders gesehen," *Das Ostpreussenblatt*, February 13, 1982.
[374] KAS, DPA, March 16, 1984.
[375] Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*, 358.
[376] Adolf Wolf, *Aussiedler und DDR-Übersiedler heute: eine Ratgeber für die Statusfeststellung* (Karlsfeld bei München: Jüngling, 1986), 93. BArch 106/97096, Gerhard Reichling, "Die Startsituation der Spätaussiedlerin der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," November 2, 1977, p. 12. "Die sonstigen Anpassungsprobleme der Aussiedler aus dem polnischen Bereich sind überwiegend psychologischer Natur. Die schwerste seelische Belastung der Aussiedler ist die Zerreissung der Familienbande mit den in Polen zurückgebliebenen Verwandten […] Ein weiteres psychologisches Problem ist das Gefühl eines Teils der Aussiedler aus Polen, von den einheimischen Deutschen nicht als gleichwertig anerkannt zu sein."
[377] Wolf, 93.

As discussed in Chapter Three, illegal emigration exacerbated existing strains between the two countries. According to Polish policies, relatives of illegal émigrés were then forbidden to leave, often for the next three to five years.[378] The West German Foreign Office and embassy attempted to intervene in these "new illegal cases," but their efforts were only intermittently successful.[379] When it became apparent that this illegal emigration showed no sign of abating, the Polish government had what appeared to be a slight change of heart. In January 1985, the administration introduced a new policy which retroactively extended illegal emigrants' visitor passes and made it easier for them to return to Poland.[380] In return, émigrés needed to turn over between 20% and 25% of their earnings to the Polish state; this money would supposedly cover their pensions and ongoing health insurance costs in Poland. How many people took advantage of this policy—or, for that matter, were aware of its existence—is difficult to say, but it is certain that this attempt to stop illegal emigration was not particularly effective. The number of illegal émigrés remained steady in 1985 and 1986.[381]

In addition to an increase in illegal emigration, the *type of migrants* also shifted during the 1980s. Most notable was the fact that with each passing year fewer new arrivals spoke German. The noticeable decline in German competency was a logical consequence of the Federal Republic's guidelines for resettler immigration, as well as natural population growth in Poland. As Stola clarifies, after "internal migration [in Poland] and marriage between people from different [ethnic] backgrounds" during the four postwar decades, "many families [in the Western Territories] had an ancestor who had been on the German Ethnicity Lists *(Deutsche*

[378] Wolf, 93.
[379] Wolf, 93.
[380] Poland had already attempted a similar "repatriation" program for its dispersed nationals after the war. See Zahra, *The Great Departure*, 229.
[381] KAS, *Die Welt*, January 3, 1987.

Volksliste)."[382] Such people could then use the List to support their case for emigration, even though their sole connection to Germany might be a great-grandparent or distant relative by marriage. As a result, many newcomers possessed only tangential or distant links to Germany and, with it, the German language. Based on this situation, it should come as no surprise that, according to one figure, 80% of resettlers who arrived in 1985 and 1986 had "very minimal German language knowledge."[383] These circumstances had led to new challenges for resettlers. As North Rhine-Westphalian Social and Work Minister Hermann Heinemann (SPD) explained in 1986, "The problems of resettler integration [had] changed since the 1970s," now that 35% of incoming resettlers were "not of German origin." The federal government had already invested considerable funds into language training; in 1985, West Germany spent 220 million Deutschmark on resettler language courses.[384] Yet these amounts were quickly proving insufficient. As "fewer and fewer resettlers" arrived from Poland having "mastered the German language," language programs were in desperate need of expansion.[385]

Although most resettlers strove to minimize or outright hide their Polish origins, their initial lack of language fluency contributed to prejudice against them as not "truly German." Encounters with bigoted locals could have dire emotional effects, especially among young resettlers whose parents had opted not to teach them their ancestral language. After arriving in West Germany, such youth were frequently bullied and labeled as "Polak," a pejorative term for Poles. To the young targets of this ethnic slur, this treatment seemed particularly unfair. As one parent explained, while in Poland, these young "Polaks" had been harassed as "Germans;" one

[382] Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*, 360.
[383] KAS, DPA, February 6, 1986.
[384] KAS, DPA, February 6, 1986. Despite these already large sums, some critics argued that more could be done. For instance, expellee politician Hupka (CDU) advocated for increasing the language budget to 290 Deutschmark annually.
[385] KAS, DPA, October 7, 1986.

young man from East Prussia even had a swastika forcibly painted on his back.[386] An Upper Silesian youth voiced similar concerns during a 1986 roundtable with Richard von Weizsäcker, explaining that "in Poland, he was insulted (*beschimpft*) as a 'Fascist,' but in Wolfsburg he [had been] denigrated (*verunglimpft*) as a 'Polak.'"[387]

Extreme though these examples may seem, the disdain many resettlers encountered was real. While West German policies officially supported the newcomers as ethnically privileged immigrants, public opinion as expressed in the media started to question the resettlers' German legitimacy during the 1980s. For instance, in a February 1982 letter to the editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a woman named Lieselotte Schucker used her experiences as an expellee to cast doubt on resettlers' Germanness. Expelled from Silesia with her parents in 1946, Shucker held that her family's decision to leave rested on their desire "to remain German." She argued that, by and large, Germans in Silesia had been offered the same choice: "Had they become Polish, they would not have been expelled." Because of this, Schucker argued that current immigrants from Poland no longer deserved to be called German; instead, they were "German-stock Poles" (*deutschstämmige Polen*). She ended her critique with a comment about how "strange" or suspicious it was that so many parents who called themselves German had failed to pass on the "slightest German language skills" to their children.[388] Schucker's conclusions were unambiguous. People who had opted to stay in Poland after the war had betrayed the German people and, consequently, no longer belonged in the German nation.

While certainly not all expellees were as disdainful as Schucker, her comments suggest a version of historical interpretation in which resettlers had forfeited their claim to "Germanness."

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[386] "Gespräch mit einer Spätaussiedlerin," *Der Schlesier*, Nr. 32, August 7, 1981.
[387] "Deutsche unter Deutschen," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, September 16, 1986.
[388] "Deutschstämmige Polen," *Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 11, 1982.

In contrast to expellee functionaries like Hupka and Czaja, who invoked the "community of fate" (*Schicksalgemeinschaft*) to advocate for resettler emigration and, eventually, for the rights of the German minority in Poland, Schucker dismissed the newcomers as opportunistic fakes. Not only did the resettlers not belong to the German national community, but by remaining behind and allowing themselves to be "Polonized," they had turned their backs on their people. This anecdote reveals that despite sharing the same Eastern *Heimat* and, arguably, similar migration experiences, some expellees refused to see resettlers as their natural allies. Along these lines, Schucker's criticism confirms that the opinions of expellee functionaries could diverge significantly from those of their apparent constituents, a well-documented phenomenon for the later 1970s and 1980s.[389]

Unlike Schucker, however, some West Germans desired to assist resettlers and acted on their own initiative to do so. For instance, a group of West Berliners established a "Good Neighbors" program to connect newcomers with locals who could help them. The structure was similar to that of the 1977 *Aktion Gemeinsinn* campaign to recruit sponsors or *Patenschaften*; however, the Berlin initiative was an entirely grassroots effort. The program began in 1984 when Angela Grützmann and other West Berliners noticed that resettlers coming through the Marienfelde Camp "sometimes [had] significant problems integrating themselves."[390] The "Good Neighbors" program thus aimed to help by giving the newcomers—of which there were 10,000 annually—coupons containing the contact information of individual West Berliners who had agreed to participate; at least a thousand people had volunteered for a similar program the

[389] For more on the increasingly diverging opinions of expellee functionaries and rank-and-file expellees, see Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe, 1945-1990* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 268–69.
[390] DPA, November 1, 1985. "… hatten teilweise grosse Probleme, sich einzugliedern."

previous year. However, despite charitable efforts like this one, many resettlers continued to feel out of place. This was particularly true among the young-resettler population.

Youth Resettlers & Defining Integration

While changes had occurred in ethnic migration patterns and policies, the relatively high percentage of young resettlers remained fairly constant. From the Helsinki agreement onward, youth were disproportionately represented among the resettlers. In 1976, for instance, more than forty percent of resettlers from Poland were under twenty-one years old, and almost fifty percent were younger than twenty-six.[391] Nearly a decade later in 1985, thirty-five percent of new arrivals were under age twenty-five.[392] The relatively young average age of resettlers proved especially important for cultural integration. As one reference guide for resettler law explained, recently-arrived young people had "been born and [grown] up under Polish rule" and as a result "[had] no memory of German times."[393] Many of these youth were three or four generations removed from direct connections to Germany.[394] Because these youth had little to no experience with West German society, they needed different integration strategies. Furthermore, although young people came in significant numbers to West Germany, they usually did so at the behest of their parents, rather than based on their own German-identity convictions. At the same time, the newcomers' age seemed to raise the integration stakes. As Heinz Kühn, Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia, explained in the mid-1970s, "What we do not pay for integration today we will be forced to spend on police and resocialization in the future."[395] In other words, if these

[391] Ernst Liesner, *Aussiedler: die Voraussetzungen für die Anerkennung als Vertriebener: Arbeitshandbuch für Behörden, Gerichte und Verbände* (Herford: Maximilian-Verlag, 1988), 127.
[392] Liesner, 128.
[393] Liesner, 126.
[394] Otto, *Zwischen lokaler Integration und regionaler Zugehörigkeit*.
[395] Quoted in Bade and Oltmer, *Aussiedler*, 38.

young people rejected the West German culture and way of life, they might become lifelong drains on the state. Which way they swung would have long-term societal, cultural, and economic implications for West Germany for years to come.

The first step in "successful integration" was language acquisition. This need was especially pressing among *Aussiedler* from Poland. In contrast to their peers from the USSR, of whom 75% had previous access to German courses, only five percent of Polish newcomers had ever taken a German class. After this, many Polish youth participated in eight-to-ten-month intensive programs at special language dormitories, where they had eight hours of German instruction daily, followed by two more hours of further lessons (*Unterrichtsstunden Nacharbeit*) led by the teachers at the dormitory.[396] Additional five-hour classes took place on one or two Saturdays per month. During free weekends, students could return home to stay with their families. Most young resettlers seem to have fared well after completing the program. Not only did they succeed in school, but researchers noted that "there was no significant difference between young resettlers and youth from West Germany" regarding education level (*Ausbildungsabschluss*). In the light of resettlers' previous language difficulties, this success in *Gymnasium* represented an "especially noteworthy [accomplishment]." For many Polish-born young people, the combination of language and education appeared to have paid off.[397]

Yet language courses and academic achievements could not always ease feelings of loneliness and homesickness. Not all young resettlers had such positive experiences, as the story

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[396] Gintzel and Krieg, *Junge Aussiedler in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 8–9. Although the dormitory staff presumably did not enforce a "German-language only" policy, a clear method of the program was full linguistic immersion. The instructors, who were employed by various private language schools contracted by the state, followed what was called the "Direct Method." Its features included "elimination (*Ausschaltung*) of the student's mother tongue," lessons taught only in German without any translation, systematic and gradual lessons, and "breaking down of inhibitions in speaking." During these courses, the students' only outside interactions came from the teachers, whose priority was education not friendship, or with their families on the weekends.

[397] Gintzel and Krieg, *Junge Aussiedler in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 19.

of the Deja family demonstrates. In December 1977, the parents and their three teenage children left Bytom/Beuthen in Poland, registered in Friedland, and eventually settled in Duisburg. Upon arrival, the teenagers struggled to adjust to their new lives. As their father explained, "Beuthen, their birthplace, had become the children's trusted surroundings, in which they had friends and acquaintances. For [them], Poland was home (*Heimat*)." Even though they were of German heritage, West Germany remained "a foreign and unknown land whose language they had only fragmentally (*bruchstückhaft*) mastered." Yet simply returning to Poland was not an option. When two Deja children later visited their grandmother in Beuthen, they saw that "everything had gotten worse since they left."[398] Although they no longer belonged in Poland, the Dejas did not yet feel at home in West Germany either. While language courses could certainly improve one's chance of success, these classes could not erase the inherent ache for belonging.

Hubert Stańczuk was another young resettler could not "find [his] way in West Germany" (*nicht zurecht finden konnte*). He too had trouble socially and as a result felt homesick. "In a sense typical of all young resettlers who come from Poland," the news article began, Stańczuk "had to leave [his] friends behind." Some of his problems seem to have boiled down to culture shock, for although Stańczuk experienced "a certain prosperity" in West Germany, the young man felt lonely and "[missed] human warmth." Homesickness, difficulties with making new friends, and problems with language and job requirements led Stańczuk and resettlers like him "to conclude after arriving in West Germany that they are not actually Germans, but Poles." After struggling in West Germany, Stańczuk apparently returned to Poland in 1979. The article concluded that, upon arriving again in Poland, "people [like Stańczuk], for

[398] "Aussiedler aus Polen: Wenn Träume nicht wahr werden," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 2, 1981.

whom life in Germany was their greatest wish, now [discovered] […] Poland as their actual fatherland."[399]

Hubert Stańczuk's story is important not just in its own right, but also because of how it was used. The original article appeared in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Sonntagsblatt*, likely in late December 1978 or early January 1979. Shortly thereafter, the Polish Press Agency (*Polska Agentura Prasowa*) translated portions of the story and republished it on January 15. Sometime after this, Gerhard Reichling, director of the German division of the Association for the Study of the World Refugee Problem (AWR), re-translated the Polish version and distributed it internally within the organization. The story's post-history suggests that Polish authorities were keenly interested in the return-migration phenomenon, especially among youth. For Polish authorities, discontented young people like Hubert Stańczuk offered the best kind of deterrent. Not only did such stories mean people came back to the country, but they also provided concrete evidence in the ongoing propaganda struggle against West Germany. For the Federal Republic, return migration represented a PR loss, as Reichling's re-translation suggests. While return migration was rare, stories like those of Stańczuk and the Deja children highlighted the shortcomings of resettler integration into West Germany. The process of helping these newcomers "live as German among Germans" needed to be rethought and restructured.

Yet what exactly did it mean for them to "live as Germans among Germans"? When asked how they envisioned their future, the young people overwhelmingly desired "contentment" (*Zufriedenheit*) in their work and their personal lives. Problems arose, however, when their preconceived notions of success clashed with unseen structures of West German culture. As one

[399] BArch 106/97099, AWR Arbeitsstelle für Aussiedlerfragen, Bundesausgleichsamt, "Übersetzung aus dem Polnischen, 'Gazeta Pomorska,' Bromberg-Thorn-Leslau. 15. Januar 1979, 'Die Menschen, die von Deutschland nach Polen zurückkehren,' PAP (Polska Agentura Prasowa) Bonn," January 31, 1979.

researcher aptly pointed out, the "young resettlers came to a new society in order to realize their personal conceptions of satisfaction and happiness [but were then] confronted with the values of a meritocratic and consumer-based society." This unexpected conundrum could plunge young resettlers into a "deep dilemma" with no way out.[400] Still, North Rhine-Westphalia based sociologists Gintzel and Krieg hoped to discover a solution.

Defining "Integration": The Role of Language and Values

Commissioned by the North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) Ministry of Work, Health, and Society, the Gintzel and Krieg study aimed to discover how young resettlers had fared after completing intensive language courses, as outlined in the May 1976 "Special Program." Because North Rhine-Westphalia was the destination of choice for almost fifty percent of all resettlers to West Germany, its researchers were uniquely positioned to analyze the experiences and trajectories of resettlers from Poland. In terms of scope, the study drew upon an impressively large sample size. In August 1980, researchers sent 2,750 surveys to young resettlers (all but a handful were between seventeen and twenty-three years of age) who had enrolled in state-sponsored language classes since 1976. Of the 1,030 people who completed and returned the survey, 959 came from Poland.[401]

According to Gintzel and Krieg, the process of youth integration boiled down to a combination of language competency and cultural values. "One has to master German in order to understand the outside world," the researchers explained before adding that many resettlers failed to recognize German "as the medium for expressing personal feelings, fears, joys, and uncertainties." They then argued that this situation caused resettlers to create their own "double

[400] Gintzel and Krieg, *Junge Aussiedler in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 64.
[401] Gintzel and Krieg, 14–15.

world," one in which the public, German-speaking environment stood in opposition to the private sphere defined by their mother tongue.[402] Gintzel and Krieg contended that the bilingual, dual-world dichotomy suggested a "very superficial integration into West Germany," a situation which could have destructive, even dangerous outcomes: "The massive repression of [the resettlers'] own personality in favor of an adjusted external behavior could transform into a social and political time bomb in the long run." How exactly this "time bomb" might explode—or what its repercussions might be—the researchers did not speculate, but they did conclude that only after German became the *lingua franca* of the resettlers' private sphere would their integration be fully achieved.[403]

However, the study also revealed that there was not a direct line between language competency and social integration. On the contrary, the research suggested that resettler isolation and self-separation tended to worsen over time, despite continued advancements in German language ability. Significantly, the resettler cohort that began language courses in 1976—the earliest date start date in their NRW survey—26% of respondents listed "lack of [social] contact" as their biggest concern. The paucity of relationships was not caused by insufficient German competence, as the report stated plainly:

> "If one-fourth of those [resettlers] who have lived in West Germany the longest and, as has been proven, have the relatively smallest language problems complain about [their] insufficient interactions with locals, then the source of the problem can hardly be inadequate language capabilities. Once again, it becomes clear that language abilities are not sufficient to guarantee social integration into a society."[404]

[402] Gintzel and Krieg, 37, 41–42.
[403] Gintzel and Krieg, 37, 41–42.
[404] Gintzel and Krieg, 34.

