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A CLEAN SWEEP? THE POLITICS OF
ETHNIC CLEANSING IN MIDWESTERN
POLAND, 1945-1946

by

Timothy David Curp

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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Doctoral Dissertation

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Abstract

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1946

by Timothy David Curp

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee: Professor Herbert J. Ellison
Department of History

From 1945 to 1946 the Communist-dominated Polish government established its rule throughout the newly reconstituted Polish state. In accord with wartime Great Power agreements, Poland was stripped of its pre-war eastern provinces, but received large tracts of German territory to the north and west—what Poland’s new authorities called the “Recovered Territories”. The new Soviet-sponsored regime, led by the Polish Workers’ Party (PPR), launched radical political and socio-economic revolutions throughout Poland, and also waged a nationalist revolution that included ethnic cleansing, degermanization and polonization in most of Poland, as well as the colonization of the Recovered Territories.

In midwestern Poland (Wielkopolska) these revolutions deeply polarized local society. Much of Wielkopolska’s conservative, Catholic population opposed the new authorities’ political and socio-economic revolutions but supported the regime’s nationalist revolution. An important source of support for the regime’s efforts to popularize this nationalist revolution was an organization affiliated with the National Democratic Party (a Party which was particularly powerful in pre-war Wielkopolska), the Polish Western Union (PZZ). The Catholic Church in Wielkopolska, even as it began to strengthen its role in public life, offer a Catholic vision of Poland’s reconstruction, and counter what it regarded as the regime’s efforts to enforce Poland’s sovietization, also participated in this nationalist revolution.

Administrative chaos, official plundering (and unofficial banditry and assault) by the Red Army, the depredations of the regime's own security forces, and looting by many of the new Polish settlers exacerbated near-catastrophic conditions at the local level in Ziemia Lubuska—the region of the Recovered Territories assigned to Wielkopolska for settlement. As political conflict in Wielkopolska deepened from late 1945 through 1946, with the establishment of an increasingly popular opposition Polish Peasants' Party (PSL), the regime relied more and more on its nationalist revolution as a primary means to secure its legitimacy. This politically benefited the regime, but also established extreme nationalism as a central element in the political life of People's Poland.

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Glossary

AK. Armia Krajowa or Home Army. Formed in the aftermath of Poland's military defeat and occupation in 1939, the AK was an umbrella group of Polish political groups dedicated to the struggle for Polish independence, loyal to the Polish government in exile in London. Rejected cooperation with the PPR and was persecuted by the Communist authorities after the creation of the PKWN.

Autochthons. German citizens in the pre-war Oder-Neisse territories regarded by the Polish regime as Polish.

Curzon line. A demarcation line to separate Polish and Soviet forces during the Russo-Polish war of 1920, approved by the British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon. It represents the easternmost limit of indisputably ethnographic Polish territory.

Dmowskiite. Referring to Roman Dmowski, a famous nationalist politician and political theorist.

Dziś i Jutro. "Today and Tomorrow." A Warsaw journal founded by pro-regime Catholics.

Endecja. National Democratic Party (Narodowy Demokracja, ND)

Generalgouvernement. Nazi administrative entity created to govern those areas of Poland not annexed to the German Reich.

Gwardia Ludowa. The Party's armed forces, or "People's Guard."

Jagiellonian. The royal house of Lithuania which allied to the Piast dynasty through marriage and became the ruling house of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Popularly considered in the 19th and 20th centuries to represent Polish civilization's eastward expansion.

Kresy. "Borderlands." Regions east of the Curzon line of long-term Polish settlement and cultural influence.

Leistungspole. “Efficient/hardworking Pole.” A legal category devised by the German administration in areas of Poland annexed to the Reich which granted the holder relatively greater legal protection.

Myth of the ZO, or Recovered Territories. The official claim that Poland, in annexing the Oder-Neisse territories, was recovering “Polish lands” conquered by Germany 700-800 years earlier.

Nie. A clandestine formation created within the AK in 1945 to resist the Communist regime. It is an acronym for the first letters of “Niepodległość” (Independence) as well as being the Polish word for “no.”

October turn. The shift in policy of the PKWN in October 1944 from attempting to build a broad ‘popular front’ with elements of the AK to an active persecution of the entire wartime non-Communist Polish resistance.

Piast. The first Polish royal dynasty founded by Mieszko I (c. 922-992) which ruled in Poland from Poland’s christianization in 966 till the end of the dynasty in 1399 with the marriage of Jadwiga I, Queen of Poland to Władysław Jagiello in 1386. Popularly associated in the 20th century with Polish territorial expansion to the west.

Powiat. County.

Rada Narodowa. National Council.

Reichsgau Wartheland. Nazi term for the territories of Midwestern Poland annexed to the German Reich.

Repatrianci. Poles who migrated from the *kresy* to Poland after the war.

Sanacja. The pre-war Polish military dictatorship.

Starosta. County administrator.

Szaber. Looting.

Szlachta. nobility

Volksdeutsche. A Polish citizen of German nationality.

Volksliste. (or Deutsche Volksliste (DVL)). The German national list. A four-tiered list used by occupying Nazis to distinguish different levels of racial purity and political activism among the persons whom they recognized as being of German nationality.

Wojewód. Provincial Governor

List of Abbreviations

AK	Armia Krajowa	Home Army
CBKP	Central Biuro Polskich Komunistow	Central Bureau of Polish Communists
KIN	Komitet Inicjatywy Narodowej	Committee of National Initiative
KPP	Komunistyczna Partia Polski	Polish Communist Party
KRN	Krajowa Rada Narodowa	National Homeland Council
KSM	Katolicki Stowarzyszen Młodzież	Association of Catholic Youth
KUL	Katolicki Uniwersytet Lublina	Catholic University in Lublin
MRiRR	Ministerstwo Rolny i Reform Rolny	Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
MO	Milicja Obywatelska	Citizens' Militia
MZO	Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych	Ministry of Recovered Territories
ND	Narodowy Demokracja	National Democratic Party
NSZ	Narodowy Siły Zbrojnej	National Armed Forces
PKWN	Polskie Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego	Polish Committee of National Liberation
PPR	Polska Partia Robotnicza	Polish Workers' Party
PPS	Polska Partia Socjalistyczna	Polish Socialist Party
PPS-WRN	Polska Partia Socjalistyczna- Wolność, Równość, Niepodległość	Polish Socialist Party- Freedom, Equality, Independence
PSL	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe	Polish Peasants' Party

PUR	Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjna	Government Repatriation Agency
PUZ	Państwowy Urząd Ziemi	Government Land Offices
PZPR	Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza	Polish United Workers' Party
PZZ	Polski Związek Zachodni	Polish Western Union
RJN	Rząd Jedności Narodowej	Government of National Unity
SL	Stronictwo Ludowe	Peasants' Party
SL-ROCh	Stronictwo Ludowe "Ruch Oporu Chłopów"	Peasant Party "Resistance movement of the Peasants"
SP	Stronictwo Pracy	Party of Work
TRJN	Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej	Provisional Government of National Unity
TZP	Tymczasowy Zarząd Państwowy	Provisional State Administrative Board
UB	Urząd Bezpieczeństwa	Security Office
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Organization	
UWP	Urząd Wojewódzki Poznański	Office of the Provincial Governor of Poznań
VdL	Verband der Leistungspolen	Union of Hard-Working Poles
WRN	Wojewódzka Rada Narodowa	Provincial National Council
ZPP	Związek Patriotów Polski	Union of Polish Patriots
ZO	Ziemia Odzyskanie	"Recovered Territories"
ZPwN	Związek Polaków w Niemczech	Union of Poles in Germany

ZSCh	Związek Samopomoc Chłopskiej	Peasant Self-help Union
ZWiU	Zjednoczenie Wyszędleńców i Uchodźców	Union of the Resettled and Exiled
ZWM	Związek Walki Młodych	Youth Union of Struggle
ZPZZ	Związek Polaków Ziemi Zachodnich	Union of Poles of the Western Territories
ZZ	Ziemia Zachodnia	“Western Territories”

Preface

He who invokes history is always secure.
The dead will not rise to witness against him.

You can accuse them of any deeds you like.
Their reply will always be silence.

Their empty faces swim out of the deep dark.
You can fill them with any features desired.

Proud of dominion over people long vanished.
Change the past into your own, better likeness.

—“Child of Europe.” Czeslaw Milosz.¹

The war- and peace-making efforts of the Grand Alliance which defeated Nazi Germany were enormously costly and did not fully vindicate the hopes of these countries' citizens, soldiers, and statesmen that their sacrifices would usher in a new era of peace and freedom. Instead, a great deal of the blood that was shed in defeating Hitler helped to buoy the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin to new power and prominence. Stalin's wartime triumph, the consolidation of his rule, the postwar expansion of the Soviet Union into Poland, East Central and Southern Europe, and the inauguration of almost a half century of Cold War were integral components of the Allied victory.

In few places were the tragic costs of the war and the imperfect nature of the peace which followed more clear than in Poland. In the case of Poland, for over fifty years a far-from-

¹ “Child of Europe,” trans. Jan Darowski, in Czeslaw Milosz, *Selected Poems* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1996), 111.

independent Soviet satellite, part of disentangling the various strands that united the war against Hitler with Stalin's victory is identifying the especially complicated knots of truth, falsehood, nationalist hopes and fears, and material interests which helped bind the Polish people to Stalin's new order in East Central Europe. Among these knots, few proved more fast than Poland's westward expansion and ethnic cleansing of the eastern Germans.

Poland's acquisition of vast tracts of eastern Germany is inextricably bound up with Allied diplomacy's wartime appeasement of Stalin's territorial and political ambitions throughout East Central Europe. This resulted in the Soviet annexation of Poland's pre-war eastern provinces and the Anglo-American policy that amounted to *de facto* recognition of Poland as a Soviet satellite. Poland did not receive the Oder-Neisse territories, nor rid itself of the Germans who lived within its newly reconfigured borders, in isolation from the broader processes that were assimilating it into the new Soviet imperium in East Central Europe. These "gifts" came with a considerable number of strings attached, the most constricting of which were that Poles received "justice," revenge, guarantees of security against German revanchism, and the material benefits of a partial share of the loot from Germany's eastern provinces from the hands of the Red Army and Stalin's Polish Communist clients. The politically and socially revolutionary regime which the Red Army installed as the rulers of Poland was the same regime that brought about the nationalist revolution of Poland's territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing.

Not only was Poland externally bound to the Soviet imperium by international politics, but, more importantly, it was internally bound to the Soviet system and partially

sovietized as well. Poland's sovietization was, to a significant degree, brought about by the alacrity with which a great number of Poles reached for the relatively intangible benefits of the spectacle of Germany's humiliation, territorial truncation and corresponding Polish expansion, and the more tangible benefits of a great deal of German moveable and immovable property which Stalin's Polish henchmen offered them. Furthermore, the official propagation and widespread acceptance of the notion that in annexing and colonizing eastern Germany, Poland was simply "recovering" long-lost western Polish lands (hence the term "Recovered Territories"), enshrined a deeply dishonest myth at the heart of reconstituted Poland's public life. Like the notion that Poland was a "People's democracy" experiencing ever greater prosperity and freedom, the myth of the Recovered Territories seriously distorted Polish political discourse and paved the way for the even greater perversions of language, thought and politics that occurred in Poland's short but brutal Stalinist period.

By carefully doling out the limited bread and circuses that these tangible and intangible benefits of Germany's defeat represented (and which were among the few rewards the regime had to distribute to a population deeply alienated from it), the hitherto isolated and despised Polish Communist movement gained a limited, but real, legitimacy which was a considerable boost for its efforts to attract a small but significant number of Poles to assist it in the work of governing the country.² In addition to Poles who actively

² In an insightful discussion, Jan Kubik notes how the new authorities sought to legitimize their rule by "remodeling" Polish culture so as to make it "socialist in form and national in content." A central element in this enterprise was the shift of Poland's frontiers westward, and the ethnic homogenization of the country. Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 2-4, 65, footnote 85.

supported the regime, the legitimacy the authorities gained by their nationalist revolution helped to win them an even broader degree of popular acquiescence for their rule at a time of intense political conflict. During this conflict in the immediate postwar period, when given a free choice, the vast majority of Poles overwhelmingly repudiated the regime.³ When, however, the regime denied its subjects such a choice and ended independent opposition politics in 1947, popular acquiescence to Communist rule meant that the population neither rose in revolt nor engaged in sustained, united opposition to the new authorities' destruction of political pluralism. Though this was due to a variety of factors⁴ (most especially the sheer exhaustion of most Poles after five and half years of war), the legitimacy which the authorities had gained through the acquisition of eastern Germany and Poland's ethnic cleansing played a crucial role in popular acceptance of their rule.

The price of this acquiescence was not that the majority of Poles missed an opportunity to engage in a quixotic and almost certainly doomed effort to overthrow the new regime in 1945 or 1946. Rather, at a great cost to themselves, the understandable Polish desire to

³ In June 1946, in the only relatively free elections held in Poland under Communist auspices prior to 1989, the Polish Communists held a national referendum over three central questions of regime policy: the abolition of the Senate, the new authorities' socio-economic reforms, and Poland's expansion into the Oder-Neisse territories. In spite of overwhelming state-sponsored propaganda and a massive amount of fraud and force to secure a vote of "three times yes", 69 percent of the electorate voted no on abolishing the Senate, and 55 percent voted against the new socio-economic policies. The only regime policy that commanded widespread support was the question of Poland's westward expansion: 68 percent of the population voted yes. Padraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 45.

⁴ Krystyna Kersten, *The Establishment of Communist Rule in Poland, 1943-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 361-364, 414-424.

humble Germany and win for their country material and security benefits through the annexation of the Oder-Neisse territories led the Polish people to willingly embrace a bright, shining lie: the Polishness of the Oder-Neisse territories, which became the touchstone of Polish national identity for an entire generation. Furthermore, prior to the normalization of relations with West Germany in December 1970, and the political, cultural and personal exchanges between Poles and Germans which followed,⁵ most Poles lived in such fear of German revanchism that sustained opposition politics aimed at transforming the post-Yalta status quo of a deeply unpopular Communist regime and the Soviet Imperium were all but unthinkable.⁶ This fear, assiduously nurtured by the regime but willingly embraced by the people,⁷ was a major factor in ensuring the Soviet Union decades of relative tranquility in dealing with what was potentially, and would become in actuality, its most unstable and subversive satellite.

In pointing out these political costs of Poland's westward expansion I hope to raise new questions in the discussion of the relationship between wartime and postwar international and domestic politics in East Central Europe. The chilling ease with which wartime and postwar statesmen and academic proponents of ethnic cleansing could recommend this as an expedient and effective "final solution"⁸ to national minority questions in East Central

⁵ Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Random House, 1993), 284-287.

⁶ James F. Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 167-168.

⁷ Zbigniew Mazur, *Obraz Niemiec w polskich podręcznikach szkolnych do nauczania historii, 1945-1989* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1995), 226-227.

⁸ Joseph Schechtman, the foremost student (and a supporter) of population transfers, in 1962 wrote in praise of population transfers of entire nationalities as "...possessing the decisive advantage of a complete and final solution." He quotes Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, who, when informed of the desire of the leader of the

Europe was regarded by many at the time as both inhumane and dangerously destabilizing.⁹ Though the worst-case scenario of that time did not come true—that the Germans so expelled from East Central Europe would become a destabilizing, unassimilable element in German society—the dangers to European stability which ethnic cleansing posed came from a different direction.

What is missing in reflections on the Potsdam accords and the ethnic cleansing of Poland and the rest of East Central Europe both then and now is a consideration of the costs to Poland of territorial annexation and the ethnic cleansing of its German minority. Those costs were quite high. In addition to the tremendous economic costs of settling the Oder-Neisse territories, the regime's nationalist revolution eased the way for the internal consolidation of Polish Communist rule and the external stabilization of the Soviet Union's East Central European empire. By examining in greater detail the manner of this consolidation, and the interpenetration of Polish Communist and a particular type of

Czech government in exile, Dr. Eduard Beneš, to expel over 2 million Germans from Czechoslovakia, exclaimed "That's a trifle, that's easy!" Joseph Schechtman, *Postwar Population Transfers in Europe, 1945-1955* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), 61, 63, 389-395.

⁹ There was a great deal of criticism in the immediate postwar period that the transfers were not conducted in the humane and orderly manner stipulated by the Potsdam accords. Furthermore, Anglo-American statesmen were deeply concerned that the magnitude of Germany's territorial loss, and the great number of refugees created by the ethnic cleansing of East Central Europe, would result in the long-term destabilization of all of Central and Eastern Europe. Alfred de Zayas, *A Terrible Revenge The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans, 1944-1950*, trans. John A. Koehler, (New York: St. Martin's Press, New York, 1994), 111-116; Sebastian Siebel-Achenbach, *Lower Silesia from Nazi Germany to Communist Poland, 1942-1949* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 97-101, 111-113. Schechtman also notes the considerable opposition that post-war ethnic cleansing aroused in Western Europe and the United States. Schechtman, 389-395.

Polish nationalist discourse—the Endecja construction of Polish national identity, which represented one of the most aggressive and xenophobic strains of Polish nationalism (see below)—it is possible better to account for the social sources of support for and the staying power of Polish Communism in the postwar period.

In addition to surveying the relevant secondary literature on the domestic and international ramifications of ethnic cleansing on midwestern Poland, I have employed a great number of primary documents in my research on the impact of postwar ethnic cleansing on Wielkopolska. During the academic year 1995-1996 I conducted research in Poznań at the State Archive (Archiwum Państwowy Poznański), the Provincial archives of the Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR), and the library of Adam Mickiewicz University (including their holdings of Church newspapers from this period), and at the national archive, Archiwum Akt Nowych, in Warsaw. These archives provided me with access to the documents of the national and provincial the PPR, a variety of government agencies, and the quasi-official nationalist organization, the Polish Western Union (Polski Związek Zachodni, PZZ).

The local government agencies in Poznań whose documents I examined included: the Office of Poznań Province (Urząd Wojewódzki Poznański, UWP); the local branches of the Ministry of Information and Propaganda (Ministerstwo Informacji i Propagandy, MIiP); and the State Repatriation Agency (Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny, PUR). Among the most valuable of these documents were the monthly situation reports of the Ministry of Information and Propaganda, which monitored everything from the political attitudes of the populace to rises in prices and the situation of the Catholic Church. The documents of the State Repatriation Agency included extremely valuable and detailed reports on the

settlement of Poles both within the heavily German populated counties of pre-war Wielkopolska, as well as within the new areas annexed to the province after the war. These documents especially help illustrate the high human and material cost to Poland in colonizing the Recovered Territories.

There were also a number of valuable materials in the files of the Office of the Provincial Governor, especially the monthly situation reports of the various counties in Wielkopolska. I was fortunate to gain access to the reports of the *Milicja Obywatelska* (the Citizens' Militia) for the entire province for the period from August to December 1945. The analysis of political events in these documents is often at variance with other sources and is excessively optimistic concerning popular support of the regime. This flaw is more than compensated for by these documents' detailed information on the horrendous security situation and include a valuable account of the conduct of Soviet soldiers in a fraternal Slavic country. This conduct tremendously exacerbated the difficult process of postwar colonization, reconstruction and economic revival in Wielkopolska.

The documents of the PZZ, which had its national headquarters in Poznań, were also quite important in my research. The internal documents and reports of the Union reveal the slow but steady transformation of the PZZ from a relatively independent, extreme nationalist organization that sought to cooperate with the regime, into an institution almost entirely subordinate to the authorities and in step with the "new reality" of a Communist-dominated Poland. These documents also show the development of western Polish nationalist thought, as well as the programs through which the PZZ sought to propagate its vision of Poland's future.

Finally, the local and national documents of the ruling Polish Workers Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR) were an indispensable aid in understanding local Communist perceptions of the situation in Wielkopolska. They also demonstrate the increasing importance of nationalism and the efforts to manipulate national symbols which came to have a central influence on a party which prior to the war had regarded even Polish independence as a negotiable aspect of Poland's long term future.

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When I began my graduate work in the *anno mirabilis* of 1989 I was fortunate to study with John Gaddis and Steven Miner at the newly established Contemporary History Institute at Ohio University. There I benefited greatly from a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship which allowed me the leisure for serious study, and a diverse community of scholars attempting to discover the peculiar problems and challenges inherent in doing contemporary history. I especially benefited from my work with Steven Miner, whose great knowledge of the history of Russia and the Soviet Union, intellectual integrity and encouragement provided me with a model of academic excellence. My time and study in Athens served me well when I moved on to continue my studies at the University of Washington.

At the University of Washington I have enjoyed the support and friendship of a number of faculty. Herbert Ellison has been a constant source of encouragement and guidance as I endeavored to sort out various interpretations of the Soviet experience and the impact of modern Communism on the 20th century. James Felak has provided me with invaluable insight into the history of East Central Europe and has been the most demanding and useful critic of my work. Glennys Young's highly demanding and correspondingly rewarding seminar on 19th and early 20th century Russian history as well as her keen and balanced analysis of my research has given me a more solid intellectual foundation, and my dissertation a greater depth and sophistication than I had before I began work with her. Each member of my committee has been generous with their time and attention, and has contributed much of whatever is valuable in my work. I also wish to the staff of the

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Finally, and most importantly, I want to acknowledge the constant and loving support of my wife, Sherry, to whom this work is dedicated. Her help has made this work possible. I have received a great deal of help and encouragement from all of my teachers and colleagues, but my wife has been my truest friend and most indispensable help in my

effort to bring this work to completion. Much of the virtue this work may possess is due to the help of her, my friends and my colleagues. Its defects are my own.

Dedication

The author wishes to dedicate this dissertation to his wife, Sherry Lynn Curp.

Introduction

All Polish influence, whether it is in the sphere of politics, or culture, or the economy, will be liquidated once and for all...I regard as our most important issue the settlement of this land with people, for whom, in the future, the notion of Poland will only be a historical memory.

—Arthur Geisler, Gauleiter Wartheland, on Germany's occupation policy in western Poland.¹⁰

A clean sweep will be made. I am not alarmed by these large transferences, which are more possible in modern conditions than they ever were before.

—Winston Churchill, on Allied occupation policy in eastern Germany.¹¹

Three costly revolutions began in Poland between the summer of 1944 and early 1946. The first two were primarily state-sponsored political and socio-economic revolutions begun by a minority of Moscow-appointed and -controlled Communists and fellow travelers. They hoped to transform Poland into a "People's Democracy"—a new, transitional form of government that would prepare Poland for the (more or less) rapid adoption of Soviet-style socialism. These totalitarian¹² revolutions ran into a great deal of

¹⁰ Dariusz Matelski. "Polityka Germanizacji Kraju Warty, 1939-1944." in *Utracona ojczyzna: przymusowe wysiedlenia deportacje i przesiedlenia jako wspólne doświadczenie* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1996), 130.

¹¹ Alfred M. de Zayas. *Nemesis at Potsdam: The Anglo-Americans and the Expulsion of the Germans, Background, Execution, Consequences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 1.

¹² "Totalitarianism," a paradigm which contends that twentieth century Fascist and Communist regimes represent states of a new type, has come under a great deal of criticism in contemporary historiography. In his survey of the changing Western formulations of the term, Abbot Gleason argues that "[t]otalitarianism was the great mobilizing and unifying concept of the Cold War..." and that the West, as part of its "missionary internationalism," applied this term to the Soviet Union in the 1930s to

popular resistance. The regime eventually established them only partially, and with a massive resort to fraud and force.

Poland's state-sponsored political and socio-economic revolutions endured for less than fifty years and exercised an uneven hold on Polish society. For both their initiation and their long-term survival, these changes were deeply dependent upon the coercive power of the new Polish state and (ultimately) the Soviet Union. When both Poland's rulers and their Soviet masters began to lose the will to defend these revolutions, and the Polish people renewed their struggle against the Communist regime under the banner of Solidarity, this system entered into a crisis. When in 1989 the Polish people regained

prepare for the "coming crusade" of World War II. Padraic Kenney, in his discussion of postwar Łódź and Wrocław, argues that the totalitarian paradigm applied to Poland is "correct—but a seriously incomplete historical drama." He argues that a social historical study of postwar Polish reconstruction "rewrites the entire play." Gleason's work, while an interesting exercise in the intellectual history of Western Europe and the United States, is not a reliable guide for postwar Poland given his claim that "totalitarianism" was not part of Polish discourse until 1968. In fact it was a central element of the Church's critique of the regime even in 1945 (see below). While Kenney's reason for avoiding the term—in order to study the agency of social actors—is commendable, it produces very curious results. For example, Kenney asserts that in postwar Poland "the press was controlled" (by whom?); that after the Communist electoral victory in January 1947, "...politics, in the sense of a democratic contest, was over..." (who ended it?); and that, in the latter period of his study, "...the workers were mobilized..." (by whom?). The answer to all of these questions is the regime. Furthermore, while this approach has value in the study of working class politics in Wrocław and Łódź, it obscures a great deal of important social and political reality when considering the regime's policies among its less favored subjects: the people of Wielkopolska. Abbot Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3, 10, 170-172; Kenney, 2-3, 54, 55, 190. For a nuanced and persuasive account of how the totalitarian paradigm can explain both social agency and the tremendous socio-political role of the state, see Jan Gross, "Social Consequences of War: Preliminaries to the Study of Imposition of Communist Regimes in East Central Europe," *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 3 (1989), 207-210.

their country's sovereignty and dismantled the coercive power that maintained the socialist content of the People's Republic of Poland, much of this *ancien regime's* political and socio-economic superstructure collapsed.

The third revolution was a nationalist revolution that engaged and united both the new Communist authorities and much of Polish society in a cooperative effort. Like the first two, this third revolution came from both abroad and within, though its support—foreign and domestic—was much broader. Internationally, this nationalist revolution required the agreement and cooperation of the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union in redrawing the ethnographic and political map of East Central Europe. Domestically, the supporters of this nationalist revolution managed to gain the agreement and active support of the majority of the Polish population in order to construct their vision of a nationally homogenous Poland. With this foreign and domestic support, the reborn Polish state was able to colonize and ethnically cleanse all the lands within its new borders, and transform Poland from a multinational, multicultural society to an all but homogenous Polish state. Poland, for the first time in almost nine hundred years, became an “ethnic monolith.”¹³

The use of the term “ethnic cleansing” to describe the international efforts of the Allies and the domestic efforts of the Polish regime and its people to expel Poland's German population is a controversial element in my evaluation of both the historiography of wartime and postwar international diplomacy and of postwar Polish history as a whole.

¹³ Jan Gross, “War as Revolution,” in Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, eds., *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 23.

Many Polish scholars find ethnic cleansing, a term of recent vintage with highly polemical connotations,¹⁴ to be misleading when applied to the Potsdam decisions.¹⁵ Marian Wojciechowski has argued that in German and Polish studies the use of the term *vertreibung/wypędzenie* (“driving away” or “expulsion”) is problematic because of its highly emotive connotations.¹⁶

Krystyna Kersten agrees and claims that it is necessary to create a “neutral terminology” to describe postwar expulsions. She proposes (without any apparently conscious irony) “to cleanse the field of research of emotional and political stratification” and use the Polish terms *wysiedlenie* (“expulsion”) (which she defines as always involuntary) and

¹⁴ Bell-Fialkoff, in contrast, claims that the term “ethnic cleansing” is a vague and euphemistic term, which he nevertheless uses as the title of his monograph on the subject. He faults the term “ethnic” since it ignores groups subject to forced removal due to reasons of religion, race or class. He claims that “cleansing” is also problematic because it “hides the ugly truth...[that cleansing] when applied to human populations...spells suffering.” Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 1.

¹⁵ This results in a difficult problem for many Polish historians when they describe the German occupation of Poland during World War II and the Nazi policy of expelling Poles in areas incorporated in the Reich (particularly “Wartheland” which encompassed all of Wielkopolska and parts of central Poland). Though German expulsions could be, and were, condemned for their excesses, the Nazi policy of ethnically cleansing their annexed territories itself could not be condemned *in toto* because it too closely resembled postwar Polish policy. See Tadeusz Cyprian and Jerzy Sawicki, *Nazi Rule in Poland 1939-1945* (Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, 1961) which details Nazi crimes in Poland but does not mention German expulsions, or Czesław Luczak, “*Kraj warty*” 1939-1945: *studium historyczno-gospodarcze okupacji hitlerowskiej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1972) 57-58.

¹⁶ Marian Wojciechowski, “The Exodus of the Germans from the Odra and Lusatian Nysa Territories,” *Polish Western Affairs* 31 (1990), 39.

przesiedlenie (“displacement”) (which can be either voluntary or involuntary)¹⁷ to describe the phenomenon of forced resettlement.

Kersten’s proposal of “neutral terminology” to discuss the process of ethnic cleansing is a flawed enterprise on two counts: it presumes that scholarly discourse can occur in a political and ethical vacuum, and it ignores the prevalence of a wide variety of linguistic usages in the immediate postwar Polish discussions of the expulsions, a number of which positively refer to the expulsions as “cleansing Poland of all German influence.” Currently ethnic cleansing does have important (and largely negative) contemporary connotations, mostly connected with the break-up of Yugoslavia. Yet the term “ethnic cleansing” accurately describes both the ideology and reality of the postwar population transfers, and is similar to terms that Poles used *at that time* to describe their efforts to remove all Germans from Poland. These terms included *oczyszczenie* (“cleansing” or “purging”) and *odniemczenie* (degermanization”).¹⁸ I employ “ethnic cleansing” both

¹⁷ Krystyna Kersten, “Przymusowe przemieszczenia ludności-proba typologii.” in Hubert Orłowski and Andrzej Sakson, eds., *Utracona ojczyzna: przymusowe wysiedlenia deportacje i przesiedlenia jako wspolne doswiadczenie* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1996), 18.

¹⁸ While ethnic cleansing involved the forcible expulsion of Poland’s German population, “degermanization” was part of a larger effort to “recover” for the Polish nation both the recently annexed lands in the Oder-Neisse territories and persons of ambiguous nationality. Polish authorities sought to achieve the latter by coercing statements of loyalty to the Polish nation and Polish “democracy” (the new authorities) as a condition for continued residence in Poland. For a discussion of the various criteria the Polish government employed to determine Polishness and the difficulties inherent in this effort, see Jan Misztal, *Weryfikacja narodowościowa na Ziemiach Odzyskanych* (Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe: Warsaw, 1992), 208-238. Degermanization was not limited to persons, but was part of a broader Polish effort to settle former German lands with Poles, eliminate public use of the German language, change all German place names, and carry on a struggle with traces of “the German mentality” supposedly exhibited by nationally mixed and/or nationally ambiguous persons. Michał Musielak,

because of its descriptive value in analyzing Poland's "nationalist revolution" and to reconsider the consequences of Potsdam's authorization of East Central Europe's ethnic cleansing.

This nationalist revolution gave Poland a new form, which the authorities and their supporters claimed was patterned on the first Polish, Piast state. Norman Davies rightly observes that this was a highly fictive anachronism. The various ingenious Polish Communist and nationalist efforts to identify tenth-century Slavic settlements in the Oder-Neisse territories (or, as they were called at the time, "the Recovered Territories"—see discussion below) bear little relation to the highly fluid nature of early medieval political or ethnographic history in East Central Europe.¹⁹ However, the force of what Jakub Berman, one of the leading officials of the new regime, called "the legend of the Oder and the Neisse" did not depend upon its historical accuracy. Instead, it was part of a larger effort by the regime and its supporters at myth-making—and at remolding Polish national consciousness.²⁰ In contrast to the first revolution, this nationalist revolution met with a deeper, more positive popular response, and its results appear to have permanently altered Polish society and the political and ethnographic map of East Central Europe.

In the immediate postwar period and beyond, these three revolutions were mutually reinforcing. The goal of the Communist-led nationalist revolution—to expand Poland

Polski Związek Zachodni, 1944-1950 (Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe: Warszawa, 1986), 236-258.

¹⁹ Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland In Two Volumes, Volume 1, the Origins to 1795* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 32-33, 66.

²⁰ "Extracts of the Minutes of the Plenum of the PPR Central Committee, 20-21 May, 1945" in Anthony Polonsky and Bolesław Drukier, eds., *The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 434.

westward and ethnically cleanse the country of its German minority—gave the new authorities a degree of popular legitimacy that Polish Communism had entirely lacked. These territories, along with both their immovable and much of their movable goods, also provided the regime with a large fund of confiscated property with which it could purchase a certain degree of popular acquiescence, and thus more firmly establish its political authority. The authorities also believed that the industrial base Poland acquired in the German east would help them realize their dreams of a more fully industrialized Poland, and thus pave the way for the country's socio-economic revolution. Perhaps most importantly, at a time of political transition and conflict, the conquest and colonization of the Recovered Territories gave the Polish Communists and their allies a cause in which many Poles were willing to accept the regime's leadership—and sincerely, though grudgingly and tentatively, support the new authorities.

Both critics and supporters of the new regime acknowledged that Poland's vast westward expansion to the Oder and the Neisse rivers (even if it implicitly entailed the country's territorial truncation in the east²¹) represented, at the very least, a short-term windfall for the Polish state and its people. The only long term cost that some diplomats and statesmen foresaw at the time (and which has since become a truism of Polish

²¹ Poland's eastern boundaries were a source of controversy within the wartime anti-Nazi alliance. Eventually, at the Tehran Conference in December 1943 (see below), the leaders of the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union fixed Poland's eastern boundary at the Curzon line. Poland thus lost an ethnically heterogeneous, largely non-Polish area of 70,049 square miles with a pre-war population of over 10 million people, roughly one-third of whom were ethnically Polish, and the rest of whom were Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Jewish. de Zayas, *Nemesis*, 41, 54-55.

historiography²²) was that Poland, in gaining so much territory at Germany's expense, would be permanently bound to and dependent upon the Soviet Union²³ (a possibility which did not at all dismay Poland's then-current rulers).

There was, however, another set of hidden costs in the conquest and colonization of eastern Germany and the ethnic cleansing of Poland for all of Polish society²⁴ that has yet to be fully explored. These costs were much higher than either Poland's new rulers or its people as a whole anticipated in the first years of Polish settlement in the Oder-Neisse territories. For the Polish people, this price included both the vastly expensive undertaking of rebuilding and settling the war-torn, depopulated Recovered Territories, but even more importantly, the stabilizing of the Communist regime in their country. Poland's strongest domestic ties to the Soviet system were internally forged: from the

²² Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland In Two Volumes, Volume 2, 1795 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 501, 558; Vojtech Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War: Diplomacy, Warfare, and the Politics of Communism, 1941-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 177-181; Siebel-Achenbach, 116; Sarah Meicklejohn Terry, *Poland's Place in Europe: General Sikorski and the Origin of the Oder-Neisse Line, 1939-1943* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 356.

²³ In addition to concerns about the geo-political impact of the new Polish-German frontier, many Anglo-American officials feared the potentially disastrous economic impact on Germany of such a huge loss of territory and the necessity of absorbing so many refugees. Siebel-Achenbach, 83-85; de Zayas, *Nemesis*, 86-87.

²⁴ The costs for the Germans so expelled by this policy were terribly high, but are difficult to assess from the current literature on the subject. Much of the Western analysis of the impact of ethnic cleansing on those Germans expelled is written either to justify Allied wartime and postwar decisions to cleanse East Central Europe of Germans (e.g., Schechtman) or to exaggerate German suffering and advocate for a revision of the postwar territorial changes in the Polish-German border (e.g. de Zayas, *Terrible Revenge*).

widespread and widely propagandized fear of German revanchism,²⁵ to the personal interests of millions of Poles (both in the Recovered Territories and throughout those areas of the country where the pre-war German minority had held large amounts of property) in maintaining their hold on the lands and properties they had “recovered” after the war. Ironically, even the Catholic Church in Poland, which prided itself as the main guarantor of a universal Christianity that united Poland to the rest of Catholic Christendom and (as the spiritual leader of a *Polonia Semper Fidelis*) to the Papacy, became deeply invested in supporting Poland’s ethnic cleansing, even over the protests of the reigning Pope, Pius XII.²⁶

For the new Communist authorities, there was to be another, distinct set of hidden costs in their effort to play the nationalist card. Most of the PPR’s highest leadership initially embraced Polish nationalism as a means to what they regarded as the greater end of Poland’s socio-economic and political transformation. However, when the PPR’s first modest efforts at social engineering and economic change came under sustained attack during the first eighteen months of their rule, they discovered that appeals to patriotism were among their only sure refuges. The fierce political opposition and near-civil war conditions that characterized the popular response to the PPR during this period led the

²⁵ In his analysis of the consistently negative portrayal of Germans in Polish secondary school texts throughout the existence of the Polish People’s Republic, Zbigniew Mazur notes that “the conscious, calculated manipulation of propaganda to the interests of the social group that came to power in Poland after World War II” was not just a matter of “mass indoctrination.” Polish society as a whole was quite open to anti-German propaganda, independent of its supposed analytical foundations. For example, Zbigniew Mazur, 226-227.

²⁶ Antoni Dudek, *Państwo i kościół w Polsce 1945-1970* (Cracow: Uniwersytet Jagielloński-Wydział Prawa i Administracji, 1995), 15-16.

Party leadership to give pride of place to the role of nationalism in its program. This effort was spearheaded by the most important figure in twentieth-century Polish Communism, Władysław Gomułka.

Gomułka, the General Secretary of the PPR, and later Minister of the newly-created Ministry of the Recovered Territories, led the effort to harness the powerful upsurge in wartime and postwar Polish nationalism to the Party's revolutionary ends, but also to win acceptance within the PPR for his efforts to redefine Polish Communism as a truly indigenous, organic outgrowth of Poland's struggle for national liberation. He ultimately succeeded in grafting Polish Communism's revolutionary socialism onto a branch of Polish nationalism—to create a new political force that, after a brief eclipse during the Stalinist period, would play a powerful role in Polish politics until the demise of the Polish People's Republic.

This reformation of Polish Communism did in fact establish the Party's place in Polish politics, even if it could not ensure widespread acceptance of the Party's programs and goals—but for the Communists, this reformation's price was high. With the nationalization of its socialist vision, both the PPR and its successor, the Polish United Worker's Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR), based their claim to rule Poland to a significant degree upon nationalist foundations, including: an anti-German interpretation of Polish national interests; the use of Polish national symbols; the guarantee of greater prosperity for all Poles; and even, in politically desperate moments, on appeals to Polish xenophobia and anti-Semitism.²⁷ Polish Communism, which began

²⁷ During three major crises of Polish Communism (the 1956 collapse of Polish Stalinism, the 1968 student protests, and the 1980 Solidarity movement), powerful factions within the PZPR sought to gain popular support by leading attacks against “Abramovitches”

its existence as a resolutely internationalist movement committed to breaking down national hostilities in East Central Europe, ended its life dependent upon, but unable to fully assimilate, the nationalist passions it had arisen to combat.

An important factor in my analysis of the postwar situation in Poland is my focus on the interaction of local and national history. Regional and cultural divisions have played a crucial role in modern Polish history. The settlement patterns of different national minorities throughout ethnographic Poland and Poland's eastern and western borderlands, as well as the long-term impact of the partitions of Poland, created a number of distinct Polish subcultures which have been at least as suspicious of other "Poles" as they have been of locals of different nationalities.²⁸

These divisions were compounded by Poland's territorial reorganization and ethnic cleansing after the war. There were five distinct regions within the Oder-Neisse territories: Lower and Upper Silesia, Western Pomorze, Mazuria (or southern East Prussia) and Ziemia Lubuska, which in turn were either independent administrative units (Lower Silesia, Western Pomorze, and Mazuria) or were attached to already existing Polish provinces (Upper Silesia was incorporated into Katowice, while Ziemia Lubuska was made a part of Wielkopolska). Within each of these regions, differing social, economic, political, administrative and ethnographic realities render broad

and "Zionists" within the Party or the dissident movement. Norman Davies, *God's Playground, Vol. 2*, 586, 588; Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution; Solidarity* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1983), 175, 264, 310.

²⁸ Kenney makes several insightful remarks on the importance of regional differences in Poland as a whole as well as in the settlement of the Recovered Territories. Kenney, 12, 161-164. Also, see the discussion below on the importance of regional differences in Wielkopolska's politics.

generalizations about the impact of post-war Poland's nationalist revolution in the Recovered Territories as a whole hazardous.

In few areas of Poland did these postwar revolutions have a more profound impact than in Wielkopolska, Poland's midwest. With a large, economically powerful Protestant German minority and a relatively prosperous, profoundly socially and politically conservative Polish Catholic peasant majority, Wielkopolska had been a region of mostly peaceful Polish-German mixed settlement and coexistence for centuries. National conflict from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, especially with the revival of an independent Polish state in this region in 1919, resulted in progressively deteriorated relations between the two peoples. The experiences of the Second World War created a climate in which the wildest excesses of nationalist rhetoric (which had led nationalists of both sides to openly claim that they were in a "life and death struggle" with each other²⁹) were transformed into reality. In Wielkopolska in 1945, the conflict between Poles and Germans was at its sharpest and most uncompromising—more than in any other region of Poland. The result was tremendous popular support of ethnically cleansing areas of mixed Polish-German settlement and broad participation of Poles from this region in the settlement of the newly annexed German lands further west.³⁰

²⁹ Richard Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1981), 209-233; Harry Kenneth Rosenthal, *German and Pole: National Conflict and Modern Myth* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1976), 69-88; Davies, *God's Playground, Vol. 2*, 124-137.

³⁰ Zygmunt Dulczewski and Andrzej Kwilecki, *Społeczeństwo Wielkopolskie w osadnictwie Ziemi Zachodnich* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1962), 5-9, 27-28.

This was also, however, a region whose social conservatism and staunch Catholicism made it one of the strongest centers of (mostly) peaceful resistance to the new regime. In Wielkopolska the work of binding the local population to the new political system and its socio-economic changes was at its most difficult, while many of the local instruments willing to participate in this work were at their most fragile. In the local PPR, the regime disposed of a branch of the Party which had few substantial ties to the people, while the state administration, imperfectly under its control, for a variety of professional and political reasons often worked at cross-purposes with the new central government.³¹

In addition to the weakness of its representatives, the regime faced a serious political challenge. The briefly-tolerated political opposition led by Stanisław Mikołajczyk's Polish Peasant's Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL) became, for a time, the strongest political force in the region, and threatened to undo the regime's fledgling socio-economic revolution. In the newly geographically and ethnographically reconfigured Wielkopolska, which gained a great deal of former German territories to the

³¹ As Kenney has noted, one of the difficulties in discussing post-war Polish politics is the multiplicity of authorities and institutions in the immediate post-war period that exercised power. The Communists desire to build a broad "popular front," create simulacra of the pre-war PPS and SL, their efforts to build up expansive state and party bureaucracies, and the partial boycott of the Communist-dominated government by the surviving Polish intelligentsia all created a situation where the government was willing to give even politically suspect or otherwise undesirable persons positions of authority. This relative institutional pluralism multiplied confusion and allowed those who disagreed with the Communists' out of conviction or for other reasons for a time to frustrate many of the authorities initiatives (see below). However, while their opponents could delay or deflect elements of their agenda, in the end the Communists were able to exercise an increasingly effective control of state institutions and the majority of the social and political institutions they had either created or authorized to operate legally, as well as to eliminate the public activity of those institutions they defined as inimical to their new order. Kenney, 9-10; Polonsky and Drukier, 428.

west and lost most of its German minority, the interplay between the regime's local and national policies, and the degree of local opposition and cooperation that these two revolutions encountered, make it a particularly important subject of study. It was here where the contradictions in socialist nationalism were at their most acute. The effort to both mobilize local society for national and patriotic ends and yet foist upon it deeply unpopular socio-economic policies created strange alliances and tensions that deeply changed both Polish Communism and Polish society.

Chapter 1: An Equal and Opposite Reaction: The Grand Alliance, Soviet Imperialism, and Poland's New Place in Europe, September 1939-July 1944

THE WAR TO END ALL WARS, PART II: THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE "GRAND ALLIANCE", THE COLD WAR, AND POLAND'S ETHNIC CLEANSING

I am convinced that the agreement on Poland, under the circumstances, is the most hopeful agreement possible for a free independent, and prosperous Polish state.

—Franklin D. Roosevelt, speaking to a joint session of Congress on the Yalta agreement, February 1945.³²

We started this war with great motives and high ideals. We published the Atlantic Charter and then spat on it, stamped on it and burnt it...and now nothing is left of it.

—Mr. Rhys-Davis, Member of the British Parliament, during a debate on the Yalta agreement.³³

In August of 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill publicly committed their respective governments to the Atlantic Charter, a statement of principles which they claimed would govern their countries' conduct during the war. Among the Charter's principles were the assertions that neither government would agree to "territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned," and that the

³² Kersten, *Establishment*, 124.

³³ Quoted in de Zayas, *Nemesis*, 58.

leaders of the United States and Great Britain “respect the rights of all peoples to chose the form of governments under which they will live.”³⁴

In August 1945, at the conclusion of the Potsdam Conference which formerly ended hostilities in Europe, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union published the “report on the Tripartite Conference” whose thirteenth article stated that “[t]he three Governments having considered the question in all its aspects, recognize that the transfer to Germany of German populations, or elements thereof, remaining in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, will have to be undertaken.” In a later communiqué, the Conference’s participants also agreed that

...pending the final determination of Poland’s western frontier, the former German territories east of a line running from the Baltic Sea...along the Oder River...to the ...Neisse River...including that portion of East Prussia not placed under the administration of the [Soviet Union]...shall be under the administration of the Polish state....³⁵

Later in the 1940s, as Cold War tensions mounted and it became important to curry the favor of German public opinion, Western statesmen began to argue that the Potsdam Protocols were never meant to be permanent, and that the Oder-Neisse territories were merely under Polish administration. At the time of these agreements, however, their Western signatories realized that they were committing their governments to support

³⁴ “The Atlantic Charter, August, 1941” in Hugh Thomas, *Armed Truce: The Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-1946* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), 556-557.

³⁵ “Communiqué of the Potsdam Conference, 2 August 1945, F.R.U.S. Potsdam, II, pp. 1579-80” in Antony Polonsky, ed., *The Great Powers and the Polish Question, 1941-1945: A Documentary Study in Cold War Origins* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 1976), 281-282.

Germany's permanent territorial partition as well as the ethnic cleansing of all Germans from East Central Europe.³⁶

This Great Power-sanctioned manipulation of borders and peoples was to have profound international and domestic implications throughout East Central Europe, and particularly in Poland. The shift of Poland's political and ethnographic frontiers two hundred miles westward played a key role in that country's partial sovietization. The causes and consequences of the Great Powers' agreement to allow the Communist-dominated Polish government to ethnically cleanse Poland is a topic that has heretofore received little direct attention in Western historiography of postwar East Central Europe, and has only recently become a topic of free inquiry in Poland. This gap in the literature greatly hinders our understanding of postwar Polish history. The beginnings of Poland's ethnic cleansing sheds important light on the dynamics of postwar sovietization in Poland.

Of the various problems in the study of postwar ethnic cleansing, the question of how and why the Grand Alliance reached agreement in favor of expelling the German population of East Central Europe is certainly one of the most important. While the Western Allies and the Polish government-in-exile in London were far from reaching a consensus with the Soviet Union or the Soviet-dominated "Lublin" Polish government about the extent of Poland's westward expansion (or eastern partition), all sides agreed that those Germans living in what was to become a reestablished Polish state should be forcibly expelled from their homes. The Great Powers and all of Poland's diplomatic and political establishment regarded these eastern Germans as an ongoing risk both to Poland's internal security and to the peace and stability of East Central Europe as a whole.

³⁶ Siebel-Achenbach, 114-116.

That the end of World War II revealed such a profound gap between publicly professed Anglo-American principles and agreement to and assistance in East Central Europe's ethnic cleansing is not in itself surprising. Indeed, most historians of the Potsdam accords regard these agreements as having merely recognized a Soviet *fait accompli* in East Central Europe. They argue that the Potsdam agreements simply implemented previous Big Three agreements made at Tehran and Yalta about the shape and nature of the Soviet Union's sphere of influence there and did not substantially alter the pattern of events in East Central Europe.³⁷ Even the ethnic cleansing of many of the Germans living in Poland and eastern Germany had already begun by the winter of 1944-45. The terror of the Red Army's advance had already prompted much of the German population to abandon their homes in an action which radically depopulated the Reich's eastern territories.

I argue, contrary to much of the literature on wartime Anglo-American diplomacy, that at Potsdam the leaders of the United States and Great Britain went further than recognizing Soviet and Polish *faits accomplis*. The Western powers also ratified this process as a legitimate end of their countries' war- and peace-making, and committed their governments to aiding Poland and the other states of East Central Europe in their efforts at ethnic cleansing. Anglo-American cooperation played a crucial part in enabling Poland and the other countries of East Central Europe to expel their German population.³⁸

That a war that Nazi Germany had begun to achieve Hitler's racist dream of conquering German *lebensraum* in Central and Eastern Europe through the murder, enslavement, and deportation of Germany's eastern neighbors was ending with the (ostensibly)

³⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, *Russia, The Soviet Union and the United States: An Interpretive History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978) 166; Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 253.

³⁸ Schechtman, 64.

ideologically and morally superior Grand Alliance's expulsion of over 10 million Germans³⁹ is of the utmost historical significance. In accord with Potsdam's stipulation that these transfers be conducted in a "humane and orderly manner," the Germans so expelled did not uniformly suffer the kind of brutality that Nazi Germany had inflicted upon its neighbors (though the early Polish expulsions of Germans from June-July 1945, prior to Potsdam were as brutal as any of the wartime German transfers of Poles).⁴⁰ But in the end, the ethnographic map of postwar East Central Europe represented almost a photographic negative of Hitler's dream: a region almost entirely "cleansed" of national minorities.

The political and diplomatic leadership of the US and the British Empire (under considerable Soviet pressure) played a major role in bringing about the metamorphosis of their policies from Atlantic Charter idealism to the *machtpolitik* of supporting ethnic cleansing. The greater accessibility of Western government documents and diplomatic correspondence makes it possible to chart this process from its tentative beginnings—in Czech and Polish exiles lobbying for mass expulsions and Churchill's government and the Roosevelt administration beginning to contemplate the ethnic cleansing of over 2 million Germans of East Prussia—all the way to the final agreements at Potsdam.

³⁹ The exact number of Germans expelled is itself the subject of controversy. Alfred de Zayas cites a figure of 15 million expellees for all of East Central Europe during and after the war. This is problematic because it lumps together the millions of Germans who either fled the Soviet advance individually or whose flight was organized by Nazi officialdom along with those expelled according to the stipulations of Potsdam agreements. (de Zayas, *Nemesis*, xxi.) Joseph Schechtman cites a figure of over 11 million expellees, almost 7 million of whom were expelled from the Oder-Neisse territories or from pre-war Poland. Schechtman, 194-195.

⁴⁰ Schechtman, 197-200.

In the spring of 1942 President Roosevelt and British Foreign Minister Eden both declined to endorse territorial changes in East Central Europe and claimed that their policies were based on the principles of the Atlantic Charter. Within nine months, during a December 1942 visit with General Sikorski, President Roosevelt had reversed himself and was all but endorsing Soviet expansion in Latvia, Estonia, and Bessarabia as well as expressing support for Poland's annexation and ethnic cleansing of East Prussia and Danzig. After the break in Polish-Soviet relations over Katyń in April 1943, but before the Tehran Conference, Anglo-American diplomats began to increase the amount of German territory to be turned over to Poland in the West (all of Upper Silesia-which would require the transfer of up to 1 million more Germans).⁴¹

The instability of the Versailles system and the destabilizing agitation of East Central Europe's German minorities in the interwar period, as well as the reputedly successful example of a Greco-Turkish population exchange following the Treaty of Sèvres⁴² all helped to suggest ethnic cleansing to Western statesmen as a viable basis for establishing an enduring peace. The rigors of the war and the desire to impose a Carthaginian peace

⁴¹ Polonsky, 38, 102, 106, 113, 134, 152. Czech efforts to secure Anglo-American approval of the expulsion had begun even earlier, in the autumn of 1941; they continued during the war, and played a major role in the Czech government's pro-Soviet alignment within the Allied camp from 1943 on. Schechtman, 58-64; Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 58-60, 133-143.

⁴² The belief of many Anglo-American statesmen in the putative success of the Greco-Turkish transfer owes more to a cohort of busy diplomats superficially reading dispatches and journalism concerning Sèvres than to an in-depth study of post-Sèvres Greece or Turkey. For a discussion of the political and social instability that attended these transfers and helped to plunge Greece into a nightmarish civil war, see George Th. Mavrogordatos, *The Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 202-205, 346-347.

upon the German people also played a role.⁴³ Yet support for population transfers was also part of a larger British and American effort to harmonize a variety of short- and long-term political goals, including Churchill's and President Roosevelt's desire for a common Allied policy toward Germany, a firm guarantee of Poland's sovereignty, and the maintenance of Great Power unity in the face of expansive Soviet territorial (and eventually political) demands on Poland.

In Western Allied discussions one of the primary motivations supporting ethnic cleansing was the desire to win the support of the London Polish government-in-exile for Soviet expansion in the Polish east by the promise of compensation to Poland from Germany in the west. Though it was the Soviet government which first proposed that Poland receive "compensation" for the lands it was to lose in the east, the Western powers quickly embraced this proposal. Awarding Poland German territories held out hopes to Anglo-American policymakers for finding a publicly face-saving compromise in the domestically and internationally politically divisive Russo-Polish dispute.

The Soviet Union's support of ethnic cleansing is inseparable from other Soviet foreign policy goals. Post-revisionist diplomatic history forms the starting point for my analysis of Soviet policy in Poland and its relationship to Poland's international dilemmas during and after the war. Post-revisionist accounts emphasize the connections between the Soviet Union's domestic and international relations and the central role of ideology in forming Soviet conduct. New research in Soviet archives has essentially vindicated post-

⁴³ For a discussion of the increasingly punitive stance of Churchill and especially Roosevelt and the American political establishment towards Germany, see de Zayas, *Nemesis*, 14-16, 38-40.

revisionist (and much of mainstream “traditionalist”) Western scholarship on Soviet foreign policy during and after the Second World War.

Post-revisionism has recognized that Western misperception and self-interest played a role in bringing about or exacerbating inter-Allied conflicts, yet for the most part it has validated the central thesis of “traditionalist” Sovietology:⁴⁴ the primary cause of Allied disputes during and following the war was the “missionary imperative” of Moscow’s triumphalist and expansionist Communist ideology.⁴⁵ Mastny, one of the main post-revisionist scholars of Soviet international relations, claims that the most striking element of new research in Soviet archives is how little, rather than how much, the documents have revealed. He argues that this research has shown that there was no substantial gap between the Kremlin’s public pronouncements and “...the thinking of insiders. Some of

⁴⁴ Geir Lundestad and John Lewis Gaddis both offer insightful and balanced discussions of the contributions of revisionism in developing the more nuanced post-revisionist synthesis. The only drawback to Lundestad’s discussion is that, not then having access to Soviet archives, he tends to overrate the revisionist contribution. See Geir Lundestad, *The American Non-Policy Towards Eastern Europe, 1943-1947: Universalism in an Area not of Essential Interest to the United States* (New York: Humanities Press, 1975), 415-431; John Lewis Gaddis, “The Tragedy of Cold War History: Reflections on Revisionism.” *Foreign Affairs* 73: 1 (1994), 142-154; John Lewis Gaddis, “Who Really Started the Korean War?” *The Atlantic Monthly* (May 1994), 138-144.

⁴⁵ This stands in stark contrast to the fundamental deficiency of the (mostly American) revisionist scholarship of the 1960s and 70s which presumed to be able to judge Soviet intentions without access to Soviet archival documents. Revisionism regarded the Cold War as a result of an expansive America’s search for overseas markets in East Central Europe, despite legitimate Soviet security claims, and, more incredibly, viewed the Soviet Union as a pragmatic Russian state uninterested in world revolution. See William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Dell, 1962), 205, 232-239; Robert James Maddox, *The New Left and the Origins of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-1945* (New York: Random House, 1968), 164-165.

the most secret documents could have been published in *Pravda* without anybody's noticing. There was no double bookkeeping...."⁴⁶

Poland played such a prominent role in Soviet diplomacy of this period because the controversies concerning Poland's place in the anti-Hitler alliance became the crucible in which the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union forged a new, Soviet-dominated Poland and transformed East Central and Southeastern Europe into the Soviet bloc. The new, ethnically cleansed Poland which emerged from the war owed its existence primarily to the diplomatic maneuvering of the Great Powers—mostly through direct and sustained Soviet intervention in Poland's domestic affairs, as well as through international diplomacy; to a lesser extent to ineffectual and erratic Anglo-American interventions; and finally, in a quite limited degree, to non-Communist and Communist Polish efforts to achieve either some modicum of self-determination or a most-favored satrapy status within the Soviet imperium in East Central Europe.

⁴⁶ Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 9. Norman Naimark argues that recent research has shown that "Brzezinski and Seton-Watson [two of the most important pre-revisionist scholars of the Soviet takeover of Central Europe] had it right the first time." Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, eds., *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 8.

WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR? THE DIPLOMATIC AND DOMESTIC STRUGGLE FOR POLAND,
SEPTEMBER 1939-AUGUST 1944

If in Poland the Order of St. Anthony advocated the redrawing of Poland's eastern borders, it also would be branded by reaction as Moscow's agent, acting at the behest of Moscow's money to deliver the Polish nation under Stalin's boot.

—Władysław Gomułka describing the reason for the domestic political failures of the PPR in Poland to Georgi Dimitrov, former head of the Comintern in a letter March 1944.⁴⁷

The Soviet Union's efforts to reshape Poland's place in East Central Europe began with the Nazi-Soviet partition of Poland in September 1939. The Soviet Union sought to fully integrate its portions of occupied Poland (known to Poles as the *kresy* or "borderlands") through a policy of political assimilation, terror, and deportation especially targeted at (but not limited to) Poles. The Soviet government deported over 1.5 million Poles from these regions to northern Kazakhstan and Siberia, many of whom died during or after their transport.⁴⁸ Soviet rule in the *kresy* culminated in rigged elections in the spring of 1940, during which the Soviet government terrorized the local populations into voting for the annexation of their regions to the Soviet Belorussian and Soviet Ukrainian Republics.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Kersten, *Establishment*, 34.

⁴⁸ Keith Sword, *Deportation and Exile of Poles in the Soviet Union, 1939-1948: Siberian Odysseys* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 26-27.

⁴⁹ An excellent study of Soviet occupation policy in eastern Poland from 1939-1941 and its relationship to internal Soviet politics and ideology is Jan Gross, *Revolution from Abroad: The Soviet Conquest of Poland's Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

Poles were for the most part a persecuted minority during the initial Soviet occupation of eastern Poland; during the first two years of the war more Poles died under Soviet than under Nazi occupation.⁵⁰ But the Soviet Union had already begun cautiously to lay the groundwork for a revived Polish Communist movement within its own territories.⁵¹ This was done through mobilizing surviving members of the Polish Communist Party (Komunistyczna Partia Polski, KPP),⁵² publication of Polish newspapers,⁵³ a continued purge of suspect members of the former KPP, and training of Polish cadres for work in Soviet security services.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Gross. "War as Revolution." 35. A particularly grim irony is that the experience of Soviet occupation proved so oppressive that even many Jews sought to escape Soviet-occupied eastern Poland by traveling to the Nazi-occupied Generalgouvernement in 1940. Gross, *Revolution From Abroad*, 205-206.

