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Wartime Germans, Postwar Poles: Nation Switching and Nation Building after 1945*

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In late October 1956, nineteen residents of the Upper Silesian industrial district signed a letter of protest to the general prosecutor in Warsaw. They called for an end to the banishment of the bishop and two auxiliary bishops of the diocese of Stalinogród (Katowice) who had been forced to leave their posts four years earlier, at the height of the confrontation between the Communist regime and Poland's Catholic hierarchy. The demand was presented as a patriotic imperative. The local Catholic clergy, the authors insisted, had been the primary "leaders in the fight against Germanism" in Upper Silesia, a region that had been part of the German Empire until 1922 and had again come under German rule during the Second World War. The signers identified themselves as former prisoners in Auschwitz, underlining their own credentials as veterans of the Polish struggle against foreign (German) oppression.[1] Such patriotic rhetoric reflected the familiar understanding of the confrontation between church and state in Poland—in the early 1950s in particular but also throughout the Communist era—as one between the natural representatives of the Polish nation and a regime imposed by and dependent on foreign (Soviet) masters.[2]

But if one reads the letter further, the text takes a strange turn. Rather than expanding on their own and the bishops' ostensibly unshakable Polish-patriotic convictions, they paint a more ambiguous portrait of the people for whom they claimed to speak. Borderland residents, they explained, carried within them a "three-way comparison calculator" (*potrójny porówalnik*), which they used to measure current developments against their experiences under German rule before the First World War as well as under Polish rule between the wars (no

* This article is dedicated to the memory of Mateusz Zatoński, my research assistant, whose diligent collection and sharp analysis of source material helped to make this article possible. He was taken from us far too soon.

[1] Archiwum Akt Nowych (hereafter AAN), Urząd do Spraw Wyznań, Wydział Rzymskokatolicki (hereafter UdSWWR), Syg 47/1516, former concentration camp inmates to prosecutor general, Warsaw, October 27, 1956.

[2] For a detailed account of the role of the church in the events of 1956, see Tadeusz Kisielewksi, *Październik 1956 punkt odniesienia: Mozaika faktów i poglądów. impresje historyczne* (Warsaw, 2001).

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mention was made of the Nazi era). "Not everything speaks to the advantage of the present times," the authors of the letter drily noted. They warned that if local people, whom they described as "indrawn" and "distrustful" but "at their core religious," saw current-day Poland as hostile to the Catholic Church, some would develop a "desire to leave for Germany."

Emigration as a response to oppression is hardly a novelty, of course, least of all in Polish history. Poles have had a long tradition of exile stretching back to the partitions of the late eighteenth century. But the authors of this letter were not talking about temporary exile in Paris or London or even joining the overseas Polish communities of Chicago or New York. They were talking about local residents claiming German citizenship by declaring German ethnicity, thus embracing, or at least acquiescing in, a retrospective re-narration of their lives. Rather than "ethnic Poles" who had endured waves of forcible Germanization, they would now turn out to be "ethnic Germans" who had endured waves of forcible Polonization. The authors of the letter to the prosecutor general insisted that only a "small proportion" of local residents would take such a step. But both they and the letter's recipients knew that the scenario they were referencing was a potential mass phenomenon.[3] At the end of the 1940s, one out of eight ethnic Poles living in Poland—almost three million people—had spent the war as members of the wartime German *Volksgemeinschaft* (racial community), with all the privileges and obligations that implied: fighting, killing, and dying in German uniform; consuming German rations; riding in German-only compartments on trains; being prohibited from sexual contact with non-Germans.[4] Around one million of these postwar Poles were so-called autochthones, former *Reichsdeutsche* (citizens of pre-1937 Germany) who were "verified" as ethnic Poles after the war.[5] Almost two million were former *Volksdeutsche*, citizens of interwar Poland who, under varying degrees of duress, had applied to and had been registered on the *Deutsche Volksliste* (German nationality list) but were then "rehabilitated" as ethnic Poles when Polish rule was restored.[6]

Historians of postwar Europe have approached the subject of nation switching from different perspectives, but almost all have viewed it as a marginal and/or

[3] In 1956, about 20,000 residents of Poland emigrated to Germany. The pace of this "family unification" action accelerated the following year, reaching an annual total of more than 100,000. Andrzej Gawryczewski, *Ludność polska w xx wieku* (Warsaw, 2005), 468.

[4] These specific implications of wartime classifications are discussed later in this article. On the role of food and sex in structuring racialized experiences of occupation during the Second World War, see Nicholas Stargardt, "Wartime Occupation by Germany: Food and Sex," *Cambridge History of the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2015), vol. 3, pt. 3, 385–411.

[5] Gawryczewski, *Ludność polska w xx wieku*, 466.

[6] See table 1 for calculations of the number of rehabilitated Volksdeutsche.

declining phenomenon. One of the defining features of the post-1945 era, after all, was the creation of "a Europe of nation states more ethnically homogeneous than ever before."[7] Since wartime collectivities represented, for most Europeans, "the apotheosis of identity," this process generally involved embedding rehabilitated people ever more firmly and inescapably within those ethnonational classifications.[8] The presumed indelibility of wartime identities was the driving force for postwar ethnic cleansing, which—rightly, albeit belatedly—has received considerable historiographic attention over the past twenty-five years. In telling the story of the largest wave of forced migration in human history, historians have relegated any mention of postwar national reclassifications to footnotes and parenthetical asides.[9] Historians of Germany have also emphasized the specific role that fear of enemy revenge played in creating "an involuntary German community" at the end of the war.[10] This contributed to an enduring sense of "ethnic solidarity" despite some "individual efforts to avoid responsibility by switching nationality."[11] Such characterizations of nation switching as not only empirically rare but also morally problematic relate to a more general question: Is commitment to a particular collective identity necessary for people to have a sense of responsibility for past injustices?[12] Other scholars, mostly researching the lands of the Habsburg Empire and its successor states, have discussed nation switching more extensively and sympathetically as a "weapon of the weak" deployed by ordinary people trying to navigate ethnic classifications imposed by nationalists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[13] But these historians of national indifference have also tended to describe the phenomenon as inexorably diminishing over time. In Bohemia and Moravia, the area of Central Europe most heavily represented in anglophone literature, the recategorization of some wartime Germans as postwar Czechs after 1945 has been

[7] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London, 2005), 27–28. Judt cites Poland as the premiere example of this development.

[8] Christopher Browning and Lewis Siegelbaum, "Frameworks for Social Engineering: Stalinist Schema of Identification and the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft," in *Beyond Totalitarianism: Nazism and Stalinism Compared*, ed. Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (New York, 2009), 258–64.

[9] Consider, for example, Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York, 2010). Within a chapter devoted to ethnic cleansing, three sentences discuss changes in national classification, two of them in parentheses (323).

[10] Michael Geyer, "Endkampf 1918 and 1945: German Nationalism, Annihilation, and Self-Destruction," in Alf Lüdtke and Bernd Weisbrod, *No Man's Land of Violence: Extreme Wars in the Twentieth Century* (Göttingen, 2005), 57.

[11] Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Civilizing Germans, 1945–1995* (Oxford, 2006), 62.

[12] W. James Booth, "The Work of Memory: Time, Identity, and Justice," *Social Research* 75, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 237–62.

[13] Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 93–119, quote from 113. Zahra refers here to James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven, CT, 1987), a study of forms of peasant resistance.

Table 1
Polish Citizens Who Had Been Categorized as German during World War II (ca. 1950)

Province (Województwo), Boundaries of 1946	Estimate of Verified Reichsdeutsche	Estimate of Rehabilitated Volksdeutsche (Administrative Process)	Estimate of Rehabilitated Volksdeutsche (Judicial Process)	Estimated Total of Wartime Germans (% of Total Population)
Silesia	850,000	904,000	131,000	1,885,000 (69%)
Gdańsk	37,750	291,000	31,000	359,750 (38%)
Pomorze		430,000	12,000	442,000 (30%)
Olsztyń	107,500			107,500 (16%)
Poznań	9,400		15,000	24,400 (1%)
Szczecin	19,000			19,000 (4%)
Wrocław	18,000			18,000 (1%)
Poland (total)	1,041,650	1,625,000	189,000	2,855,650 (12%)

Sources.—Estimates of verified Reichsdeutsche: Bernadetta Nitschke, *Wysiedlenie czy wypędzenie: Ludność niemiecka w Polsce w latach 1945–1949* (Toruń, 2000), table 4, cited in Gawryczewski, *Ludność polska w xx wieku*, 468. Estimates of Volksdeutsche rehabilitated administratively represent 90 percent of the population in category 3 of the DVL in Danzig–West Prussia (323,060 in Gdańsk, 477,430 in Pomorze: Włodzimierz Jastrzębski, "Przymus germanizacyjny w okręgu Rzeszy Gdańsk-Prusy Zachodnie w latach 1939-1945," in *Przymus germanizacyjny na ziemiach polskich wcielonych do Rzeszy Niemieckiej w latach 1939–1945*, ed. Włodzimierz Jastrzebski [Bydgoszcz, 1993], 20–23) and 95 percent of this population in (Upper) Silesia (951,177: Kaczmarek, *Górny Ślask*, 182). Estimates of Volksdeutsche rehabilitated judicially represent 90 percent of those applying in Upper Silesia (146,000: Boda-Krężel, *Sprawa Volkslisty na Górnym Śląsku*, 122–23) and 70 percent of those applying in Gdańsk and Pomorze (44,835 and 17,684, respectively: Olejnik, *Zdrajcy narodu? Losy volksdeutschów w Polsce po II wojnie światowej*, 112–13). The figure for judicial rehabilitations in Poznań is based on the estimate of 21,000 in Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation* (290), but subtracts an estimated 6,000 who would have been in category 4 and therefore were generally not treated as Germans by the Nazi regime (proportion in category 4 extrapolated from early rehabilitation rates [214]).

Note.—The estimate that 95 percent of category 3 Volksdeutsche in the province of Katowice remained in Poland is based on analysis of census data in the counties of Katowice, Rybnik, Pszczyna, Tarnowskie Góry, and the municipalities of Katowice and Chorzów. This area had a cumulative population of 1,167,516 in July 1949, of which 1,090,945 were native to the province of Silesia. Adam Dziurok, "Problemy narodowościowe w województwie śląskim i sposoby ich rozwiązania," in *Województwo śląskie 1945–1950*, ed. Adam Dziurok and Ryszard Kaczmarek (Katowice, 2007), 597. In 1943, only 93,875 residents of this area had been treated as Poles (either formally categorized as Poles or in category 4 of the Volksliste). AAK, ARZ 00114, Okręg regencyjny Katowice: Ludność obszarów wcielonych, stan 10.10.1943. We can estimate that an additional 50,000 residents in 1949 were intraprovincial migrants from the Zagłębie region who would have spent the war classified as Poles. Roughly 30,000 prewar residents who were classified as Poles were deported, mostly to the General Government, or dragooned into labor elsewhere in the Reich (estimate based on proportional allocation of composite figures in Gawryczewski, *Ludność polska w xx wieku*, 487 and 491). Most presumably returned to Poland after the war. Accounting for the remaining native population (ca. 900,000) requires assuming rehabilitation of almost all (≥95%) of the 718,163 residents of this area who were in category 3 of the Volksliste in 1943 (Okręg, op cit), as well as a substantial majority of those in category 2 who applied for judicial rehabilitation.

The estimate that 90 percent of category 3 Volksdeutsche in the provinces of Gdańsk and Pomorze remained in Poland is based on analysis of census data in Gdańsk. In 1950, there were 475,833 people in Poland who had, in 1939, lived in portions of this province that were annexed by the Reich during the war (or, in the case of children born after 1939, had a mother who had lived in the province at that time). *Narodowy spis powszechny z 3 grudnia 1950, miejsce zamieszkania ludności w sierpniu 1939 r.*,

characterized as a last gasp of nation switching, after which “choice among nationalities disappeared almost entirely.”[14]

This article starts from a different premise and takes a different approach in exploring nation switching in postwar Poland. Rather than imagining nation switchers as individuals dwelling precariously at the edges of national communities—seeking to escape them or pleading for admission to them—I will argue that wartime Germans represented a potent constituency within the postwar Polish nation. As we have already glimpsed in the letter to the Warsaw prosecutor general, the experience of having been outside of a national community and the threat of leaving a community altogether could serve as powerful levers for critiquing and transforming that community. It was the latent possibility of exit, in other words, that facilitated the exercise of voice.[15]

In the existing historiography of postwar Poland, nation switchers have been largely invisible. Many accounts of post-1945 Polish history do not mention national rehabilitation or verification at all.[16] From the 1950s through the 1980s, even specialist literature on postwar nation switching was vanishingly rare.[17] During the past thirty years, as research on German-Polish borderlands has grown enormously, the processes of national verification and rehabilitation

[14] Chad Bryant, “Either German or Czech: Fixing Nationality in Bohemia and Moravia, 1939–1946,” *Slavic Review* 61, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 683–706.

[15] Albert O. Hirschman famously analyzed this interplay between “exit” and “voice” in the expression of “customer” dissatisfaction with organizations. He saw his framework as very much applicable to states, though he did not discuss its possible applicability to cultural/ethnic communities. “Exit, Voice, and the State,” *World Politics* 31, no. 1 (1978): 90–107.

[16] Krystyna Kersten, *Między Wyzwoleniem a Zniewoleniem, Polska 1944–1956* (London, 1993); Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge, 2008); Brian Porter-Szücs, *Poland in the Modern World: Beyond Martyrdom* (Chichester, 2014).

[17] During this time, there were no monographic works on verification and only two relatively thin regional studies on rehabilitation: Julian Rados, *Rehabilitajca na Pomorzu Gdańskim* (Gdańsk, 1969); Zofia Boda-Krężel, *Sprawa Volkslisty na Górnym Śląsku: Koncepcje likwidacji problem i ich realizacja* (Opole, 1978).

