2

Europe's Zero Hour

Population Transfers in the Aftermath of WWII

WWII was fought over race and ethnicity. Hitler planned to transform the amorphous ethnic quilt of Central and Eastern Europe into a homogeneous community of Germanic peoples. The Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia and Poland under the pretext of protecting ethnic Germans from persecution. They carried out genocide against Europe's Jews and Roma and forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands of Poles to make space for German settlers (Schechtman 1953, 152). Similarly, the Soviet Union used the pretext of protecting its "[Ukrainian and Belarusian] blood brothers" to occupy Poland's eastern borderlands in September 1939 (Frank 2017, 231). Stalin then ordered the deportation of ethnic groups suspected of disloyalty to the Soviet regime, including the Crimean Tatars, Russian Germans, Poles, Chechens, and Ingush, to remote regions in Siberia and Central Asia.

After Germany's defeat, demographic engineering in Central and Eastern Europe was continued by the Allied Powers. In 1945, they decided to resettle millions of people in order to align the ethnic composition of the population to the revised borders between Poland, Germany, and the Soviet Union. Population transfers were justified by the widespread belief that ethnic minorities were a source of political instability and that they could not be assimilated. The 'Big Three' – the Soviet Union, the United States, and Britain – agreed that the creation of ethnically homogeneous nation-states, achieved by "repatriating" ethnic outsiders, would safeguard European security. They considered forced resettlement "a legitimate tool of international as well as of domestic politics" (Frank 2017, 227).

The map of Europe changed dramatically as a result of these policies. Nearly twenty million people were uprooted from their homes, and at least two million died in the process. The share of ethnic minority groups within states decreased from 26 percent in 1930 to 7.2 percent in the 1960s due to a combination of genocide, border changes, and forced expulsions.[1]

[1] These proportions are estimated by Kosinski (1969, 393, 397). According to his analysis, of the ninety-four million people living in East-Central Europe in 1930, twenty-four million

In this chapter, I first review the decisions that led to postwar population transfers. This survey provides the historical background necessary for understanding the analyses presented in the rest of the book. I show that population transfers imposed a shared fate of expulsion on internally heterogeneous populations. I also show that the presumption that residents of Germany and Poland might share a singular attachment to the German or Polish nation did not reflect the complexity of identification on the ground.

Next, I explain why studying post-WWII population transfers can be useful for understanding the effects of mass displacement on political and economic development. The analysis of migration's economic and political consequences is challenging because much of the time, migrants sort into specific destinations on the basis of economic opportunities and the presence of other migrant communities. As a result, the size and composition of migrant population in a given locality is correlated with its economic potential and political openness to migration. Furthermore, individuals who choose to migrate differ from those who stay in terms of their economic profile, social capital, and political preferences. Immigrants who do not succeed economically, or fail to assimilate, often return home, introducing yet another form of selection. This selection could be positive, when individuals with above-average skill levels in their sending regions are more likely to emigrate or stay abroad, or negative, when the opposite occurs. This kind of selective in- and out-migration makes the effects of migration challenging to interpret.

In the case of Poland and Germany, these inferential problems are mitigated. The majority of Poles and Germans did not select into migration. It was the shift in borders that determined who was uprooted and who was not. Voluntary settlers from central and eastern Polish voivodeships (*województwa*) were an exception; nonetheless, even this group included a significant proportion of individuals whose decision to migrate after 1945 was precipitated by forcible displacement during the Nazi occupation. Thus, most migrants represented a broad cross-section of society in their sending regions. Even more significantly, migrants had little agency in choosing where to settle at their destination. They were allocated to specific localities based on the availability of housing at their time of arrival. The assignment process was largely independent of the future economic prospects of destination communities and of migrants' characteristics and preexisting networks. Once the initial assignment had been made, sorting was limited: Forced migrants' former homes were now located in foreign states whose citizenship they did not possess; within their new borders, moreover, the communist authorities and Western occupation governments restricted relocation.

(26 percent) belonged to ethnic minority groups. By the 1960s, the number and proportion of ethnic minorities had declined to 7.1 million (7.2 percent). The biggest shifts resulted from the Holocaust and the expulsion of the German minority from Czechoslovakia.

These features of postwar population transfers in Poland and Germany – minimal selection into migration and little control over destination settlements – lie at the heart of my research design in this book. They allow me to estimate the causal effect of migration and resulting cultural diversity on community-level social and economic development after accounting for factors that influenced assignment of migrants. Below, I provide support for these claims using the historical record. Formal tests are presented in the relevant chapters.

PEACE SETTLEMENT AT POTSDAM AND POPULATION TRANSFERS

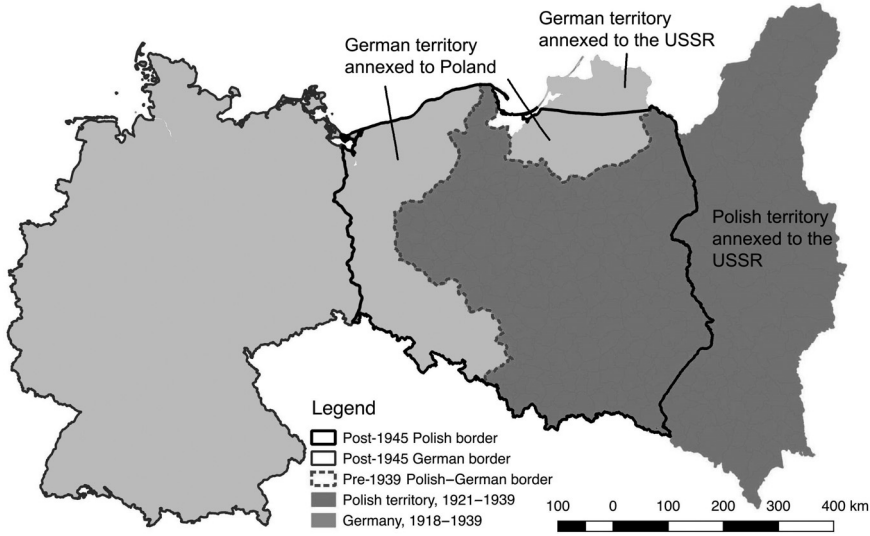
Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš was among the earliest advocates of the homogenization of European states by means of population transfers (Ahonen et al. 2008, 62). He began with moderate plans to reduce the size of German and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia through compact settlement and territorial adjustments. After Germany invaded the Soviet Union, his aims grew more radical.[2] Beneš blamed the war on "Germany as a people and state" and alleged that national minorities, the German one especially, were "a real thorn in the side of individual nations" (Beneš 1942, 230, 235). He pushed for large-scale population transfers as a way to prevent future conflict. As the war dragged on, the Allied Powers became convinced that homogenizing the border areas was necessary for securing peace (Kittel and Möller 2006; Cattaruza 2010).

Mass resettlement of some ethnicities seemed all but inevitable after the Great Powers reached an agreement on redrawing Europe's borders. At the Tehran Conference (Nov. 28–Dec. 1, 1943), Joseph Stalin used the large proportion of Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Belarusian populations in Poland's eastern territories occupied by the Red Army in September 1939 as a justification for the permanent annexation of Poland's prewar eastern territories, at 179,000 km² (69,000 mi²) and 45 percent of the country's prewar territory.[3] This shift of Poland's eastern border would precipitate the "voluntary" population exchanges between Poland and the Soviet republics of Belarus, Ukraine, and Lithuania in 1944–46.

The Polish government objected to the loss of its eastern borderlands, known as *Kresy*, which included the major cultural centers of Wilno (Vilnius) and Lwów (Lviv). The Western Allies also initially resisted the Soviet annexation, but they were unable to challenge Stalin over the issue (Lowe 2012, 220). Instead, they opted to extend Polish territory westward to the

[2] In September 1938, after learning that Neville Chamberlain was meeting Hitler in Munich, Beneš made a secret proposal to Hitler, hoping to prevent a deal between the British and the Germans. He offered 6,000 km² of Czechoslovak territory in exchange for the forced transfer of up to two million Sudeten Germans to the Third Reich, but Hitler did not respond. See Hauner (2009).

[3] Today, these territories are part of sovereign Belarus, Ukraine, and Lithuania.



Map 2.1 Changes in the borders of Poland and Germany after WWII.

Oder and Neisse rivers. As Churchill explained on the first day of the Tehran conference, "Poland might move westwards, like soldiers taking two steps 'left close.' If Poland trod on some German toes, that could not be helped …" (Churchill 1948, 733). The redrawing of the Polish–German border was justified on geopolitical grounds; by annexing the bedrock of Prussian militarism, the Allied Powers hoped to prevent future German aggression. It was also justified on moral grounds, to compensate Poland for its war damages (Blusiewicz 2015).

The status of Poland was discussed again at the Yalta Conference in February 1945. With the Red Army just 65 km (40 mi) from Berlin, the three leaders reaffirmed that the USSR would retain Poland's eastern borderlands and that Poland would receive parts of Germany in compensation (101,000 km², or 39,000 mi²), including the provinces of Pomerania, East Brandenburg, and Lower and Upper Silesia. Poland would also be awarded the former Free City of Danzig (Gdańsk) and most of East Prussia, as shown in Map 2.1. The Soviet Union kept for itself the northernmost territories around the port of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad). The Allies further agreed that eleven million Germans, who had lived in the annexed territories, would be "repatriated" to reconstituted Germany. The decision to transfer this population was reached with little deliberation and virtually no dissenting opinions (Frank 2017, 233).