⁵¹ Within German-occupied Poland there were splinters and factions of the disbanded KPP which adhered closely to the Comintern line and labeled the current conflict as an "imperialist war." and advocated Poland's postwar incorporation into the Soviet Union. Norbert Kołomejczyk and Marian Malinowski. *Polska Partia Robotnicza. 1942-1948* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1986), 17-18.

⁵² The Soviet-controlled Comintern ordered the disbanding of the KPP in 1938 on the trumped-up charge that the KPP was thoroughly infiltrated by agents of Poland's right-wing Sanacja regime and dominated by Trotskyites. In the purges which followed the Party's dissolution, the Soviet government wiped out almost the entire pre-war higher leadership of the Party (most of whom had fled arrest in Poland by taking up residence in the Soviet Union). Marian K. Dziewanowski. *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 149-150.

⁵³ Jakub Berman mentions the reopening of Polish schools in some areas of eastern Poland (after they were initially closed by the Soviets), several receptions for old members of the KPP in 1940, and even an article he wrote (and regarded as "one of my major feats") celebrating the Polish Third of May Constitution at a time when Polish nationality was still officially under attack. Teresa Torńska, *Them: Stalin's Polish Puppets*, trans. Agnieszka Kolakowska (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 208-213.

⁵⁴ John Micgiel, "The Suppression of Opposition in Poland," in Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, eds., *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 94. The NKVD began training Poles,

With the outbreak of Nazi-Soviet hostilities, the Soviet government found itself in a precarious diplomatic position. Soviet “domestic policy” in eastern Poland threatened to create serious foreign policy complications for the Soviet Union within the anti-Hitler coalition. Among the more potentially damaging legacies of the Soviet Union’s cooperation with Hitler were the murder of thousands of Polish army officers, the deportation and brutal treatment of Polish expellees from eastern Poland, and the Soviet annexation of Poland’s eastern territories. Any one of these actions could potentially have undermined the Soviet Union’s position with the Western Allies and destroyed any future prospects for extending Soviet influence into Poland. From its initial unwilling entry into the anti-Nazi coalition in June 1941 until the suspension of diplomatic relations with the Polish government-in-exile in London in April 1943, Soviet diplomacy and the staying power of the Red Army would help Stalin’s government to evade these obstacles, secure a prominent Soviet position within the Grand Alliance, and at the same time undermine the international prestige and influence of the London Poles.

At the outbreak of Nazi-Soviet hostilities, the London Poles, led by General Władysław Sikorski, attempted to bridge the gap that separated Poland and the Soviet Union. Within a week of the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, General Sikorski broadcast a message offering to reestablish Soviet-Polish relations. Soon after this, on 30 July 1941, the Soviet Union entered into an agreement with the Polish government which restored diplomatic relations, declared that “the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 relative to territorial changes in Poland have lost their validity,” and allowed for the formation of a Polish Army on

Belorussians, and Ukrainians from eastern Poland as early as September 1940, and would continue to do so throughout the war.

Soviet soil (to be composed of Polish POWs and Poles deported from the *kresy* from 1939 to 1941).

In this agreement the Polish government made a number of important unilateral concessions. Rather than demand that the Soviets recognize the Polish-Soviet border of September 1939, the Poles had to content themselves with a simple Soviet renunciation of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreements. Yet, as the Soviets made clear both during and after their negotiations with the Poles, this in no way implied recognition of Poland's pre-war frontiers. Indeed, Ivan Maisky (the Soviet ambassador to Great Britain), in discussions with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, even raised the question of whether the Soviet Union would recognize the Polish government-in-exile at all, or instead form a Polish "national committee" in Moscow, remarks which foreshadowed the Soviet Union's eventual solution to its Polish dilemma (see below).⁵⁵

The Soviets made public their reservations about the Polish-Soviet frontier in a statement released in *Izvestia* at the beginning of August. In a leading article, it was argued that while the Polish-Soviet agreement had acknowledged that the "territorial changes" which had occurred in 1939 were not "immutable," neither was the Treaty of Riga and the pre-war Polish-Soviet frontier it had established.⁵⁶ At the urging of the British, the Polish government chose not to press the Soviets on the border issue at that point. The British

⁵⁵ Terry, 170-171.

⁵⁶ *Izvestia*, 3 August 1941, as cited in Polonsky, 85.

argued that the then-current period of extreme Soviet military misfortune was not a good time to try to wring concessions from them.⁵⁷

Another important Polish concession during these negotiations was their acceptance of the Soviets' offer of "amnesty" for the Polish citizens deported to the interior of the Soviet Union during the period of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. In the negotiations between Maisky and Sikorski it became clear that the offer of amnesty was indirectly linked to the Soviet claim to sovereignty there. Maisky, when pressed to justify on what grounds the Soviets were holding Polish citizens as political prisoners, referred to Soviet law. When Sikorski pointed out that Soviet conduct toward civilians should have been regulated by the Hague convention governing military occupation, Maisky replied that the General was asking for the Soviet government "to recognize the 1939 frontier...and to admit that their actions since 1939 in these former Polish territories had been illegal."

In addition to obtaining these concessions, the Soviet government continually obstructed Polish efforts to form an army on Soviet soil. Sikorski placed a great deal of importance on Poland having as large a force as possible on the Eastern Front, both as a way of sealing Polish-Soviet cooperation in the camaraderie of arms, and (on a less sentimental note) of insuring that, should the Red Army advance into Polish territory, the London government would have loyal regular forces advancing with it. Almost from the start, however, the Soviet government obstructed the London government's efforts to organize

⁵⁷ Winston S. Churchill, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 390-392. It was a common hope of Allied statesmen, from Sikorski (almost alone among the London Poles) to Churchill and President Roosevelt, that the common struggle against Nazi Germany (which at least for the Anglo-Americans had precedence over all other "merely political" questions) would create an atmosphere of goodwill more conducive to amicable discussions on the Soviet-Polish frontier.

an independent Polish military formation by withholding promised military equipment and supplies from the Polish troops, interfering with recruiting, and being mysteriously reticent about the fate of Polish officers believed to be in Soviet custody.⁵⁸ In an effort to place Polish-Soviet cooperation on firmer footing, General Sikorski flew to Moscow for talks with Stalin in early December. He was followed later that month by Anthony Eden, whose mission was to discuss an Anglo-Soviet treaty.

On 3 December 1941, the day of Sikorski's arrival, the Soviets cast a pall on the discussion by issuing a note to the Polish government denying them the right to recruit among Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Jewish Poles who were resident in Poland's eastern provinces after 1 November 1939. The Soviets explained this action by claiming that they had only recognized the Polish citizenship of ethnic Poles as a gesture of good will, which in no way prejudiced Soviet claims to Poland's eastern territories. (The Soviets would withdraw this "concession" in January 1943, on the pretext that the Poles had not acknowledged their December 1941 note.)⁵⁹

⁵⁸ The Polish experience of Soviet obfuscation in this regard was hardly unique. From the very beginning of Anglo-Soviet relations, any British effort to gain basic military information crucial to joint actions was met with a peculiarly Soviet combination of silence and obfuscation. Typical was the following exchange between British General Ismay and Soviet military staff: "We asked for example, how many anti-tank guns were allotted to a division, adding that our divisions had seventy-two. The reply was, "It depends on what sort of division." When we suggested...an infantry division as an example, the reply was "That depends on where it has to fight." Steven M. Miner. *Between Churchill and Stalin: The Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the Origins of the Grand Alliance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 150-162.

⁵⁹ General Sikorski Historical Institute, *Documents on Polish-Soviet relations, 1939-1945* volume 1 (London: Heinemann, 1961), 227-228.

In discussions which followed with Stalin, Sikorski asserted Poland's right to her eastern territories and attempted to discover the fate of over 10,000 Polish officers (representing over 45 percent of the Polish officer corps) who had fallen into Soviet hands in 1939, and whose bodies would be discovered in Katyń in April 1943. Stalin, amicable enough in his comments over the issues of frontiers (during which he suggested that Poles and Russians cooperate to "destroy...finish...once and for all with" the troublesome Ukrainians, many of whom were then collaborating with the Germans⁶⁰), suddenly became evasive. He claimed to be uncertain about the whereabouts of the missing officers and then claimed that they must have escaped to Manchuria.⁶¹ Though the meetings concluded with Stalin and Sikorski signing a Declaration of Friendship and Mutual Assistance, the question of the missing officers would continue to haunt both governments until the German discovery of their bodies in the Katyń forest in April 1943.

This raises a problem which is hardly ever touched upon in the literature of Polish-Soviet diplomacy. Most accounts discuss Katyń only in the context of the growing tensions from the withdrawal of Anders' Army in late 1942 until the break in Polish-Soviet relations in the spring of 1943. Yet the continual stream of lies and fudged answers with which Stalin and his subordinates met the Polish Government's inquiries for almost two years had

⁶⁰ Terry, 248. This echoes a sentiment attributed to Stalin by Krushchev, who claims that Stalin once indicated that he would have been happy to deport the Ukrainians from their homeland as he had done with the peoples of the Caucasus during the war, but that "there were too many of them and there was no place to deport them." Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), 192.

⁶¹ John Coutouvidis and Jaime Reynolds, *Poland 1939-1947* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), 80.

already aroused a great deal of dread among them as to the fate of the captured officers.⁶² Stalin, having ordered their murder, was aware of their status all along and must have experienced considerable alarm every time the question of the missing Polish officers was brought up, since Katyń lay behind the German lines for almost two years. Knowing of his government's role in the massacre, how could Stalin have afforded to enter into a truly cooperative relationship with the London Poles? From the time of the July 1941 agreement until the break in relations in April 1943, the Soviet government kept a considerable degree of distance in its relationship with the London Poles and continued to foster Communist Polish organizations both within the Soviet Union and in occupied Poland.⁶³

Sikorski won praise for his statesmanship in dealing with the Soviets in the aftermath of this December meeting, while the Anglo-American diplomatic establishment regarded his "anti-Soviet" opponents within the London government as dangerous menaces to Allied unity.⁶⁴ That Stalin was being less than candid in his discussions with the General, and that neither Polish-Soviet amity nor the Atlantic Charter were issues worth any Soviet sacrifice, became clear in discussions later that month between the Soviet government

⁶² Edward Raczynski. *In Allied London* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), 140. As early as May 1942, in a communication with the US ambassador to the Polish government-in-exile, the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs expressed the fear that the majority of their officers had already died of cold, hunger, and disease. Sikorski Institute. *Documents on Polish Soviet Relations*, volume 1, 356.

⁶³ Not only was the Soviet government hinting at the establishment of a Polish national committee in Moscow, but in Polish-intercepted Soviet instructions to the British Communists the Soviets informed their supporters to "avoid the designation 'Polish state' and...don't use 'Polish citizens' but merely 'Poles.'" Terry, 171.

⁶⁴ They were so dangerous that in one memorandum British foreign office officials wondered aloud about whether or not to "bump off" one of Sikorski's more vociferous opponents, Stanisław Kot. Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 88.

and Eden. During these talks Stalin pressed hard for British recognition of the Soviet frontiers of 22 June 1941 (which included not only the disputed areas of Eastern Poland, but the Baltic states, Bessarabia, and a portion of Finland) as well as the establishment of Soviet bases in Finland and Romania. He also opined that Poland could be compensated for its losses in the east by annexing German territory up to the Oder River.

Stalin's Christmas list to the British bears striking resemblance to the demands Molotov put to Hitler almost a year earlier in Berlin, in which he advanced Soviet claims to Finland and southern Bukovina and pressed for recognition of Sweden and Bulgaria as Soviet security zones. Admittedly, Soviet demands of Churchill's government's were more modest than Molotov's proposition to Nazi Germany and did include a sop to Polish interests, but then the Anglo-Soviet relationship was still new at this point.⁶⁵ These territorial and security *desiderata* also demonstrate one of the most striking elements of Soviet diplomacy throughout World War II: its consistently expansionist ambition. These demands represented a territorial minimum which Stalin's government would advance from June 1941 until the end of the Battle of Stalingrad in January 1943, at a time when the Soviet Union was fighting for its very survival. Soviet demands would only grow as time and the Red Army marched on.

Though Eden was not prepared to accept all of Stalin's demands (in particular the Curzon line) at a time when the Soviet Union's military fortunes were at a low ebb and the Red Army was bearing the brunt of the Wehrmacht's assaults,⁶⁶ he was convinced that Britain

⁶⁵ Stalin did offer a crude *quid pro quo* when he suggested to Eden that he would understand if the British sought military and naval bases on the French coast, and that Belgium and the Netherlands would be in open military alliance with Great Britain. Miner, 186.

⁶⁶ Miner, 186.

must demonstrate its commitment to Anglo-Soviet *entente* by sacrificing the Atlantic Charter's principle of self-determination and agreeing to the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states. Even Churchill, in the face of Soviet demands and pro-Soviet domestic political pressure, wrote to FDR (in a letter whose contents were made known to Stalin) that "[t]he increasing gravity of the war has led me to feel that the principles of the Atlantic Charter ought not to be construed as to deny Russia the frontiers she occupied when Germany attacked her."⁶⁷

In Anglo-Soviet negotiations which followed during Molotov's trip to London in May 1942, only the clumsy Soviet effort to up the ante and force the British to accept immediately *both* Soviet annexation of the Baltic states and the Curzon line as the Soviet Union's frontier with Poland (in return for Polish compensation in East Prussia and Upper Silesia—the Soviets had yet to develop a fully consistent policy toward Polish territorial gains in Germany) led the British to back away from their initial willingness to recognize Soviet territorial claims. Molotov's bid to extract more concessions let them to realize the dangers of making unilateral concessions to the Soviets on matters of principle. (Attempting to brow-beat Poland into such an agreement would be another matter).⁶⁸

British refusal to countenance Soviet territorial expansion led to a complete breakdown in Anglo-Soviet negotiations—which had until that time rapidly progressed toward Britain's

⁶⁷ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 81. This statement is telling, in that it goes beyond Eden's argument in favor of recognizing Soviet annexation of the Baltic states. Churchill is implicitly recognizing Soviet claims to Finnish and Romanian territory, as well as to eastern Poland.

⁶⁸ Miner, 240-248.

de jure recognition of Soviet rule over the Baltic states.⁶⁹ While the British government had for now rejected Soviet territorial demands, only President Roosevelt's promise of an early second front (before the end of 1942) mollified the Soviets and maintained a semblance of Anglo-Soviet harmony.

Yet much damage already had been done, and more was to follow. Churchill had revealed the shakiness of his commitment to the Atlantic Charter by his willingness to recognize Soviet control of the Baltic states, and President Roosevelt broke an impasse in Anglo-Soviet relations by the expedient of making a promise he would not be able to keep. In discussions in Washington with Molotov following the latter's unsuccessful efforts in London, President Roosevelt exposed further gaps between his public principles and private thoughts. In a discussion of his vision of the postwar world, the President mused aloud about a world controlled by the four major powers (the United States, Great Britain, the Soviets and Chiang Kai-Shek's China) which would disarm all other nations (with no distinction between allies such as Poland and Axis states) and achieve a "peace by dictation." Molotov observed that such a plan would be a great blow to the prestige of Poland and Turkey, but added with doubtless honesty that the President's ideas "would be sympathetically viewed by the Soviet government and people."⁷⁰

The Soviets appear to have been under the impression that FDR's scheme of the postwar world, with its utter disregard for the rights of smaller nations, gave them *carte blanche* to assert their influence within the Allied camp. Within a month of Molotov's meetings with the Anglo-American leaders, the Soviet government began to undermine Polish

⁶⁹ Miner, 216-225.

⁷⁰ Terry, 165.

relations with the Czechoslovak government-in-exile⁷¹ and put further pressure on the Polish Army forming in the Soviet Union by halting Polish recruiting in the Soviet Union and refusing the Polish embassy the right to issue Polish passports without the Soviet government first verifying the nationality of the recipient.⁷² The result of this increasing Soviet pressure on his soldiers led General Anders, the Commander of the Government in-exile's forces in the Soviet Union, to reach an agreement with the Soviet government to evacuate these troops to British-controlled southern Iran in September 1942.⁷³ Within one year of the Soviet Union's co-belligerency, Soviet manipulation had already begun to unravel Sikorski's hopes of founding an alliance based upon Soviet-Polish equality and camaraderie of arms, and had significantly undermined Poland's place in the Grand Alliance.

Yet the foundations of Polish-Soviet cooperation were built on sand. Even during a period of desperate military danger to itself, the Soviet government had been willing to undermine Polish efforts to organize troops to fight alongside the Red Army on the eastern front due to political considerations.⁷⁴ Furthermore, the sword of Damocles that

⁷¹ Negotiations between the two governments had been making solid progress until Molotov warned President Beneš (after his talks with Roosevelt in June 1942) that Soviet-Czech relations would suffer if Polish-Czech relations were too close. Piotr S. Wandycz, *Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers, 1940-43* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1956), 80-81.

⁷² Sikorski Institute, *Documents on Polish-Soviet Relations*, 366, 374.

⁷³ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 83. Terry points out that the kind of Soviet administrative and supply problems which hampered General Anders' forces never troubled Polish Communists when they began to form Polish divisions among Poles who remained in the Soviet Union, nor did the Soviet government restrict their recruiting to "ethnic Poles"—anyone who "felt" Polish was allowed to enlist. Terry, 242-243.

⁷⁴ Terry, 230.

was Katyń was clearly visible to Stalin, and was menacingly adumbrated to the Poles by 1941. No independent Polish government apprised of the Katyń massacre could have afforded to simply “forget about the dead and think of the living,” as Churchill admonished the Poles to do in the aftermath of the German discovery there. And no government that behaved as systematically ruthlessly as did Stalin’s to undermine and subvert not only Poland’s territorial integrity, but Polish independence, could have regarded its negotiations with the London Polish government as much more than a stop-gap measure aimed at soothing Anglo-American fears of Soviet expansionism rather than a long-term effort to rebuild the Soviet Union’s relationship with an independent Poland.

Another aspect of the Soviet Union’s Polish policy which calls into question the commitment of the Soviet Union to cooperate with the Polish government-in-exile is the Soviet sponsorship of various Polish Communist movements both within the USSR and Poland. Even as the Soviets made headway in securing their minimum goal of Anglo-American recognition of their annexation of eastern Poland, they continued to intervene in Poland’s domestic affairs as well.

This task was complicated by the legacy of hatred that the Nazi-Soviet partition of Poland and Soviet misconduct in the *kresy* had created throughout Poland, and which strengthened popular belief in the doctrine of the “two enemies”—i.e. that both Germany and Russia (whether Tsarist or Soviet) were threats to Poland’s existence. While the outbreak of war between the Nazis and Soviets in 1941 led many Poles to moderate their hostility to the Soviet Union (which was referred to as “the ally of our allies”⁷⁵), there was still a great deal of popular hostility and distrust towards the Soviet Union even after the

⁷⁵ Dziewanowski, 161.

Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. This hostility and distrust was fueled by the activities of Soviet partisans, the Nazi revelation of the Katyn massacre, and Soviet territorial demands in eastern Poland.⁷⁶ Within such an anti-Soviet domestic atmosphere, the newly (Soviet-) revived Polish Communist Party, the PPR, found itself to be an isolated and despised (but increasingly well-supplied and well-funded) minority. Furthermore, Polish Communism would be rent by ferocious internal divisions at home and suffer constant interference from abroad both from Polish Communists in Moscow and from their mutual masters in the Soviet government and the Comintern.⁷⁷

In an action rich in symbolism, the Soviet Union revived Polish Communism within Poland's ethnographic boundaries⁷⁸ by parachuting in a team of Polish Communist activists into Warsaw in December 1941 (as Sikorski was attempting to secure Soviet-Polish cooperation). For the next three years the PPR would struggle in vain to establish itself as a significant political presence within or along side of Poland's vast, anti-Nazi underground, the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK) and to shed its popular image as merely a tool of Soviet influence in Poland. Though Polish anti-Soviet animus did play a significant part in this failure, the PPR's efforts to support the Soviet annexation of eastern Poland were too reminiscent of the pre-war KPP's anti-nationalist line⁷⁹ to inspire

⁷⁶ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 114; Dziewanowski, 164-165.

⁷⁷ Polonsky and Drukier, 17-23.

⁷⁸ The few surviving local Communists with whom this team established contact (and who had not organized themselves into a new party) viewed them with great suspicion and forced them to delete from the PPR's program any reference to Soviet recognition of the London government-in-exile. Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 89-90.

⁷⁹ Throughout the life of the second republic, the majority of the Polish population regarded the KPP as foreign agents who had cooperated in the Red Army's invasion of Poland in 1920, since they called for the Soviet annexation of Polish Ukraine and Belorussia in the east, the transfer of much of western Poland to the German Reich, and

confidence among either the Polish underground movement or the population at large that the PPR represented anything beyond a front organization for Russian imperialist interests in Poland.

The PPR and their sympathizers in the Soviet Union issued a number of statements during the occupation to disassociate their “new party” from the KPP’s positions on Poland’s independence and the just delineation of its frontiers. In January 1942 in Warsaw, in its first programmatic proclamation (filled with patriotic and national references), the PPR called for the creation of a “national front for the struggle for a *free and independent* Poland.” led by the workers, which only the PPR, as a “militant workers’ party” with “experience in the struggle for Polish independence [sic],” could bring about.⁸⁰ Indeed, the PPR proved so divergent from the KPP in name and program that several weeks after publishing this first manifesto, the PPR leadership found it necessary to reassure Polish Communists and their sympathizers by issuing a further document clarifying the PPR’s relationship with the Communist Internationale and the PPR’s position as a “Marxist-Leninist” party.⁸¹ In spite of these efforts, the first two years of the PPR’s work in German-occupied Poland were to be marred by a murderous

the incorporation of what remained of Poland into the Soviet Union as the seventeenth Soviet Republic. Dziewanowski, 96.

⁸⁰ “Nr. 1. 1942, styczeń [ok. 10], Warszawa.—Pierwsza odezwa programowa PPR,” in Zofia Polubiec, ed., *Polska Partia Robotnicza: dokumenty programowe 1942-1948* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1984), 51-56.

⁸¹ “Nr 2. 1942, [luty-marzec], Warszawa.—Artykuł dotyczący założeń programowych i organizacyjnych PPR oraz jej stosunku do Międzynarodówki Komunistycznej [Artykuł bez tytułu],” in Polubiec, 56-59.

factional struggle within the Party, and failure to establish any significant ties with either the AK or Polish society as a whole.⁸²

However, as Gomułka would remark in his discussions with the AK leadership in January 1943, the PPR and Polish Communism's position within Poland was tied not only to the domestic Polish situation, but also to the fortunes of the Soviet Union.⁸³ The military successes of the Red Army following Stalingrad, the German discovery of Katyń, and international diplomacy were soon to radically alter the balance of power in East Central Europe. The Red Army's victories in 1943 greatly buttressed Stalin's prestige within the Alliance at a time when Anglo-American forces were over a year away from being able to make good on President Roosevelt's promises to Stalin on the imminence of a second front in North Western Europe.⁸⁴ The Soviets quickly capitalized on their military success to exert even greater pressure on the London Polish government to accept the Curzon line as Poland's eastern frontier by declaring on 16 January 1943 all residents of eastern Poland (including ethnic Poles) to be Soviet citizens. The Soviet government followed up this *demarche* with the judicial murder of London Polish officials in the Soviet Union and attacks in the Soviet press accusing the London government of imperialistic designs on

⁸² These struggles included the murder of the First Secretary of the PPR, Marcei Nowotko on the orders of another member of the three-man troika which ran the PPR, Bronisław Mołojec, as well as conflicts between a faction of the PPR's Central Committee led by Bolesław Bierut and Finder's successor, the Party's First Secretary Władysław Gomułka. Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 119-135; Polonsky and Drukier, 17-23.

⁸³ Kersten, *Establishment*, 3.

⁸⁴ There was also real Western Allied concern over signs that, in the aftermath of Stalingrad, the Soviets were considering a separate peace with Germany. Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 73-84.

Soviet Belorussia and Soviet Ukraine.⁸⁵ Soon after this, Ambassador Maisky began to claim (in talks with Eden in March 1943) that the current Polish government was unacceptable to the Soviet Union.⁸⁶ When the London Poles requested American intervention in the face of these Soviet provocations, President Roosevelt put them off with the claim that Soviet successes made this an inopportune time for him to intervene.⁸⁷

In addition to their efforts to pressure the London Polish government, the Soviets also prepared the ground for dispensing with the London Poles altogether by fostering pro-Soviet Polish organizations in the Soviet Union as well. In February 1943 Stalin authorized and even supplied the name for a movement of Polish Communists to be formed on Soviet soil from surviving KPP functionaries and the remaining Polish deportees: the Union of Polish Patriots (Związek Patriotów Polski, ZPP). The Soviet government also proceeded to arm and equip the “Kościuszko division”—a Polish military formation officered primarily by Soviet citizens which would provide the basis for a Polish army that was ultimately, but at times uneasily, subordinate to the ZPP.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 76. As early as October 1942, the AK sent the London government information that the Soviets and their Polish clients were conducting a propaganda campaign in Poland against the London government. In the interests of “Allied unity”, the British government placed curbs on the debate in the West about Soviet territorial demands against Poland. Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 87.

⁸⁶ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 87.

⁸⁷ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 86. This of course presented the Poles with a “heads I win, tails you lose” situation, since both Soviet military success and weakness led the Western allies to advise the Poles against seeking either Soviet concessions or Anglo-American intervention in Poland’s favor.

⁸⁸ In October 1943, Polish officers in the Kościuszko division would attempt to involve themselves in politics with their “Thesis Number 1” which sought a major role for the Polish army in creating an “organized democracy” in post-liberation Poland. Polonsky and Drukier, 13.

As the Soviets were eliminating the London Polish government as a diplomatic player in the Grand Alliance and providing their clients with the organizational means to dictate the future of their country, Polish Communists in the Soviet Union continued to work out their relationship with Polish nationalism during this period. One of the most important figures in Polish Communism's restructuring was Alfred Lampe, a journalist, KPP veteran, and member of the ZPP's leadership until his death in 1943. Lampe wrote a series of articles for the ZPP which reflected this new course in Polish Communism. In his article "Poland's Place in Europe," Lampe put forward broad Polish territorial claims to large (but not fully defined) areas in eastern Germany. Employing ethnographic, historical, economic and geopolitical arguments, Lampe claimed that Poland and Europe's future peace and security depended on a Polish-Soviet guard on the Oder, the destruction of East Prussia, and the return of all of Upper Silesia to Poland.⁸⁹ Thus, for the first time, an official spokesman of Polish Communism publicly argued⁹⁰ in favor of expanding Poland's frontiers.

Within Poland the PPR would begin supporting Poland's westward expansion only slowly and cautiously, as evinced in its second major programmatic statement, "What are we fighting for?" released in April 1943. In this short, socially radical statement there was as yet no mention of Poland's frontiers or any indication as to what would be the fate of

⁸⁹ "Miejsce Polski w Europie," *Wolna Polska* nr 7, 16 April 1943, quoted in Alfred Lampe, *O nowa Polska: artykuły i przemowienie* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1954), 245-253.

⁹⁰ As early as October 1942, however, Wanda Wasilewska, another key figure in the ZPP, in a conversation with London Polish journalists speculated that it was possible that in the current situation Poland could return to a more "Piaś" type of state, with its borders lying on the Baltic and the Oder. Norbert Kołomejczyk, *Ziemia Zachodnie w Działalności PPR* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1966), 35.

national minorities residing in postwar Poland. Only by November 1943 (in a new statement, also titled “What are we fighting for?”) would the PPR claim that Poland had a right to all “ethnographic Polish territory” in the west and on the Baltic, that it would intern all Germans living in Poland prior to 1 September 1939 (as well as other “traitors of the people and agents of Hitlerism”) and punish everyone who had betrayed Poland during the occupation.⁹¹ At the same time, however, the PPR not only advocated national self-determination for the “fraternal Ukrainian and Belorussian nations” (presumably by recognizing the incorporation of the *kresy* into the Soviet Union’s western republics), but also argued equal treatment of everyone who lived within Poland’s boundaries, regardless of their nationality—“Polish nationality cannot be a privilege in regards to those national minorities who find themselves in the borders of the Polish state.”⁹²

Having provided itself with alternative Polish political bodies and military formations, the Soviet Union was well prepared for the final break in relations with the London Poles by April 1943. Indeed, the fact that Stalin called for the creation of the ZPP and the formation of pro-Soviet military units⁹³ *before* and not after the Soviet severance of

⁹¹ “Nr. 23. 1943, listopad, Warszawa.—O co walczymy? Deklaracja programowa Polskiej Partii Robotniczej,” in *Polubiec*, 121-124, 148-174.

⁹² “Nr 16. 1943, marzec 1, Warszawa.—Deklaracja programowa KC PPR określająca platformę współdziałania sił demokratycznych i wytyczająca kierunek przemian społeczno-politycznych po wyzwoleniu. O co walczymy? (Deklaracja Polskiej Partii Robotniczej)” and “Nr 23. 1943, listopad, Warszawa.—Deklaracja programowa PPR, azsadczy dokument ideowy, wytyczający cele i zadania partii w walce o odzyskanie niepodległości, ukazujący perspektywę budowy socjalizmu w Polsce. O co walczymy? Deklaracja programowa Polskiej Partii Robotniczej,” in *Polubiec*, 121-124, 148-174. The PPR would abandon this approach upon gaining power in July 1944.

⁹³ Coutouvidis and Reynolds also err in arguing that Berling’s Army began forming only after April 1943, when Stalin ordered that it, like the ZPP, should begin to be assembled in February 1943 (Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 121). See Kersten

relations with the London government in April 1943⁹⁴ points to the likelihood that Stalin was preparing to sponsor his own Polish government even prior to the discovery of Katyń. The Nazi announcement on 12 April 1943 of their discovery of the mass graves of Polish officers at Katyń placed the Polish government-in-exile in an untenable position: to ignore it entirely not only risked alienating significant sections of the Polish armed forces now in the West (as well as many Poles under German occupation who were exposed to a barrage of Nazi propaganda), but could also keep them from discovering their officers' true murderers. When the London government asked the International Red Cross to conduct an independent investigation of the German allegations, Stalin's government severed relations two days later, on 17 April. Though the Soviets expressed a willingness to reestablish their relations with the London government, this was with the precondition that it undergo a radical restructuring to purge it of "anti-Soviet elements" and make it more "democratic." From this time forward, the Soviet government would only propose increasingly unacceptable *diktats* to Sikorski and his successors⁹⁵ in the government-in-exile as the price for reestablishing diplomatic relations.⁹⁶

The Soviets met with little official Western opposition over their break in diplomatic relations with the London Poles. In spite of the initial Anglo-American refusal to

(*Establishment*, 9-10) and Terry, 243, who mentions that there were rumors among Poles in the Soviet Union that such a force had begun training as early as May 1942.

⁹⁴ Kersten, *Establishment*, 9; Dziewanowski, 166. Coutouvidis and Reynolds misleadingly write that "[i]mmediately [after Katyń] the Soviet government began to form the...ZPP and a Polish division..." Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 86.

⁹⁵ General Sikorski died in an airplane crash at Gibraltar on 4 July 1943. His successor as Premier of the London Polish government was the head of the Peasant's Party, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, who would remain in office until November 1944.

⁹⁶ Kersten, *Establishment*, 14-16.

recognize *de jure* and immediately Soviet territorial gains made during the Nazi-Soviet pact, both Churchill and Roosevelt were prepared not only to tolerate Soviet *faits accomplis* but to unofficially pressure Poland and the countries of East Central Europe to accept Soviet hegemony in the region.⁹⁷ In 1943 Churchill and Roosevelt were both anxious to meet with Stalin, iron out Anglo-American and Soviet differences, and establish an enduring basis for their countries' cooperation with the Soviet Union. At the Tehran Conference they partially obtained their goal and secured a congenial environment wherein they could be "fascinated by Stalin's personality,"⁹⁸ at the price of meekly accepting Soviet territorial claims in the *kresy* and affirming their relative disinterest over Poland's sovereignty.

The Anglo-American acknowledgment of the Soviet Union's minimal territorial demands in East Central Europe was a foregone conclusion by the time the three leaders met at the Tehran Conference (28 November-1 December 1943). As several students of these discussions have pointed out, however, the end result of the Tehran discussions were not as important as the manner by which they were determined.⁹⁹ In meetings without any formal agenda Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin touched lightly on a wide variety of topics.

⁹⁷ President Roosevelt went so far as to write to Francis Cardinal Spellman in November 1943, before the Tehran Conference, that the peoples of Central Europe would have to "get used to Russian domination" in the hope that in ten or twenty years the Russians would become more civilized. Churchill, in spite of his efforts in the postwar period to cultivate an image as more wary of Stalin's ambitions, did not substantively differ with FDR on Soviet domination of Central Europe. Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 108-110.

⁹⁸ Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 131.

⁹⁹ Siebel-Achenbach, 38; Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 131-133.

from the timing and location of a second front to postwar Allied policy in Germany and the Polish question—to name but several of the more important questions considered.

During these discussions the “Big Three” reached preliminary agreement that Poland was to cede its eastern territories to the Soviet Union and receive German territory to the west up to the Oder River. In these discussions form definitely triumphed over substance. Winston Churchill employed three match sticks to illustrate how such an operation to transform the ethnographic map of East Central Europe, and the lives of millions of Poles and Germans, could be carried out.¹⁰⁰

President Roosevelt equally distinguished himself at the conference. Though in public he conveyed the image of a statesman inspired by the highest of principles, his peculiar style of private diplomacy gives the impression of a deeply cynical man whose rhetorical flourishes in favor of freedom and democracy rang so loudly because they originated from so morally hollow a source.¹⁰¹ In a private conversation with Stalin at Tehran, Roosevelt claimed that his only qualms against Soviet proposals on Poland’s eastern frontiers concerned the potential impact such changes might have on his prospects for reelection in November 1944 by compromising his hold on the Polish vote. Stalin

¹⁰⁰ Mastny, *Russia’s Road*, 130.

¹⁰¹ President Roosevelt’s diplomacy has elicited a variety of evaluations. Lundestad’s observation that in foreign policy, President Roosevelt “showed a curious blend of perfectionism and realism...[and] probably remained a split person...not being willing or able to make a choice between the two...” reflects the tendency to consider as enigmatic in President Roosevelt what would be considered hypocrisy in a lesser mortal. Lundestad, 88-89.

sympathized with this dilemma and opined that it was necessary to conduct propaganda work among these Polish-Americans.¹⁰²

The problem with Roosevelt and Churchill's cynical propitiatory gestures to *realpolitik* is that both men were seeking to compromise with Stalin as a means to their larger end of building lasting cooperation between their countries, rather than simply dividing the world into spheres of influence. The Atlantic Charter, with its commitment to freedom and democracy, represented for them a willing tribute that they paid to the virtue toward which they ordered their diplomacy. Unlike Stalin, for whom cooperation with the West was but one phase of a larger Clausewitzian historical process that must lead to further conflict, Churchill and especially Roosevelt made concessions (at others' expense) in the belief that it was possible to avert future conflicts. This left both men (and the peoples of whose lives they presumed to dispose) vulnerable to Stalin's very different conception of the purposes of international relations. For the Anglo-American leaders concessions were a means of investing in a personal and international (and even a personal) relationship, while Stalin sought such concessions as a means to better strengthen his country for future conflict.¹⁰³

Though the Tehran Conference did not ultimately dispose of Poland's fate, Anglo-American conduct there did convey the relative weakness of their commitment to the

¹⁰² Adam Ulam, *Stalin: The Man and His Era* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 590.

¹⁰³ Bullock, 900-906 and especially John Lewis Gaddis, "The Tragedy of Cold War History: Reflections on Revisionism," *Foreign Affairs* 73:1 (1994), 146 where Gaddis reports Stalin's views on the outcome of World War II (which cost 26 million Soviet lives): "Stalin looked at it this way...World War I has wrested one country from capitalist slavery; World War II has created a socialist system; and the third will finish off imperialism forever."

letter of the Atlantic Charter. Churchill's and Roosevelt's demonstrated eagerness to accommodate Stalin over Poland is likely to have appeared to him as a fundamental indifference to Soviet conduct there.¹⁰⁴ Churchill's suggestion that the Big Three should simply decide among themselves what Poland was to receive and then inform the Polish government of their *diktat* represented such contempt for Poland's sovereignty that it led the Soviet media to all-too-accurately report that at Tehran the Great Powers had put behind them the "falsely democratic attitude toward small states."¹⁰⁵

In the year that followed the Tehran conference, the London Polish government labored in ignorance of these Anglo-American concessions as it sought to reestablish its relations with the Soviet Union on the basis of Poland's territorial integrity. As the Red Army advanced further westward with pro-Soviet Polish formations, and a small but well-supplied PPR ensconced in central and eastern Poland, the London Poles (under heavy Anglo-American pressure) realized that coming to some understanding with the Soviets was vital. There were, however, three key obstacles to any such understanding: increasing Soviet demands, Anglo-American deception, and the conflict between the accommodationist romanticism of Sikorski and his successor, Stanisław Mikołajczyk and the experienced anti-Soviet realism of their opponents within the London government-in-exile.

By 1944 the Soviet Union was so close to achieving its goal of a completely subservient, pro-Soviet Polish government, and under so little pressure from the US and Great Britain to reach an accommodation with the London Polish government, that it had little

¹⁰⁴ Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 248, 260-266, 286-288.

¹⁰⁵ Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 132.

incentive to negotiate with the London government. The conditions the Soviets set for any restoration of diplomatic relations appeared too high to the Polish government; not only did the Soviets demand unconditional acceptance of the Curzon line, but also that members of the London government deemed “pro-Fascist” be dismissed, and that the Polish government be broadened by the inclusion of (Soviet-selected) “democratic leaders from abroad.”¹⁰⁶

Mikołajczyk’s efforts to negotiate with the Soviet government were further confounded by Anglo-American deception. Though FDR at Tehran had already acquiesced to the Curzon line as “just” and Churchill claimed that Poland’s loss of the *kresy* would not “break his heart,” both leaders concealed from Mikołajczyk and the London Government the extent of Anglo-American support for Soviet claims to Poland’s eastern provinces. Indeed, in conversations with Mikołajczyk in June 1944, seven months after Tehran, Roosevelt lied to him and claimed that no final Polish border had been agreed to, and promised to support morally the Premier’s efforts to at least retain the eastern Polish-Ukrainian city of Lwów for Poland.¹⁰⁷

Mikołajczyk only learned of the border that the Great Powers had set for Poland at Tehran during delicate negotiations with the Soviets at the Moscow Conference on 13 October 1944 (within ten days of the final surrender of the Polish insurgents of the Warsaw uprising), from Molotov. When Mikołajczyk confessed to Churchill, who had come to Moscow to help facilitate these negotiations, that he was less than satisfied with Anglo-American conduct toward Poland, he received a brutal tirade from the Prime

¹⁰⁶ “Marshall Stalin to Mr. Churchill: Letter, Moscow, 4 February, 1944,” in Polonsky, 181.

¹⁰⁷ Kersten, *Establishment*, 57.

Minister. Churchill called Mikołajczyk “absolutely crazy” and, in a style that appears to have been in vogue in the 1930s and 40s among the leaders of European Great Powers when seeking territorial concessions from smaller countries, demanded Mikołajczyk’s instant capitulation to all of the Soviet Union’s territorial claims in the *kresy*.¹⁰⁸

In the aftermath of these negotiations Mikołajczyk realized that only sweeping Polish concessions could preserve even a modicum of Polish independence in the face of a Great Power consensus determined to deprive Poland of its eastern provinces. It was at this point, however, that Mikołajczyk’s accommodationist romanticism clashed with the hard-won realism of the majority of the government-in-exile.

The London government-in-exile has received particularly harsh criticism for its opposition to Mikołajczyk’s efforts to reach an understanding with Stalin and the PPR. Coutouvidis and Reynolds echo the judgments of much of the wartime Western political and diplomatic establishment (and later, Western historiography) when they attribute the London government’s unwillingness to support Mikołajczyk’s efforts to negotiate with the Soviets to “the romantic view of Polish history...[among]...men nurtured on nationalistic ideals founded on the concepts of courage and honour....”¹⁰⁹ In this standard telling of the fate of the London Polish government, Mikołajczyk the “realist” was stymied, and ultimately had to circumvent his “romantic” opponents.

This analysis ignores the very many “realistic” wartime foundations of London’s apprehensions concerning Stalin’s territorial and political ambitions in Poland: the Nazi-Soviet Pact; the deportations and Katyń massacre; the creation of the PPR, the ZPP and

¹⁰⁸ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 104-107.

¹⁰⁹ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 108.

the PKWN (see below); Soviet conduct in the Warsaw uprising (also see below); as well as Anglo-Soviet acquiescence in all of Stalin's activities in Poland and East Central Europe. In the face of the sustained opposition of the "realist" majority, Mikołajczyk resigned as premier of the London government in November 1944, carried on intermittent negotiations with the support of Britain (and to a lesser extent the United States), and finally won Soviet sufferance for his return to Poland in June 1945.

Mikołajczyk's realism¹¹⁰ consisted in his belief that the same Anglo-American diplomacy that had partitioned and assigned Poland to the Soviet Union's sphere of influence would transform itself and become a staunch defender of Polish interests once a subset of the London Poles (those deemed acceptable to the Soviets) returned to Poland. Yet many of his political opponents did not regard Mikołajczyk's decision as realism, or their own unwillingness to trust their lives (and the lives of any followers they might attract in a Soviet-dominated Poland) to the good faith of the Great Powers as too fastidious a sense of honor. Their assessment of their predicament seems far more realistic than postwar historiography's relatively uncritical acceptance of Mikołajczyk's policies as the touchstone of realism, especially given Mikołajczyk's flight from the country in fear of his life a little over two years later in October 1947.

As the influence of the London government collapsed abroad and in Poland under the combined weight of Soviet machinations, Western betrayal, and internal dissension, the

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of Mikołajczyk's policies, see Andrzej Korbonski, *Politics of Socialist Agriculture in Poland: 1945-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 110-111; Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 204-205; Romuald Turkowski, *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe w obronie demokracji, 1945-1949* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 1992), 47-51; Stanisław Łach, *Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe w latach 1945-1947* (Gdańsk: Marpress, 1995), 60-64; Kersten, *Establishment*, 111-114.

Soviets and Polish Communists together had the opportunity to carry out their revolutions in Poland. In 1944 and 1945, as international diplomacy was already putting the finishing touches upon Poland's outward form as a purely Polish nation-state, it remained to Polish Communists to fill that form with a socialist content.

Chapter 2: Creative Destruction: The Creation of the PKWN, the Liberation of Wielkopolska, the Destruction of Eastern Brandenburg, and the Formation of the Government of National Unity, August 1944-July 1945

On the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho the Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you....Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess.'

—Numbers 33: 51-53.

Summary: In January 1945 the Red Army began its last winter offensive of World War II. Within four months Soviet armies, with their Polish allies, would liberate central and western Poland, conquer all of eastern Germany, and take Berlin by storm. The terror that the Red Army's atrocities inspired led to a massive flight of much of the civilian German population of the Reich's eastern borderlands, and helped lay the groundwork for Polish expansion into the Oder-Neisse territories.

Prior to the January offensive, the Soviet-backed Polish Committee of National Liberation (Polskie Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego, PKWN) had already begun to organize its administration in eastern Poland. Among the PKWN's many challenges was what political line to pursue in the soon-to-be-liberated territories of western Poland. To the dominant party of the PKWN, the Polish Workers Party (Polska Partia Robotnicza, PPR), Wielkopolska in particular was *terra incognita*. Neither the PPR nor its predecessor party, the Polish Communist Party (Polska Partia Komunistyczna, KPP), had enjoyed any real popular support in Wielkopolska, a region famous for its social and political conservatism and its staunch anti-Communism.

The difficulties that Wielkopolska presented to the PPR were part of a larger problem for the new regime: how to co-opt Polish nationalist circles into a broad “national front,” both to carry on the war with Germany and to join in the task of postwar reconstruction. For Wielkopolska, the PKWN’s leadership developed a strategy they hoped would appeal to as wide a section of the population as possible. This strategy included a program of land reform (which would especially focus on expropriating German landholders) and sponsoring the revival of a pro-regime faction of the ultra-nationalist Polish Western Union (Polski Związek Zachodni, PZZ), an arm of the National Democratic Party (Narodowy Demokracja, ND or “Endecja”) which had dominated pre-war Wielkopolska politics. Combining these policies with its control of the state apparatus, the PKWN’s leadership sought to establish a strong base of support in the region.

In midwestern Poland, the end of five and a half years of especially brutal Nazi occupation was followed by a popular national and religious upsurge. This was concurrent with the establishment there of the rule of the PKWN, which now proclaimed itself to be Poland’s Provisional Government.¹¹¹ The initial post-liberation period saw a rapid revival of Polish political and cultural life in Wielkopolska, the transformation of the remaining German inhabitants of the region into second-class citizens, and the

¹¹¹ On 31 December 1944, the PKWN proclaimed itself to be the Polish provisional government, and was recognized as such by the Soviet Union. Though the United States and Great Britain publicly would continue to nominally recognize the Polish government-in-exile in London until 5 July 1945, they quickly agreed at Yalta, in February 1945, on the need to form a new Polish government largely based on the Soviet-sponsored Polish Provisional Government. This agreement in effect acknowledged the Soviet installation of their clients as a *fait accompli*, though the new Provisional Government as a concession granted several politicians from the London government-in-exile ministerial portfolios in the new government. See Kersten, *Establishment*, 120-124.

spontaneous Polish settlement (and looting) of the former German territories to the west, which the Provisional Government claimed to be part of the “Recovered Territories” (Ziemia Odzyskanie, ZO)¹¹² of the new Polish Republic.

This national revival in Wielkopolska was rife with tension for the new regime. The newly established Provisional Government found a certain degree of popular support in midwestern Poland for its efforts at state-building and its strong anti-German line,¹¹³ but its local representatives were also aware of the limitations of that support, and how the ongoing expansion of political, economic and religious life in this region represented a significant long-term challenge to their authority.

The national leadership of the PPR, in spite of their public optimism, looked on anxiously at the political and religious situation in Wielkopolska in the months following its liberation. Politically, within the PPR-sponsored (and -controlled) Peasants’ Party (Stronictwo Ludowe, SL), local peasant activists tried to implement policies independent

¹¹² Among the reasons for referring to this area as the “Recovered Territories” was the Polish nationalist claim that the region east of the Oder and Neisse rivers had been under Polish sovereignty prior to the German “Drang nach Osten” in the Middle Ages. Hence, Poland’s occupation and ethnic cleansing of these regions was claimed to rectify historical injustices. The creation of this myth of the ZO played a central role in the PPR’s (and Polish nationalists’) efforts to create a new “Piast” Poland (so-called after the earliest medieval Polish dynasties) that became increasingly important to the Party’s postwar politics. Given the frequency and significance of this term for postwar Polish discourse, I will refer to the Oder-Neisse territories as the ZO throughout this dissertation, except when quoting sources that refer to this area in another way—usually either as the Western Territories (Ziemia Zachodnia, ZZ) or “Oder-Neisse territories.” Of course, this use of the term ZO in no way implies acceptance of the “historical arguments” that Poles of almost every political persuasion employed to justify Poland’s expansion westward.

¹¹³ Andrzej Choniawko, *Stosunki polityczne w Wielkopolsce, 1945-1950* (Poznań, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1980), 27.

of those approved by the national SL leadership. The local branch of the PPR also proved to be a problem for the regime, since it was dominated at its highest levels by a small cadre of uncompromising former members of the KPP, many of whom had spent years working in what seemed to them a political wilderness. They had little sympathy with the PPR Central Committee's efforts to build a broad, national front. Furthermore, from below the party was flooded with new members who had little prior contact or sympathy with the party's official Marxist-Leninist ideology or its vision of Poland's future socio-economic and political development, but instead treated the PPR as a means of personal advancement.

In the local church, the Communists encountered a battered but self-confident institution much more in touch with (and supported by) local sympathies. Wielkopolska's Catholicism, encompassing both the institutional Church and the religious life of the majority of the population, had a politically activist, ideologically nationalist, and fiercely anti-Communist tradition. It represented a fundamental obstacle to the regime's efforts to effect political stabilization on its own terms. Catholicism's growing strength and combativeness from the very beginnings of Wielkopolska's liberation was a cause of real concern for a government with few reliable friends in the region. Though initially there was less armed resistance to the new authorities in Wielkopolska, this area was potentially one of the most intractably anti-regime in all of Poland. As a center of independent peasant politics, where the connection between Catholicism and Polish national identity was at its deepest, and with few of the PPR's key constituency (the industrial working class), Wielkopolska would prove to be one of the regions least amenable to Communist efforts at social engineering and most closed to the PPR's Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The first six months of life in post-liberation Wielkopolska saw the simultaneous growth of spontaneous, popular action in politics and culture (especially the settlement of former German lands to the west) and the extension of the Provisional Government's administrative and political institutions. During this period the local and national leadership of the PPR and their allies in the PZZ managed to construct one of the few trustworthy bridges across the political gap that separated the Communist-dominated regime from the population of Wielkopolska. This bridge was the mutual commitment of both the regime and local society to a firm anti-German policy and to the aggressive polonization of those German lands east of the Oder-Neisse rivers that fell under Polish administration. This bridge would groan under the all-but-constant traffic of mutual hostility which would pass over it in the coming months.

AN HISTORIC CHANCE: FROM PKWN TO PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, AND THE
BEGINNINGS OF PPR-PZZ COOPERATION, JULY 1944-JANUARY 1945

[This] is our great and unrepeatable chance, that after we completely smash Hitler's power, we can reunite to Poland the immemorial Polish lands in the west.

—Jerzy Borejsza¹¹⁴

In the summer of 1944 the Red Army won a series of crushing victories against Germany and its allies that would bring it to the gates of Warsaw. In accord with the agreements of the Tehran conference, the Soviet government treated pre-war Polish territories east of the Curzon line as liberated Soviet territory. By July, however, the Red Army had advanced into Polish territories west of the Curzon line. In these territories the Soviets employed a

¹¹⁴ Norbert Kołomejczyk, *Ziemia Zachodnia w działalności PPR* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1966), 43.

different strategy to secure their influence: they installed a pro-Soviet Polish administration, the PKWN, dominated by their clients, the PPR, as the titular heads of an independent Poland. In Lublin, the provisional capital until the liberation of Warsaw, the leadership of the PKWN began developing policies they hoped would establish their rule throughout Poland—even in areas like Wielkopolska, where the KPP had little to no established organization.

In Wielkopolska, the region's strong pre-war anti-Communism was balanced by an even deeper antipathy toward Germany, an antipathy that would grow into a profound hatred by the end of the Nazi occupation. After the Nazi victory of 1939, Germany divided its occupation zone of Poland into two parts: those territories to be annexed directly to Germany in Wielkopolska (central Poland,¹¹⁵ Upper Silesia, Pomerania, and Gdańsk), and the "Generalgouvernement,"¹¹⁶ essentially a Polish reservation which it would ruthlessly exploit.

In the annexed areas of Wielkopolska and Central Poland, which the occupation authorities designated the "Reichsgau Wartheland", the social, political and religious divisions between Poles and Germans were already greater than anywhere else in the Polish-German borderlands. There the German authorities would endeavor to depolonize the region by a policy of racial discrimination and by breaking Polish national solidarity.

¹¹⁵ Reichsgau Wartheland contained more Polish territory than the old Prussian province of Posen. It included Łódź (renamed "Lipmenstadt") and its environs. Later, after the invasion of the Soviet Union, Germany also annexed Białystok to East Prussia.

¹¹⁶ After the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 the Generalgouvernement also included Polish Galicia, which contained a large Ukrainian minority. For a full discussion of the vagaries of German occupation policy in the Generalgouvernement see Jan Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

Nazi racial discrimination and depolonization included a wide range of measures, from closing almost all Polish educational and cultural centers to designating a wide variety of public places, from parks, restaurants, public restrooms, and all 1st and 2nd class train seats as “Nur für Deutsche.”¹¹⁷ In order to break Polish solidarity and destroy the regions Polish cultural leadership the occupying authorities created a Union of Hardworking Poles (Verband der Leistungspolen) consisting of Poles loyal to the German authorities¹¹⁸ and also made a concerted effort to either exterminate or deport the Polish intelligentsia.

Nazi efforts at depolonization were followed by attempts to germanize Wartheland through the mass expropriation of Polish property, the expulsion of over 1 million Poles (who were either deported to the Generalgouvernement or sent to slave labor in the Reich) and changing all Polish place names to German names, even if, as in the case of the eastern counties of Wartheland, this entailed inventing German names for Polish towns and villages that had never been a part of a German state and had no German population.¹¹⁹ In the place of the deported Polish population Nazi authorities resettled tens of thousands of Volksdeutsche (German minorities) from southern and eastern Europe in the farms and apartments of exiled Poles and also sought to expand the region’s German population through the Volksliste, or German national list.

The German authorities applied the Volksliste differently in the various territories of Poland that were incorporated into the Reich. The Volksliste initially was meant to

¹¹⁷ Dariusz Matelski, “Polityka Germanizacji,” 135.

¹¹⁸ Musielak, 238.

¹¹⁹ Dariusz Matelski, “Ludność Niemicka w Kraju Warty, 1939-1945,” in Andrzej Sakson, ed., *Polska-Niemcy-Mniejszość Niemiecka w Wielkopolsce: przeszłość i teraźniejszość* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1994), 108.

recognize as Reich citizens the German national minority incorporated into the Polish state after World War I, and to provide German officials with a tool that would enable them to distinguish between varying levels of racial purity. There were four classes of German according to the Volksliste: Class I, which consisted of persons who were both of German descent and politically active in a Nazi organization, Class II, which consisted of persons who were “politically passive” but of German descent and active in German associations, Class III were persons who were of German descent but had undergone partial polonization, and Class IV theoretically consisted of persons of German descent who had undergone complete polonization, but as Jan Gross points out, could (and in practice often did) include anyone the authorities wanted to classify as German, even against their will.¹²⁰

Being inscribed on the Volksliste provided the inscribtee rights and protections (but also entailed obligations) that the German occupation authorities withheld from most Poles. A person inscribed on the Volksliste was protected from deportation to the Generalgouvernement, enjoyed basic legal protections, and had access to better ration cards and medical care. However, inscription could also involve being deported to the Reich for more extensive germanization or being drafted into the German armed forces.

In practice, local occupation politics and Germany’s wartime fortunes played a key role in how liberally or strictly racial criteria were applied. In Silesia, and to a lesser extent in Pomerania, the Volksliste included a large percentage of the “Polish” population. In

¹²⁰ Gross, *Polish Society*, 196-198. In Wielkopolska, as opposed to Silesia and Pomerania, involuntary inscription onto the Volksliste was relatively more rare. The governor of Wartheland, Reichsgau Artur Greisser was opposed to expanding the Volksliste in Wielkopolska, and regarded less than 3% of the local population (100,000 persons) as fit for Germanization. Łuczak, “*Kraj warty*,” 63-64.

Wielkopolska, where ethnicity, class, and religion together separated Poles from Germans, the Volksliste contained relatively fewer people (482,533 people, mostly the pre-war German minority and Germans settled in Wartheland from central and eastern Europe) but was still a cause of great resentment on the part of the Polish population. This was because the local Volksdeutsche (especially those who were deeply committed to the Nazi cause) often proved to be among the most effective informants against and fearsome persecutors of the Polish population throughout German-occupied Poland.¹²¹

As a result of the Nazi war with Polish national identity, anti-Soviet hostility in Wielkopolska (and especially among residents of Wielkopolska in exile) was tempered by an even greater desire to settle scores with Germany. Though the PPR would only establish the barest of footholds in this region prior to its liberation in 1945, the Party's increasingly fierce anti-German line helped to pave the way for its campaign for widespread local support.

Prior to the creation of the PKWN in July, 1944, the PPR did not appear to be a likely standard bearer of Polish national extremism and anti-German radicalism. In a statement it issued in Łódź in December 1943 on "Our relations with the Germans," the PPR had bitterly criticized both Nazi efforts to divide Poles from Germans through the Volksliste and the Polish belief "that every German is an enemy and that there is no possibility of mutual understanding between [Germans and Poles]." Indeed, in this document the PPR even went so far as to say that it had enrolled "the most trustworthy" of anti-Fascist

¹²¹ Matelski, "Polityka Germanizacji," 129-142.

Germans into the PPR and the Party's armed forces, the Gwardia Ludowa or "People's Guard."¹²²

Among the defenders of this Polish-German wartime accord was the man who would become one of the most bitter opponents of all things German in postwar Poland: Władysław Gomułka. In a paper he presented at the first session of the KRN on 1 January 1944, Gomułka denounced the idea that the German people as a whole should be held responsible for the crimes of Hitler's regime, which was waging war, not on behalf of the German people, but only to preserve itself. Furthermore, he argued that the anti-Nazi alliance could not "accept from the Germans those methods against which it is most in conflict, and which would deny the only reason for the war, which is the destruction of all that Hitler himself represents, the core of world-wide Fascism." Later, however, as Minister of the Recovered Territories, Gomułka would institute very different policies toward the German minority which, while not as extreme or as cruel as the Nazi efforts to either exterminate or reduce to slavery all Poles, bore a striking resemblance to the German efforts to ethnically cleanse Western Poland.¹²³

Once in power, the PPR soon began to disassociate itself from its more liberal wartime position and eventually treated all Germans as potential enemies who eventually should be removed from Polish territory. The first sign of this change in policy concerned Poland's frontiers. Even while acknowledging that they agreed to the Soviet annexation

¹²² "Nr 24. 1943, grudzień 16, Łódź.—Artykuł określający stosunek PPR do ludności niemieckiej w Polsce. O nasz stosunek do Niemców," in Polubiec, 174-179.

¹²³ "Walka i samoobrona narodu w związku z terrorem okupanta, Referat odczytany na pierwszym plenarnym posiedzeniu KRN 1 stycznia 1944 r.," in Władysław Gomułka, *O problemie Niemieckim: artykuły i przemówienia* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1971), 12.

of eastern Poland, the PPR and its junior coalition parties, the SL and the PPS¹²⁴ attempted to sweeten this bitter pill with promises of increasingly large accessions of territory in the west at Germany's expense. The PKWN's first manifesto, issued on 22 July 1944, began to expand the scope of Polish Communist territorial *desiderata* in the west which Lampe had first outlined in April 1943. While defending the Soviet annexation of eastern Poland as a means of strengthening Slavic solidarity, the manifesto called for "a return to the motherland of old Polish Pomorze, Upper (Oppeln) Silesia, East Prussia, for a wide access to the sea, and Polish frontier markers on the Oder river."¹²⁵

These initial territorial demands were quite flexible, and did not yet commit the PKWN (and more importantly the Soviet Union) to specific frontiers.¹²⁶ However, by mid-to-late September, the PPR's main newspaper in Lublin, the *Trybuna Wolności* (Tribune of Freedom), speaking on behalf of the National Homeland Council (Krajowa Rada Narodowa, KRN), the regime's new semi-legislative body, as well as the PPR, put

¹²⁴ The SL (Stronnictwo Ludowe, Peasant's Party) and the PPS (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, Polish Socialist Party), both of which were in alliance with the PPR, were both splinters of fractions from the broader, pre-war SL and PPS. In its wartime efforts to form a "national front" and avoid the appearance that it was striving for a monopoly of power, the PPR had managed to gain the cooperation of small, isolated groups of peasant and socialist activists who created ostensibly independent (but PPR-dominated) parties which took the name of their more popular parent organizations. Though initially these groups (especially the SL) were almost completely under the control of the PPR, as time went on and these parties gained in membership, especially from activists in the pre-war and wartime independent SL and PPS, the Lublin versions of these parties began to show greater signs of independence.