Glówny Urząd Statystyczny (Warsaw, 1955), vii, 4–5. In 1944, only 96,832 residents of this area had been classified as Poles (either formally as Poles or in category 4 of the Volksliste). Another roughly 40,000 prewar residents who were classified as Poles by the Nazi regime were deported, mostly to the General Government, or dragooned into forced labor elsewhere in the Reich (based on proportional allocation of composite figures in Gawryszewski, *Ludność polska w xx wieku*, 487 and 491). Most presumably returned to Poland after the war. But to account for the remaining (ca. 350,000) native inhabitants still living in Poland in 1950, we must assume a very high rehabilitation rate (ca. 90 percent) among the 323,060 residents who had been in category 3 of the Volksliste in 1944. Jastrzębski, 20.

have received some belated attention.[18] The publication of John J. Kulczycki's *Belonging to the Nation* has been an especially important landmark, offering the first comprehensive account of these processes in English, and arguably the most comprehensive account in any language. As a complement to the burgeoning literature on ethnic cleansing, Kulczycki's study usefully focuses on the "processes involved in deciding who should *not* be expelled."[19] He nonetheless characterizes these processes of incipient national inclusion as a failure, a predictably ill-fated attempt to force a borderland population to conform to predetermined national norms.[20] A crucial implicit assumption here is that wartime Germans did not exercise significant agency in defining postwar Polishness. It is telling that none of the named individuals who figure as characters in Kulczycki's book are identified as having undergone national rehabilitation or verification themselves.[21]

To investigate the degrees and forms of agency that wartime Germans did exercise in postwar Poland, we will need to look more closely at how the two most important institutions in postwar Poland—the Communist regime and the Roman Catholic Church—viewed, engaged with, and recruited from this vast population. State and church shared a strong interest in keeping this constituency in Poland, not only due to general anxieties about Poland's demographic weakness after catastrophic wartime losses, but also due to valorization of the specific demographic characteristics of those who were subject to national rehabilitation and verification. This was a disproportionately industrial, working-class population; indeed, it constituted a very large share of the entire heavy-industrial workforce left in Poland in 1945. A Marxist-Leninist regime committed to rapid urbanization and industrialization could not be entirely indifferent to its existing

[18] The earliest and still most extensive scholarship has been in Polish, including: Bernard Linek, *Polityka antyniemiecka na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1950* (Opole, 2000); Piotr Madajczyk, *Niemcy polscy 1944–1989* (Warsaw, 2001); Grzegorz Strauchold, *Autochtoni polscy niemccy czy—od nacjonalizmu do komunizmu (1945–1949)* (Toruń, 2001); Jan Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa na Śląsku Opolskim 1945–1950* (Opole, 1990); Leszek Olejnik, *Zdrajcy narodu? Losy volksdeutschów w Polsce po II wojnie światowej* (Warsaw, 2006). But there has also been important work in English in the past decade: John J. Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Polish-German Borderlands, 1939–1951* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles: Communism, Nationalism, and Ethnic Cleansing after the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2013); Peter Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory: A German-Polish Conflict over Land and Territory, 1919–1989* (New York, 2015); Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848–1960* (Cambridge, 2018).

[19] Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 6.

[20] Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 306–7.

[21] This observation is based on a survey of personal names in the index. The one named individual who actually did undergo rehabilitation, but was not identified as such in Kulczycki's book, is Bolesław Kominek, discussed later in this article.

proletariat. Less conveniently for the regime, but of providential significance for the Catholic hierarchy, rehabilitated Volksdeutsche and verified Reichsdeutsche were among the most homogeneously Roman Catholic as well as the most religiously observant people in the country—the very model of what a truly Catholic Poland should look like.

The Communist regime and the Roman Catholic Church thus had profoundly different relationships to the wartime Germans who were rehabilitated or verified as ethnic Poles. Whereas Polish state officials almost always viewed these inhabitants from a distance, skeptically evaluating wartime experiences that none of them had undergone themselves, the Catholic Church drew a large proportion of its personnel, including a disproportionate share of the episcopate, from communities that had spent the war categorized as German. Many of the men and (in much more constrained roles) women who led the church knew former Volksdeutsche and former Reichsdeutsche as family members, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Some were former Volksdeutsche or former Reichsdeutsche themselves. It might seem unimaginable that wartime German experiences could be woven into the self-understanding of a self-consciously Polish postwar Catholic Church. Indeed, references to those experiences often had to be coded in particular ways, conveyed through third-person reporting, or suppressed altogether. But, as we shall see, German war stories have often been hiding in plain sight, nestled within and reshaping in fascinating ways familiar Polish narratives of the Second World War.

Traitors, Victims, Heroes: German War Stories as Polish History

If there was one policy that seemed to enjoy a consensus across the entire Polish public sphere after the trauma of the Second World War, it was that Poland could not and should not tolerate a German national minority. Aleksander Zawadzki, the governor of the province of Katowice, summed up the policy in an oft-repeated motto: "We do not want a single German, and we will not give up a single Polish soul."[22] But what did this slogan mean for the millions of residents of postwar Poland who could be plausibly categorized as either German or Polish? In the first few months of 1945, Polish state authorities and other prominent commentators would articulate several seemingly contradictory accounts of who these people were, what had happened to them during the war, what they had done during the war, and what their postwar fate should be. At issue was not just whether wartime Germans would physically remain in Poland or have formal Polish citizenship bestowed/restored but also whether and how they would be able to speak and act as Poles, co-determining both the past and the future of the nation.

[22] Quoted in Ingo Esser, "Die Deutschen in Oberschlesien," in *"Unsere Heimat ist uns ein fremdes Land geworden": Die Deutschen östlich von Oder und Neiße 1945–1950, Dokumente aus polnischen Archiven*, ed. Włodzimierz Borodziej and Hans Lemberg (Marburg, 2003), 2:388.

The view that was articulated first and most emphatically, and that remains the most familiar point of departure for such discussions, was that Polish speakers who had been incorporated into the German wartime community were traitors. On November 4, 1944, the Polish Committee of National Liberation, set up as a proto-government after Soviet and allied Polish forces had taken control of much of central Poland, issued a decree that explicitly defined as traitors (*zdrajcy*) anyone in the General Government or province of Białystok who had declared German nationality or descent during the Nazi occupation. Such residents were to be interned and required to perform forced labor.[23] The decree effectively denied the possibility of an ethnic German minority remaining loyal to the Polish state: declaring German descent was itself treason. It also ignored the possibility that ethnic Poles may have assumed German nationality under duress.[24]

The geographic scope of the decree meant that it only applied to about 6 percent of all Polish citizens who had accepted categorization as German during the war.[25] But because it covered most of Poland's historic core, the decree encapsulated many Poles' direct local experiences and later memories of categorical revenge against Germans.[26] And because it would take several months for more detailed policies to be formulated for the lands further west that had been annexed to the Reich, this initial policy of blanket repression and exclusion set a powerful precedent. In January and February 1945, as Soviet and associated Polish forces advanced through East Prussia, Upper Silesia, and Pomerania, taking control of areas heavily populated by Volksdeutsche (on the Polish side of the prewar frontier) and Polish-speaking Reichsdeutsche (on the German side), it was unsurprising that they tended to treat all wartime-German residents as part of an undifferentiated enemy population. As was noted in a Polish government situation report from Gliwice, a city situated on the German side of the interwar border running through Upper Silesia, Soviet troops "are not able to distinguish

[23] Dekret Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego z dnia 4 listopada 1944 o sródkach zabezpieczających w stosunku do zdrajców Narodu, *Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej,* November 13, 1944, Nr. 11, 101–2.

[24] The wartime German population of the General Government was a mix of residents who had self-identified as German before the war and Polish speakers who apparently identified as German during the war for opportunistic reasons. Doris Bergen, "The Nazi Concept of 'Volksdeutsche' and the Exacerbation of Antisemitism in Eastern Europe, 1939–1945," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, no. 4 (October 1994): 569–82 (esp. 571–72).

[25] Approximately 90,000 residents of the General Government were registered as ethnic Germans (Volkszugehörige) in the early years of occupation, with an additional 97,000 registered as being of German origin (Deutschstämmige) by 1944. Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupanowej Polsce* (Warsaw, 1970), 1:453–57. In areas annexed to the Reich, about 2.8 million people were registered on the Volksliste. Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 47.

[26] For discussion of grassroots anti-German sentiment across Poland, see Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga: Polska 1944–1947, Ludowa reakcja na kryzys* (Kraków, 2012), 561–73.

between the German and Polish population. . . . all were citizens of the Reich, and all fought against the Red Army."[27]

Indeed, in many respects, Polish-speaking Reichsdeutsche and people registered on the Volksliste in interwar-Polish territories annexed to the Reich did have essentially German experiences of the war, sharing in almost all of the benefits as well as the obligations of being counted among the master race. Reichsdeutsche were full German citizens, with no formal limitations based on having a Polish-speaking background. Registration of interwar Polish citizens on the Volksliste was more nuanced since it involved assignment to one of four categories: (1) active members of the interwar German minority, (2) those with passive but demonstrable ties to German language and culture, (3) those with ambiguous connections to both German and Polish language and culture, and (4) "renegades" who actively identified with Polish nationality.[28] In practice, however, the four categories were shoehorned into the binary logic of racialized occupation. Ones, Twos, and Threes were treated as Germans. Only Fours—who constituted less than 3 percent of all those on the Volksliste—were treated as Poles. The historian Ryszard Kaczmarek has estimated that at least 195,000 men in category 3 of the Volksliste, and possibly as many as twice that number, served in the Wehrmacht.[29] This was about the same as the total number of Poles estimated to have fought in the Home Army.[30] Threes were often given the same food rations as other Germans and always far more than those allotted to Poles.[31] They enjoyed standard German social insurance benefits.[32] They

[27] Archiwum Państowe w Katowicach (hereafter APK), Urząd Wojewódzki Śląski (1945–50), Wydział społeczny-polityczny 185/II/4, Sygnatura 21, Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne, Gliwice, April 4, 1945.

[28] The premise of the Volksliste, in accord with Nazi racial ideology, was that all of those registered on it were of German descent. German cultural affinities were therefore described as maintenance of German nationality and Polish cultural affinities as succumbing to Polonization. See *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law 10*, vol. 4, "The Einsatzgruppen Case." "The RuSHA Case" (Washington, DC, 1950), 714–27.

[29] Ryszard Kaczmarek, *Polacy w Wehrmachcie* (Warsaw, 2010), 176–77.

[30] Peak Home Army membership (1944) has been estimated at 400,000: Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge, 2006), 264–65.

[31] Situation reports from agents of the Polish underground in Danzig–West Prussia described Reichsdeutsche and Ones and Twos on the Volksliste as having better access to food and fuel than Threes, though Threes had much better rations than Poles. In Upper Silesia, Ones, Twos, and Threes enjoyed the same rations, twice what was allotted to Poles. Polish underground agents nonetheless insisted on listing in separate columns the rations given to "Germans" (presumably Reichsdeutsche, Ones and Twos) and those given to "Poles in Upper Silesia" (presumably Threes). Zbigniew Mazura, Aleksander Pietrowicz, and Maria Rutowska, eds., *Raporty z ziem wcielonych do III Rzeszy (1942–1944)* (Poznań, 2004), 42 (for Danzig–West Prussia); 128 and 200 (for Silesia). See also Ryszard Kaczmarek, *Górny Śląsk podczas II wojny swiatowej* (Katowice, 2006), 331.

[32] Mazura et al., *Raporty z ziem wcielonych do III Rzeszy (1942–1944)*, 200.

were encouraged to have sex with and marry other Germans, while they were forbidden to have sex with or marry Fours or Poles.[33] Threes who traveled by train across the occupied zones of Poland used the facilities designated for Germans.[34] The few legal restrictions on Threes that did exist were not always observed rigorously. Although Threes were not supposed to be admitted to the Nazi party, local studies have revealed that they did, in fact, occupy some positions as local party functionaries in the Upper Silesian industrial district.[35]

In the winter of 1945, then, it seemed that the Polish postwar order might involve a straightforward inversion of Nazi-era national classifications, resulting in the repression and/or expulsion of all wartime Germans. Across the western Polish borderlands, on both sides of the prewar frontier, many Volksdeutsche and Polish-speaking Reichsdeutsche civilians were killed outright, and several hundred thousand were interned in local labor camps or deported to labor camps in the Soviet Union. Rape and looting were ubiquitous.[36] Such treatment in the first weeks after "liberation" predictably left lasting scars on these residents. For some, these experiences confirmed a wartime German identification and led directly to their departure from Poland. Their stories thus became part of the larger story of the mass expulsion of Germans from East-Central Europe.[37] Indeed, many recent historical accounts continue to present systematic exclusion as the blanket

[33] *Trials of War Criminals*, 721–27. In his popular survey of Nazi occupation in wartime Europe, Mark Mazower misreads this important point, erroneously writing that category 3 Volksdeutsche were forbidden to marry Germans, thus suggesting that they were, in practice, treated as Poles: *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London, 2008), 195.

[34] Dominik Stoltman, *Trust Me, You Will Survive* (Edinburgh, 1994), 145.

[35] Adam Dziurok, *Śląskie rozrachunki: Władze komunistyczne a byli członkowie organizacji nazistowskich na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1956* (Warsaw, 2000), 31.

[36] According to one recent estimate, a total of 300,000 wartime Germans were interned in camps in Poland, and at least 25,000 perished. Bogusław Kopka, "Niemcy i Polacy w obozach pracy administrowanych przez resort bezpieczeństwa publicznego w Polsce 1945–1954: Terror i praca," in *Władze komunistyczne wobec ludności niemieckiej w Polsce w latach 1945–1989*, ed. Adam Dziruok, Piotr Madajczyk, and Sebastian Rosenbaum (Warsaw, 2016), 476–88. See also Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 91–106; Kazimierz Miroszewski, "Armia Czerwona na terenie województwa Sląsko-dąbrowskiego," in *Rok 1945 w wojewodztwie slą̨sko-dąbrowskim*, ed. Andrzej Topola (Katowice, 2004), 9–31; Bogdan Cimała, "Powojenne obozy odosobnienia na Górnym Śląsku," *Studia Śląskie* 59 (2000): 117–33; Zygmunt Woźnicka, "Wysiedlenia ludności górnośląskiej do ZSRR wiosną 1945 r.," *Studia Śląskie* 59 (2000): 135–61.