Instead of reevaluating the role of dual-language spheres, the researchers directed their attention to West German unwillingness to accept the newcomers. These problems, including "lack of comprehension, the absence of understanding and being understood, as far [the resettlers'] own history and culture are concerned," made *Aussiedler* feel unwelcome in their new country long after their intensive courses were complete.[405]

Gintzel and Krieg argued that, in order to overcome this sense of isolation, resettlers needed to adjust their values. In the researchers' own words, "The vast majority of the young resettlers [were] convinced that they [could] only realize their personal, existential happiness if they [learned] to accept unconditionally the prevailing ideals of an achievement- and consumer-oriented society."[406] While most young people opted to conform, this decision rarely solved the basic contradiction between their pre-migration dreams or goals and the post-migration cultural norms. The researchers feared that, if unresolved, this tension could create a "deep identity crisis" with psychological and psychosomatic outcomes. In other words, the young people needed to realize that, although their new lives might never match their pre-migration expectations, they would feel better after learning to abide by western cultural expectations, including consumerism and achievement, regardless of how overwhelming this mentality shift might seem at first. After all, having more options entailed making more decisions, a challenge which resettlers likely had not encountered often under the economic limitations of Communism. At the same time, however, the newcomers should not wholly reject their former values. In order for true assimilation—the researchers' goal—to be achieved, the young people needed to balance

[405] Gintzel and Krieg, 35.
[406] Gintzel and Krieg, 64–65.

the "conscious and critical acceptance of the new social rules" while not somehow retaining, or at least not simply suppressing, their pre-migration ways of thinking.[407]

Interestingly, the researchers included resettlers' close-knit family structures into the list of values to adjust or change. As with other immigrant groups, resettlers in West Germany tended toward a form of self-ghettoization rather than branching out into wider West German society. Gintzel and Krieg found that resettlers with strong family ties were less likely to develop "personal independence" because assimilation required a relatively "willful and independent attitude." In particular, youth who felt content within their families proved less likely to attend public events, participate in sports, or join clubs and organizations. While the researchers certainly did not advocate for solo emigration or broken families, they were concerned that closed-off families could prevent youth from developing the friendships essential to their long-term transition into West German life.[408] The sociologists further posited that young women were especially susceptible to social isolation. Females, they claimed, opted to retreat further into the so-called "relationship triangle" (*Beziehungsdreieck*) of family, other resettlers, and neighborhood. Moreover, their "relatively intensive attachment to traditional cultural and value systems" supposedly made young women "naturally more distrustful of West German principles." The researchers contended that gender-specific integration problems played out in employment statistics. Whereas almost 50% of male resettlers obtained jobs corresponding with their training, less than 30% of young women boasted the same success. As a result, almost 70% of female resettlers were relegated to lives of unskilled labor, homemaking, or unemployment.[409]

[407] Gintzel and Krieg, 66.
[408] Gintzel and Krieg, 62–63.
[409] Gintzel and Krieg, 38–39.

The sociologists' findings are significant on a number of levels. First, their study revealed that language did not guarantee social acceptance and, with it, social integration. Despite this fact, however, Gintzel and Krieg still insisted that the resettlers' "dual world" reflected their "very superficial integration" into West Germany. These somewhat contradictory conclusions about language suggest two possible circumstances. Either the sociologists were oblivious to the home/outside-world dynamic typical within immigrant societies, or they were aware of this dynamic but did not choose to apply it to the resettlers. The former reason seems unlikely; bilingualism and the presence of dual language spheres had been well established by the mid-1980s.[410] The latter explanation therefore seems more credible. The researchers were almost certainly aware of the relationship between bilingualism and immigration, but they opted not to include it in their study of young resettlers. Perhaps this decision reveals that Gintzel and Krieg did not view the resettlers as typical "immigrants." Because these newcomers were technically "co-nationals," their integration did not warrant interpretation through a "typical immigrant" lens. Instead of seeing "the migration of repatriates […] as a migration between two different cultures," the researchers assumed that the ethnic heritage would make their integration qualitatively different. Yet as migration expert Rainer Münz pointed out, "The Germanness of the migrating German minority […] [did] not make their integration easier than that of other immigrants."[411]

These sociologists were not alone in these assumptions, nor did they come to isolated conclusions. Studies of *Aussiedler* increased greatly during the 1980s, due at least in part to how

[410] For a contemporary study of bilingualism, see for instance François Grosjean, *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982).
[411] Münz, Seifert, and Ulrich, *Zuwanderung nach Deutschland*, 148.

"unexpectedly challenging" their integration process turned out to be.[412] Most of these studies arrived at relatively uniform findings. First, separation from the rest of Germany and life under socialism had created "invisible packages" of "behaviors, practices, and attitudes" which distinguished newcomers from native West Germans.[413] Secondly, integration studies in the 1980s concluded that resettlers not only needed to "pass" as German, but they also needed to "get rid of the [cultural and socioeconomic] 'packages' they brought with them." Instead, the newcomers "should orient themselves toward the norms, values, and life patterns (*Lebensmuster*) of West Germany." Lastly, anything "different" about the resettlers, be it cultural expression or regional identification, was seen as a "hindrance to integration" (*integrationshemmend*).[414] Significantly, these "differences" could also include understandings of the German nation. In an increasingly "Europeanized," post-national Federal Republic, resettlers' ideas "of *Heimat*, fatherland, and society (*Gemeinschaft*) were viewed by most citizens as antiquated and dangerously conservative." It was on these values which expellee leaders hoped to capitalize.[415]

A New Generation of Expellees?

In 1984, the Federation of Expellees (BdV) sought to take advantage of these presumably nationalist ideals by hosting their own resettler-youth integration event. The "Federal Congress of the Young Generation of the BdV" ostensibly aimed to build relationships between young resettlers (between fifteen and twenty-five years old) and the West German-born grandchildren

[412] Otto, *Zwischen lokaler Integration und regionaler Zugehörigkeit*, 105. Recognizing the high stakes of integration, numerous sociologists, government agencies, and religious organizations undertook research projects about resettler youth in the 1970s and 1980s. These included, but were not limited to, a 1982 sociological and psychological study by doctoral student Emil Branik, a 1978 project about young resettler identity by social worker Bodo Hager, and a 1982 monograph about the "preconditions of integration" by Jutta Rubach at the German Youth Institute (*Deutsche Jugend Institut*).
[413] Otto, 121.
[414] Otto, 122.
[415] Otto, 126.

of expellees. Unlike many other young resettlers who felt more Polish than German, those who attended the Congress seem to have identified strongly as ethnically German. In addition to social events and activities, the conference included six topical discussion sessions related to core expellee concerns regarding "the fundamental question of [the German] nation": the constitutional issues surrounding German reunification, the value of West European integration, concerns regarding human rights in the formerly German Eastern territories, methods of safeguarding the peace, strategies for preserving eastern German culture and traditions, and the current state of resettler integration.[416]

By providing the young people with structured forums for discussion, the Congress offered them a chance to voice their opinions both about West Germany and the countries they had left behind. The event also created a public relations opportunity to showcase the expellees' and newcomers' apparent reconciliatory aims. A subsequent article in *Die Welt* pointed out, for instance, that the newcomers seemed to harbor no ill will toward Eastern Europe, despite the discrimination and challenges many of their families had faced. It was also reported that there was not a hint of "nationalist tones, right-radical ideas, or even hate among the young participants against the communist-controlled countries of their origin" nor was there "[any] trace of revanchist thinking toward the countries left behind." Regarding their new homeland, the young people reacted against the "prevailing materialism" that seemed to define the Federal Republic. One young man even stated that he "really [felt] sorry for [West] German youth" and was glad he had grown up elsewhere.[417]

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[416] C. Graf Schwerin, "Wie junge Aussiedler ihre neue Heimat sehen," *Die Welt*, May 30, 1984.
[417] For a thorough analysis of consumer culture in West Germany, see Frank Trentmann, "The Long History of Contemporary Consumer Society," *Archiv Für Sozialgeschichte* 49 (2009): 107–28.

When asked about their opinions of integration, the young resettlers had mixed feelings. One reporter summarized these experiences as the "three stages of integration into the West German meritocracy: expectation, disappointment, integration." The West was not as "golden" as they had hoped. Some of their frustrations were linked to economic struggles and uncertainty. As the resettlers explained, many of their families "took risks and made material sacrifices" to reach West Germany, and these sacrifices had not ended after arrival. Especially for their parents, "resettlement [was] mostly linked to social decline" (*sozialer Abstieg*).[418] Yet money was not the resettlers' only integration-related concern; belonging was equally, if not more, important to them. What exactly constituted "belonging"? One resettler defined integration as "being recognized"—i.e., *seen as German*—"by the local [Germans]." This integration, however, should not come at the cost of "giving up [their] own experiences," that is, by simply becoming West German. The incoming youth were clearly different from locals. They had grown up in dissimilar cultural and value systems, and these differences should not be minimized or erased. As the article pointed out, although resettlers were "often uncertain in the formulations [of their national identity]," they were "not without pride about being different." In other words, these differences played a vital role in their own selfhood and identity.[419]

By hosting the Congress, the Federation of Expellees created a setting for young people to reflect on their own legacy, a legacy that conveniently aligned with a long-established expellee mentality of victimhood. In the words of one young newcomer, "We resettlers are the guilty conscience (*schlechte Gewissen*) of the nation." Like the expellees before them, the newcomers' very presence required a reckoning with Germany's past; however, according to the event's organizers, these ethnic German youth also offered a way forward toward reconciliation

[418] C. Graf Schwerin, "Wie junge Aussiedler ihre neue Heimat sehen," *Die Welt*, May 30, 1984.
[419] Ibid.

and peace. The article's conclusion summarized this mentality, stating, "Whoever wants to summon the spirit of tolerance and reconciliation should view them against these youth, who are reflecting on our history and our identity, which we have suppressed."[420]

While on the surface, the BdV's Congress seemed like a valuable, even compassionate step toward resettler integration, it was also politically driven. In addition to recruiting new BdV members from the resettler ranks, the event stood in direct opposition to the prevailing West German political rhetoric of the time. Often cast as the "post-national decade," the 1980s witnessed a shift away from previous discussions of the nation and victimhood. The resettlers' narrative brought up the ideas of victimhood again, in ways that no longer fit with accepted West German discourse. Although not all resettlers identified strongly as German or experienced discrimination because of their heritage, many of them did. As those surveyed in the Grintzel and Krieg study noted, the locals continued to treat them as different, despite their clear desire to belong. "How much disappointment must lie behind the responses of the almost every [resettler] surveyed," the report postulated, "that more often than not the locals see them as foreigners and treat them as such."[421]

Although the prejudice had a variety of causes, resettler youth blamed the problem on a combination of "ignorance about historical events and the false propaganda of the media." If more West Germans would simply recognize their common ethnic heritage, the resettlers' acceptance would be easier. When they arrived in West Germany and found that their stories of victimization and oppression were not valued—and that their co-nationals saw them as foreigners—their disorientation should come as no surprise. Yet because there was no outlet in public discourse for this national or victim-based thinking, resettlers lacked a venue for

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[420] C. Graf Schwerin, "Wie junge Aussiedler ihre neue Heimat sehen," *Die Welt*, May 30, 1984.
[421] Gintzel and Krieg, *Junge Aussiedler in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 69.

recounting their experiences. The Federation of Expellees Congress therefore offered a welcome exception. Here the German-identifying young people could voice their challenges and discuss their understanding of the German nation with likeminded people. While such conversations had gone out of vogue in mainstream circles, they remained accepted and welcomed in expellee spaces.

Rethinking Immigration in the 1980s: Better off in Poland?

Although youth were a main research focus during the 1980s, integration remained a high-stakes issue across the board. Academic resettlers in particular continued to be a source of concern. Despite help from the Otto Benecke Foundation and measures instituted by Maihofer in the May 1976 program, many educated resettlers still fell through the cracks. Unable to secure employment in their given fields, thousands of them became janitors and unskilled workers just to pay the bills. Because of training differences in the West German system, career troubles disproportionately plagued people with higher education levels. Like the OBS, the Gustav-Streseman Institute in Cologne tried to help these resettlers by hosting integration seminars, but many qualified individuals still remained jobless or grossly underemployed.[422]

Beyond simply being degrading—few educated people aimed to work as doormen—the situation was also potentially dangerous. As Walli Richter, Sudeten expellee and former president of the BdV, pointedly observed, "These people were the spokespersons of their ethnic groups. If they fail [to succeed] here, [who knows] in what political direction they will lead their communities." Although Richter did not directly state that the newcomers might radicalize politically, she definitely hinted at it as a possibility. West Germans, she posited, were "sitting on

[422] "Akademiker haben es wegen der unterschiedlichen Ausbildung bei uns besonders schwer, während Facharbeiter relativ schnell eine neue Anstellung finden," DPA, October 23, 1984.

a pressure cooker (*Dampfkessel*) that could explode at any time." Other leaders agreed about the problems of prejudice. "[Resettlers] do not deserve it be discriminated against and rejected in Germany," concluded Bavarian Senator Ludwig Penzkofer (CDU). Not only did resettlers have few or no opportunities to progress in the West, but they were unable to return to their countries of origin. "For resettlers, there is no going back," Richter finished.[423]

This realization, combined with general feelings of culture shock, could lead to disappointment bordering on depression. "After the euphoria of finally being in the Federal Republic fades away," observed *Diakonisches Werk* leader Wolfgang Lanquillon, "[resettlers] realize that their value systems, attitudes, and opinions are different from those of the locals. The resulting 'conflict phase' (*Auseinandersetzungsphase*) produces confusion, shock, and […] doubts about [one's] self-worth."[424] As with the youth, new cultural values could become roadblocks to further personal and professional progress of adult resettlers. Wilfried Schlau, a sociologist and expert on resettler integration, came to the same conclusion about West Germany. As Schlau explained, resettlers encountered "great difficulties with the attitudes (*Umstellung*) of a different norm system." As a result, many of them suffered "from a 'spiritual and mosral loss of substance.'" (*geistlichen und moralischen Substanzverlust*).[425] Specifically, "the values that resettlers had protected for years […] of fatherland, the German language, church, customs, and traditions" carried little weight in West Germany. The resulting culture shock could leave deep emotional wounds and a "strong insecurity." Schlau further found that this clash of value systems destabilized the resettlers and led many to retreat into the safety of

[423] Christian Schneider, "Ohne Hoffnung am Ziel der Sehnsucht," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 10, 1984.
[424] "Aussiedler leiden unter der Arbeitslosigkeit," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, February 12, 1985.
[425] *Die Welt*, March 9, 1984. "[…] grosse Schwierigkeiten mit der Umstellung auf ein anderes Normensysten, sie leiden unter einem 'geistlichen und moralischen Substanzverlust.'"

their families, thereby further hindering their integration.[426] Bodo Hager concurred in his 1982 study of resettlers, noting that these cultural clashes strengthen their "sense of uncertainty and [create] a situation of powerlessness and general disorientation."[427]

The case of Herr J., a Polish resettler interviewed in 1982 by psychology student Emil Branik, underscored the resettlers' tendency toward homesickness and other emotional side effects. "Herr J." had only negative opinions about West Germany. He argued that the people in the Federal Republic were not only unfriendly, but they had failed to acknowledge the especially difficult challenges faced by resettlers from Poland. Despite being outspoken about his Germanness, Herr J. believed that "in Poland, everything would be better organized" than in West Germany. While he did "not like the fact that [in Poland] things were controlled politically from above," Herr J. complained repeatedly "about the excessive (*übermässige*) freedom in Germany."[428] Branik concluded that failed social integration seemed to be at the root of Herr J.'s problems. Health issues had forced him into early retirement, and because he had no job, his chances of meeting new people in West Germany remained minimal. Herr J.'s son Robert summarized the situation well, stating that maybe "things would be better for his father if he had more [social] contacts."[429]

West Germans themselves played an instrumental role in this emotional rollercoaster. By treating the newcomers are foreigners, West Germans called into question the resettlers' very identity and sense of self. As Gintzel and Krieg explained, "everyday confrontation[s] with locals' attitudes"—namely about resettler alterity—and "the uncertainty […] about the

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[426] *Die Welt*, March 9, 1984.
[427] Quoted in Otto, *Zwischen lokaler Integration und regionaler Zugehörigkeit*, 137.
[428] Emil Branik, *Psychische Störungen und soziale Probleme von Kindern und Jugendlichen aus Spätaussiedlerfamilien: ein Beitrag zur Psychiatrie der Migration.* (Weinheim: Beltz, 1982), 112.
[429] Branik, 114.

completely foreign consumption-oriented society" had profound emotional consequences for resettler identity-formation. In particular, newcomers interpreted the encounters with prejudice as "harsh attacks on their cultural identification and self-assurance," especially of their Germanness. Regarded as strangers, many resettlers opted to seclude themselves by withdrawing into their communities. Indeed, bias and rejection by locals lead resettlers to "retreat to friends and family from Poland," a response which was "already pre-programmed."[430] Gerhard Reichling, director of the AWR, shared a similar opinion in 1979. He posited that, after being uprooted from their communities abroad, young migrants encountered an even "stronger uprooting" in West Germany.[431] For this reason, Reichling advocated viewing integration issues as a "more complex […] integration problem *sui generis*," one which language training alone could not remedy.[432]

To make matters worse, as the decade continued, it became increasingly clear that West Germany might not be able to support resettler immigration indefinitely. This problem became even more acute when Eastern Bloc countries relaxed their emigration restrictions in the summer of 1987. Virtually overnight, the number of resettlers skyrocketed, causing significant strain in already-overloaded transit camps. During a July 1987 immigration spike, for instance, almost 1,500 resettlers arrived at Friedland in a single week. With the camp filled beyond capacity, the city was forced to set up emergency shelters in churches, meeting rooms, and museums nearby. Shortly thereafter, the administration of Lower Saxony, the state where Friedland was located, appealed to the federal government, explaining that their state could no longer finance the camp

[430] Gintzel and Krieg, *Junge Aussiedler in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 75.
[431] BArch 106/97096, AWR Arbeitsstelle für Aussiedlerfragen beim Bundesausgleichsamt, "Niederschrift über die Besprechung des Spätaussiedlerausschusses am 31. Mai 1978 im Grenzdurchgangslager Friedland," April 2, 1978, p. 10.
[432] Ibid.

on its own.[433] Nor were the problems limited to Friedland. West Germany's declining ability to handle resettlers reached a poignant, symbolic peak at the Nuremberg camp in December 1987. Administrators announced that, for the first time since its opening in 1960, the camp would be unable to celebrate Christmas. There was simply not enough room. The staff appealed to the local Bavarian population, urging them to take in resettlers for Christmas and the New Year.[434]

It should come as no surprise then that, around this time, newly appointed Resettler Commissioner Horst Waffenschmidt had announced that West Germany would impose an "intake limit" (*Aufnahmegrenze*) on resettlers—the first-ever cap placed on ethnic German immigration. Although this change represented a significant shift in West German policy, the change was inadequate on its own.[435] Other problems, particularly around resettler housing, could not be solved so easily. The 1976 Program had put new housing initiatives in place; however, due to insufficient funding, construction had stalled. "Stagnation in resettler-housing construction," a report by the Bavarian social ministry explained, "means that [resettlers] are forced to persevere in even longer in […] transitional housing." In some cases, multi-person families were stuck living in tiny one-room flats; such circumstances inevitably led to feelings of "frustration and desperation." Worse, these single-room apartments might be their home for up to three years. Insufficient housing and the "forced inaction" it created could have disastrous social and psychological consequences. As Senator Ludwig Penzkofer (CDU) from the Bavarian Caritas branch explained, "Waiting demoralizes, it increases the uncertainty and reduces the chances of the future for which [the resettlers] came." The results, according to Penzkofer, were clear: "family difficulties, alcohol problems, and mental crises."