The borders were confirmed at the 1945 Potsdam Conference (July 17–Aug. 2, 1945), where Stalin, Roosevelt's successor Harry Truman, and Churchill (succeeded on July 28 by Clement Attlee) convened for one last time. The Allies intended to finalize the borders by signing a peace treaty with Germany. However, due to the breakdown of relations between Moscow and the West,

the signing of such a treaty was delayed until 1990. Article XIII of the Potsdam Agreement authorized the "orderly and humane" transfer of Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary (Schechtman 1953). German minorities in Romania, Yugoslavia, the Baltic States, and other European countries were not included in the Potsdam settlement. Nonetheless, they met a similar fate.

The Allies further agreed to divide Germany and Austria into four occupation zones, administered by the Soviet, British, US, and French military administrations. A joint Allied Control Council was established to deal with matters affecting the country as a whole, with a focus on the "five Ds": demilitarization, denazification, democratization, decentralization, and deindustrialization. In addition, the Allies worked out a compromise on German reparations and created a Council of Foreign Ministers, which counted membership from the Big Three, plus China and France, and was tasked with drafting the peace treaties with Italy, Hungary, Romania, Finland, and Bulgaria.

The justification for mass population transfers derived, in part, from the unhappy experience with national minorities during the interwar period and from the widespread primordialist understanding of national identity among policymakers. As the British foreign secretary Anthony Eden explained in an off-the-record interview in 1943, "[Minorities] are a constant source of grievances and friction and they will always be used by some other Power to ferment trouble" (quoted in Frank (2017, 233)). In August 1944, the European Advisory Commission concluded that "German minorities became the advance guard of National Socialist penetration and the states which they helped to deliver to Hitler have a well-founded grievance against them. Their transfer to Germany would probably contribute to the tranquility of the countries concerned" (quoted in Schraut (2000, 116)). The removal of some groups justified the subsequent removal of others. In particular, the expulsion of the German minority from Hungary was premised on the need to make space for the Hungarian minority that had been expelled by the Czechoslovak government. Similarly, the need to accommodate Poles arriving from the territory annexed by the Soviet Union was invoked as a reason to expel the Germans living east of the Oder-Neisse line.

Moscow was well-acquainted with mass resettlement policy, having recently deported entire populations on the basis of nationality or for economic expediency (Lowe 2012, 221). The Soviet government exhibited little concern for the potential human toll. In Hungary, where the national government was reluctant to deport the German community, Soviet pressure was instrumental in starting the transfers (Kertesz 1953). When Beneš first mentioned the expulsion of then 3.5 million Germans from Poland in 1943, Russia's Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov reacted with "That's nothing. That's easy" (quoted in Frank (2017, 261)). At pains to distinguish their approach to mass resettlement from that of the Soviet government (Frank 2017, 257), Western

allies nevertheless agreed that population transfers were the only solution on the table.

There were multiple historical precedents for such policies. The British and US governments drew inspiration from the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which sanctioned the transfer of 1.5 million Orthodox peasants from Turkey to Greece and of over 350,000 Muslims from Greece to Turkey. This population exchange exemplified a technocratic approach to dealing with ethnic minorities that was buttressed by the primordialist conviction that ethno-nationalist attachments were innate and immutable (Özsu 2015).

For Churchill, the solution embodied by the Greco-Turkish population exchange held the promise of dealing with German aggression once and for all. In a speech to the British House of Commons on December 15, 1944, he proclaimed: "For expulsion is the method which, so far as we have been able to see, will be the most satisfactory and lasting. There will be no mixture of populations to cause endless trouble as in Alsace-Lorraine. A clean sweep will be made. I am not alarmed at the prospect of the disentanglement of population, nor am I alarmed by these large transferences, which are more possible than they were before through modern conditions" (quoted in Naimark (2001, 110)). Churchill put his thoughts in even more colorful terms at Yalta, claiming that "it would be a pity to stuff the Polish goose so full of German food that it got indigestion" (Lowe 2012, 231, ft. 4). US President Franklin Roosevelt drew similar lessons from the Greco-Turkish population exchange, though he avoided the issue in public.

Throughout this period, the Polish and Czechoslovak governments lobbied the US, the UK, and the USSR to authorize the removal of the German minority within their borders. From the perspective of both the Polish government in exile and the communist Lublin Committee, the German population presented a threat to Poland's territorial integrity and statehood (Naimark 2001, 136–37). A homogeneous Polish nation, by contrast, would be easier to manage. On September 1, 1945, the Polish Minister of Industry Hilary Minc, of the Polish Workers Party, expressed no qualms about the removal of millions of Germans as he discussed Poland's new territories:

> We acquired territory with ready highroads, railway lines, and waterways, with towns waiting for settlers to come, with industry which can be put into service, with mines, and at the same time with remnants of a German population which we have the moral and international right to liquidate in such time and by such means that we shall deem proper. (Quoted in Bouscaren (1963, 49))

THE UPROOTING OF GERMANS

Defining the German Community

But who counted as German, exactly? On the eve of WWII, many communities of German descent did not speak German; many German speakers were

not German citizens either. From the twelfth century onward, multiple waves of emigration from the multiethnic Holy Roman Empire to the fertile and underpopulated regions of Central and Eastern Europe created pockets of Germandom across Central and Eastern Europe. Over the course of centuries, many of these German settlers intermarried with the native population, joined the ranks of native economic and political elites, and retained little but a memory of their Germanic origins. Even within the borders of the pre-1937 German state, ethnically mixed, multilingual, and nationally indifferent communities thrived in some regions, defying official census categories and nationalizing policies. This section briefly reviews the changing meaning of "Germanness" as an ethnic and political category.

The ethnocultural conception of German nationhood first appeared in the early nineteenth century, in response to the civic nationalism developing in France. In his address to the German nation, written in French-occupied Berlin in 1808, Johann Gottlieb Fichte envisioned the German nation as a living entity bound together through a shared language. Romantic Nationalists such as Fichte reimagined the speakers of various German dialects as one German *Volk* held together by shared language and history. The Romantic movement provided a blueprint for unifying populations divided by region, class, religion, and – not least – international borders, as one national community. However, Romantic ideas did not speak to the daily struggles of the average peasant, who in fact remained "nationally indifferent" and continued to have stronger local and religious allegiances (Zahra 2010). Nor did Romantic ideas influence early legislation establishing the boundaries of the German polity.

In the early 1800s, when modern state citizenship was introduced, descent was merely one of several avenues to citizenship rights, and there was no mention of ethnolinguistic traits whatsoever. In both the Germanic Confederation and the German Empire, citizenship laws lay within the jurisdiction of individual states (*Länder*). Each state sought to regulate the entry of foreigners, understood as citizens of another German state rather than as non-Germans, to regulate access to poor relief (Fahrmeir 1997, 728). A typical state constitution from the 1820s granted citizenship by birth (inherited from the father), by naturalization, by marriage to a male citizen, and by employment in civil service (Fahrmeir 1997, 732). Emigration entailed the loss of citizenship, even for those who preserved their native tongue and descended from eminent local families.[4]

After German unification in 1871, states remained in charge of regulating citizenship, thereby making citizenship in the Empire (*Reichsangehörigkeit*) dependent on citizenship in each constituent state (*Landesangehörigkeit*) (Brubaker 1992, 12). Citizens of one state within the empire could apply for a simplified form of naturalization in another state, but their passports still

[4] Citizenship received only a brief treatment in state constitutions, which instead focused on the political rights of *Staatsbürger*, a subcategory of citizens who were male, Christian, of independent means, and without a criminal record.

identified them as Prussian, Bavarian, Hessian, Saxon, and so on (Fahrmeir 1997, 751). National identity thus remained secondary to state or even substate (regional) identities. In continuity with the earlier laws, citizenship extended to all ethnic groups within state borders, including Poles in eastern Prussia, Danes in North Schleswig, and newly emancipated Jews throughout the empire. The population of German descent living abroad was not included (Brubaker 1992, 13). As before, citizenship was lost following a decade of living abroad.[5] That is, even first-generation emigrants were no longer considered German citizens.

To be sure, the descent-based and ethnic understanding of German identity retained its appeal. As the German Empire confronted waves of Polish and Jewish immigrants from the East, state authorities increasingly relied on ethnic and descent-based attributes, discriminating against Poles and Jews in the provision of schooling, military service, and politics. The ethnocultural ideal of Germanness found a powerful advocate in the Pan-German League, founded in 1891. The League submitted several unsuccessful proposals to restrict the naturalization of Slavs and Jews and to allow Germans living abroad to retain citizenship status (Sammartino 2010, 23). Its initiatives finally bore fruit in the imperialist and xenophobic climate that pervaded Germany on the eve of WWI. The 1913 nationality law grounded German citizenship in the descent (*jus sanguinis*) principle and removed the requirement of consular registration for Germans residing abroad. The law enabled fathers of German descent to transmit citizenship to their offspring in perpetuity, no matter their ethnic heritage (Sammartino 2010, 24). Individuals of German descent who had lost their citizenship acquired the opportunity to naturalize more easily. The 1913 law thus extended German nationhood beyond Germany's borders, in a marked departure from earlier practice. As the German Empire went to war, Germans living abroad were perceived as an opportunity to expand imperial territory. The Interior Ministry drafted plans for supporting the "return migration" of German colonists into the expanded German lands and recognized ethnic Germans inside Russia as in need of state support (Sammartino 2010, 37–44).

After Germany lost the war and its territory shrank, the promises made to Germans living abroad became impossible to fulfill. Although the 1919 Weimar Constitution reaffirmed the principles of nationality delineated in the 1913 citizenship law, the return of German minorities from abroad as well as of German citizens from the imperial territories returned to Poland under the Versailles agreement was discouraged.