[37] After a long period of neglect, research on post-1945 ethnic cleansing exploded in the 1990s, and the literature in English as well as German and Polish is now vast. A few examples from the anglophone historiography: Raymond Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven, CT, 2012); Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe* (New York, 2014); Gregor Thum, *Uprooted: How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions* (Princeton, NJ, 2011).

fate of wartime Germans in postwar Poland.[38] In fact, however, before the winter of 1945 had ended, the Polish state was already recoiling from the default treatment of Polish-speaking Reichsdeutsche and Volksdeutsche as Germans. The vast majority of these inhabitants, it now clarified, were not enemies or traitors at all but rather fellow Poles and victims—not only of the Nazi regime during the war, but also of tragic misperceptions at the moment of liberation.

For former Volksdeutsche, the key to this radical shift in policy was a decree issued by the transitional government in late February 1945, followed up in early May by a law that confirmed its main provisions and clarified the details.[39] Those who had been registered on the Volksliste were now to face radically different treatment depending both on where they lived and on what categorization within the Volksliste they had received. Residents of regions where Volksliste applications had been mandatory—primarily the province of Danzig–West Prussia and the former Prussian and former Austrian areas of the province of Upper Silesia—were assumed not to have betrayed their Polish nationality if they had been placed by the Nazi regime in categories 3 or 4. They could now achieve rehabilitation through the simple "administrative" mechanism of submitting a declaration of loyalty to the Polish state, although it remained possible for individuals in these categories to be prosecuted if their wartime behavior was shown to have demonstrated abandonment of Polish nationality. Residents of these areas who had been placed in category 2 had to undergo a much more arduous process of "judicial" rehabilitation to demonstrate that their registration in that category of the Volksliste had been involuntary and that their wartime behavior had demonstrated Polish national distinctiveness. Those placed in category 1 were ineligible for rehabilitation altogether. In remaining regions, such as the Wartheland province, which encompassed the area surrounding Poznań and Łódź, it was determined that there was no general compulsion to register on the Volksliste. All of those who had registered and

[38] Some examples: Klaus-Peter Friedrich discusses the Volksdeutsche as "open collaborators" who were, "in the eyes of former Polish compatriots . . . simply renegades." After the war, they faced "exclusion from Polish society." "Collaboration in a 'Land Without a Quisling': Patterns of Cooperation with the Nazi German Occupation Regime in Poland during World War II," *Slavic Review* 64, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 711–46, quote from 728. Peter Gatrell writes that "non-German nationals, such as Silesians, Pomeranians, and Kashubians were equally demonized and unceremoniously turfed out of Poland." *The Unsettling of Europe: The Great Migration, 1945 to the Present* (London, 2019), 96. Norman Davies strangely describes autochthones in the Recovered Lands as having been "imported," suggesting that any actual native Polish-speaking inhabitants had either left or never existed in the first place: *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, vol. 2, *1795 to the Present* (Oxford. 2005), 423–24.

[39] Dekret z dnia 28 lutego 1945 r. o wyłączeniu ze społeczeństwa polskiego wrogich elementów, *Dziennik Ustaw*, Nr. 7, 39–41; Ustawa z dnia 6 Maja 1945 r. o wyłączeniu ze społeczeństwa polskiego wrogich elementów *Dziennik Ustaw*, Nr. 17, 123–26. See also Kulczycki's summary, *Belonging to the Nation*, 110–12.

had received a classification of 2, 3, or 4 therefore had to go through the judicial process to apply for rehabilitation.

These guidelines on rehabilitation were framed as addenda to previous policies on "exclusion of hostile elements," suggesting that they were limited exceptions to ongoing rules. But considering that Threes in Upper Silesia and Danzig–West Prussia constituted more than 60 percent of all wartime Volksdeutsche in Poland, these exceptions effectively turned the previous rule on its head.[40] Those eligible for administrative rehabilitation were, to be sure, often slow to submit the required oaths of loyalty as they assessed whether their home territory would definitely be included in postwar Poland and whether they would, under those circumstances, definitely want to stay in their home regions. But analysis of census data suggests that almost all of those eligible for administrative rehabilitation (90–95 percent) remained in or returned to Poland by the end of the 1940s. Although Twos in these regions faced property confiscation, restrictions on rations and employment, and sometimes even internment while awaiting the clarification of their postwar status, a majority of them also ended up remaining in Poland as Poles.[41] In Upper Silesia and Danzig–West Prussia, about two-thirds of Twos applied for judicial rehabilitation.[42] Of all judicial rehabilitation cases that were resolved by the summer of 1946, less than 20 percent were rejected. A further decree issued in June 1946 effectively ended the judicial rehabilitation process altogether, meaning that Twos in these provinces were now placed in the same position as Threes and Fours: presumed "innocent" (only registered on the Volksliste under duress) unless proven to have defected from Polish nationality voluntarily.[43] It was only in the territory of the Wartheland that residents registered on the Volksliste faced something like the blanket exclusion experienced by ethnic Germans in the General Government. Only a minority of Volksdeutsche in the Wartheland were even eligible to apply

[40] There were 726,000 people in category 3 of the Volksliste in Danzig–West Prussia and 976,000 in Upper Silesia. A total of 2.8 million people were registered on the Volksliste in all of the annexed territories. *Trials of War Criminals*, 937–38.

[41] See table 1 for detailed estimates of both administrative and judicial rehabilitations by province. On the restrictions placed on Twos during the judicial rehabilitation process, see Boda-Krężel, *Sprawa Volkslisty na Górnym Śląsku*, 86.

[42] In the provinces of Danzig and Pomorze, 97,000 had been in category 2 of the Volksliste (*Trials of War Criminals*, 938); 62,519 applied for judicial rehabilitation (Olejnik, *Zdrajcy narodu?*, 112–13). In Upper Silesia, the comparable figures were, respectively, 211,000 and 146,000. Boda-Krężel, *Sprawa Volkslisty na Górnym Śląsku*, 122–23.

[43] Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 205–6. The June 1946 decree initially only applied to Silesia, but its provisions were later applied to other areas where judicial rehabilitations had been in process. Although some of those with pending cases were now prosecuted under the new law, the total number of people convicted in the whole of Poland in 1947 was only 7,616. Olejnik, *Zdrajcy narodu?*, 189–90.

for rehabilitation, and less than 5 percent remained in Poland at the end of the 1940s.[44]

The postwar treatment of Polish-speaking Reichsdeutsche followed a trajectory similar to policy toward Volksdeutsche in eastern Upper Silesia and Pomerania. Default exclusion shifted quickly and emphatically to default inclusion. In western Upper Silesia, the earliest guidelines for recognizing German citizens as ethnic Poles set a very high bar, demanding evidence of active engagement in interwar Polish minority organizations. But revised national guidance issued in June accepted as Polish anyone declaring Polish nationality and submitting a declaration of loyalty, with only minimal caveats about excluding active participants in Nazi organizations.[45] By the end of 1946, the number of former Reichsdeutsche verified as Polish had surged to almost 700,000. The Polish Western Union, a nationalist lobbying group that had enthusiastically promoted the verification process, now worried that the number of local residents confirmed as Poles had significantly exceeded the estimated number of Polish speakers in some areas.[46] Summaries of verification outcomes in localities tended to support the impression that the bar for wartime maintenance of Polish nationality was now set very low indeed. In the village of Maciowakrze, for example, the verification commission determined that "there are no Germans." It went on to note that among the twenty local families that had been investigated and verified as Poles, there were fifteen members of the Nazi party, including a local party leader (Ortsgruppenleiter).[47] Criteria for verification were similarly generous in southern East Prussia, an area inhabited by Protestant Masurians and Catholic Warmians, who both spoke dialects of Polish. But rates of verification were much lower. Most Masurians and Warmians, like most German speakers in the East Prussia, had fled en

[44] There were approximately 493,000 Volksdeutsche in the Wartheland. *Trials of War Criminals*, 937. Kulczycki estimates that 21,000 former Volksdeutsche were rehabilitated in Poznań province (290), though this estimate would have included a large number who had been in category 4 of the Volksliste and thus were not treated as "ethnic Germans." In Łódź (city and province), there were 13,766 applications for rehabilitation. But this again would have included a significant number of applicants from category 4. And success rates for judicial rehabilitation in the region would have been relatively low (below 50 percent) given what Leszek Olejnik described as the "very Volksdeutsche-unfriendly social climate" (Olejnik, *Zdrajcy narodu?*, 117). On the blanket hostility to Volksdeutsche in the former Wartheland, see also David Curp, *A Clean Sweep? The Politics of Ethnic Cleansing in Western Poland, 1945–1960* (Rochester, NY, 2006), esp. 56–58.

[45] Kulczycki, *Belonging to the Nation*, 119–29.

[46] APK, Urząd Wojewódzki Śląski (1945–50), Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny (185/II/4), Sygnatura 428, Dyrektor Pilichowski, Polski Związek Zachodni to Min. Ziem Odzyskanych, Warsaw, January 17, 1947.

[47] APK, Urząd Wojewódzki Śląski (1945–50), Wydział Społeczno-Polityczny (185/II/4), Sygnatura 428, Sprawozdanie z kontroli narodowościowej Gromady Maciowakrze, pow. Koźle, October 14, 1947.

masse at the approach of the Soviet army in January 1945. Whereas Polish activists had spoken hopefully of a Polish-speaking population of a half million in this region, early verification numbers were only in the tens of thousands. Nonetheless, gradual return migration and generous classifying criteria did ultimately result in more than 100,000 people being verified as Poles by the end of the 1940s.[48]

The inclusion of several million wartime Germans into postwar Polish society predictably triggered a backlash, especially among those migrating into the western borderlands from central Poland or Poland's lost eastern borderlands. These resettlers and refugees had assumed they would be replacing the previous German population and were surprised and often angered to find that wartime Germans were instead being confirmed as fellow Polish citizens. One in-migrant, identifying himself simply as "a Pole," wrote to Governor Zawadzki in the summer of 1945 to express his outrage that locals who had been registered on the Volksliste—"all, without exception, traitors to Poland"—were being rehabilitated en masse. He noted that during the war Polish workers who had been forcibly brought into the region as a supplemental workforce had "daily endured slavery, precisely at the hands of the Volksdeutsche." It was hardly surprising that wartime Volksdeutsche now declared themselves to be Poles in order to avoid punishment. But, he asked the governor, "what would have happened to us if they had won?"[49]

Even among observers who accepted that mass rehabilitation and verification of wartime Germans was appropriate and necessary, there was anguished uncertainty about whether and how these fellow citizens' experiences during the war could be incorporated into Polish history. Understanding them as victims might seem to have provided a point of connection with familiar Polish-national narratives, in which the themes of victimization, suffering, and martyrdom loomed large.[50] But those familiar accounts of Polish national oppression were always premised on the national self-assertion of those being oppressed. This was especially true of the more Romantic versions of Polish history, those that highlighted armed resistance to the partitions of the late eighteenth century, the uprisings of the nineteenth century, and the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. But even national activists who had renounced insurrection in favor of the "small work" of education and

[48] Richard Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans? Language and National Identity among the Masurians since 1871* (Köln, 2001), 284–91; Claudia Kraft, "Who Is a Pole, and Who Is a German? The Province of Olsztyn in 1945," Sean Ward, trans., in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948*, ed. Philip Ther and Ana Siljak (Cambridge, 2001), 107–20.

[49] APK, Zespół 183 (Wojewódzka Rada Narodowa, 1945–50), "Polak" to Wojewódzka Rada Narodowa/Wojewode Zawadzki, via Warsaw, June 16, 1945.

[50] See, for example, the recent special issue of *The Polish Review* devoted to "Collective Suffering in the Polish Lands," 64, no. 2 (2019).

institution building had also needed to identify publicly as Poles.[51] The premise of the rehabilitation and verification processes, by contrast, was that it was impossible for some Poles to have identified as Poles at all.

The resulting existential anxieties come through clearly in an article by Father Jan Piwowarczyk, editor of the Kraków-based *Tygodnik Powszechny*, with the suggestive title "The Sin of Disloyalty to the Nation."[52] Writing in only the second issue of the newspaper, and only weeks after the transitional government's decree laying out the parameters for rehabilitation of Volksdeutsche, Piwowarczyk accepted that many wartime Germans would be and should be deemed "victims of coercion" and taken back into the national community. But he went on to lament the "painful" scale of wartime national apostasy (*odstępstwo*) and argued that such nation switching should continue to be stigmatized as a sin. This judgment extended not only to mass registration on the Volksliste in eastern Upper Silesia and Pomerania but also to mass abandonment of Polish as a declared mother tongue by interwar Reichsdeutsche in western Upper Silesia and other eastern borderlands of the Weimar Republic.[53] Piwowarczyk insisted that when these individual changes in nationality reached a certain scale, they constituted nothing less than the murder of the nation: "The nation can exist only when the collectivity of its members constantly and without pause adhere to it. If, however, they stop adhering to it, if the 'daily plebiscite' ceases, the nation dies."[54] The author was willing to countenance the absolution of those who had "abandoned their nation and went over to the enemy at the moment of most terrible trial" only if they were understood to have done so in a moment of madness—to have "succumbed to psychosis and allowed themselves to be swept away by a wave."