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[433] "Niedersachsen erwartet Länderhilfe bei Aussiedler-Aufnahme," DPA, November 27, 1987,
[434] KAS, DPA, December 21, 1987.
[435] KAS, *Bonner Rundschau*, November 20, 1987.

The Association of German Cities (*Städtetag*) echoed these appeals after its 1988 meeting.[436] Calling the resettler housing shortage a "national challenge of the first rank," Lothar Späth, the Minister President of Baden-Württemberg, estimated that the resettler home-building program would cost four billion DM.[437] The city leaders then appealed to Bonn for more funding to finance the "accommodation and care" of resettlers in their localities. They argued that, not only had the cost exceeded what individual cities could pay, but the influx of newcomers had created a "new form of housing emergency" in several cities: "many local Germans [now] had to wait longer for apartments because resettlers [were] given preferential treatment."[438] It is safe to assume that few native West Germans appreciated this approach, and this situation could fuel anti-resettler feelings. For these reasons, the municipal leaders effectively urged the Federal Republic and states to put its money where its mouth was. "The federal and state politicians cannot, on the one hand, use patriotic words to greet resettlers from Eastern Bloc states [but] on the other hand leave [their] problems to the cities and communities" to handle, argued *Städetag* Vice President and Munich mayor Manfred Rommel. The message was clear; Bonn needed to step up to help with housing—and soon.

Representatives from the Federation of Expellees also called for changes, especially in making resettlers aware of their rights. Harmut Koschyk, president of the BdV, argued that many resettlers fell through the cracks because they failed to register properly upon arrival. As a result, they never received the material benefits to which the Equalization of Burdens Law had entitled them. To remedy this problem, Koschyk called for "immediate and coordinated actions at the

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[436] The *Städtetag* lobbies for cities and their concerns. For a history of the *Städtetag* in the twentieth century, see Adelheid von Saldern, "Rückblicke. Zur Geschichte der kommunalen Selbstverwaltung in Deutschland," in *Kommunalpolitik: Politisches Handeln in den Gemeinden*, ed. Hellmut Wollmann and Roland Roth (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1999).
[437] "Nationale Herausforderung ersten Ranges: Späth will Wohnungsprogramm für Aussiedler," *Süddeutsche Zeitung,* July 22, 1988. "Späth: Vier-milliarden Wohnungsbauprogramm für Aussiedler nötig," DPA, July 21, 1988.
[438] "Städte fordern von Bonn finanzielle Hilfe für Aussiedler," DPA, June 8, 1988.

federal, state, and local levels in order to guarantee the [resettlers'] acceptance and integration." Such improvements could make a significant difference in the resettler-aid system, which Koschyk saw as "no glorious chapter for [West Germany] as a welfare state and constitutional democracy."[439] Other aid organizations similarly voiced their appeals on behalf of resettlers, especially calling for the public to become more involved in the newcomers' lives. According to the Catholic aid organization Caritas, this engagement could take the form of social or cultural guidance. The continual evolution of West German culture over the past ten years—and the general lack of a social or cultural evolution in Poland—had further heightened the need for sociocultural education. Whereas "'smooth communication' may have been possible in integration seminars ten years ago […] information about social and church life [in West Germany] would need to be 'translated' today."[440] By coming alongside resettlers, individual West Germans could answer their questions and help bridge disorienting cultural gap such as this one.

Appeals by Koschyk, the *Städtetag*, and Caritas did not fall entirely on deaf ears. In 1988, the West German government began taking steps toward a new resettler "Special Program." Commissioned by Chancellor Kohl in July 1988 and announced that December, the initiative allocated massive new funding toward resettler integration. For instance, funding for youth increased significantly from 135 million DM in 1987 to 230 million DM in 1989. The number of academic stipends available through the Otto Benecke Stiftung and similar organizations was increased more than fivefold, from 4,000 to 22,000 stipends annually.[441] These changes were

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[439] KAS, DPA, June 12, 1988

[440] KAS, DPA, June 2, 1987. "Sei in den Eingliederungsseminaren vor zehn Jahren noch eine 'reibungslose Verständigung möglich' gewesen, so müssten heute Informationen über das soziale und kirchliche Leben 'verdolmetscht' werden."

[441] "Regiergung bewilligt weitere 40 Millionen Mark für junge Aussiedler," DPA, July 20, 1988; "Der Bundeskanzler kündigt ein 'Sonderprogramm Aussiedler' an: Arbeitsgruppe soll erforderliche Massnahmen entwickeln," *General Anzeiger Bonn*, July 22, 1988.

essential if West Germany hoped to keep up with the "flood of resettlers" who continued to stream into the country.[442]

These policy shifts and funding increases were vital for certain financial and social aspects of integration; however, the money could not necessarily solve an even greater problem on the rise, that of public opinion. During the late 1980s, concerns about illegal Polish immigration and fears of communist spies posing as resettlers eroded the already-declining West German views surrounding their migration. In August 1987, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* ran an article which claimed that hundreds of Poles had paid for counterfeit documents proving their Germanness in order to emigrate. While the article only explicitly stated that one Polish person had been caught, the story suggested that the problem was substantially larger.[443] Indeed, in the spring of 1988, the German Press Agency (DPA) and *Die Zeit* both ran exposés about the rise in falsified German "ancestry certificates" (*Abstammungsurkunden*), in which they reported that since 1985, at least 200 cases had been traced in North Rhine-Westphalia. Another twenty-four cases had been discovered in Lower Saxony since 1987, and police in West Berlin were investigating another sixty such cases.[444] The media attention to these cases added to the rising suspicion toward many ethnic German resettlers. According to the article, North Rhine-Westphalian Minister Heinemann "expressed concern that many resettler families will be wrongfully discredited as a result of the inflamed discussion" surrounding the falsified papers.[445]

Fear that Polish spies had infiltrated West Germany by posing as resettlers also rose to the public consciousness in 1988. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution

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[442] "Milliarden-Kosten durch neue Flut von Aussiedler," *Neue Ruhr Zeitung*, July 21, 1988.
[443] "Hunderte aus Polen illegal eingebürgert? Gefälschte Papiere," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* August 6, 1987.
[444] "Auch andere Ostblock-Aussiedler kamen mit gefälschten Papieren—Fälschungen stümperhaft—Kriminalpolizei ermittelt bundesweit," DPA, March 30, 1988.
[445] "Auch andere Ostblock-Aussiedler kamen mit gefälschten Papieren—Fälschungen stümperhaft—Kriminalpolizei ermittelt bundesweit," DPA, March 30, 1988. See also Helga Hirsch, "'Es lohnt sich nicht, anständig zu sein': Gefälschte Papiere bringen eingewanderte Polen in Verruf," *Die Welt,* April 8, 1988.

(*Verfassungsschutz*) issued a report explaining that the secret police in East European countries had been recruiting resettlers as spies for years, usually beginning as soon as they submit their first emigration application. According to the report, "[East European] authorities give [resettlers] the impression that their permission to emigrate depends on their consent to inform on (*bespitzeln*) their fellow countrymen in West Germany."[446] Although the DPA article did not offer specific numbers or percentages about spies, the assertion about East European recruiting tactics was accurate. As countless files from the Polish Security Service reveal, agents routinely vetted passport applicants to serve as informants in West Germany.[447] While the number of collaborators remained relatively small in comparison to the total number of emigrants, cooperating with the communist Security Service (SB) was not the only way that resettlers opted to maintain connections to Poland. After reaching the Federal Republic, many people chose to join the Polish immigrant organization Zgoda, the political ideologies of which were often regarded by West Germans with suspicion.[448]

The phenomena of falsified papers and spy-recruitment, together with the overall lack of German-speaking ability, contributed to the growing sense by the late 1980s that new resettlers were not actually German. These problems grew worse with each passing year. Indeed, by 1988 more and more newcomers lamented that, although they desired to "live as Germans among

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[446] "Spionage/Aussiedler: Ost-Spionage macht sich an Aussiedler heran," DPA, July 19, 1988.

[447] The Polish Security Service frequently recruited émigrés as spies and informants. For instance, in the early 1970s, Security Service agents tried to recruit 100 spies in an operation called "REN." See AIPN Ka 030/21 t. 1, fols. 8-9, 126-130.

[448] Although statistics for Zgoda membership were not available, the leadership of the German Section Association for Study of the World Refugee Problem (AWR) in Friedland noted in 1978 that Zgoda had undertaken an "intensified membership campaign among resettlers from Poland." See BArch 106/97096, AWR Arbeitsstelle für Aussiedlerfragen, "Betr: Forschungsstufe IV des Forschungsvorhabens über die Eingliederung der Aussiedler," May 22, 1978. According to Pallaske, Zgoda and the "Association of Poles in Germany" (Bund der Polen in Deutschland/Związek Polaków w Niemczech) competed for the membership of immigrants from Poland, particularly during the 1980s. See Pallaske, *Migrationen aus Polen in die Bundesrepublik Deutschland in den 1980er und 1990er Jahren: Migrationsverläufe und Eingliederungsprozesse in sozialgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, 168–69.

Germans," they discovered "with great bitterness that people [treat] them as foreigners." As a result, they no longer needed just "practical help;" they now also required renewed attention to their "psychological-social problems."[449]

Conclusion: Continuities and Changes

Many aspects of the resettler situation changed between the 1975 Helsinki Agreement and the late 1980s. More the 90% of the immigrants in the latter decade came illegally, which created new problems for West German officials. Furthermore, the clear relational connections which undergirded much of Helsinki's "Family Reunification" emphasis had diminished. Many of the newest resettlers had no direct personal connections to West Germany, besides the often difficult-to-substantiate claim that they or their ancestors were German. Alarmingly few of the newest arrivals spoke German to any degree. According to one statistic, approximately 92% of resettlers arriving from Poland in 1988 needed language help.[450] Moreover, these intensive courses needed to be extended from eight months to twelve months if the newcomers were to attain any degree of fluency.

Yet even with all these changes, one important feature of the migration had remained the same: the belief (or rhetoric) that resettlers were entitled to specific rights in the Federal Republic. Use of this rhetoric spiked in 1986 during Bundestag discussions of the Equalization of Burdens Law (*Lastenausgleich*), which guaranteed special rights to expellees and their descendants. The law's thirty-first version, approved in December 1986, was intended to "ensure that future resettlers obtain the same aid from the *Lastenausgleich* as those who came before

[449] "Deutsche aus Osteuropa bekommen Ausländerfeindlichkeit zu spüren," DPA, April 28, 1988.
[450] "Nationale Herausforderung ersten Ranges: Späth will Wohnungsprogramm für Aussiedler," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 22, 1988.

them."[451] The Bundestag passed this revision without debate, thereby confirming that resettlers had "a legal claim to fair compensation for losses incurred during their emigration."[452] By continuing to place resettlers on equal legal footing with expellees, the lawmakers clearly confirmed, albeit not verbally, the newcomers' victimization through World War II.

In 1988, historical connections to World War II became even more explicit, as articles invoked the German "community of fate" (*Schicksalgemeinschaft*), a term which hearkened back to the immediate postwar period. Politicians like Maihofer had alluded to this reasoning when announcing the 1976 May Program; however, these assertions became even more explicit in the following decade. One politician stated that "resettlers have suffered under the consequences of World War II for longer" than West Germans had.[453] A 1988 *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article aptly titled "Latecomers of the Catastrophe" explicitly connected resettler migration to aggressive Nazi policies and Germany defeat:

> "These resettlers are also members of that unhappy German community of fate which the Third Reich manufactured with its '*Heim ins Reich*' settlement action [which] initiated the dire chapter of expulsions in Central Europe and [as a result] after the war turned into foreigners the Germans [living] in their old territories in Eastern Europe. [The resettlers] are the last stragglers (*Nachzügler*) and scattered [people] from this tragedy, which the Second World War caused […] Their life stories (*Lebensläufe*), which are often marked by depressing experiences, reveal the traces and times of this painful, guilt-laden history.[454]"

[451] KAS, DPA, June 4, 1986.
[452] "Aussiedler werden Vertriebene gleichgestellt," *General Anzeiger Bonn*, December 5, 1986.
[453] "Bonn will mehr Mittel für Aussiedlereingliederung bereitstellen," DPA, June 6, 1988.
[454] Hermann Rudolph, "Nachzügler der Katastrophe," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 22, 1988.

Significantly, within this framing, resettlers did not necessarily need to "prove" their Germanness in a legal sense. They were not required to provide birth certificates or other official documents (although to receive certain benefits, such documentation might be necessary). For even more important than a birth certificate were an individual's *experiences as German*. Furthermore, according to this logic, such experiences need not be accompanied by "outward behaviors," such as speaking German or maintaining German cultural practices. Instead, "it is sufficient evidence if an awareness of the German community of fate was kept alive within the family." Thus, it was one's *experience of* and *self-identification with* German victimhood that made one credibly "German."[455] Again, the connection to World War II was explicit. "In such [resettler] cases, [to decision to] leave Poland [has] a causal connection to the general expulsion measures (*Vertreibungsmassnahmen*)." As if that were not clear enough, the next sentence read, "The causal connection to the Second World War continues here."[456]

Yet despite the continued invocation of the *Schicksalgemeinschaft* to support resettler immigration—and West Germany's continued support for said immigration—significant shifts in opinion were brewing under the surface. In fact, one of the clearest articulations in this shift in opinions came a highly unexpected source, the Federation of Expellees. In late April 1988, the BdV and its affiliated Silesian Youth (*Schlesische Jugend*) organization issued statements calling for unprecedented restrictions to ethnic German emigration from Poland. Instead of allowing further emigration, the BdV and Silesian Youth urged West Germany to expand its support for the German minority in Poland. Furthermore, the BdV framed the migration spikes of 1987 and 1988 as proof not that Poland had eased its discrimination against Germans, but as indication that Polish abuse of the German minority had gotten worse. "Based on multiple reports coming from

[455] Wolf, *Aussiedler und DDR-Übersiedler heute*, 94.
[456] Wolf, 94.

the German Friendship Circle (*Deutsche Freundschaftskreis*)"—an illegal minority organization in Poland—"it must be assumed that Germans who campaign for human rights (*Menschenrechte*) in the homeland are either suspended from work or school or are deported from People's Poland as quickly as possible."[457] In other words, the Polish government had simply resorted to expelling Germans, rather than giving them the rights they deserved.

Hartmut Koschyk, himself a resettler and former member of German Friendship Circle in Poland, took this conclusion a step further. He argued that "improving the cultural situation [of ethnic Germans] would reduce their desire to emigrate" and avoid the struggles and disruption that accompanied relocation. Heinrich Lummer (CDU) echoed this position in 1988, stating, "The goal of [West] German foreign policy must be to improve the human rights circumstances for Germans in their countries of origin so significantly that the desire to emigrate disappears or becomes nonexistent." Their positions were virtually identical to the statement made by CDU politician Richard Hundhammer in early 1982, discussed in Chapter Three. Yet unlike Hundhammer, who was castigated by political opponents and his own party alike, Koschyk received support for his stance. In fact, Heinrich Lummer, a CDU Berlin parliament representative, voiced the same conclusion and even called for West Germany to restructure its foreign policy to reflect the priority change: "The goal of [West] German foreign policy must be to so [significantly] improve the human rights environment for Germans in their countries of origin that their desire to emigrate decreases or becomes obsolete."[458] Efforts to aid Poland's German minority—and thereby prevent further emigration—are the focus of the final chapter.

[457] *Schlesische Jugend Pressemitteilung*, Nr. 13/88, April 4, 1988.
[458] *Schlesische Jugend Pressemitteilung*, Nr. 13/88, April 4, 1988.

Chapter 5

Unrest and Protest: Poland's German Minority in the mid-1980s

During the mid-1980s after Martial Law was lifted, Polish authorities reported increased unrest among the self-proclaimed German minority population in Upper Silesia. For instance, in April 1984, brothers Andreas and Thomas Osmenda hung homemade banners proclaiming, "Hunger strike!" and "I demand the emigration of my family!" and refused to leave the street in front of their house. Also in 1984, Kristian Staniek performed two hunger strikes at the West German embassy in Warsaw. Both Staniek and the Osmendas were arrested.[459] A year later in June 1985, Horst Muszalik occupied the West German embassy along with his wife and children.[460] In all three cases, the protesters had applied repeatedly and unsuccessfully for exit visas to West Germany. The Osmendas had been rejected eight times since 1979; Staniek's visa was denied in 1983; the Muszaliks had been applying regularly for emigration since 1980.