¹²⁵ "Manifest Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego, 22 lipca 1944" in Liliana Bester, ed., *Manifest PKWN* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1974), 13-25.

¹²⁶ Kołomejczyk, 46. The manifesto's formulations (indeed, the entire "Piast conception") were vague enough that they did not then commit the PKWN to claim all of Lower Silesia or the Pomeranian coast, including the port of Szczecin (Stettin).

forward even wider territorial claims, demanding that the Oder and western Neisse¹²⁷ become Poland's western border.¹²⁸

Another sign of this reversal was the PKWN's decree on agricultural reform, issued on 6 September 1944, which ordered the expropriation of *all* German agrarian property in liberated Poland to facilitate the regime's efforts at land reform. The PKWN's decree ordered the confiscation of agrarian property belonging to German citizens and to Polish citizens of German nationality in eastern Poland.¹²⁹ Though it was ostensibly limited to those areas of Poland liberated in 1944, in little over two weeks after this decree *Trybuna Wolności* reported that the PPR intended to make the decree's principles obligatory throughout liberated Poland and the ZO.¹³⁰ Other signs of the regime's new hard-line policy on the German question from autumn 1944 to winter 1945 included the PPR's increasing public identification of "German" with "Nazi"¹³¹ and its insistence that the Germans in the ZO be expelled.¹³²

¹²⁷ There were two branches of the Neisse river, the eastern and western, which could have been used to delineate a Polish-German frontier. At stake in this question was the fate of Breslau (Wrocław), over 24,793 square kilometers of German territory, and the transfer of an additional 2-3 million Germans from Poland. Even with the border set at the eastern Neisse, Poland would have to expel over 6 million Germans from its expanded western frontier areas. Siebel-Achenbach, 88-89.

¹²⁸ Kołomejczyk, 48.

¹²⁹ "Dekret Polskiego Komitetu Wyzwolenia Narodowego z dnia 6 września 1944 r. o przeprowadzeniu reformy rolnej," in Bester, *Manifest PKWN* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1974), 31.

¹³⁰ Kołomejczyk, 52.

¹³¹ This can be seen in Gomułka's speeches from September 1944 on, in which he increasingly refers to the PPR's struggle with Germany, or "hitlerite Germany", and not with simply "the hitlerites" (hitlerowcy). Compare Gomułka, *O problemie Niemieckim*, 12 with "Obecna sytuacja i zadania partii: z referatu na naradzie PPR w Lublinie

Important contacts between the regime and Poles who had been expelled from those western Polish regions incorporated into the German Reich helped facilitate the PPR's anti-German policies. Because of the earlier German ethnic cleansing of western Poland, the first extensive contacts between the PPR and the Poles of Wielkopolska took place in Lublin—more than 200 miles eastward—in the autumn of 1944 with the encouragement of the Moscow-dominated wing of the Polish Communist movement.¹³³ It was during this time that western Polish nationalists and the PKWN began to take their first tentative steps toward a mutual reconciliation. Ironically, the group that played a key role in bridging the gap between the regime and Wielkopolska society, and would assist the regime in policy formation in the soon-to-be annexed ZO, was the PZZ (Polskie Związki Zachodni) or Polish Western Union, a group founded by one of the Communists' most vociferous pre-war enemies, the National Democrats or Endecja.

The Endecja had been in the forefront of Polish politics throughout the interwar period. When Poland regained its freedom in 1919, the rivalry between Roman Dmowski (the leader of the Endecja) and Jozef Piłsudski (a leader of the PPS) defined the political struggles of the Republic's early years. Piłsudski enjoyed strong support in much of the Polish army and the Polish left. Domestically, he supported a "Jagiellonian" conception

wyłoszonego 10 października 1944 r" and especially "PPR w walce o niepodległość Polski: z wykładu w Centralnej Szkole PPR w Lublinie wyłoszonego w grudniu 1944 r" in which Gomułka speaks unabashedly of the growing hate the Polish people felt toward the Germans during the years of the occupation. Gomułka, *O problemie Niemieckim*, 20-31, 36-38.

¹³² Władysław Gomułka, *Artykuły i przemowienia: tom I: styczeń 1943- grudzień 1945* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1962), 219.

¹³³ See "Document 12, Letter from the CBKP to Manuilsky, 4 July 1944", and "Document 14, Minutes of the Executive Committee of the ZPP, 16 July 1944", in Polonsky and Drukier, 227, 229.

of Poland and believed in the ideals of the old Polish Republic as a confederacy of different peoples (in which Poles would play the dominant part, to be sure, but which would have room for other nationalities). Internationally, he saw Poland as positioned between two enemies, Germany and Russia, which required, for the sake of Polish independence, to be balanced against each other.

In contrast to Pilsudski, Dmowski derived his support from Poles living in the Republic's eastern and western borderlands. Domestically, Dmowski envisioned a more "Piaśt" Polish national state whose goal would be the polonization of all assimilable minorities, and the expulsion of groups he regarded as either recalcitrant (German) or unassimilable (Jewish). Dmowski's desire for a more homogeneous Polish nation-state led him and his successors in the National Democratic Party to embrace the politics of extremist nationalism which included (and increasingly relied upon) anti-semitic pogroms and economic and cultural struggle with Poland's national minorities, particularly its German and Jewish minorities.¹³⁴

Internationally, Dmowski believed that the key to Poland's future lay in reclaiming and developing Polish territory along the country's western frontier, and reversing the centuries-long German "Drang nach Osten." He perceived Poland's long term interests to fundamentally clash with Germany in a way in which they did not with those of Russia and the Soviet Union. Thus, while much of the Endecja would entertain a conservative mistrust of Soviet politics and intentions toward Poland, Dmowski's thought and politics

¹³⁴ Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland, 1918-1939* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 60-61, 200-202, 215, 225; Edward Wynot, *Polish Politics in Transition: The Camp of National Unity and the Struggle for Power, 1935-1939* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1973), 29.

contained an underlying current of openness to pan-slavist (or, as he called them, “neo-slavist”) ideas and practical international cooperation with Russia.¹³⁵

During the war, the experience of German occupation considerably strengthened the Endecja’s western orientation and popularized it in western Poland, as more and more Poles began to identify Poland’s long-term security as depending upon a more defensible western boundary on the Oder and Neisse rivers.¹³⁶ As the war dragged on and it appeared that, far from mutual exhaustion, the Soviet Union would achieve a resounding victory in the east, the neo-slavist current revived among elements of the Endecja.¹³⁷

Polish Communists had sought to reach out to the Endecja even before the establishment of the Provisional Government in Lublin on 22 July 1944. In July, on the verge of the establishment of the Provisional Government, the Central Bureau of Polish Communists in the USSR (Central Biuro Polskich Komunistow, CBKP) mentioned in a letter written to the Comintern the need to establish an “ND party group” to cooperate with the other

¹³⁵ Piotr S. Wandycz, “Poland’s Place in Europe in the Concepts of Piłsudski and Dmowski,” *East European Politics and Societies* 4:3 (1990), 462-463.

¹³⁶ This did not, however, result in a popular willingness to cede Poland’s eastern borderlands to the Soviet Union. Most Poles who were concerned about the issue of Poland’s western frontiers (and who mainly lived in western Poland) desired that Poland simultaneously retain its eastern provinces *and* receive significant accessions of territory in the west at German expense. Kołomejczyk, 57-58.

¹³⁷ The majority of the nationalist underground had been and was to remain positively hostile towards the PPR, regarding it as little more than a front for a new occupation. Indeed, the extreme right wing of the Endecja played a key role in the armed struggle against Communist rule in Poland until the early 1950s. However, even before the PZZ and PPR entered into negotiations in the fall of 1944, the right-wing Committee of National Initiative (Komitet Inicjatywy Narodowej, KIN) (composed in part of Poles from Wielkopolska who had been moved to eastern Poland by the Germans) had already joined the KRN and called upon all Poles to support an alliance of Slavic states with the Soviet Union. Kołomejczyk, 67.

coalition parties. Later, Wanda Wasilewska, an important CBKP official, claimed in a discussion of the composition of the Provisional Government that “even members of the ND” were present in the coalition.¹³⁸

When the PKWN established itself in Lublin in 1944, leaders of the PZZ made their way east to confer with leaders of the new regime¹³⁹ and explore the possibilities for cooperation, based in their common anti-German stance. The leadership of the PZZ had chosen a fortuitous time to begin discussions with the PKWN. The nationalist rhetoric which the regime employed in eastern Poland to stir up local interest in revenge against the Germans and the expropriation of their territory generated relatively little enthusiasm.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, the first few months of liberation had proven to be a dangerous and difficult time for the new authorities, as the PKWN with limited manpower attempted to organize and administer all of Poland east of the Wisła river and to prosecute the war with Germany. The area under Lublin’s control was among the poorest regions of Poland, but contained a population of over 9 million people—a population swollen by over 500,000 expellees from the German ethnic cleansing of its annexed territories and an

¹³⁸ Polonsky and Drukier, 229.

¹³⁹ In this section I will often refer to the PKWN and the PPR synonymously, though the reality was somewhat more complex than this. The allied parties, the SL and particularly the PPS, did at times take divergent lines from the PPR and seek to support and implement policies that diverged considerably from the PPR. However, the PPR effectively controlled both movements, with “plants” who served both to gather information and to implement PPR policies within these parties. In the final analysis, prior to the return of Mikołajczyk and the revival of an independent peasant’s party in July 1945, Polish Communists and their agents directed and controlled, if not monopolized, almost all PKWN activities in Poland.

¹⁴⁰ Polonsky and Drukier, 58.

additional several hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing from the Ukrainian Nationalist Organization's ethnic cleansing in eastern Poland.¹⁴¹

In the first two months of its rule, the PKWN made unsuccessful efforts to gain wide popular support through land reform and to divide and disarm the AK. Though the PKWN had managed to secure limited popular support, to create the foundations of an administration, and to strengthen its control over the army, it was ultimately dependent upon Soviet economic and military aid to defend and supply its territory, and upon the help of Soviet security organs (especially the NKVD) to maintain its grip on power.

The regime's task of mustering popular support was further complicated by the failure of the Red Army to come to the aid of the AK during the Warsaw rising which began in August 1944, within weeks of the creation of the PKWN. Through the summer and fall, AK activists throughout PKWN-administered Poland were being arrested by the NKVD and the regime's own fledgling secret police, the Security Office (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa, UB). By mid-September many in the AK began to actively resist the regime. Only through heightened political repression and Soviet-supported terror begun in October (the "October turn") was the PPR able to maintain control of the situation. Though ostensibly committed to a Moscow-mandated broad "national front," the October turn left the PKWN even further isolated from Polish society, and strengthened the resistance it sought to crush. It was while the regime was casting about for both trained administrative help and a cause which could rally Poles to their side that the PZZ contacted the leader of the Lublin PPS, and soon-to-be Prime Minister of the Provisional Government, Edward

¹⁴¹ John A. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism* (Englewood: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1990), 111-112; Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 474-475.

Osóbka Morawski. The Union's representatives proposed to him that the PKWN recognize its organization. In return the PZZ offered to cooperate closely with the regime to make the slogans of a broad national front a reality.¹⁴²

In October 1944 the PKWN allowed some members of the pre-war PZZ and the Union of Poles in Germany (Związek Polaków w Niemczech, ZPwN) to form a Union of Poles of the Western Territories (Związek Polaków Ziem Zachodnich, ZWZZ). This organization would seek to popularize the PKWN among Poles who had been exiled from their homes in the west, to represent their material interests to the administration, and to prepare these exiles for a return to western Poland.¹⁴³

At first the ZWZZ, founded at the beginning of the "October turn" and dominated by PKWN officials, focused more on social than on national radicalism. In late October, Jan Haneman (who was simultaneously a member of the PPS Supreme Council, the director of the PKWN's Financial and Economic Council, and acting head of the ZWZZ, which would soon change its name to the Union of the Resettled and the Exiled—Zjednoczenie Wysiedleńców i Uchodźców, ZWiU) spoke to a group of expellees. In his address, Haneman emphasized that reborn Poland needed to be a Poland of workers—of the proletariat, peasants, and laboring intelligentsia.¹⁴⁴ His speech meshed very well with the PKWN's initial assessment of the situation in Poznań and the rest of western Poland. While the PKWN realized that Wielkopolska was a "blank page" for the (Communist) party, they were also aware that German occupation policies had concentrated a

¹⁴² Polonsky and Drukier, 43-90.

¹⁴³ Musielak, 65.

¹⁴⁴ WAPP PZZ 579: 64-67.

significant amount of agricultural and industrial capital in the hands of a relatively small number of Germans. The regime's leadership believed that German persecution had thus "proletarianized" the Polish population in the western borderlands. In these areas, German policies had united social liberation (from capitalist oppressors) and national liberation (from foreign occupiers). This in turn strengthened the hope among the regime's activists that the PKWN's land reform and punitive anti-German expropriations could win it a great deal of popular support in that region.¹⁴⁵

Another speaker at this meeting, Wincenty Rzymowski, emphasized a more overtly nationalistic approach to the challenges facing Wielkopolska and all of Poland upon the impending collapse of the Nazi imperium. For Rzymowski, as for many Poles within and outside the PZZ, World War II was merely the continuation of a "centuries-long German war against the Slavs."¹⁴⁶ This was an appeal to a Dmowskiite construction of Polish nationalism, which primarily defined Polish identity by its opposition to "Germandom." For many of the Poles from Wielkopolska, their experience of exile at the hands of the Germans had left its mark. While the returnees were not at all enchanted with the PKWN or the PPR,¹⁴⁷ a significant number of them expressed an initial eagerness to serve Polish

¹⁴⁵ "February Plenum of the PPR," in Polonsky and Drukier, 417-418. Furthermore, this "proletarianization" of the entire Polish population in those areas incorporated into the Reich led the PPR to reevaluate its position in regards to Wielkopolska's landowners, whom the PPR was more willing to compensate for the expropriation of their lands due to the Party's assessment of these landowners' relatively greater patriotic role during the occupation.

¹⁴⁶ WAPP PZZ 579: 66.

¹⁴⁷ When the Wielkopolska exiles managed to return home, the Provincial Department of Propaganda and Information found them a "particularly destructive element" that required neutralizing—by holding a special propaganda event with the participation of "all political groups, unions and strata of society." See "69. 1945 marzec 27, Poznań.—Sprawozdanie z działalności Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Informacji i Propagandy w

national interests upon their return to midwestern Poland. Many who wrote to the PZZ emphasized how their suffering at German hands and their previous experiences of life in the Polish-German borderlands meant that they knew “exactly what were the relations between Poles and Germans.”¹⁴⁸

The PZZ activists were not, however, satisfied with the highly circumscribed role mobilizing refugees in eastern Poland that was given to the ZWZZ. A Reactivation Committee of the PZZ wrote to the leadership of the PKWN and outlined both the tangible and intangible help it believed it could provide to the new regime. At a time when the majority of the pre-war intelligentsia was boycotting the PKWN, the PZZ offered to help provide and train administrative cadres to support the regime, and to form a bureau of studies which would give technical assistance on the complex problems relating to the peace conference, defining nationality in areas of mixed Polish-German settlement, and the colonization and absorption of the Recovered Territories. This assistance would provide valuable support to a regime stretched to the limits of its human resources. The PZZ also proposed to help in planning settlement and schools in the ZO. Furthermore, the PZZ, as an ostensibly non-Party, independent organization, could

Poznańiu za okres od 5 do 27 marca 1945 r.,” in Stanisław Nawrocki and Kazimierz Bielecki, eds., *Początki władzy Ludowej w Wielkopolsce: materiały źródłowe z wielkopolskich archiwów państwowych* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976), 102.

¹⁴⁸ WAPP PZZ 579: 50, 53, and 154. See especially the letter of R. Rozynek, a Polish government official born in Wolsztyn in Wielkopolska, who when he was being resettled was not even allowed to take even a suitcase with linens with him, or Franciszek Barski, who was expelled with his family from Moglino, Wielkopolska in mid-December 1939 and from this experience claimed to know the nature of Polish-German relations. They, and many others like them, had scores to settle after over 5 years of “internal exile” in eastern Poland and were willing to cooperate with the PKWN to achieve their revenge.

potentially co-opt elements that might otherwise remain aloof from, or even hostile to, the new order—a proposal which nicely complemented the PKWN's efforts to cast itself as an authentically Polish movement committed to creating a broad national front.¹⁴⁹

The PKWN's reception of this letter and the content of its response demonstrate that the regime was open to cooperation with the Union, but was developing its own conception of the PZZ's future role. In his reply to the Reactivization Committee's request, Osóbka-Morawski not only agreed to allow the PZZ to begin work but even offered to "morally and materially support the work of the PZZ" and looked forward to "becoming more acquainted with the practical work of the Union and its personnel."¹⁵⁰ More ominously, anticipating the PZZ's future, in the draft of the letter sent to the PKWN, the Union's offer to train "security personnel" for service in the ZO was erased, as was the PZZ's first request of the government, that it be given "wide freedom to gather its strength."¹⁵¹ Indeed, the Organization Committee of the PZZ (formed in late November 1944 and composed of both the PZZ Reactivization Committee and the ZPZZ) contained a number of PPR activists¹⁵² who would play a key role in the slow internal transformation of the Union from an elite, western Polish organization to a mass, all-Polish organization, and

¹⁴⁹ WAPP PZZ 579: 213-214.

¹⁵⁰ WAPP PZZ 579: 217.

¹⁵¹ WAPP PZZ 579: 213. After this, the PZZ would make no offer to train security personnel.

¹⁵² Musielak, 76. The four-member organizational committee of the PZZ included two PPR and one PPS activists, the most important of whom was PPR member and PZZ Secretary General Jozef Dubiel, a member of the pre-war Communist League of Polish Youth and a wartime Communist partisan commander who would play an important role in the subsequent history of the PZZ, and later the Ministry of Recovered Territories as Gomulka's assistant. For a brief reference to Dubiel's pre-war and wartime biography see Polonsky and Drukier, 162.

move it from an ostensibly apolitical to an intensely partisan stance.¹⁵³ While these activists would succeed in reorienting the PZZ ideologically to be more in tune with the new order in Poland, in the process they themselves, and others within the PPR, would be influenced by the kind of nationalist rhetoric that the PZZ and the Party ever more energetically employed.

In the months that followed its reactivation the PZZ worked with the government among western Polish refugees in eastern Poland, attempting to prepare them to return to their homes. The leadership of the PZZ further attempted to define their goals and ideology during this time. With the liberation of western Poland in the coming winter, the PZZ would quickly reestablish itself in its pre-war strongholds in Upper Silesia and Wielkopolska and then begin to play a leading role in the settlement of the Recovered Territories—developments that caused the Provisional Government a certain level of apprehension in spite of its extensive control of the Union’s leadership structures.¹⁵⁴

For the PKWN and its successor, the Provisional Government, winter afforded little time for reflection. Indeed, in a series of conferences and meetings in November and February

¹⁵³ WAPP PZZ 579: Circular Number 1, no date (November 1945?) which contained the initial formulation of the PZZ’s mission and self-definition. In this document the PZZ stated that its goals included, first and foremost, organizing “all of the Polish people’s strength in a struggle for the Odra-Nyssa frontiers” and then “to develop a support for [Poland’s] Slavic allies, especially the USSR, and to reject *szlachta* [noble] politics and its conflict between Slavs.” It further claimed that the PZZ was an “all-Polish, non-Party, anti-Fascist and democratic institution.” The latter formulations would prove the Union’s undoing as Dubiel and other PPR members in the organization’s leadership followed the postwar Party line, which saw all opposition to the new order in Poland as fundamentally Fascist and anti-democratic.

¹⁵⁴ At the May 1945 Plenum of the PPR there were demands that Dubiel be withdrawn from the PZZ and complaints that in some areas the PZZ was functioning as a “fifth” party. Polonsky and Drukier, 438.

the tensions exacerbated by the PPR's "October turn" came to a head. The PPR tried to dominate the administration and yet attempted to work through semi-independent allied parties, in accord with its goal of forming a "national front without traitors and capitulators." However, the Party's tendency to define most of those who held contrary political opinions to be "objective allies of the Germans"¹⁵⁵ was producing an impasse. At the PPR's national conference of 9-12 November 1944, PPR activists led by the Party's General Secretary, Gomułka, tried to lay guidelines for strengthening their hold on the country, which centered on the Party's "declaration of war" on the Polish army (because it was "infected" by ideologically foreign elements, i.e., former officers of the AK incorporated into its ranks) and a need for a thoroughly "democratic state machinery" with people "who think the same way as its government in all the key jobs in the civil service, the armed forces and the courts."¹⁵⁶ These approaches did little to help the PPR, and in February its task was further complicated by the liberation of the rest of Poland and the beginnings of Polish rule in central and western Poland and the ZO.

LIBERATION IN AN ERA OF TOTAL WAR: THE SOVIET LIBERATION OF WIELKOPOLSKA AND THE DESTRUCTION OF EASTERN BRANDENBERG, JANUARY-MARCH 1945

The Germans are not human beings. From now on the word "German" is for us the worst imaginable curse. From now on the word "German" strikes us to the quick. We shall not get excited. We shall kill. If you have not killed at least one German a day, you have wasted that day.

—Ilya Ehrenburg¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Polonsky and Drukier, 383.

¹⁵⁶ Polonsky and Drukier, 375-385.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in de Zayas, *Terrible Revenge*, 1994.

All your enemies open their mouths wide against you; they scoff and gnash their teeth and say, "We have swallowed her up. This is the day we have waited for; we have lived to see it." The Lord has done what he planned; he has fulfilled his word, which he decreed long ago. He has overthrown you without pity, he has let the enemy gloat over you, he has exalted the strength of your foes.

—The Lamentations of Jeremiah 2:16-17

In January the Red Army resumed its drive on Berlin in a ferocious three month campaign that culminated in the siege of Berlin and the total collapse of the Nazi regime. Hitler's fantasy of victory through superweapons, unwillingness to listen to the warnings of impending military disaster awaiting the German armies and civilians on the road to Berlin, and indifference toward the fate of the German people beyond the end of the war all compounded the catastrophe that was about to befall the Reich. Blinded by his determination to defend the Reich's last supplies of natural oil in Hungary, Hitler ordered almost half of the German army's Panzer divisions to Hungary, leaving only five Panzer divisions to face the tremendous Soviet buildup opposite the main Warsaw-Berlin axis. In spite of "chillingly accurate intelligence" on Soviet strength and intentions in the central front, Hitler dismissed this as nothing but a bluff.¹⁵⁸

Indeed, Nazi Germany's combination of minimal preparedness prior to the Soviet offensive, dogged defensive action, belated embrace of total war through mass mobilization, and scorched earth policy in the face of the Soviet advance subjected the

¹⁵⁸ John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin: Continuing the History of Stalin's War with Germany* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), 446-447.

German civilian population of the eastern Reich to the worst of all situations: reaping all the costs of total war without being effectively mobilized.¹⁵⁹

While the Red Army certainly accounted for many of the 2 million Germans from the eastern provinces who lost their lives during the Soviet advance, the peculiar combination of brutality and incompetence of the Nazi regime (“Austrian efficiency and Prussian charm” quipped the Czechs) made a terrible situation even worse. For fear of appearing to be “defeatists” (which in the aftermath of the July bomb plot’s effort to assassinate Hitler became a particularly dangerous affair), Nazi officials in the eastern provinces refused to prepare evacuation plans. This meant that most of the evacuation was unplanned and unorganized, which resulted in heavy casualties in the dead of winter. Furthermore, as part of their belated efforts to wage a total war, the Nazi regime enrolled almost the entire male population of the eastern provinces from ages 16 to 65 in the *Volkssturm* (People’s Guard), creating a situation in which most refugees and survivors would be women, children and the elderly. Finally, the Nazi regime’s implementation of a scorched earth policy to hinder the Red Army’s advance in certain areas of eastern Germany also compounded the suffering of those Germans who were unable or unwilling to flee.¹⁶⁰

The criminal negligence of Hitler’s regime toward its civilian population was to be met by a more active barbarism from the Red Army. Before their drive into western Poland and eastern Germany, Soviet soldiers were fed a steady diet of ferocious anti-German propaganda and, unit by unit, given tours of the recently liberated concentration camp in

¹⁵⁹ Hieronim Szczegoła, *Przeobrażenia ustrojowe-społeczne na Ziemi Lubuskiej w latach 1945-1947* (Poznań: Uniwersytet Adama Mickiewicza, 1971), 23-24; Siebel-Achenbach, 56-82.

¹⁶⁰ Erickson, 523.

Majdanek.¹⁶¹ This propaganda campaign provided a little-needed impetus for a war of vengeance against all Germans, soldiers and civilians, similar to the racially and ideologically motivated war that the Wehrmacht waged against the Soviet civilian population.

The general German population certainly was agitated by Nazi racial propaganda about the advance of the Red Army's "Asiatic hordes," but there was also ample concrete evidence of Soviet misconduct. The most famous occurred in October 1944, when the Red Army briefly occupied a number of German villages in East Prussia which the Germans managed to recapture a week later. In the village of Nemmersdorf the Soviets had murdered all the inhabitants who hadn't managed to escape, including 72 women and children and one 74-year-old man. News of these atrocities touched off a panic in East Prussia which resulted in a mass flight from there and eventually from all of eastern Germany: over 7 million Germans fled the eastern borderlands of the Reich. It was thus during the Red Army's advance and these most fierce last battles of the eastern front that the first, unofficial ethnic cleansing of western Poland and eastern Germany up to the Oder and Neisse rivers began, through the unplanned flight of much of the German civilian population.¹⁶²

The Soviet advance was rapid. Within two months the German army was almost completely driven out of Wielkopolska and East Brandenburg,¹⁶³ and the Red Army had

¹⁶¹ de Zayas, *Terrible Revenge*, 34-35; Siebel-Achenbach, 57.

¹⁶² Czesław Osękowski, *Spółeczeństwo polski zachodniej i polnocnej w latach 1945-1956: procesy integracji i dezintegracji* (Zielona Góra: Wyzsza Szkoła Pedagogiczna im. Tadeusza Kotarbinskiego, 1994), 81; de Zayas, *Terrible Revenge*, 35-38.

¹⁶³ Administrative divisions form one of the more difficult problems in any study of either the transition of the former eastern territories of the German Reich to Polish rule or the

established bridgeheads across the Oder river to prepare its advance on Berlin. War damage in these regions was severe but uneven. Much of the German strategy hinged on a forward defense of all territory, with Hitler ruling out any withdrawal, and on the defense of fortresses behind enemy lines by those troops encircled by Soviet advances. The Germans' pursuit of this strategy often resulted in the Soviets overrunning significant portions of the front by outflanking maneuvers. This left large tracts of territory undamaged but dotted with dangerous formations of enemy troops and fortresses astride important lines of supply in their rear. In Wielkopolska, the Red Army managed to liberate many of the region's smaller towns with little or no fighting by January, but had to fight a costly two-month-long siege in Poznań that ended with the surrender of the German garrison on 22 February 1945.¹⁶⁴

While much of the German population sought to flee the Soviet advance, those Poles remaining in Wielkopolska quickly reestablished their region's political and cultural life.

fate of these territories under Polish rule. Wielkopolska's Ziemia Lubuska, established in June 1945 (prior to which it had been divided between the provinces of Lower Silesia and Western Pomerania), is not entirely contiguous with the pre-war German province of East Brandenburg or with the current Polish province of Zielona Góra. The difficulty is further compounded by the tendency of postwar historiography to write regional histories in which administrative divisions current during the historians' research are projected backward onto the immediate postwar period. See the discussion in Szczegoła, *Przeobrażenia*, 5.

For clarity's sake I will attempt to follow the administrative divisions of this region as they occurred. Hence, prior to the establishment of Polish administration in the ZO I will refer to the region directly west of Wielkopolska as East Brandenburg. Until June 1945 I will discuss the region west of Wielkopolska within its then-current (and confused) administrative context which divided this area between the Polish provinces of Lower Silesia, Western Pomerania, and Poznań, and finally after June 1945 I will discuss the "Ziemia Lubuska" region of midwestern Poland.

¹⁶⁴ Erickson, 523.

Often within a day or two of liberation Poles in the smaller towns and villages of Wielkopolska created a local government, guarded abandoned stores and properties, and founded militias to secure public order. The Red Army liberated Konin on 21 January and the next day the Polish citizens of the town met to establish a provisional town government. In Gniezno, liberated on the evening of January 21 (without major damage), the population had organized a mass meeting by January 23 which established a local government. Among other actions this government organized a local branch of the "Citizens' Militia" (Milicja Obywatelska, MO), ordered the protection of all magazines and military barracks, and created a committee in charge of provisioning the town and helping to supply the Red Army, while another committee was placed in charge of sanitation, hospital management, and support for the poor.¹⁶⁵

In Poznań, even while the siege of the German garrison was still going on, the Provisional Government's local representatives established themselves in the city and began organizing the administrative and political life of the region. By the first half of February the Provincial government set up a Polish administration in every county and district of Wielkopolska. Equally telling, the UB, which sent a 90-man operation group to Wielkopolska on 30 January, had also managed by February to establish itself in every county of Wielkopolska.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ "2. 1945 styczeń 21, Konin.—Protokół zebrania obywateli miasta Konina powołującego Tymczasowy Zarząd Miejski" and "4. 1945 styczeń 23, Gniezno.—Protokół zebrania konstytucyjnego Tymczasowego Komitetu Ludowego w Gnieźnie," in Nawrocki and Bielecki, 19, 21.

¹⁶⁶ Choniawko, 25.

Within three weeks of the German garrison's capitulation, on 9 March 1945, the PZZ also began functioning in Poznań. The Union cooperated with the regime in gathering evidence against the German occupying authorities for the upcoming Nuremberg trials (and local prosecutions of German war criminals) and helped Wielkopolska refugees in the Lublin region to return to their homes and farms, most of which were devastated by the fighting and the looting of the German and Soviet Armies.¹⁶⁷

Further west, the Red Army's conquest of East Brandenburg, the destruction of German society and the first steps toward creating the new Polish order in this area all proceeded apace. Heavily fortified East Brandenburg lay directly east of Berlin and was the special target of the First Belorussian Front. So fierce and rapid was the Soviet advance that already by 31 January Soviet forces had crossed the Oder river, only seventy kilometers east of Berlin. For all its rapidity, however, the advance was tenuous, since it left large concentrations of German soldiers and civilians wandering behind the Red Army, especially to the north in Pomerania.¹⁶⁸ Some cities in East Brandenburg, such as Grünberg, taken by the Soviets on 15 February, fell quickly, with the Red Army advancing so rapidly that it attacked Grünberg's defenders from the west rather than coming from the east, and so captured the town with minimal damage, and little time for its 30,000 German inhabitants to escape. Most of the other major towns of the region, including Landsberg, Kustrin, Gubin, and Schneidemuhl, were, like Poznań, pounded to

¹⁶⁷ WAPP PZZ 586: 136.

¹⁶⁸ The fighting proved especially difficult for the Red and Polish armies because before the war the Germans had honeycombed this region with defensive fortifications (the "Pomeranian wall"), which the German army stubbornly defended. Henryk Dominiczak, *Wróciliśmy na Ziemię Lubuska: udział wojska polskiego w zasiedleniu i zagospodarowaniu Ziemi Lubuskiej, 1945-1948* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1974), 21-28.

pieces in battles of varying length which left tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians dead.¹⁶⁹

Military events worked a tremendous social transformation throughout East Brandenburg, and indeed most of the German east. Of the five major regions of what were to become Poland's Recovered Territories (Upper and Lower Silesia, East Prussia, Western Pomerania, and East Brandenburg), only Lower Silesia and Western Pomerania retained a substantial German population throughout the Red Army's advance. However, in East Brandenburg (and even in the pre-war Polish territories of Wielkopolska) many Germans (and Poles with German citizenship, the so-called "autochthons") returned to their homes when the front moved forward, only to face persecution, imprisonment in work camps, and, later, expulsion.¹⁷⁰

There were two main groups of Poles already living in East Brandenburg: the autochthons and Polish slave laborers. The autochthons of East Brandenburg were part of the ethnic Polish minority who lived within the borders of the German Reich even after the end of World War I.¹⁷¹ In East Brandenburg they numbered over 5,000 people and

¹⁶⁹ Szczegola, *Przeobrażenia*, 27. In Gubin alone, which fell on February 22, the fighting resulted in 60,000 Germans killed, over 120,000 captured, and especially heavy destruction on the eastern side of the town. Kustrin, a first class fortress held by a 10,000-man garrison and commanded by SS Brigadier General Heinz Reinefarth, the "hangman of Waraw," held out until 30 March, and like Gubin was completely destroyed.

¹⁷⁰ Osekowski, 80-83.

¹⁷¹ There were two major concentrations of Polish autochthons within the pre-war boundaries of Germany: the Poles of Opeln, Silesia and of Warmia and Mazuria in East Prussia. Even according to pre-war German statistics, which tended to downplay the number of Poles, these groups numbered over 1.2 million people (with the highest Polish figures placing the number at 1.4 million). Osekowski, 89.

were concentrated in several villages close to the border of Wielkopolska, and during the Soviet military occupation were led by Lucjan Brudło, the mayor of Dąbrów Wielkopolska. Brudło eventually obtained permission from the local Soviet military commander to organize provisional Polish administration, and to contact Polish officials across the border and secure an audience with the governor of Poznań province. The governor proceeded to appoint Brudło as the Polish government's plenipotentiary for "the regions of the former counties of Międzyrzecz and Celichowski in order to secure government property and establish a provisional administration," thus creating the first Polish plenipotentiary in the area that was to become Ziemia Lubuska.¹⁷²

Even more important both numerically and organizationally for the future Polish administration in this region were the over 30,000 Polish slave laborers and POWs working or being held prisoner in Eastern Brandenburg during the war. These Poles proved especially willing to cooperate with Soviet military authorities in establishing Polish administration in Landsberg, Zielinzig, Frankfurt Ost, and Friedeburg.¹⁷³ Ironically enough, those Poles forcibly brought to Germany to serve as slaves for Hitler's "Thousand Year Reich" were perfectly placed to participate in the elimination of the fruits of over a thousand years of mostly-peaceful German settlement in the lands east of the Oder River.

Their numbers were soon buttressed by the beginnings of Polish settlement in East Brandenburg, the so-called "cross-border" settlement. This settlement took place shortly after the advance of the Red Army (and was often little different from the organized

¹⁷² Szczegoła, *Przeobrażenia*, 37-38.

¹⁷³ Szczegoła, *Przeobrażenia*, 34.

“*szaber*” or looting expeditions which would soon sweep all of the former German eastern territories). Along with the movement of various central government operation groups, it represented the first timid efforts of local Wielkopolska society and the central government to begin colonizing the now mostly empty lands to the west of Wielkopolska.

Polish administration was only in its infancy in East Brandenburg. Many of the former slave laborers and POWs who formed the backbone of the first Polish administration were eager to return home.¹⁷⁴ There were also very real tensions between local Polish officials and the Red Army over the willingness of Soviet military commanders to rely on local German administrators when these could be found. Yet in spite of its often inauspicious beginnings, already the outlines of what would become Poland’s Ziemia Lubuska were beginning to arise out of the ashes of the former German province of East Brandenburg.

SERVING POLAND: FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT RULE IN WIELKOPOLSKA TO THE CREATION OF THE FRONT OF NATIONAL UNITY. APRIL-JUNE 1945

“It would be a great pity to stuff the Polish goose so full of German food that it died of indigestion.”

—Churchill to Stalin at Yalta on the danger of overextending Poland’s frontiers¹⁷⁵

“Do you think I’m going to swallow Poland up?”

—Stalin to Churchill at Tehran, 1943¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ In Landsberg so many former Polish slave laborers returned to their homes that the Soviets closed down the first Polish administration they had established in this city in favor of an all-German local government. Szczegółą, *Przeobrażenia*, 40.

¹⁷⁵ Winston S. Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), 374.

¹⁷⁶ Polonsky, 164.

The first six months of the Provisional Government's rule in Wielkopolska, from February to July 1945, took place against the backdrop of the war and other domestic and international crises which engaged most of the Provisional Government's time and attention. Militarily, even with the liberation of Western Poland and the beginnings of Polish administration in eastern Germany, two more months of hard fighting awaited the Polish and Red Armies as they began their final drive on Berlin. Internationally, the Lublin Provisional Government's position was even more uncertain. Until June 1945, only the Soviet Union acknowledged it as the legitimate government of Poland. This further reinforced the dependency of the Polish Communists upon Stalin, for whom Poland was but one piece (albeit a very important piece) in the elaborate chess game of inter-Allied diplomacy. Though the Western Allies' official recognition of the Polish government-in-exile in London was largely *pro forma* by this point, they remained opposed to the exclusively Soviet-controlled Provisional Government in Lublin, and decidedly hostile to having Poland (especially a Soviet-controlled Poland) receive all of the Oder-Neisse territories for which its regime was then clamoring.

Domestically, the Provisional Government found itself at an impasse. The terror the regime unleashed in eastern Poland in the aftermath of its "October turn" had only encouraged resistance from the AK rank and file, who saw that they had nothing to gain in cooperating with the new regime.¹⁷⁷ Ironically, Communist repression was strengthening an underground movement whose highest leadership was attempting to demobilize the majority of its operatives. The last commander of the AK, Leopold Okulicki, convinced that the mass of the AK was incapable of direct armed resistance

¹⁷⁷ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 172-174.

against the Soviets, had officially disbanded the organization in January 1945. He also attempted to create a smaller, less militarily-oriented underground—"Nie" (from the first letters of *niepodległość* (independence), which mean "no" in Polish)—but arrests, which even claimed Okulicki, so crippled Nie that its surviving leadership decided in August 1945 to dissolve all AK-related underground work.¹⁷⁸

The underground, however, could not be demobilized by decrees from its leadership. The ongoing NKVD and UB arrests, executions and deportation of former members of the resistance drove many of them back into the forests, and often into cooperation with the radical National Armed Forces (*Narodowy Siły Zbrojnej*, NSZ). The NSZ was fiercely hostile to the PPR, its coalition partners, and its Soviet patrons. As early as August 1943 its chief publication, *Szaniec* (The Rampart), had declared that it was the duty of Polish patriots to "pull out the Bolshevik weeds and cleanse the terrain... [and that the] PPR, People's Guard, and various "red" partisans must vanish from the surface of the Polish land."¹⁷⁹ The NSZ backed up these words with deeds, attacking People's Guard detachments during the occupation as well as after liberation.

Yet even the NSZ's leadership realized the futility of open armed opposition to the Soviet-backed provisional government and attempted to disband the organization. This effort also failed by the summer of 1945, as the regime's security forces arrested more and more of the NSZ's national leadership, and local commanders and their soldiers began taking independent guerrilla actions. As the underground became increasingly decentralized and isolated from a society attempting to accommodate itself with the new

¹⁷⁸ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 216.

¹⁷⁹ Kersten, *Establishment*, 21.

authorities, many of its members found themselves extorting material support from the society they believed they were attempting to liberate, and falling more and more into the gray area between freedom fighting and banditry.¹⁸⁰

The ongoing fight with the underground carried costs for the new authorities as well. As the front moved westward in the winter of 1945, and much of the Red and Polish armies with it, the regime found itself committed to a policy of terror without sufficient instruments to carry it out. The regime was fighting against an increasingly large and desperate underground in conditions approaching civil war.¹⁸¹ The Polish population as a whole was also growing ever more restive in the face of the government's ruthless police tactics, and its inability to create order or anything beyond the barest modicum of existence in Poland.¹⁸²

The regime did have one trump to play in its relations with Polish society: the possibility of Poland's territorial aggrandizement at Germany's expense. From the early days of its rule, the PPR had become more aware of how much was at stake politically in its ability to polonize the Recovered Territories by ethnically cleansing the region of its Germans and sponsoring Polish settlement.¹⁸³ In February 1945, in a paper delivered to a Plenum of

¹⁸⁰ Kersten, *Establishment*, 222, 229-30.

¹⁸¹ Kersten, *Establishment*, 137-142.

¹⁸² Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 172-175, 216.

¹⁸³ In their discussion of the PPR's efforts to politically unite Poland, Norbert Kołomejczyk and Marian Malinowski agree that "A very important moment in this conception (of Poland's new boundaries and new place in Europe) was the treatment of the question of borders and territory as organically connected to a general program of democratic (sic) change." This enabled the PPR to bring together a broader coalition around its social and economic reforms, since the regime could emphasize the need for a united Polish front in the face of the difficulties in assimilating the Recovered Territories. Kołomejczyk and Malinowski, 330-333.

the Central Committee, Gomułka argued that Poland's westward expansion would completely change Poland's socioeconomic and political situation. Socio-economically, the thousands of soon-to-be-nationalized German industrial concerns would transform Poland from a predominantly agrarian into an industrial-agricultural country where the state would be the greatest industrial power. Gomułka also argued that "...all of society is caught up in a hate of Germany," which created real political opportunities for the PPR since such hatred "creates a serious possibility of uniting all of society into one entire national front."¹⁸⁴

For the new regime to reap the benefits of territorial expansion, Gomułka saw the need to degermanize the Recovered Territories as quickly as possible. This required both that "the Germans be driven off, and that we have to lead, and settle Poles [there].... It will not suffice to settle the thousands [of repatrianci], which we have to settle, here we are speaking of millions, and this action must literally encompass the whole nation."¹⁸⁵ The PPR's Central Committee acted on this recommendation in April 1945 by sending a circular to every provincial, town and county committee of the Party warning all local party organizations that they needed to prepare to make a massive effort to settle millions of Poles in the Western Territories and allocating to each Provincial Committee areas in the ZO that it should begin to settle. In this document the PPR also claimed that "[t]he occupation of this land, its degermanization, and as rapid as possible economic

¹⁸⁴ "Nr 39. 1945, luty 6, Warszawa.—Z referatu i sekretarza KC PPR ogłoszonego na rozszerzonym plenum Komitetu Centralnego. Nowa sytuacja, nowe zadania: sytuacja Polski i zadania Naszej Partii dwa etapy wyzwolenia kraju," in Polubiec, 279-299.

¹⁸⁵ "Nr 39" in Polubiec, 294.

revitalization is the burning question which presents itself to our State, our Nation, and our Party.”¹⁸⁶

Diplomatically, the period from February to June 1945 would be decisive for postwar Polish (and East Central European) history for the next half-century. At Yalta the Soviet leadership secured almost all of its objectives in Poland: western agreement to (as yet unspecified but substantial) Polish accessions of German territory in the Oder-Neisse region, the effective Western de-recognition of the London government-in-exile, and finally, a Western commitment to negotiations over the composition of the Polish government in which the Soviets effectively held veto power and which acknowledged the Lublin government as the foundation upon which any reorganized Polish government was to be built. With the end of these latter negotiations in Moscow in June 1945, for the cost of what at the time appeared to be little more than cosmetic political changes in Poland's current government, the Soviets succeeded in ensuring that their clients both retained broad control of the state administration, and finally gained full Western diplomatic recognition as Poland's only government.

While the “Big Three” had already informally set Poland's eastern boundaries at the Tehran Conference in November 1943 (and agreed that Poland would receive territorial compensation in the west at Germany's expense), the Polish question remained a cause of tension within the Alliance. Soviet conduct during the Warsaw Uprising¹⁸⁷ and its

¹⁸⁶ AAN KC PPR 295: 18. For a full discussion of the evolution of the PPR's policy to settle the Recovered Territories, see Dulczewski and Kwilecki, 66-67.

¹⁸⁷ Western leaders, especially in Great Britain, were particularly incensed over the Soviet government's refusal to allow Western bombers to use Soviet airfields close to Warsaw to aid the insurgents via air-drops of supplies and bombing runs. Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 185-186.

unilateral recognition of the PKWN as Poland's Provisional Government on 1 January 1945 had aroused a certain degree of Anglo-American suspicions toward Soviet intentions in East Central Europe that threatened to coalesce into a coherent Anglo-American policy of non-recognition, or even opposition to further Soviet expansion in the region.

Yet as Mastny points out, Western official and public opinion, led by President Roosevelt, tended to support the Soviets in their disputes with the London Polish government. Furthermore, by February 1945 both FDR and Churchill, "elated by the impending triumph over Nazism....[and] self-confident and optimistic about the future," were in no mood to seek a confrontation over Poland. Instead they sought to resolve amicably and quickly all the questions facing the Grand Alliance.¹⁸⁸ In February 1945 at Yalta, the leaders of the "Big Three" met to reach an answer to their Polish questions, and to adjudicate the other outstanding problems facing the Grand Alliance as the war moved into its final stage.

These "other problems," including the future of the United Nations, Allied occupation policy in Germany, reparations, and Soviet belligerency in the war with Japan, all loomed very large in American calculations and inclined President Roosevelt to seek compromise in Poland—an area that he regarded as within a legitimate Soviet sphere of influence.¹⁸⁹ At Yalta, discussions of the Polish question revolved around two issues: the nature of the government that should rule in Poland, and whether it would be based upon the Polish

¹⁸⁸ Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 186, 240.

¹⁸⁹ Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States*, 165-168; Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 251-253.

government-in-exile in London or upon the Soviet Union's clients in the Provisional Government; and what would be the limits of Poland's western frontier with Germany.

Behind these issues loomed questions over Allied policy toward Germany, the shape that the unofficially recognized Soviet sphere of influence in East Central Europe would take, and ultimately, whether it would be possible for the Anglo-American and Soviet leadership to reach an acceptable compromise on matters of security and principle in East Central Europe. These problems were resolved, for the most part to Soviet satisfaction, at the Yalta conference. Soviet aims in Poland found one of their greatest bulwarks in the confusion of Anglo-American counsels. The Anglo-American Polish policy at Yalta remained the same tangle of double-dealing and wishful thinking which had already helped to facilitate Soviet domination of Poland. It would soon gain the Soviet Union's Polish clients both Western recognition of their rule and a Polish frontier on the Oder-Neisse line for relatively minimal concessions.

In the final agreements concerning Poland, the Soviets ensured that the future, reorganized Provisional Government would be based upon their dependents, which effectively delegitimized the Polish government-in-exile. The agreement was that the current Polish government *in Lublin* would be broadened by democratic Polish elements both within the country and from abroad. This was to occur by common Allied agreement that would be reached through a working group of the "Big Three's" senior diplomats, Viacheslav Molotov, Clark Kerr and Averell Harriman.

The agreement also stipulated that elections in Poland (and throughout East Central Europe) would be held at Soviet discretion. The Soviets insisted upon changing the final draft of the "Declaration of Liberated Europe" in which the Allies obliged themselves to

“immediately establish appropriate machinery for the carrying out of the joint responsibilities” to a commitment merely to “...take measures for the carrying out of mutual consultation.” Kersten points out that the Soviet government’s purpose in these changes did not escape American diplomats: in a discussion with President Roosevelt, Admiral Leahy argued that this agreement was so elastic that the Russians “can stretch it all the way from Yalta to Washington, without ever technically breaking it.” which elicited from FDR the response, “I know...But it’s the best I can do for Poland at this time.”¹⁹⁰

Finally, in negotiations over Poland’s borders, the Big Three agreed formally to recognize Poland’s eastern border as the Curzon line, while in the west there was only a general agreement that Poland’s new frontier would reach at least the Oder and eastern Neisse rivers. On several occasions at Yalta the Soviets proposed that Poland’s boundary with Germany be the Western, not the Eastern, Neisse river. At this time, however, the Anglo-Americans rejected this formula, agreeing only that “Poland must receive substantial accessions of territory in the north and west.” Directly contrary to Churchill’s later claims, during the discussions of Poland’s frontiers at Yalta it was perfectly clear to all parties the difference entailed by placing Poland’s boundary on either the Eastern or Western Neisse river.¹⁹¹

The Western Allies, by agreeing to accept a Polish-German frontier on the Oder and Eastern Neisse, not only compromised the principles of the Atlantic Charter but also deeply undermined their ability to resist the further partition of the German East at their

¹⁹⁰ Mastny, *Russia’s Road*, 251; Kersten, *Establishment*, 123.

¹⁹¹ Siebel-Achenbach, 115; Churchill, *Triumph*, 374-375.

next meeting with the Soviets at Potsdam in August. Agreeing to the expulsion of all Germans in the Oder-Eastern Neisse territories already committed the Allies to the expulsion of over 6 million Germans from territories that had been settled by Germans for over six hundred years. When the Allies tried to object to the western Neisse, they were forced to rely solely on the pragmatic argument of Germany's inability to accommodate the extra 3 million persons who would be expelled, while questioning Poland's ability to absorb the additional territory, as they had already acknowledged the principle of ethnic cleansing even of predominantly historically (and overwhelmingly ethnically) German territory.¹⁹²

In the aftermath of the conference, Stalin acted as if the Yalta accords gave him a completely free hand in Poland (and the rest of East Central and Southeastern Europe). Both Churchill's and Roosevelt's willingness to lightly dismiss the current Polish government-in-exile and their rapid assent at Yalta to all but one of the Soviet Union's major demands (concerning the Oder-Neisse frontier) led Averall Harriman to concede that the United States appeared to accept the Soviet-dominated status quo in Poland, and was unwilling to protest Soviet behavior there.¹⁹³ For his part, Roosevelt sincerely believed that, in return for all of the Anglo-American concessions on the Polish question, he had ensured that Stalin would at least be "discreet in projecting power beyond his borders, operating behind the facade of democratic procedures wherever possible."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Siebel-Achenbach, 86-90.

¹⁹³ Lundestad, 194-196.

¹⁹⁴ Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States*, 166.

The failure of both sides to comprehend the other's perception of the substance of the Yalta accords led to a significant increase in the hitherto relatively cordial Soviet-American diplomatic relationship in the last weeks of President Roosevelt's life, and sowed even more mutual distrust in the anti-Hitler coalition.¹⁹⁵ At the heart of Anglo-American diplomacy's efforts to come to grips with the Polish question, and of many of the later conflicts which would blossom into the Cold War, was much of the Anglo-American political establishment's misapprehension of the Soviet system—as well as their own bad faith toward both their Polish allies and their own citizens in whose name they negotiated. The belief that Stalin could tolerate truly free elections (“pure as Caesar's wife.” quipped FDR in a discussion with Stalin) in his sphere of influence in East Central Europe represented a degree of wishful thinking akin to blindness. Furthermore, FDR's claim after the Crimean Conference that the Yalta accords “can be a peace...based on the sound and just principles of the Atlantic Charter” was an example of cant and hypocrisy from which Stalin had little to learn.¹⁹⁶

The attempt to implement the Yalta accords by broadening the Polish government to include democratic Polish elements both within the country and from abroad proved difficult to implement. A particularly vexing issue was the proposed expansion of the then-current Polish Provisional Government in the face of adamant Soviet objection to the entry of the Peasant Party leader (and main western hope for a non-Communist leader of Poland), Stanisław Mikołajczyk, into any reorganized Provisional Government. During

¹⁹⁵ Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States*, 165-168; Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 251-253.

¹⁹⁶ Mastny, *Russia's Road*, 287; Gaddis, *Russia, the Soviet Union, and the United States*, 166.

the Yalta conference both Stalin and Molotov had claimed that Mikołajczyk was unacceptable to the Polish Provisional Government. In fact, in discussions within the PPR's politburo in December 1944, the PPR was open to Mikołajczyk's entry into the government (though not as a chairman of the (then) PKWN). It was not the PPR but rather Stalin who opposed the return of Mikołajczyk to Poland, on the grounds that he was involved in "terrorist" activities against the Red Army, and that the Soviet Union would not allow him to return until the Red Army was out of Poland.¹⁹⁷

Aggressive Soviet misconduct in Poland further aggravated the atmosphere of these discussions, including the Red Army's ongoing pacification of the country and especially the "arrest of the sixteen"—leaders of the four independent political parties of Poland who were lured into a trap by the NKVD in Poland on the pretext of negotiations about broadening the Provisional Government. At this meeting the Polish political leaders were placed under arrest and then spirited off to Moscow to stand trial for allegedly preparing to cooperate with Germany in organizing a Polish uprising against the Red Army, and for sabotage against the Red Army.¹⁹⁸

Eventually, after a series of stormy diplomatic exchanges with the US and Great Britain in April and May over Soviet foot-dragging with regard to broadening the Lublin regime, the Soviet government agreed to sponsor negotiations in June in Moscow between Mikołajczyk and his companions from London and their clients in the Provisional

¹⁹⁷ Polonsky and Drukier, 391, 395.

¹⁹⁸ For over a month the Soviets refused to confirm that they had taken these 16 Polish political leaders hostage. Polonsky, 42. It also appears that this action was not coordinated between the Provisional Government and the NKVD in Poland, but rather represented a Soviet *fait accompli*. Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 187.

Government.¹⁹⁹ During these negotiations, held concurrently with a Soviet show trial of the sixteen underground leaders captured in March, Mikołajczyk finally secured a place for himself and three other exiled politicians who had broken with the London government in the preceding months.

Mikołajczyk and his compatriots had to pay a high price to gain admission into what was to become the Western-recognized Provisional Government of National Unity (Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej, TRJN). The TRJN was announced on 5 July, the same day the verdicts against the sixteen were pronounced (the majority of whom received long sentences in Soviet prisons). This was an obvious Soviet effort to create a chasm between the returning Poles and the Polish people. Furthermore, the four positions purchased (out of seventeen ministerial folios, with the remaining fourteen, including the key National Defense and Justice Ministries, going to the PPR and their allies) very much limited any impact that the returning politicians could have on government policy.²⁰⁰ In return, however, Mikołajczyk gained the opportunity to put to the test his belief that it was only within Poland, and not from the outside, that it would be possible to turn the Yalta accords to the advantage of the Polish people.

During all of these diplomatic disputes the Polish Communists had benefited greatly from Soviet diplomatic skill and the West's relative lack of concern about the fate of Poland. The June agreement and the formation of the Provisional Government of National Unity (TRJN) in Moscow, while they did grant the PPR and its allies the "commanding heights" of the country's political life, still left the new regime vulnerable at the local

¹⁹⁹ Lundestad, 199-202.

²⁰⁰ Kersten, *Establishment*, 153-156.

level. This was especially the case in Wielkopolska, where the cumulative failures of the new order gave Mikołajczyk and his supporters in Wielkopolska the possibility of overturning the political status quo in the region.

The Provisional Government's failures were grave and persistent at both local and national levels. The ongoing struggle with the underground was only the most severe of many dangerous challenges to the new government's political monopoly. The PPR's dabbling in social radicalism in its land reform, its ongoing problems with its coalition partners, its efforts to popularize the Polish-Soviet alliance, and its failure to restore public order had further exacerbated an already tremendously difficult political and economic situation. In land reform in Wielkopolska, the Party managed to gain some initial support from the most poor and dispossessed elements of the population through distributing German property,²⁰¹ but only at the price of neglecting many of the peasants with middle-sized holdings.²⁰²

Politically, even before the October turn, the PPR's "allies", the PPS and SL, had begun to demonstrate disturbing signs of independence which the PPR managed to curb only with great difficulty. The PPS proved the easier party for the PPR to manage in Wielkopolska, though less so at the national level. In Wielkopolska the PPS had an even

²⁰¹ AAN MAP 114: 53 in which the Provincial Governor opined that the agrarian reform, conducted under the auspices of the PPR-sponsored ZSCh (Związek Samopomoc Chłopski, Peasant Self-help Union), "was a real counter-weight to the local reactionary SL."

²⁰² "86. 1945 kwiecień 19, Śrem-Sprawozdanie Polskiej Partii Robotniczej z wprowadzenia w życie dekretu o reformie rolnej w powiecie," and "91. 1945 maj 9, Rawicz-Sprawozdanie pełnomocnika rządu dla reformy rolnej na powiat rawicki," in Nawrocki and Bielecki, 132 and 137, which reveal how in both counties land reform overwhelmingly favored the landless agricultural workers and small holders.

narrower base than the PPR, since the radicalization and career possibilities that played a significant role in expanding the PPR's membership did not lead many to join the PPR's "rival." The Governor of Poznań, responding to local PPS criticisms at their Party's limited representation in local government, claimed that there was a "popular perception" that belonging to the PPS did not cut off openings to London, while "PPR membership is a call to the barricades,"²⁰³ i.e., the PPR leadership regarded those who joined the PPS as trying to retain some formal identification with Poland's pre-war political system. To the PPR's leadership this implied that such persons were not completely committed to the new regime, and hence not suitable for appointment to important administrative posts.

These "sectarian" tendencies of the local PPR, which led its leadership to monopolize government positions and not to grant the local (and admittedly weak) PPS a significant share in local government, meant that the many careerists who flooded the political parties in search of jobs concluded that patronage lay with the PPR and not the PPS. The relative weakness of the PPS, indeed of all "workers' politics" in agrarian Wielkopolska, ensured that, locally at least, there would be little open conflict between the two workers' parties.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ AAN MAP 114: 52-54.

²⁰⁴ While it was only in the later period of this work (late 1946) that the PPS would begin to take a more critical stance toward the PPR in Wielkopolska, in the rest of Poland relations between the two parties were more strained. Early on the PPS was riven with factions, from those who were wholehearted supporters of the new order and believed that cooperation with the PPR was absolutely necessary, to others who sought a middle way between the PPR and their opponents, and yet others, especially those associated with the pre-war PPS, who sought complete independence for their party. The PPR would remain wary of these divisions, and of the PPS as a whole, up until their takeover of the PPS in 1948. During the immediate postwar period the PPR managed the PPS with a judicious combination of division of spoils, plants within the party, and their hold over the not fully independent leadership of the PPS.