The characterization of rehabilitated Volksdeutsche and verified Reichsdeutsche as incapable of rational decision making was common to many otherwise sympathetic contemporary commentaries. The minister of labor in Poland's transitional government, Jan Stańczyk, who had spent time working in the Polish part of interwar Upper Silesia, emphasized the national immaturity of the local population. Since they had experienced centuries of germanizing pressure and only a brief period in an independent Poland, he argued, it would be "unfair

[51] Brian Porter, "The Social Nation and Its Futures: English Liberalism and Polish Nationalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Warsaw," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 5 (December 1996): 1470–92.

[52] Jan Piwowarczyk, "Grzech niewierności względem narodu," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, April 1, 1945, 4.

[53] Between the censuses of 1925 and 1939, the number of German citizens who declared Polish as their mother tongue declined from 930,000 to 61,000. While emigration accounted for a small part of this reduction, it largely reflected linguistic assimilation. Peter Oliver Loew, *Wir Unischtbaren: Geschichte der Polen in Deutschland* (Munich, 2014), 132–33.

[54] In using the term "daily plebiscite," Piwowarczyk duly cited Ernest Renan, the nineteenth-century French scholar who famously used the phrase in his definition of a nation.

to demand the same kind of patriotic consciousness as from the rest of Poles."[55] A similar attitude was evident in a report sent to provincial authorities by members of a local resettlement commission in Upper Silesia, who warned that large numbers of Polish-speaking Reichsdeutsche were ready to leave Poland for Germany in order to be reunited with family members, find better material conditions for their children, or escape robbery and abuse at the hands of Polish newcomers to the region. While the authors called for verified Poles to be treated as "citizens of equal value," they added the somewhat contradictory caveat that they of course "must be the youngest child" within the national community."[56] Condescending language also characterized assessments of individual wartime Germans, including some with especially problematic wartime behavior. In justifying lenient verdicts for Volksdeutsche who had joined the SA (Sturmabteilung), Polish courts often emphasized the mental and moral deficiencies of the accused, deploying characterizations such as "a type with weak character," "egged on by colleagues," "a simple person, of low level of intelligence, lacking in civic education."[57]

Depicting former Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche as temporarily insane or as children provided a basis for absolving them of responsibility for their wartime actions. It also facilitated the exclusion of those actions from narratives of Polish history. But if the ultimate aim of rehabilitation and verification was to enable future national agency, then insistence on the helplessness and abjection of wartime Germans was not very productive. The most vociferous advocates of the rehabilitated and the verified therefore tended to articulate a different kind of victimization narrative. Rather than imagining Silesians, Pomeranians, and Masurians as exceptionally vulnerable to Germanizing pressures that were successfully resisted by other, more "mature" Poles, these accounts portrayed these populations as facing pressures and forms of oppression that other Poles had been spared altogether. This emphasis was uncontroversial to the extent that it involved recounting the persecution of Polish language and culture in territories annexed to the Reich. But the comparative aspect of this argument, the suggestion that residents of central Poland had a relatively "easy" experience of Nazi occupation, was far more difficult to reconcile with narratives of Poles' blanket wartime martyrdom. Defenders of former Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche were nonetheless remarkably bold in making such comparisons. A letter sent to Warsaw by officials in

[55] AAN, Zespół 290, Urząd Rady Ministrów, Sygnatura 5/134, Minister Pracy i Opieki Społecznej (Stańczyk) to Premier (Osóbka Morawski), August 4, 1945.

[56] APK, Urząd Wojewódzki Śląski (1945–50), Wydział Spoleczno-Polityczny (185/II/4), Sygnatura 428, Sprawozdanie Woj. Komisja Kontrolna działające w związku z akcja wysiedlencza, October 8, 1946.

[57] Adam Dziurok, "Rozliczenie zbrodni niemieckich na Górnym Śląsku na przykładzie procesów byłych członków SA," in *Władze komunistyczne wobec ludności niemieckiej w Polsce w latach 1945–1989*, ed. Adam Dziurok, Piotr Madajczyk, and Sebastian Rosenbaum (Warsaw, 2016), 64–74, quotes from 72.

Działdowo county, an area attached to East Prussia during the war where many local inhabitants ended up being placed in category 2 of the Volksliste, contrasted the hardships of service in the Wehrmacht with the ostensibly more tranquil lives of Polish farmers across the border in the General Government. "Volksdeutsche," the letter concluded, "envied the relatively peaceful fate of non-Volksdeutsche Poles."[58]

Similar claims were advanced by Roman Catholic bishop of Katowice, Stanisław Adamski, probably the single most influential voice advocating on behalf of residents who had been registered on the Volksliste. He lobbied for a rapid and generous rehabilitation process, first in a memorandum circulated to policy makers in the spring of 1945,[59] then in a pamphlet published the following year.[60] As a prelate with a long record of Polish-national activism, he was not registered on the Volksliste himself. He was banished from his diocese in 1941 and spent most of the rest of the war in occupied Warsaw. But he and the rest of the diocesan curia had encouraged both the parish clergy and ordinary parishioners to declare themselves "inclined to Germanness" in the German census of 1939 and to accept Volksliste classifications (1, 2, or 3) that would allow them to remain in the region.[61] Adamski cited his personal experience straddling Silesia and the General Government to argue that compulsory registration on the Volksliste was a worse fate than spending the war as a Pole in central Poland: "life in exile in the General Government surrounded by countrymen was much easier, more free, and more joyful [than life in Silesia]. I know. I was both here and there."[62]

But Adamski's defense of local Volksdeutsche went much further than recounting the oppression they suffered under Nazi occupation. Whereas Father Piwowarczyk had described residents' response to such oppression as "succumbing to psychosis" and falling into the "sin" of "national apostasy," Adamski instead portrayed them as national heroes. The bishop explained that registration on the Volksliste in Upper Silesia was a conscious and deliberate "maskerada," a term that can be translated as "masquerade" but also as "camouflage." Indeed, the military

[58] AAN, Zespół 290, Urząd Rady Ministrow, Sygnatura 5/16, Problem "Volksdeutschow" w powiecie działdowskim, from Prezydium Powiatowa Rada Narodowa, n.d., received February 28. 1945.

[59] Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Katowicach (hereafter AAK), ARz 00004, April 9, 1945, Pogląd na obecny stan duchowieństwa katolickiego i zakonów diecezji katowickiej.

[60] Adamski had served as bishop of Katowice since 1930. He was born in the Poznań region and spent his earlier career there, but the rest of the diocesan curia was almost exclusively composed of natives Silesians. See Jerzy Myszor, *Historia Diecezji Katowickiej* (Katowice, 1999), 306–8, as well as biographies of individual clerics in the online encyclopedia of the Catholic Church in Silesia, https://silesia.edu.pl/index.php/Kategoria:Biografie.

[61] Jerzy Myszor, *Stosunki Kościół-państwo okupacyjne w diecezji katowickiej 1939–1945* (Katowice, 2010), 37–53.

[62] Stanisław Adamski, *Pogląd na rozwój sprawy narodowościowej w województwem śląskim w czasie okupacji niemieckiej* (Katowice, 1946), 22.

connotations of the latter were quite intentional. In Adamski's account, mass declaration of German nationality in the police census of 1939, followed by mass registration on the Volksliste, had been a "stratagem of war" in order to "paralyze a new means of repressing Poles."[63] The registration of almost the entire population as German, while seemingly a triumph for the regime, actually generated "consternation" among Nazi leaders since it made it impossible for the authorities to tell who was really a Pole or a German.[64] Church authorities had even taken the "very grave" step of suspending public use of Polish in religious worship in order to thwart the Nazi regime's attempt to use language of worship as a means of separating Poles and Germans.[65] Despite the anguish that this acceptance of linguistic Germanization entailed, Adamski argued that the treatment of almost all local residents as German guaranteed the survival in place of the region's Polish-speaking population and also ensured that a future Poland would have an experienced industrial workforce. In short, the bishop triumphantly concluded, "the camouflage in Upper Silesia succeeded."[66]

Adamski's postwar defense of wartime nation switching was also, by many measures, a spectacular success. His "camouflage" narrative swiftly became the quasi-official stance of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. The clergy of the diocese of Katowice rallied monolithically behind their bishop, often articulating defenses of wartime nation switching that were even more defiant than Adamski's. In a speech to the Provincial National Council in Katowice in July 1945, Father Rudolf Adamczyk dismissed as "childish and pointless" the notion that former Volksdeutsche needed to "atone" for enjoying better material conditions during the war. Poles in other regions, he argued, should be happy that so many people in Silesia had survived the war in this way. And rather than dwelling exclusively on the crimes committed by some Volksdeutsche, they should reflect on the various forms of collaboration practiced by Poles in the General Government.[67] A year and a half later, in an article in *Gość Niedzielny* (The Sunday Guest), a periodical published by the diocese of Katowice, Father Franciszek Kuboszek reiterated and further explained Adamski's characterization of wartime nation switching as "camouflage." This strategy, he emphasized, was not a top-down imposition by Adamski but was instead the result of unanimous, simultaneous application of "rustic common sense" by the local population. "No one could have any scruples about it or saw any problems with it. Since it was necessary to stay [in their home region], it was necessary to adjust to

[63] Adamski, Pogląd na obecny, op cit.
[64] Adamski, *Pogląd na rozwój*, 11.
[65] Adamski, *Pogląd na rozwój*, 12.
[66] Adamski, *Pogląd na rozwój*, 22.
[67] The full text of Adamczyk's address was printed under the title "Czas skończyć z dzielnicowością," *Gość Niedzielny*, August 26, 1945, 236–38.

circumstances, i.e., to become a German on the outside."[68] While the Catholic clergy in Silesia vocally defended wartime nation switching, the church hierarchy and broader Catholic milieu in the rest of Poland fell silent on this issue. Bishops in other areas may have had private reservations about Adamski's wartime behavior,[69] but no one in the Polish episcopate voiced public criticism of his role in mass registration on the Volksliste or expressed any public lamentation about the phenomenon itself. Father Piwowarczyk's characterization of mass nation switching as a tragic "national apostasy" proved to be the last, as well as the first, systematic commentary on the matter by a non-Silesian Polish Catholic intellectual.

Even more striking was the rapid dissemination and effective adoption of Adamski's account by Polish state officials. The bishop's memorandum was shared with the courts overseeing the judicial rehabilitation process, not only in Katowice but also in Poznań and Pomerania, and by the end of 1945, Adamski himself expressed satisfaction that official government policy now reflected his sympathetic portrayal of wartime nation switching.[70] When Governor Zawadzki provided an update on the progress of national rehabilitation and verification in Silesia one year after the commencement of those processes, his talking points were scarcely distinguishable from the program that the regional church had been promoting. In addition to expressing a general desire to be "finished" with the legacy of the Volksliste as soon as possible, Zawadzki also called for the rapid judicial rehabilitation of Twos, the "overwhelming majority" of whom were "in no way worse than those in the third or fourth category of the Volksliste." While the update on verification of Reichsdeutsche was somewhat more equivocal, with reference to "abuses" that affected both "undoubted Poles" and "doubtful Poles," the governor again stressed the need to guarantee the autochthonous population's "full civil rights" as soon as possible.[71] This rhetorical convergence illustrates what historian Michael Fleming has rightly described as a shared agenda of Polonization that spurred wide-ranging church-state cooperation in Poland's

[68] Franciszek Kuboszek, "Szkodliwa tendencja w ksiązce Izdebskiego o volkslistach," *Gość Niedzielny*, February 9, 1947, 46.

[69] In correspondence with the pope immediately after the war, August Hlond, the primate of Poland, criticized Adamski's wartime actions as "mistakes," in part because they led to the local church taking a compensatory accommodationist stance in relation to the incoming Polish communist regime. Jerzy Pietrzak, *Pelnia Prymasostwa: Ostatnie lata prymasa Polski kardynala Augusta Hlonda 1945–1948* (Poznań, 2009), 1:293–94.

[70] AAK, ARz 220, Klonowski, Kierownik Sądu Grodziego in Bydgoszcz to Adamski, November 7, 1945; Adamski to Eugeniusz Krala, Prezes Sądu Apelacyjnego in Katowice, December 14, 1945.

[71] "Wojewoda Zawadzki o 'volkslistach,'" *Gość Niedzielny*, May 19, 1946, 162.

former German borderlands.[72] But whereas Fleming has discussed this consensus exclusively in terms of repression and expulsion of the German population (along with other ethnic minorities), Polonization actually often meant precisely the embrace and integration of wartime Germans.

Indeed, probably the most impressive measure of the success of Adamski's "camouflage" narrative was the one the bishop used to judge the success of the wartime strategy itself: a large majority of the people in question (Roman Catholic, Polish-speaking Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche) remained in their home regions, not only immediately after the war but through the Communist era. There were, to be sure, significant waves of emigration in the late twentieth century. But before 1980, such emigration was relatively modest, representing only about 20 percent of the population that had undergone national rehabilitation or verification after the war.[73] Even after the larger wave of emigration in the 1980s and 1990s, a majority of the descendants of this population remains in Poland today. It is revealing that the only subgroup among rehabilitated and verified Poles that witnessed wholesale emigration within a single generation was one that was not covered by Adamski's confessionally specific defense: the Protestant autochthones of Masuria. Already by 1970, 90 percent of Masurians originally verified as Poles had reidentified as German and moved to Germany.[74] The fate of Poland's Jews also stood in sharp contrast to the high levels of persistence in place among Catholic Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche. After a brief revival immediately after the war, two-thirds of the members of the Jewish community had emigrated already by 1950. Following the antisemitic purges of 1968, only a few thousand Jews remained in the country.[75]

This high degree of demographic continuity meant that the fate of Catholic wartime Germans in postwar Poland was in many ways most comparable to the fate of Catholic wartime Germans in postwar France. As in Upper Silesia and Pomerania, almost the entire population of Alsace-Lorraine had been treated as ethnically German after the region was conquered and incorporated into the Reich. After liberation, the French government followed the same trajectory

[72] Michael Fleming, "The Ethno-Religious Ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church and the Ascendancy of Communism in Post-war Poland," *Nations and Nationalism* 16, no. 4 (2010): 637–56.