These protests revealed not only a growing sense of desperation among the minority, but also a desire to assert their Germanness more publicly. In addition to emigration, many activists called for the official recognition of their minority status and for the human rights that accompanied it. Emboldened by the relative success of the Solidarity Trade Union and inspired by its methods—some of these leaders were indeed members of Solidarity—would-be emigres like Muszalik, the Osmendas, and Staniek drew up charters to create German minority organizations across Upper Silesia.[461] Their demands included the right to cultural expression

[459] AIPN Ka 030/371, fol. 31, Report by H. Marchwicki, February 17, 1986.
[460] AIPN Ka 030/371, fols. 138-143, "Wykaz inspiratorów rewizjonistycznych działań z terenu woj. katowickiego." July 23, 1985.
[461] Herbert Piontek was also member. Archive of the IPN in Wrocław (hereafter AIPN Wr) 011/1813 t. 2, "Analiza," June 18, 1985, p. 2.

and to preserve their national heritage by using German in public, celebrating Mass in their mother tongue, and electing their own representatives to the Polish parliament.

Yet even as Silesians asserted their Germanness in increasingly public ways, their very existence became a topic of debate. As the 1980s progressed, Polish authorities became less and less willing to recognize the presence of a German minority within their country's borders. In May 1985, General Jaruzelski declared that Poland no longer had a German minority, stating that through the Helsinki agreement, Poland had "more than fulfilled all international duties related to repatriation and bringing together families divided by the war." Thanks to this large-scale emigration, he concluded that "the problem of a national German minority in Poland [had] definitively ceased to exist" and "this chapter [was] forever closed."[462] Jaruzelski's statement came in response to a recent shift in West German politics during which a subset of conservative politicians began increasingly calling for aid for the "more than one million Germans" living in Poland. Although expellee leaders had long invoked West Germany's "duty to protect" *(Schutzpflicht*) these dispersed co-nationals in Poland, they became even more vocal in their efforts in the early and mid-1980s.[463] Expellee politicians like Herbert Hupka and Herbert Czaja, both CDU, and the newly established "Working Group on Human Rights Violations in East Germany" (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Menschenrechtsrechtsverletzungen in Ostdeutschland*), abbreviated to AGMO, strove to draw public attention to the minority's plight.

Rather than being isolated incidents, these developments—hunger strikes and protests in Upper Silesia, appeals for German minority recognition, Polish assertions that no German

[462] "Es gibt keine deutsche Minderheit in Polen," DPA, May 10, 1985.
[463] For references to the "*Schutzpflicht*" in regard to the German minority in Poland, see KAS 04-015-019/2, Press Release by the CDU Landesverband Braunschweig, April 6, 1976; KAS VII-006 212/2, Recommended talking points for a meeting between Alfred Dregger and Tadeusz Olechowski, the new Polish ambassador to West Germany, on August 25, 1984; and KAS VIII-006-130/2, Letter from Czaja to Werner Marx, January 31, 1977.

minority existed, and West German claims regarding one million Germans in Poland—were all deeply intertwined. This chapter shows that Polish efforts to stem the emigration tide by rejecting passport applications in the early 1980s only made emigration-hopefuls more determined in their methods and, more importantly, in their sense of Germanness. The more the Polish state denied these applicants' emigration requests, and the more times they had to argue for their Germanness, *the more German they began to feel*—and the more doggedly they worked to present themselves as Germans.

As their determination to emigrate grew stronger and their German identity continued to crystalize, these Upper Silesians began choosing different courses of action. Some individuals opted to emigrate illegally by overstaying their tourist visas abroad; others appealed to West German politicians, priests, and the press for advocacy, and still others like Staniek, the Osmenda brothers, and the Muszalik family resorted to more drastic measures, such as hunger strikes, occupying the embassy, or doing both. Yet perhaps the most troubling from the Polish view was the spike in applications to launch German minority organizations, for the Polish state perceived these requests as an ideological attack on Polish sovereignty in Upper Silesia.

Nor were the applicants acting alone. House searches by the Polish Security Service (*Służby Bezpieczeństwa*, SB) in the mid-1980s revealed that activists received substantial backing from expellee leaders and West German "revisionist circles;" the Polish administration's fears of expellee influence, discussed in Chapter One, seemed justified. This support came in ideological forms, such as the late 1983 assertion by a high-ranking Foreign Office member that "1.1 million Germans" still lived in Poland. The assistance could also be pragmatic, as when West German citizens offered minority members concrete advice for navigating Polish bureaucratic structures. In these ways, the actions of thwarted émigrés and their West German

supporters called into question Polish sovereignty in Upper Silesia. Ironically, the Polish state's desire to crush or dispel the minority movement ultimately strengthened it, for every denial of the minority's existence made its members more resolute in their nationalist convictions and more determined to achieve recognition. Worse still, the state's efforts ultimately entrenched the very Germanness that Polish leaders were so intent on denying.

"One Million Germans"

Polish officials had long worried about West German meddling with the indigenous Silesian population. As Chapter One explained, Silesian officials in the late 1960s expressed concern that West German "revisionist centers," as they called the organized expellees, were ramping up their involvement in western Poland. Initially their fears seemed unfounded. While the West German government had made some appeals for minority rights during the mid-1970s, their goal was to effect emigration, not create a strong ethnic minority in Silesia. For instance, when during an October 1975 visit to Poland Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (FDP) apparently requested German language classes for people who "felt [a connection to] the German nationality," the Polish response was dismissive.[464] Rather than allowing a dialogue to emerge, Polish authorities (in their own words) "categorically rejected the possibility of discussions with the Federal Republic of Germany about issues related to the alleged 'German minority in

[464] APO, KW PZPRwO 2665, PZPR KW w. Opolu, fol. 82, "Aktualne problem stosunków Polska-RFN," June 1977, p. 46. "Rzad RFN oficjalnie nie występował wobec Polski z żądaniami zagwarantowania praw 'mniejszości niemieckiej,' ale rownież nie przeciwstawaia się podnoszeniu tego problem przez koła rewizjonistyczne RFN. Próbę transformacji tego postulatu i dopasowania go do procesu normalizacji stosunków PRL-RFN podejmował aparat MSZ RFN i osobiście minister Genscher w czasie swojej wizyty w Polsce w październiku 1975 r. Wyrażało się to w podniesieniu przez stronę RFN problem 'ułatwień w zakresie życia kulturalnego i nauczania języka niemieckiego dla osób zamieszkałych w Polsce i poczuwających się do narodowości niemieckiej.'" The West Germans brought up the language question again during Minister Olszowski's visit to Bonn in April 1976.

Poland,' stating the lack of a legal and factual basis in this regard."[465] That Genscher opted to drop the issue indicates that the German minority was not a top priority. While the Foreign Office and the West German embassy in Warsaw continued to intervene in "hardship cases" and those of divided families, their correspondence made virtually no references to German minority rights for the rest of the 1970s and into the early 1980s.

The relative silence was broken in 1983 following the transition from an SPD- to a CDU-run government in West Germany. Early that year, there had already been indications that CDU policies would bring changes to the Federal Republic's relationship to the German minority living in Poland. However, the most public statement to that effect first came in December 1983.[466] In a statement to the Bundestag, Alois Mertes, a high-ranking official in the Foreign Office, asserted that, although only 120,000 Germans in the Oder-Neisse Region were actively trying to emigrate, more than one million Germans still lived in this area.[467] Mertes' statement provoked a very strong response in Poland, while the West German press barely noticed. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reported on Mertes' speech, for instance, but the article did not attend to the gravity of his claims about Poland's German minority and its size.

In Poland, on the other hand, Mertes' words were viewed as an unequivocal threat. As press secretary Jerzy Urban explained in January 1984, "The Polish administration […] rejects the demands of the Federal Republic" regarding the "purported Germans" living in Poland. Moreover, the Warsaw government "considers [these demands] as a violation of the 1970 agreement and as a threat to the collective European structure." Urban then went a step further to

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[465] APO, KW PZPRwO 2665, "Aktualne problem stosunków Polska-RFN," June 1977 p. 46. "Strona polska kategorycznie odzycała możliwość dyskusji z RFN spraw związanych z rzekomą 'mniejszością niemiecką w Polsce,' stwierdzając brak jakichkolwiek podstaw formalnoprawnych i faktycznych w tym względzie."
[466] Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*, 463, footnote 172.
[467] "120,000 Deutsche wollen aus dem Oder-Neisse Gebiet aussiedeln," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 16, 1983.

argue that "hidden behind this claim [about the Germans] was a negation of Polish sovereignty over these territories."[468] In other words, the Poles understood Mertes' statement about "one million Germans" as a West German attempt to undermine Polish authority and potentially reclaim the Oder-Neisse territories as their own. Mertes' assertion also had clear repercussions for Polish emigration policies, as Stola clarifies: "In the fall of 1983, emigration [from Poland] was restricted even more tightly [because] the unfortunate statements by the West German government about more than one million Germans still [living] in Poland [had] embittered [bilateral] relations." The passport bureau essentially ceased issuing exit visas to the Federal Republic, except in the most extenuating or "especially drastic" circumstances. Even then, every positive emigration decision had to be confirmed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.[469]

The original proponents of the "one million Germans" thesis indeed had an established history of questioning the postwar border, as Urban noted. For years, Herbert Czaja (CDU), president of the Federation of Expellees (BdV), had claimed that Poland's German population exceeded one million; he often cited this statistic in his correspondence and speeches. At an April 1976 regional expellee meeting, for instance, Czaja expressed hope that the West German press would report more on the "over one million [Germans] in Poland."[470] In 1977, Czaja criticized Willy Brandt, asserting that the SPD leader had failed to defend the "more than one million German citizens, on whom Polish citizenship was illegally imposed."[471] As BdV

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[468] "Regierungssprecher Urban weist Erklärung von Staatsminister Mertes über Deutsche in Oder-Neisse-Gebieten zurück," Radio Warschau, January 4, 1984.
[469] According to the new instructions, passports to West Germany would only be issued in three circumstances: when the applicant was a former prisoner, when the applicant had recently married a West German citizen, and in other "chance circumstances." Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*, 347.
[470] KAS 04-015-019/2, "Vorträge der Landesdelegiertenversammlung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Union der Vertriebenen," by Herbert Czaja, "Deutschland und seine östliche Nachbarn," April 24, 1976.
[471] APO, KW PZPRwO 2665, fol. 167, p. 2. Institut Śląski, Zakład Stosunków Międzynarodowych, "Informacja nt. zachodnio-niemieckich liczb i ocen dotyczących 'przesiedleńców' z Polski, 1976-1977." Brandt "nie stanął w obronie 'przeszło miliona obywateli niemieckich, którym bezprawnie narzucono obywatelstwo polskie' [...] i nie

president, Czaja included this number in the 1976 "Requests of the Expellees for the Eighth Legislative Period," the Federation's official petition to the Bundestag. In the document, he urged the West German government to pressure Poland into permitting the "use of the German language in public life, in press, in schools, and churches […] in Upper Silesia and Southeast Prussia" where Czaja insisted that "around one million Germans still live."[472] While Czaja was arguably the most consistent proponent of this number in West Germany, the statistic also had a following in Poland. In September 1970, the Security Service intercepted a letter from a Silesian woman claiming to speak on behalf of the "one million Germans in Poland."[473] Czaja was therefore not the only person who believed that this many Germans still lived in Poland, even if very few people in the 1970s would have accepted this figure as fact.

Thus, when Mertes made his statement, he was not inventing a number out of thin air but using a number that had been floating around expellee circles and among Germans living in Poland for the last decade. While a few reporters in both countries questioned the figure's origins—one article even called its sudden appearance "mysterious"—expellee- and *Aussiedler*-activists seized on the number immediately. As a high-level member of the Foreign Office, Mertes could imbue the "one million Germans" claim with a measure of unprecedented authority—the number suddenly sounded "official."[474] Now with the apparent backing of Mertes and the West German Foreign Office, expellee lobbyists and conservative politicians began

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nalegał na 'szybkie i pozytywne załatwienie 269 tys. wniosków o wyjazd, dotyczących 700 tys. obywateli niemieckich."

[472] KAS VIII-006-130/2, "Die Anliegen der Vertriebenen für die 8. Legislaturperiode" to the members of the Bundestag from Czaja and Neuhoff, December 13, 1976.

[473] AIPN Wr 011/563 t.1, fols. 29-32, "Plan operacyjnych przedsięwzięć do sprawy operacyjnego rozpracowania krypt. 'Romantyk,'" October 22, 1970. She had apparently addressed the letter to Walter Scheel.

[474] Herder Institute Press Archive, "Das hin und her mit der 'deutschen Minderheit,'" *Polens Gegewart*, October 1984. This article referred to the 1.2 million number as "mysterious."

publicly invoking with renewed vigor their "duty to protect" *(Schutzpflicht*) their dispersed co-nationals living behind the Iron Curtain.

"No More Germans in Poland"

The emergence of the "1.1 million Germans" thesis directly affected those people living in Poland, not only by strengthening the existing minority movement but also by prompting a crackdown from the Polish administration. In early 1984, shortly after Mertes' statement, Polish authorities noted with frustration that multiple self-proclaimed Germans had submitted paperwork to create ethnic minority organizations. Most of the instigators lived in Upper Silesia near Katowice and Opole where, according to the Polish government, no German minority existed. The Security Service further observed that West German individuals and expellee groups were continuing their "traditional forms of infiltration among the autochthons," including caring for the graves of German soldiers, sending care packages, and spreading literature with the "goal of supporting the spirit of Germanness." Unlike in the past, though, the local population itself had begun showing more initiative. Along with seeking to legalize minority organizations, some people had been "attempting to organize protest actions and demonstrations in public places with the goal of extorting positive decisions for emigration from the passport officials."[475] In some cases, people had occupied the West German embassy in Warsaw, threatening to stay there until being granted exit visas.

The Security Service in Katowice blamed the increased activism on West Germany and specifically to the "one million Germans" thesis. In an October 1985 surveillance report, agents argued that "centers of political and ideological subversion from West Germany" had been

[475] AIPN Ka 030-371, fols. 15-23, "Program pracy Sekcji III-A," August 28, 1985.

engaging in "intensified, aggressive and retaliatory activity." These efforts, which came from "a number of West German institutions, especially the Upper Silesian expellee organization," generated a "negative impression among the local population of the Katowice voivodeship." Using "various forms and methods of influence," these groups were "striving for the disintegration of the local-origin population, supporting pro-German tendencies, and infiltrating Silesian society with foreign ideology."[476] The report further noted that these recent West German activities were distinct from past iterations in that they created "a qualitatively different political and social situation." As evidence of these troubling new developments, the proposal cited both the West German "promotion of the thesis about the existence of more than a million Germans living in Poland" and the recent attempts to establish German minority organizations.

In other words, the latest developments in Upper Silesia appeared to have deep ideological roots and goals. Security Service agents argued that the proposed minority organizations "[aimed] to 'build up' […] the revisionist thesis about 'one million Germans in Poland.'" The Poles also alleged that the West German embassy in Warsaw had at least partially inspired the spread of this thesis.[477] Additionally, Polish authorities had experienced increased "pressure from the pro-German environment" for emigration.[478] Between the growing movement for German minority organizations and the heightened demand for exit visas, Polish officials found themselves frustrated and continually on the defensive. Their assessment thus bore striking resemblance to the Silesian officials' admonitions almost two decades earlier. In 1967, the Opole authorities had concluded their report to the Ministry of Internal Affairs with a warning that West German "revisionist centers" might intensify their activities in the voivodeship; Chapter

[476] AIPN Ka 030-371, fols. 15-23, "Program pracy Sekcji III-A," August 28, 1985.
[477] Ibid.
[478] Ibid.

One discussed these concerns. By the mid-1980s, Polish authorities concluded that these circles in West Germany, especially expellee groups and their representatives in the CDU/CSU, had "brought significant threats" and intensified "revisionist activities on an unprecedented scale."[479]

Within this charged international setting, General Wojciech Jaruzelski offered an almost farcical contrast to Mertes' "one million Germans" claim. At the forty-year celebration of the Recovered Territories in spring 1985, Jaruzelski declared in front of hundreds of guests and dozens of reporters that there was no longer a German minority in Poland. He argued that Poland done its duty regarding German repatriation and family reunification and, as a result, "the problem of a national German minority in Poland [had] finally ceased to exist." As if anticipating the incredulous domestic and international responses, Jaruzelski offered this definitive conclusion: "This [German minority] chapter is forever closed."[480] The effect was immediate. Jaruzelski's words had barely made it into Polish newspapers before West German politicians and journalists began refuting them. Members of Poland's supposedly imaginary German minority likewise spoke up, pointing out that they did, in fact, exist. Clearly Germans still lived in Poland, as the growing list of "emigration-hopefuls" (*Ausreisewillige*) should prove.

The ground for Jaruzelski's conclusions about the German minority's nonexistence had been prepared a year earlier on March 8, 1984, when the Polish administration had repealed Decree 37/56. This unpublished law from 1956 which had allowed people emigrating to West Germany to forfeit their Polish citizenship with relative ease. As explained in Chapter Three, the regional official Czyrek had argued in early 1983 that overturning Decree 37/56 would transform emigration-hopefuls back into Polish citizens. This move would "legally confirm that there

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[479] Ibid.
[480] "Jaruzelski: Keine deutsche Minderheit," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 9, 1985.

[were] no longer any people of 'indisputable German ethnicity'" in the country.[481] Jaruzelski likely waited until spring 1985 to make his declaration in response to recent developments within the self-described German minority, as well as Mertes' "one million Germans" thesis.

A Rise in Activism

For years, individuals living in Poland had claimed German heritage; however, until the mid-1980s, emigration had usually been their goal. In most cases, when people in Upper Silesia declared their "belonging to the German nation" (*przynależość do narodu niemieckiego*) and changed their nationality on identity documents, they also submitted exit visa applications around the same time. The individuals who began petitioning for minority rights in the 1980s initially followed this pattern; most of them sought to emigrate to West Germany and been denied, often multiple times. However, this time their frustration, paired with the realization that other people shared their plight, led to a change in tactics. By focusing on the trajectories of several German minority leaders, this section provides insight into the motivations and methods of pro-German activists, while shedding light on the personal networks that eventually coalesced into a relatively united minority movement in Upper Silesia.