The possibilities open to individuals of German descent changed under National Socialism. The Nazis sought to bring Germans from Eastern Europe

[5] After 1871, it was possible to register with a German consulate and retain one's citizenship for a longer period.

"back into the Reich" as well as to extend the Reich's borders to incorporate Germans residing in Central and Eastern Europe. They coined the new term *Volksdeutsche* both to incorporate these heterogeneous populations into the new *Volksgemeinschaft* and to justify their military objectives. Following the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, Austrians were granted Reich citizenship. Sudeten Germans became Reich citizens following the annexation of Sudetenland in the same year. Germans living in Poland, and virtually all citizens of the Free City of Danzig (Gdańsk), became Reich citizens after September 1939.

No drop of "German blood" was to be lost. Nazi officials were willing to overlook considerable linguistic and cultural differences among the non-Jewish population in order to expand the size of the German community in the occupied territories and to fill the ranks of the Wehrmacht and the labor force, once manpower shortages began to intensify. They encouraged Czechs, Poles, and Slovenes with distant German ancestry to apply for Reich citizenship, provided they had no Jewish roots. These individuals were expected to assimilate over time. Speaking German was not required. For example, the Nazis classified Kashubians and Silesians, ethnic groups within postwar Poland, as *eigensprachige Kulturdeutsche*, or "non-German-speaking Germans united with the German nation through the shared German culture" (Kamusella 2004, 23).

To deal with the resulting ambiguity of what constituted "Germanness," the Nazis devised multiple categorizations. From 1940 onward, the German People's Lists (*Deutsche Volksliste*) divided the inhabitants of occupied territories into four categories: (1) *Volksdeutsche* at the top of the hierarchy; (2) *Deutschstämmige* (of German Descent); (3) *Eigendeutschte* (voluntarily Germanized); and (4) *Rückgedeutschte* ("forcibly Germanized"), applied to racially valuable individuals who resisted Germanization. Some individuals who could pass as German signed up for opportunistic reasons, because being classified as *Volksdeutsch* ensured privileged treatment during the occupation. Others signed up to avoid repression: Individuals who resisted being put on the *Volksliste* could be sent to concentration camps, while their children were taken away for forcible Germanization. Ethnic Poles from German-occupied Silesia were tacitly encouraged to register on the *Volksliste* by the Polish government-in-exile, keen to preserve the Polish population in that region. The total number of registrants on the German People's Lists reached 2.76 million people, with nearly two-thirds in categories 3 and 4 (Broszat 1961, 134).

In addition to relying on the *Volksdeutsche* to administer regions under military occupation, the Nazis encouraged their resettlement into the territories annexed into the Reich in 1939. By 1944, some 900,000 *Volksdeutsche* from the Baltic States, Yugoslavia, and Romania were resettled in this way. Resettlement policies were again applied broadly, producing linguistically mixed settlements. In reaction to this overly inclusive approach, the SS officers in the Warthegau complained that the incoming German settlers spoke Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian instead of German (Bergen 1994, 573).

The Complexity of Identification on the Ground

It is this expansive, descent-based conception of the German nation that would guide postwar expulsions – not only from the German territory that had been transferred to Poland and the Soviet Union but also from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, and the USSR. Building on the Nazi Germanization policies, postwar transfers imposed a shared misfortune on communities that had little in common until the rise of Hitler and had until then identified with their locality, region, or confession.

Some of the largest "nationally indifferent" communities, to use the concept proposed by Zahra (2008) to describe individuals who resisted national identification, were located in the Sudetenland, Upper Silesia, and East Prussia.[6]

On the eve of WWII, the Sudetenland was home to three million Germans who settled in this mountainous region in medieval times. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the majority of the Sudetenland's population spoke both Czech and German. To encourage bilingualism, local families customarily exchanged their children for the summer or school year (*Kindertausch-handl*) (Glassheim 2016, Ch. 1). However, in the final years of the Habsburg empire, activists on both Czechoslovak and German sides worked hard to undercut such practices and establish linguistic separation. They marked the landscape with nationalist symbols and founded ethnic associations to conjure up national loyalties. Their efforts intensified following the creation of independent Czechoslovakia. To inflate the number of Czechoslovaks, the new government forcibly reclassified some Germans as Czechs and imposed fines for declaring a "false" nationality on the census (Zahra 2008). German speakers responded to such measures by rallying around the Sudeten German identity and seeking support from Germany. Their discontent with the Czechoslovak government peaked during the Great Depression, as they blamed their economic woes on the state and voted for the Sudeten German Party (*Sudetendeutsche Partei*), which campaigned for German annexation of the Sudetenland and was secretly funded by the Third Reich. After the war, the Sudeten Germans, alongside all those registered in the German National Lists, were subjected to expulsion.

Even the population that had lived within Germany's pre-1937 borders did not always identify with the German nation nor, indeed, speak German. National loyalties were particularly ambiguous in Upper Silesia, where confessional identity predominated (Jarząbek 2009, 17). Religion "provided both the ideological framework and the social space for Upper Silesia to navigate between German and Polish orientations" (Bjork 2008, 18). Most Silesians were bilingual in Polish and German or spoke the Silesian dialect. In the 1921 plebiscite, organized to determine the future of Silesia, in line with

[6] National indifference was also common in Poland's eastern borderlands, discussed in the next section.

the principle of national self-determination, 60 percent of Silesians supported remaining in Germany. Some 25 percent of Polish speakers identified with the German state, confounding ethnonationalist predictions. As pro-German Reverend Paul Nieborowski quipped, the "Polish-speaking population of Upper Silesia expressed many times that they wish to live in a Catholic way, speak Polish, and stay in the German fatherland" (quoted in Jarząbek (2009, 28)). In the end, the plebiscite failed to produce a clear mandate for the region's future, and the League of Nations proposed an alternative solution, namely, dividing the industrial region of Silesia in half. During the Nazi occupation, the Polish part of Upper Silesia was subjected to intensive Germanization. About 90 percent of its residents were put on the German People's Lists (*Volksliste*) and conscripted into the German army. After the war, Silesians placed on the *Volksliste* had to prove their Polish roots in order to avoid expulsion.

Ethnoreligious boundaries were similarly ambiguous in East Prussia. This region was home to some half a million Masurians, a Protestant community that spoke the Polish language. Commenting on the apparent contradiction, Richard Blanke (2001) described this group as "Polish-speaking Germans." In the 1920 plebiscite, 99 percent of Masurians voted to remain part of Germany rather than Catholic Poland, frustrating Polish Catholic nationalists who subsidized Polish newspapers, savings banks, and cultural activities in the region. In the 1930s, Masurians overwhelmingly supported the NSDAP. However, after the region was transferred to Poland, many Masurians applied for Polish citizenship, seeking to avoid expulsion.

In sum, Germans uprooted at the end of WWII held multiple identities and came from regions with complex histories of nation-building. Paradoxically, the decision to expel them into a territorially reduced Germany after 1945 "reinforced and powerfully legitimized" the conception of the German race promoted by the Nazis, which incorporated all individuals of German descent no matter their language, religion, and customs (Brubaker 1992, 168–69).

The Process of Uprooting

Who left home and when, was largely determined by three factors: (1) the advance of the Red Army across Europe; (2) proximity to populations victimized by Nazi Germany during the war; and (3) the arbitrary decisions of local authorities, who were left in charge of deciding who counted as German.

The first wave of refugees from Central and Eastern Europe fled the advancing Red Army in late 1943 and early 1944. At that time, the Wehrmacht evacuated several hundred thousand civilians from the southern Soviet Union, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Slovakia. By contrast, in the core German territories that belonged to the pre-1937 Reich, organized evacuations of civilians were rare because Nazi leaders did not want to admit military defeat. Many Germans residing in these areas, as in the territories of the pre-1937 Reich, fled independently, often in horse-drawn vehicles, at the start of the

Vistula–Oder offensive in January 1945. The years of Nazi propaganda about Soviet savagery and rumors of atrocities in localities occupied by the Red Army contributed to their flight (Ahonen et al. 2008, 135). It is estimated that some six million people left Germany's eastern provinces at this time, including 2.4 million who were evacuated by sea from the Baltic ports (Connor 2007, 13). Among them were around 9,600 refugees who boarded the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, the ship sunk by the USSR and immortalized by Günter Grass in his novel *Krebsgang*. All of these refugees intended to return home when hostilities subsided, unaware of the border changes planned by the Allied Powers.

Once Germany retreated, those Germans who had remained in the areas previously controlled by the Nazis were attacked by the victimized local population. Many were marched toward the German and Austrian borders and abandoned on the other side. The Polish and Czech governments supported these so-called "wild expulsions" and sent millions of settlers to expropriate German property in an attempt to force the Allies' hand at Potsdam. The army or paramilitary units would enter German villages and order the local population to vacate their homes in half an hour or less. Germans caught in the "wild expulsions" brought little with them and were often robbed of the few belongings they had along the way. Scholars estimate that 1.2 million Germans, including 400,000 from the territories incorporated into Poland and 800,000 from Sudetenland, were expelled in this way (Ahonen et al., 2008, 139; Glassheim, 2016, 43). "Wild expulsions" were prevented only in areas occupied by US troops, such as western Czechoslovakia.

Article XIII of the Potsdam Agreement, signed on August 2, 1945, called for the suspension of the expulsions until the appropriate infrastructure could be created to transport and settle the expellees. Nevertheless, little changed in areas controlled by the Red Army, where "wild expulsions" continued until December 1945. To evade accountability, the Polish and Czechoslovak governments outsourced the task to local authorities and military units.