[73] In the 1950s, 292,000 Polish citizens emigrated to Germany. A further 313,000 emigrated in the 1960s and 1970s. Departures rose to 633,000 in the 1980s. Gawryczewski, *Ludność polska w xx wieku*, 469. See also Dariusz Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracja z Polski, 1949–1989* (Warsaw, 2012), table 4, 281.

[74] Between 1950 and 1970, the Masurian Protestant population fell from 68,500 to 7,043: Andreas Kossert, *Preussen, Deutsche oder Polen? Die Masuren im Spannungsfeld des ethnischen Nationalismus 1870–1956* (Wiesbaden, 2001), 327.

[75] There were an estimated 222,000 Jews in Poland in 1946. By 1951, only 60,000–80,000 remained. By 1970, the Jewish community numbered 5–10,000. Gawryczewski, *Ludność polska w xx wieku*, 99.

as the Polish government in its treatment of the borderland population: harsh but relatively brief purges gave way to a blanket embrace of all but a handful of local inhabitants as French citizens in good standing. As Laird Boswell has argued, the reincorporation of the province into France relied on a seemingly paradoxical relationship between center and periphery. On the one hand, there has been an enduring "deep memory rift between the border region and the rest of the nation": residents of Alsace-Lorraine nurtured memories of wartime victimization, while residents of other parts of France did not learn anything at all about the region's wartime experiences.[76] On the other hand, at crucial moments, national elites in Paris have emphatically endorsed Alsace-Lorraine's regional memory, even when it has stirred discontent elsewhere in the country.

This dynamic was most dramatically on display in 1953, when a group of Waffen SS soldiers were put on trial in Bordeaux for their role in the massacre of hundreds of civilians in the French town of Oradour in 1944. Thirteen of the soldiers were conscripts from Alsace-Lorraine. Their initial convictions alongside other German soldiers provoked outrage and protests in their home region. A conservative majority in the National Assembly eventually voted to pardon the so-called *malgré nous*—those who fought for Germany "despite ourselves"—which in turn sparked an uproar in the Limousin region, where Oradour is located. In her study of the trial, Sarah Farmer concluded that "the Assembly deemed the alienation of a poor, rural, leftist region to be less of a threat to national unity than continuing unrest in populous, prosperous Alsace."[77]

Electoral politics, in other words, provided the mechanism that integrated the insular and inward-looking regional memory culture of Alsace-Lorraine with the sprawling, national-level coalition of first Christian Democracy, then Gaullism. What might have provided a similar mechanism in postwar Poland, connecting the distinctive German wartime experiences of Silesians and Pomeranians with Polish-national politics and culture? The remainder of this article will address that question, focusing in particular on whether and how the biographies of those who spent the war as Germans intersected with the biographies of Poland's postwar elites.

Intimacy and Distance: Nation Switchers as National Role Models

Just as there was a widespread consensus that postwar Poland would need to be a national (*narodowy*) state, there was a similar consensus that it would need to be a people's (*ludowy*) state. Having lost a disproportionate share of its intelligentsia

[76] Laird Boswell, "Should France Be Ashamed of Its Past? Coming to Terms with the Past in France and Its Eastern Borderlands," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 9, nos. 2–3 (June–September 2008): 237–51, quote on 245.

[77] Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (Berkeley, CA, 2000), quote from 167.

(by one estimate, about 35 percent) to the targeted campaigns of the Nazi regime, Poland had to recruit its postwar leaders from the "popular" classes.[78] In what was still a largely rural and agrarian society, coming from "the people" still tended to mean coming from the peasantry. But the forces of industrialization and urbanization meant that the typical Pole of the future would live in a city rather than a village and work in industry rather than on the land. The great symbols of this transformation would be new socialist cities such as Nowa Huta, on the edge of Kraków, where migrants from the countryside would have "the chance to move from the margins of Polish history to its newly constructed center stage."[79]

But the creation of a new "Workers' Poland" through rural-urban migration would take time. Who would serve as Poland's actual working class while its ideal one was under construction? Wartime losses among industrial workers, after all, had been almost as severe as losses among the intelligentsia. The industrial workforce in Poland's largest cities, Łódź and Warsaw, had plunged by 40 percent and 70 percent, respectively, reflecting a catastrophic human toll, including the death of the overwhelming majority of each city's Jewish inhabitants as well as the near-total physical destruction of the capital. Partially replacing these losses was the huge and relatively more intact industrial conurbation of Upper Silesia, roughly half of which had previously been outside Poland's frontiers. In 1946, a third of all Poles working in mining and industry lived in the province of Silesia (covering historical Upper Silesia and the Zaglębie region), with an additional 7.7 percent living in the provinces of Gdańsk and Pomorze, largely overlapping with wartime Danzig–West Prussia. In the heavy industrial sector, this regional concentration was overwhelming: 79 percent of all miners and 82 percent of all foundry workers lived in the province of Silesia.[80] There was a clear—and clearly awkward—implication of this regional concentration: about half of Poland's heavy-industrial working class consisted of people who had spent the war as part of the German working class.[81]

As Malgorzata Fidelis discusses in her study of the transformation in the roles of men and women that accompanied Poland's postwar industrialization, the issue of nationality was the dominant preoccupation of mining communities in the

[78] Aleksander Gella, "The Life and Death of the Old Polish Intelligentsia," *Slavic Review* 30, no. 1 (March 1971): 23.

[79] Katherine LeBow, "'We Are Building a Common Home': The Moral Economy of Citizenship in Postwar Poland," in *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe*, ed. Frank Biess and Robert Moeller (New York, 2010), 221.

[80] Prewar figures from *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1937* (Warsaw, 1937), 239; postwar figures from *Rocznik Statystyczny 1948* (Warsaw, 1949), 58–59.

[81] This rough estimate is based on extrapolating the proportion of former Germans among the overall population (see table 1) to the number of people employed in heavy industry (mining and metallurgy).

immediate aftermath of the war.[82] The first, existential question for much of the Polish working class, in other words, was whether it would be accepted as a *Polish* working class at all. As we have seen, most former Volksdeutsche and Polish-speaking Reichsdeutsche ultimately were rehabilitated or verified (respectively) as Poles. But initial perceptions of them as German continued to shape the language of observations by the police and other state officials long after most rehabilitations and verifications had been completed. One police report from late 1949 concluded that since most workers in the Upper Silesian cities of Gliwice and Zabrze were autochthones, they could be assumed to be "pro-German."[83] Another report from 1948 noted that most employees at a rendering plant near Gdańsk were "Germans who had not yet been rehabilitated," along with a small number of Ukrainians. "It is not surprising," the reporting officer concluded, "that Polish workers do like to seek employment in that factory."[84]

What comes through clearly in such reports is the social distance separating the observers from the observed. The Polish officials moving into regions in which most people had spent the war as Germans were almost always strangers to those lands. In part, this reflected the specific recruitment patterns of Communist activists. While the prewar Communist party never had any traction in the former Prussian parts of Poland, even in heavily industrialized Upper Silesia, one of its electoral strongholds was in the Zagłębie basin, on the other side of the pre-1918 Russian-German frontier.[85] Recruitment to the Polish Workers Party (PPR) just after the war reflected these earlier patterns. In August 1945, party membership in the cities of the Zagłębie region was three to four times more prevalent than in the cities of interwar Polish Silesia and ten times more prevalent than in the cities of interwar German Silesia.[86] Recruitment of native residents into governing cadres would remain very weak as Communist rule was consolidated. In 1956, only 11 percent of the members of the party committee in the province of Opole were from the region.[87]

[82] Małgorzata Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (Cambridge, 2010), 131–42.

[83] Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (hereafter IPN), BU 1572/315—Raporty miesięczne i tablice statystyczne szefa WUBP w Katowicach, Report of 01.02–28.02.1949.

[84] IPN, BU 1572/308—Sprawozdania dekadowe Szefa WUBP w Gdańsku, Report of 01.06–30.06.1948.

[85] Karol and Tadeusz Rzepecki, *Sejm i Senat 1928–1933: Podręcznik zawierający wyniki wyborów w województwach, okręgach i powiatach, podobizny posłów sejmowych i senatorów, statystyki i mapy poglądowe* (Poznań, 1928).

[86] Adam Hrebenda, "Rola polityczna śląsko-dąbrowskiej klasy robotniczej w okresie xxv-lecia PRL," in *Klasa robotnicza województwa katowickiego w ćwierćwieczu Polski Ludowej*, ed. Wanda Mrozek (Katowice, 1972), 30.

[87] Michał Lis, *Polska ludność rodzima na Śląsku po II wojnie światowej* (Opole, 1993), 40.

The estrangement of wartime Germans from the Polish state went beyond distrust of the Communist party. It also reflected the more fundamental social distance that separated former Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche from Poland's educated elite. This had already been apparent in the interwar period, in the part of Upper Silesia already incorporated into Poland: in 1923, only a small minority (15 percent) of schoolteachers in the province of Silesia were native to the province, far lower than native representation among schoolteachers elsewhere.[88] A government report from 1954 on the autochthonous population of western Upper Silesia concluded that they generally worked "at the lowest levels" and with only "faint chance of advancement." Whereas 4.5 percent of all preschool children in Poland were from a Reichsdeutsche background, only 0.9 percent of those in higher education had such a background.[89] "Repolonization" classes were meant to help verified Reichsdeutsche overcome their lack of previous exposure to written Polish, but students in such classes were sometimes put off by the condescension of their in-migrant teachers.[90] Poles with any kind of German past would have been hard pressed to find role models with similar life stories among Poland's political and cultural elites. Of the twenty ministers in Poland's transitional government in 1945, none had been born in the half of postwar Poland that had been part of Germany before the First World War.[91] The same was true of the membership of the Polish PEN Club in 1948, a group that can serve as a rough-and-ready proxy for the country's literary elite. Only one of the ninety-eight members was born in the German empire, and none were born in Upper Silesia, Pomerania, or Masuria.[92]

A similar pattern was evident among Poland's lay Catholic intelligentsia. Most of the leaders of the latter arose from the interwar Catholic student movement, based in cities of the former Austrian or former Russian partitions (Wilno, Lwów, Kraków, Warsaw, Lublin). They would have had little if any connection to the areas where German identification was the wartime norm. As Piotr Kosicki has observed, Poland's Catholic intellectuals constituted a fundamentally francophile and germanophobe milieu, and their sympathies and experiences tended to

[88] Jerzy Bartkowski, *Tradycja i polityka: Wpływ tradycji kulturowych polskich regionów na wspólczesne zachowania społeczne i polityczne* (Warsaw, 2003), 153.

[89] IPN BU 1583/252—Rewizjonizm Niemiecki, "Zagadnienie Rewizjonizmu," November 1954.

[90] A woman of local origin who underwent training to be a teacher described good relations with most students and teachers but complained that one discriminated against her "because I was born in Silesia." "Czytać uczyłam się z polskiego modlitewnika," Pamiętnik nr. 3421, in *Tu Jest Mój Dom: Pamiętniki z Ziem Zachodnich i Północnych* (Warsaw, 1965), 125.

[91] One cabinet member, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, was born in the Ruhr and spent some of his youth in the Poznań region.

[92] Membership lists from the Polish Pen Club website, https://penclub.com.pl/lista-czlonkow-w-roku-1949/.

leapfrog over the German-speaking world.[93] Even the briefly revived Labor Party (Stronnictwo Pracy), a Christian Democratic party that had drawn some of its leaders and much of its mass support from Upper Silesia and Pomerania before the war, was led after the 1945 by activists from former Austrian and Russian lands.[94]

There was one glaring exception to this pattern: the leadership of Poland's Roman Catholic Church. Wartime Germans were well represented—indeed, often overrepresented—among the bishops, parish priests, and members of religious orders who governed the institution and served as its public face. With few exceptions, Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche priests eligible for rehabilitation or verification, respectively, went through the necessary processes and remained in their pastoral posts.[95] But this persistence was not just a lagging indicator, destined to fade as the wartime generation retired or died. It was instead part of a self-reinforcing feedback loop, in which the visibility of priests native to the region reinforced local loyalties to the church and spurred further recruitment to the priesthood. In Opole (interwar German) Silesia, for example, autochthones made up 56 percent of the overall population in 1950 but 71 percent of ordinations to the priesthood between 1945 and 1962.[96] Provincial governor Zawadzki, despite his overall support for rapid mass rehabilitation and verification, complained that this numerical advantage was exacerbated by a conscious policy of favoritism toward autochthonous priests. These "masked Germans" continued to be put in charge of larger, urban parishes, while in-migrant priests tended to be relegated to smaller, rural parishes.[97] Throughout the Communist era, the dioceses of Katowice (interwar Polish Upper Silesia) and Chełmno (in Pomerania), where the overwhelming majority of the Catholic population had been registered on the Volksliste, had disproportionately high levels of religious vocations, meaning they were net "exporters" of priests to other parts of Poland.[98]

[93] Piotr Kosicki, *Catholics on the Barricades: Poland, France, and the "Revolution," 1890–1956* (New Haven, CT, 2018), esp. 9, 33–35, and 76–91.

[94] Wojciech Korfanty, who was both one of the national leaders of the Labor Party and a regional populist tribune in his native Upper Silesia, died just before the outbreak of the war.

[95] See table 2 for estimates of the total number of rehabilitated Volksdeutsche and verified Reichsdeutsche among Poland's Roman Catholic parish clergy. The proportion of wartime Germans among Poland's postwar Roman Catholic clergy (about 800 out of 8,800) was comparable to their share in the total population. Total figure for parish clergy from Lucjan Adamczuk and Witold Zdaniewicz, eds., *Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1918–1990: Rocznik statystyczny* (Warsaw, 1991), 133.

[96] Alojzy Sitek, *Organizacja i kierunki działalności kurii Administracji Apostolskiej Śląska Opolskiego w latach 1945–1956* (Wrocław, 1986), 27 (population figure); 42–43 (ordination figure).