Norbert Gaida

Norbert Gaida was one of the initial leaders in Upper Silesia. Born in 1947, Gaida (or "Gajda" in Polish) was trained as a construction engineer. Involved in politics, he served intermittently as the village mayor. Gaida's first move toward emigration happened at the end of the Helsinki agreement in 1979 when he changed his nationality status to "German" and

[481] AMSZ, D. IV, z. 7/86, w-3, RFN 0-30-4-82, fols. 1-9, "Notatka Informacyjna: Propozycje decyzji i działań w sprawie wyjazdów obywateli polskich na pobyt stały do RFN" by Józef Czyrek, p. 5.

submitted his family's passport applications. Their requests were denied, and Gaida was expelled from the Communist party shortly thereafter. In 1981, Gaida joined Solidarity and became a "highly active member" in the union.[482] Around this time, he began a brief stint working as a teacher; however, he was suspended when he was caught preparing signs and slogans with "anti-state content" (*antypaństwowej*) during a class session. An article in *Die Welt* argued that Gaida's subversion arose from his previous experiences with the state's "massive intimidation methods" (*Einschüchterungsmethodik*). In February 1980, for instance, the Polish militia arrested Gaida and brought him in for questioning. While in custody, he was so "brutally mistreated during a multiday interrogation that he had to be taken to the hospital."[483] A nurse apparently helped him to escape, and he managed to flee to the West German embassy in Warsaw.[484]

At that point, authorities did not punish him further, and in 1981 Gaida still remained in Poland. That September, the family's situation became even more complicated, due to the actions of his mother Sophie. After failing to receive an exit visa, the matriarch chose to emigrate illegally; she left on a trip for Holland and never returned. Her illegal departure meant that none of her family could receive exit visas for the next five years, based on current Polish policy. This realization prompted Gaida to take more drastic action. When his twelve-year-old son Michael left in August 1983 with a group of children for a Catholic summer camp in West Germany, Gaida and his wife instructed him not to return. "With the understanding of his parents," the boy somehow managed to leave the group and travel to his grandmother, who was now living near Hannover. A rather sensationalized article in *Die Welt* concluded that the parents' decision to

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[482] AIPN Ka 030-212, fols. 86-88, "Naczelnik Wydziału II Dep. II Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrzynych w Warszawie," October 10, 1984.
[483] Ingo Urban, "Ein Verband der Deutschen in Polen kann die Ausreisewelle stoppen," *Die Welt*, November 11, 1984.
[484] Archive of the Haus der deutsch-polnischen Zusammenarbeit in Gliwice (hereafter AHDPZ), Documents from Blasius Hanczuch, "Die Aufgaben des Deutschen Freundschaftskreises in Schlesien und das Streben nach Rechten der Deutschen in unserer Heimat," undated.

"[separate] themselves from their son" could "only be interpreted as a sign of their desperation." By sanctioning Michael's illegal emigration, the Gaidas hoped to give him a head start in a West German life.

After his son's departure, Gaida's actions took an unexpected turn. In September 1983, only one month after his son left, Gaida submitted paperwork to establish the "German Social and Cultural Society" (*Niemieckie Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne*), a minority organization which would focus on the areas around Katowice and Opole. The group's charter and declared goals suggest that, at this point, Gaida was committed to staying in Poland and helping other Germans living there. According to the proposed charter, "the purpose of the group would be the aid and protection against 'repression and harassment' for people declaring the German nationality," along with linking together Germans across Upper Silesia.[485] The document also mentioned a long-term desire not only to build up the German minority in Poland, but to foster better relations between the German and Polish nationalities as well. The charter ended with a call to "connect people of German ethnicity and nationality to the broader national construction of society in Poland, as well as activities for preserving world peace and friendship between the German and Polish nationalities."[486] Based on this text alone, Gaida seemed dedicated to remaining in Poland and improving the circumstances of Silesia's Germans, both internationally and domestically. Although his decision to create a group may have initially stemmed from the fact that, because of his mother's and son's illegal departures, he could not leave, Gaida still presented himself as strongly committed to the German minority's cause *in Poland.*

[485] AIPN Ka 030/212, fols. 86-88, "Naczelnik Wydziału II Dep. II Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrzynych w Warszawie," October 10, 1984.
[486] Ibid.

That said, even after Gaida had submitted the group's application, the Polish authorities continued to believe that he still planned to emigrate. In their opinion, Gaida and his fellow agitators had "conducted local campaigns" not because they cared about the German minority but because of their "goal of getting permission for emigration from Poland for [Gaida] and his family."[487] The agents argued that, by stirring up a sufficient "fuss" (*szum*), Gaida hoped to "obtain the longed-for [permission to] emigrate more quickly."[488] They believed that Gaida was not alone in using this strategy; at one point, the Security Service concluded that, in general, "attempting to establish national minority organizations" was "one method of 'extorting' the passport organs to grant positive decisions for emigration."[489]

Gaida's "fuss" did not initially sway Polish authorities in his favor, but his actions did attract West German attention. After finding out about Gaida's case, Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher planned to meet with him personally during a November 1984 visit to Poland. Despite this demonstrated West German interest in Gaida's situation, Polish authorities refused to yield. Both of his subsequent attempts to establish a minority organization were immediately rejected, and the second application resulted in a strong state crackdown. Shortly after the documents were submitted in September 1984, District Attorney Jerzy Zientek ordered Gaida's apartment be searched "with the goal of finding evidence, particularly propaganda materials with revisionist contents."[490] Although the archival record includes no details about the findings, the results ostensibly impacted Gaida's situation. Not long after the apartment search, Gaida was received permission to emigrate; he left Poland with the remainder of his family in April 1985.[491]

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[487] Ibid.
[488] Ibid.
[489] AIPN Ka 030/371, fols. 15-23, "Program pracy Sekcji III-A," August 28, 1985.
[490] This was the reason given in the *Durchsuchungsbefehles* Rb 1135/84. See Ingo Urban, *Die Welt*, "Ein Verband der Deutschen in Polen kann die Ausreisewelle stoppen," November 11, 1984.
[491] AIPN Ka 030/371, fols. 19-27, "Informacja dot. przejawów działalności sił rewiz i trendów emigracjynych do RFN w woj kat," September 7, 1985. The month is difficult to read; however, the number appears to be a nine.

Horst Muszalik

If by getting rid of Gaida the authorities had hoped to snuff out the nascent German minority movement, they grossly miscalculated. The engineer-turned-teacher was just one of several key figures in Upper Silesia's German minority network. Once Gaida left, fellow engineer Horst Muszalik (Muschalik) took his place. One of Gaida's close friends and co-applicants, Muszalik had worked alongside Gaida to lobby for minority rights during the preceding year. For instance, in November 1984, he and Gaida, along with a man named Josef Banczyk, sent an impassioned letter to the West German Bundestag in which they protested the decision to support a Polish minority organization in Germany when no corresponding group for Germans existed in Poland. After the second application was rejected in December 1984, Muszalik and Gaida collected signatures from sixteen other self-described Germans, which they submitted to the Polish Internal Affairs Ministry to protest the labeling of their group's application as "revisionist."[492]

Even after Gaida's somewhat abrupt departure, Muszalik continued with the minority's quest. In June 1985, only two months after Gaida emigrated, Muszalik submitted paperwork to create a minority organization. This second group iteration went by the name "Association of Germans in Poland" (*Stowarzeszenia Niemców w Polsce*) and would focus on the Opole voivodeship. Muszalik also gathered popular support; the application contained thirty-five signatures, all from Upper Silesia. This time as before, the Security Service considered emigration to be the applicants' ultimate goal; indeed, all of the people who signed the minority document were actively seeking to emigrate, including Muszalik. He had been applying for an exit visa regularly since 1980 and, in the words of an informant, "[emphasized] his German

[492] AHDPZ, Documents from Blasius Hanczuch, Minister Spraw Wewnętrzych w Warszawie, "'Odwołanie' od decizji nr SA. I-6015-74-84 z dnia 18.12.84."

origins in an ostentatious manner."[493] Even during a redirecting or "warning conversation" at the Internal Affairs office, Muszalik "declared himself definitely as a German."[494] In May 1985, shortly after Gaida's emigration, Muszalik took his "ostentatious" Germanness a step further. Along with his wife and three children, he conducted an "occupation strike" (*strajk okupacyjny*) at the West German embassy in Warsaw, likely hoping to get support for either his emigration applications, his minority organization, or both.[495]

Kristian Staniek

Muszalik was part of a large and expanding network of German minority members and their attempted leaders, all agitating across Upper Silesia for their own cultural associations. This network included an unemployed electrician named Kristian Staniek living in Rynik. Like Gaida and Muszalik, Staniek had tried unsuccessfully to emigrate, although he only submitted first application in 1983. His relatively late application did not prevent him from resorting rather quickly to more extreme forms of protest. During 1984, Staniek declared two hunger strikes inside the West German embassy. As with the other activists, the Security Service believed his goal was to "[force] a positive decision from the passport authorities for his emigration to the Federal Republic."[496]

Although his hunger strikes failed to achieve the desired results, Staniek was not dissuaded. Instead, he simply changed his strategy. In June 1985—around the same time as

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[493] AIPN Ka 030/371, fol. 31, Report by H. Marchwicki, February 17, 1986.
[494] Ibid., "profilaktyczno-ostrzegawczym w czasie której deklarował się zdecydowanie jako niemiec."
[495] AIPN Ka 030/371, fols. 19-27, "Informacja dot. przejawów działalności sił rewiz i trendów emigracjynych do RFN w woj kat," July 1, 1985. This document suggests that Gaida had also occupied the embassy at some point, but I have found no evidence elsewhere to confirm that he did so. AIPN Ka 030/371, fols. 138-143, "Wykaz inspiratorów rewizjonistycznuch działań z terenu woj. Katowickiego," July 23, 1985.
[496] AMSZ D. IV, z. 39/87, w-12, "Zaczelnik do pilnej notatki NR Pf.-862/D.IV/84: Wykaz osób przebywających w ambasadzie RFN." Staniek and three other people were staying in the embassy. As of November 1984, they had been there for three months.

Muszalik's application in Opole—Staniek presumably left the embassy and submitted paperwork to create a German minority organization in Rybnik. Eighteen people signed the initial charter for the "Society of the German Minority" (*Towarzystwo Mniejszości Niemieckiej*) in Rybnik.[497] In addition to planning their own activities, such as religious services and academic lectures in German, the group hoped to meet with "other societies of the same kind in the former German territories." When both the city administrators and the voivodeship directors rejected the application, Staniek took his case to the central authorities, appealing directly to Interior Minister Czesław Kiszczak on August 11, 1985.[498] The electrician then received his final negative decision. The judge explained to Staniek that this type of organization was not allowed on formerly German territories, and he connected the group to the "theses preached by enemies of Poland" in the "revisionist circles in West Germany." As if to add insult to injury, the judgement gave permission to authorities to "refuse to register the association and prohibit its activities." Staniek's quest was over; the last sentence declared the "decision [as] final."[499]

Although Staniek's group was denied, his case sheds further light onto the relationship between failed emigration attempts, ethnic identity, and minority-group formation. In his appeal to the Interior Minister, Staniek explained that "the creation of such a society arose because of persistent refusals of their emigration [requests]." Their goal in establishing a group was not to cause problems for Poland; they simply hoped to maintain emotive ties to their nation and their culture. Loss of identity, language, and heritage—these fears drove them to join together in a

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[497] AIPN BU 1585/6761, fols. 1-5, "Lista członków założycieli 'Towarzystwo Mniejszości Niemieckiej w Polsce," June 10, 1985.

[498] AIPN Ka 030/371, fol. 34, Report by H. Marchwicki, February 17, 1986. "W 1984 roku podjął 2-krotnie akcję protestacyjną w formie strajku głodowego w Ambasadzie RFN w W-wie celem wymuszenia decyzji pozytywnej od władz paszportowych na wyjazd stały do RFN..." For the application, decision, and reasoning related to Staniek's minority group, see AIPN BU 1585/6761, fols. 1-13. Staniek appealed the negative decision by sending a letter directly the MSW minister. See AIPN BU 1585/6761, fols. 10-11, "Odwołania," Letter from Staniek and three other members to Interior Minister General Czesław Kiszczak, August 11, 1985.

[499] AIPN BU 1585/6761, fol. 12, "Decyzja," September 6, 1985.

minority group. Because they could not make "ordinary contact" with other Germans, Staniek and his crew feared that they would "lose the identity of [their] nation." A German minority group in Poland would keep them from "[losing] the awareness of [their] origin and the cultural customs of the German people."[500] They pointed out that, even though Polish authorities and the mass media had denied their existence—as evidenced by Jaruzelski's declaration earlier that year—"the fact that citizens of German descent remain in Poland [could not] be hidden." Having their own organization would allow them to resist this clear attempt at silencing while also preventing their cultural extinction: "We want to unite ourselves against this effort [to deny our existence]" so that "we can feel alive [as a group] and not be buried alive!"[501]

Herbert Piontek

Staniek's words clearly reflected the German minority's frustration, anger, and desperation in the mid-1980s. Yet how did such feelings evolve over time? The story of Herbert Piontek, another Upper Silesian German, is instructive in this regard. Piontek, whose name is the Germanized spelling of the Polish word for "Friday" (*piątek*), was born in 1936 in Kedzierzryna-Koźle, a town in the Opole voivodeship.[502] Although Piontek had first listed his nationality as "Polish" in a 1980 tourist visa application for Italy, Security Service agents believed he had been

[500] AIPN BU 1585/6761, fols. 10-11, "Odwołania," Letter from Staniek and three other members to Interior Minister General Czesław Kiszczak, August 11, 1985. "Pragniemy wyjaśnić, iż myśl utworzenie takiego towarzystwa powstała na wskutek ciągłych odmów na wyjazd, kontaktu z rodzinami, gdzie w pewnym stopniu kulturę tą mielibyśmy zapewnioną. W chwili obecnej gdy zabrania nam się zwykłych kontaktów międzyludzkich przez co zatraca się w nas tożsamość narodowę, zmuszieni jesteśmy zabiegać w miejscu zamieszkania o prawo zrzeszania się, aby nie utracić świadomości naszego pochodzenia oraz obyczajów kulturowych narodu niemieckiego."
[501] Ibid., "Dlatego też, pragniemy się zrzeszyć aby sugerowanie takie przestało istnieć i moglibyśmy się czuć żywymi a nie żywcem pogrzebani!"
[502] AIPN Wr 011/1813 t. 1, fols. 6-7, "Wniosek o wszczęcie sprawy operacyjnego sprawdzenia krypt. 'Krajan,'" June 1985.

moving toward a "pro-German position" since 1978.[503] In September 1980, he started the process of applying for emigration; by March 1984, his visa applications had already been rejected five times. Similarly to Gaida and many other aspiring émigrés, a wayward family member had derailed his plans. Piontek's brother had refused to return to Poland from a vacation in West Germany and now lived in Augsburg; as a result, Piontek would likely not be allowed to emigrate for the next five years.[504]

Like the other applicants, Piontek became more dogged in his "Germanness" after each rejected passport application. Tellingly, in February 1982, Piontek sent a letter to an editor at the *Trybuna Opolska* newspaper in which he made it clear that he had not originally intended to emigrate.[505] He believed that being German should not preclude him from living in Poland. In his own words, "I consider myself a Silesian of German origin, who however is able to live in Poland and be a loyal [Polish] citizen." He claimed to be genuinely surprised by the hostility and discrimination he encountered after submitting his first passport application. Because of his emigration attempts, Piontek had been demoted in his work as an engineer, despite his spotless work record and written protests from his subordinates. His paycheck decreased by more than 3,000 zloty per month as a result, and he was powerless to prevent the change.[506] This demotion along with similar negative experiences had convinced Piontek that, as an indigenous Silesian, he had no future in Poland. "There is no faith placed in autochthons," Piontek explained to the editor. "In no single large city in the Opole region have autochthons been given governing positions [in the past] or currently; no autochthon is the director of a large factory; no Opole

[503] IPN Wr 011/1813 t. 1, fols. 22-23, "Analiza materiałów operacyjnych związanych z inicjatywą powołania Stowarzyszenia Niemców w Polsce," June 28, 1985.
[504] IPN Wr 011-1813 t. 1, fol. 6-7, "Wniosek o wszczęcie sprawy operacyjnego sprawdzenia krypt. 'Krajan,'" June 1985.
[505] APO, KW PZPRwO 2660, fols. 107-110, Letter from Herbert Piontek to the *Trybuna Opolska*, March 10, 1982.
[506] Ibid, p. 4

secondary school teaches German, despite autochthons studying there."[507] In other words, social and economic advancement were impossible, not just due to his recent demotion but also because of his heritage. Even if Piontek had wanted to effect institutional change, he believed that his autochthonous roots would have disqualified him from doing so.