In November 1945, the Allies released a plan for the "transfer" of the remaining six million Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary into the Soviet, British, and American occupation zones.[7] Potsdam-sanctioned expulsions began between January and February of 1946. They did not look much different from the "wild expulsions" described earlier. As before, military and police units would round up Germans from either their homes or from the labor camps and detention centers where they were held. Eventually, the expellees would be marched to collection points and sent off to specific occupation zones located in Germany.

In Hungary, where no Germans had been expelled prior to the Potsdam provisions, transfers took place under somewhat better conditions. Still, the

[7] The French were not part of the Potsdam agreement and refused to admit expellees into their occupation zone.

procedures were similarly inhumane. As a rule, German settlements were encircled at night in order to prevent the residents from escaping; in the morning, the population was transported to an internment camp, where they were examined by medics and then sent off to the US occupation zone in Germany by train (Apor 2004, 40). On paper, the expulsions were limited to individuals who declared themselves to be German in the 1941 census, re-Germanized their Hungarian names, or joined the Nazi organizations. New exemptions were introduced over time as the logistical problems mounted. On June 1, 1946, the United States closed its occupation zone to arrivals from Hungary, creating backlogs. From 1947 until June 1948, German expellees were sent to the Russian occupation zone. In March 1950, the Hungarian government reversed its policies entirely, decreeing that expelled German inhabitants could return and would be guaranteed equal rights upon doing so.

How this final stage of expulsions proceeded depended on the local authorities, who were in charge of deciding not only who was German but also who was economically useful and to what degree. As a rule, the groups considered to be the least economically productive, including the old, the sick, and women and children, were expelled first. The able-bodied were sometimes held back until the end, as they could be employed to clear the rubble and perform other unpleasant tasks. Skilled workers in select occupations were retained, to facilitate the resumption of economic activity. Two exceptions to this rule are worthy of mention. In Czechoslovakia, Germans who had fought against the Nazis were permitted to stay (Kučera 1992). Conversely, the wealthy were forced out early from Hungary so that their property could be nationalized and redistributed (Kertesz 1953).

In Poland, approximately one million of the prewar inhabitants of the German provinces of East Prussia and Upper Silesia, subsumed under the term autochthones (*autochtoni*), remained in the country after signing declarations of loyalty. This autochthonous population was diverse and comprised several separate ethnic groups, including Catholic Kashubians in the northwest; Protestant Mazurians and Catholic Warmiaks in the north; and Catholic Silesians in the southwest. These were the same groups that the Nazi officials had viewed as German just a few years prior.

The Polish government viewed the autochthones as essential for replenishing population losses and as a justification for Polish claims on the historically German region. In 1946, in his position as minister of the newly acquired territory, Władysław Gomułka referred to the locals as "the living proof of the Polishness of the Recovered Lands." When discussing verification criteria in March 1946, he went so far as to argue that "even those who over the years succumbed to Germanization should be restored to Poland" (Kulczycki 2016, 170, 175). At the same time, Polish authorities feared German sabotage and suspected that the autochthones were staying for economic reasons. The resulting policy was inconsistent across localities and time periods: In numerous instances, autochthones of Polish descent were expelled, while many

German-speaking autochthones were prevented from leaving against their will (Stola 2010, 67).

The autochthones' ties to Poland were verified by a committee that typically included: a local governor or foreman (as chairman); two representatives of the People's Council; autochthones who had already proven their allegiance to Poland; representatives of the Polish Western Union (*Polski Związek Zachodni, PZZ*), an anti-German patriotic organization; a Catholic priest; a teacher; a head of the District Office of Public Safety (*Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego*); and a head of the district police station (*Milicja Obywatelska*) (Łach 1978, 64). As a rule, identification with the German nation as well as membership in the Nazi party or affiliated organizations was sufficient to disqualify one's claim to Polish citizenship. Beyond this, the criteria were vague. Language, religion, and self-identification were all considered. Yet, the various regional authorities often disagreed on what exactly constituted Polishness. For example, the new governor of Gdańsk emphasized self-identification as the most important criterion, citing the "insufficient clarity" of the 1946 directive on nationality issued by the Polish Ministry for the Recovered Territories (*Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych, MZO*) (Kulczycki 2016, 176). By contrast, the governor of Szczecin argued that the majority of the population in his province "no longer felt any link with Polishness" and should, therefore, be removed to Germany (Kulczycki 2016, 178). Families were generally kept together; so, the German spouse of a Pole could remain in Poland after "commit[ting] in writing to maintain loyalty to the Polish nation and state and to raise the children in a Polish spirit" (Kulczycki 2016, 177).

The verification process, much like the population transfers, operated under the assumption that every individual held an enduring, well-defined national identity. Yet, as noted earlier, the majority of the locals who remained in the territories acquired from Germany were neither Polish nor German, and they preferred religious or regional identification, at least before they were forced to choose by the Nazi government. Upon learning about the hunger and discrimination faced by the expellees in defeated Germany, they made every effort to secure Polish citizenship for themselves (Sakson 1998, 214). A few years later, many autochthones would have a change of heart and seek to emigrate.

The transfers were largely concluded by 1948. Altogether, some 12.5 million ethnic Germans were uprooted from their homes between 1944 and 1951. At least 600,000, and possibly as many as 1.5 million, died en route (Connor 2007, 15). At the end of the 1940s, only 125,000 to 431,000 Germans still lived in Poland; 200,000 remained in Czechoslovakia, according to these countries' official statistics (Ahonen et al. 2008, 95). In Hungary, only 22,445 individuals declared German nationality in the 1949 census (Apor 2004, 43). If we are to go by the numbers, it is fair to say that the territories annexed from Germany, along with the Czechoslovak Sudetenland, experienced a near-complete population turnover.

THE UPROOTING OF POLES

WWII and subsequent border changes also resulted in the forced and voluntary migration of approximately five million Polish citizens. This was a heterogeneous group, originating from three former imperial partitions of Poland and also from abroad.

In 1795, the multiethnic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was divided between the German, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian empires. The empires pursued divergent policies toward the populations under their control. The Austro-Hungarian empire offered the most permissive environment for nurturing Polish nationalism. Poles living under Habsburg rule practiced Catholicism freely, had access to education in the Polish language, and enjoyed regional self-governance. The German and Russian empires suppressed Catholicism and Polish national identity. The brief period of nation-building following the creation of independent Poland in 1918 proved insufficient for erasing cultural differences between Poles from different imperial partitions. Indeed, the cultural imprint of different empires remains visible to this day, despite the massive population movements unleashed by WWII (Grosfeld and Zhuravskaya 2015; Zarycki 2015; Charnysh and Peisakhin 2022). Interwar Poland also failed to integrate its sizable ethnic minorities, which comprised 35 percent of the population in 1931 – a failure that would prove costly during the war when some of the ill-treated groups would collaborate with the Nazi and Soviet occupiers.

Divergent interpretations of Polish history under the control of foreign empires contributed to the development of two opposing conceptions of Polish national identity: as an ethnocultural community sharing one language and religion and as a political community sharing one state. These conceptions were articulated best by the prominent political thinkers Marshall Józef Piłsudski, on the left, and Roman Dmowski, on the right. Piłsudski glorified Poland's past as the multiethnic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795) and embraced ethnic minorities as part of the Polish nation. Dmowski, by contrast, perceived Poland's diversity as its Achilles' heel. He condemned the religious tolerance that attracted a large Jewish population to the Commonwealth and argued that the future belonged to the ethnically homogeneous Polish nation (Dabrowski 2011). The Piłsudski camp ruled independent Poland between 1926 and 1935, but many of its policies were adopted in reaction to the National Democrats, its main competitor. After the war, it was Dmowski's vision that triumphed. Formerly bitter enemies, Polish communists and surviving members of the interwar Endecja movement would collaborate in creating an ethnically homogeneous Polish state by expelling the remaining German and Ukrainian minorities and inventing the myth of Polish roots in the newly acquired German territories (Curp 2006).

Repatriation from Kresy

After the westward shift of Polish borders, some 2.2 to 2.7 million prewar Polish citizens wound up outside of their home country. The resettlement of this population into the reconstituted Poland was governed by agreements signed between the Soviet-installed Polish Committee of National Liberation and the governments of the Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) in September 1944.[8] The agreements covered "all Poles and Jews who were Polish citizens until 17 September 1939 . . . and want[ed] to resettle in the territory of Poland," that is, they did not include Polish citizens of Ukrainian, Belarusian, or Lithuanian ethnicity. The agreements with Ukraine and Belarus restricted the "evacuation" to the territory that had belonged to Poland in 1939.

The deadlines set for repatriation were short and, as it turned out, unrealistic. It was determined that registration of potential migrants would take place from October 1 to December 31, 1944. The resettlement was to be completed during the period from December 1, 1944, to April 1, 1945 (Czerniakiewicz 1987, 33). This meant that Poles were supposed to leave before the status of German territory east of the Oder–Neisse line was finalized (Ther 1996, 789).

Determining who counted as Polish in the eastern borderlands was even more complicated than separating Germans from Poles in Upper Silesia and Eastern Prussia. One of the reasons for ethnic fluidity and "national indifference" in the borderlands was that this region had been part of independent Poland for just under two decades. Prior to 1918, the area had been split between the Habsburg and Russian empires, with opportunities for nation-building particularly limited in the Russian partition. As a result, the population outside major cities was ethnically mixed, and identities were ambiguous. The population "made up a continuum of cultures that stood literally and figuratively on the border between Poland, Ukraine, and Russia" (Brown 2005, 40).