[97] AAK, ARz, 00004, Zawadzki to starosty in województwo of Silesia, January 9, 1946.

[98] In 1985, 887 parish priests in Poland had been born in the diocese of Chełmno; 756 parish priests worked in the diocese; 1,039 parish priests had been born in the diocese

TABLE 2
ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISH PRIESTS IN POLAND CATEGORIZED AS GERMAN DURING WORLD WAR II (CA. 1950)

Diocese or Apostolic Administration	Estimate of Verified Reichsdeutsche	Estimate of Rehabilitated Volksdeutsche	Estimated Total Number of Parish Priests Categorized as German during WW II
Katowice		207	207
Chełmno		182	182
Opole	293		293
Wrocław	33		33
Gdańsk	19		19
Olsztyń	45		45
Gorzów	23		23
Poland (total)	413	389	802

SOURCES.—Estimates of verified Reichsdeutsche are numbers of priests ordained within the given apostolic administration. Most of these figures are drawn from articles in a special issue of *Nasza Przeszłość* in 1965. For Opole: Dola, 33; for Gdańsk: Antoni Baciński, "Dzieje Diecezji Gdańskiej w ostatnimXX-leciu (1945–1965)," 166; for Olsztyń: Jan Obłak, "Dzieje Diecezji Warmińskiej w okresie dwudziestolecia (1945–1965)," 213. The estimate for indigenous priests in the apostolic administration of Gorzów is taken from Robert Żurek, *Kościół Rzymskokatolicki w Polsce wobec Ziem Zachodnich i Północnych 1945–1948* (Szczecin-Warsaw-Wrocław, 2015), 414. Estimate of 207 rehabilitated Volksdeutsche in the diocese of Katowice represents 90 percent of the estimated total parish priests in categories 1–3 of the Volksliste. Jan Sziling, *Polityka okupanta hitlerowskiego wobec Kościoła Katolickiego 1939–1945* (Poznań, 1970), 91. Estimate of 182 rehabilitated Volksdeutsche among parish clergy in the diocese of Chełmno represents 80 percent of the estimated total parish priests in categories 1–3 of the Volksliste. Sziling, 83.

NOTE.—The wartime province of Danzig–West Prussia, where application to the DVL was compulsory, substantially overlapped with the diocese of Chełmno. Rehabilitated priests from the region are therefore all credited to that diocese in this chart. But a few counties, all with relatively low rates of adherence to the DVL, were in the neighboring dioceses of Gniezno, Włocławek, and Płock. A small number of rehabilitated priests in the region may therefore have worked in those dioceses. Given the regime's distrust of Roman Catholic clerics, especially potentially polonophile clerics, it has been assumed that very few if any Catholic diocesan priests in Katowice or Chełmno were assigned to category 1 of the DVL, which would have made them ineligible for rehabilitation.

There was an even more remarkable overrepresentation of wartime Germans, especially Silesians, among the country's nuns. In 1950, Silesia (Upper and Lower) had less than 20 percent of Poland's Catholic population but was home to almost a third of all members of female religious orders.[99] The disparity was most striking in the apostolic administration of Wrocław (Lower Silesia), where very few local laypeople were verified as Polish but hundreds of nuns of local

of Katowice; 887 worked in the diocese. Adamczuk and Zdaniewicz, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce 1918–1990*, 134.

[99] Out of the 19,051 nuns resident in Poland in 1950, 1,618 lived in the diocese of Katowice, 2,366 in the apostolic administrations of Opole, and 2,033 in the apostolic administration of Wrocław: AAN, UdSWWR, Syg 5a/28, "Koscioly i klasztory rzymkatol w Polsc," n.d. [1950].

origin remained.[100] The Catholic hierarchy argued that this reflected the underlying Polish elements within the prewar and wartime German church in the region.[101] But state officials reported that autochthonous nuns in Middle and Upper Silesia, whatever their genealogical origins, spoke Polish poorly at best and represented a dangerous vector of Germanization among the indisputably Polish in-migrant lay population.[102] In 1954, these anxieties led to the most dramatic single act of repression that the regime ever launched against the Catholic Church: an operation called "X-2" that deported more than a thousand nuns from Opole Silesia to central Poland in order to disrupt their putative Germanizing influence and expedite the nuns' own Polonization.[103]

The outsized role that Upper Silesia played in Polish Catholicism had already been evident during the interwar period. The diocese of Katowice was the most monolithically Roman Catholic in the country (92.3 percent), offering an early model of what a confessionally homogeneous Poland would look like.[104] Both Silesians and Kashubians—the latter an ethnic group inhabiting the northwestern part of the diocese of Chełmno (Pomerania)—cultivated enduring auto-stereotypes of exceptional religiosity, self-understandings that were largely confirmed by quantifiable indices of devotional intensity.[105] Unlike Galicia, the other

[100] At the end of the 1940s, only 5 percent of the population of the *województwo* of Wrocław (covering most but not all of the apostolic administration) was native to the area: *Narodowy spis powszechny z dnia 3 grudnia 1950: Miejsce zamieszkania ludności w sierpniu 1939 r.* (Warsaw, 1955), 4–5. I have not been able to make a systematic calculation of the origins of all nuns in the region, but in reports from the early 1950s, a large proportion of nuns in many individual houses were described as being autochthones: AAN, UdSWWR, Syg. 133/482. For example, almost half of the sisters of Mary Immaculate living in Middle Silesia (143 of 306) were autochthones: Edtya Kołtan, "Kościół jako czynnik integracyjny ludności Dolnego Śląska widziany przez pryzmat działalności Zgromadzenia Sióstr Maryi Niepokalanej (1945–1963)," in *Dolnoślązacy? Kształtowanie tożsamości mieszkańców Dolnego Śląska po II wojnie światowej*, ed. Joanna Nowosielska-Sobel and Grzegorz Strauchold (Wrocław, 2007), 131–39.

[101] Bolesław Kominek, *W służbie "Ziem Zachodnich"* (Wrocłąw, 1977), 47.

[102] A report on the St. Elizabeth sisters in Kostomłoty in 1953 complained that the autochthonous sisters "up until the present moment use German despite being in Poland for such a long time." AAN, UdSWWR, Syg. 133/482 (pp. 25–26 of archival pagination). A report on the Servants of the Virgin Mary in Głuczyca described them as "mostly hardened Germans, some of whom cannot understand a word of Polish." AAN, UdSWWR, Syg. 133/488.

[103] Ks. Andrzej Hanich and ks. Alojzy Sitek, "Wysiedlenie śląskich księży i siostr zakonnych ze Śląska Opolskiego przez władze komunistyczne w 1954 roku," in *Stalinizm i rok 1956 na Górnym Śląsku*, ed. Adam Dziurok, Bernard Linek, and Krzysztof Tarka (Katowice-Opole-Kraków, 2007), 145–207.

[104] Witold Zdaniewicz, *Kosciol Katolicki w Polsce 1945–1972: Duchowieństwo i wierni, miejsca kultu, życie religijne* (Poznan-Warsaw, 1978), 65.

[105] On religious auto-stereotypes of Kashubians and Silesians, see Bartkowski, *Tradycja i polityka*, 145–46, 150. Bartkowski also examined a number of other quantitative indices of religiosity, including church attendance, in which Upper Silesia, along

Polish region known for its piety, Upper Silesia stood out for combining elevated religiosity with very high levels of urbanization and industrialization. For Catholic commentators anxious about the impact of socioeconomic modernization, this was an invaluable precedent. They designated the local parish clergy as the heroes of this success story, crediting their diligence and ingenuity in sympathetically adjusting forms of pastoral care to suit industrial schedules and habits.[106] Already in the 1920s, as the Polish episcopate reconstituted itself after a century of incorporation into different imperial states, it actively sought to incorporate the pioneers of such "modern" pastoral practices into its ranks. New bishops appointed to run dioceses in central (former Russian) Poland were drawn predominantly from the former Prussian dioceses of Poznań-Gniezno and Katowice.[107]

This pattern was amplified further after the war, as men from these two regions were exclusively entrusted with the governance of the vast new western and northern territories. By the end of 1945, four of Poland's seventeen dioceses and two of the five apostolic administrations in the "recovered lands" were run by bishops born in the territory of the diocese of Katowice.[108] Two dioceses (Gniezno and Warsaw) were headed by Poland's primate, August Cardinal Hlond, who was born in Upper Silesia and educated in a Prussian Volksschule before going on to attend a secondary school in Turin run by the Salesian order. After spending the first part of his career in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, he returned to Upper Silesia in the 1920s to serve as the first bishop of the diocese of Katowice. Many of his oldest and closest clerical colleagues were based in the region, and he had four sisters who remained in Upper Silesia their entire

with Galicia, stood out (149–54). In the 1930s, the dioceses of Katowice and Chełmno had ranked second and third, respectively, in per capita participation in Catholic Action (Tarnów in Galicia was first). Calculated from figures in Witold Zdaniewicz, "Akcja Katolicka," in *Historia katolicyzmu społecznego w Polsce, 1832–1939*, ed. Czeslaw Strzeszewski, Ryszard Bender, and Konstanty Turowski (Warsaw, 1981), 417–52.

[106] See James Bjork, "Bulwark or Patchwork? Religious Exceptionalism and Regional Diversity in Postwar Poland," in *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*, ed. Bruce Berglund and Brian Porter-Szücs (Budapest, 2010), 129–58.

[107] James Bjork, "From Empires to Nation-States: Remaking Roman Catholicism in an Independent Poland," *Central Europe* 17, no. 2 (January 2020): 79–92. Curiously, none of these new bishops came from the other former Prussian diocese, Chełmno, even though its devotional profile would seem to have made it attractive in ways similar to Poznań-Gniezno and Upper Silesia.

[108] August Hlond (bishop of Gniezno and Warsaw), Jan Kanty Lorek (bishop of Sandomierz), Teodor Kubina (bishop of Częstochowa), Bolesław Kominek (apostolic administrator of Opole), Karol Milik (apostolic administrator of Wrocław). This list does not include the actual bishop of Katowice, Stanisław Adamski, who, as we have seen, was a fierce advocate for locals registered on the Volksliste although not himself a native of Silesia. Apostolic administrations were de facto dioceses; the special terminology reflected the fact that the Vatican did not recognize the transfer of the Oder-Neisse territories to Poland until 1970.

lives. He would have thus known many people who were registered on the Volksliste—likely including at least some of his own nieces and nephews and/or sisters and brothers-in-law. One sister had to change her married name from Helman to Chlondowska as part of the postwar de-Germanization campaign in the region.[109]

Teodor Kubina, another native of Upper Silesia, had been appointed the first bishop of the new diocese of Częstochowa in 1925. The diocese was the home of the Black Madonna, Poland's national icon and the country's most popular pilgrimage destination, but it also encompassed "red Zagłębie," the left-leaning industrial region just to the east of Upper Silesia. Kubina's personal links to the experience of mass Volksliste registration were even more intimate than Hlond's. His first pastoral post had been in the St. Mary's parish of Katowice, where he ministered to a congregation that was overwhelmingly German speaking. His niece, Helena, who managed Kubina's household at the time, later married a German-speaking painter, Adolf Jersch, an active member of the local church council. Both Helena and Adolf were categorized as Volksdeutsche during the Second World War, and Kubina's nephew by marriage served in the Wehrmacht and ended up in a POW camp in France at the end of the war. Despite the intervention of the local diocesan authorities, Kubina's niece and her children were expelled from Poland, and the family resettled in northwestern Germany.[110]

Close family ties to wartime Volksdeutsche—almost unheard of among Poland's political and secular-cultural elites—were thus extremely common within the Catholic episcopate, even among bishops now governing dioceses beyond the areas where Volksliste applications were mandatory. For bishops such as Hlond and Kubina, however, as well as for Adamski and his auxiliary bishop, Juliusz Bieniek, long records of Polish-patriotic activity and achievement of high status within the prewar church ensured that they themselves were never compelled to (or offered the opportunity to) accept categorization as German during the war. They therefore occupied a unique mediating position: many of their family, neighbors, friends, and colleagues had officially spent the war as Germans.[111] But they personally had been categorized by the Nazi regime as

[109] Jan Konieczny Tchr, "Pochodzenie oraz dzieciństwo sługi bożego Kardinala Augusta Hlonda," *Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne* 33 (2006): 362.

[110] AAK, ARz 00114, Zaświadczenie for Helena Jerschowa, Wikariusz Generalny, March 8, 1945. I am grateful to Adolf and Helena's grandson for confirming through personal communication that the family was, indeed, expelled from Poland.

[111] Bieniek was born in a part of Upper Silesia that remained German during the interwar period, meaning that most family members spent the Second World War as Reichsdeutsche. A profile of Bieniek by the Polish security service reported that one of his brothers served in the Wehrmacht while another brother had been a member of the Nazi party before as well as during the war. Charakterystyka bp. Juliusza Bieńka, August 16, 1949, from IPN Ka 056/111, reprinted in Józef Marecki and Filip Musiał,

Polish and so could claim the credibility that went with such a "normal" Polish experience of the war. We saw this delicate balancing act in Adamski's articulation of the "camouflage" narrative, as well as in the letter from former prisoners in Auschwitz to the prosecutor general in 1956. These texts invoked and spoke for hundreds of thousands of Poles who had passed as German during the war, but the actual authors/signatories of the letter claimed the moral authority of having not passed as German. The same implicit rules could be observed in an article published in the spring of 1945 in *Gość Niedzielny*. While the article vociferously defended those who were forcibly registered on the Volksliste, the anonymous author pointedly used the byline "A Silesian-not-on-the-Volksliste."[112]

This apparent taboo on former Volksdeutsche or Reichsdeutsche making public claims on their own behalf might suggest that postwar rehabilitation or verification lingered as a stigma, blocking or at least impeding the career advancement of those who had spent the war formally classified as Germans. In fact, however, priests who had been categorized as German during the war had a better chance of rising to the top of the Polish Catholic hierarchy than those who had been categorized as Poles. In 1972, when Poland's diocesan structure was reorganized to reflect postwar territorial changes, four of the country's twenty-four ordinary bishops had worked in pastoral roles in the diocese of Katowice during the war and would thus have been registered as ethnic Germans.[113] Whatever concerns these wartime biographies might have raised, they seem to have been trumped by the desire to recruit bishops from the ranks of parish clergy with extensive experience of working-class pastoral care, preferably with working-class backgrounds themselves.[114] If the Polish church wanted to showcase a clergy and hierarchy whose social origins were both "popular" and modern, it had to take its priests of working-class origin wherever it could find them.