The PPR's ongoing efforts to bring the burgeoning peasant movement to heel resulted initially (in late 1944 and early 1945) in the crippling of the SL as an active force in the countryside, because the only way the PPR could save politics in the village (for itself) was to destroy them; to regain control of the Peasant's Party it had begun to expel or unseat much of its nominally independent leadership. This operation began soon after the SL's leadership began to move toward greater independence from the PPR-dominated Provisional Government's line and accept members from the pro-Mikołajczyk SL-ROCh (Stronnictwo Ludowe "Ruch Oporu Chłopów." Peasant Party "Resistance movement of the Peasants").²⁰⁵

In eastern Poland the SL's more careful approach to land reform and the push by SL officials for elections to the national councils led the PPR to remove independent SL activists from PKWN leadership positions in November 1944. In the same month, pursuing a policy of PPR Politbureau-mandated *faits accomplis* within the ostensibly independent SL, pro-PPR elements within the SL Presidium purged the movement's leadership to more closely reflect the regime's agenda within the SL.²⁰⁶

These moves did little to address the underlying problem that the SL represented to the PPR: how to operate a peasant front organization that was ostensibly the successor of the independent SL movement and was open to popular political participation, but was in fact dominated by PPR plants throughout its upper leadership and wedded to the PPR's programs, which did not enjoy popular support. Communist agrarian politics in Poland in the immediate postwar period did not successfully answer this question. The PPR's

²⁰⁵ Łach, 48-50.

²⁰⁶ Polonsky and Drukier, 85-86.

leadership imitated Stalin in ultimately discounting the long-term importance of the Polish peasant movement, a conceit that would cost them a great deal when Mikołajczyk returned to Poland in July 1945.²⁰⁷

The ambiguity of the PPR's relationship to peasant politics created problems for the regime throughout the country, but especially in Wielkopolska. There the local SL was an amalgamation of PPR-controlled elements and the more powerful and well-organized pre-war SL activists, who regained the upper hand in local peasant politics. This part of the SL leadership, with the backing of the rank and file, renewed efforts to exert a more independent line even prior to the return of Mikołajczyk to the country.²⁰⁸

The alliance with the Soviet Union proved to be an especially heavy burden for the PPR both locally in Wielkopolska and nationally. Though it appears that the majority of the Poles of Wielkopolska had initially greeted the Red Army with enthusiasm,²⁰⁹ its

²⁰⁷ During a December meeting with the PPR leadership Stalin opined that the SL "would never be a powerful party" and that "it would be bad if the PPR were overrun by peasants." The subject of the SL came up in two later meetings of the Politburo of the PPR Central Committee. Gomułka argued that the current weakness of the SL required that the PPR allot activists to it, while Berman, echoing Stalin, said that the SL could not be regarded as a permanent institution, and that it only "had a certain role to play, at least until full liberation." Polonsky and Drukier, 394-397, 397.

²⁰⁸ In a conference held just prior to Mikołajczyk's return, the Poznań branch of the SL called for a Polish peasant's movement "without PPR oversight." Lach, 55.

²⁰⁹ Eduard Erazmus, in his study of politics in postwar Wielkopolska, asserted that the "Red Army was especially popular in Wielkopolska," but that anti-Soviet propaganda was the greatest obstacle to the PPR." *Referendum i wybory w województwie Poznańskim w latach 1946-1947* (Poznań: Uniwersytet Im. A. Mickiewicza, 1970), 13. In a collection of documents about life in post-liberation Wielkopolska, as early as February and March there are reports which note the local population's gratitude to the Red Army but then discuss problems with particular Soviet military personnel's behavior towards the local population. (See "7. 1945 styczen 24, Śrem.—Protokół utworzenia Komitetu Narodowego w Śremie"; "33. 1945 luty 23, Poznań.—

depredations upon the civilian population soon made it an object of hatred and dread. The initial concerns over petty theft and unfriendly Red Army officers in official reports in February and March in Gniezno, Śrem, and Poznań gave way to reports of more widespread Soviet violence by May 1945.

In their June situation report to Poznań's governor, officials in Gniezno reported that in the past month Soviet soldiers had raped ten women: eight Poles and two Germans, among them a 68-year-old woman. In other incidents in Gniezno, five Soviet soldiers gang-raped one woman, while in another instance a militia man attempting to break up a rape was shot at by Soviet soldiers. In Poznań three civilians were murdered by Soviet soldiers, including the mother and father of a young girl raped by a Soviet soldier, while in Śrem the village administrator of Blazajewo was shot and killed by Red Army men.²¹⁰

Even membership in the PPR was no sure safeguard against the Red Army's soldiery. In Leszno county Soviet soldiers stopped a Polish Communist driving from a party meeting with his sister and daughter. The soldiers confiscated his car, raped his sister, and almost shot the party man, who "was a strong partisan of the Red Army and an ideal worker

Sprawozdanie delegata Ministerstwa Apropowizacji i Handlu na województwo poznańskie"; and "45. 1945 marzec 5, Gniezno.—Sprawozdanie sytuacyjne Powiatowej Komendy Milicji Obywatelskiej w Gnieźnie za miesiąc luty," in Nawrocki and Bielecki, 23, 43, 54.) The tensions in the official historiography, which maintains the popularity of the Red Army as liberators, but acknowledges early problems with predatory Soviet soldiers, combined with my own archival research, seems to indicate that there was an initial honeymoon period with the Red Army followed by a rapidly growing disenchantment with the confiscations, thefts, assaults, and rapes which became a monotonous and deadly staple of the Red Army's presence in Wielkopolska and the ZO throughout the initial postwar period from 1945-1947.

²¹⁰ WAPP UWP 79: 8-9, 73-74, 85. Most other situation reports for the counties of Poznań province contain similar stories of Soviet misconduct.

from the first moment of the Soviet Army's appearance." Such incidents were "the order of the day throughout the entire county, so that in Leszno women in the villages didn't dare to sleep in their homes and were at risk working in the fields during the day."²¹¹

In addition to unofficial Soviet actions, official Red Army plundering, especially of "German property" (a significant amount of which had belonged to Poles prior to the war and had been confiscated by the Nazi occupiers from its Polish owners) and local agricultural produce and animals, was also causing a great deal of popular concern and undermining the Party's credibility.²¹² Furthermore, both to supply the Red Army while it carried on operations in Poland and to provide food for the more devastated regions of the rest of the country, the government also exacted a great deal of produce from Wielkopolska, which made the regime even more unpopular among the local peasant population.²¹³

In addition to these problems, PPR leaders began to criticize Poznań's PPR for admissions policies that they believed had "left the door of Party membership open too wide."²¹⁴ From January to May the PPR experienced spectacular growth in Wielkopolska.

²¹¹ WAPP KW PPR 71: 72-73. Even the County's Second Secretary of the PPR had been robbed by a patrol, and the Soviet confiscation of all jeeps and cars was hindering party work. "All efforts to intervene with the Red Army on the issue of rape had been without effect."

²¹² In a May report, officials in Gostyn county noted that a new Red Army unit was behaving better toward the civilian population. In a report filed in the same month in Żnin county, however, there is mention of popular disquiet in both the county's towns and villages over a great eastward Soviet cattle drive of confiscated animals which damaged local crops. WAPP UWP 79: 16, 109.

²¹³ Choniawko, 55.

²¹⁴ WAPP KW PPR 50: 20.

from 1,500 members in January to over 60,000 by May, in an area where both before and during the war the PPR had shown little activity.²¹⁵ For a party whose self-conception was “based upon the ideology of Marx and Lenin in its work,” and which required that its members not only paid dues but “were active in daily party work,” this massive influx of what the higher Party leadership considered to be “proletarianized petty bourgeois elements” created significant difficulties.²¹⁶ In particular, the central leadership believed that the new cadres were especially vulnerable to “sectarianism” and monopolistic tendencies which complicated the relations between the local PPR and its allied parties.²¹⁷

Finally, the Party found itself unable to gain control of its own instruments of public order and repression, the UB and the MO. The Provisional Government’s commitment to a policy of repression, the power of Soviet advisors within the UB, and the government’s dependence on the UB all threatened, in Gomułka’s words, to “create a state within a state” and “turn the PPR into the lowest NKVD front organization”²¹⁸ by transforming the UB into the *de facto* ruling organization in Poland.

In Wielkopolska, where the weak AK initially presented the regime with few problems, the highhandedness and rapacity of the security organs was a significant ongoing problem for the Provisional Government. From May to June 1945 situation reports from 10 of 19 counties filing reports reveal major problems with the UB. Only Jarocin county reported that local society regarded the UB “positively.” Officials in all the other counties

²¹⁵ Choniawko, 31.

²¹⁶ WAPP KW PPR 50: 21.

²¹⁷ WAPP KW PPR 6: 11.

²¹⁸ Polonsky and Drukier, 428.

repeatedly cited the UB's "too ruthless attitudes, the injury that its requisitions did to efforts at economic recovery, and the youthfulness of UB functionaries," who, according to the Poznań county report, "were not known for their competence."²¹⁹ In Żnin county the situation had deteriorated so badly, including incidents of UB beatings, that the local national council sent a petition to the Provincial UB in Poznań requesting that the UB in this county be reorganized.²²⁰

The deepening crisis brought about by the Provisional Government's failing efforts at repression occurred at precisely the time when its administrative problems multiplied—as more and more territory was turned over to it to govern in areas where it possessed few reliable cadres. These problems, and the prospect of the imminent return of Mikołajczyk to the country, convinced the leadership of the Party by May to recognize that they were in the midst of a crisis that called for a change of course and a consolidation of ranks. The May Plenum of the PPR sought to return to the slogan of the popular front and emphasized collaboration with society rather than repression against it.

Władysław Gomułka, the Party's General Secretary, dominated the Plenum and proposed new strategies to solve the Party's internal problems and face the challenges undermining the new regime's rule in Poland. Gomułka recognized the unpopularity of the Party's rule, and some of the reasons for it. In his opening address he specifically cited the ongoing problems of Poland's eastern frontiers, the excesses of the security services, and the abiding anti-Soviet feeling of the Polish population (which he attributed primarily to

²¹⁹ WAPP UWP 79: 15, 14, 42, 46, 49, 74-75, 80.

²²⁰ WAPP UWP 79: 105.

Tsarist imperialism and the “mistakes” of Soviet security organs, especially during the period of Nazi-Soviet cooperation).²²¹

Gomułka’s perception of the precariousness of the regime’s hold on Poland in no way hindered his ruthless determination to bring the benefits of a Communist revolution to his people. During the June negotiations with Mikołajczyk that created the TRJN, Gomułka informed Mikołajczyk of his status in words that also guided his actions toward the Polish nation as a whole: “Do not be offended, gentlemen, that we only offer you space in the government on our terms. Because we are master of the house. We will never hand over power once it has been taken. You can still shout that the blood of the Polish nation is being spilled, that the NKVD rules Poland, but this will not divert us from our path.”²²²

Internally, the Party leadership agreed with Gomułka that the PPR was plagued by sectarianism, an unwillingness to work with the allied SL or PPS parties, and by dangerous political sloganeering, including agitation for Poland to join the Soviet Union as the Seventeenth Republic and for *kolkhozes* (collective farms).²²³ Externally, many speakers asserted that the Party was confronting a real crisis in its rule, and referred again and again to problems with the UB and NKVD, the depredations of the Red Army, Soviet military interference in local politics, and the crisis brought about by the Soviet refusal to allow Polish administrators into the port of Szczecin.²²⁴ The concerns about Szczecin in

²²¹ Aleksander Kochanski, ed., *Dokumenty do dziejów PRL: protokół obrad KC PPR, maj 1945* (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1992), 13.

²²² Kersten, *Establishment*, 118

²²³ “Extracts of the Minutes of the Plenum of the PPR Central Committee, 20-21 May 1945” in Polonsky and Drukier, 426-428.

²²⁴ The Soviets also forbade the Polish government to secure the territory surrounding Szczecin, which was theoretically to become part of Poland. This began to raise

particular echoed Gomułka's own earlier claim that, along with the agricultural reform, "the expansion of [Poland's] land to the west binds the people to the system."²²⁵

The question of whether the problems facing the Party constituted a crisis was an issue of real dispute at the Plenum. Jakub Berman claimed (seconded by Bolesław Bierut in his personal notes) that "there is no crisis, only great difficulties," since the Bolsheviks had faced even worse opposition in establishing their rule. He did criticize the "Trotskyite" belief that the Red Army could solve all of Poland's problems, and also supported the Plenum's nationalist tenor by claiming that the "legend of the Oder and the Neisse will live on for hundreds of years." For him, the central question was not whether or not the regime was in the midst of a political crisis, but rather the need for "the education of the Party's cadres and the rebuilding of ideological work."²²⁶

While there was general agreement at the Plenum on the need for a "sharp struggle with sectarianism," the question of the Party's relation with the society (was there a crisis?) did not produce consensus. In Gomułka's summing up he specifically rejected Berman's claim that the regime was not in crisis by pointing out that the base of support for the "reaction" was widening and deepening, while the lack of elections made it difficult to tell if support for the regime was increasing. He also claimed that Berman's comparison

concerns among Polish Communists in other "exposed" regions, particularly Wrocław, that the Soviets would not support Poland's takeover of the westernmost projected reaches of its frontiers on the Oder and Western Neisse. Osekowski, 42; Polonsky and Drukier, 430.

²²⁵ Kochanski, 11.

²²⁶ Kochanski, 26-27, 57. Gomułka's disagreement with Berman and Bierut foreshadowed their future conflicts over Polish affairs that would lead to Gomułka's persecution by the Party in the late 1940s for nationalist deviations.

of the current situation in Poland with revolutionary Russia was false, since in Poland “we are not establishing a Soviet system... [but rather] a democratic coalition.” At issue was just how far the PPR needed to reverse the course it had taken since the October turn. Gomułka, who supported a real, if limited, accommodation with Polish society,²²⁷ carried the day, and in the following months the PPR sought to widen its base of support in society, cooperate with its allied parties, and try to surmount society’s distrust of the regime.²²⁸

During the May Plenum, and in line with the Party’s “struggle with sectarianism” and its return to the strategy of a broad national front, the Party emphasized the importance of the Recovered Territories as a means of cementing the alliance between its allied parties. In May and June (prior to the Moscow agreement and the creation of the TRJN) the PPR took a number of steps to realize its program of rapidly polonizing the ZO. The Party took the lead in organizing “Settlement Committees” throughout Poland composed of the major political parties and social organizations, including the Peasant Self-help Union (Związek Samopomoc Chłopskiej, ZSCh), trade unions, and the PZZ.²²⁹ Among the Party’s resolutions from the Plenum was the claim that **“the extension of Poland’s borders to the Oder and the Neisse will enable the Polish nation to overcome economic difficulties and quickly rebuild the country and change Poland’s economic structure.”**²³⁰ (emphasis in the original)

²²⁷ Kersten, *Establishment*, 118.

²²⁸ Andrzej Werblan, *Władysław Gomułka: Sekretarz Generalny PPR* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1988), 259-261.

²²⁹ Kołomejczyk, 106.

²³⁰ “Nr 40. 1945, maj 26, Warszawa.—Uchwała plenum KC PPR określająca bieżące polityczne partii. Uchwała w sprawach politycznych,” in Polubiec, , 299.

This is very much in line with Lange's wartime writings on the *social* importance of the Recovered Territories for Poland's internal political transformation. The shift away from the eastern borderlands of Poland, from a social structure composed of peasants and large estates under the control of the Polish nobility to western areas with heavy industry and (after the expropriation of the German population) land that could create independent peasant farms led Lange, and this later Plenum, to claim that the accession of the Recovered Territories would produce a Polish society more progressive, i.e., more open to the Communist Party's leadership, and less inherently anti-Soviet.

Within two days of the Plenum, Edward Ochab, who was both a member of the PPR's Central Committee and the Minister of Public Administration (then in charge of overseeing the settlement of the ZO), sought to further the Recovered Territories' integration with the rest of Poland. He proposed to the Council of Ministers a plan for the Polish Army to immediately expel Germans living along Poland's western frontier (with the exception of certain German professionals and skilled workers), and to replace them with Poles in a full-scale effort to populate the region with 3.5 million Polish settlers by 1 August 1945 (2.5 million of whom were to come from other regions of Poland, while the remaining balance would include *repatrianci* and Poles returning from forced labor in Germany).²³¹ The Council of Ministers agreed and fully committed the government to implementing a program of mass repatriation and resettlement of the Recovered Territories.

The PPR Central Committee followed up these party and government resolutions with a further circular to its various provincial, town and county committees instructing them on

²³¹ Kołomejczyk, 100.

the necessity of a massive resettlement of the Western Territories. To implement the PPR's and the Government's ambitious goals, the Central Committee gave detailed instructions on the organization of the settlement, and the numbers of PPR members and of each provinces' inhabitants that it expected to participate in the settlement effort.²³² Among government bodies which cooperated with (and were often staffed by) the PPR, the Ministry of Propaganda's instructions concerning means by which propagandists were to encourage settlement in the ZO are among the most revealing. These instructions demonstrate the degree to which the PPR, though "secretly" fighting for socialism.²³³ was willing to condone propaganda appealing to enlightened self-interest in a good cause.

In its instructions to propagandists, the Ministry of Propaganda detailed the Party/Government line on the need for swift polonization of the Western Territories, and some of the reasons why it was such a central issue for the government. In its "Theses on the question of resettlement" the Propaganda Ministry informed its operatives that the first reason for such an action was the degree to which the colonization of the ZO would complement the recently completed land reform by "eliminating existing land-hunger, and by distributing to every landless and land poor (peasant) a sufficient farm."²³⁴ It also pointed out that the current campaign to settle several million Poles in the Recovered Territories was linked to the upcoming peace conference, in which Poland's prestige and political position could suffer if the area was left unsettled.

²³² AAN KC PPR 295/VII-7: 27-28.

²³³ Polonsky and Drukier, 436.

²³⁴ AAN MIiP 777: 100.

The Ministry provided an illustration of the kinds of propaganda which should be undertaken to mobilize society. A sample poster it sent to local propaganda offices titled “We are going west for work and bread” emphasized the planned nature of settlement and the kinds of aid that settlers could expect from local government organizations.²³⁵ This was very much in accord with the “Theses” warning that propagandists refrain from “abstract appeals” to “honor, social obligation” or a “historical mission” and instead conduct this campaign with “concrete slogans” such as “7.5 hectares including property titles, already built-up [farms], with seed grain and tools, and fertile land,” and “free transport for settlers, and government help with livestock and tax relief in the first period of farming.”²³⁶

This emphasis on “concrete slogans” (and economic advantages) for the Polish people in the Recovered Territories represented some of the most enticing carrots the new regime had to offer its citizen-subjects. As the PPR sought to implement the resolutions of the May Plenum, which called for the renewal of a national front strategy, it appears that the leadership was very much aware of the concrete political benefits it could reap in the Recovered Territories. The patronage that the Party and state’s control of the massive redistribution of German property promised it appealed to the PPR as much as it hoped that economic advantage would entice the Polish people as a whole to cooperate with (or at least acquiesce to) its control of both the Recovered Territories and of Poland.

Finally, the province of Poznań was also on the verge of receiving a significant boon from the central government in the form of the annexation of thirteen former German

²³⁵ AAN MIiP 777: 54-55.

²³⁶ AAN MIiP 777: 102.

counties to the east which had previously been administered from Lower Silesia and Polish Pomorze. This extension of Poznań's provincial boundaries would provide the local PPR a field of activity in which its close ties with local government and the deep dependency of the new society springing up there would immensely strengthen the Party's political clout throughout the region. For all its efforts to seize the political initiative and engage in internal reform, the reactivation of a fully independent Peasant's Party led by Mikołajczyk would break the PPR's local political monopoly. Indeed, for the Party and local society the coming year would be a time of almost unbearable tension and upheaval, as the clash between the PPR and the PSL²³⁷ and the first waves of Polish settlement in the west worked tremendous social and political changes throughout Wielkopolska.

A CHOSEN PEOPLE: WIELKOPOLSKA'S SOCIETY ON THE EVE OF A NATIONALIST
REVOLUTION, MARCH-JULY 1945

As a people greatly humbled, the most downtrodden, and the most harmed, we are undoubtedly called by Providence to greatness... We have to choose: to go with Christ and win our rightful future, or build without Christ and meet a tragic fate, such as Jerusalem met, because it did not acknowledge the time of its Visitation.

—Cardinal Hlond in Poznań, 29 July 1945²³⁸

²³⁷ Within two months of his return to Poland, by August 1945 Mikołajczyk would lead the majority of peasant political leaders out of the PPR-controlled SL into a new party, the PSL (Polskie Stronictwo Ludowe, the *Polish Peasant's Party*), a move which the PPR would allow in order to retain the barest margin of influence in peasant politics.

²³⁸ "O Jutro Polski," *Głos Katolicki*, 29 July 1945, Nr. 14, 1.

In Wielkopolska, provincial administrative authorities, the PZZ, much of local society, and (to a lesser extent) the PPR had already begun to colonize the Recovered Territories even prior to the May Plenum and the Party's call for massive efforts to settle the ZO. Throughout the spring and early summer of 1945, Poznań had taken a leading role in sending settlers to the territories to the west, sending more people to colonize the Recovered Territories in the first four months than any other province in Poland.²³⁹

The new provincial government attempted to place itself at the forefront of the settlement movement in Wielkopolska, and to extend its influence into the Recovered Territories. On 26 March 1945, at the first meeting of the Provincial National Council (Wojewódzka Rada Narodowa, WRN),²⁴⁰ a consultative body, Dr. Feliks Widy-Wirski²⁴¹ (then Vice-Governor and soon to be Provincial Governor of Wielkopolska) opened the meeting with a speech in which, after praising the new democratic order in Poland, he went on to

²³⁹ Dulczewski and Kwilecki, 45.

²⁴⁰ The PPR had been experimenting with national councils (rady narodowe) even during the occupation. As part of its efforts to institutionalize "people's power", the PKWN created the local, provincial and country-wide national councils in September 1944, intending to invest them with extensive political power. Very quickly, however, the regime discovered the difficulties of maintaining full control over the councils and began to limit their competence. Eventually they became primarily arenas of political discussion with little real power, most of which fell to the new, Warsaw-dominated government administration. Polonsky and Drukier, 78-79.

²⁴¹ Dr. Feliks Widy-Wirsky, a member of a pro-Sanacja academic organization before the war, threw in his lot with the new regime in 1944, and in July cooperated in the creation of a pro-regime faction within a revived Workers' Party (Stronnictwo Pracy, SP), a pre-war Christian-democratic political party that was given new life by the return from London exile of its head, Karl Popiel. Widy-Wirsky helped lead a group within the SP whose goal was to control the party and leave Popiel as little more than a figurehead. In addition to these duties, Widy-Wirsky was appointed the Provincial Governor of Poznań, where he played a leading role in attacking the PSL in Poznań, one of its main areas of support. Kersten, *Establishment*, 201-203.

discuss the “very important matter” of the Recovered Territories. In this speech he focused on the significance of the recovery of the Oder basin (including Szczecin), which he argued was an “organic part of Wielkopolska.” The crucial economic importance of the Recovered Territories required “that the Polish people cannot allow any kind of soft treatment of the Germans whatsoever” and that these areas be quickly settled.²⁴²

When the Council of Ministers divided the Recovered Territories into four regions, the Provisional Government did not assign initially Poznań an extensive administrative role in the region. Most of the territories west of Poznań were allotted to the newly created provinces of Lower Silesia and Western Pomorze.²⁴³ However, officials in these sprawling, poorly delineated provinces experienced great difficulties in fully organizing the territories of East Brandenburg, a region lying in the extreme northwest and southwest reaches of their respective provinces. The resulting administrative chaos and neglect²⁴⁴ in this area created a vacuum which Poznań’s provincial administration moved in to fill.

The wave of settlement that swept Wielkopolska westward beginning in March greatly facilitated the extension of Poznań’s influence. The new settlers often maintained contacts with their former county and provincial officials²⁴⁵ and received ongoing support from various local organizations, especially the PZZ and the PPR. This allowed Governor Widy-Wirski to play a major informal role early on in the settlement.²⁴⁶ Cooperating with

²⁴² “74. 1945 kwiecień 9, Poznań.—Sprawozdanie z konstytucyjnego posiedzenia Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej w Poznaniu,” in Nawrocki and Bielecki, . 108-109.

²⁴³ Dulczewski and Kwilecki, 86.

²⁴⁴ Rybicki, *Początki władzy ludowej*, 79.

²⁴⁵ Szczegóło, *Przeobrażenia*, 50-52.

²⁴⁶ Szczegóło, *Przeobrażenia*, 49-50.

the PPR, in March and April 1945 Governor Widy-Wirsky sent administrative teams westward that organized eight of the fourteen counties which the Provisional Government would eventually transfer to Widy-Wirsky's jurisdiction as its Plenipotentiary.²⁴⁷

The proverbial efficiency of Wielkopolska society appeared to be borne out by the rapidity with which the region mobilized its resources to create a Polish presence in the western borderlands, and by the efforts of Widy-Wirsky and the PPR to turn the skeleton administration begun in the spring of 1945 into effective Polish rule of the region. The new Polish administration in Ziemia Lubuska, with ongoing support from Wielkopolska, sought to overcome the many challenges it faced in reviving the local economy and to prepare for the millions of Polish colonists that were expected soon to begin arriving from exile in the west and "repatriation" in the east.

The PPR's role in the settlement was significant, but far from the "leading role" claimed for it by later Polish historians.²⁴⁸ The PPR did encourage settlement in the ZO, and helped to organize over 28,000 settlers from Wielkopolska to go westward in a period of four months²⁴⁹ The local branch of the Party made its most important effort to extend its

²⁴⁷ Dulczewski and Kwilecki, 87-90.

²⁴⁸ Choniawko maintains that "the PPR enjoyed authority [in Wielkopolska] because of its role in settlement [in the Recovered Territories]." Choniawko, 49-50. Szczegóła and Kołomejczyk also discuss the importance of the Poznań PPR in sending operation groups to various towns in the Recovered Territories. Szczegóła notes that the PPR "emphasized work in the Western Territories," yet it was the PZZ which was the main organizer of mass settlement in the Recovered Territories. *Przeobrażenia*, 38-39.

²⁴⁹ Choniawko, 49.

influence by thoroughly monopolizing the new administration and especially security,²⁵⁰ considering the creation of the MO and the UB to be a Party matter.²⁵¹

Yet while the Party did much to ensure that its cadres dominated the administrative and security apparatus, it played only a secondary role in sponsoring mass Polish settlement. This early pattern—the local PPR monopolizing the administration in the Recovered Territories, yet ignoring the popular efforts toward settlement—was part of a larger pattern in which the local Communists tended to strengthen their own organization's control of the “commanding heights” of administration and security at the expense of other parties in the ruling bloc.²⁵² This political discrimination in Wielkopolska came under heavy criticism at the Party's May Plenum. Within a month Wielkopolska's PPR underwent a massive purge of its membership which would cut the Party's size by over half.²⁵³

Roman Zambrowski, a member of the PPR's Central Committee, traveled to Wielkopolska and led the local discussion of the May Plenum and its implementation. He focused particularly on how the Poznań Party was guilty of “significant instances of sectarianism.” Openly contemptuous of the “ardently revolutionary” and recently proletarianized local petty-bourgeois, Zambrowski argued that they, along with old KPP

²⁵⁰ Erazmus, 18.

²⁵¹ Szczegółą. *Przeobrażenia*, 45.

²⁵² Erazmus, 17

²⁵³ Choniawko, 31.

members, were damaging the Party when they “struggled for Poland, but had Poland’s sovietization on their minds.”²⁵⁴

As evidence of sectarianism he pointed to a recent speech by the Mayor of Poznań, who spoke of “the working class holding power, led by the PPR,” while other comrades spoke of the party growing because it was “the party of Soviet democracy.”²⁵⁵ Other speakers pointed to the overwhelming numbers of PPR members in the Provincial *Rada Narodowa* (National Council) (111 out of 190 members) and the unwillingness of local party members to help organize local branches of the (Lublin) PPS and SL.²⁵⁶

Zambrowski claimed that such policies did not even approximate the line of the old KPP, which spoke of the alliance of the workers, peasants, and working intelligentsia. As it was, locally the PPR did not take into account the Party’s line or the current situation in Poland, in which the Party was creating a “democratic” regime that required the cooperation of the allied parties. In his final recommendations, Zambrowski, echoing the Central Committee, charged the local Party to take a leading role in waging a mass struggle with reaction and an internal struggle with sectarianism, and in organizing all of local society to resettle the Western Territories. He claimed it was “necessary to throw all our strength into this effort [to settle the ZO] to carry out this action to the finish.” If 2.5 million Poles were not settled in the Recovered Territories, Poles would be unable to bring in the harvest in this area, and would be forced “to leave Germans on this terrain and compromise our position in world public opinion.”²⁵⁷ At the national level the PPR

²⁵⁴ WAPP KW PPR 50: 20.

²⁵⁵ WAPP KW PPR 50: 20

²⁵⁶ WAPP KW PPR 6: 10b, 11.

²⁵⁷ WAPP KW PPR 50: 22.

saw the settlement and ethnic cleansing of the Recovered Territories as an important means to secure the popular acceptance in Poland that had so far eluded it, and commanded the local Party to pursue such a policy.

Part of the PPR's efforts to support the redrawing of Poland's frontiers included assisting the *repatrianci* who had begun arriving in Wielkopolska as early as the spring of 1945.²⁵⁸ The PPR would help to settle these Poles in former German estates and farms in the old province of Poznań, as well as in the Recovered Territories. Even though the *repatrianci* were in a worse material state than any other settlers, the PPR, in marked contrast to the local population and many local officials (and its own later policies), at this time regarded them as "toughened, standing on a high moral plane, a creative and hard-working element."²⁵⁹ The Party's own proposals for settlement included giving the *repatrianci* first choice of farms and land from re-parceled German estates. In accord with central government policy, "strong families" were to be settled as pioneers in Ziemia Lubuska, while "weak and middle families"²⁶⁰ would be settled in the central counties of Poznań province, which Party officials believed contained over 5,000 farms which could be used for this purpose. The proposals went on to advocate turning over any existing surplus of

²⁵⁸ Henryk Słabek, *Polityka agrarna PPR: geneza i realizacja* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1967), 326.

²⁵⁹ WAPP KW PPR 145: 16. Later, upon further acquaintance with the *repatrianci*, the Party in Wielkopolska would revise this early positive assessment.

²⁶⁰ WAPP KW PPR 145: 16-17. Later in the documents "weak families" are defined as "women with children" who were not capable of engaging in pioneer work in the Recovered Territories, though even here it was noted that such "women *repatrianci* are hardened, and do not fear work, and are full of zeal."

textiles, footwear, furniture, agricultural implements, and especially former German livestock to the *repatrianci*.²⁶¹

The Party recognized that these guidelines would be controversial in light of local hostility to the *repatrianci*. In particular, settling *repatrianci* in Wielkopolska's central counties, on former German farms that the local Polish population coveted, would entail conflict with the district and commune land offices. Party officials were very critical of these offices, calling them a "state within the state," whose interference could only be solved through the intervention of higher authorities.²⁶² This conflict became especially important in the summer and fall, when the politics of land reform and land distribution were caught up in the larger political struggle between the PPR and its allies and Mikołajczyk's PSL.

While the PPR was caught up in redefining its relationship to Polish nationalism and moderating its social and political rhetoric (if not its actions), the PZZ took the lead²⁶³ in

²⁶¹ WAPP KW PPR 145: 17.

²⁶² WAPP KW PPR 145: 16.

²⁶³ There is a general historiographical consensus on the importance of the PZZ, especially in the early, most difficult months of settlement. Dulczewski and Kwilecki, while claiming that the PPR played the key role in Wielkopolska's settlement of the ZO, discuss the importance of the PZZ as well. Dulczewski and Kwilecki, 183-184. Writing later, Rybicki claims that "The Polish Western Union was one of the most meritorious social organizations in all of the territories returned to Poland and next in establishing on them the Polish reason of state in the years 1944-1950." Hieronim Rybicki, *Powstanie i działalność władzy ludowej na zachodnich i północnych obszarach Polski, 1945-1945* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1976), 59. Musielak maintains that "Undoubtedly, the Poznań circle of the PZZ undertook the earliest and greatest scale of settlement...[and that t]his action gained the approval of the authorities, who, in practice, allowed the Poznań circle to carry it out in Wielkopolska." Musielak, 185.

mobilizing local society in Wielkopolska to undertake the first efforts to settle, degermanize and polonize midwestern Poland and all of the Recovered Territories as well.²⁶⁴ The PZZ, due to its pre-war affiliation with the National Democrats, had deep roots in Wielkopolska. This, combined with its prudent willingness to cooperate with the PPR,²⁶⁵ allowed it to very quickly reestablish its organization throughout the province. The Union had already taken the lead in helping hundreds of thousands of Poles who had been expelled from Wielkopolska to return to their homes in the months following the liberation of western Poland.²⁶⁶ In the months that followed liberation, the PZZ would play a crucial role in the earliest Polish settlement of the Recovered Territories.

The PZZ's expansion was furthered by its leadership's determination to become a mass organization.²⁶⁷ In the period following its reactivation in Lublin in December 1944, one of the PZZ's main slogans became "Everyone join the ranks of the PZZ. Everyone to the front and the struggle with the eternal enemy of the Slavs." This goal of an open, ostensibly nonpartisan organization allowed the PZZ to expand and engage in vigorous

²⁶⁴ The PZZ in Poznań would carry on its activities in all of the Recovered Territories until 15 September, at which time it would focus its efforts in only Poznań and Ziemia Lubuska. WAPP PZZ 586: 136.

²⁶⁵ WAPP KW PPR 6: 30, which refers to "good cooperation" between the PPR and the PZZ in efforts to settle the Recovered Territories.

²⁶⁶ Osękowski, 52. There is a dispute as to how many Poles exiled to the Generalgouvernement the PZZ helped return to their homes. Osękowski cites estimates ranging from "around 300,000" to claims that the number was 540,000 persons. Osękowski claims that precise numbers are difficult to establish due to the incompleteness of the archival data. However, the documents of the Lublin branch of the PZZ support the claim that the PZZ helped over 300,000 persons from western Poland return to their homes. WAPP PZZ 579: 234.

²⁶⁷ WAPP PZZ 589: 2-4.

activities both in its old strongholds in western Poland and in regions where it had been largely absent during the pre-war period.²⁶⁸

The PZZ's first efforts to formulate its program within the context of life in Communist-dominated Poland were quite tentative and conservative. This process occurred in stages, and began with the regime's official recognition of the Union in Lublin in December 1944. Part of the price of this recognition had been that the old leadership of the Union accept the appointment of Jozef Dubiel, Jan Hanemann and several other members of the parties of the bloc to the highest leadership positions within the PZZ. However, in keeping with the new regime's emphasis upon the settlement of the Recovered Territories and the PPR's "struggle with sectarianism," which emphasized the necessity of cooperating with all "patriotic elements," the regime's initial approach to the PZZ's internal organization and activities was quite solicitous. In May 1945, at a meeting of the Governing Board of the PZZ, Jozef Dubiel (Secretary General of the PZZ and the PPR's watchdog) informed the Board of an unofficial conversation with the Premier, Osóbka-Morawski, who indicated that the regime was prepared to grant the PZZ access to government funds and resources to carry out its work.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ This included such central Polish provinces as Kielce, where the local PZZ grew to over 2,600 members in the first four months of its existence (from late January to May 1945) in this province. There the PZZ engaged in propaganda to encourage settlement in the Recovered Territories; from 5 May to 31 October over 170,000 persons, including 3,128 members of the Kiel PZZ, would travel west. WAPP PZZ 586: 137. In Lublin the PZZ was even more successful. By October 1945 it had 23,508 members, and it helped to settle over 20,190 persons in the Recovered Territories from January to December 1945. WAPP PZZ 579: 194, 234.

²⁶⁹ WAPP PZZ 589: 4.

This meeting resulted in the Union's first programmatic statement which demonstrated the PZZ's relative independence. In this document the PZZ formulated its goals and purposes in an exclusively nationalist, non-partisan fashion—which would stand in sharp contrast to the Union's later programmatic and ideological statements. The PZZ defined its main goal as “To establish Polishness in the West and on the shore [of the Baltic] forever.” To do this the Union foresaw the need to “create such a Polish wall in the Western Territories and Pomorze that the feet of conquerors will never touch Polish land. This must be stronger and surer than the Maginot line...a wall of the breasts of living people, in which each heart would be Polish.” Such a task was “the historic mission of the Polish Government...[but also] for it to succeed to the end it is necessary for all of Polish society to share in this work.”²⁷⁰

To that end, the Union volunteered its services to the government, offering to “awaken and organize society in the spirit of the necessity of this collective effort.” It offered to cooperate in the settlement of the Recovered Territories, arguing that within the framework of the PZZ it would be possible to gain the collaboration of all patriotic Poles.²⁷¹ More ominously for the future of the Union's independence, it promised to tighten the discipline of the various provinces within the PZZ and to modify its statutes in keeping “with new needs and questions” and to present these modifications to the government for approval.²⁷² Within five months Dubiel and his supporters within the Union ensured the fulfillment of these promises in accordance with the political needs of the PPR.

²⁷⁰ WAPP PZZ 589: 2.

²⁷¹ WAPP PZZ 589: 2, 4-5.

²⁷² WAPP PZZ 589: 2.

These first moves to change the direction of the PZZ did not initially impact the Union's popularity in Wielkopolska. In Poznań (which would eventually become the headquarters for the Union in all of Poland) during the spring and summer of 1945 the PZZ became a mass organization, present in 40 of the province's 43 counties and organized in 136 local circles with 23,000 members,²⁷³ many of whom were among the elite of local society.²⁷⁴ The Union engaged in a wide variety of activities to support degermanization within the pre-war boundaries of Wielkopolska²⁷⁵ and settlement in every region of the Recovered Territories.

Its most significant contribution was in facilitating the initial Polish settlement of the Western Territories in the months following the war. In late April, the Ministry of Public Administration commissioned the PZZ to play a national role in Polish settlement by developing a practical plan for colonizing the Recovered Territories. From 15 March until 1 December 1945 (when PUR took over the task of organizing settlement) the PZZ

²⁷³ WAPP PZZ 586: 130.

²⁷⁴ WAPP UWP 73: 110, 213. In Moline the President of the local circle of the PZZ, K. Szymański, was a pharmacist, while the vice-president, E. Zawadzki, was the Inspector of Schools. In the Trzemeszno circle of the PZZ the President, K. Nowaczyk, was the manager of a local school, and in Ostrów the PZZ leadership (like those in Moline and Trzemeszno) was "apolitical" and among the most highly educated members of local society.

²⁷⁵ In Wielkopolska the PZZ took the lead in organizing degermanization, which began within the first days of Poznań's liberation. "69. 1945 marzec 27. Poznań.— Sprawozdanie z działalności Wojewódzkiego Urzędu Informacji i Propagandy w Poznaniu za okres od 5 do 27 marca 1945 r.," in Nawrocki and Bielecki, 103.

settled over 94,000 Poles from Wielkopolska to the Recovered Territories, many of these members of the Union.²⁷⁶

The Union also undertook a great deal of propaganda activity in support of de-germanization and the internal Polish settlement of areas of mixed Polish-German settlement within the boundaries of the pre-war Republic. The weekly publication *Polska Zachodnia* (Western Poland), begun in August 1945, was among the highest-circulating weeklies in Wielkopolska²⁷⁷ and provided a forum for both the regime and officials of the

²⁷⁶ WAPP PZZ 586: 146. This raises a problem because Choniawko, who claims that the PPR “gained great authority” for its role in helping to settle the Recovered Territories, maintains that the PPR helped settle over 28,000 people in the west in 1945. Choniawko, 49-50. Yet, given that the PZZ was directly involved in settling all 94,000 Poles from Wielkopolska who went westwards, it appears that in assessing the role of the PPR Choniawko is including all settlement actions in which the PPR participated, regardless of whether the Party or the PZZ did most of the work in sending colonists westward.

Even allowing for Choniawko’s figure of 28,000 settled primarily by the PPR, and the fact that the PZZ documents were apparently claiming credit for those settlers whom were co-sponsored by the Union and the PPR, this would still translate into the PZZ having settled almost three times the number of Poles as the PPR. If by settling 28,000 the PPR “gained authority” in Wielkopolska for its role in polonizing the ZO, this alone would indicate that the PZZ also enjoyed real authority in the province for its much greater role in the settlement of the Recovered Territories. Musielak supports this when, while discussing the historiographical controversy in Poland regarding the PZZ’s role in settling the ZO, he claims that “...the Union was the leading settlement institution in the so-called pioneer period of the settlement of the western territories.” Musielak, 197.

²⁷⁷ *Polska Zachodnia* had a circulation of 10,000 copies per week, a figure surpassed only by the PPR’s *Wola Ludu* (Will of the People), published three times a week at 20,000 copies per run, and *Walka Ludu* (The People’s Struggle) with one run of 15,000 copies. *Polska Zachodnia*’s circulation was equaled by two other papers, *Polska Ludowa*, the PSL’s official paper, and *Głos Katolicki*, which the local branch of the Ministry of Propaganda designated “the organ of militant Catholicism.” These officials also regarded *Polska Zachodnia* as a “very uneven publication,” which contained both “interesting and truly worthwhile articles mixed in with articles of very low worth, either professionally or culturally.” WAPP WUIiP 34: 72-76.

Union to drum up support for Poland's westward expansion. The monthly publication of the PZZ's Instytut Zachodni (Western Institute) was the *Przegląd Zachodni* (Western Review), which, according to local officials at the Ministry of Information and Propaganda, took a "more scholarly approach to the problems of newly annexed western land, the past and present politics of Poland and the struggle of the Polish people and the Slavs with Germanism."²⁷⁸ Both publications propagated the Union's (and the regime's) extreme anti-German line.

In addition to its periodical publications, the PZZ conducted other propaganda throughout 1945, from radio programs on Sunday afternoon to publishing brochures, whose titles included "About Poland's new frontiers in the west" and "Grunwald."²⁷⁹ The Union also organized mass meetings and conferences, including a "Week of the Western Territories" in May, celebrations of the 535th anniversary of the battle of Grunwald in July, and

²⁷⁸ WAPP WUIiP 34: 77.

²⁷⁹ The Battle of Grunwald (A.D. 1410) was a battle between the Order of Teutonic Knights and the Kingdom of Poland-Lithuania which spelled the beginning of the end for the Order's power in Prussia. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both Poles and Germans revived the memory of this struggle, for different political purposes. For German nationalists Grunwald and the Teutonic Order became symbols of Germany's age-long "civilizing mission" in East Central Europe and its warfare against the Slavic east. For Polish nationalists, especially those associated with Dmowski and the Endecja, the defeat of the Teutonic Order at Grunwald represented the vindication of Polish resistance to germanization. As Piotr Wandycz points out, this anachronistic projection of Polish-German conflict into the High Middle Ages is more than a little ironic, given that the German townsmen of East Prussia, tired of the heavy-handed rule of the Order, through their later revolt, played a key role in translating the Polish victory at Grunwald into the defeat of the Teutonic Order. Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Price of Freedom: A History of East Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1992), 42.

information meetings on economic life in the Recovered Territories in August and September.²⁸⁰

By far the most popular propaganda events which the PZZ conducted in conjunction with all of the region's political parties and social organizations were a series of over 100 anti-German mass meetings held on 23 September against the rehabilitation of Volksdeutsche in the province of Poznań, in which up to 10,000 people participated.²⁸¹ These meetings often involved very emotional appeals to Poles, such as the speaker in Wolsztyn, who encouraged his audience to "never forget the shameful lessons of the German crematoriums, concentration camps and gas chambers!" and the speakers at the Poznań rally, who, echoing Dr. Widy-Wirsky's opening address to the National Council, complained about "Polish sentimentalism" and also invoked the memory of Majdanek, Auschwitz, and Ravensbruck "in which our wives and mothers were murdered and burned and which will be for us an eternal warning."²⁸²

The prepared resolutions adopted at these meetings included demands that "no German man or woman, and no Pole who for personal gain signed the German national list, even if he did nothing to injure Poles or Poland, be rehabilitated," that "all Germans immediately be quartered in isolated work camps and be assigned compulsory labor," and "that for a period of at least six years all of those who for personal gains and purely material benefit signed the German national list, or who petitioned to be enrolled...will be deprived of the full rights of a citizen and will have to wear a badge, differentiating them

²⁸⁰ WAPP PZZ 586: 141.

²⁸¹ WAPP PZZ 586: 143.

²⁸² WAPP WUIiP 33: 35-36.

from Polish society.” Furthermore, in keeping with the PZZ’s own understanding of the ethnic politics of degermanization, the resolutions demanded that rehabilitation of Volksdeutsche and Leistungspolen be handled more severely in the annexed regions of Wielkopolska than in Upper Silesia.²⁸³ The Ministry of Propaganda reported that the turnout and enthusiasm for the meetings and these resolutions was quite high.²⁸⁴

In addition to the local and central government, political parties, and the PZZ, the Catholic Church in Poland also played an important part in the settlement of the Recovered Territories. Throughout Poland, Catholicism helped to shape popular opinion regarding the new regime, the transformation of Poland’s frontiers, and the German question. In Wielkopolska, Catholicism exercised its influence in a wide variety of ways: through the actions of various institutions, the Church’s clerical elite, and the Catholic laity.

Defining “Catholicism” represents a central but complicated analytic problem in any assessment of the strength of postwar Catholic religious life in Wielkopolska. In their discussions of the Church’s role in Poland’s assimilation of the Recovered Territories, both Osękowski and Wisłocki seek to distinguish between the activities of the Holy See.

²⁸³ In Silesia and Pomorze signing the Volksliste was obligatory, while in Wielkopolska inscription onto the Volksliste had a (relatively) more voluntary character. Musielak, 238.

²⁸⁴ WAPP WUIiP 33: 35-39. Local branches of the Department of Propaganda in the city of Poznań reported “a crowd of many thousands” and the crowd’s enthusiastic reception of representatives of the Polish military. In Kalisz local officials opined this was the most enthusiastic crowd that had appeared in Kalisz since February, while in Żnin and Miedzychod large crowds received the resolutions (which were similar to the Poznań resolutions) with satisfaction.

the politics of Poland's episcopate, and the clergy's pastoral work in various regions.²⁸⁵ Coutouvidis and Reynolds speak of the "Church and the Catholic camp"—a rubric under which they primarily subsume the clergy and Catholic lay political leaders and intellectuals.²⁸⁶ Krystyna Kerszyn goes further and speaks of "Catholicism as culture." She points out that in the immediate postwar period there were over 5,000 registered Catholic societies, from rosary associations and choirs to the relief association Caritas, which together had over 500,000 members throughout Poland.²⁸⁷

"Catholicism as culture" is a particularly apt description of Wielkopolska, where Catholicism played a central role in defining Polish national identity. As in the rest of Poland, Catholic lay people and priests exercised broad social and political initiative in Wielkopolska in the postwar period. This initiative ranged from mutual clerical-lay involvement in the semi-independent Catholic political movement *Stronnictwo Pracy* (Party of Work, SP), to social organizations (including the PZZ and Caritas), to the predominantly lay staff of Poznań's official Catholic paper, *Głos Katolicki* (Catholic Voice). Even nominally committed Catholics used their faith to express political judgments through such gestures as singing the popular hymn "Boże, Coś Polska" with

²⁸⁵ Osekowski, 210; Jerzy Wisłocki, "Kościół Katolicki wobec polskich Ziem Zachodnich i północnych," in *40-lecie powrotu Ziem Zachodnich i północnych do Polski: część II: sekcja polityczno-socjologiczna: materiały ogólnopolskiej sesji naukowej odbytej w dniach 25-26 czerwca 1985 r.* (Warsaw: Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, Akademia Nauk Społecznych, Instytut Historii Ruchu Robotniczego, 1986), 94.

²⁸⁶ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 225-226.

²⁸⁷ Kerstyn, *Establishment*, 213.

the final verse “Return to us a free fatherland, oh Lord,” as was done during the period of Poland’s partitions.²⁸⁸

While theoretically almost all of Poznań’s population were Catholic lay people, for the purposes of discussing Catholicism’s socio-political influence in Wielkopolska I will use “the laity” to refer to all baptized, practicing, non-ordained Catholics not bound by religious vows, who sought, in public or private, to support their vision of the Catholic faith, regardless of their political orientation,²⁸⁹ and “the Church”²⁹⁰ to refer to the public and private activities of Catholic priests and religious.

²⁸⁸ Kerstyn. *Establishment*, 211.

²⁸⁹ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 223.

²⁹⁰ “The laity” and the “Church” are theologically problematic usages according even to Tridentine Catholic definitions, which held the church (*ecclesia*) to consist of “the faithful dispersed throughout the world.” “The Catechism of the Council of Trent: for Parish Priests” in *The Catholic Tradition: The Church*, Charles J. Dollen, James K. McGowan, and James J. Megivern, eds. (Wilmington: McGrath, 1979, vol. 1, 276. This understanding persisted during the reign of Pius XII, who would insist that “the lay faithful...ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church.” *Discourse to the New Cardinals*, February 20, 1946: AAS 38 (1946), 149, as quoted in John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* [The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People] (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, 1989), no 9.

In contrast to this theological understanding, I here employ a more popular usage of “the Church” as it was widely utilized at the time. This is also a convention in scholarly literature, which rarely distinguishes between the Church as the hierarchy, and the Church as part of a larger socio-religious construct. Thus, for example, Norman Davies, in his discussion of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, defines the Church in terms of the “first duty of the clergy ...to propagate the Faith, to administer the sacraments, and to tend the quick and the dead” (Davies, *God’s Playground, Vol. 2*, 207), while Kenney, in his discussion of the Roman Catholic Church and labor politics, argues that “...the church never addressed workers as workers.... The time when the Polish church would embrace human rights as a cause was still thirty years away” (Kenney, 52). Kenney’s discussion is problematic in that it ignores the fact that Catholics, not only at an “individual level” but also corporately in the SP, formulated a program that sought

According to this definition, Bolesław Piasecki, the notorious leader of pre-war Poland's small Fascist party, the Falanga, and his pro-regime "Dziś i Jutro" ("Today and Tomorrow") group,²⁹¹ is part of the laity, as is Karl Popiel, an important pre-war political leader in the Christian Democratic Party of Labor (Stronnictwo Pracy, SP) who returned with Mikołajczyk from London in order to revive the SP as a semi-independent party. Feliks Widy-Wirski and Władysław Gomułka, on the other hand, though baptized as Catholics, fall outside of this definition of the laity because of their determination simply to restrict, use, and limit Catholicism. They, and those in sympathy with them, had little or no positive conception of Catholicism playing any legitimate role in Poland's public life.²⁹² While it is not the place of historians to adjudicate which position was or was not

to address "workers as workers" (which included the nationalization of heavy industry) but was blocked by the regime through arrests and harassment of SP activists. Polish Catholics were indeed aware of the working class, but the regime barred the Church either through its hierarchy or its lay activists from politically or socially organizing among workers. Kersten, *Establishment*, 202-204.

²⁹¹ Named after their Warsaw journal, the Dziś i Jutro group began publishing in November, and denounced the opposition stance of the SP and Mikołajczyk's PSL to the new regime. It is important to note that initially Piasecki's efforts to found a pro-regime Catholic journal received cautious, but real, support from the Church in the form of a \$500 gift from Cardinal Hlond to assist in the initial costs of printing the journal, and an official representative of the hierarchy, Fr. Pawski, who was present at the journal's initial editorial meetings. Antoni Dudek and Grzegorz Pytel, *Bolesław Piasecki: Próba biografii politycznej* (London: Aneks, 1991), 159-161.

²⁹² Widy-Wirski and the "Wojewód's group" of the SP represent a problem in analysis, in that while they were ostensibly linked to the SP and the Catholic Church, in practice they functioned almost exclusively as a means of regime influence within the SP. Especially in Poznań, Widy-Wirski's home province, his group exerted great influence over the SP, and introduce a radically different ideological approach within the movement. This was best summed up by one of the official representatives of the Party in Poznań, Citizen Gmurowski, who claimed that the SP was working for a "...Church that can be only Polish, with Christian, and not Roman, ethics." WAPP KW PPR 50: 44. While such a political stance does fit into a broader Christian Democratic tradition, it is problematic to consider this a "Catholic" perspective.

“truly Catholic,” I propose this definition of the laity as the most analytically useful—not so broad as to encompass the political activity of all gentile Poles, nor so narrow as to apply only to those expressing hierarchically-sanctioned perspectives.²⁹³

Something striking about the history of postwar Poland is the degree to which *all* the main political players, from the regime and the PSL to Polish society at large, sought to utilize religious feeling to support political positions. The regime’s courting of the Church and Catholic public opinion began as early as August 1944, when the PKWN granted Catholic University in Lublin (Katolicki Uniwersytet Lublina, KUL) permission to begin operation. KUL became the first institution of higher learning to open its doors in independent Poland in the academic year 1944-45. The regime followed up this show of favor in March 1945 with a visit by the Minister of National Defense, General Rola-

²⁹³ The historiographical tendency to conflate the Church with the Hierarchy is not only sociologically (and theologically) problematic, but it also usually assumes a unity of perspective within the hierarchy that did not exist. Even at the highest reaches of the Church there existed profound disagreement and very different social, political and ecclesiastical agendas. One of the most striking of these was the wide divergence between Poland’s Primate, Cardinal Hlond, and Pope Pius XII over the matter of the Church administration in the Recovered Territories. The Pope was decidedly unenthusiastic about altering Poland’s ecclesial boundaries to fit Poland’s new, soon-to-be ethnically cleansed political boundaries, while Hlond used the wide powers the Pope had granted him to organize the Church in “Poland” according to the new definition of “Poland”—even though this definition included territory which was not completely *de jure* Polish. (For a full discussion of these high ecclesial politics see Siebel-Achenbach, 203.) It is important to note that not only was there a difference between Rome and Poland over how to proceed, but also within Poland itself there were significant differences among the bishops, with Cardinal Hlond pursuing a confrontational line with the new regime, Archbishop Sapieha pursuing more conciliatory policies, and Bishop Adamski of Katowice cooperating with the new authorities to protect the compromised population of his diocese, Katowice, who had more or less *en masse* signed the Volksliste. These differences would be played out throughout the hierarchy, and make it difficult to locate the “official” policy of the Church.

Żymierski, to the acting head of the Polish Catholic Church in Poland, Archbishop Sapięha. Significantly, General Rola-Żymierski is recorded as beginning his appeal to the Archbishop by stating that the Western Allies would not support Poland's independence and that Stalin desired to extend Poland's borders westward. Shortly after this meeting, on 24 March 1945, the regime gave permission to the Church in Kraków to begin publishing *Tygodnik Powszechny* (The Universal [or Catholic] Review).²⁹⁴

The regime's early efforts to forge an understanding with the Church in eastern and central Poland continued after the liberation of western Poland and the conquest of eastern Germany. Especially in the Recovered Territories, where the regime was dependent on help from sources as disparate as German experts and the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Organization) to establish a Polish presence in the region, local and central government officials early on sought to cooperate with the Church.²⁹⁵ Far from seeking the separation of Church and State,²⁹⁶ the government, at

²⁹⁴ Peter Raina, ed., *Kościół w PRL: Kościół Katolicki a Państwo w Świele Dokumentów 1945-1989: Tom 1 lata 1945-59* (Poznań: W Drodze, 1994), 9-10.

²⁹⁵ Osękowski, 212.

²⁹⁶ Reynolds and Coutouvidis claim that, similar to the Central Committee Plenum of June 1946 (which claimed that the regime sought only to ensure that "religious feelings must not be made use of in political disputes"), "[t]he government's repudiation of the Concordat in September 1945 seems to have been motivated by...[the] outlook that the Church and State should operate in different spheres..." (Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 223). This taking of the programmatic statements of the PPR at face value is profoundly problematic. The PPR (and later the PZPR) sought constantly, if cautiously, throughout its rule to reshape Polish society, including Poland's religious traditions, according to its own conception of Poland's future. The arrest and enlistment of Piasecki as a supporter of the regime, General Rola-Żymierski's conversations with Archbishop Sapięha, and Piasecki's conversations with the PPR's General Secretary, Gomułka in July 1945 (Dudek and Pytel, 157) point to a regime that was deeply concerned about, and desired to direct, religious opinion. The repudiation of the Concordat, like its earlier gestures of openness to the Church and its later conflict, was almost entirely

both the local and national levels, was constantly endeavoring to win the cooperation of the Church in its efforts to rebuild Poland.

In Wielkopolska, and later in Ziemia Lubuska, the Church and her laity exercised much initiative from the very first in reviving religious life, and met with no official restrictions.²⁹⁷ Representatives of the Church officially participated in almost every civic event (few of which occurred without a Mass). In Poznań, however, the strong tradition of conservative Catholic social, nationalist, and political activism tended to lead to greater conflict with the regime than elsewhere in Poland,²⁹⁸ even as Catholics supported and assisted in the expulsion of the region's German population. Among the most militant expressions of a Catholic alternative to much of the new regime's social and ideological program was Wielkopolska's chief Catholic newspaper.²⁹⁹ *Głos Katolicki*.

based on the regime's assessment of its current political needs, and not upon any abstract principle such as differing spheres of activity.

²⁹⁷ "102. 1945 czerwiec 4. Poznań.—Sprawozdanie wojewody poznańskiego dla Ministerstwa Administracji Publicznej z działalności za miesiąc maj 1945 r." in Nawrocki and Bielecki, 161.

²⁹⁸ The historiographical consensus is that in Poland prior to 1949, the Church and regime warily avoided direct conflict, though both contained more militant elements which engaged in preliminary skirmishes. According to Hans Roos "...it was not until...1949 that the struggle between the Church and the State really began." Whether or not this is true for the rest of Poland, in Wielkopolska this generalization is inaccurate. In *Głos Katolicki* and through other actions, Catholicism as a whole in this region both perceived the regime's actions as provocative and engaged in a systematic struggle with the new regime's official Marxist ideology. Hans Roos, J.R. Foster, trans., *A History of Modern Poland: From the Foundation of the State in the First World War to the Present Day* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 238-239.

²⁹⁹ *Głos Katolicki* was one of the three largest weekly papers in Wielkopolska, with a run of 10,000 copies. It was one of three local ecclesial publications, though the others were primarily designed for clergy. *Głos Katolicki* was certainly the most militantly anti-regime paper of a lively Catholic press in postwar Poland, which included such papers

Almost from its first issue in late April 1945, *Głos* carried on a strident, but double-edged, anti-German line. While the paper openly supported the regime's ethnic cleansing of Poznań, and indeed rejoiced that it would result in an ethno-religious cleansing³⁰⁰ of Wielkopolska, there was another edge to many of these articles that had other, Polish targets. In *Głos Katolicki* there is a carefully constructed view of "the Germanic" which various writers employ to propose a national-Catholic interpretation of Poland's immediate and distant past, to advance a Catholic vision of the new post-war social order, and to subtly (and not so subtly) critique the new Communist-dominated regime.

Local officials at the Ministry of Information and Propaganda were well aware of the subtext of many of *Głos*' articles, complaining that the paper "in a cunning way, with the help of hidden parallels, allusions, and analogies to democracy [sic: the regime's term for itself], attacks democratic reforms, defends the papacy and the concordat, calls for Catholics to create a united front, and strengthens the influence of faith on life." These officials also acknowledged that *Głos* "enjoyed a great deal of popularity and exercised significant influence on Wielkopolskan society." To combat this influence, officials

as the pro-regime *Dziś i Jutro* (Today and Tomorrow), the moderate (but also strongly anti-German) *Tygodnik Powszechny* (The Catholic/Universal Weekly) and the also moderate, but less overtly anti-German *Gość Niedzielny* (Sunday Visitor), the diocesan paper of Upper Silesia (a diocese with a large number of German Catholics and Catholics of mixed and/or ambiguous nationality).