Two imperfect heuristics have been used to distinguish Poles from other ethnic groups in the interwar period: language and religion. According to the 1931 Polish census, Polish speakers in the annexed region numbered 3.6 million, accounting for 34 percent of the population, while Catholics totaled 3.1 million, or 29 percent of the population. Neither indicator accurately mapped onto national loyalties, however. In the countryside, local residents often claimed that they belonged to the "Catholic nationality" or that they were simply peasants. In the Polesie region, annexed to the Belarusian SSR, some 60 percent of residents identified themselves in the 1931 Polish census as *tutejsi*, or "people from here." The ethnic divide sometimes overlapped with social class, with Polish-speaking Catholic landlords wielding authority over a Ukrainian and Belarusian Orthodox peasantry. Lamenting the difficulties in

[8] The Polish government-in-exile opposed the agreements and continued to advocate with the Allies against the annexation at this time.

TABLE 2.1 *Repatriation from the territory incorporated into the USSR.*

	Ukraine	Belarus	Lithuania	Other USSR
Eligible population	854,809	520,355	379,498	800,000
Registered for repatriation	816,870	499,600	380,000	–
Repatriated	787,674	274,163	197,156	258,990
Repatriated (%)	92	53	52	32

Note: Eligible Polish population in other USSR republics was estimated based on the 1926 population census.
Sources: Czerniakiewicz 1987, Ciesielski 2000.

delineating nationalities in the region, the Secretary for the Ukrainian Commission for National Minority Affairs observed in 1925 that conversational language was a poor metric because the local Polish and Ukrainian dialects sounded nearly identical (Brown 2005, 32–33).

During the war, the Kresy region experienced not one but three occupations: first by the Soviet Union (1939–41), then by Nazi Germany (1941–44), and then again by the Soviet Union (1944–45). During the first occupation, the Soviets deported tens of thousands of Polish elites to Siberia and Kazakhstan and collectivized agriculture. The Nazis, then in alliance with the USSR, moved ethnic Germans from these territories into western Poland. During the second occupation, the Nazis murdered the Jewish population, with the help of the Ukrainian and Lithuanian police forces. From 1943 onward, anticipating the change of power, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army murdered 60,000 to 100,000 Polish civilians in Volhynia and Galicia (southern borderlands) to pave the way for the incorporation of these regions into postwar Ukraine (Snyder 2003, 168–170). The cleansings escalated into a full-scale civil war between Poles and Ukrainians. As the Red Army secured the area in 1944, Stalin was determined to separate Poles and Ukrainians once and for all, by removing the remaining Poles from the region annexed into the Ukrainian SSR and by removing all Ukrainians from the territory that would become postwar Poland in Operation Vistula (*Akcja Wisła*).

The emigration of "Poles and Jews" from Kresy was, on paper, "voluntary." Indeed, not all Polish nationals in the annexed regions registered for repatriation. Still, Poles leaving this area were doing so under duress: They fled communal violence, Soviet repression, and looming collectivization. Ultimately, the rates of emigration depended not so much on individuals' preferences, but on the corresponding policies toward Polish nationals in the newly created Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Lithuanian states (see Table 2.1).

The exodus of Poles was nearly universal from the territory of western Ukraine, which experienced ethnic cleansing in 1943–45. Fearing the Ukrainian nationalists, an estimated 100,000 civilians had fled across the new

border by the time the organized resettlement process started (Czerniakiewicz 1987, 46). As the Polish plenipotentiary in Łuck reported in November 1944, "the rural population of Volhynia and other voivodeships, plagued by gang attacks, is literally begging to depart" (Ciesielski 2000, 22). Nevertheless, some dispute remained over the issue of nationality and, thus, over who had the right to leave. For example, the Polish plenipotentiary complained that whereas members of the Greek Catholic or Uniate Church were automatically considered Ukrainians, Roman Catholics listed as Ukrainians in their documents were not approved for departure on religious grounds (Kulczycki 2003). It is estimated that 95.6 percent of eligible residents of western Ukraine registered for repatriation, and of these, 96.4 percent left for Poland (Czerniakiewicz 1987, 47,131–132) (see Table 2.1).

In Belarus and Lithuania, intergroup relations tended to be less antagonistic. The key push factor for Poles seeking to leave these newly created Soviet republics was the traumatic experience of the Soviet occupation in 1939–1941. Convinced that staying in their homes meant collectivization and repression, many individuals with prewar Polish citizenship registered for repatriation (Kochanski 2012, 546). However, the Lithuanian and Belarusian authorities sought to retain Poles living in the countryside – at least until the fields were sown and harvested – even as they supported the emigration of urban residents, whom they viewed as difficult to assimilate (Kulczycki 2003). As a result, 80 percent of those who registered in the city of Vilnius (*Wilno*) were able to leave, compared to just 31.3 percent of the population in other parts of Lithuania. Additional factors complicating emigration from the countryside were poor access to transportation and attachment to the land (Czerniakiewicz 1987, 60–63). Altogether, it is estimated that only 54.8 percent (Belarus) and 51.8 percent (Lithuania) of the individuals who registered for departure were actually transported to Poland (Czerniakiewicz 1987, 228).

The occupational distribution of repatriates is shown in Table 2.2. Peasants made up the largest proportion of the population repatriated from the Ukrainian and Belarusian SSRs, at 38 percent and 35 percent of total migrants, respectively. Among those repatriated from Lithuania, craftsmen (31 percent) and white-collar workers (28 percent) predominated. These differences reflected varying levels of economic development in Kresy. Urbanization was much higher in the regions transferred to Ukraine and Lithuania – which included the cities of Lwów and Wilno – than in those transferred to Belarus (Czerniakiewicz 1987, 66). Czerniakiewicz estimates that approximately 60 percent of all Polish workers and about 50 percent of landowning farmers were repatriated. This is consistent with the greater obstacles for leaving rural areas, particularly from the Lithuanian SSR. Notably, an equal proportion of small landowners (5 ha or less) and large landowners (15 ha or more) repatriated. Each group comprised about a quarter of all repatriates. This suggests that economic resources were not the decisive factor behind leaving Kresy.

The experience of "Polish repatriates" was only marginally better than that of German expellees. Individuals registered for repatriation were exempt from

TABLE 2.2 *Repatriates' occupations by republic of origin.*

Occupation	Ukraine (%)	Belarus (%)	Lithuania (%)	Other USSR (%)
Peasant	38.22	35.28	18.37	28.46
Worker	16.23	4.85	10.36	36.75
Craftsman	10.10	4.56	31.18	9.74
White-collar worker	27.78	23.19	27.65	5.97
Teacher	0.41	0.85	1.30	–
Share of urban population	44.1	25.94	69.78	35.54
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Czerniakiewicz (1987, 160).

paying taxes and entitled to receive property in Poland of comparable value to the property they were leaving behind. They were also allowed to take with them up to two tons of property, including livestock. In reality, few succeeded in transporting their possessions. Some departed in a hurry, fearing for their lives and lacking the necessary documentation. Others were denied ownership certificates by the local authorities (Ahonen et al. 2008, 132). Those who managed to bring their belongings were often robbed on the way, or forced to give up their assets in bribes to the multitude of officials responsible for transporting them. There were no schedules, and migrants would often spend 10–15 days in the open air at railway stations, waiting for transport (Kulczycki 2003; Sula 2002). Families coming from the same village were often split into several trains, which departed weeks or even months apart. Most migrants were transported in open carriages or cattle cars, and some died from overexposure, hunger, and disease. The passengers often had to bribe railway servicemen with alcohol – the only recognizable currency in 1945 (Blusiewicz 2015).

Most transports of "repatriates" were directed to the territories acquired from Germany following the Potsdam settlement. Only a small group was settled in the old Polish lands, numbering 250,000 in rural areas and 300,000 in urban areas by the end of 1947 (Banasiak 1965, 149). The repatriation from Kresy was completed within two years, with 98.8 percent of all repatriates relocated by 1946.

On July 6, 1945, an additional agreement was signed with the Soviet Union, allowing some 520,000 Poles and Jews to renounce their Soviet citizenship and return to Poland (Kochanski 2012, 545). Many of these migrants were deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan from Kresy during the Soviet occupation, that is, they originated from the same territories as the repatriates and had lived in the Soviet Union only during the war (Kulczycki 2003). These repatriates were relocated through 1948.[9]

[9] In 1955–59, an additional 250,000 migrants from the interior of the Soviet Union followed.

Polish–Soviet treaties also envisioned the repatriation of Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians into the newly created Soviet republics. In late 1944, the Polish State Office for Repatriation estimated that some 546,000 people would be moved east. Ukrainians were the largest group, and their removal was prioritized owing to the history of ethnic cleansing in Volhynia and neighboring areas. In 1945, Ukrainians living near the border were ordered to move within fourteen days or face expulsion by force. Under pressure, most Ukrainians registered for relocation left Poland by the end of the year (Ahonen et al. 2008, 100–101).

Upon completion of the formal population exchange between Poland and Ukraine, some 140,000 ethnic Ukrainians and Lemkos still lived in southeastern Poland.[10] The Soviet authorities refused to accept more "repatriates." This decision led to the deportation of these remaining communities to the newly acquired German territories in Operation Vistula between April and September 1947 (Ahonen et al. 2008, 101).