In 1985, three years after sending this letter, Piontek still lived in Poland; however, like Gaida, he had shifted his focus away from emigrating and toward forming a minority organization. The initial petition for his group, submitted in May 1985, began with a controversial declaration: "We assert that many Germans still live in Poland and are forced to live [here] often against their wills. They should have the right to access the language, culture, customs, and traditions of their own people." The group based their legal claims on the Helsinki CSCE Final Act and on a 1932 Polish law regarding national minorities. Among other things, the petitioners called for a German language newspaper, German church services and Mass, German language classes, and better access to rights from the Polish administration. Piontek sent the petition, which contained thirty-five signatures, to voivodeship leaders in Katowice, the West German embassy, and the Bundestag. Not surprisingly, the Polish government denied his request on "revisionist" grounds—the same reason applied to other attempts to create minority groups in Upper Silesia. According to the rejection notice, Piontek's organization offered a "threat to peace and public order." Moreover, his suggestion a "total Polonization" had occurred was tantamount to West German "revisionism."[508]

Piontek persisted despite this setback and appealed the administrator's decision. He argued that Poles living in West Germany were treated well and had been permitted to form their own cultural organizations. He pointed out that other minorities in Poland had the right to

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[507] Ibid, p. 2
[508] AIPN Wr 011/1813 t. 1, fols. 51-52, "Decyzja," date not legible.

organize and preserve their heritage. Why, he asked, should only the Germans living in Upper Silesia be excluded? For all these reasons, Piontek viewed the government's "refusal to register a [German minority] association […] as a specific form of discrimination against the national minority in Silesia." Such treatment was particularly unfair in light of Polish migration restrictions. Because Silesians were not allowed to leave, these people had effectively been trapped in the country. However, their heritage and their emigration efforts prevented them from advancing or, in some cases, from even supporting themselves. The combination was cruel. These Germans had no future in Poland, but they were not allowed to leave for West Germany. Piontek argued that, because the group would be purely cultural and had "no intention […] of engaging politically," the voivodeship administrators should reconsider their decision.[509]

When the authorities refused to overturn their July 1985 decision, Piontek took his cause yet again to his co-nationals. That December he circulated a letter to the "people of German heritage" living in Poland. After describing their experiences of discrimination, recounting the details of forced Polonization, and noting the Polish state's refusal to acknowledge the minority's existence, Piontek called for action. He urged his fellow Germans to declare themselves as German on official documentation. This move would help them reclaim the "holiest" (*najświętszej*) thing of which the Polish state had hitherto deprived them, namely their "fatherland" (*ojczyzny*). [510] If Germans in Silesia hoped to gain their rights and maintain their heritage, they would need to band together and advocate for themselves. Piontek himself acted on this plan in 1986, when he and several other leaders tried to organize a gathering of "German-heritage people" (*deutschstämmige*) in Poland.

[509] KAS VI-006 213.1, "Widerruf," July 5, 1985.
[510] AIPN Wr 011/1813 t. 1, fol. 58, "Do ludności pochodzenia niemieckiego!" December 1985.

Authorities prevented the event from happening, but the attempted meeting seems to have tipped the scales in Piontek's favor. Polish authorities finally gave his family exit visas on May 12, 1986. What is interesting, however, is not Pionek's emigration, but the fact that it was so long in coming. In their initial assessment, Security Service agents had described him as "person of high intelligence" who seemed "capable of drawing together other discontented Germans who want to emigrate."[511] Despite recognizing Piontek's leadership traits and potential for subversion, Polish authorities still waited five years before letting him leave, thereby giving him sufficient time to unite other self-described Germans in Silesia.[512] When Piontek departed in September 1986, he left behind a large, active German minority network. Equally significant, the five-year struggle with Poland's administration had only strengthened Piontek's sense of German national identity. In other words, by denying him departure, *Polish authorities had made Piontek even more German.*

The Most "Troublesome" Activists: Andreas & Thomas Osmenda

Beyond these other examples, the Osmenda family offers perhaps the most striking illustration of both Polish repression and West German meddling. In 1979, the entire family declared their German nationality and submitted their first exit-visa applications. During the next six years, their emigration attempts were repeatedly rejected "based on important"—but never specified—"social reasons."[513] After these rejections, Andreas, the oldest of the four Osmenda brothers, attempted in 1986 to establish a German association and thereby "demonstrate the

[511] AIPN Wr 011/1813 t. 1, fols. 6-7, "Wniosek o wszczęcie sprawy operacyjnego sprawdzenia krypt. 'Krajan,'" June 1985.
[512] AIPN Wr 011/1813 t. 1, fols. 22-23, "Analiza materiałów operacyjnych związanych z inicjatywą powołania Stowarzyszenia Niemców w Polsce," June 28, 1985, p. 2.
[513] Holger Breit, *Die Deutschen in Oberschlesien 1163-2015* (Wielenbach a. Ammersee: Dr. H. Breit, 2015), 137.

existence of a German minority in Silesia."[514] Up to this point, Andreas's behavior largely matched that of his fellow activists. Still the Security Service assigned him the code name "*uciążliwy*," which translates to "burdensome" or "troublesome."

The reason for this label lies with Andreas's youngest brother Thomas, who caught the Polish authorities' attention shortly after he turned eighteen in 1983. Now officially of age, Thomas was required by law to register for a Polish identification card and, with it, Polish citizenship and possible conscription in the Polish military. Thomas refused and, as a result, found himself in a sort of legal limbo. Without Polish identity papers, he could not get a job; without Polish citizenship, he could not apply for German citizenship. Thomas's 1984 response to this conundrum earned him no sympathy from the state. "None of these laws will make me into a citizen of the People's Republic of Poland," he argued. "There is no compulsion to adopt a citizenship, and if it is required, then show me [that] law… Every person has the right to live in his fatherland, and no one will take this right from me. I demand, again, an exit visa."[515] Thomas not only did not receive a visa, but the Polish authorities used his lack of identity papers as an excuse to arrest him multiple times.[516]

Still, these challenges made the Osmenda brothers even more determined. On April 2, 1984, shortly after their ninth passport rejection, Andreas and Thomas began a hunger strike. In front of the elder brother's house, located a short walk from Katowice's city center, they hung banners declaring, "Hunger strike!" and "I demand the emigration of my family!"[517] Two days later, both Osmendas were arrested and interrogated for multiple days. Although they were

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[514] AIPN Wr 011/1813 t. 2, fols. 24-33, April 25, 1986.
[515] *Antrag an den Staatsrat der VR Polen in Warschau,* February 15, 1984. Cited in Breit, *Die Deutschen in Oberschlesien 1163-2015*, 138. Also quoted in *Schlesische Jugend* 1987, "Thomas Osmenda, ein ostdeutsches Schicksal."
[516] Breit, 138.
[517] Breit, 138.

released without being charged, their problems were far from over. In December 1985, Thomas was summoned to court and sentenced to two months in prison without parole. Only after his family paid 18,000 zloty—a large sum, especially considering that Thomas himself had no income—was he released. Although he tried to find work, the lack of Polish identity papers made it nearly impossible. In an apparent stroke of luck, he finally secured a job in February 1986, but when he arrived without an identity card, the employer rescinded the offer. As if the lack of job were not bad enough, Thomas was then summoned to a disciplinary council for his "refusal to work" (*Arbeitsvereigerung*). He could choose between a 50,000 zloty fine or three months' jailtime. Thomas summarized the Catch-22 nature of his predicament. "First the authorities deliberately give me no passport, which means I cannot work, and now I am punished for not working. But I have no opportunity to find regular work."[518]

While Thomas was dealing with his legal situation, Andreas was expanding his involvement with the burgeoning German minority movement. Together with Herbert Piontek, he organized the German Cultural Congress; however, right before the April 1986 event, Andreas was arrested—officially based on a (likely contrived) charge of engaging in "illegal bottle trade" (*illegaler Flaschenhandel*)—and the Congress was cancelled. Andreas then tried to establish a German-language newspaper in Silesia. This endeavor never took off, though, because shortly after circulating a survey to the region's German population, he received an exit visa. Andreas left with his wife and son in November 1986.[519] The remaining family members did not fare so well. During the next seven months, the Polish militia searched their house more

[518] "Thomas Osmenda, ein ostdeutsches Schicksal," *AKZENT,* February 1987.
[519] Ibid.

than twenty times. Only in August 1987—eight years after their first passport application—were the last Osmendas permitted to emigrate.[520]

Help from the West: AGMO and the Silesian Youth

The German minority in Poland, particularly cases like that of the Osmenda family, played an important role in unofficial West German-Polish relations during the 1980s. The word "unofficial" here is deliberate, for although the embassies did become involved at certain points—and the West German embassy in Warsaw was the site of multiple hunger- and occupation strikes—the key players did not formally represent either state. In Poland, individual activists responded to thwarted emigration attempts by banding together and asserting their rights. In West Germany, expellee politicians and their affiliates advocated for these minority Germans and, in some instances, helped activists formulate their strategies. A 1985 surveillance proposal in Katowice interpreted the recent rise unrest in Silesia as the product of "centers of political and ideological subversion from West Germany," particularly expellee organizations (*Landsmannschaften*) which had begun engaging in "intensified, aggressive and retaliatory activity."[521] According to the Poles, expellee groups encouraged indigenous residents to declare themselves German, thereby upsetting the Silesian status quo. Yet who exactly were the guilty parties in West Germany, and what were their actual aims?

Although the Security Service agents were correct in asserting that the Silesian *Landsmannschaft* was involved, most of Poland's woes actually stemmed from a subsidiary organization called the "Silesian Youth" (*Schlesische Jugend*) and its "Working Group on

[520] "Thomas Osmenda endlich frei," *Schlesische Nachrichten,* September 1987.
[521] AIPN Ka 030/371, fols. 1-2, "Wniosek o wszczęcie sprawy obiektowej 'Odwetowcy,'" 1985. The date is difficult to read, but it appears to be in June.

Human Rights Violations in East Germany" (AGMO). Formed in 1980, the organization was intentionally provocative. For instance, although at first glance the "East Germany" in its name might seem to refer to the German Democratic Republic, the group's actual focus was on Poland and the formerly German territories in its borders. While AGMO members did not explicitly call for the return of this land to Germany, they considered the area to be German, even into the late 1980s. A donation-seeking leaflet from 1987 tellingly included a map of the Eastern Territories with this description: "East Germany beyond the Oder and Neisse today—since the end of the war under Polish and partially Soviet control." To clarify the geographical focus further, the pamphlet even contained this bolded heading: "Freedom and human rights for the Germans in Silesia, Upper Silesia, East and West Prussia, as well as Pomerania!"[522]

In addition to circulating leaflets and raising money, AGMO organizers worked to garner political and popular support for the German minority in Poland. Foreign Minister Mertes's December 1983 announcement about the "1.1 million" Germans gave their cause an added air of credibility, which AGMO leaders leveraged to collect signatures "insisting on the guarantee of human rights and basic freedoms for the million Germans living in the Oder-Neisse regions." Through this initiative, dubbed "Action '83," the Silesian Youth submitted more than 20,000 signatures to Friedrich Vogel, a State Minister in the Federal Chancellery. In the process, the youth sought to raise awareness about Germans living in Poland.[523]

Despite the campaign's success, AGMO leaders recognized that simply collecting signatures was insufficient. The group needed a "face" for their movement, a person whose story

[522] AHDPZ, Documents belonging to Friedrich Schikora (Gliwice), "Menschenrechte überall… auch in Ostdeutschland!" Pamphlet by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Menschenrechtsverletzungen in Ostdeutschland, November 1987.
[523] AMSZ D. IV, z. 39/87, w-12, Kolonia, May 25, 1984, MSW- Noworyta; Berlin, May 24, 1984, MSZ- Szabelski dla Krola.

could represent the million-plus Germans still living in Poland. The Osmenda family offered the ideal case. As victims of blatant, even sensational human-rights violations, including house searches, interrogations and repeated arrests, as well as their failed attempts to emigrate, the four Osmenda brothers perfectly "represented the 1.1 million Germans living under the Polish regime," the Silesian Youth periodical explained.[524] In early 1984, the AGMO officially took up the "human-rights care" (*menschenrechtliche Betreuung*) for the Osmenda family, publicizing their plight in the West German media, passing out fliers, and giving "collected signatures to [West German] authorities and representatives" on their behalf. In conjunction with the 1984 "Day of Human Rights," held each year on December 10, the Silesian Youth circulated a press release about the Osmendas and the "1.1 million Germans" remaining in Poland. Further utilizing their media connections, AGMO leaders also secured airtime for the Osmendas' story on the major West German news networks, including the ARD. Additionally, they offered practical advice and material help to the family. For example, when Andreas started an illegal German-language school in his house, AGMO representatives convinced a Munich-based publishing company to donate thirty textbooks.[525] Similarly, when Andreas tried to establish a German-minority newspaper, the West Germans offered to secure a photocopier and other supplies.

Along with publicizing the minority's cause and providing material aid, AGMO leaders spent time lobbying individual West German politicians. In early December 1985, for instance, they contacted Bundestag representative and CDU/CSU foreign-policy spokesman Hans Klein and asked him to bring up the Gaida, Piontek, and Osmenda cases at the upcoming "Day of Human Rights." As ethnic Germans, these activists fell under Klein's legal jurisdiction, even

[524] "Thomas Osmenda endlich frei," *Schlesische Nachrichten*, September 1987.
[525] AIPN Wr 011/1813 t. 2, fols. 24-33, April 25, 1986, p. 17.

though they technically lived within Poland's borders. As the AGMO representatives explained, "Our compatriots beyond the Oder and Neisse also want to know that they are represented by you [Hans Klein], as German nationals within the meaning of Article 116 of the Basic Law."[526] By leveraging connections with politicians like Klein, the AGMO aimed to shift West German policies in the minority's favor.

Although Polish authorities suspected that minority leaders were receiving help from West Germany, they finally found concrete evidence to this effect when they searched Andreas Osmenda's house in April 1986. Security Service agents discovered correspondence with the West German embassy in Warsaw, Bundestag representatives Claus Jäger and Herbert Hupka, and various ARD reporters. Agents further learned that the Osmendas' story was featured on "*Kontraste*," an investigative news program, and their West German contacts believed the broadcast had been effective, stating that "many people support [the Osmendas'] quest for human rights for Germans in Silesia."[527]

Andreas had also been in touch with individual West Germans, including a man named Günter Spielberg.[528] How the two became connected is unclear, but their exchanges were full of practical advice and updates about media coverage. In correspondence from November 1985, for instance, Spielberg informed Osmenda that he had "fulfilled his request about informing public opinion" about his family's case. Spielberg further ensured him that all documents relating to his case would be "presented to the experts at the CSCE meeting in Ottawa and the directors of the German delegation." Spielberg additionally promised that there would be "publications about the fate of the Osmenda family" in various West German newspapers and that he had "personally

[526] KAS VI-006 213.1, Letter from AGMO-SJ to Hans Klein, December 6, 1985.
[527] AIPN Wr 011/1813 t. 2, fols. 24-33, April 25, 1986, p. 15.
[528] In the SB report, his name is also spelled "Gudrun." AIPN Wr 011/1813 t. 2, fols. 24-33, 25 April 1986, p. 14.

spread [information about] the Osmenda case in Hannover and Upper Bavaria." In a later letter, he offered advice about creating a German-language periodical in Poland, developing applications to the Polish authorities for German-language instruction, and even establishing the illegal German school in Andreas's house.[529]

The search likewise confirmed that West Germans had been advising Andreas about political maneuvers on the international level. Letters from a man named Carl-Heinrich Müller, who apparently represented the Silesian Youth, urged Andreas to contact the CSCE about his case and gave him the mailing address for the Conference on Human Rights and Citizens in Madrid. Andreas ostensibly followed Müller's advice, for the search revealed a typewritten letter addressed to "the participants in the CSCE," which ostensibly decried the oppressive treatment of the German minority living in Poland. According to the Security Service agent, the letter claimed that "Polish authorities had robbed [Germans] of every human right" and because they had taken "every opportunity to deny their existence," the Germans "must meet illegally."[530] Thus it seemed that, with the encouragement of Müller and under the advisement of Spielberg, Osmenda sought to denounce Poland within the CSCE network and the broader international community.

More than any other papers seized from Andreas' home, the Security Service viewed Müller's documents as the "most intriguing from a security perspective." In addition to urging Andreas to contact the CSCE, Müller had encouraged Thomas "to start a hunger strike in order to gain the attention of the mass media."[531] Even though it seems possible that the brothers may

[529] Ibid., p. 10 and 15.
[530] Ibid., p. 6.
[531] Ibid., p. 15. Although the Security Service report failed to mention the date of this letter, it seems plausible that Müller's suggestions preceded the Osmendas' hunger strike in April 1984; if his recommendations were for a second hunger strike, he would have likely included the word "again."

have independently decided to hunger strike, the correspondence was still incriminating. For these letters proved that the Silesian Youth organization, with Müller and likely Spielberg as its messengers, had actively fomented resistance among the Polish German minority. For the SB, the Müller correspondence and other documents seized from Osmenda's house not only "confirmed that an illegal German minority organization [existed] in Silesia," but also showed that this subversive group had received consistent help from beyond Poland's borders and that the West Germans were to blame.[532]

However, simply faulting the Germans is perhaps too facile an answer. Yes, West German citizens in AGMO had indeed been in contact with Osmenda. The papers confiscated from his home make this much clear, even though it is not certain who reached out to whom in the first place. Presumably, the AGMO welcomed the opportunity to use the Osmendas' story and tout it as an example of Polish repression Equally significant, however, are the factors that precipitated the Osmendas' connection to the West German organization. Had Osmenda been allowed to emigrate, he would have had no need for the AGMO. By rejecting his applications, the Polish state contributed to his indefatigable embrace of Germanness. Unwilling to recognize or admit their own role in Osmendas unofficial "Germanization," the Polish Secret Service latched onto the explanation that West German organizations had been nurturing their citizens' Germanness. Raiding Osmenda's home offered the ideal and convenient proof of their revisionism-centered theory.

[532] Ibid., p. 18.

Paranoid Poland?