³⁰⁰ Writers for *Głos Katolicki* distinguished between ethnic Polish Augsburg and German Evangelical Protestants, recognizing the former (who it claimed were concentrated in the Old Congress Kingdom, in Warsaw and Łódź) as "mostly good Poles...[whom] it can be hoped will work together in an agreeable and exemplary fashion with Polish Catholics for the good of our common fatherland." As for the latter, "In the new Poland these Germans are already gone... To a great degree Catholics—as is well known—are already occupying the empty German churches, in exchange for our own churches which the Germans burned down and destroyed." *Głos Katolicki*, 27 May 1945, "Augsburski czy ewangelicki," 8.

recommended that “the responsible censors turn a great deal of attention on this newspaper” and that it not be allowed to expand its circulation.³⁰¹

Though *Głos* often commented on domestic Polish affairs and its anti-German propaganda had more than one target, this did not vitiate either the force or the highly personal tone of its anti-German commentary. The anti-German polemic appeared in *Głos*' first issue, in an article written by “our Uncle from Baranów” (a regular feature writer for the pre-war *Katolicki Przewodnik* (“The Catholic Guide”) who would now write for *Głos*). In *Głos* “Uncle” discussed the losses that he and his family endured during the occupation. These included the death of four of his sisters' five male children: the death of a brother due to the lack of medical care available for Poles under Nazi occupation; a sister-in-law who died in prison; and this sister-in-law's only son, who died during a German bombing on the first day of the war, while the family's three daughters were either imprisoned or sent to forced labor in Germany.

“Our Uncle” went on to point out that “in a similar way it is certain that every reader could talk at length about their own heavy trials and about the sad fate of their own dear ones.” Though he ended on a hopeful note, contemplating all that remained, from “our Polish land ...[to]... our God and faith, faith in the resurrection....” this first article

³⁰¹ WAPP WUIiP 34: 75-76; WAPP WUIiP 35: 83.

underlines the highly personal social and political dimensions of anti-German feeling³⁰² in a region where few persons escaped the war unscathed.³⁰³

On the same page is a short article on “The current state of the clergy in the Archdiocese of Poznań,” which discussed the clergy’s losses during the war. Of 681 Archdiocesan Catholic priests, the Nazis imprisoned 350, of whom over 200 died in the camps. Fifty more priests died of natural causes, twenty-five fled abroad, while the rest were either concealed by their congregations in the countryside or ministered to Poles in the Generalgouvernement. This evocation of the institutional Church’s losses hard by “Our Uncle from Baranów’s” discussion of the suffering of the laity established a second theme in *Głos Katolicki*’s representation of Catholicism in Wielkopolska: the close ties between the hierarchical Church and the laity, which the war and occupation had deepened.

“Our Uncle’s” second article, “A chat about the Protestant Churches,” concerned the then-current effort of the Polish Catholic Church to confiscate and convert Protestant churches into Catholic places of worship. In this second article “Uncle” began with a discussion of Catholic religious life under German occupation. He noted how the Nazi authorities had closed down most of the city of Poznań’s Catholic churches, with the exception of the Franciscan Church, which was open only on the condition that no Poles be permitted inside. He did not directly criticize the German Franciscan fathers, whom

³⁰² It is also important to note that, like the PPR at this time, this article (and future issues of *Głos*) also uses “hitlerowcy” (the hitlerites) interchangeably with “Niemców” (Germans) and celebrates the fact that “Now the rule of the Germans has ended—grant God—forever.” “Przypominam Się,” *Głos Katolicki*, 29 April 1945, 3.

³⁰³ “Przypominam Się,” *Głos Katolicki*, 29 April 1945, 2-3.

the authorities had given the choice of either accepting the anti-Polish restrictions or closing the Church altogether. "Our Uncle" did, however, reflect that "In spite of everything, I have the impression that it was not then a Catholic Church, that Our Savior who said 'Come to me everyone' no longer lived there."

He went on to list the Catholic churches in Poznań which the "modern-day Huns" first utilized as storage depots, and later, in the fighting for Poznań, destroyed. During the siege of Poznań the Germans had destroyed many of the city's ancient Catholic churches, leaving most of Protestant churches almost untouched. "Uncle" did concede that "the Nazis didn't do this out of love for Protestantism" and that the confiscation of these churches for the use of Catholics was causing concern among the "oversensitive" about how these confiscations reflected on Poland's tolerance for other faiths. He argued that the churches were being seized, not "because they were Protestant, but rather because they were German." In the article's chilling conclusion, "Uncle" reflected on a conversation he had when, outside of a Catholic church, "a certain citizen...a Volksdeutch" asked him if it was permitted for him to enter a church. "Uncle" replied:

Of course it is permitted...The Catholic Church stands open for everyone, especially for those who in deep penitence are searching for God.

Only it seems to me, that for many, many Germans, there is no penance but death. Only such a penance will suffice to pay for the terrible iniquity and crimes which in the past few years have been committed in the world. One cannot without punishment scoff at God, at his holiness, and his commandments.³⁰⁴

The view of all Germans and Germany as guilty almost beyond redemption, and essentially unchanging in their anti-Polish enmity, was advanced in a great number of

³⁰⁴ "Gawęda o protestanskich kościołach," *Głos Katolicki*, 6 May 1945, 2-3.

Głos' articles, and led to an unambiguous endorsement of Polish expansion westward. In "The New Land" the article's author quoted extensively from a publication of the PZZ-affiliated Instytut Zachodni, *The Odra-Nisa [sic]: The Best Border for Poland*, which offered historical, economic, geopolitical, but most importantly moral arguments for Poland's territorial aggrandizement. Morally, Poland's right to the Recovered Territories lay in the claim that

...the land, which has endured 700 years of germanization, has preserved in a large degree its nationality. With the sword the Połabian Slavs have been exterminated, others have been denationalized, others have had torn away from them what is to them most holy, their native tongue and national feelings. And that crime must be righted.

This past war is an epilogue to the centuries-long struggle of Germandom and Slavdom, and perhaps it is the last epilogue.³⁰⁵

This view is expressed even more forcefully in Ignacy Stein's article "Black Spots"—an extensive discussion of another Instytut Zachodni publication, Zygmunt Wojciechowski's *Polska-Niemcy: dziesięć wieków zmagania* (Poland-Germany: Ten Centuries of Conflict)³⁰⁶. This article illustrated its title with maps of Poland in the tenth, thirteenth, fourteenth, eighteenth, and twentieth centuries that grow progressively black with the expansion of German settlements and principalities eastward.³⁰⁷ According to the author,

³⁰⁵ "Nowe Ziemie," *Głos Katolicki*, 8 July 1945, 6.

³⁰⁶ Zygmunt Wojciechowski, *Polska—Niemcy: dziesięć wieków zmagania* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Zachodniego, 1945).

³⁰⁷ These maps and the author's commentary on them are quite artful in delineating only Poland's western, and not its eastern, frontiers. For instance the author discusses all three of Poland's partitions and Poland's "greatest and most perverse enemy yet of Poland, Fredrick II" who occupied Poland from the Wisła to the Niemen, along with "the other Germans—the Austrians" without mentioning Russian participation.

this German expansion from the beginning of the twelfth century took place with the aid of “treason and murder and nothing in this German method has changed from then to today.”³⁰⁸

Joining with both official and popular efforts to demonize “the Germanic” gave the Church and its spokespersons the opportunity to exorcise anything in Poland, particularly its politics, that it could brand as manifesting a “Germanic” spirit, and to bless all that was Polish (and Catholic). This other, domestic edge to *Głos*’ anti-German propaganda was most apparent in the agitation over the proposed secularization of Poland’s marriage law, and the question of religious education in public schools. In both cases, various writers in *Głos* drew parallels between the new government’s proposals and German policies in Wielkopolska (from both the wartime occupation and earlier, Prussian policies).³⁰⁹

In addition to *Głos*’ polemics, the hierarchy of the Church also influenced public policy toward Germany through their actions and pronouncements. Important early instances of this included Bishop of Katowice Stanisław Adamski’s efforts to help establish a Polish ecclesial administration in Lower Silesia by attempting to drive off the German clergy of Wrocław (Breslau) with warnings that the Polish government would soon force them to

³⁰⁸ “Czarne Plamy” in *Głos Katolicki*, 7 October 1945, Nr. 24, 7.

³⁰⁹ The link between the new policy and the German policies during Bismark’s Kulturkampf is explicitly made in “Ślub kościelne czy kontrakt cywilny?” (*Głos Katolicki*, 5 August 1945, 3) and “Kulturkampf” (*Głos Katolicki*, 2 September 1945, 7). The latter article concluded with the note that “The Church won the ‘struggle for culture’ [kulturkampf]. But the traces of this struggle continue to this day...[in] obligatory civil weddings.... Today after our latest victory the traces of the first German occupation will also disappear. It would be time to liquidate also this remaining ‘kulturkampf.’”

move,³¹⁰ as well as his attempt to shape the regime's nationality policies in Upper Silesia in an important memorandum on the problems of Polish national identity in areas of mixed settlement.

Though Bishop Adamski's forays into the new regime's nationality policy were significant, the Polish episcopacy's sustained intervention into public affairs would become truly threatening to the regime only with the return of the Primate, Cardinal Hlond, in July 1945 after over five years of exile. In his first sermon on Polish soil, "On Poland's Future," delivered at Poznań's parish church, Cardinal Hlond preached about Poland "at the crossroads":

As a people greatly humbled, the most downtrodden, and the most harmed, we are undoubtedly called by Providence to greatness...We have to choose: to go with Christ and win our rightful future, or build without Christ and meet a tragic fate, such as Jerusalem met, because it did not acknowledge the time of its Visitation.

Our Polish history, our national traditions have grown up with the Church and have been formed in the spirit of Christ. The *conservative instinct* of our people leads us in this critical moment to chose Christ, his law, and his gospel.³¹¹

Cardinal Hlond worked to achieve this vision of a great, Catholic Poland in a variety of ways. He would vigorously oppose the regime's various efforts to secularize Polish public life, help formulate a positive program of social and political action for the laity, and use the special (and vast) powers granted him by Pope Pius XII³¹² to reorganize the

³¹⁰ Siebel-Achenbach, 199.

³¹¹ "O Jutro Polski," *Głos Katolicki*, 29 July 1945, 1.

³¹² According to Stehle, "the wording [of these plenary powers] has never been published" but granted their holder power to appoint bishops. Hlond claimed that it was on the basis of this authority that he appointed Apostolic Administrators for the entire

administration of the Catholic Church within Poland's new boundaries. This latter action is among his most controversial, and most lasting, achievements.

Cardinal Hlond used his authority to both disband German Church administration in the Recovered Territories and, on 15 August 1945, to appoint Polish priests as Apostolic Administrators for five newly organized dioceses in the Recovered Territories.³¹³ A key problem in the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Affairs' letter of 8 July granting Cardinal Hlond "special authority" "*in tutto il territorio polacco*"³¹⁴ is that it did not define what territory constituted "Poland," and thus what was the extent of Cardinal Hlond's authority. At the heart of this question is whether Cardinal Hlond, by compelling the two remaining German bishops, Piontek in Wrocław (Breslau) and Kaller of Warmia, to acknowledge his jurisdiction and resign their sees, deceived them about the nature of his authorization from Rome. In Wrocław (Breslau) in particular, the city's German Catholic clergy claimed that the Cardinal stated, apparently contrary to fact,³¹⁵ that he had

ZO. Hansjakob Stehle, trans. Sandra Smith. *Eastern Politics of the Vatican 1917-1979* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 253-254.

³¹³ Cardinal Hlond reorganized the old German diocesan boundaries to accord more closely with Polish administrative divisions within the Recovered Territories. The five dioceses included the Diocese of Chełmińska and Gdańsk administered by Fr. Andrzej Wronka; Lower Silesia, administered by Fr. Karol Milik; Oppeln Silesia, administered by Fr. Bolesław Kominek; Warmia, administered by Fr. Teodor Bensch; and Western Pomorze and Ziemia Lubuska, administered by Fr. Edmund Nowicki. "Polski Kościół na polskiej ziemi" in *Głos Katolicki*, 26 August 1945, 1. These diocesan boundary changes not only impacted the Polish-German border, but also touched Polish-Czech ecclesial boundaries as well, since Cardinal Hlond assigned the Kłodzko region in southwestern Poland to Fr. Milik's administration even though before the war it had formed part of the Archdiocese of Prague. Siebel-Achenbach, 203.

³¹⁴ Stehle, 254.

³¹⁵ Siebel-Achenbach, relying almost entirely on German sources, recounts how the German clergy, believing that the Holy See was misinformed about the conditions in Breslau, sent a representative, Fr. J. Kapps, to Rome who gained an audience with the

direct authorization from the Holy See to disband the (German) Metropolitanate of Breslau and replace it with a Polish Apostolic Administration.

Cardinal Hlond at the very least acknowledged that he had acted unjustly toward the German clergy. In a letter Hlond wrote to Rome in October 1946 explaining his conduct in 1945, the Cardinal claimed that “In the then-current conditions the only effective [choice] was the transfer of power to Polish prelates who were capable of handling the situation, in which the German Ordinaries, as a consequence of the political changes, demonstrated that they were deprived of influence and the possibility of practically exercising power.” He went on to acknowledge “...human errors. My errors” in the manner of the German bishops’ deposition. While he claimed that he acted in the best interest of all believers, both Polish and German, since the latter were also in danger of losing all pastoral oversight, he admitted that “they [the German bishops] left in the glory of martyrs, and having been publicly wronged, and that the whole responsibility falls on me, as is appropriate and in accord with the truth.”³¹⁶

Regardless of whether he abused the powers given to him by the Pope and his later regrets over these actions, the Cardinal’s late August announcement (made one week after the appointments in order to give him time to inform the government) was immensely

Pope on 10 October 1945. At this audience Fr. Kapps informed the Pope of the state of affairs there (including Hlond’s disbanding of the Breslau Metropolitanate), and claimed that the Pope “expressed surprise” at Hlond’s actions and stated that the successor to the former German Archbishop Bertrand should be someone already within the Breslau diocese, which would *de facto* exclude Hlond’s appointee, Fr. Milik. Siebel-Achenbach argues that the surprise the Pope is purported to have expressed is “further evidence that the Pope had not given Hlond express approval beforehand...” to take the measures Hlond had taken in Poland. Siebel-Achenbach, 205.

³¹⁶ Mikołaj Lizut, “Błąd Kardynała,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 2-3 December 1995, 24.

popular³¹⁷ and laid the foundations for the Polish Catholic Church's establishment in the Recovered Territories. In the public pronouncements of the Church, and in the attitudes of her faithful, there was little evidence of Hlond's later ambivalence in his conduct toward German Catholics. In a front page article *Głos* triumphantly reported on "A Polish Church on Polish Territory." The article noted that the day when the new Apostolic Administrators would begin their duties in the Recovered Territories was "[t]he day of 1 September, the sixth anniversary of German aggression, [and so] in this manner the prevailing German diocesan Church administration will be extinguished on these lands."³¹⁸

In Poznań, Hlond's strong support for Poland's expansions in the territory did not forestall a conflict between Catholicism and the State which local officials and many of the clergy and laity would characterize as an "offensive of militant Catholicism."³¹⁹ In Ziemia Lubuska, however, where Polish settlement was just beginning, and the Church, like the settlers and the new regime, experienced tremendous initial difficulties in establishing its presence.³²⁰ cooperation rather than conflict for the most part characterized the relationship between the Church, its laity and the regime. In both places, Catholicism proved to be a source of ongoing political tensions within society, either

³¹⁷ Stehle, 254.

³¹⁸ "Polski Kościół na polskiej ziemi" in *Głos Katolicki*, 26 August 1945, 1.

³¹⁹ Compare the local Ministry of Propaganda report which speaks of an "offensive of militant Catholicism" with a *Głos Katolicki* front-page reprint of one of Cardinal Hlond's pastoral letters, "On the task of Catholicism in the fight against God," which called for a "universal Catholic offensive." AAN MIiP 35: 165, and "Zadanie Katolicyzmu," *Głos Katolicki* 22 July 1945, 1.

³²⁰ Osękowski, 215, which goes so far as to characterize the situation in Gorzów as the worst in the entire Recovered Territories.

because of the degree to which it was an element of conflict in the old territories of Wielkopolska, or by the “entangling alliance” that the close ties between Church and State would represent for Party militants in the “wild west.”

Though influenced by their Catholic faith and national aspirations, the Poles of Wielkopolska pursued a wide variety of interests that government authorities, nationalist agitators, and the Church regarded as detrimental to the viability of Poland as either a political, national, or Christian community. Often at the periphery of official records, Party documents, sermon literature, and police reports, the people of Wielkopolska were composed of diverse and often mutually antagonistic groups. The local population was deeply divided between “true Poles” and persons whom the German authorities classified (sometimes against their will) during the occupation as “Volksdeutsche” or “Leitungspole,” and between local residents and refugees making their way eastwards in cattle cars and transports from slave labor in Germany. These groups responded in a variety of ways to the new realities created by the ongoing ethnic cleansing and expansion of Polish settlement in Wielkopolska, the beginnings of Polish colonization of eastern Germany, and Communist rule.

Like religion, nationalism in Wielkopolska was a significant social and ideological force. But just as with their faith many Poles managed to formulate a religiosity that made room for a host of local exceptions, distinctions and desiderata, so it was with popular nationalism. These local conceptions of nationalism challenged both the regime’s and the PZZ’s efforts to inculcate their versions of Polish patriotism. This manifested itself most importantly in local society’s relations to the remaining German minority and the *repatrianci*. Far from developing a consistent ethic of nationalism in their relations to

these groups, the Poles of Wielkopolska negotiated their relationships with them on the basis of a variety of local interests, hatreds and prejudices.

Though anti-German rhetoric dominated public discourse and often received an enthusiastic response, the concerns of the speakers at the anti-German PZZ rallies and Governor Widy-Wirsky about Wielkopolskans' "sentimentality" toward the German minority were not entirely misplaced. In Mogilno county, the *starosta* (district administrator) reported that a number of Poles had come to him to complain about the UB's indiscriminate persecution of all Germans, even those who had supported Poles during the occupation and were deeply opposed to Nazism. The *starosta* even cited "well-known instances" during the occupation of the Nazis persecuting, imprisoning and even executing such Germans, sometimes with the cooperation of Poles. The *starosta* claimed that the policy of treating all Germans the same only disturbed the local Polish population and deepened German solidarity. He recommended treatment that would distinguish between anti-Nazi Germans and the rest of the German population.³²¹

In addition to the problem of "good Germans," there was the complicated, emotional problem of the Volksdeutsche and the "Leistungspolen." Though Poznań had the fewest signatories of the Volksliste of all the regions of Poland incorporated into the Reich, there were still several counties with large numbers of Volksdeutsche, especially the counties of Gostyn, Kalisz and Kępno (where the Ministry of Propaganda claimed that 83 percent of the county was either German or Volksdeutsche).³²² Attitudes toward these persons could be quite ambivalent. In Gostyn, there was a great deal of resentment about the

³²¹ WAPP UWP 126: 1.

³²² WAPP WUIiP 34, 83.

“liberal treatment” of certain Germans (“Reichsdeutsche, Volksdeutsche, Stammdeutsche”) who “wandered around freely...[and] whose wives and daughters are beautifully dressed.” Yet there was also real local concern over the ambiguous status of Leistungspolen, many of whom were “good Poles” who at the time had no legal way to be rehabilitated.³²³

Relations in Wielkopolska between the local population and the *repatrianci*, who were beginning to settle land the government confiscated from the German minority, was a real problem in the first months following liberation. Locally, there was a great degree of disquiet over the government’s specific efforts to transform Poland into a homogenous nation-state by replacing the long-established German minority with the “foreign” *repatrianci*.³²⁴

These eastern Poles had suffered the loss of almost all their property and had received elaborate promises from Soviet officials of rich, empty German lands waiting for them in western Poland.³²⁵ Many of them were traumatized by their losses, and the weeks they spent traveling on cattle cars to their new homes in midwestern Poland left them quite listless and passive.³²⁶ Those whom the government settled further west, in the former

³²³ WAPP UWP 79, 18-19.

³²⁴ Krystyna Kersten, *Repatriacja Ludności Polskiej Po II Wojnie Światowej* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolinskich Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1974), 98-99. This agreement would be the cause of a great deal of difficulty for the Polish and Soviet governments during the course of the repatriation of Poles and Jews from Poland’s former eastern borderlands to the new Polish state.

³²⁵ WAPP WO-PUR 2682: 1, wherein PUR (Panstwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny, the State Repatriation Agency) reported that the repatrianci were promised “animals, agricultural tools, monetary aid of 5,000 zł, orderly German farms, help with grain for sowing,” and “many other things we don’t have now.”

³²⁶ WAPP WUIiP 33: 146.

provinces of eastern Germany, soon discovered that these devastated lands were very different from the Soviet image of them, and they also became quite demoralized.³²⁷

In Wielkopolska the tension between local Poles and the *repatrianci* settled there was particularly pronounced, as the Provisional Government and the PPR gave the *repatrianci* German property that locals had coveted for themselves.³²⁸ Furthermore, the social and cultural differences between Wielkopolskan Poles and the *repatrianci* were a source of tension, with many local Poles holding the *repatrianci* in contempt and referring to them as “gypsies” and “Russians.”³²⁹ Far from embracing what the Polish state and the PZZ regarded as a consistent ethic of nationalism, the local population of Wielkopolska had their own, locally produced definition of Polishness that could simultaneously

³²⁷ “Demoralization” is a catch-all word which government and party officials of all political persuasions employed frequently in the documents of this period. Government officials employ it indiscriminately to describe both the efforts of many Poles to avoid work and engage in looting, as well as applying it to persons who complain of the lack of material rewards for work. In their December report officials in the Ministry of Information and Propaganda complained that throughout the province there was an “atmosphere of passivity,” which “was worse than diversions.” In particular these officials noted a growing sentiment among many people was “the one who works the hardest, will end up a loser.” In Gorzów local officials spoke of the “psychosis of laziness” that infected both the *repatrianci* and other settlers in search of plunder. WAPP WUIiP 36: 131-132; WAPP UWP 78: 170; WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 87.

³²⁸ Słabek, 331-333.

³²⁹ This was often the fate of refugees from ethnically cleansed areas. After World War I. Greeks in the mainland referred to those repatriated from Anatolia as “tourkosporoi” (“Turkish seed”) or “giaourtovaftismenoi” (“baptized in yogurt”). See Mavrogordatos, 194, 205. Similarly, Germans expelled from Poland received abuse upon their settlement in western Germany. See Marion Frantziach, “Socjologiczne Aspekty Problemu Wypędzenia Niemców,” in Hubert Orłowski and Andrzej Sakson, eds., *Utracona Ojczyzna*.

enthusiastically applaud officially-defined patriotism, embrace remnants of the German minority and exclude Poles from the *kresy*.

Yet, in spite of these tensions, Wielkopolska was on the eve of an important revolution. For many centuries Wielkopolska had been a borderland province of mixed population, with Poles in the majority in the countryside and Germans (with a small, but significant, Jewish minority) dominating urban society. After World War II, however, Nazi Germany's atrocities, the destruction of Poznań's Jewish minority, and the massive flight eastward of much of the region's German minority had created an international and domestic Polish environment open to radical, final solutions to the national question in Wielkopolska.

Both within the Grand Alliance and in Poland many were convinced, whether for racial, cultural, or geopolitical reasons, that "Germandom" represented a fundamental obstacle to peace in East Central Europe that needed to be removed. Though neither the Allies nor even the most radical and bitter of Poles proposed any policy as horrific as extermination, the first Polish efforts to create an ethnically homogenous Polish society within Poland's old borders, and to conquer and colonize Polish *lebensraum* to the west, ushered in a new social, political, ethnographic and religious reality that was little short of revolutionary.

In Wielkopolska, the disappearance of the German minority and the opening up of vast tracts of land in the west for Polish colonization was the basis for fundamental social, national and religious change. Socially, ethnic cleansing created the possibility for significant upward social mobility for many Poles both in town and country, as they received confiscated German property or took up positions in the economy formerly monopolized by Germans. Nationally, when "Polishness" became a central criterion of

residence, let alone of political or economic activity in midwestern Poland, it reinforced Wielkopolska's socio-economic transformation and carried over into the post-war period many of the legal and political practices of Nazi occupation, albeit with a reversal of those benefiting from and those suffering at the hands of these laws and practices.

Finally, in Wielkopolska ethnic cleansing was also religious cleansing. Wielkopolska's greater religious homogeneity strengthened the already considerable power of Catholicism as a political and social force. The next eighteen months would reveal the ways in which these social, national and religious transformations would interact within the context of Wielkopolska's political strife and help forge a new society and a new political order.

**Chapter 3: The Ties That Bind: The Polonization of Poznań, the Manufacturing of
Ziemia Lubuska, and the Failed Transformation of Wielkopolska, July 1945 to
February 1946**

The Western Territories bind the nation to the system.

- Władysław Gomułka³³⁰

Mobilization [to settle the Recovered Territories] needs to be conducted with concrete slogans without appeals to abstract notions of honor, social obligations, a historical mission, etc. Concrete arguments are: 7 1/2 hectare farms...government help...tax relief...etc.

- From the Ministry of Information and Propaganda's "Theses on the question of settlement"³³¹

The tenuous bridge of mutual support for territorial expansion and anti-German policies that became one of the main points of contact between the regime and local society began to give way by the summer of 1945 under the weight of local, national, and international events. Internationally, as a concession to his Western allies, Stalin consented to the broadening of the Soviet-backed Provisional Government to include Polish politicians from abroad. Foremost among the politicians who returned to Poland was Stanisław Mikołajczyk, a key figure in the pre-war Wielkopolska SL and an important leader in the wartime Polish government-in-exile in London. The return of Mikołajczyk and other politicians from exile in June 1945 led to the formation of the Provisional Government of

³³⁰ Kersten, *Establishment*, 165.

³³¹ "Tezy w Sprawie Przesiedlenia," AAN MIiP 777: 100.

National Unity (Tymczasowy Rząd Jedności Narodowej, TRJN) and the establishment of greater political pluralism in Poland.

These international agreements had an especially important impact in Wielkopolska, where the regime-sponsored local SL broke as a body with the government and joined Mikołajczyk's new Polish Peasants' Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL). The Catholic Church in Wielkopolska also began to strengthen its role in public life, offering a Catholic vision of Poland's reconstruction and countering what it regarded as the regime's efforts to enforce Poland's sovietization. These events, along with the local tensions between the state and society in Wielkopolska, revealed the depth of political and social antagonisms between the majority of local society and the new regime, and the fragility of much of the Provisional Government's work in this region.

The return of Mikołajczyk, the proclamation of the TRJN, and the formation of the PSL created a new political situation in post-liberation Wielkopolska (expanded in June 1945 to include thirteen former German counties to the north and west of the province) and led to an early clash between the PSL and the PPR. The first six months of the TRJN saw Communist efforts to stabilize the political and economic situation in Wielkopolska (primarily through propaganda and patronage), and to maintain a political monopoly in the 13 new counties of Poznań. However, the regime was more than willing to resort to fraud and force in order to limit the PSL's political power in Wielkopolska—and did.

The party-state's effort to win the hearts and minds of the people of Wielkopolska failed. Very early on the PSL established itself as the most popular political party in the region and broke the weak PPR political hegemony at the grass-roots level. While the Communists, their allies and dependents still commanded the upper reaches of political

and economic life, within nine months of midwestern Poland's liberation the socio-economic and political reality of Wielkopolska was a volatile mix of competing populisms, economic misery, and widespread criminality. In this context, the degree to which freedom, security, and the achievement of Poland's "manifest destiny" in the western borderlands were compatible was an open question.

The ethnic cleansing and polonization of midwestern Poland, including not only the former German counties (called Ziemia Lubuska) but also pre-war Wielkopolska, gave the PPR-PSL conflict in this region a special character. Though they were deeply divided ideologically and politically, both parties, and almost all of local society, were united in determination to completely polonize the region. Almost all of local Polish society supported the expulsion of ethnic Germans and the severe punishment of most of those persons of ambiguous nationality who had signed the Volksliste. But within the boundaries of pre-war ethnic Poland, the TRJN's efforts to replace the German minority with Poles repatriated from eastern Poland (and granting them much of the German minority's property) continued to meet widespread resistance in the PSL-dominated Land Offices. There the PSL was much more responsive to local sentiment that regarded German property as legitimate spoils for local Poles, and not for "outsiders," even other Poles. In Ziemia Lubuska this rivalry between the Poles from Wielkopolska, Polish settlers from the central regions of Poland, military settlers and the *repatrianci* from former eastern Poland was also intense, with each group internally divided between those who did and did not support the new order in Poland and also seeking to defend its own interests against other groups.

The situation on the ground in both Wielkopolska and Ziemia Lubuska encouraged such divisions. The newly-established Polish administration (dominated by Poles from Wielkopolska) often was both corrupt and incompetent in its efforts to provide basic services and regulate the colonization of Ziemia Lubuska. More importantly, the new authorities proved almost completely powerless to protect the Polish population from either Soviet or Polish banditry throughout most of the first year of settlement. The great amount of spoils at stake in the form of all (surviving) unmoveable, and a good deal of moveable, German property helped to encourage Polish efforts at "*szaber*" as well as constant Soviet looting. This in turn created a constant crisis of security in the region and undercut the Polish regime's and people's efforts at long-term settlement and constructive work in Ziemia Lubuska.

For those few who did endeavor to get their farms or property in order, the ongoing banditry, murder, and rapine throughout the region (mainly, but not exclusively, Soviet) made constructive work in Ziemia Lubuska both dangerous and, in the first several months, largely fruitless—since the Red Army would confiscate much of the local harvest in the fall of 1945. This confiscation only heightened popular fears that Poland's tenure in the Oder-Neisse territories would be short-lived and led many settlers to flee in the winter of 1945-46, doing serious damage to the TRJN's efforts to secure its hold on the region. Though the local administration managed to stabilize the economic and security situation sufficiently to prevent a complete collapse of settlement in the region, at a time when economic, political and international insecurity exacerbated already-deep cultural and political divisions throughout Wielkopolska, it is little wonder that the PPR, as the foremost advocate of social and political change, suffered politically.

At the end of February, almost a year after the liberation of Wielkopolska, national unity thus continued to elude the authorities. Local society was socially and politically poised to continue developing along paths incompatible with the regime's vision of Poland's future as the local PSL and the Catholic Church led local efforts to halt (and even roll back) the regime's socio-economic and political revolutions. The regime's increasingly desperate response to these challenges was to base its right to rule on the still-popular nationalist revolution of territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing. Though this bridge of mutual agreement and interest between the regime and society would require shoring up by the regime's bayonets and truncheons, it was sound enough to support the authorities' efforts to pave the way for their political monopoly.

DRIVING OUT THE NATIONS: THE DEGERMANIZATION, SETTLEMENT, AND POLONIZATION
OF MIDWESTERN POLAND, JULY-SEPTEMBER 1945

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations...and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.

—Deuteronomy 7:1-2

To strengthen our own element on this terrain it is most important to isolate every German who was very active in the (Nazi) party...and secondly to create an organization, maybe along the lines of the...SS Settlement Staff.

—From a report of the Initiative Commission in the County
Korzuchowski³³²

³³² WAPP WUIiP 149: 2.

The war and its aftermath had already greatly reduced the German population of Wielkopolska and Eastern Brandenburg even prior to the May Plenum and the Polish government's decision to undertake the ethnic cleansing of the Recovered Territories. During its initial advance through Wielkopolska the Red Army had already begun the forced resettlement of some elements of the German population. The Soviets had pressed many of the remaining local Germans and Volksdeutsche into labor service at the front, and in the process they also conscripted Poles whom the Germans had forced to sign the Volksliste.³³³ This was but one of a number of instances during the advance into mixed Polish-German areas when the Red Army proved unwilling to distinguish between the Polish sheep and the German goats, including situations in which, upon capturing Poles whom the German Army had forced to accompany it during its retreat, the Soviets treated them the same as the Germans.³³⁴

Even after the front moved westward, the Red Army continued to deport Germans from throughout Wielkopolska and areas of East Brandenburg to the Soviet Union for slave labor. In Piła (Schneimude), in what was to become Ziemia Lubuska, the Soviets established a concentration camp with 8,000 Germans whom the Red Army later evacuated to the east.³³⁵ In Jarocin county in Wielkopolska, the pre-war German population was 3,757 but by 1 January 1945 had expanded to 26,722 Germans, including German refugees, Poles inscribed on the Volksliste, and Volksdeutsche that the Reich had

³³³ "102. 1943 czerwiec 4, Poznań.—Sprawozdanie wojewody poznańskiego dla Ministerstwa Administracji Publicznej z działalności za miesiąc maj 1945 r.," in Nawrocki and Bielecki, 160.

³³⁴ "74. 1945 kwiecień 9, Poznań.—Sprawozdanie z konstytucyjnego posiedzenia Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej w Poznaniu," in Nawrocki and Bielecki, 113.

³³⁵ AAN MAP 2465: 8.

settled from the former Baltic States, Bessarabia and the Soviet Union. By March however, the *starosta* reported that there remained only 1,762 Germans in the county and that all of the men had been “sent away to work, and transported from the terrain of the county.”³³⁶

For the first several months of East Brandenburg’s occupation, in spite of wartime flight and deportations of much of the German population, Poles formed a small minority and mainly consisted of either administrators, small groups of newly arrived (and often deeply traumatized) *repatrianci*, and settlers/looters. The Soviets, intent on exploiting the area as long as it remained under their control, were loath to expel most of the German population, who served them as slave laborers. There was little incentive for the Red Army to expel these Germans and turn over their farms and property to incoming Poles who would not be as subordinate to them as the Germans had been. Up until the formal end of the Red Army’s control of East Brandenburg in May, Germans who had fled the Red Army’s late winter advance on Berlin began in the spring to return to their homes in increasing numbers without hindrance from the Red Army.³³⁷ These returning Germans revived the hopes of the remaining German population that the Reich might retain its eastern provinces, and caused a great deal of anxiety among the newly settled Poles that Poland’s hold on these regions would be short-lived.³³⁸ The regime’s concern that the increasing German population would hinder Polish settlement, along with the May Plenum’s decision to seek a “uniformly Polish state,” led the Polish government in late

³³⁶ ~43. 1945 marzec 3, Jarocin.—Pierwsze sprawozdanie sytuacyjne jarocińskiego starosty powiatowego,” in Nawrocki and Bielecki, 52.

³³⁷ Bernadetta Nitschke, “Wysiedlenia Niemców w czerwcu i lipcu 1945 roku,” in *Zeszyty Historyczne* 118, 1996, 156.

³³⁸ Nitschke, 163-164.

June 1945 to launch a more systematic effort to ethnically cleanse the region and to permanently bar Germans from returning to their homes.³³⁹

At this time the only Polish institution in the Recovered Territories capable of carrying out such a massive operation was the Polish Army. The 2nd Polish Army, stationed in the Recovered Territories, had already begun to expel Germans living in those areas of the ZO set aside for military settlement as early as mid-June.³⁴⁰ In accord with the Ministry of Public Administration's directives of 26 June 1945, the army stepped up its efforts to completely clear the border regions of Germans between late June and early July. In Ziemia Lubuska the 5th and 11th Infantry Divisions of the 2nd Army began a rapid and massive expulsion of Germans living near what was to become the new Polish-German border. In the most active periods of these expulsions, from 22 June to 8 July, these two divisions expelled over 350,000 people to the Soviet occupation zone of Germany.³⁴¹

This initial expulsion differed from later efforts to ethnically cleanse the region in its greater brutality and disorganization and the central role played by the Polish Army.³⁴² In spite of such limitations, these expulsions fulfilled, and indeed overfulfilled, their aim. In Gorzów Wielkoposki (Landsberg) the Polish military evacuated over 24,000 of the county's 29,000 remaining Germans during the first week of July (the county's pre-war population had been 101,100).³⁴³ The majority of Germans expelled at this time were

³³⁹ Dominiczak, *Wróciłismy*, 58.

³⁴⁰ Nitschke, 156-159.

³⁴¹ Of the 350,000 Germans which the 5th and 11th divisions expelled, approximately 240,000 lived in areas that would become part of Ziemia Lubuska. Dominiczak, *Wróciłismy*, 69-70.

³⁴² Nitschke, 158-162.

³⁴³ WAPP UWP 78: 63.

simply forced across the bridges of the Oder and Neisse territory on foot, often forbidden to take even hand-luggage and without any provisions made to accommodate them in Soviet-occupied Germany.³⁴⁴ In accord with Gomułka's demand at the Plenum, the Polish army mounted a guard at the frontier to foil any further German efforts to return to their homes.³⁴⁵

Thus, wartime flight and these initial expulsions removed much, though not all, of the region's German population. Yet this initial effort at ethnic cleansing showed the Polish government that the process of expelling the remnants of the German population and of settling the area with Poles would be far more difficult than it and its supporters had initially anticipated.

The Polish government realized that the costs of this first effort at ethnic cleansing were too high. An inspection commission in Ziemia Lubuska noted that the recent "ruthless evacuation of all the Germans beyond the Oder and Neisse rivers" in Nowy Sól (which remained part of the newly-organized province of Lower Silesia) and the rural areas of Zielona Góra (by then part of Ziemia Lubuska) "without a prior understanding with the local authorities" had done "great damage and complicated activities in these two counties." There were currently no Polish settlers available to move into the property that the evacuation forced the Germans to abandon, leaving it to be "freely destroyed or robbed."³⁴⁶ The regional branch of PUR in Gorzów and local government officials made

³⁴⁴ Osękowski, 103.

³⁴⁵ Document 75, "Extracts of the Minutes of the Plenum of the PPR Central Committee, 20-21 May 1945," in Polonsky and Drukier, 440-441.

³⁴⁶ "Sprawozdanie z odbytego objazdu terenow nowoodzyskanych przez Starostę powiatu gostyńskiego, Starostę powiatu śremskiego, Inspektorow PURu" in WAPP WO-PUR 131: 69; WAPP WO-PUR 2675: 14; AAN MAP 2465: 155.

similar observations, noting that the too-rapid expulsion of the German population did not give Poles a chance to occupy abandoned German property—resulting in “all moveable German property in Gorzów becoming booty for Soviet soldiers.”³⁴⁷

The military’s expulsions thus only exacerbated the already severe economic dislocations in East Brandenburg brought about by the war, since the new authorities could neither secure all of the property nor (most importantly) bring in the harvest in fields left untended by the too-swift disappearance of the German population. Furthermore, publicity about the brutality of these initial expulsions also generated uniformly negative, though limited, press in Great Britain which caused the Polish government a significant amount of embarrassment³⁴⁸ prior to the Grand Alliance’s delineation of the Polish-German frontiers at Potsdam. This combination of economic dislocation and international opprobrium led the Ministry of Public Affairs to conclude that these initial expulsions had been a mistake.³⁴⁹ Polish authorities called a halt to them in mid-July, and would not resume them again until the beginning of 1946, under very different circumstances.

The ethnic cleansing of midwestern Poland would thus prove to be much more complicated than the Polish Army’s brutally simple efforts to clear all the frontier regions by simply forcing all Germans into Soviet-occupied Germany.³⁵⁰ In addition to the danger

³⁴⁷ WAPP WO-PUR 2675, 14; AAN MAP 2465: 155.

³⁴⁸ de Zayas, *Nemesis*, 105-107.

³⁴⁹ Nitschke, 164.

³⁵⁰ Dąbrów Wielkopolskich (Dammerstadt) would prove to be an exception to the problems of ethnic cleansing confronting the new regime. Since it contained a small indigenous Polish population, the problem of ethnic cleansing there was even more complex than the relatively straightforward process of expulsion in the remainder of Ziemia Lubuska.

of abandoned property, Polish officials and local society in Ziemia Lubuska and Wielkopolska realized that they still needed German labor, both professional and unskilled, to help economically revive the region.³⁵¹ Furthermore, in Ziemia Lubuska the new Polish authorities also had to contend with the Red Army's interference in Polish efforts to expel Germans under local Soviet protection,³⁵² the ubiquitous problem of *szaber* and Soviet looting, and manifold social and economic crises. These problems greatly undermined the regime's efforts to transform the former German province of East Brandenburg into a Polish Ziemia Lubuska.

In Wielkopolska the efforts to displace the German minority and the Volksdeutsche would run into further difficulties because of the problems inherent in distinguishing "true Germans" from "germanized Poles." and hostility to the *repatrianci* to whom central government bodies were giving German property coveted by the local Polish population. Though local society for the most part was united in its determination to expel the German minority, the manner and timing of this expulsion, and the form that post-expulsion midwestern Poland should take, would be a source of ongoing controversy between the people and the regime.

Finally, international constraints also influenced the formation of the government's nationalities policy. Though the Western Allies and the Soviet Union endorsed Polish efforts to ethnically cleanse the Recovered Territories in Article XIII of the Allied

³⁵¹ This is reflected in the Provincial Governor's instructions concerning the expulsion of the German population from the towns, in which he excepted "Germans employed as professionals in important positions in administration and industry, who cannot at this time be replaced by a suitable Polish professional." "Postępowanie przy wysiedlaniu Niemców z terenu Ziemi Odzyskanych," WAPP UWP 126: 6.

³⁵² Nitschke, 162.

agreements at the Potsdam Conference in August 1945, Anglo-American observers constantly pressured the Poles that these transfers accord with Potsdam's stipulation that they be "orderly and humane." As an ultimate sanction the Anglo-Americans could, and at times, did, disallow Poland to send its German expellees westward.³⁵³

The Soviet government's support for its Polish clients' struggles with the German question also fluctuated. At the international level the Soviet government would for the most part remain steadfast in its support of Poland's westward expansion to the Oder-Neisse line (the policy of Red Army commanders in Poland is, however, a very different story). Yet the Soviets often made gestures to conciliate German public opinion, including hints at the Potsdam conference about "adjusting" the Oder-Neisse line, that caused the regime and Polish settlers in the Recovered Territories no small anxiety.³⁵⁴ These internal and external constraints shaped the regime's political and administrative efforts to ethnically cleanse and settle midwestern Poland as quickly as possible.

The new expulsions policy that began to take shape in Wielkopolska thus reflected a wide variety of local socio-economic, national-political, and East Central European geo-political constraints. While the ultimate goal of an ethnically pure Poland would become a touchstone of the regime's policies, how and when the regime would achieve this goal remained a contested question. Wielkopolska's provincial governor, Feliks Widy-Wirsky, attempted to limit the damage that too rapid and indiscriminate an expulsion would entail

³⁵³ de Zayas, *Nemesis*, 116-120, 123.

³⁵⁴ Siebel-Achenbach, 214. Though the most significant Soviet revisionist musings concerned Stalin's suggestion at Potsdam that Szczecin (Stettin) be returned to Germany, Edward Ochab, then Plenipotentiary General of the Recovered Territories, argued at the May Plenum that popular anxiety over Poland's retention of Szczecin threatened Polish settlement in Wrocław as well. Polonsky and Drukier, , 430.

in his August regulations concerning the expulsion of the German population. In these regulations Widy-Wirsky ruled that the resettlement of Germans living in towns was not to include those employed as professionals either in local government or industry, for whom there was no adequate replacement. He further ordered an end to “unplanned and arbitrary” resettlement of the German population, and that:

- in times when it was impossible to remove the resettled rural population beyond Poland’s borders, these should be settled on estates and employed in harvest work;
- Germans should be informed about the intention to resettle them at least 24 hours in advance;
- Germans should be allowed to carry hand luggage or suitcases they could carry on their own without limit as to weight;
- at the time of resettlement an inventory of remaining buildings or apartments with a description of moveable objects found therein should be taken;
- immediately after drawing up the inventory list, authorities were guard and seal buildings or apartments or give them to a Pole for temporary use.

The *Wojewód* (Provincial Governor) concluded these instructions by warning that “all actions against either the law or our national feelings of honor, such as robbery, high-handedness, sadism toward those to be expelled, etc., will be ruthlessly punished, and the guilty brought to judgment.”³⁵⁵ Within a month, Widy-Wirsky followed up these regulations with further limitations on the manner, and target populations, of resettlement. In late September he decreed that Germans and Volksdeutsche of all groups who voluntarily desired to leave Polish territory were to be issued passes for that purpose. “Germans” were defined as including German citizens of German nationality (i.e.

³⁵⁵ WAPP UWP 126: 6.

Category I of the Volksliste) and all Germans that the Nazi authorities had resettled from the Baltic, Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Wołyn with the goal of germanizing western Poland.

The only German citizens and persons who had during the war signed the Volksliste but were excluded from this list were:

- persons of Polish descent who, in the first phases of the war, were in eastern Poland and declared themselves German with the aim of returning to their homes in the Generalgouvernement or western Poland; or
- Polish citizens inscribed in categories 2-4 of the Volksliste who were seeking rehabilitation.³⁵⁶

These regulations also stated that the resettlement should be carried out in a “planned and humanitarian way.” Widy-Wirsky ordered those counties on Poland’s (new) western border which had few Germans to immediately begin to evacuate the local German population. These evacuations should be carried out by the UB and MO, who would escort these Germans out of Poland. Local government officials were ordered to provide sufficient bread for the expellees, and not to expel any craftsman or professional for whom there was not an immediate Polish replacement. After repeating the regulations of August concerning expellee property and the means of safeguarding it, Widy-Wirsky reiterated that all Germans of Polish nationality, all Volksdeutsche inscribed on lists 2-4, and all persons mentioned in point 2c were to be exempt from expulsion.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ WAPP UWP 126: 9, 11.

³⁵⁷ WAPP UWP 126: 8-11.

These regulations represented a decidedly minimalist approach to the task of ethnically cleansing Wielkopolska, but avoided the Polish “sentimentalism” Widy-Wirsky had earlier decried. Already terrified by the ruthlessness of the first wave of ethnic cleansing and discouraged by the Potsdam accords,³⁵⁸ over 70,000 Germans in Wielkopolska took advantage of the new regulations issued in September and registered to leave Poland voluntarily.³⁵⁹ By separating the expulsion of the Volksdeutsche who lived within the pre-war boundaries of Wielkopolska from that of Germans in the Recovered Territories, and even limiting the next round of expulsions to those who volunteered and unnecessary non-professionals in the westernmost counties, the governor ensured a gradual, economically less destabilizing transition to an ethnically pure Poland, and gave his administration more time to sort out the charged, complicated issue of the Volksdeutsche.

As difficult as it was, ethnically cleansing midwestern Poland was merely the prerequisite for the second, more important task that confronted Wielkopolska’s ruling elite. The second problem, that of transforming Eastern Brandenburg into Ziemia Lubuska, would prove even more difficult. The change in Wielkopolska’s provincial boundaries in June 1945, which placed large tracts of the ZO within the Province of Poznań, recognized *de jure* the considerable *de facto* importance Poznań had so far played in the polonization of the Oder-Neisse territories. However, the scattered communities of Polish settlers and the skeleton administration which Wielkopolska’s government and the local branch of the PPR had established in the Western Territories in the spring and early summer of 1945 proved incapable of meeting the numerous challenges facing Polish settlement in the first summer of their existence. By August 1945, three months after the May Plenum

³⁵⁸ Nitschke, 171.

³⁵⁹ Misztal, 175.

mandated that Wielkopolska's PPR launch full-scale settlement of the Recovered Territories, Poles were fleeing this region and the Party concluded that local society had "failed the exam" in its efforts to colonize the region.³⁶⁰

The problem of settling the Recovered Territories would have proven daunting for even the most popular of Polish governments possessing the wholehearted cooperation of the majority of the population—conditions which hardly applied to the PKWN even after the return of Mikołajczyk. The counties of Gorzów (Landsberg), Zielona Góra (Grunstadt), and Krosno Odrzański (Crossen) exemplify three distinct patterns of settlement in Ziemia Lubuska, each of which posed a number of complicated, interrelated problems to the settlers and the new administration. In Gorzów and Krosno, as in most of the other counties of Ziemia Lubuska, the Polish authorities were faced with rebuilding two cities that had been devastated by the fighting. During the wartime fight for Gorzów (Landsberg) the city was more than half destroyed, and by the end of June 1945 the population had declined from 50,000 in pre-war Landsberg to 15,000.³⁶¹ Most of these inhabitants were German, in spite of Polish resettlement in Gorzów since mid-May³⁶² and the substantial wartime population of Polish slave laborers.

Krosno had suffered even more severe damage. In August PUR officials reported that more than 80 percent of the town was destroyed. Before the war 60,000 Germans lived in the county (10,000 in the town of Crossen) but by 31 July there were only 6,800

³⁶⁰ WAPP KW PPR 50: 27.

³⁶¹ "Sprawozdanie Oddziału Powiatowego Informacji i Propagandy w Sulęcinie przy ul. Stalina 34 za miesiąc czerwiec, 1945," in WAPP WUiP 132: 7.

³⁶² PUR established its first staging area for settlers in Gorzów on 17 May 1945. By 1 June 1945, PUR had settled over 2,200 Poles in Gorzów. See WAPP WO-PUR 2682: 1; WAPP UWP 78: 63.

inhabitants, over 4,400 of whom were German.³⁶³ Krosno was also part of the area of Ziemia Lubuska that had been officially set aside for military settlement,³⁶⁴ and was one of many counties where civilian and military authorities clashed.

Zielona Góra presented a different type of problem, somewhat more similar to the situation in the German-populated counties of Wielkopolska than to that of most of Ziemia Lubuska. Largely bypassed by the fighting, and far enough from what became the new Polish-German frontier to avoid much of the first wave of ethnic cleansing in June and July, Zielona Góra retained a significant German population which enjoyed Soviet patronage throughout the summer of 1945. This caused local Polish officials significant short-term problems in their efforts to polonize the town and the surrounding region.

There were important differences between the thirteen counties in terms of their agricultural productivity, manner of settlement (predominantly military or civilian), population (*repatrianci*, Wielkopolskan, or central and southern Pole), and degree of destruction. However, every county in Ziemia Lubuska shared a complex and interrelated set of problems that confounded efforts to fully polonize East Brandenburg and Wielkopolska. These problems included the difficulties of transport and supply; administrative chaos and corruption; *szaber*; and the looming presence of the Red Army, which semi-officially and unofficially hindered Polish settlement in the region at every turn. Together these problems fundamentally undermined the Polish state and society's first efforts to establish a new, Polish-dominated order in the Polish midwest in the first six months after the liberation of Wielkopolska and the conquest of East Brandenburg.

³⁶³ WAPP UWP-WRiRR 3270: 127.

³⁶⁴ Dominiczak, *Wróciliśmy*, 76. Other counties in Ziemia Lubuska slated for military settlement included Sulęcín, Rzepin, and Gubin.

The first problem was supplying a minimum amount of food to Polish settlers. From June to September, reports from local government and PUR officials in Gorzów to their superiors in Poznań sought help for a supply situation they progressively described as “difficult,” “tragic,” and requiring “immediate attention.”³⁶⁵ The central office of PUR in Ziemia Lubuska (in Gorzów) had at its disposal only one passenger car to serve the 13 counties of Ziemia Lubuska.³⁶⁶ Throughout this period Poznań officials, who themselves had few resources to spare, repeatedly ignored PUR’s requests for two or more heavy trucks and provisions for the Poles settling in this area. By the end of September local government officials in Gorzów warned that if they did not receive immediate material help in organizing a storage depot to supply the counties of Ziemia Lubuska, the region would be threatened with “catastrophic hunger.”³⁶⁷

In Zielona Góra and Krosno the supply and transport situation also progressively worsened from the summer to autumn. As early as August, the Department of Agriculture in Zielona Góra was reporting that settlers were so concerned about the poverty and lack of draft power in this, the least fought-over section of East Brandenburg, “that every day people are leaving.”³⁶⁸ By November officials reported that the county had received only

³⁶⁵ WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 5, 41, 82.

³⁶⁶ WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 41.

³⁶⁷ “Extracts of the Minutes of the Plenum of the PPR Central Committee, 20-21 May 1945,” in Polonsky and Drukier, 439.

³⁶⁷ WAPP WO-PUR 2767: 5.

³⁶⁸ WAPP UWP-WRiRR 3270: 143; WAPP UWP 78: 286. In another report on the situation in the city of Zielona Góra, officials said that the supply situation had created “unheard-of fear”; local officials lacked sufficient bread to fulfill the quotas on the ration cards, and only small amounts of UNNRA goods were reaching the town. AAN MAP 2465: 231.

one-fifth (or less) of its allotted food requirements for settlers, having received 17 tons of grain instead of 88 tons, and 280 kg of fats instead of 3 tons. In October officials in Krosno referred to a “simply catastrophic situation” and reported that “if we do not receive aid in the shortest time people will start to leave.”³⁶⁹

Similar conditions prevailed in the other counties of Ziemia Lubuska and threatened the region with a massive outflow of settlers. In early October in Strzelce officials requested help “on account of the worsening supply situation which is influencing settlement.” Settlers, particularly the *repatrianci*, were especially concerned about the lack of grain which promised to hinder any effort to carry out the spring sowing.³⁷⁰ The problems with food supply alone threatened to undo efforts to settle Ziemia Lubuska.

Furthermore, like most other counties in Ziemia Lubuska, Gorzów, Zielona Góra, and Krosno lacked sufficient transport to distribute the meager supplies they received from Poznań or Warsaw. Even more alarming for the economic future of the region was a catastrophic decline in animal and mechanical draft power as wartime losses, official Soviet confiscation (and unofficial Soviet and Polish theft) of livestock, and difficulties maintaining tractors throughout the region made farming tremendously difficult. Every county in Ziemia Lubuska experienced these difficulties. Prior to the war Grunstadt had

³⁶⁹ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 215; WAPP UWP 78: 195-196.

³⁷⁰ AAN MZO 1154: 8. In Miedzyrzecz, as early as August the local population was complaining about the bad supply situation (WAPP UWP WUiP 32: 155), which according to local reports filed for September (WAPP UWP 78: 146-147) remained “unsatisfactory” and by October were “critical” (AAN MAP 2465: 192). In the late autumn and the beginning of winter in Sulecin (WAPP UWP 78: 267 which also described the situation as “catastrophic,”), Slubice (AAN MZO 1151: 4) and Piła (WAPP UWP 78: 71, 160), each county reported an outflow of settlers because of the lack of provisions.

over 3,000 horses, 19,000 cattle, and 28,000 pigs. After the war Zielona Góra (Grunstadt) had only 447 horses, 1800 cattle, and 189 pigs, which represented a drop of 80-90 percent of the herds in this county.³⁷¹ Gorzów, Krosno and the other counties of Ziemia Lubuska (East Brandenburg) suffered similar losses which neither the provincial nor the central government were in a position to make fully good.

In Gorzów in August local government officials reported on a "lamentable lack of draft power" and livestock, with only 1914 horses, 1933 cows, 7 tractors and 856 pigs. By September there would be a further decline in animal population, with only 1727 horses, 1076 cows and 479 pigs.³⁷² (According to the report of the Provincial Land Office in September there were only 1622 horses and 1850 cattle, which represented only 16 percent and 5.3 percent of the pre-war animal population respectively.³⁷³)

In Zielona Góra in August there were 888 cows, 200 horses, and 290 pigs.³⁷⁴ In its late October report the county land office twice in the same report appealed to the provincial land office to send cattle and horses, warning that if it did not receive these "in the absolute minimum amount of time," those Poles already settled in the county would begin to leave. Lack of draft power had already resulted in only 5 percent completion of

³⁷¹ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 143. According to the Provincial Land Office, in September there were 447 horses and 1806 head of cattle, or 19.8 percent and 9.4 percent of the pre-war population respectively. WAPP UWP WRiRR 3272: 344-345.

³⁷² WAPP UWP 78: 12, 32.

³⁷³ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3272: 344.

³⁷⁴ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 127.

the spring sowing. (From August to September the number of horses had increased to 349, but cattle had declined by almost half, to 482 animals.)³⁷⁵

In other counties the situation varied but was almost uniformly grave. In Piła the wartime decline was the most dramatic, going from 3,000 cows and 2,000 horses in the pre-war period to 103 cows and 156 horses in October.³⁷⁶ In August the land office in Trzcianka also reported “significant difficulties because of the lack of workers and draft power.”³⁷⁷ Wschowa was an exception to the general rule of receiving little to no help from the provincial government, since the provincial land office sent them 2,000 cattle, though they still reported a deficit of 1,000 horses.³⁷⁸ In Międzyrzecz all six of the county’s tractors were non-operational due to lack of professional tractor repairers and fuel, and so some estate land in the county could not be sown. In Słubice sowing was also “greatly hampered” by lack of draft power and problems with tractors.³⁷⁹

Economic dislocation was only further compounded by tremendous administrative chaos and corruption of the fledgling Polish administration in Eastern Brandenburg. The poorly-defined provincial boundaries in midwestern Poland were one source of great confusion. Prior to the redrawing of provincial boundaries in June 1945 in what became Ziemia Lubuska, the efforts of each province to organize the various counties of East Brandenburg was greatly complicated by an inexact delineation of boundaries between

³⁷⁵ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 214-215.

³⁷⁶ WAPP UWP 78: 74.

³⁷⁷ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 136.

³⁷⁸ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 140, 202.

³⁷⁹ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 136.

the provinces of Western Pomerania, Lower Silesia and Poznań. This resulted in disputes over jurisdiction in several counties.³⁸⁰

Krosno was an extreme example of the administrative chaos that was all too typical in this period. On 2 May, an operation group from Poznań arrived in the town to establish a Polish administration. At the end of May another operation group from the province of Western Pomerania (to which the town was officially, though nominally, attached) arrived. In early June yet a third operation group from Lower Silesia also arrived to take control of the town. The resulting dispute between the different groups was not resolved until the redivision of provincial boundaries in mid-June defined Krosno as belonging to Poznań province.³⁸¹

Equally confusing were the presence and activities of numerous "operation groups" from both local and national governmental institutions and the PPR, including the UB, the ministries of industry and of land reform, the Government Repatriation Bureau, the Polish military authorities in charge of military colonization, and various settlement commissions from different regions of Poland investigating the prospects for settling members of their local population in the Recovered Territories. The various operation groups and administrators were an ongoing source of mutual confusion and tensions, since they neither coordinated their activities with one another nor possessed clear written instructions or mandates as to the limits of their responsibility, and had little or no effective means of communication with their superiors.³⁸² Instead, they usually worked at

³⁸⁰ Szczegółą, *Przeobrażenia*, 42, 50.

³⁸¹ Rybicki, *Powstanie i działalność*, 52.