Settlers from within post-1945 Poland

The annexation of German territory also led to the voluntary migration of an estimated 2.2 million Poles from the territory that remained Polish after the war. Most originated from the overpopulated central and south-eastern voivodeships. Approximately 51.2 percent of voluntary migrants came from the former Russian partition, which had suffered the most destruction during WWII. Another 25.2 percent and 23.6 percent came from the Austrian and Prussian partitions, respectively (GUS 1950).

The first to move to the territories annexed from Germany were Poles who lived in proximate areas. They could simply walk or bike across the former border to occupy farms and houses abandoned by fleeing Germans. Later on, transports were organized from more distant areas to accommodate larger groups of settlers. These later migrants traveled with resettlement certificates from the local authorities in their places of origin, which enabled them to receive German farms and covered the costs of rail travel and food supplies (Gieszczyński 1999, 87–88).

Government marketing played no small part in driving resettlement. Advertisements and slogans were posted on city walls and hung on utility poles in villages, publicizing opportunities to obtain land and employment in the newly acquired territories (Dulczewski and Kwilecki 1963, 642). For example, a 1945 slogan by the Central Committee for Resettlement read:

Peasants! You no longer have to emigrate [from Poland]. You want bread – in the West there is bread. You want land – in the West there is land. Let's harvest the sown fields

[10] Lemkos originated in an ethnographic region of the Carpathian Mountains, shared among Ukraine, Slovakia, and Poland. In postwar Poland, they were viewed as a subgroup of ethnic Ukrainians and treated as such.

to fill our barns and granaries. The urban population will find factories and stores abandoned by the Germans in the West. The white-collar workers will find work in departments and offices. (Quoted in Blusiewicz (2015))

In April 1946, over 50,000 young Poles from all over the country attended "We Keep a Guard on the Oder" (*"Trzymamy Straż nad Odrą"*), a propaganda event held in the newly acquired port city of Szczecin (Stettin). The government facilitated attendance by paying for transportation and room and board. The authorities used such events not only to encourage resettlement but also to dispel rumors about insecurity and disorder in the west (McNamara 2012, 31).

To encourage migration, some areas were also designated to support specific localities in the newly acquired territories. For example, a coal mine in prewar Polish Upper Silesia was tasked with helping to revive its Lower Silesian counterpart by sending volunteer crews. The volunteers received monetary incentives (Jedruszczak 1967; Blusiewicz 2015). Under Circular No. 22 issued in March 1946, farmers from regions damaged during the war were given priority for resettlement.

To repopulate larger landed estates, prevalent in East Prussia and Pomerania, the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reform created a network of voivodeship and county-level councils tasked with propaganda and recruitment of potential settlers. They were also charged with maintaining economic and cultural connections between the sending communities and the settlers (Kersten 1962, 56). The success of this operation was mixed, given the poor state of large estates in the aftermath of war and looting. By the end of 1947, cooperative and parcel settlement covered 1,156 estates (254,280 ha) and 17,040 families throughout the country – approximately 16 percent of the planned number (Kersten 1962, 65).

Soldiers of the Polish People's Army were invited to settle in areas along the new international borders. They were given priority in farmland allocation and enjoyed free amenities such as agricultural tools, seeds, livestock, and furniture, along with tax incentives (Gieszczyński 1999, 112).

Surveys of sending villages shed some light on the socioeconomic characteristics and regional makeup of these migrants. A significant proportion were landless and poor and resettled in hopes of acquiring their own farms. For example, Żmiąca (Limanowa county), a large village in south-east Poland, saw 21 percent of its population ($N = 166$) migrate west between 1945 and 1952 (Wierzbicki 1960). Most emigrants (76 percent) were in their prime working years, between 15 and 45 years of age, and previously owned no land or only small plots. In the resettled regions, they could acquire larger farms (59 percent) or leave agriculture altogether (41 percent). Migration "resolved numerous longstanding conflicts, fulfilled many desires, and allowed the union of several marriages based on love by eliminating the need for a dowry" (Wierzbicki 1960, 100–101).

Sending regions were not limited to overpopulated rural areas. Settlers from Poznań region, which shared the longest stretch of border with the newly

acquired territories, represented a cross-section of the population, including the intelligentsia, workers, and shop owners (Burszta 1995, 89). In large towns and cities destroyed by the war, such as Warsaw, Poznań, Białystok, and Grudziądz, inhabitants were enticed to resettle by the promise of finding better housing and simply by the opportunity to start anew. Kersten (1962, 48) observes that a typical settler from post-1945 Poland decided to settle in the newly acquired territories after already being separated from a native community during the war. Just like forced migrants from Kresy, many voluntary migrants had lost their property, experienced deportations, and spent time in forced labor camps. Thus, the boundary between forced and voluntary migrants in the aftermath of WWII was blurred.

Settlers from Other Countries

An additional, smaller group of repatriates and re-emigrants (150,000) arrived from other European states (Germany, France, Belgium, Romania, Denmark, Netherlands, and Yugoslavia). Most came from working-class families that had first immigrated to the industrial centers of Western Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Polish government mobilized to facilitate their return, including by signing a series of agreements with states that had large Polish diasporas before WWII. Prior to the resettlement, the re-emigrants' real estate was surveyed to facilitate compensation for the items left behind upon their resettlement to Poland (Banasiak 1965). Warsaw was especially keen on attracting skilled workers in the mining industry to take the place of German miners in Lower and Upper Silesia, but the majority of re-emigrants were unskilled manual laborers. They returned to Poland in hopes of securing better career opportunities and for ideological reasons.

The largest number came from France, at 89,777 people between 1946 and 1949. The movement of these individuals was managed through repatriation offices in Międzylesie (Kłodzko County, Lower Silesian voivodeship) and Zebrzydowice (Cieszyn County in Silesian voivodeship) (Sula 2002, 155). Re-emigrants experienced in mining were directed to the coal-mining region of Wałbrzych and nearby areas (Sula 2002, 154).

Another large group of Polish re-emigrants was returning from German Westphalia, Rhineland, and Saxony, where they had settled in the 1870s. These Poles had spent WWII in concentration camps. The Polish government sought to bring them home, expecting their familiarity with German agriculture and industry to facilitate the appropriation of German farms and factories.

Yugoslav Poles, numbering about 30,000, comprised another distinctive group of re-emigrants. Under Habsburg imperial rule (1867–1914), many Poles were recruited to work in administrative positions in the empire's southern territories. They stayed put after the dissolution of the empire, finding protection under the 1919 Minorities Treaty. However, their status became more precarious once Yugoslavia entered the war on the German side in 1941.

This turn of events ultimately contributed to the diaspora's decision to return to Poland after the war (Sula 2002, 164). Most re-emigrants from Yugoslavia were farmers, though the group also included artisans, merchants, and laborers working in foundries and the textile and tanning industries.

ALLOCATION OF MIGRANTS IN POLAND

In Poland, limited state capacity after a devastating war, coupled with time constraints, restricted the government's ability to regulate population flows. According to Thum, the resettlement process "serve[d] only the aim of territorial appropriation, with little regard to optimizing settlement patterns" (Thum 2011, 59). Where and how many people settled in a specific locality depended on factors largely orthogonal to the migrants' characteristics and preferences.

The Polish government did harbor ambitions to manage migration. In October 1944, it established the State Repatriation Office (*Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny, PUR*). PUR was organized territorially, with separate branches in each voivodeship. By August 1945, the organization had 259 regional offices, including input points (*punkty wlotowe*) that accepted migrants; throughpoints (*punkty przelotowe*) that provided food to people in trains and managed the trains' routes; transshipment points (*punkty przeładunkowe*) that switched trains from the broad to the standard gauge rail system; and destination points (*punkty docelowe*) tasked with delivering people from trains to their final destinations (on foot, by horse cart, or by car) (Ciesielski 2000). In 1945, PUR was incorporated into the newly created Ministry for the Recovered Territories (*Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych, MZO*), which was responsible for repopulating the territory, providing material support and credit to settlers, managing the German property, and creating guidelines for economic development of the region.

A key concern of officials in charge of resettlement was to avoid conflict between migrants from different regions. The 1945 Regional Plan for the Resettlement of Agricultural Settlers to the Recovered Territories stipulated that migrants from the same region should be resettled as compact groups, avoiding intergroup mixing where possible. The authorities also sought to prevent economic grievances. The Plan recommended prioritizing forced migrants and ensuring that the conditions in the new settlements were not worse than in the ones left behind (Lewandowski 2013, 205).

The government coordinated migration from Kresy along three latitudinal railway routes: Southern (Rawa Ruska to Śląsk); Central (Baranowicze, Pinsk, Kowel to Pomorze Zachodnie, Zielona Góra); and Northern (from Vilnius to East Prussia). Thus, repatriates from western Ukraine – the largest group – were directed to Silesia; repatriates from the Lithuanian SSR to East Prussia and West Pomerania; and repatriates from Belarus to the Warta and Kostrzyn areas. Transportation networks were not the only factor considered; the government also sought to maximize agricultural productivity. According

to the resettlement plan developed by the Council for Scientific Issues of the Recovered Territories (*Rada Naukowa dla Zagadnień Ziem Odzyskanych*), agricultural conditions in the settlers' destination regions were to resemble those in their regions of origin.