The postwar advancement of rehabilitated Volksdeutsche was sometimes rapid. Herbert Bednorz, for example, had been placed in category 2 of the Volksliste during the war.[115] As late as 1948, he was included on a list compiled by state

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eds., *Nigdy przeciw Bogu: Komunistyczna bezpieka wobec biskupów polskich* (Warsaw, 2007), 66–68. The wartime German status of another brother reportedly facilitated his work as a driver delivering humanitarian assistance from the diocese of Katowice to the General Government. Myszor, *Stosunki*, 174–76.

[112] "Volkslisty," *Gość Niedzielny*, March 1945, 4–6.

[113] Bolesław Kominek (Wrocław), Herbert Bednorz (Katowice), Wilhelm Pluta (Gorzów), and Jerzy Stroba (Szczecin).

[114] Between 1900 and 1960, just over a quarter of all Polish priests came from working-class backgrounds. In Upper Silesia, more than half had such origins. Józef Baniak, *Powołania do kapłanstwa i do życia zakonnego w Polsce w latach 1900–2010: Studium socjologiczne* (Poznań, 2012), 94.

[115] AAN, UdSWWR, Sygnatura 78/10, Informacja dot. bpa Herberta Bednorza, March 12, 1960.

officials of more than forty local priests who reportedly "did not have a command of the Polish language."[116] And yet already by 1947, he was serving as the guardian of the entire network of Catholic youth associations in Poland.[117] Bednorz was appointed the auxiliary bishop of Katowice in 1950, after Bishop Adamski had been partially debilitated by a stroke, and effectively ran the diocese through the 1950s and 1960s. He was formally invested as ordinary bishop in 1967, following Adamski's death, and served in that position until his retirement in 1983.

Bolesław Kominek also applied for registration on the Volksliste during the war and was placed in category 3. His brother, like most other military-age men from the region, was enlisted in the Wehrmacht.[118] Kominek's wartime career was in many ways the epitome of Bishop Adamski's "camouflage" narrative. A member of the formally Germanized curia, he supervised the German-language pastoral care of the diocesan "Kirchenvolk."[119] Simultaneously, and with the knowledge of his superiors and colleagues, he served as the plenipotentiary of the Polish underground state for church affairs in Upper Silesia.[120] In this capacity, he coordinated the funneling of material aid to concentration camp inmates and to the General Government. The German status of Kominek and other clerical colleagues was essential for this work, as was the German status of local laypeople, which meant that they earned relatively generous wartime wages. Those high wages made possible robust donations to the church, and those donations could in turn be directed to (Polish) recipients outside the region.[121]

Soon after the end of the war, Kominek was appointed the apostolic administrator of the Opole region, which covered the portion of Upper Silesia that had

[116] Edmund Duda to Urząd wojewódzki Śląsko-Dąbrowski, November 16, 1948, reproduced in Kornelia Banas and Adam Dziurok, eds., *Represje wobec duchowieństwa górnośląskiego w latach 1939–1956 w dokumentach* (Katowice, 2003), 152–53. Wilhelm Pluta, the future bishop of Gorzów, was also on this list.

[117] Pietrzak, *Pelnia Prymasostwa*, 1:478.

[118] AAK, Kancelaria Biskupa Adamskiego, Syg 71, deposition from Adamski, March 1, 1949. Adamski refers here to Kominek having had to "accept" (*przyjać*) the Volksliste in order to remain in the diocese. A fuller account of Kominek's Volksliste experience was provided by a *Gazeta Wyborcza* journalist, partly on the basis of interviews with Kominek's colleagues: Aleksandra Klich, *Bez mitów: Portrety ze Śląska* (Rybnik, 2007), 122–23.

[119] The term "Kirchenvolk" was employed by Franz Wosnitza, the vicar-general who ran the diocese on Adamski's behalf between 1942 and 1945, to emphasize the German status of the vast majority of the population. AAK, ARz 0079, report on the bishopric of Kattowitz, February 9, 1943. Kominek served as Wosnitza's secretary during pastoral visitations in the later years of the war: for example, AAK, AL 00777, Wosnitza/Kominek to Father Lokay, Bismarckshütte, April 17, 1944.

[120] Mazura et al., *Raporty z ziem*, xxv.

[121] Myszor, *Stosunki*, 174–76.

remained under German rule during the interwar period. In 1956, he was appointed to a similar role in the apostolic administration of Wrocław (Middle Silesia), and in 1972, following the Vatican's recognition of the incorporation of the western territories into Poland's ecclesiastical structure, he was formally recognized as archbishop. The following year, shortly before his death, he became the third sitting Polish bishop to be elevated to cardinal, alongside the Primate, Stefan Wyszyński, and the archbishop of Kraków (and future pope), Karol Wojtyła. But Kominek's informal influence within the episcopate was evident much earlier. One well-informed observer wrote in 1965 that he was "a likely successor [of Wyszyński] as primate of Poland."[122]

Later that same year, Kominek wrote the most famous single document issued by the postwar Polish episcopate: a letter to the German bishops that extended forgiveness for historic German transgressions against Poles and asked for forgiveness for historic Polish transgressions against Germans. Since the Polish bishops' letter was presented as precisely that—a document collectively authored by Poland's entire episcopate—it was initially (mis)read as a window into the thinking of all Polish bishops but especially the two most prominent ones: Wyszyński and Wojtyła.[123] Later research has clarified that the letter was actually written by Kominek, drafted in German from the beginning and then lightly edited by a couple other Germanophone colleagues; other bishops, such as Wyszyński and Wojtyła, simply signed the finished document.[124] But even as more recent scholarship has duly noted Kominek's authorship, it has remained curiously uncurious about the bishop's own biography, including his Volksliste registration, and his earlier writings related to this experience.[125]

[122] Hansjakob Stehle, *Independent Satellite: Society and Politics in Poland since 1945* (London, 1965), 275–76.

[123] The most momentous such creative misreading of authorship was by Adam Michnik. Writing years later, he analyzed the bishops' letter of 1965 as the key piece of evidence for a new way of thinking in Poland's Catholic Church, making possible the historic rapprochement between the episcopate and secular dissidents. Adam Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, ed. and trans. by David Ost (Chicago, 1992), 85–94.

[124] Basil Kerski, Tomasz Kycia, and Robert Zurek, *"Przebaczamy i prosimy o przebaczenie": Orędzie biskupów polskich i odpowiedź niemieckiego episkopatu z 1965 roku. Geneza, kontekst, spuścizna* (Olsztyn, 2006), 21–29.

[125] Piotr Kosicki, for example, briefly describes Kominek as "deeply familiar with German culture and traditions": "*Caritas* Across the Iron Curtain? Polish-German Reconciliation and the Bishops' Letter of 1965," *East European Politics and Societies* 23, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 213–43, quote from 225. See also Karolina Wigura, "Alternative Historical Narrative: 'Polish Bishops' Appeal to Their German Colleagues, of 18 November 1965," *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 27, no. 3 (August 2013): 400–412; Annika Frieberg, *Peace at All Costs: Catholic Intellectuals, Journalists, and Media in Postwar Polish-German Reconciliation* (New York, 2019), chap. 5.

Twenty years before Kominek started writing the text of the bishops' letter, he was already rehearsing its structure and much of its content in his pastoral statements as apostolic administrator of Opole. His fundamental challenge in that role was to reconcile within a single community hundreds of thousands of Catholics who had spent the war categorized as Poles with hundreds of thousands of others who had spent the war as Germans. In the summer of 1946, he published a long article in *Tygodnik Powszechny* analyzing the new demographics of the region and laying out a road map for its social and cultural future. Kominek published the article under a pseudonym, in the voice of an omniscient observer who obviously considered himself a Polish patriot but who revealed no particular geographic origin or wartime history of his own. This persona ostensibly allowed for an impartial consideration of the points of view of each demographic group. Kominek described the region as starkly divided between a large minority of in-migrants and a majority of autochthones (former Reichsdeutsche). The author had some sympathetic remarks about the former, especially refugees from Poland's former eastern territories who "in recent years certainly lived through more and lost more than native Silesians." But when it came to discussing voluntary settlers coming from territories that had been Polish before the war and remained Polish after the war, his descriptions turned scathing. He referred to those who moved into the region in the final months of the war as "looting hyenas, who rummaged for the best [pickings] with the word 'Poland' on their lips," understandably making local inhabitants distrustful of all incoming "Poles." Later in-migrants were not much better, often continuing "the pillaging traditions of the first conquistadors." Kominek concluded that "only slowly, over many years, will Poland be able to regain its moral credit."[126]

This account of 1945 was remarkably similar to—indeed, might be described as a slight variation on—narratives articulated by German expellees. We find here the same truncated chronology, with a story that essentially starts with the end of the war, and the same portrayal of the resident population as innocent victims.[127] One significant difference, of course, was the retrospective labeling of the victims as "Poles" rather than "Germans." But even this distinction was blurred in Kominek's telling. He readily conceded that in-migrants saw themselves and were seen by the autochthonous population as representing Poland and Polishness. In turn, in-migrants tended to view all native residents as Germans, a perception that Kominek described as misguided but understandable: most inhabitants, he noted, were "not at all 'nationally' Polish."[128] When the

[126] Bolesław Kozielski [Kominek pseudonym], "Mozaika na Opolszczynie," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, July 28, 1946, 5.

[127] Robert Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley, CA, 2003), esp. chap. 3.

[128] Kozielski, "Mozaika."

author nonetheless insisted that autochthones and in-migrants should now be considered fellow "Poles," he was not referencing any shared past experience—most certainly not any recent past experience—but rather an aspirational future trajectory. The natural inclination of natives and various groups of in-migrants, Kominek observed, would be to cluster separately in their own parishes, avoiding contact with ostensible fellow Poles who were, in practice, viewed as strangers if not outright adversaries. The church was not to allow this to happen. Catholics were expected to mix with those of all backgrounds in their local area. Over time, they would socialize, intermarry, and "merge involuntarily," eventually forming "a beautiful, harmonious national picture."[129]

Kominek's agenda has been characterized by one historian as a "radical nationalization of church life" in the region.[130] But what did "radical nationalization" mean? Who would determine the national content that all would now be expected to share? It seemed intuitive that any program of Polonization would be led by those "more 'Polish' Poles" who were moving into the western territories from eastern and central Poland.[131] In some respects, this did prove to be the case. All catechismal positions in secondary schools in Opole Silesia were now filled by repatriate priests in recognition of their better mastery of literary Polish.[132] The German language, previously used to varying degrees by almost all former Reichsdeutsche and Volksdeutsche, was now strictly curtailed and effectively eliminated from public religious activity. But this privileging of "more 'Polish' Poles" in linguistic practice should not be seen as a reflection of their overall hegemony within the church. It was, rather, compensatory, balancing the fact that former Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche occupied most positions of power in their home regions and a disproportionate share in other parts of the country as well. Those church leaders, in turn, tended to view laypeople from their home regions as model Catholics and model future citizens, even if they were not plausible models of previous or current Polish-national consciousness. As Kominek wrote to those clergy who had migrated into the Opole region from other parts of Poland, autochthones might have a lingering "German mentality," but they should be admired for the "high level" and "disciplined" nature of their religious practice, as evidenced by frequent Communion and regular church attendance. He urged understanding of local resistance to the singing of overtly nationalist hymns such as *Boże coś Polskę*, which was unfamiliar in the area and was seen as an unseemly mixing of nationality with religion. "From one side as well as the other," the

[129] Kozielski, "Mozaika."
[130] Linek, *Polityka antyniemiecka na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1950*, 124.
[131] Kominek used the term "more 'Polish' Poles" in his memoirs: *W służbie,* 40.
[132] Kazimierz Dola, "Kościół katolicki na Opolszczyźnie w latach 1945–1965," *Nasza Przeszłość* (1965), 83.

apostolic administrator concluded, "certain sacrifices and concessions are necessary in order for a new church unity slowly to arise."[133]

Kominek regularly issued similar appeals for conciliation on the pages of the weekly *Gość Niedzielny*,[134] which circulated widely in the Opole and Wrocław apostolic administration as well as in the diocese of Katowice.[135] Kominek's calls for mutual understanding between autochthones and immigrants, like Adamski's "camouflage" explanation of mass Volksliste registration, became part of an unquestioned consensus shared by the editorial team and other contributors to the newspaper.[136] Although *Gość Niedzielny* did not have the same influence within the national Catholic intelligentsia as *Tygodnik Powszechny* or *Tygodnik Warszawski*, it enjoyed a more substantial mass readership in its home region. Aggressive promotion by the clergy and at least intermittently generous paper allowances by the state (in the interest of Polonization) helped to make *Gość Niedzielny* the highest circulation Catholic periodical in Poland in the late 1940s.[137]

In their repeated appeals for mutual forgiveness and unity, Kominek and his colleagues clearly gave little thought to inclusion of non-Catholics. Indeed, Kominek welcomed the departure of millions of German-speaking Protestants from Poland's new western and northern territories as a providential rollback of the confessional frontier.[138] The only extensive engagement with Protestantism

[133] AAK, ARz 00704, Kominek to immigrant priests to Opole Silesia from other Polish dioceses, January 1, 1946.