³⁸² Henryk Dominiczak, *Proces zasiedlenia Województwa Zielonogórskiego w latach 1945-1950* (Zielona Góra: Lubuskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1975), 14.

cross purposes with each other and engaged in costly struggles over turf. The confusion generated by these conflicts over jurisdiction further complicated the immensely difficult tasks of ethnically cleansing, degermanizing, polonizing and settling the Recovered Territories³⁸³—and gave these groups additional opportunities during their sojourn in Ziemia Lubuska to loot the region thoroughly.³⁸⁴

Even when Warsaw finalized the provincial boundaries in July and awarded Ziemia Lubuska to Poznań, this did not solve the problems of overlapping jurisdictions and the ongoing tug-of-wars between local authorities throughout midwestern Poland. Among the most important conflicts were those between local security organs (the aggressive, if not overly-competent or incorrupt UB and MO); the Polish military officials in charge of military colonization; the regular administration; the county land offices; and PUR. These conflicts absorbed a great deal of time and energy, and only increased distrust within the government and between it and the various groups of settlers, who often received contradictory orders from different government bodies.

Reports about the incompetence, arbitrariness and corruption in the MO and UB that had accompanied the growth of these two institutions in the pre-war regions of Wielkopolska followed them into the Recovered Territories. Both institutions not only proved incapable of dealing with the security crisis created by Soviet and Polish marauders (see below), but were often themselves a source of insecurity, as their personnel used their arms and authority to steal or arbitrarily confiscate abandoned German property, and to assert themselves against local administrative authorities. In addition to the MO and UB, the

³⁸³ Rybicki, *Początki władzy ludowej*, 90.

³⁸⁴ WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 100-101.

Polish army in this region, charged with guarding Poland's new frontiers and preparing the region to receive military colonists, also undermined civilian administration and settlement through its various interventions, and through the looting of individuals or small groups of soldiers. In a region struggling with immense security difficulties, the impotence, illegality, and interference with local administration of the three institutions charged with maintaining public order exacerbated an already desperate security situation. The failure of Polish security was widely recognized as the single most important factor in undermining Polish settlement.

In Gorzów, local government officials reported in August that the MO was "failing the exam." Its ranks were full of sixteen- and seventeen-year-old peasants who "...in the hours between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. are amusing themselves. By open windows or on the street their songs and music echo in the distance."³⁸⁵ The local PUR representative complained that daily thousands of destitute *repatrianci* from the east and Poles returning from slave labor in the west confronted the spectacle of members of the MO and UB who owned "stores, restaurants, separate villas or 5 room apartments, comfortably furnished, chock-a-block full of crystal, and covered with Persian rugs."³⁸⁶

Even though by November material improvements had eliminated the militia's "...illegal requisitions and breaking into apartments,..." the militia remained so ineffective in protecting the Polish population from Soviet marauders that the people were not even bothering to report the Red Army's assaults and robberies.³⁸⁷ The UB in Gorzów, though

³⁸⁵ WAPP UWP 78: 10.

³⁸⁶ WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 42.

³⁸⁷ AAN MAP 119: 1, 3.

it was “very active in political cases,”³⁸⁸ was mainly notable for its unwillingness to cooperate in any way with local administrative authorities and its breaking up of armed citizens patrols that had begun to make some headway in dealing with the problem of Soviet marauders.³⁸⁹

The regime’s plenipotentiary in Krosno, in whose jurisdiction the Polish Army was also present, was even more blunt in discussing the failures of Polish security organs in his county. The arbitrary intervention of military authorities and the militia commander had undercut the plenipotentiary’s position and created a situation where there were three *de facto* Polish authorities in the county. Both the militia commander and the military commander of the town of Krosno, Major Szymański, freely requisitioned whatever items they claimed to need, which in the major’s case included: a barracks; a “mass of free apartments”: an apartment for his personal use (which had been previously occupied by a Polish pioneer who was summarily evicted); the plenipotentiary’s own motorcycle and several of his horses (all taken during a critical time at the harvest); looted furniture; and pigs and cows for the major’s personal use. Furthermore, the major freely made administrative appointments and issued directives to village *starostas*, and engaged in the above confiscations without notifying the plenipotentiary.³⁹⁰ Even officers sent to monitor the progress of military settlement a month later admitted that security was a problem, the MO was ineffective, and that civil-military relations were “quite indifferent.” They, however, pointed to the civilian administration’s lack of cooperation and claimed that it

³⁸⁸ AAN MAP 2465: 181.

³⁸⁹ AAN MAP 119: 3, 15.

³⁹⁰ WAPP UWP 78: 16.

had already taken the best houses and buildings for civilian settlers and was beginning to settle civilians in areas set aside for military settlement.³⁹¹

In his September report the plenipotentiary had even harsher things to say regarding the Army, the MO and the newly arrived UB. He called the behavior of military operation groups “scandalous.” They freely looted whatever came to hand, including items the civilian administration had managed to protect after the first wave of (military) expulsions had left a great deal of former German property unguarded. He went on to call security as a whole a failure, and recommended that three-fourths of the militia be immediately dismissed because of their drunkenness, disrespect (toward himself), and “misbehavior” with German women.³⁹² The UB had only recently established itself, but,

³⁹¹ “8. 1945 sierpień 14. Krosno Odrz.—Sprawozdanie powiatowego inspektoratu osadnictwa owjskowego w Krośnie Odrzańskim por Jana Sucha o warunkach osadnictwa w powiecie,” in Hieronim Szczegółka, ed., *Źródła do Początków Władzy Ludowej na Ziemi Lubuskiej 1945-1947* (Poznań, Zielona Góra: Lubuskie Towarzystwo Naukow, 1971), 95.

³⁹² A question that arises in official discussions of “misbehavior” is whether Polish officials were using this term primarily to describe fraternization or as a euphemism for rape. In the Polish conquest of eastern Germany there are numerous reports of Polish soldiers and civilians raping German women. While there are references to improper fraternization between local Polish officials and German women, the Militia’s usually comprehensive records of crimes committed from August-December 1945 (including both Polish and Soviet attacks on Polish women and Soviet attacks on German women) are ominously silent on the question of Polish sexual assault against Germans. Given the criminality and anti-German animus of a significant portion of Polish security personnel, it is unlikely that many German women regarded it as worthwhile to report sexual assaults by Poles to Polish authorities. Of the 10 out of 14 reports 10-day reports that I had access to from the period 11 August to 31 December 1945, there were 35 reported rapes, only 2 of which concerned Polish sexual assaults on German women (26 concerned Soviet (17) or “unknown” (9) assailants of Polish women, 5 were about Polish men assaulting Polish women, and the remaining 2 concerned the rape of German women by unknown assailants). Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Harvard

within two days of its arrival in the town, confiscated his car.³⁹³ This, along with the preceding several months' problems, hindered the development of a good working relationship between the plenipotentiary and security forces. He again complained in October of the "many young and unschooled militia men," and that the UB continually overstepped its authority and did not cooperate well with the MO.³⁹⁴ In November he went so far as to send evidence of the UB's arbitrary actions to the Prosecutor in Poznań.³⁹⁵

In Zielona Góra the first problem the administration grappled with was the absence of any MO presence until late summer. Prior to August there was a "maddening lack" of militia throughout a county that officials in the local branch of the Ministry of Information estimated required at least 200 armed men.³⁹⁶ In August and September these officials also reported that in fifty villages there was no militia presence, and where there were MO stations, "the militia [was] helpless"³⁹⁷ against Germans hiding in the county's forests. Furthermore, while the few available militia were incapable of defending the local population they did manage to increase the misery of settlers by joining in with Soviet soldiers and other Poles in looting local farms.³⁹⁸ Throughout the autumn the MO

University Press, 1995). 75-76; WAPP UWP 120: 328, 371-372, 421, 479, 623, 734, 778, 809, 848, 865.

³⁹³ WAPP UWP 78: 23-24, 26.

³⁹⁴ WAPP UWP 78: 81.

³⁹⁵ WAPP UWP 78: 195.

³⁹⁶ WAPP WUiP 149: 2.

³⁹⁷ WAPP WUiP 32: 59; WAPP WUiP 33: 164.

³⁹⁸ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 143.

remained an ineffective institution³⁹⁹ and there were continued reports of its participation in robberies,⁴⁰⁰ all of which prompted local authorities by December to authorize the formation of citizens' guards.⁴⁰¹

The worsening security situation, combined with other problems, threatened to bring about mass Polish flight from the ZO. By November PPR officials acknowledged unsatisfactory security as a challenge second only to food and supply in undermining the province's efforts to settle the Western Territories,⁴⁰² while one of the leaders of the PZZ, Zygmunt Wojciechowski, claimed in his own report that lack of satisfactory security was the first problem undermining settlement.⁴⁰³ In their own situation reports officials in the MO acknowledged that the people of the western counties were demanding that the MO defend them, but "...the MO was not equal to the task, it possessed neither sufficiently broad jurisdiction or the power [to stop Soviet marauders]."⁴⁰⁴

In addition to the security organs' malfeasance and jurisdictional conflicts with the regular administration, civilian government itself was torn by numerous internal conflicts, and racked by incompetence and corruption. The presence of many unqualified, corrupt administrators provided an added incentive for officials from various branches of the local government to battle over jurisdictions, either to protect what they regarded as their

³⁹⁹ AAN MAP 2465: 229-230.

⁴⁰⁰ WAPP UWP 78: 285.

⁴⁰¹ AAN MAP 119: 92.

⁴⁰² WAPP KW PPR 145: 40.

⁴⁰³ AAN MAP 2465: 67.

⁴⁰⁴ WAPP UWP 120: 811.

own sphere of future speculation, or as a means of avoiding a detailed accounting for their earlier activities.

The stakes in these struggles were high. In spite of vast wartime destruction and Soviet looting, the Polish administration was in charge of protecting and distributing thousands of former German shops and apartments,⁴⁰⁵ tens of thousands of farms and estates,⁴⁰⁶ and significant amounts of relief supplies from the UNRRA and (to a much lesser extent) from the provincial and central governments. In addition to German property, East Brandenburg contained another resource readily available for exploitation: its remaining German population. Throughout the summer and autumn upwards of one-third of the region's population was German. Furthermore, the almost total mobilization of the male German population from 16-60 years old into the Volkssturm and their subsequent death in battle, capture or retreat to the west meant that the Germans remaining in Ziemia Lubuska were disproportionately women, children and the elderly, and so were very vulnerable to Polish (and especially Soviet) sexual and economic exploitation. For those Germans who had not managed to flee the Soviet advance and Soviet-Polish occupation, the coming months were a time of fear, violence, hunger and slave labor.

⁴⁰⁵ In the county of Gorzów (Landsberg) there were over 2500 unoccupied farms (many of which were damaged), while in the city Gorzów (Landsberg) there were over 10,000 apartments, 7,750 of which were substantially intact, though quite often empty. Even in Krosno, the poorest county of the former German province of East Brandenburg, whose county seat had been substantially destroyed by the fighting, the smaller town of Zamsz (Sommerfeld) was not touched by the fighting and had electricity and running water by August 1945. WAPP Urząd Wojewódzki Rolny i Reform Rolny 3270: 127.

⁴⁰⁶ WAPP WO-PUR 2674: 3, and WAPP UWP 78: 63 and 294 which note that most of these apartments had been stripped of their furniture and were empty.

This was a situation rife with temptation and opportunities for theft and oppression on a truly grand scale. The terrible losses the Polish intelligentsia suffered during the war⁴⁰⁷ and their partial boycott of the regime⁴⁰⁸ meant that those who did hold responsible posts were often unsuited for them. Furthermore, uncertain communications between the provincial and national authorities and their local representatives contributed greatly to official corruption, along with the inability and/or unwillingness of the regime to allocate sufficient resources to the task of building up the new administration. With the central government exercising an all but complete lack of supervision over its official representatives—but also delegating to them tremendous powers to transform East Brandenburg into Ziemia Lubuska and to mold social and political life in the Recovered Territories—there were very few checks to official power, and hence to official corruption.

Given the many difficulties and temptations inherent in the task of distributing former German property to the newly arriving Polish settlers and *repatrianci*, it is little wonder

⁴⁰⁷ During the war 37.5 percent of those who had received a higher education, 30 percent of those with a secondary education and over 50 percent of students at vocational schools during the interwar period perished during the war. This included 30 percent of all scientists and academics, 57 percent of all lawyers, and 39 percent of all doctors. This does not include the tens of thousands of members of the intelligentsia who fled to the west during the war and chose not to return to a Communist-dominated country after the war. Kersten, *Establishment*, 166.

⁴⁰⁸ Krystyna Kersten, *Między Wyzwoleniem a Zniewoleniem: Polska 1944-1956* (London: Aneks, 1993), 145-155. This boycott was far from complete, especially in Wielkopolska where part of the nationalist intelligentsia did cooperate with the regime, but the problem was serious enough that various unqualified personnel were promoted in areas where they had little expertise or education, and is part of the larger wartime and postwar phenomenon of the predominance of the young in public life throughout central and southern Europe. Jan Gross, "The Experience of War in East Central Europe: Social Disruption and Political Revolution," in Kersten, *Establishment*, xviii.

that the two institutions charged with this task, the Government Land Offices (Państwowy Urząd Ziemiński, PUZ) and the Government Repatriation Agency (Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny, PUR), were among the most politically controversial and least loved state agencies in post-war mid-western Poland.⁴⁰⁹ While these two institutions cooperated closely in the settlement of Ziemia Lubuska, within the pre-war boundaries of Wielkopolska they often waged a bitter conflict over jurisdiction of abandoned and confiscated (mostly) German property.⁴¹⁰ This conflict in large part had its roots in the each institution's very different mandates. PUZ saw its primary task to be the revival of agriculture as quickly and efficiently as possible, while PUR saw as its main mission the carrying out of a widespread and rapid settlement of Polish colonists, *repatrianci*, and returnees from Western Europe, and to just as quickly expel the remaining remnants of the German population.

Another element in this conflict was bound up with the politics of land reform. The PPR saw land reform as primarily a political task through which it would cement the loyalty of the poor and middle peasants to the regime, while PUZ was concerned with blunting those elements of land reform which very early on began to undercut agricultural productivity. PUR also found itself caught in a political crossfire between much of the local administration and elements within Wielkopolska's PPR. The local administration in those pre-war counties of Wielkopolska which had been heavily populated by Germans

⁴⁰⁹ Stefan Banasiak discusses the widespread unpopularity and negative press PUR received in *Działalność osadnicza państwowego urzędu repatriacyjnego na Ziemiach Odzyskanych w latach 1945-1947* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1963), 59-60.

⁴¹⁰ Among the many problems local officials faced in distributing confiscated property were numerous instances of Poles who had been on the third and fourth categories of the Volksliste who had their property confiscated, but were later rehabilitated and sought to reclaim their homes and farms. WAPP PUR 2852: 86.

regarded PUR's task of facilitating the settlement of the *repatrianci* with hostility, while the PPR vacillated in its attitude toward the *repatrianci*, and hence toward PUR. At times the PPR regarded the *repatrianci* as a politically "healthy" (i.e., pro-PPR) element, while on other occasions the PPR either sought to court local opinion by supporting anti-*repatrianci* measures or viewed the *repatrianci* as reactionary. These many-sided jurisdictional and political conflicts between PUR, PUZ, the PPR, and other administrative bodies were among the most damaging and bitter disputes hampering Polish settlement. They enhanced local uncertainty about stability in property ownership, directly undermined the already difficult task of reviving the region's agricultural productivity, and, when they later began to become aligned with the PPR's political campaign against the PSL (see below), these conflicts further divided Polish frontier society.

PUR faced a truly tremendous task in the Recovered Territories: from the establishment of its offices and staging point on 27 May 1945, to settling the ever larger number of *repatrianci* arriving from the east and Polish slave laborers returning from the west in to what was to become Ziemia Lubuska.⁴¹¹ The PUR office in Gorzów was responsible for organizing staging points throughout Ziemia Lubuska, and provided food (within its first month PUR provided 53,800 meals and additional dry goods to Poles passing through Gorzów), medical care, and even cash grants for the *repatrianci* after their arrival, as well as providing information and registering both the *repatrianci* and settlers arriving from

⁴¹¹ The Central Government had originally assigned Gorzów and the northwestern areas of Ziemia Lubuska to the province of Western Pomorze, from which PUR officials in Gorzów vainly sought help in June 1945 to supply and help fix transport problems. WAPP WO-PUR 2674: 88.

other areas of Poland.⁴¹² During these early days PUR had to deal with the enormous disappointment caused by the exaggerated Soviet promises made to the *repatrianci* about the high quality of life in the Recovered Territories⁴¹³ as well as cope with the difficulty of finding sufficiently qualified people to deal with the administrative challenges of resettlement⁴¹⁴ and the large number of *repatrianci* and settlers (over 127,000 persons by 30 September 1945⁴¹⁵) who were constantly arriving in this region.

Very early on PUR officials were highly critical of the “unnecessary chaos” generated by the tremendous proliferation of operation groups, non-governmental organizations and administrative bodies concerned with the distribution of German property⁴¹⁶ and the settlement of Poles in the Recovered Territories, and pressed for a unification of all settlement activities. In his June 1945 report, Stanisław Wala, the local head of PUR in Gorzów (whose jurisdiction extended to most of what was to become Ziemia Lubuska), already complained about the local government’s lack of material and administrative support for PUR. Among other problems, Gorzów’s *starosta* refused to provide PUR with a car. PUZ had failed to deliver a promised team of horses and a cart, and both PUZ

⁴¹² WAPP WO-PUR 2682: 1.

⁴¹³ WAPP WO-PUR 2682: 2.

⁴¹⁴ WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 40.

⁴¹⁵ WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 2.

⁴¹⁶ Banasiak mentions at least ten different official and semi-official institutions which had direct authority in distributing property, from the ZSCh (Związek Samopomoc Chłopski, Peasant Self-help Union) to Settlement Committees (which included political parties and representatives of organizations such as the PZZ), to departments within the regular administration, including the departments of forestry, waterways, and ports, to local prefects and subprefects. Other organizations, including the military, industries, schools and various churches also sought to reserve rural and urban property for their own uses. Banasiak, 91.

and the plenipotentiary in charge of provisions, trade and industry were unwilling to send a description of recently cataloged German property to his office.⁴¹⁷ While in July Wala reported that there was “close cooperation” between himself and the local authorities, even then he noted a general tendency to give the *repatrianci* as little provisions as possible, and that cooperation between PUR and the Regional Military Inspector was a problem.⁴¹⁸ By August and September, however, Wala would complain bitterly of the failings of various administrative bodies that he claimed were placing Polish settlement in the Recovered Territories in jeopardy.

In addition to problems with the wide-scale looting of the MO, the UB, and the Red Army and the all but insoluble problems of transport and supply, Wala noted in his reports for August and September the “epidemic spread of corruption” throughout the poorly paid administration, who often hid former German industrial or trade goods from PUR officials, retaining them as a supplement to their unpaid salaries.⁴¹⁹ Local government officials were also reserving farms for themselves, friends, or relatives. Wala argued that at the root of these problems was the predominance of Poznań natives in the local administration and the MO, who behaved badly, even with hostility, toward the *repatrianci* and Poles from other regions of Poland while they treated the remaining German population better. Wala claimed that the corruption and pro-German sympathies of the local, Poznań-dominated administration were among the reasons that many *repatrianci* and settlers were already beginning to flee the region.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁷ WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 100-101.

⁴¹⁸ WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 82.

⁴¹⁹ WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 42.

⁴²⁰ WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 3.

In spite of these defects, much of the local Polish administration in charge of protecting and distributing this property to settlers endeavored to fulfill their tasks conscientiously. Local government and PUR officials in Ziemia Lubuska were not insulated from the hardships that impinged upon other settlers. They worked in the face of extremely adverse conditions, with little support from the provincial or central government or the Red Army. In Krosno local officials sent to the county from Wielkopolska had received little financial help and no official directives from the Governor of Poznań from their arrival in the county in April until July.⁴²¹ In June, when they received an operation group from the neighboring province of Lower Silesia, they were confronted with the spectacle of an administration just across their province's boundaries whose members were regularly receiving ten times their own officials' pay—pay which they had extracted from Poznań only with great difficulty.⁴²²

Officials in Gorzów and Zielona Góra also worked in extremely difficult conditions, often receiving little to no pay or rations. In one report an official in Gorzów complained that after a couple of months in the Recovered Territories local officials "forgot what fats looked like."⁴²³ These difficulties were exacerbated by the large number of blue and white collar workers employed in local government at that time: in Gorzów one-third of the city's working population (7,000 Poles) were city employees.⁴²⁴ In Zielona Góra the

⁴²¹ Dulczewski and Kwilecki, 87.

⁴²² WAPP UWP 78: 15.

⁴²³ WAPP UWP 78: 10-11, 67, 169. In October ration card holders only received their allotment of bread, with no meats, fats, or other items. In Zielona Góra the situation was less difficult in the summer and early fall.

⁴²⁴ WAPP UWP 78: 294, The October report which noted the number of city employees also reported that the local government's financial situation was "catastrophic," and that there was "an absolute lack of credit."

supply and payment situation was less difficult in the summer and early autumn, and the local government enjoyed real success in settling large areas of the county.⁴²⁵

Though there was relatively little direct conflict between PUR and the regular administration in Ziemia Lubuska,⁴²⁶ PUZ and the local government were quite active in their opposition to PUR in the pre-war counties of Wielkopolska. There, PUR was very much an “outside institution” that was on the cutting edge of the creation of a new Poland. Among PUR’s tasks were: imposing the regime’s unpopular policy of settling *repatrianci* on abandoned German and Volksdeutsche farms in the pre-war counties of Wielkopolska; assisting both those Poles returning from slave labor and those reemigrating from throughout Europe; helping the Poles of Wielkopolska settle Ziemia Lubuska; and helping to organize the expulsion of the region’s remaining German population. PUR, like many other new institutions in this period, found itself hampered by extremely limited resources with which to perform its duties and care for its own personnel (and which led to a constant outflow of PUR personnel to other, better paying, government institutions⁴²⁷), and by the difficulty in finding reliable personnel.⁴²⁸ Finally,

⁴²⁵ Before the war there were 65,799 inhabitants in Zielona Góra. Within six months of the Polish takeover of the region there were 30,000 Poles in the county, of whom 24,000 had been settled by PUR. (WAPP WO-PUR 137: 61.) PUR had also enjoyed significant success in Gorzów, where local government officials reported that by October there were over 35,844 Poles in Gorzów county (14,688 settled in the city of Gorzów), and that 5,400 farms had been settled. (AAN MAP 2465: 156.) Even during the months when provisions were scarce, PUR officials in Gorzów had “very energetically helped settlers” and had spent 138,000 zł helping 921 repatrianci. WAPP UWP 78: 294.

⁴²⁶ In his October 1945 report, the Regional Inspector of Settlement noted relatively few difficulties between PUR and local government officials in Ziemia Lubuska’s thirteen counties, though he reported extensive difficulties with the Red Army, Military Settlement authorities and the MO. WAPP WO-PUR 872: 38-40.

⁴²⁷ Banasiak, 58.

as popular attitudes toward the reforging of mid-western Poland's boundaries and society became increasingly negative, PUR found itself increasingly under fire as one of the central institutions charged with bringing about these changes.

PUR began to organize in Wielkopolska shortly after the liberation of Poznań, on 27 February 1945. Within five months it established itself throughout the province, with 32 staging areas, settled the *repatrianci* on 5,337 farms and 580 town properties, and also helped settle 30,823 residents of Wielkopolska in the Recovered Territories.⁴²⁹ The old counties of Poznań contained the largest concentration of German farms in the pre-war regions of Poland,⁴³⁰ and hence represented a prime area for the regime to begin to resettle the tens of thousands of *repatrianci* from the former Polish eastern borderlands who began to enter Poland in increasing numbers in the winter and spring of 1945.⁴³¹

From the beginning, county and district Polish officials (especially, but not exclusively those working in the Land Offices) and local society sought to hinder PUR's efforts to settle the *repatrianci* on these farms. As early as March, in Kępno (a county with the second largest numbers of German farms in the pre-war boundaries of Wielkopolska⁴³²) PUR officials complained of how PUZ, the local town government and forestry officials had all failed to send descriptions of former German property, and how village and

⁴²⁸ WAPP WO-PUR 134: 43.

⁴²⁹ WAPP WO-PUR 134: 43.

⁴³⁰ 31.5 percent of the 98,750 German farms in pre-war Poland were in Poznań. Ślabek, 324-325.

⁴³¹ From January to April 1945, over 140,000 persons returned to Poland from the Soviet Union, though this number fell off considerably, to only 22,058 for the rest of 1945. Banasiak, 17 and Kersten, *Repatriacja ludności*, 229.

⁴³² Ślabek, 342.

district administrators had sought to “fictionally occupy” farms vacated by Volksdeutsch to whom they were related.⁴³³ PUR officials made similar accusations in Ostrów (where they tried to explain to local officials that there was no such thing as “first” and “second-rate” Poles, and railed against the local effort to “defraud the state”⁴³⁴), Nowy Tomyśl (whose land office appealed to provincial authorities to curb PUR’s efforts to settle more *repatrianci*, an action which it claimed was contrary to the interests of both the county and the *repatrianci* themselves⁴³⁵), Leszno, Środa, and Żnin.⁴³⁶ In Obornik, the land offices were less a hindrance to PUR than was the stance of the local political parties—in spite of what PUR regarded as the significant opportunities for settlement within the county.⁴³⁷

By September 1945 resistance to, and concern about, PUR’s settlement efforts was entrenched throughout the local and higher provincial administration. In a report issued by the Provincial Settlement Committee (a body that worked in close cooperation with PUR) on settlement in fourteen of pre-war Wielkopolska’s 27 counties, only two counties were reported as exhibiting “good” or “very good” cooperation with PUR and the Settlement Committee. In the remaining counties the report described cooperation between PUZ and local officials and the Settlement Commission and PUR as anywhere from “not too good” to “combative.”⁴³⁸

⁴³³ WAPP WO-PUR 872: 4.

⁴³⁴ WAPP WO-PUR 872: 6.

⁴³⁵ WAPP WUIiP 33: 145.

⁴³⁶ WAPP WO-PUR 872: 20-22, 29.

⁴³⁷ WAPP WO-PUR 872: 33.

⁴³⁸ WAPP WO-PUR 872: 38-44.

The government institutions (and later the opposition political party, the PSL) which engaged in such resistance had behind them the solid support of much of Wielkopolska's society.⁴³⁹ Officials active in settling the *repatrianci* constantly referred to the "extremely unfriendly/hostile attitude" toward the *repatrianci* on the part of a local society which sought to retain as much German property as possible in its own hands. In Kępno, PUR officials talked about how "generally, both officials and the people are cautiously but plainly very unfriendly to the *repatrianci* and the resettlement action....," an unfriendliness that extended to PUR officials as well.⁴⁴⁰ In Środa PUR officials reported how "Local people [were] unfriendly toward the *repatrianci*, not offering them any help at all, demanding higher payment for leasing horses, and opining that the *repatrianci* don't conduct themselves well in their affairs, and that they will have to leave their farms and that they (the local people) will receive their land."⁴⁴¹ This attitude appears to have been common and persistent throughout Wielkopolska (and in other regions of the Recovered Territories where Wielkopolska Poles settled⁴⁴²), and efforts by both the

⁴³⁹ Słabek, 335.

⁴⁴⁰ WAPP WO-PUR 872: 3.

⁴⁴¹ WAPP WO-PUR 872: 21.

⁴⁴² WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 3 in which a PUR official in Gorzów complained of the better treatment which Wielkopolska (and Pomorze) Poles showed to Germans than to the *repatrianci*; and Kenney, who discusses the strong regionalism that pervaded settlers' attitudes in Wrocław, and how the "Pozniaks" were often regarded by other Poles as "arrogant and scornful of their less civilized neighbors to the east." Kenney, 159, 161.

Church⁴⁴³ and the PPR⁴⁴⁴ to counter local prejudice against the *repatrianci* were to little or no avail.⁴⁴⁵

Degermanization and colonization of even the pre-war provinces of Wielkopolska thus proved to be a more difficult task than either the Polish state, the PPR, or local society imagined it to be. Even as early as August Wielkopolska's PPR was concluding that local society has "failed the exam" of settling the Recovered Territories. The regime had made a good beginning in its efforts to achieve Gomułka's dream of a state built along national and not multinational lines; it had already expelled much, if not all of the region's Germans and had expropriated their property. This was accomplished under the politically optimum conditions of limited pluralism, overwhelming force, and a strong concentration of power into officially approved hands, but even then the new authorities had only partially overcome the difficulties of establishing a new administration, coping with the legacy of wartime destruction and threats to security, and ethnically cleansing and colonizing an enlarged Wielkopolska. In the coming months the regime would be buffeted by even more challenges as it sought to cope with a widely popular opposition, shore up the collapsing Polish settlement of Ziemia Lubuska, limit the physical and political damage of the Red Army's ongoing depredations, and restore some semblance of public order in a region racked by increasing political violence, banditry, and popular looting.

⁴⁴³ Osekowski, 219-220.

⁴⁴⁴ WAPP KW PPR 145: 16.

⁴⁴⁵ PUR and the Settlement Commission filed similar reports of local hostility concerning Ostrów, Leszno, Mogilno, Kalisz from August to December. WAPP WO-PUR 872: 5, 20, 37, 65.

“MIGHTY MEN OF VALOR”: THE RED ARMY IN WIELKOPOLSKA AND ZIEMIA LUBUSKA,
JULY-SEPTEMBER 1945

“Our soldiers look at your life, at your stores, your restaurants, and amusements, they see that the bourgeois and capitalists are growing up among you. They are doing this against the enemies of democracy and working people.”

—A Red Army officer replying to Poles complaining about thefts committed by his soldiers.⁴⁴⁶

And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses: and they slew all the males...And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.

—Numbers 31:7, 9-11

The looming presence of the Red Army proved to be the most important source of ongoing difficulties in all aspects of efforts to settle, degermanize and polonize the Recovered Territories. The ongoing intervention of Red Army officers in almost every aspects of local administration and the sporadic but potentially dangerous Soviet sponsorship of the region's remaining German population called into question Polish sovereignty in Eastern Brandenburg during the first summer of Polish settlement there. This, the ongoing official exactions and unofficial continued pillaging, and the numerous rapes and deadly assaults by the Red Army's officers and enlisted men on the Polish population further undermined Polish efforts to settle Ziemia Lubuska. Though it was true that, as both the Soviet Union's soldiery and the PPR repeated at every opportunity, Poland's ultimate claim to the Recovered Territories depended upon the Red Army's

⁴⁴⁶ WAPP WUIiP 34: 84.

grace, Poland would pay a high price for this “gift” in the safety, property, and lives of many of its citizens in these first few years of settlement.

The tendency of many Soviet military commanders to support local Germans against Polish authorities and to frustrate Polish efforts at settlement was the first hurdle that the Polish government faced in its efforts to assert control in the Recovered Territories. In part this reflected the limited and uncertain nature of Polish sovereignty in this area prior to the Potsdam conference, and the vagaries of Stalin’s German and Polish policies. Poland’s claim to this region was quite tenuous, especially since throughout the summer of 1945 the Recovered Territories were still largely populated by the remnants of the German population, units of the Red Army and their worker brigades, and literally millions of transients moving eastward and westward. Though they possessed the trappings of a sovereign people, Poles in the Recovered Territories still remained a minority⁴⁴⁷ ultimately subject to the control of local Red Army military commanders.

The Red Army’s support for the local German population also demonstrated the Soviet military’s desire to derive as much material benefit as possible from the former German Reich’s eastern provinces through both the looting of German property and the expropriation of German labor. The Red Army’s commanders did this first through their

⁴⁴⁷ TASS reported that over 3,970,000 Soviet citizens were repatriated from Germany from the summer of 1945 until 1 September. The Soviets liberated a further 732,000 Western European and American POWs who had been imprisoned in the eastern areas of the Reich. Finally, PUR reported that until July 1945 over 800,000 Poles had returned from slave labor in Germany, and from July until the end of the year a further 656,000 would return to Poland. Combined with Soviet troop movements and the efforts of Germans to return to the homes they had abandoned in the east during the first onslaught of the Soviet advance, at least 5-6 million people passed through western Poland during the first several months after the war, many of them along the Berlin-Poznań railway that cut through Ziemia Lubuska. Kołomejczyk, 78.

support of the local German population, and then through overly vigorous, calculated efforts to “help” local Polish authorities in Ziemia Lubuska ethnically cleanse the region.

Throughout the early summer the Soviets allowed Germans to return to their homes and farms, and then as long as possible delayed and hindered Polish efforts at settling Poles and expelling Germans. This was especially the case during the Polish Army’s expulsions of July in which, in large areas, the Polish Army encountered vigorous Soviet resistance—including instances where the Red Army arrested Poles attempting to carry out the expulsions.⁴⁴⁸ Several months later, by the autumn of 1945, when Poles were establishing the basis for a massive resettlement of the Recovered Territories, the Soviets apparently reversed their previous policy and began their own expulsion of elements of the German population (excluding German workers on Soviet-controlled estates). However, the Soviets carried on these expulsions without any coordination with local Polish authorities and ignored Widy-Wirsky’s revised regulations on expulsions. The result was that these expulsions rebounded to the Red Army’s immediate benefit as the Soviets made sure that all of the latter’s moveable property fell to the hands of the Red Army and not Polish settlers.⁴⁴⁹

In Ziemia Lubuska Soviet obstruction of the Polish administration occurred in a variety of semi-official and unofficial ways. Officially, throughout most of the region Red Army commanders expressed a constant willingness to cooperate with the Polish civilian administration. Thus, for example, the Commander of the First Ukrainian Front issued an order which called on Soviet officers “to transfer to Polish authorities all landed property

⁴⁴⁸ Nitschke also reports that in at least one instance Germans were so encouraged by Soviet support that they attacked an MO post. Nitschke, 162-163.

⁴⁴⁹ AAN MAP 2465: 69.

together with its inventory, buildings, draft animals, with exceptions [which would prove to be quite significant] for what comes under the list prepared by units in charge of trophies of war.” Polish operation groups also initially reported good cooperation with Soviet military authorities in Gorzów and Zielona Góra.⁴⁵⁰ Indeed, in the early days of the conquest of East Brandenburg the Soviets had been instrumental in establishing the first Polish administration in the region, and would sporadically (and with decreasing frequency) supply it with material help (though the Soviets were also willing to help assist in the establishment of German administrative bodies in areas that did not have sufficient number of Poles).⁴⁵¹ However, even though by mid-July 1945 the Red Army had turned over to civilian rule practically every town under its administration,⁴⁵² Soviet military commanders would continue to interfere in Polish administration.

In Zielona Góra this interference involved the Soviet military officials not only showing little respect toward Polish officials,⁴⁵³ but even the active Soviet sponsorship of the

⁴⁵⁰ “9. 1945 kwiecień 4. Gorzów Wlkp.—Sprawozdanie burmistrza miasta Gorzowa Wlkp. Piotra Wysockiego z działalności administracyjnej”; “10. 1945 kwiecień 12—Rozkaz szefa wydziału komendantur wojskowych I. Frontu Ukraińskiego ppłk Riepina do komendantów wojennych”; and “16. 1945. 12 maj -22 czerwiec. Zielona Góra—Fragmenty “Kroniki” prowadzonej przez grupę operacyjną Komitetu Ekonomicznego Rady Ministrów w Zielonej Górze.” in Szczegół, ed., *Źródła Do Początków Władzy Ludowej*, 11, 12, 23.

⁴⁵¹ Szczegół, *Przeobrażenia*, 31-32; Rybicki, *Powstanie i działalność*, 25-29.

⁴⁵² Rybicki, *Powstanie i działalność*, 29. The three exceptions were Piła (in the area assigned to the province of Poznań), Białograd, and Szczecinek.

⁴⁵³ An example of the distortions which official censorship forced on Polish historiography occurs in Szczegół’s collection of documents on the beginnings of Polish rule in the Recovered Territories, *Zródła do Początków*, 85-86, which reproduces without comment the 10 July order of the Soviet garrison commander, General Borisov in which he enjoins his subordinates to cooperate with Polish officials and provide them with all possible aid. The sentiments expressed in this order bear little resemblance to

town's German population. The Soviets allowed German schools to remain open, accepted the German Mark as official currency,⁴⁵⁴ and even helped the local population to publish a German newspaper until the end of August.⁴⁵⁵ In Gorzów Soviet authorities appointed a member of the German Communist Party as head of the German community,⁴⁵⁶ and local Polish officials complained of Soviet soldiers "holding on to German farms by force of arms," and of Soviet-German cooperation in keeping Poles from settling in certain villages. Polish officials in Gorzów went on to claim that the Red Army was the "greatest problem hindering settlement."⁴⁵⁷ Up to the beginning of September authorities in Krosno reported good relations with local Red Army commanders, since the Soviets openly acknowledged only Polish rights to local property (though this situation would soon change radically⁴⁵⁸). However, even these officials admitted of the lower ranks of the Red Army that "they take, rob, and carry off all that they can, and assault with their weapons in hand."⁴⁵⁹

actual Soviet conduct in Zielona Góra (or most of the other towns and villages of East Brandenburg) in the summer of 1945.

⁴⁵⁴ WAPP WUIiP 149: 1-2.

⁴⁵⁵ WAPP WUIiP 32: 59

⁴⁵⁶ *Szczegóła, Przeobrażenia*, 40.

⁴⁵⁷ WAPP UWP 78: 13, and WAPP WO-PUR 2675: 15.

⁴⁵⁸ WAPP UWP 78: 193. In their report for November, Polish officials reported that the Soviets had begun to defend the remaining local German population against Polish settlers.

⁴⁵⁹ WAPP UWP 78, 24. Polish officials also complained of Soviet military commanders favoring Germans in Swiebodzin (WAPP WUIiP 32, 51) and Trzcianka, where local Soviet commanders confiscated local grain stores and "took an enemy stance towards Poles, and at every step tolerated Germans [underlined in the original]. (WAPP UWP Wydział Rolnictwa 3270: 134), and Międzyrzecz, (WAPP Urząd Rolnictwo 3270: 134 and WAPP WUIiP 33, 147.) In Strzelce Krajenski the 26,000-strong Soviet workers'

This all-but-universal interference of the Red Army in Polish administration in Ziemia Lubuska and throughout the Recovered Territories prompted the Office of the Plenipotentiary General of the Recovered Territories (in charge of organizing Polish settlement and administration in the ZO) to issue a report in July 1945 stating that it regarded the Red Army as “one of the most important difficulties in organizing a Polish administration in the Recovered Territories.” The Plenipotentiary even claimed that “all power rests in the hands of Soviet military commanders” in spite of the agreement of 23 May transferring the Recovered Territories to Polish civilian administration.⁴⁶⁰

Yet even worse than these Soviet meddlings in Polish administration were the Red Army’s constant exactions. Official Soviet looting in Ziemia Lubuska included not only much of the region’s relatively small amount of surviving industry, but also the occupation of German estates (staffed in part by Germans who were completely outside of Polish jurisdiction and beyond the reach of expulsion). Most devastating of all for Polish settlement, the Red Army confiscated much of the harvest of autumn 1945, greatly increasing the fear of hunger among the already poorly-supplied local Polish population.

The Soviets did make gestures of materially supporting Polish settlers during this period. In several counties, the Red Army made gifts of horses to new Polish settlers, though here, as in so much else, Poles were wise to look Soviet gift horses in the mouth. In Skwierzyn, while they refused to contribute to a sowing fund and in general did not help local officials to sow the land, the Red Army did turn over to Polish settlers ten horses.

brigades (in an area with less than 7,000 Polish settlers) were supporting the remaining local Germans against Polish settlers. WAPP UWP 78: 317; AN MZO 2465: 142-143.

⁴⁶⁰ AAN MAP 2421: 42, 44.

which on inspection were all found to be seriously ill.⁴⁶¹ In Międzyrzecz as well the Soviets made a great show of giving 20 horses to the local population, “all of which were ill or very old, with little ability to work. In one case of six gift horses, five shortly died....”⁴⁶² Only in Wschowa did the Soviets play an unambiguously positive role, when in November the Red Army turned over 260 horses to the county government as it abandoned the estates it had occupied.⁴⁶³

However, these few official gestures of goodwill paled in comparison to the toll of the Red Army’s official plundering and unofficial banditry and assault. Reports of unauthorized confiscations and thefts, assaults and rape are a universal theme in the administrative reports of this period, wherever the Red Army was stationed in Wielkopolska. However, since the Polish-Soviet alliance was (and for almost half a century would remain) the cornerstone of Communist politics in Poland, the Polish government and the PPR did all they could to maintain the appearance that the ostensibly harmonious surface of official Polish-Soviet relationship and Slavic solidarity was undisturbed by anything but insignificant local conflicts. Indeed, the PPR leadership revealed how deeply out of touch it was with popular sentiment in the matter of the Red Army when in August its high leadership complained that the Party was on the defensive against anti-Soviet propaganda, and insisted that “at every step,” local activists underline the importance of the Polish-Soviet alliance.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶¹ WAPP UWP 78: 141.

⁴⁶² WAPP WRiRR 3270: 217.

⁴⁶³ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 199.

⁴⁶⁴ KW PPR 6: 78. Post-war Polish historiography echoes this inconsistency (or, perhaps, simply reflects the exigencies of official censorship). Erazmus, in his study of Wielkopolska’s politics, claims both that “the Red Army was very popular in

Soviet exactions included the ongoing confiscation of “booty of war” by special Soviet units, and illegal plundering and robbery by individual soldiers or by bands of Soviet soldiers, deserters, and workers’ brigades attached to the Red Army. Officially, Soviet urban plunder included apartments, supply magazines, and much of the little surviving industry and machinery in the towns.⁴⁶⁵ In Gorzów officials reported that since the Soviets had turned over economic administration to Polish authorities in July the situation had worsened on account of the Soviet confiscation of the town’s magazines, a complete lack of threshing machines (which the Soviets had confiscated), and the serious harm done to the gas works by Soviet confiscations.⁴⁶⁶ In their report for September officials in Krosno reported the continued Soviet confiscation of apartments, while officials in Zielona Góra reported that as of August the Soviets continued to occupy the power and electric works, and were withholding power from the town.

In other towns and counties of the lightly industrialized, mainly rural Ziemia Lubuska, Soviet confiscations were equally thorough and their occupation of urban dwellings impinged on Polish settlement. In Sulęcín county, the Soviets seized a metal processing plant in Slonsk (Sonnenburg), and in Sulęcín itself a furniture factory, three sawmills, dairy equipment, a cannery, and a brush factory.⁴⁶⁷ while in Swiebodzin “all industry had been turned over to the Russians.”⁴⁶⁸

Wielkopolska” *and* that “anti-Soviet propaganda was the greatest obstacle to the PPR.” Erazmus, 13.

⁴⁶⁵ WAPP UWP 78: 65-67

⁴⁶⁶ WAPP UWP 78: 80.

⁴⁶⁷ WAPP UWP 78: 261.

⁴⁶⁸ WAPP WUIiP 32: 51.

In the countryside the Red Army occupied a large (and during the summer and fall of 1945 a growing) number of local farms and estates, confiscated all their inventory and seed grain, and often wrecked any farms they finally abandoned.⁴⁶⁹ In the autumn of 1945, however, local Soviet military commanders even further damaged the local economy by extending their definition of plunder to include most of the region's harvest. In their 3 October 1945 report, local officials in Krosno reported that the Soviet military commander proclaimed that all potatoes in the county were "loot of war" and belonged to the Red Army. The Soviets also took most of the harvest (9,000 hectares) and reneged on a promise to turn over to the county government 150 kilograms of grain per hectare.⁴⁷⁰ In Zielona Góra and Gorzów the Red Army also took most of the harvest as well.⁴⁷¹

Confiscations like these also occurred in most other counties of Ziemia Lubuska. In Trzcianka, Słubice and Międzyrzecz, the Red Army's harvest units took all of the grain on the estates they occupied, as well as the greater part of the agricultural inventory in the county (including farm machinery in Słubice and Międzyrzecz that local settlers or Polish officials had repaired) and were leaving farm machinery outdoors where it was being damaged.⁴⁷² In Wschowa the Soviets seized sixty percent of the harvest, but they forbade

⁴⁶⁹ WAPP WO-PUR 2675: 14. In a report of the 10,993 free farms in Gorzów county, PUR reported that 40 percent of these were in Soviet hands and "that it can be counted on that when the Soviets leave such places they will be completely devastated." In Strzelce there were similar problems with the Soviets destroying property they occupied, including one estate which, after the Soviets left, only had "empty walls and the land" with no farm implements, furnishing, seed grain or animals. AAN MZO 1154, 8.

⁴⁷⁰ WAPP UWP 78: 80-82.

⁴⁷¹ WAPP WUiP 33: 155, 164.

⁴⁷² WAPP UWP WRiRR: 131, 134, 136.

Poles to mow hay in Soviet-controlled fields, even though they themselves were not mowing the hay and it was either rotting in the fields or burning.⁴⁷³ In Strzelce Krajeński the Soviets completely confiscated the grain harvest.⁴⁷⁴

The unofficial violence of the Red Army further deepened the misery of Polish settlers and the remaining Germans throughout the summer and fall of 1945. Theft, assault, rape and murder were the (dis)order of the day among most of the Red Army units stationed in Ziemia Lubuska. Problems with security appear throughout almost every official report in this period, usually with the remark that local security forces, the MO and UB, were powerless to intervene and that all remonstrances with Red Army military officials were “without result.” In July and August local government officials in Gorzów spoke of places in the county where “Soviet soldiers attempted to strip the population of everything, and the people making complaints don’t find any help or protection from the Soviet military commander.” Not surprisingly, this led to a deterioration in relations between the Polish settlers and the Red Army.⁴⁷⁵ By early October officials were talking of the Red Army’s thieving and plundering as a “universal plague” in all but one of Gorzów county’s twelve communes.⁴⁷⁶

A discussion of the situation in various counties in Ziemia Lubuska appears in reports sent to the Inter-ministerial Commission on Poland’s Frontiers and the Inter-Party Committee of Democratic Parties in September. In Skwierzyn the report discussed

⁴⁷³ WAPP WUiIP 33: 164; WAPP UWP WRiRR: 140.

⁴⁷⁴ WAPP UWP 78: 317; AAN MZO 2465: 142-143.

⁴⁷⁵ WAPP UWP 78: 7, 65.

⁴⁷⁶ AAN MAP 2465: 155

“unfriendly behavior by particular Soviet units and robberies.” In Wschowa there were frequent thefts, rapes, and brawls involving Soviet soldiers, and in Gorzów theft and assault by Soviet soldiers were “the order of the day.” Officials also reported the destruction of buildings in the Stolec commune by departing Soviet units, a murder in the Czechów district of a settler, Bolesław Wasilewski and the beating of his brother, and that someone “in the uniform of a senior lieutenant stole a horse.” Międzyrzecz and Strzelce counties reported numerous thefts and assaults by Soviet soldiers and workers, as did Sulęcín, which stressed that “shootings, scuffles, and rapes are daily occurrences.” Zielona Góra reported constant thefts, assaults, and even murders, while Gubin and Slubice reported assaults, thefts and rapes, sometimes committed by Soviet soldiers and sailors with German cooperation on Poles settling in those counties.⁴⁷⁷

These constant robberies led many local settlers to refuse to accept farms that lay near any of the county’s many forests, for fear of becoming easier targets of banditry.⁴⁷⁸ A convention adopted by local officials commenting on the Red Army’s criminality throughout much of this reporting is that crimes were committed by “individuals in Soviet uniform,” rather than directly crediting these depredations to the Red Army. There were indeed deserters, workers’ brigades attached to the Red Army, and even bandits who had stolen Soviet uniforms who probably did account for a certain portion of the assaults and thefts in Ziemia Lubuska. However, the limited government efforts to distinguish between the “real Red Army” and “those hiding behind its uniforms” (such as officials in Międzyrzecz attempted to do⁴⁷⁹) did not impact popular perceptions of the Red Army as a

⁴⁷⁷ AAN MZO 60: 202-203.

⁴⁷⁸ AAN MAP 2465: 155.

⁴⁷⁹ AAN MAP 2465: 204.

whole being responsible for the ongoing depredations. That even local officials believed this is indicated later in the Gorzów report cited above by the fact that in the one commune, Sanok, where there was little violence against civilians, the local Soviet commander kept his troops in line. While the problem of banditry in Ziemia Lubuska and Poznań was greater than the Red Army alone (see discussion below), the Red Army accounted for a very high proportion of the violent lawlessness in the area. if only because its units were large, well-armed and undisciplined.

In Zielona Góra the situation was especially grave. In August officials in Zielona Góra reported Soviet and civilian thieving in unoccupied German farms, and that their efforts at intervention were “without result.”⁴⁸⁰ By October, officials discussed how relations between the Red Army and the local population had recently worsened on account of “constant instances of assault, rape and even murder by Red Army soldiers.”⁴⁸¹ The security situation worsened in part due to a purge of the MO which had reduced its numbers and led to the liquidation of several MO outposts in the countryside.⁴⁸² This created a situation in which the “MO was completely helpless in the face of Soviet soldiers and Soviet military commanders were also helpless...[and] Soviet soldiers...especially in the night, but also in the day ruthlessly steal everything that comes into their hands.”⁴⁸³

⁴⁸⁰ WAPP UWP-WRiRR 3270: 143.

⁴⁸¹ WAPP UWP 78: 283.

⁴⁸² WAPP UWP 78: 284.

⁴⁸³ AAN MAP 2465: 229.

This chronic lack of security was similar, if not as severe, in Krosno. There the main problem appears to have been Soviet theft and not assaults, rape or murder. In their reports of August, September, and October local officials referred to constant complaints by settlers of thieving by Soviet deserters, Soviet-held German prisoners, and Soviet soldiers.⁴⁸⁴ Similar problems prevailed throughout Ziemia Lubuska⁴⁸⁵ and further deepened the perception among Poles that the Recovered Territories were a dangerous “Wild West”⁴⁸⁶ unsafe for settlement.

DISSENSION IN THE CAMP: SOCIO-POLITICAL PLURALISM AND THE GROWTH OF OPPOSITION POLITICS IN WIELKOPOLSKA, SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 1945

And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

—Exodus 16:2

⁴⁸⁴ WAPP UWP 78: 24, 80.

⁴⁸⁵ The Red Army’s crimes against the local population were a source of tensions in Sulęcín county in September on account of the Soviet stealing of produce. “and especially [because of] incidents of rape, robbery and perfidy in relation to Poles.” (AAN MAP 2465: 127.) These were only beginning to decrease in October, and then only on account of the decreasing size of the Soviet garrison. (AAN MAP 2465: 216.) In Miedzyrzecz the “excesses, abuse, thieving and plundering” of Soviet soldiers (and particularly of the worker brigades) were also “very great, especially lately (in September).” (AAN MAP 2465: 204-206.) There were similar problems in Strzelce (AAN MAP 2465: 142, which reported “massive robberies on the part of workers brigades” in September and in October that several Poles had been murdered, including the local village administrator, and that two young girls had been raped; AAN MZO 1154: 8), Piła (where thefts by Soviet soldiers were increasing; WAPP UWP 78: 160), and Swiebodzin (where in September alone Soviet soldiers shot five Poles—two in the course of armed robberies—killing two and severely wounding two more; WAPP UWP 78: 219-220).

⁴⁸⁶ Dominiczak, *Wróciliśmy*, 94.

“I know that you still have doubts and don’t believe us, [when we say] that we have sincere intentions to see the Polish people strong, free, independent, truly sovereign. Be sure that after sustained cooperation you will be convinced of our intentions. They are sincere.”

—Stalin speaking to Mikołajczyk on 27 July 1945 during the Potsdam Conference.⁴⁸⁷

The Moscow agreement of June 1945 that provided for the reorganization of the Soviet-sponsored Polish government through the entry of politicians from the London government-in-exile, and the subsequent proclamation of the Government of National Unity (Rząd Jedności Narodowej, RJN), had a significant political impact in Wielkopolska, as in much of the rest of Poland. The revival of independent peasant politics in the summer of 1945 and the creation of Mikołajczyk’s Polish Peasant’s Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, PSL) in August represented an open break with the sham political pluralism of the PPR-sponsored (and -controlled) parties. This real pluralism in the midst of unpopular state-sponsored, social and political revolutions and a highly popular nationalist revolution proved very difficult for both Wielkopolska’s society and local representatives of the Communist regime to manage.

Socially, this was a time of deepening divisions and chaos in mid-western Poland. Local society was still reeling from the traumas of the German invasion and occupation, its ambiguous “liberation” by the Red Army, and the new burdens imposed upon it by the national and social revolutions that were still in progress. The ongoing economic crises, the challenges of reconstructing social and economic life (mostly) within the boundaries set by the new regime, widespread criminality (mainly, but not exclusively in the form of Soviet violence and *szaber*), and the immense difficulties of ethnically cleansing and

⁴⁸⁷ Łach, 60.

colonizing midwestern Poland even further taxed local efforts to come to terms with the new realities of post-war Poland.

Politically, most of Wielkopolska's society initially responded with high enthusiasm to the return of Mikołajczyk, and eagerly took up the burden of transforming the regime-sponsored, village-based mouthpieces, the SL and the Union of Peasants' Self Help (ZSCh) into fully independent political organizations. Furthermore, the Church and much of its active laity engaged the regime on another front; while they would rarely attack it openly, the Church carried on a polemic against totalitarianism and Marxism, and, in cooperation with the laity, developed independent social organizations and initiatives that local authorities interpreted as an attack against themselves. It was unclear whether a civil society responsive to a variety of local needs could develop in the face of fierce official resistance. The strains of years of war and occupation, the recreation of Poland within new boundaries, and the power of the regime to exact a high price for local efforts to sustain political pluralism all began to tell in Wielkopolska in the months following the establishment of the RJN.

Politically, the PPR and (what was to become) the PSL found themselves locked in mortal combat almost from the beginning of Mikołajczyk's return to Poland. In Wielkopolska the regime responded particularly violently to what it perceived as local efforts to limit and even reverse its social and political revolutions in Wielkopolska. The regime, in spite of being wedded to an overly simplistic and dogmatic understanding of peasant politics (see below) and no longer able to simply ban competing political visions, was still determined to compete for the hearts and minds of local society.

The rapid decline of their political reach in the villages placed the authorities in an especially difficult situation. In response to this deterioration of their influence, local authorities reformulated the basis of the legitimacy of their rule. They increasingly emphasized that the conquest, ethnic cleansing and colonization of the Recovered Territories was their peculiar, and proprietary, contribution to Polish politics. They also argued that only a united Poland which stood in true solidarity with the Soviet Union would be secure in its possession of the Ziemie Odzyskane. In their ongoing effort to gain popular acceptance of their rule, Polish Communism presented itself primarily as nationalist in form and content, even while retaining an undercurrent of commitment to social revolution.

Stanisław Mikołajczyk appeared poised to offer a more widely popular alternative to the regime. Politically, at the national level, Mikołajczyk attempted to pursue a middle course between what he regarded as the intransigent futility of armed resistance and the London government-in-exile's policy of non-negotiation on the one hand and simple acquiescence to, or cooperation in, Poland's sovietization on the other. His goal was to find a "third way" by accepting a minimalist interpretation of the Yalta-delineated Soviet sphere of influence in East Central Europe. He declared his support for a Polish-Soviet alliance, was willing to align Poland's foreign and security policies with the Soviet Union, and strongly supported Poland's claims to the Recovered Territories. However, within this Polish-Soviet alliance (and the Soviet sphere of influence) he wanted to maintain Poland's ties with the West and secure Poland's autonomy in its internal affairs.

Mikołajczyk's grand political strategy to achieve this goal was to transform the general hostility of Polish society against the new Communist order and the widespread desire for

any non-Communist alternative into overwhelming popular support for his Peasants' Party. Backed by this support he planned to move the PSL from the role of a loyal opposition to national leadership. To this end Mikołajczyk consistently pressed the regime to follow through with its international commitments to hold elections at the earliest possible time. He believed that a PSL victory in these elections would demonstrate to Stalin that his party was the only political force in the country that could guarantee the Soviet Union's strategic interests in Poland by politically stabilizing the country—a task of which he was sure the Communists would prove incapable.⁴⁸⁸

Mikołajczyk's program has often been characterized as "realism," in contrast to the "romanticism" of the London government's rejection of Yalta, and the armed resistance of the remnants of the AK and NSZ against the regime. However, his strategy was fraught with great difficulties and all but doomed to failure from the beginning since it rested on three fatally flawed, "romantic," assumptions: first, that the West would make anything beyond token remonstrations with the Soviets and their Polish clients when the latter violated both the letter and the spirit of their Yalta and Moscow obligations and restricted political pluralism in Poland; second, that the Soviets were willing to tolerate an internally free Poland; and finally, that the PSL could mobilize a sufficiently large amount of steadfast support that the new regime would prove incapable of crushing all legal, popular opposition.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁸ For a solid discussion of the evolution of Mikołajczyk's political goals, strategies, and tactics during and after the Moscow agreement of 1945 which returned him to Poland, see Turkowski, 21-23, 27, 30.

⁴⁸⁹ Mikołajczyk's political agenda has received a great deal of scrutiny in Western historiography (prompted in part by his autobiographical account of his political activity from 1945-1947) and, since the collapse of the *ancien regime* in Poland in

The initial response of Polish society to the return of Mikołajczyk and other former members of the London government-in-exile seemed to be a vindication of their decision to enter Poland's political life on Stalin's and the PPR's terms. In the first few days of his return Mikołajczyk spoke to crowds of tens of thousands in Warsaw, Poznań and Kraków. In Wielkopolska, over 50,000 people gathered in Poznań's Freedom Square on 5 July to hear him speak at a rally that later party historians would characterize as "anti-people's power." The crowds greeted Mikołajczyk with lengthy chants of "Mikołajczyk for President" and with cat-calls at the PPR and PSL banners present at the rally.⁴⁹⁰

Władysław Gomułka, in a speech to a joint session of the Central Committees of the PPR and the PSL on 12 July, claimed that the Poznań rally (and Mikołajczyk's equally enthusiastic reception in Kraków) was orchestrated by the same "reactionary elements" which had "up until now carried out a struggle with the Provisional Government."⁴⁹¹ Such evidence of Mikołajczyk's popular support led Gomułka to back away from his earlier criticisms of the UB at the May Plenum as a "state within a state." He claimed that since

1989, has received uncensored consideration from Polish historians as well. In spite of this increased scrutiny there is remarkably little difference in the Western pre-1989 and the Polish post-1989 accounts of Mikołajczyk's defeat, with the exception that the latter's access to the documents have more strongly emphasized the degree to which this defeat depended upon "administrative measures" (force and fraud). See Korbonski, 110-111; Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 204-205; Turkowski, 47-51; and Łach, 60-64.

⁴⁹⁰ Łach, 62

⁴⁹¹ "Nr 41. 1945, lipiec 12, Warszawa.—Przemówienie I sekretarza KC PPR o sytuacji politycznej w kraju na wspólnym posiedzeniu KC PPR i CKW PPS," in Polubiec, 313. It is important to note that the right radical NSZ (which was at that time waging an armed struggle against the regime) is among the reactionary groups Gomułka lumps together as supporters of Mikołajczyk. This demonstrates the degree of hostility with which Gomułka and the PPR received Mikołajczyk *from the beginning* of his return to Poland.