Orchestrating an orderly migration process, however, faced a number of challenges. For one, the government perceived an urgent need to rapidly repopulate the newly acquired territory to ensure the permanence of the new borders and prevent further looting of German property. In May 1945, the Polish Council of Ministers called for accelerating the resettlement process "without devoting too much attention to the mistakes and doubts" that might arise. In addition to moving migrants from the annexed eastern borderlands, the authorities encouraged spontaneous immigration from within post-1945 Poland (Banasiak 1965, 125). As Bolesław Rumiński, an official from the Ministry of Industry, said in a speech to the provisional parliament (*Krajowa Rada Narodowa*) at the time:

> We have to take control, the faster the better. Don't wait for instructions or proclamations. The plan is simple. We have to take control by means of sending at least 10 percent of the population from just across the old border – without waiting for those who will come from behind the Bug River [i.e., from the eastern borderlands] to conduct the proper colonization. (Quoted in Blusiewicz (2015, 5))

A more fundamental challenge was limited state capacity. The task of carrying out an orderly resettlement turned out to be "more than the new administration could handle" (Kenney 1997, 158). Relocating millions of people in a state devastated by war and divided by internal political struggle, and doing so while the German population was leaving, was a logistical nightmare. The railway system, the central conduit for relocation, proved especially difficult to handle. Many train carriages were either destroyed in the war or expropriated by the Red Army. Important bridges and railway hubs had been blown up by retreating Germans.[11] Military priorities and the poor condition of trains made the length of the journey unpredictable. The trains frequently changed course, and migrants often failed to reach their destinations. For example, in March 1945, migrants were thrown out of the trains when Marshall Zhukov ordered that train carriages be immediately sent west (Ahonen et al. 2008, 131).

Once the resettlement process was set in motion, carefully deliberated policy objectives quickly gave way to an indiscriminate process, described by historians as "total chaos" (Kersten 2001, 83) and a "fail[ure of] coordination" (Kochanowski 2001, 143). PUR Director Władysław Wolski lamented that migrants were often offloaded midway to their destinations, in the middle of

[11] It was estimated that 50 percent of railway and road infrastructure was destroyed, including 2,465 locomotives, 6,250 passenger cars, and 83,636 freight cars as well as 5,948 km of railroads, 48 km of railway bridges and viaducts, 14,900 km of paved roads, and 15.5 km of road bridges (Kowalczyk et al. 1970, 1149).

an open field, because the train conductors lacked planned itineraries (Ciesielski 2000, 23). Migrant Henryk Zaborowski describes the process at one of the PUR transfer stations as follows: "A PUR employee would write the name of a destination in chalk on the side of the railway car, and the cars would be uncoupled and shunted down the tracks" (quoted in Thum (2011, 69)). As a result, "sometimes where the transported ended up was a matter of pure chance" (Thum 2011, 68).

The rational management of housing for settlers also posed a challenge. A major drawback was that Polish officials relied on the outdated 1939 German census to estimate housing availability in specific settlements. This meant that they lacked data about the extent of war damages. Their job was also complicated by the fact that the population numbers were constantly changing. By the time some resettlers disembarked, other migrants had already taken their assigned places. As a result, migrants were frequently sent from one destination to another when officials overestimated housing capacity in a given area.

Silesia was repopulated first because Silesian settlements were easiest to reach for repatriates from western Ukraine, who comprised the largest group of forced migrants. Migration processes in East Prussia and Pomerania took longer; in these areas, voluntary migrants from central and western Poland were more numerous. Migrants from abroad traveled from west to east and were settled in larger numbers in areas closer to the post-1945 border between Poland and Germany (see Map A.1).

The haphazard nature of the assignment process, implemented by short-staffed administrators, produced considerable variation in the local distribution of various migrant populations. Despite the official policy to settle migrants as compact groups, many communities were broken up upon arrival because there was not enough housing available (Kersten 2001; Dworzak and Goc 2011). In a representative account, Marian Samulewski (n.d.) described the tribulations of his repatriated village in western Poland: "We were told our trip was over [. . .] but there were no more empty houses in Wierzchówo, so only three to four families were able to settle there."[12] Samulewski's family stayed put in Wierzchówo; others continued on their journey.

How many migrants from the same region settled together in one place was largely left to chance. For example, the entire village of Budki Nieznanowskie moved from western Ukraine largely intact to the village of Gierszowice, Opole voivodeship. For repatriates from Budki, only the material environment had changed following migration, as they now lived in brick rather than wooden houses and farmed larger plots of land with more sophisticated machinery. The inhabitants of nearby Busk, by contrast, were dispersed across nineteen villages and eight counties of Opole voivodeship and their neighbors were migrants from other parts of Poland (Dworzak and Goc 2011).

[12] Interview with Marian Samulewski, Centrum Historii Zajezdnia, www.zajezdnia.org/swiadek-historia/marian-samulewski (November 3, 2018). Translation by the author.

Conversely, there were many examples of groups mixing within a single settlement. For example, the population of Pszcew (Lubuskie region) consisted of migrants from central Poland, who came from ten different voivodeships, and repatriates from the USSR, who came from seven different voivodeships. Three villages in the Koszalin region were settled by migrants from eleven voivodeships in central Poland and six voivodeships from beyond the Bug River (Burszta 1995, 80).

While some migrants took advantage of the administrative chaos in order to move elsewhere after 1948, most remained in the settlements initially assigned to them. Not only did the Polish settlers lack knowledge about settlements in this historically German territory, but they viewed their assignments as temporary due to rumors that another war with Germany was imminent (Sakson 2011, 247). There was too much uncertainty as to whether accommodation would be available in some other settlement. In addition, the communist government restricted the sale and exchange of land. Migrants' ability to relocate was thus hampered by their incomplete property rights (Machałek 2005).

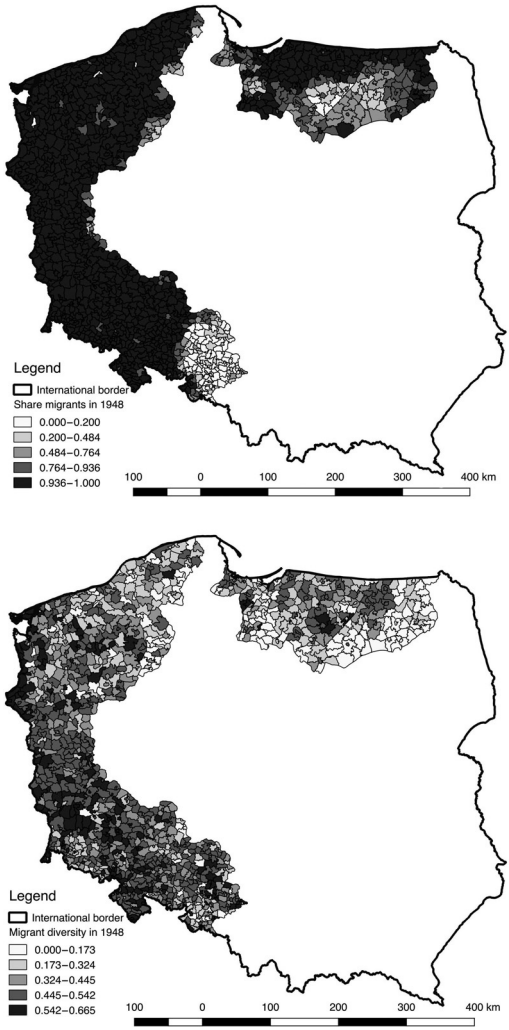
Dataset on the Distribution of Population in Poland's Resettled Territories

To understand the resulting regional composition of the population in western and northern Poland, I digitized an unpublished survey of 1,217 historic municipalities conducted in December 1948 and located in the Polish Archive of Modern Records (*Archiwum Akt Nowych, AAN*). The survey recorded the size of the autochthonous population (*miejscowi*) as well as the number of repatriates from Kresy and USSR (*repatrianci z ZSSR*), settlers from within post-1945 Poland (*przesiedleńcy z Polski centralnej*), and returnees from abroad (*repatrianci i reemigranci z innych krajów*). It also collected information about the population temporarily present on the municipality's territory, which is not included in my analysis.[13]

I use these data to compute the total share of migrants as well as the diversity of the migrant population, measured as a fractionalization index based on the shares of these three migrant groups.[14] Map 2.2 confirms that Poland's newly acquired territories experienced a turnover of population. The share of migrants is low only in parts of Upper Silesia and East Prussia, populated by "nationally ambiguous" ethnic groups (Silesians, Warmiaks, and Mazurians) that received Polish citizenship. The map further illustrates that migrants from different regions were mixed unevenly across space, in line with the haphazard nature of the allocation process described earlier. In Chapter 7, I show that this

[13] The survey did not separate out the approximately 137,000 Ukrainians and Lemkos uprooted during the secret Operation Vistula in 1947. Because the Vistula deportees were deliberately dispersed in small groups and not allowed to exceed 10 percent of the population, their omission does not have a large impact on the population totals.

[14] The formula is as follows: Diversity $= 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{n} (s_i)^2$, where s_i is the share of the population in each regional group and n is the number of groups.



Map 2.2 Share and diversity of migrants in Polish municipalities in the territory annexed from Germany. Diversity is measured as an inverse Herfindahl index, with higher numbers signifying greater diversity. Municipality boundaries were reconstructed by the author based on a 1949 map from the Central Office for National Measurements (*Główny Urząd Pomiarów Kraju*).

local-level variation in the diversity of migrants within the resettled region was largely uncorrelated with the share of migrants, urbanization level, and population size, and only weakly correlated with distance to the German border and railway.

ALLOCATION OF EXPELLEES IN WEST GERMANY

Expellees arriving in West Germany similarly had little choice regarding where to go. During the "wild expulsions," they sought shelter in the regions that were closest to and most accessible from their former homelands (Müller and Simon 1959, 300–346). Accordingly, Germans from East Prussia and the Danzig region fled via the Baltic Sea to Schleswig-Holstein in the far north of Germany. Germans from the Sudetenland crossed over into neighboring Bavaria. As a rule, larger numbers of expellees arrived in the areas bordering Germany's former eastern provinces.