This does not mean, however, that the Polish "revisionist" interpretation was merely contrived or irrational. After all, the expellee lobby, which arguably had the greatest stake in influencing western Poland, had declined considerably in power since the Warsaw Treaty in 1970.[533] By the 1980s, most West Germans had accepted Polish control over the Oder-Neisse region as fact, and only a handful of expellee leaders still argued that these territories should return to Germany. With each passing year, these politicians moved further to the periphery. This shift became especially clear during the planning for the Silesian expellee gathering in 1985. When the *Landsmannschaft* chose "Forty Years of Banishment—Silesia Remains Ours!" as that year's theme, Chancellor Helmut Kohl pressured them to change the slogan. The expellees ultimately obliged, and the gathering instead bore the motto "Silesia Remains our Future in a Europe of Free Peoples."[534] The adjustment of the annual theme showed that expellees and other revisionist circles had lost substantial influence in mainstream West German politics. Based on this reality, it seems possible that Polish fears of revanchism were unfounded.[535]

Other evidence suggested, though, that Polish concerns about the German minority's connections to West Germany were not entirely baseless. In a scathing letter to the Bundestag, Norbert Gaida and two colleagues accused West Germans of betraying the minority in Poland, even though they had been "faithful to the work of [their German] ancestors" and maintained their ethnic heritage. Their main grievance was with SPD Bundestag leader Hans-Joachim Vogel, who had apparently undercut the German minority's quest for recognition during his

[533] Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 2003, 269–73.
[534] James M. Markham, "Silesian Exiles jeer Kohl speech," *New York Times*, June 17, 1985.
[535] As Ahonen, aptly notes, by the early 1970s, "the potential irredentist threat posed by the expellees had also faded, as ever-growing numbers accepted the Federal Republic as their new *Heimat* and rejected the siren calls of backward-looking revisionism." Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*, 2003, 273.

recent visit to Poland and, in the protesters' view, "sold out [the Germans in Poland] with impunity."[536] This move seemed hypocritical, for as Gaida and the others pointed out, Vogel had supported a Polish minority group "in the borders of our fatherland"—referring to West Germany—a region "which [had] never been Polish!" In contrast, the German remnant had lost their property and endured forty years of "humiliation, persecution, and brutal uprooting from everything of their national heritage and Germanness." By prioritizing international relations with Poland over the German minority's situation, Vogel was "building the bridge of understanding at the cost of denying the approximately one million Germans" living in Poland. Such behavior was tantamount to "treason" (*Verrat*) or "betrayal of the German nation."[537] Although Gaida and the others did not necessarily call for Silesia's return to Germany, their references to "one million Germans," the "betrayal of the German nation," and remaining "faithful to the work of [their German] ancestors" echoed earlier revanchist sentiments.

Yet did Gaida actually desire to harm Poland with "anti-state content" and "revisionist propaganda" as the Security Service claimed? Or put differently, did he plan to create a German minority group in Upper Silesia in order to spite Poland? The answer is not necessarily. In 1984—the same year he denounced the SPD's minority policy—Gaida also argued that an officially-sanctioned German minority group would actually aid, not hurt, Poland. According to an article in *Die Welt,* Gaida apparently asserted that Poland needed the Germans to remain in Upper Silesia. He argued that the region had been all but "emptied if its native (*eingeborenen*)

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[536] While West German and American presses did report on Vogel's visit to Poland, they did not mention any of the issues that Gaida raised. The *Christian Science Monitor,* for example, stated that Vogel drew criticism from expellees when he failed "to try to meet with any opposition Poles," i.e. members of Solidarity, during his November 1984 visit. See Wellington Long, "East-West ties dealt blow when German failed to visit Poland," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 26, 1984. For coverage in West German newspapers, see Carl-Christian Kaiser, "Opfer der Affäre," *Die Zeit*, November 16, 1984; "Ich will, dass wir allein regieren können," *Der Spiegel*, November 12, 1984.

[537] AHDPZ, Documents from Blasius Hanczuch, "Protest" from Norbert Gaida to the West German Bundestag, November 10, 1984. The document includes a partial German translation of the original Polish text.

population" because of "constant emigration to West Germany," but permitting a German minority association in Poland "could slow down the outbound wave" of emigration.[538] In other words, if the Silesian population were permitted to remain in their homes *as Germans*, the population drain would end and all residents of western Poland would thrive as a result.

Gaida's point was valid; German organizations indeed had the potential to halt the borderland exodus. Silesia's regional officials themselves had pointed this out almost two decades earlier in their recommendations to the central government, as discussed in Chapter One. However, by 1985, the situation had become significantly more complicated, for Polish authorities also had to consider another important fact: West Germans not only wanted German minority groups to exist, but they had clandestinely interfered in domestic affairs, particularly the Osmenda case, to make such organizations possible. Polish officials thus found themselves in a political quandary. On the one hand, denying the minority's existence had only strengthened the determination of its members, as protests and hunger strikes in Upper Silesia had shown. Furthermore, repressing the minority seemed to make West Germans more determined to advocate on its behalf. The Germans in Upper Silesia may have been a thorn in the side of the Polish state, but avoiding any solution seemed more appealing than dealing with the deep-seated issues at hand. Allowing particularly vocal troublemakers to emigrate appeared to be the best way to keep the internal and external threat at bay.

Legalized minority groups did not seem like a good idea, for this organizations would give the remaining Germans an official channel for protest against the state. More importantly, such a policy would have required the Poles to admit that Germans still lived within their borders. This action would undoubtedly open their country up to further influence from West

[538] Ibid.

Germany. Paranoid though the Polish government may have been, there was actual precedent for German influence in their country. According to popular historical interpretation, the German minority had acted as a "fifth column" during the interwar period. Based on this reasoning, Germans disloyal to Poland had welcomed Hitler and had helped make the Nazi occupation possible. Concerns about West German infiltration also roots in the postwar era. In a 1949 speech to the Bundestag, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer invoked what became known as the "sole-representation claim" (*Alleinvertretungsanspruch*). Through this statement, Adenauer asserted that "pending German reunification, the Federal Republic [would be] the only legitimate state organization of the German people."[539] As Stefan Wolff explains, even though this declaration was initially intended to undermine East Germany and its statehood, "political pressure and […] lobbying by expellee organizations" convinced the West German government to apply the principle to German minority populations in Eastern Europe. While official measures focused on a combination of foreign policy and "humanitarian efforts to improve the situation of ethnic Germans," communist governments frequently responded with suspicion.[540] Although Polish leaders realized that "humanitarian" changes such as permission for forming minority organizations could combat emigration, they also feared that such concessions would further expose their country to "revisionist" West German influences.

Polish authorities ultimately opted for a different route. They chose to let the most frustrated and, from their perspective, subversive Germans emigrate. However, this course of action did not solve the "German minority problem." By the time they left, activists like Gaida, Piontek, and the Osmendas had already stirred up substantial grassroots support and "awakened" more Germans for their cause. Nor were they the only instigators; during the mid-1980s, many

[539] Wolff, *German Minorities in Europe*, 198–99.
[540] Wolff, 198–99.

other people became activists for emigration and minority rights.[541] A July 1985 list by the Katowice Security Service identified thirty-one people engaged in overt pro-German activities in the region. The names included both men and women and sometimes even whole families. Ages ranged from twenty to seventy; however, the majority were born in the 1940s and 1950s. Henryk Foik, born in 1942, protested in the streets of Katowice when his visa was denied; he was also in contact with the West German embassy. Thirty-two-year-old Piotr Petke visited the embassy in November 1984 to request help in organizing a minority group in Zabrze. Bernard Nicer, born in 1948, tried to stir up the applicants at the passport office in Bytom to get their support for creating a German minority group; he, too, was in touch with the embassy. Thirty-one-year-old Jan Walosik also hoped to establish a group in Bytom. In addition to declaring himself German, he wrote petitions to organizations in Poland and abroad to gather popular support. Magdalene Bybska, born in 1937, organized a strike to occupy the embassy in Warsaw "in order to gain public attention for the […] wrongs done against the Germans in Poland."[542] As the decade wore on and more people joined the movement, Polish fears came true. Not only did West Germany become more involved in the region, but thousands of self-described Germans continued to demand emigration.

A Study in Germanness: Rudolf Boegner

This chapter had focused on activism and its role in creating and strengthening the German minority in Poland. The Polish state's efforts to quench the German minority movement and to erase the population's residual "Germanness" ultimately backfired, as people asserted

[541] AIPN Ka 030/371, fols. 138-142, "Wykaz inspiratorów rewizjonistycznych działań z terenu woj. katowickiego," July 23, 1985, p. 5
[542] AIPN Ka 030/371, fol. 138-142, "Wykaz inspiratorów rewizjonistycznych działań z terenu woj. katowickiego," July 23, 1985, p. 5.

their ethnic and national identities even more determinedly. Many individuals across Upper Silesia did become activists, even though their names and stories did not receive the same level attention from the Polish or West German states as the Osmendas' case. The question, however, remains: how did "ordinary," non-activist members of the German minority express ties to their heritage? Moreover, how did this strengthened or transformed "Germanness" come to be, and what did it look like in practice? This final section examines the case of Rudolf Boegner, a self-described German from near Katowice. Although he submitted his first passport application in 1978, he only received permission to emigrate in 1988. During the intervening decade, Boegner became decidedly more convinced of and vocal about his German identity.

In many ways, Boegner's biography is highly typical for an eventual resettler. He was born in 1936 to German parents but was raised by his aunt in Poland. He grew up speaking German, and he had close family in West Germany. His older sister had been living there since 1946, and at some point his aunt also emigrated. Boegner himself married a Polish woman, finished his post-secondary education, and had a good (albeit unspecified) job in Poland. In 1976, Boegner traveled to West Germany on a tourist visa to spend two months with his aunt. Two years later in 1978, he submitted his first passport application, believing he qualified for "family reunification" under the Helsinki Agreement. His application was rejected with no further explanation.[543] Like other emigration-hopefuls, Boegner made a second passport attempt. This time, however, he intentionally included more evidence of his "indisputable Germanness." He pointed out, for instance, that his parents were "German without a doubt" and that all his close relatives already lived in West Germany. [544] Again, though, his request was denied.

[543] AIPN Ka 184/8471. According to the official stamp, this first application was rejected by the Katowice passport office on September 8, 1978.
[544] AIPN Ka 184/8471, Letter from Rudolf Boegner to the Passport Office MSW in Warsaw, April 28, 1979; Letter from Rudolf Boegner to the Passport Office MSW in Warsaw, November 5, 1979.

According to an official's note at the bottom of his letter, Boegner did "not meet the criteria for recognition," presumably as German (*brak kryteriów do rozpoznania*).[545]

Yet what "criteria" was Boegner lacking? This question drove him to include even more documentation in his next application attempt as well as shift his strategy. Rather than arguing for a passport based on his right to "repatriation" alone, Boegner built a case to prove his German nationality. In his June 1980 letter to the passport officials, Boegner offered three pieces of evidence of his "indisputable Germanness." This showed that parents had opted not to take Polish citizenship in 1922, even after the Silesian plebiscite and subsequent uprisings placed them within Poland's borders. According to Boegner, this decision meant that they considered themselves to be German. Secondly, Boegner's older brother and sister had been educated in a German minority school. Thus, his parents had deliberately chosen to educate their children as Germans. Lastly, Boegner's sister, along with all of his closest relatives, had resided in Germans since 1946—after *having been expelled there as Germans*. Based on all these reasons, Boegner concluded that he, too, should be seen as German. In his own words, "all of this can only mean one thing… [that my] German nationality […] and right to German citizenship can in no case be questioned." Furthermore, his sense of Germanness was not a convenient emigration strategy; he had actively identified as German since 1956, when he first listed his nationality on an official form.[546] His message was unequivocal. Boegner was not an opportunist or an economic émigré; rather, he was an "indisputable German" who had unwaveringly claimed that ethnic heritage for the previous twenty-five years.

Unbeknownst to Boegner, however, the passport authorities disregarded his ethnic-based reasoning anyway. Although he met the "indisputable German" criteria, other aspects of his

[545] AIPN Ka 184/8471, Letter from Rudolf Boegner to the Passport Office MSW in Warsaw, November 5, 1979.
[546] AIPN Ka 184/8471, Letter from Rudolf Boegner to the Passport Office MSW in Warsaw, June 2, 1980.

biography had rendered his application void. As a passport official noted on Boegner's September 1982 application, the would-be émigré was of working age, a member of the educated class, and married to a Polish woman. As a contributor to the Polish economy and part of the Polish intellectual elite, Boegner was too valuable to let go. Furthermore, Boegner's emigration would create yet another divided family, whose members could then find reason to apply for emigration based on "family reunification." No amount of ethnic arguing would have helped Boegner overcome the three strikes against him. As an educated, employed applicant in an ethnically mixed marriage, he stood little chance of receiving permission to leave.

Boegner, however, had no way of knowing that the logic of the passport system was rigged against him. He still hoped to emigrate and, consequently, responded by taking more steps to cultivate his German ethnic identity. Later in 1982, for instance, Boegner contacted officials in the Federal Republic and applied for a West German ID card for himself and his two sons; they received the five-year-long passes that December. In 1983, Boegner applied for an exit visa again, this time including documentation about his parents' German citizenship. After this attempt failed, Boegner appealed to the Polish parliament or *Sejm*. In early 1984, he wrote to that the Polish press secretary's claim that "there are no Germans at all wanting to emigrate to West Germany" was false; he and his family were definitive evidence to the contrary. He then argued, however, that the secretary's statement could become the truth, if only the Polish government would allow him and other Germans finally to leave.[547]

This appeal, along with future emigration efforts over the next five years, remained unsuccessful.[548] In January 1987, Boegner wrote again to the communist party authorities. As in

[547] AIPN Ka 184/8471, Open letter (*list otwarty*) from Boegner to the Sejm, January 24, 1984.
[548] For a brief moment in late 1985, Boegner briefly revised his strategy, applying for a tourist visa for himself and his son to use during winter vacation. Instead of asking for an exit visa, he applied for a tourist visa for him and his older son during winter vacation. Surprisingly, his request was granted. See AIPN Ka 184/8471.

his previous attempts, Boegner set forth the case for his Germanness—including the facts of his parents' German citizenship, his siblings' attendance at German minority schools, and his claiming German nationality since 1956. However, unlike the previous instances, Boegner did not request to emigrate this time. Instead, he asked to establish a German minority organization in Poland, stating that since it was "the preference of the passport authorities that [he would] spend the further years of [his] life in Poland," this statement was "a declaration of [his] intention to create a German minority association in Poland."[549] After this letter, a bureaucratic switch flipped; suddenly his emigration case gained traction. When Boegner applied in August 1987, his family received the long-awaited permission to emigrate. They left in early 1988, finally exchanging their frustration for celebration.

Conclusion

All told, Boegner's emigration took ten years. The Polish state had rejected Boegner's applications for reasons that were not only outside of his control—he was educated, he had a good job and was too young to retire, and his wife was Polish. Moreover, these reasons *had nothing to do with his being German*. However, because the Polish authorities did not explain their reasoning, and that his application was doomed from the start, Boegner assumed that his application was not strong enough. Thus, he endeavored to build and present a more thorough case for his Germanness. During the next ten years, he sought out evidence about his heritage, including and his siblings' school enrollment forms. He also recruited relatives in West Germany to write to the Foreign Office in Bonn on his behalf; his name appeared on official "intervention" lists as early as 1979. In the process of honing his argument, Boegner undoubtedly strengthened

[549] AIPN Ka 184/8471, Letter from Boegner to the KC PZPR Buiro Listów i Interwencji, January 22, 1987.

his own sense of his German identity. He was German, and in his own words again, his "German nationality […] and right to German citizenship [could] in no case be questioned." Thanks to the Polish passport authorities and the lack of transparency about the process, Boegner ultimately became more German.

Thus, although Polish officials had clear reasons for denying Boegner's applications, their strategy ultimately backfired. For by repeatedly rejecting his applications and by providing no reasons for their decision, the passport authorities inadvertently awakened and strengthened the would-be émigré's sense of Germanness. With each application, Boegner rearticulated and solidified his argument. Although there are many possible reasons for his declared intent to establish a minority organization—it may have simply been a bluff to obtain a visa—the strategy worked. By the time he was permitted to leave Poland, Rudolf Boegner had transformed into an "indisputable" ethnic German, at least in his own estimation.

It is also important to note that stories like Boegner's directly affected perceptions of ethnic Germanness in West Germany. In the 1970s and 1980s, accounts of families "trapped in Poland" like the Boegners frequently made it into the news and sometimes even took up multiple newspaper pages.[550] In recounting these resettlers' plights, these articles also influenced how ethnic Germans were perceived and helped create and reinforce an image of resettlers as the "most worthy immigrants" and as "sufferers for Germanness." Stereotypes such as these directly impacted West Germany's efforts to intervene in Boegner's situation and similar "hardship cases" (*Hartefälle*) involving multiple repeated rejections. This "victimized" image also

[550] See, for instance, Ernst Ney, "Aussiedlerinnen baten auch für ihre Männer in Polen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 16, 1977. Eberhard Nitschke, "Polen macht Grenze für Familien dicht," *Die Welt,* August 12, 1986.

translated into public policy, as the state continued to spend millions of Deutschmark annually on resettler integration programs through the 1980s.

The Boegner case, along with those of activists like Gaida, Staniek, and the Osmendas, reveals that understandings and portrayals of "Germanness" were not static entities, but they evolved continually based on individual circumstances and specific interactions with the Polish state. For many resettler-hopefuls, encounters with passport officials, relatives in the west, and other minority members created a stronger sense of German identity. Because official Polish policies of allowing people with "indisputable German heritage" to leave, as outlined in the 1970 "Information," conflicted with actual emigration decisions, more and more minority members in Poland identified as "sufferers for Germanness." Furthermore, the circumstances in Poland—particularly the repeated rejection of passport applications and suppression of minority organizations—fueled this "suffering resettler" stereotype in West Germany. Eventually, ethnic Germanness became shorthand for a disadvantaged diaspora. In these ways and more, experiences and developments on both sides of ends of the resettler migration process shaped the evolution of ethnic German identity during the Cold War and well after its end.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1980s, Polish emigration policies were undergoing unprecedented changes, turning the migration trickle into a stream. Whereas in 1986, only 27,000 resettlers left Poland legally for West Germany, by 1989, the total had spiked to 250,000.[551] Three main factors contributed to this rise in emigration. First, the Polish state started loosening its passport restrictions in 1987; the emigration wave grew stronger as more people took advantage of these policy changes.[552] Second, uncertainty about West German-Polish relations further fueled a sense of urgency, creating another *Torschlusspanik* reminiscent of 1979 lapsing of the Helsinki agreement. Third, continued and expanded material benefits by the West German state for resettlers, along with an expanded bureaucracy to deal specifically with their needs, created a definitive "pull factor." For instance, in 1988, ethnic German newcomers were eligible for forty different forms of aid.[553] In sum, the late 1980s saw both a significant rise in resettlers from Poland, as well as a renewed West German commitment to their integration.