“[w]e are entering into a new stage in the deepening democratization of the country and our aim is the liquidation of the remnants of reaction’s strength... [therefore] it is necessary to return attention to strengthening the apparatus of the UB.”⁴⁹² He went on to claim in the joint PPS/PPR speech that “We represent the only correct political line, therefore, as Poles we have the right to hold power.”⁴⁹³ This ominous shift in emphasis by the PPR’s General Secretary from his earlier call for a broader national front and a struggle with “sectarianism” to liquidating “the remnants of reaction’s strength” within *one week* of Mikołajczyk’s return would find especially strong support within the ranks of Wielkopolska’s PPR.

In addition to its political impact throughout Poland, this new era of political pluralism inaugurated by Mikołajczyk’s return served as a catalyst for ongoing social, cultural and religious tensions in mid-western Poland, and helped to further polarize an increasingly divided local society. The Soviet liberation of the region in February 1945, far from bringing respite, had instead further divided Wielkopolska. Most of society’s energy was absorbed by the sheer difficulty of day-to-day survival, and the enormous twin tasks of reconstruction and the internal colonization of an ethnically cleansed pre-war Wielkopolska and the settlement of the former German territories.

Even prior to Mikołajczyk’s return there was significant social and political discontent caused by the establishment of the new Communist-dominated regime in Poznań. The regime compounded these social and political tensions by the contradictions inherent in its simultaneous launching of three revolutions: a popular nationalist revolution *and*

⁴⁹² Łach, 65.

⁴⁹³ “Nr 41. 1945, lipiec 12, Warszawa.—Przemówienie I sekretarza KC PPR o sytuacji politycznej w kraju na wspólnym posiedzeniu KC PPR i CKW PPS,” in Polubiec, 313.

widely unpopular social-economic and political revolutions. The regime radicalized and mobilized a willing majority of the local population through its national revolution, transforming the newly expanded Wielkopolska into a purely Polish region, even as it repelled much of the rural population with its efforts to confect unpopular social and political revolutions with its program of land reform.

The local SL, along with its Wielkopolska peasant constituency, had been an early cause of concern for the authorities. As early as May, Governor Widy-Wirsky had complained that the Wielkopolska SL was “reactionary.” The PPR discussions after the May Plenum reveal that the local leadership of the PPR regarded the peasantry of Wielkopolska, indeed all of local society, with grave suspicion, believing that Poznań was “especially susceptible ground for reaction.”⁴⁹⁴ Party leaders realized the their efforts at land reform were not popular locally and had been implemented in “too bureaucratic a fashion...without the participation of the Peasant Self-help Union.”⁴⁹⁵ Yet these same leaders demonstrated a jaundiced and overly simplified view of village politics by maintaining that much of the peasant dissatisfaction with Land Reform and resistance to the government’s high taxation in-kind was due to “kulaks.”⁴⁹⁶ and that in the villages

⁴⁹⁴ WAPP KW PPR 6: 11.

⁴⁹⁵ WAPP KW PPR 6: 20. Furthermore, the bureaucracies which implemented this reform were themselves divided. Among the institutions which concerned themselves with (their own interpretations of) land reform in midwestern Poland were the Government Land Offices (Panstwowy Urząd Ziemski, PUZ), PUR, ZSCh, the PPR, Settlement Committees, and Committees of Military Settlement. Słabek, 331

⁴⁹⁶ The free use which the higher echelons of the PPR in Poznań made in its internal documents of the term “kulak” is linguistically, ideologically, and politically very significant. Given that even the PPR’s highest leadership (which also frequently employed this term) frequently condemned the ideological extremism and “sectarianism” of the Poznań branch of the PPR, and that the term “kulak” was the linguistic centerpiece of the murderous collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet

“reaction was present everywhere.”⁴⁹⁷ In July they continued to lament the weakness of their front organization in the villages, the Peasant Self-help Union,⁴⁹⁸ but characteristically blamed their political problems in Wielkopolska on “reactionary administrators.”⁴⁹⁹

The Party’s latent suspicion of Wielkopolska’s peasantry blossomed with Mikołajczyk’s enthusiastic reception and the rapid, mass defection of Wielkopolska’s PPR-dominated SL to his new PSL. The local branch of the SL elected him President of its organization when he returned to Poland on 6 July and by 14 September almost the entire Poznań branch of the SL had joined Mikołajczyk’s newly formed PSL as a body.⁵⁰⁰ All that was left of the remaining fraction of the PPR-dominated SL were several hundred PPR clients scattered throughout the region.⁵⁰¹

All of the region’s latent social and political tensions had begun to tell in mid-western Poland by the summer of 1945. The regime in Wielkopolska (and the local administrative

Union, this term (along with the claim “reaction was present everywhere”) reveals the violence and paranoia that infected the upper reaches of the PPR.

⁴⁹⁷ WAPP KW PPR 6: 23.

⁴⁹⁸ WAPP KW PPR 6: 77.

⁴⁹⁹ WAPP KW PPR 6: 22, 77, 89. In May, July and August Poznań’s Executive Committee discussions contained repeated complaints about reactionary or irresponsible administrators who hindered the Party’s work. In the winter, as Polish settlement in Ziemia Lubuska began to unravel, Party members in the Settlement Commission charged that enemy propaganda and reactionary administrators at PUZ were undermining their efforts to settle and polonize Wielkopolska. WAPP KW PPR 145: 46, 65.

⁵⁰⁰ Erazmus, 48.

⁵⁰¹ In January 1946, two months after the PPR devoted itself to restoring the SL as a pro-regime party in Wielkopolska’s countryside, the SL had 620 members in 37 counties. Choniawko, 78.

apparatus imperfectly under its control) soon found itself in the unenviable position of trying to transplant policies which had only imperfectly survived the shocks and stresses of post-war reality from the hothouse environment of limited pluralism to the less temperate conditions of active opposition. The strains of this operation revealed the weaknesses of the new authorities' too-sweeping (and implicitly totalitarian) agenda, and their inability to carry their program out. Indeed, midwestern Poland would become (along with southern Poland) one of the strongest areas of social support for the PSL, and a challenge to the "democracy" that the regime was attempting to establish.⁵⁰²

Because the UB seized most of the PSL's archives in 1949,⁵⁰³ information about the post-war history of the PSL in Wielkopolska is available only from the usually quite hostile state administrative and pro-regime parties; hence any discussion of the PSL's direct activities remains fragmentary. The fierce polemics and political repression that the Party-dominated state engaged in to combat the growth of the PSL from the beginning does, however, illustrate an important element in post-war Wielkopolska (and all-Polish) politics: the inability of the PPR to envision any constructive role, or good motives, for substantive opposition to its political programs. This intolerance of opposition shaped the conduct of both the national and local levels of the PPR in its relationships with the local administration, the Catholic Church, and the PZZ.

⁵⁰² Łach, 75.

⁵⁰³ After the forced reunion of the PSL with the SL in 1949, the UB seized the PSL's archives. Access to these archives is even now quite limited, especially as the information they contained was, at the time of my research in 1995, being used in the prosecution of criminals.

Nationally, the return of Mikołajczyk and other politicians from abroad entailed the reorganization of the central government. Mikołajczyk became head of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (Ministerstwo Rolny i Reform Rolny, MRiRR) and his supporters received other important positions within the Central Government, especially the Ministry of Public Administration, which at this time exercised jurisdiction over the settlement of the Recovered Territories. This further threatened to expand the scope of the PSL's influence to include one, if not the only, universally popular program that the regime had initiated: the colonization of eastern Germany. The widening of the government to include the PSL also promised that officials who sought to adjust the regime's policies to local concerns or different social and political perspectives (particularly the local land offices) could find protection at the highest levels of government. Though the PPR and its clients in the other four legal parties retained the lion's share of positions (and ensured that at least the vice-minister of each PSL minister was a member of the PPR⁵⁰⁴), at the local and national level the regime would seek to limit, and eventually eliminate, the PSL from all self-government and administrative bodies in order to more completely harmonize the regime's political and administrative apparatuses.

Nationally, one of the most important means that the PPR employed to weaken the PSL's administrative power was creating the Ministry of Recovered Territories (Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych, MZO) in November 1945, headed by Gomułka, as a "super ministry" to centralize all government decision-making concerning the Recovered

⁵⁰⁴ Łach, 96.

Territories.⁵⁰⁵ Both the Wielkopolska branch of the PPR and the PZZ as a body supported this, arguing that the various crises besetting settlement in Ziemia Lubuska (and settlement throughout the Recovered Territories) necessitated a coordinated effort by the central government.⁵⁰⁶ The local PPR sought to even further strengthen its hold on administration in Ziemia Lubuska by lobbying for the creation of a Vice-Governor of Poznań in charge of Ziemia Lubuska who would be a member of the PPR,⁵⁰⁷ though this demand was soon dropped in favor of the creation of a Department of Ziemia Lubuska, which would centralize provincial policy toward those areas of the Recovered Territories administrated by Poznań.⁵⁰⁸

In the pre-war provinces of Wielkopolska the PPR was mostly concerned with what it regarded as the obstruction of the County Land Offices (which it called a "state within a state") that had proven to be especially responsive to local desires to reserve German land for current and future local needs.⁵⁰⁹ Another problem that the regime encountered was the difficulty that various administrative and political organs had in implementing a uniform policy of land distribution. Among the institutions which concerned themselves with (their own interpretations of) land reform in midwestern Poland were the

⁵⁰⁵ Rybicki, *Powstanie i działalność*, 84-85; Rybicki, *Początki władzy ludowej*, 132-133; Musielak, 176; Łach, 96. There is a surprising consensus between official pre-1989 and post-1989 Polish historiography that the creation of the MZO was a frankly political move to significantly limit the influence of the PSL-controlled ministries of Agricultural Reform and Public Administration.

⁵⁰⁶ WAPP KW PPR 145: 38; E. Męclewski, "O koncentrację wysiłku państwowego." *Polska Zachodnia* 23 September 1945: 1-2.

⁵⁰⁷ WAPP KW PPR 145: 39.

⁵⁰⁸ Szczegóła, *Przeobrażenia*, 81.

⁵⁰⁹ KW PPR 145: 16.

Government Land Offices (Panstwowy Urząd Ziemi, PUZ), PUR, ZSCh, the PPR, Settlement Committees, and Committees of Military Settlement.⁵¹⁰ The resulting chaos gave local peasants numerous opportunities to subvert the regime's efforts at distributing land according to its own plans.

In Wielkopolska one of the earliest and most direct conflicts between the newly established PSL and the PPR occurred over disputes concerning the regular provincial administration, especially in the local Land Offices. The PPR favored setting aside large tracts of confiscated German land for the *repatrianci* and for other, unspecified purposes in a "land fund." This policy was quite controversial in the villages both because of the *repatrianci*'s unpopularity, and because many peasants regarded the "land fund" as part of the regime's preparation for the eventual collectivization of agriculture.⁵¹¹

With Mikołajczyk's appointment as head of the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (Ministerstwo Rolny i Reform Rolny, MRiRR), officials at PUZ acquired an important ally in the central government. The Party began to step up its campaign to undermine PUZ, censuring it in September for attempting to "sabotage [the agrarian] reform"⁵¹² and eventually using its domination of the UB and the higher levels of administration to fire PSL members holding government posts.⁵¹³

Limiting and eventually eliminating the PSL from Wielkopolska administration did not satisfy either the militant higher leadership of Poznań's PPR or pro-regime elements

⁵¹⁰ Słabek, 331.

⁵¹¹ Choniawko, 66, 67.

⁵¹² Choniawko, 68.

⁵¹³ Erazmus, 59-60.

within the local government. Their hostility to the PSL (and much of the local society which it represented) ran more deeply; their aspirations for control were far greater, and required a consequently greater satisfaction, than their initial victory at the level of high politics could provide. The leadership of the PPR's Provincial Central Committee found the new atmosphere created by Gomułka's calls for struggle with the PSL more congenial than Roman Zambrowski's demand after the May Plenum that the Poznań PPR wage a "struggle with sectarianism" and their monopolist tendencies.

These future offensives against the PSL were far off in the summer of 1945. In August and September the local Party very much felt itself on the defensive, and believed that Wielkopolska society had failed it grievously. In a meeting of the PPR's Provincial Central Committee on 5 August and of Party activists on 8 August the Party faithful had the opportunity to reassess their strategy and tactics in the struggle to politically transform Wielkopolska. At both meetings Party activists opined that complaints about the attacks of Soviet marauders missed the "big picture": that without the help of the Soviet Union Poland would still be under Fascist occupation; that the Red Army had played a key role in constructing bridges, bringing in the harvest, and sending food supplies to Silesia; and that it was only the Soviet Union which had procured recognition of Poland's western borders.⁵¹⁴

Speakers at both meetings also complained of the ubiquitous "reaction", which was trying to take control of the cooperative movement Społem, seeking to use the long-promised upcoming elections for its own purposes, spreading anti-Soviet propaganda, persuading the peasants not to take the land, and disowning the conquest of Wrocław and Szczecin.

⁵¹⁴ WAPP KW PPR 50: 27; WAPP KW PPR 6: 77-78.

At both these meetings Party activists and high officials invoked “reaction”, along with popular anti-Soviet attitudes, to explain most of the difficulties facing the Party in Wielkopolska. However, these meetings also demonstrated the existence of a significant difference of opinion between the lower and higher echelons of the Party concerning the popularity of the “new reality” in Wielkopolska.

In the matter of land reform (the centerpiece of the Party’s revolutionary efforts in Wielkopolska), a representative of the PPR’s Central Committee, Żenon Kliszko, charged that its unpopularity was due to the weakness of the Peasant Self-help Union, and blamed the overly bureaucratic way in which land reform was carried out for undermining the party politically in Wielkopolska.⁵¹⁵ Local Party activists, on the other hand, had a different view of the subject: they singled out the role of reaction, and went on to complain about the obstinacy of Wielkopolska’s peasantry. One activist pointed out that there were even peasants who were returning land given to them. He insisted that the agricultural reform “had to be [underlined in the original] carried out: and if the peasants don’t want to take the land, then let the peasants of Rzeszów come, where they don’t have enough land, and where there is overpopulation, and our peasants can just go west.”⁵¹⁶

In assessing the colonization of Ziemia Lubuska, the head of the Party’s Committee of Settlement claimed that the main factor hindering settlement was (unnamed) reactionaries “who are trying to control the administrative apparatus and are paralyzing this work.”⁵¹⁷ Among the activists, however, there was again a different view of the

⁵¹⁵ WAPP KW PPR 6: 77.

⁵¹⁶ WAPP KW PPR 50: 28.

⁵¹⁷ WAPP KW PPR 6: 77.

problem. Comrade Jaśkiewicz also complained that the settlement of the west had in the last two months gone on very slowly. He went on to claim that too many organizations were occupied with the question of settlement, that the PZZ had not fulfilled its promise, and most importantly, that Polish society and the government administration “had failed the exam” through excessive *szaber* and lack of perseverance among the settlers. He even went on to demand that when, and if, settlers returned from Ziemia Lubuska, they should be regarded as “deserters.”

There was thus a significant divergence between the assessments by Party activists and officials of the problems facing the regime. At the higher levels of the Party, officials in the national and local Central Committees assumed these problems were either the result of a small group of reactionaries who were sabotaging the settlement or agricultural reform, or, as in the case of Kliszko’s remarks concerning the land reform, of the bad organization and implementation of essentially popular reforms.

Lower-level activists did not fully share this official optimism. Instead, many of them bemoaned the weakness and lack of vision of their faltering society. Indeed, at the end of his meeting with them, Kliszko observed that “the discussion...was not at all lively.”⁵¹⁸ Kliszko went on to ignore the concerns raised by local activists, and instead emphasized the need to popularize Poland’s victory in achieving recognition of its western frontiers and in gaining a territory which transformed Poland into an “industrial-agricultural country.” He then reiterated the necessity of denouncing “reactionary propaganda which

⁵¹⁸ WAPP KW PPR 50: 28.

claimed: we don't want Szczecin and Wrocław, we don't want Silesia with its 5000 factories...."⁵¹⁹

At the center of this new stage in the struggle for the hearts and minds of Wielkopolska society was an all-but-exclusive emphasis on nationalistic propaganda concerning the extension of Poland's frontiers westward. At the meeting of the Provincial Committee, Kliszko had begun with a paper that began by "[e]mphasizing that it [the recognition of Poland's western boundaries at Potsdam] is a great victory of the Government of National Unity, and especially of a great victory of Polish democracy...." After discussions of problems with the PSL, land reform, and the settlement of Ziemia Lubuska, Jan Izydorczak, the First Secretary of Wielkopolska's Provincial Committee, closed the meeting by reiterating Kliszko's remarks, that "this great fact [of the recognition of Poland's frontiers "only through alliance with the Soviet Union"] needs to be emphasized at every step in party work and among the masses...."⁵²⁰

The Party had returned to the one issue which had, in part, bridged the gap between itself and the majority of Wielkopolska's society since the region's liberation. Far from winning the hearts and minds of the majority of the region's peasant population through land reform, the Party had discovered that most of the rural population were indifferent at best to its revolutionary blandishments. There remained, however, the hope that the people could be persuaded that only "democracy" (i.e., the new regime) in alliance with the Soviet Union could maintain Poland's hold on the Recovered Territories. Though in their internal discussions the local Party leadership would continue to fulminate at length

⁵¹⁹ WAPP KW PPR 50: 27-28.

⁵²⁰ WAPP KW PPR 6: 76, 78.

about the PSL as “one great Party, the Party of kulaks and rich peasants,”⁵²¹ their public propaganda (in accord with the Party line as a whole) would ever more frequently downplay class struggle and focus on patriotic appeals to support the regime and so preserve Poland’s territorial integrity and national unity.

In its efforts to more fully polonize the regime and popularize Poland’s territorial expansion, the Party had the full cooperation of the Provincial Governor, Feliks Widy-Wirski. Though not a Communist, Widy-Wirski shared the Party leadership’s dim view of Wielkopolska’s society and sought to increase the power of administrative coercion to create a new, more mature nation. Unfortunately, he claimed that so far “[t]he Polish people, instead of traveling on the tank of history, have fallen under its wheels.”⁵²²

Widy-Wirski was determined to see this changed. Even at the first meeting of Wielkopolska’s *Rada Narodowa* in April 1945 he had defined Poland’s westward expansion as crucial for Wielkopolska’s future (see above). With Wielkopolska’s acquisition of Ziemia Lubuska in June, his apprehension of the importance of the Oder-Neisse territories had grown to the point that at the conference of the Provincial Administration he would assert that “[b]efore us is the matter of concentrating our forces. We must focus everything in facing the question which history has placed in front of us—controlling the Western Territories.” This required propaganda based on “the platform of a healthy state and nation” and required a particularly sharp nationality policy.⁵²³

⁵²¹ WAPP KW PPR 6: 89.

⁵²² WAPP WUiP 33: 92-93.

⁵²³ WAPP WUiP 33: 93.

To carry on such a struggle, he cited the example of the Governor of Upper Silesia, Gen. Zawadzki, who was creating work camps for Germans attempting to return to their homes.⁵²⁴ As he would later write in the front page of the first number of the PZZ's weekly, *Polska Zachodnia*, in an article suggestively titled "The Simple Political Consequences [of the War]," Poland's westward expansion to the Oder and Neisse represented a favorable shift in the demographic balance between Slavs and Germans in Europe. The victorious war and the new territories would provide a "significant growth in our biological potential...[hence] to us it falls by necessity not only to rebuild after the terrible war time destruction, but also to settle and assimilate the Polish autochthons of the Recovered Territories." This was the work of the current generation, which could only be fulfilled by the most organized of states, supported by a united people, lending to it all of society's "vital powers."⁵²⁵

Having defined the assimilation of the Recovered Territories as such a central task for Poland led Widy-Wirski to critique and correct those aspects of local society which, in his view, hindered the Polish settlement of Ziemia Lubuska. In a meeting with the Propaganda Ministry in Poznań, Widy-Wirski discussed in detail the theoretical issues that confronted the regime's rule in Wielkopolska. He talked of how the "Polish people were formed in a vegetative, peasant environment. A passive strength to endure, a great, inexhaustible strength, resides in them.... Unfortunately, until now we have not been able to transpose this strength to endure into the strength to conquer."

⁵²⁴ WAPP WUiP 31: 8.

⁵²⁵ Feliks Widy-Wirski, "Prosta Konsekwencja Polityczna." *Polska Zachodnia*, 5 August 1945, 1.

To change this situation it was necessary to create a propaganda which was aware of the “laws of physiology” and which could influence the people to abandon their passivity and embrace action. This required an emphasis on the ongoing struggle with “Germandom,” an effort to dispel the “psychology of Roman Dmowski” which hindered good relations with the Soviet Union, and to approach current economic difficulties by attacking the root problem, “Poland’s vegetative individualism.” It was this individualism that led Poles to “fight with every kind of state structure....Among us there rules a notion of freedom from everything—anarchy—and not freedom for everything....To achieve an economic change, we must immediately achieve a change in the people’s psyche.”⁵²⁶

Achieving such a change would not come easily for the regime. The officially-sponsored attacks on Pius XII’s silence during the occupation⁵²⁷ (and *Głos Katolicki*’s vigorous and combative responses to these charges), the return of Cardinal Hlond to Poland, and the regime’s unilateral moves to change Poland’s marriage laws had already ushered in a time of Church-state tensions in the pre-war provinces of Wielkopolska. These tensions were heightened by the regime’s decision on 12 September to unilaterally sever the 1925 Concordat between Poland and the Vatican,⁵²⁸ a move which the Polish Church

⁵²⁶ WAPP WUIiP 33: 93.

⁵²⁷ The PPS press was particularly combative and anti-clerical, at one point calling Pius XII a “Fascist in a tiara.” WAPP WUIiP 35: 165.

⁵²⁸ Given the many ways in which the state sought to utilize religion for its own purposes, it is impossible to reconcile the decision of the RJN to sever the concordat with the idea that “[the state was]...motivated by this same outlook that Church and State should operate in different spheres, rather than by any hardening of policy towards the Church.” Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 223.

interpreted as a further effort by the regime to lay the groundwork for forthcoming restrictions on religious life in Poland.⁵²⁹

Local officials, in turn, complained openly and bitterly about unpatriotic curia which did not take a stand against the violence of the anti-regime NSZ and its “fratricide” or send any representative to a major strategy session on how to assist the government in its efforts to collect taxes-in-kind from the peasants.⁵³⁰ To the hard-pressed authorities it appeared that the Church leadership’s only vision of their public role was one of “unceasing self-adoration.”⁵³¹ The regime’s hostility to the Church grew to the point that by December 1945, at the First Party Congress of the PPR, Jan Izydorczyk, the First Secretary of Poznań’s PPR, went far as to claim that the Church and Cardinal Hlond were at the head of reaction in Poland.⁵³²

In the autumn of 1945 Poznań’s Catholic clergy and laity were both criticizing much of the “new reality” and undertaking a number of initiatives which the local authorities regarded as threatening. These included what the regime regarded as the Church’s “[s]truggle for a monopoly on the formation of the psychological face of the

⁵²⁹ Raina, in his discussion of the Polish government’s decision to sever the concordat, notes that in addition to citing alleged infractions of the concordat by the Holy See in favor of the German occupation (including extending the jurisdiction of German bishops in Polish territory), regime officials also cited the numerous “privileges” enjoyed by the Church under the concordat. According to these officials, the Church’s privileges guaranteed it “unrestricted freedom in exercising its spiritual power and jurisdiction,” the right to undertake religious education in all public secondary schools, and the power to choose bishops, all of which were illegitimate in People’s Poland. Raina, 20.

⁵³⁰ WAPP WUiP 34: 122, 147.

⁵³¹ WAPP WUiP 34: 122.

⁵³² Łach, 91.

environment,”⁵³³ its provocative actions in preparation for the feast of Christ the King, and its efforts to increase the circulation of *Głos Katolicki*.

Regime authorities found especially galling a brochure titled “Thy Kingdom come” issued during the preparations for the Feast of Christ the King, written by Józef Chmary. This “diversionist and anti-democratic” tract contained several passages which censorship officials at the Ministry of Propaganda considered as “open provocations.” They regarded as particularly combative Chmary’s claim that “[t]he Polish people has many times given proof, in its uprisings [sic] in 1920⁵³⁴ and 1939 that truth and right mean more for it than strength.”⁵³⁵

In the same report, the regime’s censors went on to claim that *Głos Katolicki*, some articles or mimeographed copies of Kraków’s Catholic paper, *Tygodnik*, and brochures such as Chmary’s, represented a Catholic effort “in the realm of the press to establish a preponderance [of influence].” The report concluded that these Catholic actions necessitated further government scrutiny of all Catholic publications, and a purge of all officials in government publishing houses and the government-owned paper suppliers.⁵³⁶ This concern over Catholic publishing activities is especially striking given the vastly superior quantities of the regime’s publications; while *Głos Katolicki* had a weekly run of 10,000 copies,⁵³⁷ the regime-controlled, regular daily papers *Głos Wielkopolski* and the

⁵³³ WAPP WUIiP 34: 147.

⁵³⁴ 1920 was the date of the Russo-Polish war.

⁵³⁵ WAPP WUIiP 34: 147-148.

⁵³⁶ WAPP WUIiP 34: 149.

⁵³⁷ WAPP WUIiP 34: 148. The censor’s report indicated, however, that an official at the government paper supplier (and friend of Chmary) gave sufficient material to *Głos Katolicki* to enable the publishers to print 50,000 copies of issues 18-23.

military paper *Wolność* ran 60,000 and 42,000 copies respectively, while the thrice-weekly paper of the PPR, *Wola Ludu*, was run for 20,000 copies per edition.⁵³⁸ This level of official concern at the Ministry of Propaganda over the vastly smaller efforts of religious publishing (which offered an alternative to regime propaganda) indicates just how fragile officials at the Ministry of Propaganda regarded their command of public discourse in Wielkopolska.

Propaganda officials especially focused on the ways in which churchmen employed “discrete methods of attack against the accidental shortcomings of [the current] reality.”⁵³⁹ In the case of Cardinal Hlond and *Głos Katolicki*, however, this analysis was quite flawed. In his statement of the public position of the Church, Cardinal Hlond was not merely critiquing the regime’s “accidental shortcomings.” Rather, the Cardinal turned the regime’s own democratic slogans against it, attacked its Marxist ideological foundations and proposed a Christian and democratic alternative. This strategy was used quite effectively in a public address by Cardinal Hlond on 28 October at Freedom Square on the Feast of Christ the King.

In his address, titled “Poland at the Turning Point of History,” Cardinal Hlond offered a theological reconstruction of the causes and consequences of the Nazi occupation and the Soviet-sponsored liberation. The Cardinal began with a reflection on the First International Congress of Christ the King, which had occurred in Poznań in 1937. He

⁵³⁸ WAPP WUIiP 34: 72. This list of official publications excludes the two (purely pastoral and professional) monthly religious publications of the Archdiocese of Gniezno-Poznań, the PSL’s *Polska Ludowa* (a weekly with a 10,000 copy circulation) and the 19 other pro-regime weekly and monthly publications (of which the weeklies alone had a circulation of 41,000 copies).

⁵³⁹ WAPP WUIiP 35: 166.

recalled how at that Congress participants from various countries raised the alarm about the growth of “atheistic materialism” and how much of that growth was due to the failings of Christians who “...believe in Christ, but...often lack the spirit of Christ.” To truly defend Christianity against “the plague of godlessness [required] a full religious life, through moral conversion, through a bold realization of belated social reforms, and by establishing the faith in society’s consciousness.”

Cardinal Hlond went on to discuss Nazi “racist materialism’s” war on believing Christians and the Jewish people in Poland, and the “savage hitlerite propaganda” against Christianity in general and especially the Holy See. In claiming that Nazi Germany regarded the Pope as an especially deadly and hated enemy, the Cardinal was both attempting to shore up the post-war reputation of Pius XII and indirectly criticizing the regime’s propaganda against the papacy.

He continued this train of thought by observing that “... nationalist, hitlerite, atheism has collapsed, but, besides Christianity, on the world stage there still remains internationalist atheism that desires to form a new man.” Cardinal Hlond acknowledged that materialism and Christianity did have certain “points of contact” based on shared social concern, but at the same time he proclaimed that there existed “a difference so basic, that [materialism’s and atheism’s] theoretical agreement was not possible, any more than there could be an agreement between the notion of God and atheism.” Though this implied that conflict between the two systems was inevitable, the Cardinal claimed that while “the pressure of international materialism is strong, Christianity will not be overthrown.”

What then, was to be done? Cardinal Hlond spoke of how the Polish people desired to build their new life on the basis of Christianity and the gospel. “An unfailing vital instinct and an age-old conscience demands [of them] that they turn to Christ. At the turning point of history Polish Catholicism serves God and takes an oath for future generations that it will resist the great temptations of unbelief, and that it will defend its soul from being crippled by materialism.” Though Polish Catholics were determined not to shrink from any sacrifice for the good of the Republic, they desired to unite “the healthy revolutionary of the times with the people’s faith, overcoming the contradictions, which the (to us foreign) philosophies of the nineteenth century constructed between matter and spirit and bring about a harmony of vital physical strength and the spiritual power of the Polish man.”⁵⁴⁰

This address demonstrates that the Church itself desired a separation between the it and the state, the better for the Church to exercise influence in private life and the public square. Indeed, in Cardinal Hlond’s case it appears that his experience of seeing first hand the disastrous impact on the Church of Church-state cooperation in Vichy France (where he spent most of the war) encouraged him to seek to preserve the Polish Church’s independence⁵⁴¹ from a regime and a state of affairs in East Central Europe that he and many Poles regarded as temporary.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴⁰ August Kardinal Hlond, “Polska na przełomie dziejów,” *Głos Katolicki*, 11 November 1945, 1-2.

⁵⁴¹ Tadeusz Wyrwa, “Kościół i państwo w pierwszym dziesięcioleciu PRL-na podstawie raportów dyplomatów francuskich,” *Zeszyty Historyczne* 82 (1987), 62.

⁵⁴² WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 87.

This desire to limit Church-state collaboration also explains the relatively muted response of the Polish hierarchy to the regime's severing of the concordat in their communiqué following the first post-war conference of the Polish episcopate at Częstochowa on 3-4 October. They complained of the severing of the Concordat but focused most of their attention on problems facing Polish society: including the rights of Catholics *as citizens*, the right to religious education, the detrimental impact of the war on morality, and the need to help those in extreme misery. While the communiqué ended by calling for the rebuilding of the Polish state on a Christian foundation, it did this by proclaiming that "the overwhelming Catholic majority of the country has the right to representatives in the Sejm who are responsive to their religious convictions and their ethical principles."⁵⁴³ Rather than merely objecting to particular policies, Cardinal Hlond and the Polish hierarchy sought to encourage Polish Catholics to take the authorities' claims of establishing a democratic, people's government at face value and seek to extend religious influence by exercising their rights as citizens.

Such addresses did little to endear the Church to local officials, but neither did they completely foreclose mutual cooperation between the Church and the new regime. Indeed, it was precisely the emphasis of ecclesial authorities on the duties of Polish Catholics as citizens, their constant support for the Polish state (though coupled with severe criticisms of the regime's official ideology), and their constant appeals to Polish patriotism and Polish values which added a powerful, religious note to nationalism in Wielkopolska. Though most of the politically active Catholic laity were active in the

⁵⁴³ "Komunikat urzędowy z Konferencji Episkopatu," *Głos Katolicki*, 14 October 1945, 1-2.

PSL, the emphasis by all social and political actors in Wielkopolska on Polish nationalism would have a significant long-term impact on society and the state.

In contrast to the mutual hostility between Church and state in the old provinces of Wielkopolska, in the pioneer conditions of Ziemia Lubuska a spirit of cooperation reigned between the newly established religious and political authorities. Officials reported favorably on the efforts of the (few) priests to establish Catholic religious life in the new counties of Wielkopolska,⁵⁴⁴ and were sensitive to colonists' complaints about the lack of priests and the need to open new churches.⁵⁴⁵ These officials, and the central government in Warsaw, were aware of and supported the stabilizing role of the Church in the Recovered Territories.⁵⁴⁶

In the Recovered Territories this cooperation included active support for the Church from the regime. In Zielona Góra officials reported that work was in progress to grant the request of local Church authorities to confiscate a second Evangelical parish due to the constantly growing number of Roman Catholics in the region.⁵⁴⁷ In Gorzów a local official noted in his November report "accusations about the lack of priests," and commented that "[k]nowing the soul of our peasants and especially of the peasant-*repatrianci* I understand the importance of this issue." The official went on to report that

⁵⁴⁴ WAPP UWP 78: 65, 81.

⁵⁴⁵ WAPP UWP 78: 8, in which officials in Wschowa report that settlers were demanding the creation of new parishes, and WAPP UWP 78: 221, in which officials in Świebodzin regarded the presence of Catholic priests as a stabilizing influence on settlement.

⁵⁴⁶ Osękowski, 212.

⁵⁴⁷ AAN MAP 2465: 229.

his interventions with the new Apostolic Administrator resulted in the Administrator's promise to do everything possible to bring more priests to Ziemia Lubuska.⁵⁴⁸

Local officials were especially positive about the creation of a semi-official Catholic hierarchy in Ziemia Lubuska with the establishment of an Apostolic Administrator in Gorzów. Though the Warsaw government did not officially recognize the establishment of Polish Church administration in the Recovered Territories,⁵⁴⁹ the arrival of the new Apostolic Administrator, Fr. Nowicki, in September at a well-attended Ingress (entrance) ceremony was a semi-public event. The authorities commented positively on the high turnout for the events surrounding the Ingress,⁵⁵⁰ and noted that Gorzów's "Roman Catholic parish is gaining an increasing number of the faithful."⁵⁵¹

Because of the Church's anxiousness to establish a presence among the new settlers,⁵⁵² as well as for nationalistic reasons, the Church's leadership in the Recovered Territories tended to cooperate with the authorities. This, and local officials' desire to do everything possible to encourage and sustain settlement in the Recovered Territories, led to a greater

⁵⁴⁸ AAN MAP 119: 2

⁵⁴⁹ Official instructions required local officials to treat the Apostolic Administrators in the Recovered Territories the same as any other Polish priest, but in their reports to the central government, officials in Gorzów spoke of the arrival of and meetings with "the bishop." Osekowski, 212; AAN MAP 119: 2.

⁵⁵⁰ WAPP UWP 78: 168.

⁵⁵¹ AAN MAP 2465: 180.

⁵⁵² Concern over the activities of sects (especially the National Polish Catholic Church, which the regime invited to the Recovered Territories in hopes of fostering religious divisions among Poles) figure in both the Polish episcopate's communiqué of October 1945 and Hlond's later justification of his establishment of a Church hierarchy in the Recovered Territories. "Komunikat urzędowy z Konferencji Episkopatu," *Głos Katolicki*, 14 October 1945, 1; Raina, 51.

degree of cooperation between Church and state in Ziemia Lubuska, thus distinguishing this region even more from the rest of midwestern Poland. Fr. Nowicki set the tone for this cooperation in his first pastoral letter to the parishes in Ziemia Lubuska, in which he stressed his strong support of the regime's efforts to settle the region: "...the pioneers of Polish settlement love this recovered land with their whole hearts, have endured the initial difficulties, and stand as the founders of a happy future for their children and as historic architects of Poland's greatness."⁵⁵³

In addition to the crises brought about by the return of Mikołajczyk and the ongoing tensions between Church and State, the late summer and early autumn was also a time of struggle within the nominally independent PZZ. The PZZ's primary goal was to create "a living, Polish, wall...a Chinese wall separating Poland and Germany" along the Oder-Neisse frontier. The Union's leadership and many of its activists regarded the question of Poland's western frontiers as "the first, the most significant issue which is thrust upon us at this moment" and, in spite of their usually strongly conservative or right-wing politics, desired to cooperate with the regime in order to unite all of Polish society to colonize and polonize the Recovered Territories.⁵⁵⁴

This single-minded focus on the problems connected with the ZO facilitated the efforts of Józef Dubiel and the regime's collaborators within the Union to move the PZZ to a more partisan, pro-PPR stance. By the fall of 1945, the growing anxiety of the remaining independent leadership of the PZZ about the weakness of Poland's western settlements and the increasing desire of pro-PPR elements within the Union to turn the PZZ to

⁵⁵³ Osekowski, 212.

⁵⁵⁴ WAPP PZZ 589: 1-3, 5-6.

partisan purposes resulted in the final surrender of the Union's independence to the regime. By November 1945 the Union was fully assimilated into Poland's new, Communist-dominated order.

In both its propaganda and confidential reports the Union supported a greater centralization of Polish efforts to settle the Recovered Territories. From the first issue of the PZZ's *Polska Zachodnia*, the Union's propaganda emphasized the need to "concentrate our national energy on the Recovered Territories" (in an article titled "The Most Important Question" by one of the leading pre-war members of the PZZ, Dr. Zygmunt Wojciechowski).⁵⁵⁵ In the same issue, Czesław Pilichowski, a member of the PZZ's Main Board of Directors, publicly outlined the Union's "basic ideological-political platform," which included the following points:

- "to mobilize all of the moral and material strength of the Polish people of the old Polish territories, so that the issue of our occupation of the western borders will be completely solved,"
- "to settle the Western Lands through a purely Polish element which possesses a deep understanding of our historical mission..."
- "...that the PZZ categorically declares that no traitor has a place among the Polish people, but neither will any Pole be given up as German booty."
- "[the PZZ] assumes that all Germans are guilty, not only particular [Germans], that the German people, which gave its full moral and political support to Hitlerism, is closely tied to Fascism, and must as a whole pay the cost for crimes perpetrated on other peoples, especially on the Polish, Soviet and Yugoslav [peoples]-the PZZ represents the thesis of a radical solution to the German question on Poland's terrain. Without a radical decision of the German question there will never be any lasting peace in the Western Lands or in the whole world."

⁵⁵⁵ Zygmunt Wojciechowski, "Najważniejsza Sprawa," *Polska Zachodnia*, 5 August 1945, 2.

Pilichowski concluded by saying that only a “strong, lively...democratic, just and progressive” Poland would be able to ensure the fulfillment of these goals.⁵⁵⁶

The PZZ continued its propaganda efforts in *Polska Zachodnia*⁵⁵⁷ and in popular events and meetings throughout Wielkopolska. In September events organized by the Union included an informational meeting/recruiting drive for representatives of the local press, members of political movements, and unions in Poznań; newspaper and radio presentations on the theme of “Ten Centuries of Struggle with Germandom”; a harvest festival in Gorzów organized in cooperation with the local Ministry of Information and Propaganda;⁵⁵⁸ and anti-Volksdeutsche rallies (with the cooperation of local political parties and social organizations) “on practically the entire terrain of the Province.”⁵⁵⁹

In October the PZZ conducted another series of meetings commemorating Polish victims of mass Nazi executions in 1939. From 4-11 November the Union organized a “Week of

⁵⁵⁶ Czesław Pilichowski. “Ziemie Zachodnie a polityka polska.” *Polska Zachodnia*, 5 August 1945, 3.

⁵⁵⁷ Officials at the Ministry of Propaganda, however, regarded much of *Polska Zachodnia*’s material to be “...very uneven; beside interesting, truly worthwhile articles, are also inserted columns of low professional and literary worth.” In addition to this, the publication’s free insert for children, *Mój przyjaciel* (“My friend”) “[was] distinguished by its prominent attitude of ultra-Catholicism.” WAPP WUIiP 34: 76-77; WAPP WUIiP 35: 84.

⁵⁵⁸ WAPP KW PPR 6: 89, WAPP WUIiP 33: 34. This particular rally came under special criticism by both the provincial executive committee of the PPR and the Provincial branch of the Ministry of Information and Propaganda due to the lack of PPR standards. The PPR’s executive committee referred to it simply as an error that required correction, while propaganda officials went on to comment that the organization committee did not understand “...that every celebration of this variety should have a political character.”

⁵⁵⁹ WAPP PZZ 586: 139-143.

the PZZ” throughout the Province, during which it sought to popularize its ideas and aims and conducted a membership drive under the slogan “Everyone to the ranks of the PZZ. Everyone to the front against the eternal enemy of the Slavs.” Yet even as it continued to expand its educational and propaganda efforts, the Union also ceased its efforts to settle Poles in the Western Territories, and limited itself to helping approve potential settlers and gathering statistical information.⁵⁶⁰

Though all of their public events directly supported Poland’s territorial expansion and ethnic cleansing (as well as usually expressing active support for the regime’s social and political changes), many of the pre-war activists of the PZZ expressed private concerns over the way the regime was managing the settlement and polonization of the (pre-war) western borderlands and the Recovered Territories. In Poznań this included efforts to protect the small Polish population (approximately 10,000) of Dąbrów Wielkopolskich⁵⁶¹ and a lengthy memorandum on the problems of settlement by Wojciechowski, one of the leaders in the efforts to reactivate the PZZ and the head of the Instytut Zachodni at that time.

In a report sent to the Ministry of Public Administration in mid-September, Wojciechowski outlined what he saw as the causes of difficulties in the settlement of Ziemia Lubuska. He agreed with the consensus view that the first problem of settlement was the lack of satisfactory security, and that problems with the Red Army were also

⁵⁶⁰ WAPP PZZ 586: 143-147.

⁵⁶¹ PZZ intervention to protect these autochthons against official efforts to expel them began in earnest only in January 1946. Małgorzata Ujdak, *Polski Związek Zachodni Wobec Problemów Narodowościowych w Latach 1944-1950* (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 1988), 63.

undermining Poland's economic stability in the Recovered Territories. He was also highly critical of political and organizational errors that he claimed were a major hindrance to settlement. Among these were the constant turnover in government officials, the lack of central planning in guiding local officials, and the administration's helplessness in relation to Party organizations; this was written at a time when the PPR and the parties of the bloc were the only parties of real consequence in Ziemia Lubuska.

Wojciechowski cited numerous abuses, including how a "certain party's" efforts to settle a commune in Ziemia Lubuska without coordinating its efforts with PUR generated a great deal of chaos, and how, in another county where even the most important government officials lacked motorized transport, Party organizations (including the UB—sic!) possessed "all the means to maintain motor vehicles ... and used them [the vehicles] not only for official purposes." After listing other instances of administrative and political corruption and mismanagement, Wojciechowski concluded by criticizing what he regarded as the most damaging policy: the stifling of popular initiative through ongoing official confiscations and the lack of private ownership. This was not an objection in principle to state ownership, since he opined that "it should be a matter of indifference if a particular industry is in the hands of a private person or the government, when the most basic thing is that there be movement [economic development], and that it produces and employs people." Rather, the problem was that at the time there was neither clear private ownership nor central planning that could make government ownership productive. Wojciechowski proposed that the only remedy in this situation was to devolve decision making to the lower administration, in the counties, since the economic health of the

region was more important than the regime's attempt to "...realize even the most beautiful of its fundamental doctrines."⁵⁶²

But these were doctrinaire times, as the remaining independent leadership of the PZZ was soon to discover, especially given the support within the union for uniting all of Poland's strength in order to colonize the Recovered Territories. As the result of an earlier PZZ conference in Łódź in July 1945, PPR members and their sympathizers had come to dominate the Main Board of the PZZ, which was based in Poznań. By October, after several months of organization, the Main Board was prepared to issue new instructions and a new ideological platform that would turn the PZZ into a more hierarchical, tightly organized institution better suited to cope with the new political situation in Poland.⁵⁶³

This occurred in two stages. The first stage began with a meeting of the Main Board of the PZZ in Poznań from 10-12 October 1945. There, Board Members agreed upon the need to modify the PZZ's statutes, to begin inspections of every provincial branch of the PZZ, and, for propaganda purposes, to formulate the PZZ's declaration of ideas (a task given to Józef Dubiel). It was further agreed that every provincial branch would invite representatives of their province's political parties "in order to guarantee that every provincial board [of the PZZ] will maintain a responsible political line."⁵⁶⁴

In this meeting's final communiqué, the Main Board served notice that the organization was beset with corrupt elements who were either attempting to use PZZ membership as a means of conducting *szaber*, or "...reactionary elements who were trying to use the

⁵⁶² AAN MAP 2465: 67-72.

⁵⁶³ WAPP PZZ 582: 3.

⁵⁶⁴ WAPP PZZ 582: 3.

broad, non-party, democratic platform of the PZZ to conduct reactionary diversions against the government or the people.” The communiqué went on to assure the Union’s membership that such activities would no longer be tolerated. The Main Board claimed that in the situation brought about by the long-lasting war and migration, decentralized work hampered the Union, and had allowed “objectionable individuals” to enter the PZZ and injure it. What was needed now were coordinated efforts, which the Main Board of the PZZ would bring about through a series of inspections of all the PZZ’s circles, which would result in “the uncompromising removal of all wreckers, the correction of errors, and the improvement of deficiencies.”⁵⁶⁵

In addition to the inspections which began soon after the October meeting, the Main Board mandated the creation of a “Social-Political Department” for each of the larger provincial circles. These departments would serve to facilitate the sharing of information with the Main Board and become a means to build the programmatic and organizational unity of the organization. These changes were also proclaimed as essential to strengthen the Union’s work in helping the Polish people settle the Recovered Territories.⁵⁶⁶ Finally, the culmination of Dubiel’s activity in the Union (within five months, in April 1946, he would cease to be the organization’s Secretary General and become Vice Minister of the MZO) was the November 1945 Programmatic Resolution of the PZZ, which evinced the definitive subordination of the PZZ to the new regime.

This resolution represented a significant departure from the PZZ’s previous *professions de foi* to the authorities in May and to the public in August. To begin with, the November

⁵⁶⁵ WAPP PZZ 582: 8.

⁵⁶⁶ WAPP PZZ 582: 26.

program placed considerably greater emphasis on pan-slavic solidarity, and how "...the eternal friendship and alliance...with the peoples of the Soviet Union is the best security for our people and for all of slavdom against new German aggression." So the new resolution insisted that the Union's first goal, "the continuing elimination of...German aggression and German imperialism" was tied to the "...close cooperation of all peace-loving peoples...."⁵⁶⁷ This emphasis on the Union's role in fostering international cooperation differs sharply with both the May and September pronouncements that the Union's main task was to help mobilize primarily Polish resources, in order to colonize Germany's former eastern territories.⁵⁶⁸

The next major change was a greater emphasis by the leadership of the Union on the relationship between Poland's internal politics and its ability to maintain its hold on the Recovered Territories. The November resolution observed that the PZZ, in spite of its nonparty character, "declares itself in favor of the existence in Poland of such a political and socio-economic environment as will make possible the full realization of the basic tasks of the Polish people in this historical epoch." The resolution went on to claim that just such an environment had been realized through the work of the National Homeland

⁵⁶⁷ WAPP PZZ 582: 47. The Union's leadership forcefully reiterated their sense of dependence on the Soviet Union in an internal report for November which stated that the realization of the PZZ's goals for the expansion and retention of Poland's new western frontiers had come about "...through the political and military strength of the Soviet Union...." WAPP PZZ 582a: 62.

⁵⁶⁸ Compare this to the May memorial's claim that "the first, most burning issue" facing Poland was the occupation and settlement of the ZO with the best of *Polish* strength, and the August statement, which dealt *first* with the question of Poland's embracing a "Piast conception" of the Polish state (though this was bound up with "the victory of the democratic camp" in Poland) and only secondly mentioned Polish-Soviet friendship. WAPP PZZ 589: 1, and Cz. Pilichowski, "Ziemia Zachodnia i polityka polska," *Polska Zachodnia*, 5 August 1945, 3.

Council, the Government of National Unity, and Polish democracy, which had "...settled the historical dispute with the peoples of the Soviet Union and had concluded both peace and alliance with them, as well as friendly relations with the democracies of the US and England...and finally [achieved] the recovery of the Polish territories on the Oder, Neisse, and the Baltic."⁵⁶⁹ In the polarized environment brought about by the regime's ferocious anti-Mikołajczyk propaganda, this amounted to the PZZ declaring co-belligerency on behalf of the PPR.⁵⁷⁰

This co-belligerency carried organizational costs and benefits. In Poznań the PZZ had grown to become a major, quasi-governmental entity with a budget of almost 120,000 zlotys/month.⁵⁷¹ (PUR, in contrast, had spent 351,700 zlotys in financial aid to over 19,000 settlers in Gorzów from May to October 1945.⁵⁷²) Though membership dues brought 80,000 zlotys to the Union in 1945,⁵⁷³ to fund the PZZ's staff and propaganda activities at their current levels the PZZ's leadership required and sought significant government help (in the form of a permanent allowance) from the MZO in November.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁶⁹ WAPP PZZ 582: 47.

⁵⁷⁰ The foremost historian of the PZZ in postwar Poland, Michał Musielak, agrees, and comments on the failure of those within the PZZ who wanted to maintain the Union's traditional line that they wanted to develop the ideas and organization of the Union "in isolation from the then current political reality," and that at that time the PZZ's apolitical tendencies were only "theoretical postulates." Musielak, 96.

⁵⁷¹ WAPP PZZ 582: 6.

⁵⁷² AAN MAP 2465: 80.

⁵⁷³ WAPP PZZ 586: 138.

⁵⁷⁴ WAPP PZZ 582a: 52.

The costs of accepting the strings attached to close cooperation with the regime were a significant drop-off in membership and a local rank-and-file that grew increasingly disenchanted with the deepening partisan stance of the Union's Main Board. Though the PZZ's membership had grown rapidly in Wielkopolska after the region's liberation (from 2,900 members in May to over 23,000 by the end of 1945⁵⁷⁵), it now began a steep decline. By the end of 1946 in Poznań province the PZZ would number only 6,850 members. Furthermore, in 1946 officials at the PZZ's Main Board began to complain of a "lack of organizational and social discipline" on the part of the various PZZ circles in Wielkopolska, many of whom refrained from sending even one report to the Union's central authorities.⁵⁷⁶ In spite of these complaints, officials conceded that much of the alienation was due to the PZZ's political activities on behalf of the PPR and the parties of the "democratic bloc" as well as society's general disenchantment with "all organizations," including the PZZ, which the report attributed to the "growth of the numbers of [officially sponsored and mandated] organizations."⁵⁷⁷

The PZZ, in spite of its origins as part of the National Democrats, a political movement profoundly opposed to the Communists, found itself inextricably bound to the new order within a year of the Union's revival. The PZZ's strong fiscal and organizational ties to the new authorities and its own fundamental commitment to Poland's westward expansion

⁵⁷⁵ WAPP PZZ 586: 130.

⁵⁷⁶ WAPP PZZ 586: 291.

⁵⁷⁷ WAPP PZZ 586: 300.

persuaded many of its members to accept, publicly at least, what Dr. Wojciechowski referred to as the new order's "most beautiful models."⁵⁷⁸

There were a number of factors peculiar to the Union's goals and ideology (as well as the conduct of the regime) that brought this about. Many within the Union were convinced that the tasks of ethnically cleansing old Poland and polonizing the Recovered Territories required a strong state and a united Polish people. Furthermore, despite Dr. Widy-Wirsky's claims to the contrary, the Dmowskiite tradition within the Union encouraged a more favorable attitude toward the Soviet Union, and hence toward a cornerstone of the regime's foreign (and much of its domestic) policy: the anti-German, Polish-Soviet alliance.⁵⁷⁹ For many of these former Endecja activists, whose writings are filled with references to "centuries of Polish-German conflict,"⁵⁸⁰ and for much of their western Polish audience who had direct experience of almost six years of Nazi occupation, the promise that Germany would be permanently weakened through the conquest of the

⁵⁷⁸ Criticisms of the regime's management of settlement in the ZO similar to Wojciechowski's appear in the Main Board's November report. In particular, the Main Board strongly echoed Wojciechowski's criticisms of the negative role of political parties interfering in administration. WAPP PZZ 582a: 70.

⁵⁷⁹ Throughout the 1930s Dmowski was particularly anxious about the possibility of an anti-Polish Nazi-Soviet axis, and considered Germany a far more greater threat than Russia. This was very much in line with the national, geopolitical reasoning which guided his whole career. Krzysztof Kawalec, *Roman Domowski* (Warsaw: Editions Spotkanie System, 1996), 320-21.

⁵⁸⁰ The PZZ's publishing house sponsored numerous anti-German publications. In 1945 alone, in the first four issues of the Union's scholarly publication, *Przegląd Zachodni*, the journal listed 16 book titles concerned with Germany's wartime crimes in Poland as well as 15 brochures and 2 books about various aspects of the "Slavic west" and the ethnographic, historical, and economic basis of Poland's occupation of the Recovered Territories. Musielak refers to the "tremendous influence of the war on the Polish historiography of Polish-German relations," and the Union's "exaggerated anti-German stance" from 1945-1947. Musielak, 159-161.

Recovered Territories was too alluring. Many would quit the PZZ in protest rather than assent to the Union's complete subordination to the regime. For others, however, work in the PZZ offered the possibility of carrying on what they regarded as the essential historical task of Poland's westward expansion. Even though this required working within regime-imposed constraints, for them the benefits of establishing Poland on the Oder and Neisse far outweighed the costs of ideological compromise with the PPR.

Political divisions within Wielkopolska deepened through the late summer and fall of 1945. Ongoing discontent with the regime's agricultural policies, the creation of a popular political opposition and the growing antagonism of the region's Catholic leadership to the new regime all heightened tensions and uncertainties in Wielkopolska's old provinces. In Ziemia Lubuska, however, these developments had a lesser impact. There the near-monopoly on economic life enjoyed by local authorities, the greater dependence of the Polish population on government help, and the common struggle to establish a Polish presence tended to mute political and religious conflict. Most conflict in Ziemia Lubuska occurred between different kinds of settlers (*repatrianci*, military settlers, or Poles from Poznań) and rarely openly challenged the legitimacy of the authorities.

The increasing division within and between the various regions of Wielkopolska created difficulties for the regime's local representatives. The popular reaction against the regime's socio-economic policies in the central and eastern counties of Wielkopolska and the greater difficulties of even maintaining a Polish population in Ziemia Lubuska led the regime to purge its allied institutions and the government administrative apparatus⁵⁸¹ to

⁵⁸¹ In addition to the regime's successful efforts to suborn the PZZ, the PPR and its supporters waged a bitter and only partially successful struggle to maintain their hold

render them more docile and pliant. At the same time, in Wielkopolska the only stable point of contact that united the regime to the rest of local society was its punitive anti-German measures.

It was across this bridge of anti-German hatred that the regime's leadership hoped to carry its agenda to Wielkopolska society. The question for the regime was: could the local authorities even sustain Polish settlement in Ziemia Lubuska, much less persuade Polish society of its value?

A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY?: STABILIZING SETTLEMENT IN ZIEMIA LUBUSKA AND THE COSTS OF WIELKOPOLSKA'S NATIONALIST REVOLUTION, NOVEMBER 1945-FEBRUARY 1946

And the children of Israel said unto them. Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt. when we sat by the flesh pots. and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness. to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

—Exodus 16:3

"I think that such a division [between the 1948-1955 Stalinist and pre-Stalinist period] is unfounded, indeed illogical. I reject the division into two stages...because that would imply that previously, when the rule of the people was just beginning to blossom, the influence of Stalinist methods... or of Stalin himself was smaller....It was greater."

—Edward Ochab⁵⁸²

The difficulties of ethnic cleansing and the settlement of Ziemia Lubuska, the ongoing terrorism of the Red Army, and the deepening political and social divisions created a

on the ZSCh, which was threatening to defect, as a body, to the PSL. WAPP KW PPR 6, 89.

⁵⁸² Torńska, 34.

crisis for the regime in both Ziemia Lubuska and the old provinces of Poznań. Nine months after the liberation and expansion of midwestern Poland, the new authorities were further than ever from reaching their goal of winning widespread popular acceptance. Even worse, the settlement efforts which it realized were so central to the government's efforts to establish its legitimacy were threatening to unravel in the winter of 1945-46, as more and more settlers found the immediate risks of death and ongoing deprivation in Ziemia Lubuska to be unbearable—and left the region.

Yet, the regime weathered these crises and emerged ready to defend its hegemony. The end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946 saw a hardening of the divisions within Polish society throughout Wielkopolska. From the highest levels of provincial government to the lowest recesses of administration and the newest cadres of the parties of the "democratic bloc," the majority of the new authorities became convinced that they represented the real interests of the Polish nation and therefore had the right and the duty to rule.

Both the regime's success in cooperating with society in the settling of Ziemia Lubuska and its failure to suppress armed and unarmed opposition from Wielkopolska society at large stiffened attitudes within the regime. Buttressed by their control of an at times corrupt and brutal, but effective, administration and energized by the conviction that Poland's expansion and ethnic cleansing was their unique and uniquely necessary contribution to society, the regime's *apparat* in Wielkopolska was prepared to renew its struggle for the hearts and minds of local society. However, the bridge between social and nationalist revolution that the PPR believed the German occupation had created in Wielkopolska, and across which it attempted (mostly in vain) to freight its revolutionary

activities, turned out to carry traffic in both directions. While it allowed the authorities to transport an element of social radicalism into a profoundly conservative region, the regime itself also began to change, and became almost as nationalist as it was socialist.

The majority of local society in both the old and new counties of Wielkopolska continued to reject the authorities' claim to be Poland's only saviors, and instead politically supported the PSL. In the counties of north and southeastern Wielkopolska a small but violent minority even went so far as to wage an armed struggle against the regime. But though the insurgents enjoyed some support along Wielkopolska's eastern border regions (which bordered provinces with larger insurgencies), the population of midwestern Poland as a whole was unwilling to engage in or support armed resistance. Many of the people apparently accepted the radical anti-regime propaganda that identified the PPR as the "Polish Soviet Party" (Polska Partia Radziecka⁵⁸³), and were decidedly opposed to Communist rule.⁵⁸⁴ However, just as during the German occupation the majority of the Polish population of Wielkopolska refrained from engaging in direct, armed resistance, so too with the advent of the new regime most Poles were unwilling to make the transition from non-violent objection to the regime to active resistance.

In Ziemia Lubuska, though there was almost no armed resistance at all, the local population's attitude to the new order was split: the *repatrianci* and military settlers, who came from Poland's former eastern provinces and who made up a little less than half of Ziemia Lubuska's population, were almost universally hostile to the authorities, while pioneers from southern and central Poland and Wielkopolska were more likely to support

⁵⁸³ WAPP WUIiP 40: 65.

⁵⁸⁴ Kersten, *Establishment*, 208-211.

the regime. However, given the almost universal expectation among the *repatrianci* that the current regime (and their own sojourn in Ziemia Lubuska) was only transitional,⁵⁸⁵ as well as the strong sense of dependency on the central government among all the settlers, here, as elsewhere in Wielkopolska, discontent never translated itself into sustained, active opposition to the new order.

Throughout Ziemia Lubuska the onset of winter was a time of fear and anxiety for all the Polish population. The security situation worsened, as Soviet soldiers continued their attacks on the Polish population. The supply situation, administrative difficulties, and the problems of reconstruction also hampered Polish settlement. Yet, in spite of all these difficulties the regime and local society managed to maintain and even expand Polish settlement.