[134] B.K., "Nienawiść potęga," *Gość Niedzielny*, July 1, 1945, 167; B.K., "Regionalizm—owszem! Dzielnicowość—nie!," *Gość Niedzielny*, September 2, 1945, 246; "Życie kościelne na Śląsku Opolskim," *Gość Niedzielny*, November 11, 1945, 324.

[135] Kominek served as the newspaper's representative at a national meeting on promotion of the Catholic press. Pietrzak, *Pelnia Prymasostwa*, 1:498. He lobbied the government to facilitate its expanded distribution in the Opole region. AAK, ARz 00704, Kominek to Komendant Woj. M.O. (ppulk. J Kratko), November 17, 1945. Adamski also strongly advocated dissemination across Lower Silesia, AAK, ARz 92, Adamski to Milik and Kominek, September 25, 1945.

[136] The thirty-three-year-old editor, Father Klemens Kosyrczyk, had a wartime career fairly typical of the regional clergy: arrest and several months of imprisonment in Dachau followed by multiple, precarious pastoral positions "camouflaged" as a German. See biography in the online encyclopedia of the Catholic Church in Silesia, https://silesia.edu.pl/index.php/Kosyrczyk_Klemens.

[137] Initial postwar circulation was 75,000. By 1946, there were 20,000 issues distributed just in the Opole region. Renata Dulian, "75 lat Gościa Niedzielnego," *Fides: Biuletyn Bibliotek Kościelnych*, 1–2 (12–13), 186–95, figures from 189. By comparison, *Tygodnik Powszechny* and *Tygodnik Warszwaskii* each had total circulations around 20,000 in the immediate postwar period. Czesław Lechicki, "Prasa polska katolicka 1945–1948," *Kwartalnik Historii Prasy Polskiej* 22, no. 2 (1983): 65–87.

[138] In his memoirs, Kominek described how "the enormous Protestant wave that had been moving to the east for centuries was, in a single moment, pushed back to the west." Kominek, *W służbie*, 79.

in *Gość Niedzielny* during this period was a defense of the controversial postwar transfer of some local Protestant churches to Catholic control.[139] While Protestants continued to be viewed as rivals, Jews scarcely came into view at all. The migration of tens of thousands of survivors of the Holocaust to Silesia in 1945 was noted only fleetingly by Kominek in a demographic survey of the Opole region shared with the Department of Confessional Affairs.[140] Likewise, *Gość Niedzielny* published one laconic report, in the back pages of an issue in August 1946, referring to the looming mass emigration of Poland's remaining Jewish population.[141]

This indifference to the fate of Polish Jews was at least briefly interrupted in the aftermath of the pogrom in Kielce on July 4, 1946, in which several dozen Jews were killed. Responses to the pogrom varied greatly among the large contingent of bishops of Silesian origin. Cardinal Hlond infamously blamed antisemitic violence on Jewish support for Communism, and auxiliary bishop Bieniek told a British diplomat that he gave some credence to stories of Jews engaging in ritual murder of Christian children. Bishop Kubina, by contrast, issued an immediate and categorical condemnation of the pogrom, a response that has been portrayed in recent historiography as unique within Polish Catholicism.[142] But the bishop of Częstochowa's stance actually had an important echo in *Gość Niedzielny*, the newspaper that Kubina had himself founded and edited more than two decades earlier, when he was a pastor in Katowice. Commenting on the pogrom a week earlier than their colleagues at *Tygodnik Powszechny*, the editors condemned the killings as acts of "fratricide," since "everyone is our brother, regardless of nationality or confession," and reiterated earlier condemnations by Bishop Adamski of "treacherous murders of innocent Jews."[143] The article was admittedly short, but this brevity was, in part, due to the absence of defensive passages about antisemitism being alien to Poland's national traditions, a theme that dominated

[139] Paweł Prawdzic, "Protestantyzm polski a niemiecki na Śląsku," *Gość Niedzielny*, July 28, 1946, 254, and August 4, 1946, 259–60.

[140] ADO, Kuria Opolska, 6/13, Kominek to Dyr. Department Wyz Religijnych, Ministerwo Admin. Publicznej (Ob. Jaroslaw Demianczuk), August 9, 1946.

[141] "Żydzi będą opuszczać Polskę," *Gość Niedzielny*, August 18, 1946, 279.

[142] Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Antisemitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (Princeton, NJ, 2006), 135–40.

[143] "Nie zabjij!," *Gość Niedzielny*, July 14, 1946, 234. In a survey published twenty-five years ago, Dariusz Libionka noted the early responses to the Kielce pogrom in *Gość Niedzielny*: "Antysemitizm i Zagłada na łamach prasy w Polsce," *Polska 1944/45–1989. Studia i materiały*, II/1996, 151–90, relevant references on 179–80. This important observation was unfortunately lost in subsequent historiography, which has erroneously portrayed *Tygodnik Powszechny* as the first to comment on the event. See, for example, Robert Kuśnierz, "Pogrom kielecki na łamach prasy w Polsce," in *Wokół pogromu kieleckiego*, ed. Leszek Bukowski, Andrzej Jankowski, and Jan Żaryn (Warsaw, 2008), 2:132–62.

most Catholic commentary.[144] The blunt immediacy of the title—"Do Not Kill!"—conveyed the priority of the authors: preventing participation by any of its readers in similar acts of violence. Considering that the newspaper enjoyed a mass audience precisely in the region where almost half of Poland's remaining Jews lived, it was a noteworthy intervention.[145]

Arguably more significant than such brief but emphatic denunciations of violence against Jews was the absence from the pages of *Gość Niedzielny* of rhetoric that could have further stoked such violence, in particular suggestions that Jews were to blame for violence against or repression of Christians at the end of the war. Given the ubiquity of references to Judaeo-Bolshevism not only in Poland but also across Eastern Europe, it is all too easy to imagine how a narrative of shared German-Polish Catholic suffering in 1945 could have leaned heavily on antisemitism, casting Jewish Communists alongside the Soviet army as the alien instigators of that suffering.[146] Indeed, the outlines of just such a narrative would emerge fifty years later, when the post-Communist Polish government began an investigation into the mistreatment of prisoners, overwhelmingly Volksdeutsche, at the Zgoda labor camp in Świętochłowice in Upper Silesia. The inquiry, led by the Commission for Investigation of Crimes against the Polish Nation, quickly focused on the actions of the commandant of the camp, Salomon Morel. A twenty-six-year-old Holocaust survivor at the time, Morel would later emigrate to Israel following the antisemitic purges of 1968.[147] While the commission's original aim of exposing acts of brutality committed in Zgoda and other postwar labor camps was certainly legitimate, the attempted extradition of Morel from Israel framed the issue in a troubling way. Rather than confronting the fact that the internment of Volksdeutsche by the Polish state had the clear backing of much of Polish society and was, indeed, understood precisely as a response to "crimes against the Polish nation," responsibility for postwar retribution was deflected onto a (now conveniently "foreign") Jewish Communist. As the investigation of Zgoda other regional internment camps gained global attention, the theme of "Jewish revenge" awkwardly took center stage.[148]

[144] Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity and Poland* (New York, 2011), 318–19.

[145] In July 1946, almost 40 percent of Polish Jews lived in Upper or Middle Silesia (the *województwa* of Silesia and Wrocław): Gawryczewski, *Ludność polska w xx wieku*, 296–97.

[146] Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judaeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), esp. chap. 5.

[147] Adam Dziurok, ed., *Obóż pracy w Świętochłowicach w 1945 roku: Dokumenty, zeznania, relacje, listy* (Warsaw, 2003).

[148] John Sack, *An Eye for an Eye: The Untold Story of Jewish Revenge against Germans* (New York, 1995).

This theme was, however, absent from the regional Catholic press at the time when the repression of wartime Volksdeutsche and Reichsdeutsche was occurring. This was due in part to a reluctance to criticize the regime too directly and publicly. Although Adamski privately complained to Governor Zawadzki about the detention and ill treatment of former Volksdeutsche in the Zgoda camp,[149] *Gość Niedzielny* did not report on this or other camps at all. But this absence also reflected the conviction that the ultimate source of postwar violence and discrimination was not an alien regime but rather the mutual suspicions that roiled the Polish Catholic community. While it was very much an inward-looking approach, it was not based on an assumption of preexisting internal homogeneity—quite the opposite. As we have seen in Kominek's programmatic statements, communal integration was understood as being achievable only after frank acknowledgment of widely divergent, and in some cases directly clashing, experiences of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath. An article by "Jan from Opole," published on the front page in *Gość Niedzielny* in August 1946, provides a further example of this line of thinking. Drawing on the story of the pharisee and the tax collector in the Gospel of Luke, the author lamented that in local cities like Bytom and Gliwice he had met many "pharisees," both natives and in-migrants, who loudly proclaimed the righteousness of their own community and shunned others. But he insisted that he had also encountered many other "genuine tax collectors," who had "suffered deeply but not only over their own misfortune but also over the great material and moral misery that, as a result of the war, still hangs like a nightmare over not only our country but all of Europe." They understood that "None of us is without sin. Each of us has, consciously or unconsciously, added a brick of personal culpability to the current situation and the calamity that Europe has experienced."[150]

In this vision, the postwar process of mutual confession, forgiveness, and conciliation would unfold at multiple, mutually reinforcing levels: local/parochial, regional/diocesan, national, European, global. The expectation—or, at least, the hope—was that people would now commit themselves to ever greater integration into each level of community. Those living in a given parish, in other words, should now put down roots there, whether they were longtime native residents or recent refugees. Likewise, wartime Germans rehabilitated or verified as Poles would become irreversibly invested in the reconstruction of the Polish nation. But clerical observers who had themselves spent the war categorized as Germans would have been well aware that these integrative processes were not inescapable, and that the immediate postwar era would not necessarily be the final chapter in the story of nation switching. From the 1950s through to

[149] AAK, ARz 99, Adamski to Zawadzki, March 5, 1945.
[150] Jan z Opola, "Faryeusz i celnik na Śląsku," *Gość Niedzielny*, August 18, 1946, 273.

the present day, recurring waves of people who had previously renounced their wartime-German backgrounds have reclaimed those identities as they emigrated to Germany. Since the 1990s, tens of thousands of others have remained in their home regions while declaring membership in a German national minority. And since 2000, more than a million others have declared affiliation with "new" Silesian and Kashubian nationalities, sometimes as a sole nationality, sometimes in combination with Polish or (more rarely) German nationality.[151]

The sociologist Erving Goffman famously described the construction of social reality in terms of individual performances. Every performance, he wrote, "is something the team members can stand back from, back far enough to imagine or play out simultaneously other kinds of performances attesting to other realities. Whether the performers feel their official offering is the 'realest' reality or not, they will give surreptitious expression to multiple versions of reality, each version tending to be incompatible with the others."[152] It is a description that would have made intuitive sense to the nation switchers of the German-Polish borderlands. Some, however, may have questioned Goffman's assumptions that pivots from one alternative reality to another needed to be "surreptitious." When the Polish sociologist Stanisław Ossowski visited a village in the Opole region shortly after the end of the Second World War to investigate national identity in the region, he was surprised not so much by the presence of what he called "national indifferentism," a readiness to change national categories for pragmatic reasons, as by the fact that his interlocutors "did not think that such national indifferentism would make a bad impression on an outsider."[153] This boldness is less surprising once we understand that some of the "outsiders" that villagers in Opole Silesia encountered in 1945 had themselves spent the war categorized as Germans but were now, nonetheless, in the vanguard of the region's Polonization.

As noted at the beginning of this article, there has been a running debate (albeit often only implicit) about the morality of nation switching. Should we view it as evasion of responsibility for the past or, instead, an act of everyday resistance to the top-down imposition of identity? In turning attention to the roles

[151] In the 2011 census, 148,000 residents declared German nationality (with 45,000 declaring German as their sole nationality), representing a slight decrease from the previous count. But identification with "regional" nationalities soared: 847,000 people now declared Silesian nationality (376,000 of them declaring it as their sole nationality), while 233,000 declared Kashubian nationality (16,000 as their sole nationality). *Przynależność narodowo-etniczna ludności—wyniki spisu ludności i mieszkań 2011*, Materiał na konferencję prasową w dniu 29.01.2013, Główny Urząd Statystyczny.

[152] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York, 1959), 202.

[153] Stanisław Ossowski, *O Ojczyźnie i Narodzie* (Warsaw, 1984), 274.

played by nation switchers within national communities, we have started to explore a related but distinct set of normative questions. What did those with ambiguous national pasts do with the power that they wielded—beyond securing their own inclusion in the national community? Historians of Alsace-Lorraine have pointed to the potential dark side of that borderland's clout. Warding off critical scrutiny of the region's wartime experiences has facilitated inward-looking narratives of collective self-pity at both the regional and national level. A similar potential has been evident in some attempts to shape Poland's national narratives in order to accommodate the German war stories of many of its citizens. The rehabilitation of Catholic Volksdeutsche and verification of Catholic Reichsdeutsche could be celebrated within the story of the country's confessional homogenization, as the flip side of the postwar mass exodus of Protestants and Jews.

I have argued, however, that the wartime Germans who played key roles in Poland's postwar Catholic hierarchy actually tended to push national narratives in a different direction. Rather than rehearsing stories of shared suffering and victimization by shared enemies, they cast a spotlight on the divergent experiences and mutual animosities within their local, regional, and national communities, seeing recognition of these differences as a first step toward conciliation. To be sure, the words and actions of individuals like Bolesław Kominek or Teodor Kubina must be credited to their own moral imaginations and choices. Borderland biographies were not destiny, for good or ill. But their intimate familiarity with straddling collective experiences—with being, as Stanisław Adamski described, "both here and there"—surely shaped their ability to identify and sympathetically articulate a variety of national narratives. Perhaps even more important, repeated pivoting between various national performances facilitated nation-switchers' awareness that no collective story, even if related in confident first-person plural, was entirely their own.