The collapse of Communism from late 1989 to 1990 gave the resettler question a whole new dimension. While migrants from Poland continued to arrive in West Germany, they were quickly outnumbered by "late resettlers" (*Spätaussiedler*) from the former Soviet Union.[554] Tellingly, if asked about "resettlers" today, the average German will say something about "Russian Germans" (*Russlanddeutsche*). This shift in perception makes sense, for of the 2.5 million resettlers who came to the Federal Republic between 1988 and 1998, almost 1.6

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[551] Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*, 480.
[552] Stola, 351.
[553] Stola, 361. Furthermore, the Federal Republic created a division within the Interior Ministry to deal specifically with resettler concerns; Horst Waffenschmidt took office in 1988 as the first Representative (*Beauftragter*) for Resettler Questions.
[554] Despite its earlier usage, the term "*Spätaussiedler*" was not legally codified until 1993 in response to the influx from the former Soviet Union.

million—that is, two-thirds of the total—originated in the former Soviet Union.[555] Although resettlers from Poland had accounted for 62% of all incoming *Aussiedler* from 1950 to 1987, they were eclipsed by their Russian counterparts in the 1990s.[556]

Adjustments to German resettler policies contributed to this shift. After the overwhelming influx of resettlers in the early 1990s, along with the westward migration of many former East Germans after the *Wende* in 1989, the German administration chose to revise its resettler law. Starting in 1993, newcomers needed to prove "discrimination or the outcome of earlier discrimination based on German ethnic heritage" in order to obtain resettler status and benefits. Because this condition was difficult for resettlers from Poland to meet, their numbers dropped off sharply in 1994. Whereas in 1990, almost 134,000 *Aussiedler* immigrated from Poland, by 1994, the number had fallen to 2,440; in 1998, there were fewer than 500.[557] Many people continued to immigrate from Poland, however. Consequently, it is likely that, after 1990, newcomers who would have previously been classified as "resettlers" were simply counted alongside "normal" migrants from Poland. Another major shift occurred a decade later in 2004 when Poland joined the EU and, soon thereafter in 2007, became part of the Schengen Zone. Since then, migration to Germany and other member states has normalized. Yet employment, rather than ethnic belonging, has been the primary reason for migration, particularly to the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Sweden.[558]

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[555] Bade and Oltmer, *Aussiedler*, 21.
[556] Bade and Oltmer, 24, point out that migration from Romania also increased significantly during the early 1990s, creating a sort of "snowball effect."
[557] Bade and Oltmer, *Aussiedler*, 22.
[558] Seasonal migration for work accounted for much migration from Poland during the 1990s and early 2000s. This seasonal labor migration peaked in 2004 when approximately 300,000 people moved between Poland and Germany for jobs. See Agnieszka Fihel and Marek Okolski, "Dimensions and Effects of Labour Migration to EU Countries: The Case of Poland," in *EU Labour Migration Since Enlargement: Trends, Impacts and Policies*, ed. Bela Galgoczi, Leschke, Janine, and Andrew Watt (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 185–210; Kathy Burrell, *Polish Migration to the UK in the "new" European Union: After 2004* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016); Nick Gill and Paula Bialski, "New Friends in New Places: Network Formation during the Migration Process among Poles in the UK," *Geoforum*,

Emigration from Poland thus witnessed substantial changes in 1987, 1993, and 2004. For the purposes of this study, however, the 1987 shift is the most noteworthy. From 1970, when the Warsaw Treaty and accompanying "Information" opened the way toward resettler migration, until the easing of passport restrictions in 1987, almost 400,000 resettlers departed Poland for West Germany. These emigrants, along with the "ethnic Germans" who remained behind, have been the focal point of this dissertation. Specifically, this project has investigated how resettler conceptions of "Germanness"—both in their own self-perceptions and in "official" Polish and West German policies and discourses —changed after the Warsaw Treaty made migration easier. By focusing on Upper Silesia, a borderland sandwiched between present-day Germany and postwar Poland, this dissertation has teased out the vicissitudes of ethnic rhetoric and national belonging among "perhaps the most famously indifferent population in twentieth-century Europe."[559]

First, this dissertation sheds light on the legacy of national indifference and the enduring malleability of ethnic identity. Although the borderlanders' liminality had turned their region into a target of both "soft politics" and violence in the twentieth century, the Upper Silesians also displayed agency, creativity, and ingenuity in asserting their own identities. In the 1970s and 1980s when opportunities in Poland were few, many indigenous residents leveraged their ambiguous ethnic backgrounds to achieve their emigration goals, overcoming clear limitations to their mobility. In the process, these Upper Silesians successfully navigated bureaucratic structures in both countries, appealing to Polish passport officials, West German politicians, and relatives living abroad. Some of them, like Kristian Staniek and the Osmenda brothers, even

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Themed Issue: New Feminist Political Ecologies, 42, no. 2 (March 1, 2011): 241–49. Zahra highlights how growing fears of an influx of Polish immigrants in France belied the relatively small number of Poles who migrated to the country by 2005. See Zahra, *The Great Departure*, 277–81.

[559] Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities," 99.

resorted to hunger strikes or occupying the West German embassy in Warsaw to bring attention to their situations; others opted for illegal emigration. That so many people managed successfully to exit a state that was considered "closed" during the Cold War is significant and reaffirms the combined power of individual tenacity.[560]

Secondly, in their process of emigrating and integrating, resettlers put forth a different interpretation of "Germanness." To many resettlers, one's "Germanness" was not simply an ethnicity to be claimed or an identity to be experienced; it was also a status to be leveraged. Moreover, through this leveraging, resettlers presented an alternative interpretation of Germanness itself. When people wrote on passport applications that they "felt German" or officially changed their nationality designation on visa paperwork, they rejected their membership in the Polish body politic and declared their connection to a separate national entity. In the process, these "latecomers" made clear that nationality was not just about eating *Spätzle* or celebrating German-language Mass. Rather, nationality was inextricably linked to their *rights*—the right to mobility, the right to organize their own cultural groups, the right to educational and employment opportunities not limited by their heritage. Certainly, the desire for these rights overlapped with economic factors; the desire for upward social mobility as well as spatial mobility motivated many resettlers from Poland. Yet by framing their Germanness in terms of ethnic belonging and "family reunification," specifically within the broader German *Volk,* resettlers placed themselves in direct contrast to others in Poland and "foreign" guest workers in West Germany.

[560] Although Stola does not draw the same conclusion about individual agency, he does clearly question Poland's "closed" status during the Cold War. Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*; Stola, "Opening a Non-Exit State: The Passport Policy of Communist Poland, 1949–1980."

Thirdly, by declaring their Germanness in significant numbers, resettlers questioned and undermined the Polish state's authority over them. By seeking to leave Poland and by framing their emigration demands in ethnic terms, resettlers implicitly contended that the Polish state was not qualified to represent its German-heritage population. Moreover, in declaring their German nationality, resettlers presented themselves as a suffering ethnic diaspora, one which the West German state was obligated to protect. The Federal Republic cast further doubt upon Poland's control over the Silesian population. Many West German actions—such as upholding the 1913 citizenship law, applying the *Bundesvertriebenengesetz* to resettlers, issuing the newcomers Expellee IDs, offering material aid in the May 1976 program, and advocating in illegal emigration cases—ultimately presented successful and potential resettlers as part of the wider (West) German national community. In drawing attention to systemic discrimination against Germans, along with the expected hardships under a Communist regime, resettlers and their advocates framed Poland as an "unfit mother" having lost the right to care for the Germans inside its borders. Thus, by simultaneous rejecting Poland and asserting their membership in the German nation, resettlers claimed a right to "return home" to the West German state.

Despite the rhetoric of "living as Germans among Germans," however, resettler integration proved difficult for many newcomers. Part of their struggles boiled down to culture shock, but their borderland heritage also played a role. Even as they applied for emigration based on their Germanness, many residents of Silesia considered themselves "neither German nor Pole," but *Silesian*.[561] Certainly, German identity persisted in some individual communities, but even this national affiliation coexisted alongside its regional roots. Through tracing the pre- and post-migration history of the Silesian population, this project has argued that their borderland

[561] This phrase comes from the title of Bjork's book. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*.

experiences directly affected their encounters in Poland and West Germany, hindering any sort of simple belonging within either state. For many Silesians, their borderland past held an ambivalent legacy. On the one hand, their history enabled resettlers to qualify for emigration as "Germans" in the first place; however, this same background also increased their value in the eyes of the Polish state, especially as West Germany became willing to pay for their emigration. These facts had clear, arguably traumatic consequences for many Silesians, especially those essentially held hostage by the Polish government after relatives had illegally emigrated. In sum, while Upper Silesia is a relatively small area, this region remained a key point of tension between Poland and West Germany during the Cold War. Although this friction did not manifest itself in ethnic violence, as it had earlier in the twentieth century, the struggle played out in the lives of individual Silesians.

The ethnic drama of Upper Silesia and the tug-of-war over its people reached a climax in the mid-1980s. The combination of Solidarity's international fame, the imposition and eventual lifting of martial law in 1983, and the ascent of the CDU majority government under Chancellor Kohl intensified West German interest in minority members living in Poland. Cracks in the façade of Communism led West Germans, particularly from expellee circles, to ramp up their activities in Poland. This western involvement further fueled stirrings among the German minority population. Kohl's government, and particularly the Foreign Office under Mertes, took an increasingly proactive approach, both to emigration and to supporting the German minority.

The continued importance of Poland and its remaining German residents is perhaps best exemplified by the events of November 9, 1989. As East Berliners were breaching the Berlin Wall, Kohl was in the middle of a diplomatic mission to Poland. Instead of immediately returning to West Germany, Kohl continued with his itinerary; on November 12, he celebrated a

joint German-Polish Mass with Polish Minister President Tadeusz Mazowiecki in Kreisau/Krzyżowa, a small Upper Silesian town. To this day, Germans in this area remember Kohl's visit as one of the key moments in the minority's history. Although the fall of the Berlin Wall largely overshadowed the collaborative Mass in terms of media coverage, the event eventually captured international attention, thanks to a homemade banner proclaiming, "Helmut, you are our Chancellor too" (*Helmut, Du bist auch unser Kanzler*).[562] In the decades since, the sign has endured as a "site of memory" among the German population of Upper Silesia.[563]

However, as important as the banner was for the minority as a whole, its significance becomes even clearer in the case of an Upper Silesian named Rudi Urban. Born in 1980, Urban grew up in a definitively "German" family. His native language is German, but he also spoke the Silesian dialect at home while growing up. Although the risk of being informed on (*bespitzelt*) for German usage had diminished by the 1980s, young Rudi understood that German was a language for the private sphere. "German works at home," Rudi remembers his father explaining, "but do not [speak German] out on the street." His father Richard, a locksmith by trade, joined the local German minority organization in 1986, after realizing that "the time was right to be able to do something." Having heard about the minority movement growing in Ratibor, Richard started inviting likeminded people to his restaurant (*Gaststätte*), where they spent evenings singing German songs from their schooldays and reciting poems. Only a child at the time, Rudi naturally "slipped into" this "closed society," effectively growing up alongside the German

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[562] For instance, the banner was referenced in this 1991 *Spiegel* article: "Wir wollen Anschluss," *Der Spiegel*, June 10, 1991.

[563] The notion that the banner became a "site of memory" is drawn from Piotr Przebyla's chapter on Annaberg; however, Katharina Schuchardt comes to a similar conclusion. Schuchard notes that the present-day German minority in Opole sees the sign as a "symbol of this time" that has "been passed along" within the minority. Katharina Schuchardt, *Zwischen Berufsfeld und Identitätsangebot: Zum Selbstverständnis der deutschen Minderheit im heutigen Opole/Oppeln* (Waxmann Verlag, 2018), 208; Piotr Przybyla, "Annaberg: die Heilige und der Vulkan," in *20 Deutsch-Polnische Erinnerungsorte*, ed. Hans-Henning Hahn et al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2018), 122.

minority movement in Gogolin, as similar groups continued to crop up in other towns across Upper Silesia.

Like many other families in Upper Silesia, the Urbans felt the draining effects of emigration. At some point in the late 1980s, Rudi's older brother left Poland illegally. Majoring in Dutch Studies, he compiled all his documentation, including proof of his German heritage, and signed up for a university-sponsored trip to the Netherlands. Shortly after crossing the inter-German border, Rudi's brother left the train and headed to the Unna-Massen transit camp to register as a German. He eventually settled in the Rhineland near Cologne, where he married a West German woman. Although young Rudi received permission to stay with him in early 1989, his older brother was unable to visit Poland; he would have been arrested immediately upon arrival.[564]

Despite the illegal emigration of his eldest son, Richard Urban continued to support the German minority group in his town. Learning of Kohl's upcoming visit to Poland, Richard decided to travel to Kreisau/Krzyżowa for the Mass, bringing young Rudi along. The elder Urban also planned to make a sign for the Chancellor, but he wanted to write something more original than "Gogolin greets you!" (*Gogolin grüsst Dich!*) According to his son, one evening before the trip Richard had the perfect idea. His banner would read, "Helmut, you are our Chancellor too." Soon after, he reached out to his neighbor, a Polish printer, to see if he would make the sign. The neighbor agreed, even though he admitted that he did not speak German. According to Rudi, Richard later humorously referred to this moment as an early instance of "German-Polish cooperation." Father and son traveled to Kreisau/Krzyżowa, where they

[564] Rudi Urban, interview by author. Opole, Poland. July 14, 2017.

unfurled the banner and revealed the slogan that still influences the German minority in Poland to this day.[565]

Today, Rudi is a recognized leader of the German minority in Upper Silesia. Having studied journalism and *Germanistik*, he is now the Editor in Chief of the *Wochenblatt*, the German-language newspaper in Upper Silesia. He also hosts a German radio show, organizes television programs, and works closely with politicians representing the German minority in Poland. When asked what Germanness means to him, Rudi says that being a German in Poland has become a normal, unquestioned part of his life. He has no trouble "participating in the Polish government, [being] a Polish citizen, [or singing] the Polish national anthem." Yet he notes that, when he sings the German national anthem, this is a "totally different thing;" it comes from "a different part of the body—more from the heart." For Rudi, it is no problem to embody a German ethnic or national identity, while also being a Polish citizen.[566]

Yet Rudi also recognizes that many Upper Silesians may not have such a self-evident identity. Especially for those whose families ceased speaking German after the war, the sense of Germanness may have disappeared. He considers this to be the case, especially among indigenous-born youth who never experienced discrimination as Upper Silesians; as a result, "they feel more clearly Polish." However, even though language plays a key role in ethnic-identity transmission, national heritage can still be passed along without it. Such is the case for Rudi's wife. Although she grew up with Polish as her native language and even today does not

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[565] According to Katharina Schuchardt, even today, a banner with this message is considered a "symbol of this time" and continues to be "perpetuated and passed along within the [German] minority" in Poland. Danuta Berlińska takes her analysis a step further, arguing that this moment was critical in the formation of an "ethnic electorate" (*ethnische Wählerschaft*). The emotional connection that the German minority feels with the CDU allegedly traces back to the Mass on November 12, 1989. See Schuchardt, *Zwischen Berufsfeld und Identitätsangebot*, 208; Danuta Berlińska, "Die deutsche Minderheit in Polen," in *Nachbarn auf Distanz: Polen und Deutsche, 1998-2004*, ed. Anna Wolff-Poweska and Dieter Bingen (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 262.

[566] Rudi Urban, interview by author. Opole, Poland. July 14, 2017.

speak German (though she does understand it), Rudi's wife has "never doubted" her German national identity. In fact, she jokes that she is the only "real" German in the extended Urban family; everyone else, including Rudi, has failed to renew their German identity cards; she alone has kept hers current. Despite not speaking German, Rudi's wife considers herself fully German. In Rudi's words, "We have not talked about [ethnicity] because it was easily clear […] We do not have to discuss who we are because we know who we are."[567]

Zuzanna Donath-Kasiura, one of Rudi's colleagues in the Social-Cultural Society of Germans in Opole Silesia (*Sozial-Kulturelle Gesellschaft der Deutschen im Oppelner Schlesien* or SKGD), has expressed similar feelings about her German ethnicity. Like Rudi's wife, she did not grow up speaking German; she first learned it as an adult. Yet even without the language, Zuzanna always knew she was German. All throughout her childhood, Zuzanna's family reminded her that she was "not a real Pole." Looking back, Zuzanna recognizes that their "traditions and customs, what [they] ate, the holidays [they] celebrated […] were always a little different." For her, being German means that she "accepts who [she] actually [is]." A true autochthon, Zuzanna can trace her roots back multiple generations in Upper Silesia, and her maternal grandfather was likely fluent in both German and Polish. Her insights into her German identity in Silesia today provide a fitting end point to this dissertation:

> "In order to shape the future, it is important that to accept and know who one is. I know who I am, and knowing that, I believe I can build my life better [because] I am standing solidly on the ground (*richtig auf dem Boden steht*). No one can come and tell me, you are not that or you are actually this. I alone can know that."[568]

[567] Rudi Urban, interview by author. Opole, Poland. July 14, 2017.
[568] Zuzanna Donath-Kasiura, interview by author. Opole, Poland. July 14, 2017.

Although it is impossible to say whether other Upper Silesians would echo Zuzanna's explanation of her German identity, her confident assertion of ethnicity brings to mind the long history of national indifference. For the better part of the twentieth century, Upper Silesians encountered powers seeking to nationalize them. During the Silesian plebiscite of 1921, after the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939, and with the "verification" processes of the postwar era, Upper Silesians were forced to choose a national side. Oftentimes, maintaining a neutral position was risky, if not impossible. As a result, many Upper Silesians molded themselves to fit into a particular national box. Yet despite the warfare, expulsions, and discrimination, a latent sense of national indifference remained; the strong regional affiliation persisted through it all. Even as Zuzanna describes her German ethnic identity, she draws on the language of national indifference, asserting that no one can tell her who she is; she "alone can know that."

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