Once transport became more organized, expellees were first assembled in the distribution areas and then directed to a specific occupation zone. France did not view the Potsdam Agreement as binding and refused to accept expellees (Schulze 1989, 333). As a result, the share of expellees in proportion to the total population was much lower in the French occupation zone (6.6 percent) than in the American (18.7 percent) and British zones (17.2 percent).

The occupying governments insisted that expellees should be accommodated in private houses rather than placed in dedicated camps. They estimated that one room had to accommodate two people on average (Connor 2007, 31). The U.S. Military Government Regulations on refugees and expellees further stipulated that "expellees from any one community abroad will be distributed and resettled among several German communities," with the aim to "prevent minority cells from developing" (Schraut 2000, 117).

Expellees' first stop in West Germany was typically the district transit camp, where new arrivals were registered and subjected to medical examinations, vaccinations, and delousing. After the intake process was completed, expellees reboarded the trains and proceeded to other camps or their final destinations. Trains were often divided before departure.

The chief concern of the officials involved in the relocation of expellees was finding a spare room. In urban areas, acute housing shortages had existed even before the war and were now exacerbated by wartime bombing. For this reason, most expellees were directed to the countryside, with the number of refugees assigned to specific communities again based on the estimated availability of housing. The local mayor, in consultation with the housing boards, was tasked with "assigning the newcomers to individual householders at the parish level" (Connor 2007, 30–31). A small proportion of expellees was also temporarily housed in camps, although the occupation governments did not favor this practice.[15]

Like Polish migrants, German expellees were dispersed in small groups. Many receiving communities came to house newcomers from different places of origin, who shared little but the fate of losing their homes. The flight itself contributed to this outcome: Many communities were split apart, as they weaved their way across borders and into a territorially reduced Germany.

[15] Some camps were formerly used as forced labor camps.

The deliberate policy of breaking up large expellee groups from the same place of origin played an even bigger role. For instance, in 1947, expellees from a municipality of 2,000 residents in the Danube River valley (the so-called Danube Swabians, *Donauschwaben*) were dispersed across 158 localities in the occupation zones of West Germany (Kossert 2008, 55). As a result, "[i]n the vast majority of cases, the refugees were not able to settle in established groups with their social network still intact" (Schulze 1989, 334).

Once resettled, the expellees could not move at will. Until 1947, the occupying powers banned relocation altogether. In the next two years, relocation required permission from the military authorities and was limited primarily to family reunification. The freedom of movement was restored only following the creation of West Germany in 1949 (Müller and Simon 1959). Over time, there were a few shifts that aimed to equalize the burden of refugees across German states and to facilitate employment in urban centers. However, the initial distribution of expellees proved "sticky," as many expellees remained in the settlements to which they had originally been allocated (Connor 2007, 146).[16]

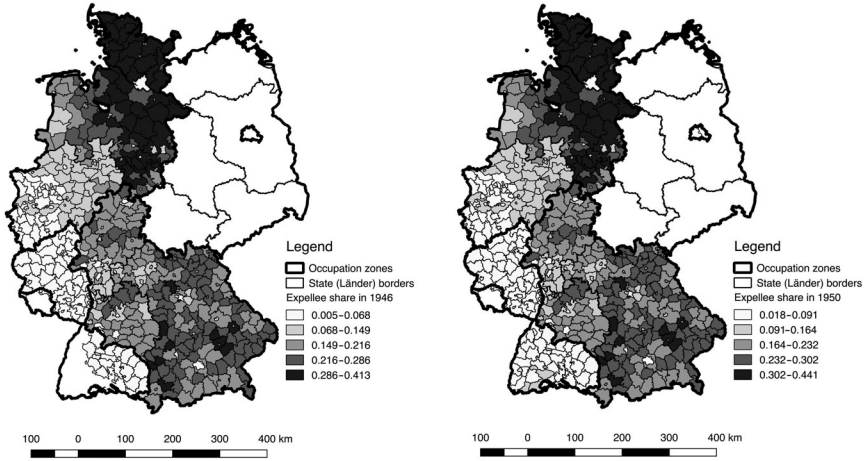
Dataset on the Distribution of Expellees

My primary sources of data on the size and regional origin of the expellee population for West Germany at the county (*Kreis*) level are the 1946 and 1950 population censuses, digitized by Braun and Franke (2021). I supplement these sources with data from *Statistisches Taschenbuch über die Heimatvertriebenen* (1953). For analysis at the municipality (*Gemeinde*) level, I digitized results of the 1950 census from *Amtliches Gemeindeverzeichnis für Bayern* (1950) and *Gemeindestatistik von Schleswig-Holstein* (1951).

The 1950 census, conducted after the expulsions ended, defines the expellees (*Heimatvertriebene*) as the population which as of September 1, 1939, lived on lost eastern territories or in the Saarland, as well as people who lived abroad (using borders from December 1937) but spoke German as their native tongue. A child is counted as an expellee in this group (1) if his father was an expellee or (2) for children born out of wedlock, if the mother was an expellee. That is, the expellee group includes both Germans from the pre-1937 German territories and Germans from abroad.

The variation in the share of expellees to the population at the county level is presented in Map 2.3. According to the 1950 census, the state of Schleswig-Holstein (33 percent of expellees) followed by Lower Saxony (27.2 percent) and Bavaria (21.2 percent) were the most affected. These states had a larger agricultural sector and suffered less destruction during the war. As shown in Chapter 8, there is a strong positive correlation between wartime destruction,

[16] At the county level, expellee shares in 1950 and 1961 are highly correlated ($\rho = 0.83$, $p < 0.001$).



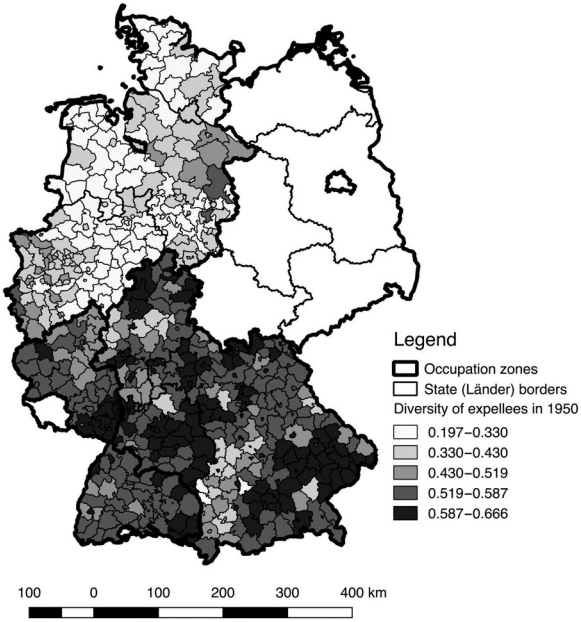
Map 2.3 Distribution of expellees in West German counties in 1946 and 1950. Data for the Soviet occupation zone are unavailable. Data from some parts of the French occupation zone exist only for 1950. Saarland joined West Germany in 1957. County boundaries are based on a shapefile from by MPIDR and CGG (2011).

reliance on agriculture, and the size of the expellee population. Distance to the eastern border is negatively correlated with the share of expellees. These factors are important to consider when studying the consequences of expellee presence for political and economic outcomes. The data further indicate that the heterogeneity of the expellee population, measured as a fractionalization index based on shares of expellees from different countries of origin, is higher in southern Germany, which was more accessible than northern Germany for expellees from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, and Silesia (see Map 2.4). Aside from the north–south pattern, the expellee diversity index is uncorrelated with the socioeconomic characteristics of receiving areas (see Chapter 8).

CONCLUSION

WWII and the revision of European borders upended the lives of millions of Poles and Germans, inflicting terrible human costs on people who had already endured six years of war.

The majority of postwar migrants had little choice on whether to move and where to settle. The allocation process in both Poland and West Germany was shaped by the availability of housing rather than by the economic potential of receiving localities. In Poland's newly acquired territories, migrants were allocated to settlements emptied of the German population. Only a small



Map 2.4 Diversity of expellees in West Germany in 1950. Diversity is measured at the county level as an inverse Herfindahl index based on shares of expellees from different countries of origin, with higher numbers signifying greater diversity. Data for the Soviet occupation zone are unavailable. County boundaries are based on a shapefile from MPIDR and CGG (2011).

number of original inhabitants remained. In West Germany, expellees were distributed into private houses in settlements that had lower population density and suffered less destruction during the war.

While some localities received large groups of migrants from the same region or even village, other localities received migrants from multiple regions and countries of origin. Migrants that started their journeys together were often separated upon resettlement, by chance (Poland) or by design (West Germany). The timing of (forced) departure, the distance migrants had to cover, and the fast-changing availability of housing shaped the composition of the migrant population in each receiving settlement.

As noted earlier, the intent of population transfers was to harmonize ethnic and political boundaries. Yet, policymakers who expected population transfers to stabilize international and domestic politics were soon disappointed. While it is true that ethnic homogeneity within states increased, the resettlement process also triggered new boundary-making processes in receiving communities. As I show in Chapters 3 and 4, homogeneity in the regions most affected by population transfers was a myth. In both Poland and Germany, localities that

received large migrant inflows ended up more diverse in the aftermath of the war than at any other point in their history. Even though migrants were considered "Poles" and "Germans" on paper, there were salient differences between them and the native populations in the immediate postwar period. Differences in dialect, customs, religion, and migration experience loomed large in the context of conflicting economic interests.