In addition to intractable economic problems, the authorities and local society were helpless to procure the security of persons and property. By November PPR officials acknowledged unsatisfactory security as a challenge second only to food and supply in undermining the province's efforts to settle the Western Territories.⁵⁸⁶ while one of the leaders of the PZZ, Zygmunt Wojciechowski, claimed in his own report that lack of satisfactory security was the first problem undermining settlement.⁵⁸⁷

In an October report to the Ministry of Public Administration, officials in seven of the nine counties sending data⁵⁸⁸ reported no improvement in the security situation, and sent

⁵⁸⁵ WAPP UWP 120: 256; WAPP WO-PUR 2677: 87.

⁵⁸⁶ WAPP KW PPR 145: 40.

⁵⁸⁷ AAN MAP 2465: 67.

⁵⁸⁸ Skwierzyn, Wschowa, Gorzów, Miedzzyrzecz, Strzelce, Sulcin, and Zielona Góra; Gubin and Slubice did not send information.

in more detailed descriptions of Soviet depredations. Gorzów reported ongoing destruction of buildings by departing Soviet soldiers. In Zielona Góra it was reported that “[t]he population’s relations with the Red Army have worsened on account of the constant increase in cases of theft, assault, and even murder.”⁵⁸⁹

In Zielona Góra’s January 1946 report officials spoke of ongoing popular hostility against the Red Army because “acts of terror, rape, and thieving are still too fresh in peoples’ minds...Even up to the first half of December, shootings and assaults in the streets of the town were the order of the day.”⁵⁹⁰ In his report for November Krosno’s local plenipotentiary reported that “when these questions were brought to the attention of the local Red Army military authorities, there was not always success in finding those guilty.”⁵⁹¹

The economic situation at the beginning of the winter was also quite grim. In Krosno, by late November officials would report that supply problems were “desperate.” with a lack of fats, meat, vegetables, soap, clothes, shoes, and milk for women and children. This, combined with the Red Army’s confiscation of most of the fall harvest, ongoing Soviet confiscations of farm inventory and animals, and a lack of seed grain and potatoes, greatly frightened the settlers.⁵⁹² Officials in Zielona Góra also reported similar local concerns over severe supply problems and raised the possibility that this alone could

⁵⁸⁹ AAN MZO 60: 51, 53.

⁵⁹⁰ AAN MAP 2465: 277.

⁵⁹¹ WAPP UWP 78: 193.

⁵⁹² WAPP UWP 78: 195-196.

encourage flight from the county⁵⁹³—which in fact began to occur on a small scale by mid-winter, as many officials began leaving the area⁵⁹⁴.

In Gorzów food supplies were even in a worse state. From 1-19 December in the city no bread was baked because of the lack of flour; there were no fats, flour, kasha, or meat available either. The government and cafeterias had mostly been closed because of the lack of provisions.⁵⁹⁵ Similar supply problems prevailed in the other counties of Ziemia Lubuska as well; many officials declared that settlement in their counties was also threatened with collapse.⁵⁹⁶

In addition to the short-term crisis of supply, long-term economic problems threatened Polish settlement throughout Ziemia Lubuska. While Gorzów's county land office

⁵⁹³ In August the Zielona Góra branch of the Ministry of Propaganda reported that people were dissatisfied with the government on account of provisions (WAPP Wojewódzki Urząd Informacyjny i Propaganda 32: 59). In November and December inspectors from the Ministry of the Interior and Propaganda officials reported "a lack of even basic items on the ration cards—namely bread" in October and November, and a lack of fats and milk in December. AAN MAP 119: 93; WAPP UWP 78: 286; WAPP WUIiP 149: 49.

⁵⁹⁴ AAN MAP 2465: 276.

⁵⁹⁵ AAN MZP 1136: 38.

⁵⁹⁶ In Międzyrzecz officials reported that the "lack of items of the first necessity...has created a very critical situation..." and that without immediate help from the Province many settlers in the town and country would begin to depart (AAN MAP 2465: 193). The situation was somewhat better in Skwierzyn, where the population received "bread, salt, fish, oil, coffee and matches," though the situation would worsen in December (AAN MAP 2465: 166, 291). In December in Strzelce and Piła officials described the supply problem as "very critical" and also raised the possibility that local officials would quit their posts to seek employment in other regions of Poland. AAN MZO 1154: 22; AAN MAP 119: 49-51, 54.

reported in November that there had been an increase in the number of draft animals,⁵⁹⁷ lack of seed grain and draft power kept the Land Office from meeting its target of sowing 10,000 hectares of land by spring.⁵⁹⁸ Draft power problems were severe in the other counties of Ziemia Lubuska. Though there were 1,000 horses in Slubice county by November, the number was constantly decreasing because of lack of fodder (mostly confiscated by the Soviets) and lack of veterinarians.⁵⁹⁹ The lack of draft power (including lack of fuel and repairs for tractors) had such a negative impact that in the 14 counties of Ziemia Lubuska only fifteen percent of the spring sowing was completed. In the 27 counties of old Poznań Poznań farmers only met 55 percent of the sowing target.⁶⁰⁰

Reports of administrative corruption and popular looting also increased. This was due in part to the greater organizational effectiveness of the MZO in conducting inspections and receiving petitions and complaints, as well as the concern of provincial authorities that *szaber* represented a significant threat to sustainable Polish settlement. Evidence also suggests that official concerns with corruption represented an effort to purge Ziemia Lubuska (and the old counties of Wielkopolska) of politically suspect elements.

In both Zielona Góra and Krosno there were important investigations of official corruption in the winter of 1945-46, both of which had strong political overtones. In December 1945 in Zielona Góra the UB accused Kazimierz Górny (a member of the PSL), the head of the local Provisional State Administrative Board (Tymczasowy Zarząd

⁵⁹⁷ At that time the county possessed 2,770 horses, 2,180 cattle and 1,112 pigs. WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 278.

⁵⁹⁸ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 205.

⁵⁹⁹ WAPP UWP WRiRR 3270: 271.

⁶⁰⁰ WAPP UWP 34: 121.

Państwowy, TZP) in charge of securing former German property, of *szaber* during the first months of his work in Zielona Góra, as well as falsely accusing the UB of looting in an effort to cover up the malfeasance of the TZP.⁶⁰¹

In their investigation the UB noted that Górný had begun keeping records of the property he was charged to secure only on 5 December (five months after the TZP began operations in Zielona Góra), which he explained was due to the initial difficulties of the Board's work. The UB acknowledged that Citizen Górný "[g]ives the impression of an energetic, clever, well connected person." However, according to their report, the UB, the *starosta*, the mayor and social activists all shared the conviction that "...in the beginning period of his work, on account of the prevailing chaos, not only he, but the persons under him, could have taken certain personal profit, even though at this time there was no concrete proof of this."⁶⁰² Among the evidence gathered in the case against Górný was a deposition by one of Górný's former assistants, Henryk Górecki. Górecki had arrived with the first TZP operation team sent to Zielona Góra, and sought to explain the problems that faced the TZP (and indeed, all Polish administration in the Recovered Territories) in the first few months of work.⁶⁰³

Górecki wrote that at the beginning of its work the TZP faced a situation in which "...the initial organizational chaos reigned not only in the offices of the TZP, but quite simply everywhere." The 4-person operation group that arrived in Zielona Góra in late June had

⁶⁰¹ AAN MZO 1159: 65.

⁶⁰² AAN MZO 1159: 55.

⁶⁰³ AAN MZO 1159: 61.

only received oral instructions from the Provincial Branch of the TZP in Legnica.⁶⁰⁴ To begin its work in June the TZP operation group had to hire additional workers (by January 1946 the TZP in Zielona Góra employed 58 persons⁶⁰⁵), from among Poles who came from every region of Poland and of whom the TZP knew nothing. The TZP then proceeded with the difficult work of trying to safeguard German property and distribute it among impoverished *repatrianci* and Poles returning from slave labor in the west—all of whom hungered for clothes, household items, furniture, etc. and among whom there were undoubtedly a certain percentage of speculators, louts, and adventurers.

The TZP's work was further complicated by the large number of instructions and regulations which began to come into its offices "day after day," and many of which were "often completely impracticable and self-contradictory." Górecki closed his statement by claiming that as an employee of the TZP who had worked with it from the beginning, the personnel there sought not only "...to strengthen our state, but to benefit the people as a whole...."⁶⁰⁶

In Krosno there was a scandal of a different sort. From 10-23 February 1946, during an inspection of the county by Julian Faszczewski, an official of the Ministry of Recovered Territories, substantial evidence of widespread malfeasance and political conflict was uncovered. Much of this conflict swirled around the current *starosta*, Jan Ociepka, a member of the otherwise moribund local PPS, and the vice-*starosta*, Jan Such. According

⁶⁰⁴ Legnica was formerly part of the province of Lower Silesia. The local TZP headquarters there sent out an operation group to Zielona Góra at a time (prior to its 7 July 1945 transfer to the province of Poznań) when that town was still officially part of Lower Silesia.

⁶⁰⁵ AAN MZO 1144: 55.

⁶⁰⁶ AAN MZO 1144: 61.

to Faszczewski's report, Ociepka, who recently had been dismissed from a local government post in Wrzesien because of looting, did not enjoy a good opinion with the local PPR, the Union of Military Settlers, or local government officials.⁶⁰⁷

In an attached report from the county's branch of the UB, Ociepka was described as "... a bad administrator,...of working-class stock,...of middle education....who has no personal enemies because his closest collaborators and friends are just like him, are his truest imitators and do the same things he does." The report went on to describe how he had taken "for unknown purposes" 5 kg of butter (a very valuable commodity in post-war Poland, worth 370 zlotys/kg on the open market in January 1946⁶⁰⁸), meat and other items from the *starosta*'s mess. Furthermore, Ociepka had a great weakness in his constant partying and brawling that led him into all sorts of difficulties, including an occasion on 26 January where he and his vice-*starosta*, Such, were beaten up at a party given by the Union of Military Settlers.⁶⁰⁹

Faszczewski went on to detail the various ways in which Krosno had suffered during Ociepka's and Such's administration. He claimed that German property in the whole county had been looted freely, and that other officials in the town of Krosno had already been imprisoned for theft in November, including the town of Krosno's mayor, vice-mayor, and treasurer. The new mayor, Rzakowolski, was a "weak organizer and lacked self-control, a fellow who didn't care about the town; the Vice-mayor, Kaseja, the former

⁶⁰⁷ AAN MZO 1144: 51.

⁶⁰⁸ WAPP WUIiP 107: 6. Fuel oil, for example, cost 70 zlotys per liter in near by Sulęcín county. WAPP WUIiP 132: 45. Siebel-Achenbach rightly describes butter as "...something worth its weight in gold in post-war Poland." Siebel Achenbach, 189.

⁶⁰⁹ AAN MZO 1144: 55.

starosta [of Krosno prior to his dismissal and replacement by Ociepka] and [current] vice mayor has a bad reputation in local society.” Other branches of local government, including the entire town administration and MO of Zamsz (Sommerfeld), the other major town in the county, had “significant faults,” as did the cooperative movement, “Spółem,” and the County Land Office. Only PUR and the local branch of the Ministry of Information and Propaganda “...stand out positively against a very dark background.”⁶¹⁰ The report concluded with a recommendation that both Such and Ociepka be immediately dismissed from their posts, and that the work of PUR in Krosno be commended for its “self-sacrificing and honest work.”⁶¹¹

Izydorczyk wrote to the PPR’s Central Committee in Warsaw to defend the work that had been done in Krosno. He began by admitting that Ociepka did “engage in a little looting” but that he was not worse than “many other of the starostas in the West.” and that the local PPR “had him on the index.” He went on to claim that conditions in Krosno, like other counties of Ziemia Lubuska, certainly left much to be desired, but that it was obvious that the MZO’s inspectors “especially do not like the Polish Workers’ Party, because the members, representatives, and *starostas*, etc., of other parties without a doubt have more sins on their consciences.”⁶¹² Whether because of this intervention, or because of such a paucity of even semi-qualified personnel who were willing to settle in the

⁶¹⁰ AAN MZO 1144: 52-53.

⁶¹¹ AAN MZO 1144: 54.

⁶¹² AAN MZO 1144: 61.

Recovered Territories, Ociepka remained at his post, where his veniality, drunkenness, and disorderly conduct were an ongoing problem.⁶¹³

In both Zielona Góra and Krosno (as well as other areas of Ziemia Lubuska and the pre-war counties of Poznań) charges of corruption were deeply connected to broader political questions. The First Secretary of Poznań's PPR claimed that the problems with *starosta* Ociepka's administration in Krosno were no worse than those in any other county of Ziemia Lubuska; Zielona Góra's UB pressed a case against a member of the TZP in part because the TZP accused the UB of looting—"undermin[ing] our authority in the eyes of society."⁶¹⁴ These instances demonstrate the high importance of political considerations in the adjudication of corruption cases. In other counties and among a variety of administrative bodies of Ziemia Lubuska, the PPR pressed cases of corruption and "tactless behavior and informal administrative work" as a means to politically cleanse the region of ideologically uncertain elements, especially members of the PSL.⁶¹⁵ Indeed, the PPR went so far as to claim that the misery in Ziemia Lubuska "[f]or the most part...is the fault of reactionary work, of dark elements of hitlerite Fascists who are undermining and causing difficulties..." for efforts to settle Ziemia Lubuska.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹³ AAN MZO 1144: 1-3. Another inspection in March 1947 would also recommend that Ociepka be immediately dismissed for misconduct.

⁶¹⁴ AAN MZO 1159: 68.

⁶¹⁵ WAPP KW PPR 145: 37. Among the counties that Party members conducted inspections (on behalf of State Board of Control Commission for Ziemia Lubuska), Trzcianka, Strzelce, Piła, and Zielona Góra were all cited as areas where PSL officials were either corrupt or, because of their party affiliation, were unable to harmonize their work with the UB.

⁶¹⁶ WAPP KW PPR 145: 59.

Local officials in Ziemia Lubuska had a variety of ideas on the causes of popular discontent. In Zielona Góra, local officials in the *starosta*'s office claimed that many of the villages in their county were inhabited by "socially immature people,...even to a certain degree asocial [people]." They also observed that unlike the peasants of central Poland, who were highly conscientious, the typical settler in Zielona Góra "...is most of all occupied with his own affairs, his own survival, and doesn't care about what happens beyond his own home...[for him] his obligations to society and the State are a thing completely secondary...."⁶¹⁷

In contrast to the hostility of Zielona Góra's officialdom toward local society, in Gorzów the *starosta*'s office regarded local society as an important partner in its efforts to reduce crime. Officials in county government praised the greater security provided by armed citizens' patrols and found the UB's confiscation of these patrols' firearms in November an "incomprehensible act."⁶¹⁸ Even after this, in December, the local MO arranged night patrols in different districts with at least one armed militia man accompanied by two or three local settlers, as well as a civilian night watch in a cooperative effort to cut down crime. Though these initiatives were undermined by both the lack of firearms and UB interference, by January officials reported that security was improving in the towns with electric lighting. Although it attributed this mainly to the withdrawal of Red Army units from the county, the struggle with *szaber* was showing good results on account of local participation in the MO's policing.⁶¹⁹ By February, officials in Gorzów reported an even greater increase in security, noting that armed robberies, assaults, and murder were

⁶¹⁷ AAN MAP 2465: 276.

⁶¹⁸ AAN MAP 119: 3.

⁶¹⁹ AAN MZO 194: 94.

becoming “increasingly rare facts,” and that in some communes every theft was discovered.⁶²⁰

In Ziemia Lubuska the regime recorded other successes at this time. The threatened collapse of regional settlement did not materialize in spite of the failure of either the central or provincial government to provide any significant increase in food or fuel supplies during the winter. Indeed, during this period settlement even expanded, as more Poles from the former *kresy* were settled in the remaining undamaged properties in the region’s towns and villages. In Gorzów, though the economic situation remained serious throughout the winter, with none of the county’s many factories able to function on account of lack of fuel and raw materials, and the supply situation still “very bad”⁶²¹ in February 1946, the settlement of the county was almost completed.⁶²² In the last nine months, from May 1945 to January 1946, the authorities had managed to settle 21,436 persons in Gorzów, and awarded them 4,145 farms.⁶²³

Zielona Góra also experienced some real successes in reviving economic life and settling the region. By November 1945, officials from PUR’s Central Inspectorate praised the work and organization of Zielona Góra’s PUR as a “stark contrast to the other towns and counties of Ziemia Lubuska.” PUR officials had already helped to settle 30,000 Poles in a county which, before the war, had a population of 65,000. Officials estimated that, even

⁶²⁰ AAN MZO 194: 222.

⁶²¹ In January Gorzów’s authorities had sufficient bread for the 15,550 persons with ration cards. However, for this same number of persons authorities received only 155 kg of tea, 438 kg of marmalade, 6,000 kg of sugar, 871 kg of soap, 11,138 packs of matches, and 1,350 liters of fuel oil to distribute to the county’s population. AAN MZO 194: 95.

⁶²² WAPP WUIiP 90: 32-33.

⁶²³ AAN MZO 194: 98-99.

after all the damage caused by the war, and especially the “horde of looters” who ravaged the county after the war, it would still be possible to settle a further 15,000 Poles in the county’s towns, and 10,000 in Zielona Góra’s villages.⁶²⁴ Zielona Góra’s officials, in spite of their various complaints about the settlers, security, and the lack of help from the central government, still had high hopes for their county’s future. In November the *starosta*’s office wrote positively about efforts to revive commerce and the economic potential of the county’s remaining industry.⁶²⁵

In Krosno, in spite of the numerous problems with the county government, inspectors from the Ministry of Recovered Territories filed positive reports about the activities of the local office of the Ministry of Propaganda and of PUR. PUR alone, excluding military settlement, managed to settle 4,496 families, or over 14,000 persons, in Krosno’s towns and villages from 1 October 1945 to 27 February 1946. Many of the *repatrianci*, who constituted the majority of those resettled, were able to bring livestock with them, and thus were not in as desperate a material state as those who had arrived earlier.⁶²⁶

Even though the situation in Ziemia Lubuska in the winter of 1945-46 was economically and politically difficult for the regime, its representatives had managed to help preserve and even expand Polish settlement in the region. For their part, the vast majority of settlers did not abandon their new homes in the western borderlands. The *repatrianci*, who formed roughly half of the region’s population, had no real prospects of returning to their homes in the regions annexed to the Lithuanian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian Soviet

⁶²⁴ WAPP WO-PUR 137: 61.

⁶²⁵ AAN MAP 2465: 235.

⁶²⁶ WAPP WUiP 107: 20.

Republics, in spite of their almost universal longing to do so, which often made them unwilling to invest real effort in developing the property on which they were settled.⁶²⁷ However, other settlers from southern, central and western Poland, who had the option of returning to their former homes, remained as well. For them, the promise of a better future and the reality of freely distributed property appears to have outweighed the dangers of life in Ziemia Lubuska.

In addition to those settlers who sought the benefits of long-term settlement, many of those called upon to settle the lands to the west had yet another image of the "concrete slogans" that should guide their conduct in the Recovered Territories. In addition to problems that came from "above" (the crises created by official incompetence and venality and the Red Army's criminality), significant elements of the Polish population engaged in looting of former German property and preying upon other Poles. Just as Polish officials often pursued their own private interests in Ziemia Lubuska and squabbled with the Provincial and national government over the allocation of resources to their particular departments, many individual Poles also pursued their own private interests in spite of the government's efforts to encourage collective work/engage in social control of the settlers. The fall and winter of 1945 were a time of widespread Polish looting, or "szaber," banditry and theft throughout mid-western Poland. This greatly contributed to a regional economic and social crisis, as a significant number of Poles, especially in the Recovered Territories, engaged in looting and refrained from constructive work.

⁶²⁷ WAPP UWP 120: 851.

Szaber was among the most ubiquitous, universally condemned, and apparently self-destructive popular phenomena of the immediate post-war period. While the *Wojewód* complained to the Ministry of Public Administration of the great deal of theft throughout Wielkopolska in the first six weeks following liberation, from late February through April 1945⁶²⁸ most of this was committed by members of the Red Army.⁶²⁹ It was only in the summer that Poles would begin their own widespread looting.

Szaber occurred within the peculiar context of Wielkopolska's nationalist revolution of ethnic cleansing and territorial expansion, amid widespread poverty, unemployment, and economic misery. The Allied-authorized Polish annexation of eastern Germany, the Red Army's looting, the regime's confiscation of all abandoned property by decree, the colonization of Ziemia Lubuska, official corruption, and even the Church's own expropriation of Protestant churches for its services (all occurring after five long years of Nazi occupation, enslavement and illegal expropriation) form the backdrop to popular looting in Wielkopolska.

For the previous five and a half years various foreign and domestic social and political institutions had used the crises of war, occupation, and liberation to expropriate the

⁶²⁸ ~102. 1945 czerwiec 4. Poznań.—Sprawozdanie wojewody poznańskiego dla Ministerstwa Administracji Publicznej z działalności za miesiąc maj 1945 r.” in Nawrocki and Bielecki, 160.

⁶²⁹ WAPP UWP 79: 73-74. Prior to June, the reports from Poznań county, like most other counties in Wielkopolska, discussed crime during this period almost exclusively in terms of confiscations and thefts committed by soldiers of the Red Army. These reports also often anxiously noted how these depredations were having a significant impact on local attitudes towards both the Red Army and the Provisional Government. However, PUR and the PPR also noted how local people took advantage of the chaos in the pre-war counties of Wielkopolska to confiscate farms, animals, and equipment abandoned by the German population. WAPP KW PPR 145: 16; WAPP WO-PUR 872 20: 65.

property and labor of various elements of Wielkopolska's population, and thus undermined the traditionally strong respect of local society for law and property rights.⁶³⁰ In the post-war period a significant element of the population took advantage of the breakdown in public order following the German collapse (and imitated the new authorities who all too often used their position to engage directly in *szaber* themselves) to personally profit by stealing abandoned German property. Furthermore, many Poles made the short step from looting abandoned German property to stealing Polish property (much of which had previously belonged to Germans but had been "officially" distributed by the authorities). Finally, in the tortured and violent political situation of post-war Poland, bands of former members of the AK, deserting soldiers from the Polish (and even Red) Army, and elements of both the semi-Polish Volksdeutsche and German minority began to either form home-grown Wielkopolska marauding bands, or to wander to midwestern Poland from other, more heavily policed regions in central Poland. This, in combination with official and unofficial Soviet banditry and confiscation, made all of Wielkopolska a considerably dangerous place.

According to available reports from the Provincial office of the MO for the period from August to December 1945, *szaber* and theft by Poles was a serious problem throughout midwestern Poland, while banditry and the anti-regime insurgency was confined to the eastern counties of pre-war Wielkopolska. From 1-20 November alone there were 83 armed robberies (nine of which were committed by persons in Polish military uniforms, and 43 by Soviet soldiers). There were an additional 92 thefts described as *szaber*, 228 apartment robberies (of which only 63 were solved), 103 horse thefts (41 of which were

⁶³⁰ Jan Gross, "Social Consequences," 202-203.

solved), 108 cattle thefts (34 solved) and 417 bicycle thefts (63 solved).⁶³¹ From 11-31 December there were 86 armed robberies (10 committed either by Polish military personnel or persons in Polish military uniforms, and 36 committed by Soviet soldiers or civilians). *Szaber* declined to 17 cases, as did most other kinds of property crime, during the Christmas season.⁶³² The MO blamed Polish *szaber* and thieving largely on the high rate of unemployment that prevailed in the region (especially, but not exclusively among the *repatrianci*⁶³³), and on the large numbers of transients traveling through Wielkopolska.⁶³⁴

The regime made further efforts to end *szaber* and reassert its control over the allocation of German property. In regulations issued by Feliks Widy-Wirsky, the Provincial Governor, entitled "A Warning from the Governor of Poznań on the day 24 X 45 in the question of looting" new stiff penalties were laid down for looting. These new regulations warned that anyone caught engaging in *szaber* would be subject to article 160 of the code of punishment, which called for five years prison and a fine, and that to this fine and imprisonment the regime could add a further five years in a work camp.

⁶³¹ WAPP UWP 120: 774-778, 806-808.

⁶³² There was however a significant increase of homicides: 38 during this period, of which only 18 were solved, and of which 5 were known to have been committed by the Red Army. WAPP UWP 120: 842, 867.

⁶³³ The repatrianci were an especially difficult case because they were often settled in the towns of Ziemia Lubuska without employment, and were convinced that they would soon be returning to their old homes in the former Kresy. WAPP UWP 120: 811. In the first week of November, in Kalisz county there were over 8,000 unemployed Poles Kresy. WAPP UWP 120: 779. By December there would be an additional 1,000 unemployed in Kalisz, in addition to another 1,000 without work in Szamotuły—all because of factory shutdowns in Kresy. WAPP UWP 120: 837.

⁶³⁴ WAPP UWP 120: 778, 808. Additionally, there were 25 homicides, 15 of which were solved, of which 5 were known to have been committed by Soviet soldiers.

In these regulations the Governor also informed the populace that the struggle with looting would include searches of the train and car baggage of those returning from the Recovered Territories. There were to be inspections of all items in markets and stores, and proof of purchase for goods at the market had to be shown.⁶³⁵ In this way it was hoped that the open theft and trading in German property would be eliminated and that the government's efforts to redistribute property would no longer be hindered by massive theft.

In addition to the partial breakdown of public order brought about by theft and looting throughout midwestern Poland, the regime faced another struggle: an armed struggle with insurgents/bandits in the eastern counties of Wielkopolska. Prior to late October political opponents of the regime had rarely resorted to arms in their struggle with the regime. From the last weeks of October to the end of December, however, armed activity in the eastern counties of Krotoszyn, Kępno, Kalisz, Koło, and Koniń stepped up dramatically, with 37 separate incidents from 21-31 October alone.⁶³⁶ These actions ranged in seriousness from several persons in Polish military uniforms on 31 October robbing three inhabitants in the village of Siarka, Kalisz county of a 100 kg pig, shoes, butter, a bicycle and money,⁶³⁷ to insurgents temporarily seizing the village of Sępólna, in Koło. During this incident, over 200 heavily armed insurgents arrived in town in two trucks, shot and

⁶³⁵ AAN MAP 158: 134-135.

⁶³⁶ AAN UWP 120: 731-743.

⁶³⁷ AAN UWP 120: 731-733, 742. Beyond their placement in the relevant sections, the criteria by which the MO ascribed some robberies as the work of "reactionary bands" and others as simple armed theft by persons in Polish military uniforms is not clear. In the same report, for example, in the section describing armed robberies, 4 of these were carried out "by persons in Polish military uniform," and one by persons who gave a receipt with the inscription NSZ.

wounded an MO and an UB functionary and then proceeded to seize the local MO contingent (whom they held hostage in the main square), force the remaining UB to withdraw from the village after a gun battle, and destroy the town's MO post with grenades before withdrawing.⁶³⁸

Over the next two months there would be over 80 attacks by armed bands in Wielkopolska, several of which involved the brief occupation of entire villages and/or the destruction of local MO posts. Among the most well organized of these attacks were: the occupation by a 50 person band of the village of Popien, Turecki county on 5 November, where the perpetrators seized over 100.000 zlotys from the commune administration and beat a member the PPR; on 11 November an attack on the MO post in the village of Opatów, Kępno county where 70 men claiming to be part of the AK stole clothing and other items from the MO and the local head of the PPR; on 18 December an attack by a 36 man strong AK group on the village of Kazimierz, Konin county, which destroyed all local government records on taxes in kind and seized grain supplies. Different bands also robbed and destroyed MO posts in Konin on 18 December and Moglino on 19 December.⁶³⁹

In many of these attacks insurgents especially targeted UB and MO personnel, local officials, and members of the PPR and PPS.⁶⁴⁰ In spite of the insurgents' local successes, which led the Main Command of the MO to report in January 1946 that security in thirteen of Poznań's 39 counties (only one of which was in Ziemia Lubuska: Strzelce)

⁶³⁸ AAN UWP 120: 740.

⁶³⁹ AAN UWP 120: 782, 813-814, 855,

⁶⁴⁰ AAN UWP 120: 843.

was “unsatisfactory” on the whole, the MO claimed that security in the province had improved, and in general was satisfactory. The Main Command acknowledged that the bands which were causing problems in the eastern counties represented a real threat: they were well armed, were recruiting among the local population, fugitives, deserters from the Polish and Soviet military, and they often enjoyed the sympathy of the local population.⁶⁴¹

However, many of these bands were beginning to descend from being primarily a politically motivated insurgency to engaging in plain banditry, as they robbed and terrorized peaceful elements of the population and thus began to jeopardize their popular support. The MO claimed that in the month of December it carried out 68 actions (often in cooperation with the UB) which eliminated 10 bands and resulted in 90 arrests. In a situation where legal opposition to the regime was still possible, and the population of Wielkopolska as a whole desired the reestablishment of public order, the anti-regime insurgency never managed to establish themselves as a major presence in the central and western counties of the province.⁶⁴²

In addition to the armed insurgency, the regime faced less violent, but steadfast political resistance (especially in the pre-war counties of Wielkopolska) on the part of the constantly expanding PSL and a still combative Catholic Church. The Church’s press continued its lively polemic with various regime policies, pro-regime publications, and the officially-established Marxist ideology. In such articles as “The Basis of Our

⁶⁴¹ AAN UWP 120: 843-844.

⁶⁴² Erasmus’ observation that “the only political basis of these bands was negative” appears to be supported by the MO’s documentation of their activity in 1945. Erasmus, *Referendum i wybory w województwie Poznańskim w latach 1946-1947*, 57.

Strength,”⁶⁴³ “An Army of Babes,”⁶⁴⁴ and an address by Cardinal Hlond “The Issue of the Christian Family,”⁶⁴⁵ *Głos* continued to argue that the secularization of Poland’s marriage laws and the possibility of civil divorce threatened to undermine Poland’s birth rate, which in turn would have potentially disastrous social, economic and military consequences. In other articles, including “German Anti-Christianity,”⁶⁴⁶ “On a New Man,”⁶⁴⁷ and “At the Sources of Current Evils,”⁶⁴⁸ *Głos* directly and indirectly attacked Marxism, as springing from an alien (German) cultural environment (“German Anti-Christianity”), resembling the Nazi project of constructing a “culture of murder” (“On a New Man”), and part of a system based on “fear, terror, and death—the usual tools of totalitarianism....”⁶⁴⁹

The regime’s propagandists were very much aware that *Głos* represented only a small part of the Church’s strength and activity in Wielkopolska. In report on the state of religious affairs in the province in December, these officials wrote about both the “Catholic aspect of Wielkopolska’s society” and “the Church’s offensive.” In reference to the Church’s “offensive,” they noted that, while turnouts for official events tended to be quite low (such as the anniversary celebration of the Soviet Union’s October Revolution in Wolsztyn, where only 15 persons turned up), throughout the parishes of Wielkopolska

⁶⁴³ Jan Dobraczyński, “Fundament Siły,” *Głos Katolicki*, 25 November 1945, 1.

⁶⁴⁴ Zofia Trzcińska-Kamińska, “Armia Niemowląt,” *Głos Katolicki*, 13 January 1946, 18.

⁶⁴⁵ August Cardinal Hlond, “Zagadnienie Rodziny Chrześcijańskiej,” *Głos Katolicki*, 27 January 1946, 34-35.

⁶⁴⁶ Ignacy Stein, “Antychryścianizm Niemiecki,” *Głos Katolicki*, 25 November 1945, 7.

⁶⁴⁷ Ignacy Stein, “O nowego człowieka,” *Głos Katolicki*, 9 December 1945, 34-35.

⁶⁴⁸ Aleksander Rogalski, “U źródeł zła dzisiejszego,” *Głos Katolicki*, 10 February 1946, 1.

⁶⁴⁹ Rogalski, “U źródeł zła dzisiejszego,” 1.

there were numerous missions, recollections and sermons full of “anti-government declarations.”⁶⁵⁰

This official analysis of Wielkopolska’s Catholicism is quite revealing of attitudes toward religion among the regime’s representatives. According to them “[t]he notion of religion is associated with the person of the priest, who always finds a hearing among ‘the faithful.’” Currently, “[t]he Church...was gaining time by skillfully playing its trump card, that it was familiar with the psyche of its...flock.”⁶⁵¹ In Gorzów, a similar analysis of the state of religion undertaken by local propaganda officials in January noted that religious life in the county did not differ from Poland’s central regions, except that the priests showed a greater understanding of the people’s needs, and received in return greater trust by the local people. To combat this state of affairs they recommended the construction of more libraries, and the creation of “Houses of the People” as centers of culture.⁶⁵²

Equally revealing of the attitudes of both the regime’s political officialdom and the Catholic hierarchy is a conversation between Poznań’s governor and Cardinal Hlond. Dr. Widy-Wirsky, one of the nominal heads of the nominally Catholic Labor Party, met secretly with the Cardinal on 7 February 1946, ostensibly in order to intervene on account of “several aggressive remarks by priests during their sermons.”⁶⁵³ but also to attempt to work out a better *modus vivendi* with the Church in Wielkopolska.

⁶⁵⁰ WAPP WUIiP 36: 137-138.

⁶⁵¹ WAPP WUIiP 36: 138.

⁶⁵² AAN MZO 194: 93.

⁶⁵³ WAPP KW PPR 73: 6.

In a wide-ranging discussion on the Church's role in public life, the Cardinal, who described himself as "non-political," refused to give Dr. Widy-Wirsky any opinion on the role of the Labor Party in the upcoming elections (see below), and claimed that "the Catholic Church will not officially support any single party...[and that] up until now I have not spoken with Mikołajczyk." He went on to say that it was simply "a false opinion that the Church would enter into a struggle with the regime," and did not question the regime's right to make "positive social reforms" even at the expense of the Church's material interests. When Widy-Wirsky objected that "the responsible managers of the Church" had taken a line "now and again unfriendly to the government," Cardinal Hlond countered by noting "the permanent attacks against him by the government's press" and implying that this in part reflected inordinate Jewish influence at the highest levels of government.⁶⁵⁴

The Cardinal went on to insist that the lack of a Concordat in no way needed to hamper Church-state relations, and he cited the examples of the United States and England, where the Church had good relations with the state in spite of neither country having an official Vatican diplomatic representative. Cardinal Hlond concluded his talk with the Governor by recounting a conversation he had had with Edward Beneš, a former schoolmate of the Cardinal's, who asked to meet with him as the Cardinal was passing through Czechoslovakia on his way to Poland. In their conversation, Hlond reported that Beneš told him of his anxieties concerning the expansion of Communist influence in both their countries. Beneš claimed that in spite of the current heavy Soviet influence in Poland, in the long run "thanks to Catholicism you can defend yourself—it is worse with us

⁶⁵⁴ WAPP KW PPR 73: 7.

Czechs.” Hlond closed the conversation by promising that he would keep the clergy out of politics, “because in this activity even being a man of the cloth doesn’t defend one from perversions of character or the intellect.”⁶⁵⁵

The regime’s relationship to religious life in Wielkopolska reveals that, either in conflict or cooperation, there was a significant gap between the new authorities and practicing Catholics, whether they were lay or ordained. In Wielkopolska, the only categories with which regime officials could analyze Catholicism were either the laity’s superstition (which could be cured with enough libraries and reading rooms) or the clergy’s raw power politics (as evinced in their all-but-exclusive identification of Catholicism with the hierarchy). These perceptions, shaped by the regime’s dominant Marxist ideology, hardened by the authorities’ ambition to dictate rather than negotiate, and given a keen edge by the conflict such strategies engendered, hung over the authorities’ efforts to build a bridge between local society and themselves like a sword of Damocles.

Catholicism’s role in deepening the schism between the new regime and much of local society is more complex. Certainly throughout Wielkopolska most of the clergy, including Cardinal Hlond and the majority of the region’s priests, were actively hostile to the new authorities.⁶⁵⁶ Yet even in their criticisms the clergy and *Głbs* carefully distinguished between the regime’s specific policies (especially regarding the new marriage laws and the secularization of public education) and the Polish state. Indeed, the Church’s official polemic against these policies was an eclectic mix of appeals to natural law, principles of majoritarian democracy (i.e., that Poland’s overwhelming Catholic

⁶⁵⁵ WAPP KW PPR 73: 8.

⁶⁵⁶ Erasmus, *Referendum*, 54; Łach, 119.

majority had a right to shape national policy according to their values) and, in the case of marriage law, even to Poland's economic and geo-strategic interests (that Poland's security and prosperity depended upon a growing population and would be threatened by any weakening of marriage). Though much of the current content of the regime's policy came in for strong official criticism, the Church did not declare an open conflict with the form of the new People's Poland as a strong, centralized state.⁶⁵⁷

Indeed, their defense of the Polish state was but one part of the local Church's enduring support of Polish nationalism. During this time the Church's official spokesmen maintained their attack on all things German (though much of this was toned down from the immediate post-liberation period and was primarily a thinly-veiled attack on the government, such as "German Anti-Christianity" and "At the Sources of Current Evils"). Churchmen also closely cooperated with local authorities to establish the institutional Church in Ziemia Lubuska. Finally, the hierarchy continued its close identification of the Church and the Polish nation, such as occurred in Cardinal Hlond's address to Catholic students on 17 November 1945, when he spoke of how "[t]his Church, so in the Poland of Choroby, as in People's Poland, gathered around its pastors, is nothing other than the people itself, which is grafted into Christ ...and preserves the Gospel as the deepest theme of its history."⁶⁵⁸ The strong identification of the Church and the nation further reinforced the deep nationalism which pervaded all of Wielkopolska's public life in the years immediately following the war.

⁶⁵⁷ Erasmus notes that there were "no official pronouncements against the creation of workers and peasants power," and that the Church took a stance of "formal neutrality against the PPR as it waged ideological combat against Marxism" even though most of the clergy supported the PSL. Erasmus, *Referendum*, 54-55.

⁶⁵⁸ August Cardinal Hlond, "Kościół Chrystusowy," *Głos Katolicki*, 9 December 1945, 1.

The impact of the hierarchy's pronouncements on the laity, and the ways in which the laity's own religious attitudes informed their relationship to the regime, are more difficult to gauge. This was a time of tremendous religious vitality in Wielkopolska. In January, Ministry of Propaganda officials had noted the rich celebrations of Christmas and the activities of various Catholic lay organizations, including the Sodality of Mary, the Servants of Jasna Góra, and the Association of Catholic Youth (Katolicki Stowarzyszen Młodzież, KSM), where clergy preached frequent "reactionary" sermons.⁶⁵⁹ Earlier, in December, these officials (while considering who was enabling the "armed and moral diversions" currently occurring in Wielkopolska's eastern counties) had noted the "disturbing growth" of the KSM. Officials observed that the KSM far surpassed the regime-sponsored Youth Union of Struggle (Związek Walki Młodych, ZWM)⁶⁶⁰, and how the various plays it presented and the composition of its leadership made it "obvious that the members of this organization are also members of the PSL."⁶⁶¹ This evidence, while hardly a complete picture of lay religious life in Wielkopolska, suggests at the very least that the most religiously active lay people were not put off by the clergy's anti-regime pronouncements, and that in at least one organization where the laity exercised a high degree of initiative, the KSM, religious engagement and anti-regime politics went hand-in-hand.

⁶⁵⁹ WAPP WUIiP 37: 156.

⁶⁶⁰ Even official historiography noted a "...very difficult situation with Poznań's youth," and how the ZWM only numbered 12,000 members in February 1946 (and declined to 9,000 by May) due the "conservative environment of Poznań." Erasmus, *Referendum*, 63-64.

⁶⁶¹ WAPP WUIiP 37: 153-154.

During this time the PSL also continued to greatly expand its membership to over 500,000 nationally, and 70,000 locally in the fall and winter of 1945-46, at a time when the PPR's party membership was still in decline in Wielkopolska⁶⁶² and the SL was for practical purposes eliminated as a political force in midwestern Poland.⁶⁶³ Even in Ziemia Lubuska, where the PPR was well established throughout the administration, the PSL expanded into most, though not all, of the region's 11 counties.⁶⁶⁴ In the winter of 1945-46 Mikołajczyk focused on strengthening the PSL's internal organization and preparing it for the "free and unfettered elections" that were stipulated in the Moscow agreement, and which the regime was anxious to delay for as long as possible.

In Wielkopolska local officials initially were relatively sanguine in their evaluations of the continuing expansion of the PSL throughout the winter.⁶⁶⁵ but the PPR became ever more hostile in its evaluation of the collapse of the SL and the growing strength of the PSL. As early as August, Wielkopolska's PPR Executive Committee resolved that it was

⁶⁶² Coutouvidis and Reynolds cite Polish literature which places PPR membership in Poznań at 26,779 members in December 1945, and PSL membership at 70,000 by mid-1946, with national totals of 235,300 PPR members and 502,069 PSL members by May 1946. Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 237. Kersten cites a (more likely) figure of 540,000 in January, and 800,000 by May 1946. Kersten, *Establishment*, 192.

⁶⁶³ By early December 1945, the SL existed in only 6 of Wielkopolska's 43 counties. Werblan, 319.

⁶⁶⁴ These included the counties of Zielona Góra, Krosno, and Gorzów. Szczegóło, *Przeobrażenia*, 175-176.

⁶⁶⁵ In November the Ministry of Propaganda's report claimed that the PSL was developing on the periphery of the peasant movement, though they acknowledged that in Zielona Góra it had grown so much at the expense of the PPR that the local First Secretary committed suicide. MliP 35: 157. The MO's report in January 1946 discussed the various ways in which local society blamed the government for lack of security and provisions and the bad economic situation, and yet still claimed that in general the province's population was friendly toward the government. WAPP UWP 120: 888.

necessary “at every step to demask them as wreckers, enemies of democracy, Endeks and Pilsudskiites [sic!]....”⁶⁶⁶ As the struggle with the PSL wore on, the Executive’s evaluations of the PSL became even more negative, with the Executive Committee discussing how the PSL was attempting to unite with the remnants of the SL and create “one great [Peasant’s] Party, the Party of kulaks.”⁶⁶⁷

Various government and party officials played a significant role in further exacerbating political tensions in Wielkopolska by their rhetoric and policies. As political competition between the PSL and the PPR and its satellite parties intensified, the state apparatus and public security became more politically active. The regime’s officials continued to interpret any opposition to its policies or official ideology as political opposition, and to fully identify the political opposition as simply an unarmed, but equally blameworthy, branch of the armed, anti-regime (and hence, anti-democratic) insurgency that needed to be fought by all means at the regime’s disposal.

From the very beginning of the PSL’s creation, local PPR and government officials throughout Poland fiercely opposed and illegally hindered the PSL. This opposition ranged from administrative interference⁶⁶⁸ to politically motivated intimidation, and arrests,⁶⁶⁹ and at least one case of politically-motivated, regime-sponsored mass murder in

⁶⁶⁶ WAPP KW PPR 6: 89.

⁶⁶⁷ WAPP KW PPR 6: 109.

⁶⁶⁸ At the very beginning of the PSL’s political activity in Poland, President Bierut contravened the Moscow agreement, refused to grant to the PSL the agreed upon 1/3 positions in the KRN (Krajowa Rada Narodowa, National Homeland Council) or 1/3 of the positions in local government administration, and also illegally engaged in censorship of the PSL’s heavily restricted press. Łach, 93-94, 96, 99.

⁶⁶⁹ Harassment included the UB demanding lists of all PSL members, efforts by the UB to enlist PSL members as informers, provocations by UB functionaries going to the homes

Wielkopolska in the winter of 1945-46.⁶⁷⁰ The pressure to schedule promised elections at a time when regime officials were aware of the strength of the PSL⁶⁷¹ as well as the advent of a burgeoning insurgency by various armed anti-regime bands in Wielkopolska in the late fall and winter of 1945-46 further radicalized the PPR and the UB's attitudes toward the PSL. Both institutions began to step up their attacks on the PSL and harden their attitude toward it, and toward Wielkopolska society as a whole.

Wielkopolska's UB, dominated by the PPR and bearing the brunt of fighting the insurgency, by December 1945 was the cornerstone of the regime's effort to neutralize and destroy the PSL. The full mobilization of the UB toward this end began in late November at a meeting of all Provincial Commanders of the UB with the Minister of Public Security and Stanisław Radkiewicz, a member of the PPR's Politburo (and old KPP activist.) Though the final breakdown in election negotiations between the PPR and the PSL was over two months away, Radkiewicz already was speaking of how "our democracy" could not afford to lose the upcoming elections. He foresaw that in this electoral contest the UB (as well as the MO) belonged to and represented the regime's armed strength, while the AK and NSZ bands (along with the British Intelligence Service

of PSL members while masquerading as members of the AK, and the confiscation of PSL party cards. Turkowski, 79.

⁶⁷⁰ In Kępno, after the murder of the local UB commander, the UB conducted a mass arrest of 300 persons in the town and surrounding area. Though the majority of these persons were soon released, 16 did not return, and their bodies were later found buried in the county's fields in April 1946, at which time the UB removed the corpses to an unknown place. Turkowski, 79.

⁶⁷¹ In a February conference of provincial heads of security throughout Poland, the Commander of Wielkopolska's MO referred to Poznań as "...the dominion of Mr. Mikołajczyk...." Andrzej Paczkowski, ed., *Aparat bezpieczeństwa w latach 1944-1956: taktyka, strategia, metody: część I: lata 1945-1947* (Warsaw, 1994), 53.

by whom these bands were employed⁶⁷²) were the armed detachments of the PSL. Radkiewicz claimed that in this contest the UB must disarm the opposition, or “they will tear us apart....”⁶⁷³

Radkiewicz followed up his discussion of the political situation with a secret order issued on 4 December 1945 to local UB commanders that they were “...in the greatest secrecy to prepare an action having as its goal liquidating the activists of this Movement [the PSL], which must be attributed to reactionary bands.”⁶⁷⁴ Though this order apparently was not fully executed,⁶⁷⁵ the attitude of the head of the UB toward the PSL had immediate results on the activity of Poznań’s UB.

In November and December, in meetings with members of the province’s PPR and Ministry of Propaganda, UB operatives in Wielkopolska shared their views of the situation, revealed the depth of their political commitment to the regime and solicited help in their struggle against reaction. In their meeting with the PPR on 14 November, Major Kowalczyk of the UB discussed the various faults of the PSL: its opposition to the

⁶⁷² Earlier in this discussion, Col. Romkowski, Minister Radkiewicz’s unofficial second-in-command, claimed that “...from top to bottom the basis of the AK [insurgency] was money, and that this money, along with the AK’s instructions came from abroad.” Romkowski claimed that this money came from Britain’s Intelligence Service, which was attempting to spy on everything going on in Poland. Paczkowski, 35.

⁶⁷³ Paczkowski, 37, 39.

⁶⁷⁴ Łach, 103.

⁶⁷⁵ The vast majority of PSL activists were not directly threatened prior to the political upheavals of mid-1946; however, there were isolated acts of violence such as the 5 December 1945 murder in Łódź of a famous peasant activist, and member of the PSL’s Supreme Executive Committee, Bolesław Ściborek. Ściborek was killed in his home by unknown assailants, who were widely assumed to have been UB agents. Radkiewicz, in a revealing comment on this incident, claimed that it represented a “Goebbels-esque Katyń-style provocation....” Łach, 100-103.

Government, and especially the PPR and PPS; that it was under significant clerical influence that sought to slander Russia; that it was sheltering reaction under its wings; and that it was secretly financed by the NSZ. Kowalczyk illustrates the complete identification of the UB with the PPR when he concluded that “[W]e, as members of the PPR, must ourselves be very careful of every action of this reactionary clique and of these enemies of our Democratic State.”⁶⁷⁶

In the December meeting between a representative of the UB and members of the Ministry of Propaganda, the UB official began with a quote from Radkiewicz that “Security is the sword of democracy,” and that as such, it should cut away what is bad, what hinders people’s democracy. He then went on to outline the criminal and political aspects of the UB’s work, and how the UB sought to ensure the security and freedom of every loyal citizen and organization. This guarantee of security did not, however, apply to reaction, which he defined as those who did not agree with the current political changes, and who opposed the great, revolutionary changes: “agricultural reform...the whole [current] structure of the economy and of education, which proceeded from us.”

Reaction, whose area of work included “the forests [i.e. the armed underground], institutions, government offices, political and youth organizations, and also the area of religious life.” conducted its activities either like the bands, with arms, with sabotage in economic institutions, or with propaganda activities in political parties. While it was necessary to distinguish between these various activities, the UB was committed to a fight to the finish with reaction, and sought the full cooperation of the Ministry of

⁶⁷⁶ WAPP KW PPR 70: 22.

Propaganda's local functionaries "since we are both tools of democracy and executive organs... [because]...we have the same goals...to establish democracy."⁶⁷⁷

For the PPR this shift from its war of words with the local PSL (supplemented when necessary by repression) to greater repression became more visible in midwestern Poland after the first Party Congress of the PPR and the subsequent official interpretation of the Congress by the leadership of Wielkopolska's Provincial Executive Committee. At the Congress itself, which took place in December 1945 in Warsaw, Gomułka (the PPR's General Secretary) found himself in a difficult political situation. At this time within the PPR there were numerous KPP activists, many of whom had only recently returned to Poland from the Soviet Union.⁶⁷⁸ and members of the PPR from central and eastern Poland, where the anti-regime insurgency was quite strong, who were calling on the Party to make a show of force and use the state apparatus to crush all opposition. This was also the line that both Poznań's First and Second Secretaries took when they spoke at the Congress. Izydorczyk, in addition to his attack on Cardinal Hlond "as the head of reaction" in Poland, complained that the SL was a completely spent force in Wielkopolska and demanded an open attack on the PSL, while Maria Kamińska made a "crushing condemnation" of PUZ and PUR, as well as criticizing the regime's lack of energy in attacking the PSL and reaction. Many delegates found her speech so convincing that, according to one, she "...carried the whole congress with her."⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁷ WAPP WUiP 36: 148-150.

⁶⁷⁸ Of 1087 delegates, two-thirds of the delegates, or 659 activists, declared that they had belonged to the KPP, over 400 of whom were outside of Poland during the occupation. Werblan, 300-301.

⁶⁷⁹ Werblan, 312, 318; Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 222.

Gomułka attempted to indirectly combat what he regarded as “state fetishism,” or an excessive focus on the state’s administrative apparatus to conduct political repression.⁶⁸⁰ He sought to win over the delegates to a new definition of both Polish Communism’s history and the tasks confronting the PPR in the post-war era. In a speech that lasted five hours Gomułka presented an artful reconstruction of the PPR’s recent history. According to him, the PPR was a new, young Party that had inherited the best traditions of Polish Communism while rejecting its errors, and was a spontaneous creation of the Polish people.⁶⁸¹ He claimed that the PPR was the only Party responsible for Poland’s liberation and that all the other political parties had not only failed to preserve Poland’s independence, but during the war had compromised themselves by continuing the Sanacja policy of opposing the Soviet Union and embracing the doctrine of the “two enemies”: that both Germany and the Soviet Union were Poland’s irreconcilable enemies.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰ Gomułka, *Artykuły i przemówienia*, 525.

⁶⁸¹ Werblan, in his discussion of Gomułka’s speech, acknowledges that the General Secretary was, on a number of points, offering “inaccurate or tendentious interpretations” of the PPR and Poland’s wartime history (such as when Gomułka claimed that in the summer of 1939 Poland, France and Great Britain were trying to deflect Hitler’s aggression toward the Soviet Union), but that this represented more a “philosophy of history” than rigorous academic history. Werblan argues that Gomułka was not attempting to write a historical textbook, hence it is “nonsensical” to apply academic criteria in criticizing Gomułka’s speech since “its criteria and aims were political, and not academic.” The problem is that the numerous hidden and not-so-hidden untruths in Gomułka’s assessment of the Party’s past and current political situation reflect the highly developed habit of the PPR’s leadership of altering or ignoring inconvenient facts to make them fit the Party’s predetermined course of action. When the Party sought to implement and popularize a political strategy which Gomułka claimed followed from his analysis, though many Poles had direct and indirect evidence of its tendentiousness, the result was numerous difficulties and the strengthening of the political opposition, which could only be overcome by further resorts to fraud and force. Werblan, 306-307

⁶⁸² Gomułka, *Artykuły i przemówienia*, 440-441.

At the heart of his presentation, Gomułka developed a new, Polish Communist approach to the question of Polish independence that bore a striking resemblance to the geo-political thought of Roman Dmowski. Gomułka, like Dmowski had realized that the key problem with embracing the notion of the two enemies was that Poland could not ultimately maintain its independence if *both* Germany and Russia indeed regarded it as an enemy. Polish independence hinged upon forging a *modus vivendi* with at least one of these neighbors, and for both men (for very different reasons) Russia was the more desirable partner for Poland.⁶⁸³ Gomułka argued that it was only by fully embracing a Polish-Soviet alliance (and rejecting any Polish territorial claims in the east) that Poland could establish a firm foundation for its true independence. At the Congress he claimed that it was the PPR alone, through its sound political line, which had cut through the Gordian knot of hostility that had separated Poland from the Soviet Union and forged an alliance with the USSR through which it was able to win for Poland "...[the] greatest gain from the past war, the Recovered Territories...." For Poland possessing the Recovered Territories ensured the country's future prosperity and peace throughout Europe.⁶⁸⁴

Gomułka went on to claim that both in Poland and abroad the recent war had brought about revolutionary changes without a revolution, especially in the countries liberated by

⁶⁸³ Prior to and during World War I, Dmowski had sought to establish some basis for cooperation with Russia and the Entente, and even later, through most of the 1920s and especially 30s, had advocated a Polish policy of non-provocation of the Soviet Union due to his theory that Germany's geo-political and imperial interests would inevitably pull Germany eastwards, and hence into conflict with Poland (Kawalec, 126-127, 320-322). Gomułka's commitment to Polish-Soviet friendship came first and foremost from his commitment to revolutionary socialism, and only later, during World War II, did it also take on a decidedly anti-German character.

⁶⁸⁴ Gomułka, *Artykuły i przemówienia*, 480-484, 510.

the Red Army, and had strengthened the popularity of the left throughout the world. This created a new situation in which long-term alliances between democratic socialists and liberal-bourgeois to completely defeat domestic and international Fascism were possible, and even raised the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism. Gomułka concluded that it was hence possible for the PPR to cooperate with other political parties, and a legitimate weapon in the struggle against domestic Fascism for the PPR was to seek other political allies.

In a later speech toward the end of the conference Gomułka sought to defend his strategy of building a broad-based coalition of democratic and liberal-bourgeois parties from criticism by using the analogy of the Soviet Union's wartime alliance with the capitalist west as an example of how such cooperation could benefit the cause of socialism. He went on to claim that it was even possible for the PPR to build an alliance "from below" among the democratic elements of the PSL's rank-and-file and lower level activists by showing them the error of their party's leadership's ways, and then supporting them in forcing the PSL's leadership to enter into a common electoral bloc with the PPR.⁶⁸⁵ In this way Gomułka hoped to maintain for the PPR all the benefits of its hegemony and co-opt the PSL more fully into the task of stabilizing Poland's political and economic situation.

The Congress' resolutions represent the outward victory of Gomułka's position that the Party needed to continue its efforts at combating sectarianism and building a broad alliance with other groups the PPR judged to be democratic. While these resolutions mention the role of the PPR in the elimination of "great landowners and finance capital,"

⁶⁸⁵ Gomułka, *Artykuły i przemówienia*, 513-514, 524, 533.

they speak primarily of the Party's role as guarantor of "Poland's independence and sovereignty" and its goal of protecting the security of Poland's frontiers through a close alliance with the Soviet Union. The resolutions also echoed the May Plenum's condemnation of sectarianism and proclaimed that the PPR's goal was to strengthen the solidarity between the PPR and the PPS, and to build a political worker-peasant alliance "as the best guarantee of fully annihilating reaction and its ideology, achieving victory in the elections as well as also realizing the resolutions of this Congress, and bringing about the development of people's democracy in Poland."⁶⁸⁶

These resolutions represented a significant outward change in the Party's self-representation from the days of the KPP, even if members of the Congress privately did not regard "People's Democracy" as an "aim in itself" but only as a transitional stage to socialism.⁶⁸⁷ In spite of the relative moderation of its public pronouncements after this Congress, three problems remained for the PPR which were almost immediately apparent in Wielkopolska, and which would make the creation of a united worker-peasant's front there, and eventually in all of Poland, impossible: first, how to interpret the Congress' relatively inclusive rhetoric and implement resolutions in a hostile, politically competitive environment; second, what to do if Mikołajczyk's PSL refused to enter the democratic coalition as a junior partner or struggle against the PPR's particular definition of "reaction"; and finally, and most importantly, what to do if Gomułka and the Party's claim that the majority of the nation was behind the regime was not in fact the case.

⁶⁸⁶ Kołomejczyk and Malinowski, 288-289, and Polubiec, 320-322.

⁶⁸⁷ Malinowski and Kołomejczyk, 289.

In Wielkopolska, the interpretation of these articles fell to First Secretary Izydorzcyk. On 9 January 1945 Izydorzcyk gave a presentation to PPR activists on both the Party Congress and the current political situation in Wielkopolska. In his remarks Izydorzcyk acknowledged the need for close cooperation between the PPR and the PSL (which in Wielkopolska was a small and completely loyal part of the PPR-controlled coalition⁶⁸⁸) and a worker-peasant alliance. However, he claimed at the same time that any cooperation with the PSL depended upon the latter's deeds. The PSL's own actions in sabotaging agrarian reform, not entering into active struggle with banditry (indeed, according to Izydorzcyk, in certain circles of the PSL even praising the insurgents), and supporting a reactionary professor in a meeting of the Provincial *Rada Narodowa* were deeds that already demonstrated there were two Peasant Parties in Wielkopolska, a "Lords' (Pańskie) Peasants' Party," and a "Peasants' (Chłopskie) Peasants' Party [the regime-sponsored SL]."⁶⁸⁹

For Izydorzcyk, the unwillingness of the PSL up to this time to commit to forming an electoral bloc with the PPR and the other democratic parties had "crystallized the situation." He called on PPR activists to begin intensive preparations for the upcoming elections. These included: organizing mass actions and public meetings; struggling against the rumors of war by exposing "the humbug of a [new] war and the Atomic Bomb (today's radio has reported that the Soviet Union has also created its own Atomic Bomb better even than the earlier one...)"⁶⁹⁰; expanding Wielkopolska's PPR to 100,000

⁶⁸⁸ Even during the period of later ideological conflict between the PPR and the PPS in the rest of the country in late 1946, the local PPS never opposed the PPR. Erazmus, 25.

⁶⁸⁹ WAPP KW PPR 51: 6.

⁶⁹⁰ Earlier in his presentation, Izydorzcyk quoted Hilary Minc (Minister of Industry and PPR Politburo) to the effect that Poland was already recovering more quickly from

members; more fully incorporating PPR activists in administrative posts into the PPR's own organizational hierarchy; and eliminating all *starostas* not belonging to democratic parties.⁶⁹¹

Izydorczyk's plan for the PPR's electoral campaign even prior to confirmation that there would be a contest between the regime and the PSL reveals just the kind of reliance upon administrative methods that Gomułka deplored but to which he offered no practical alternative in the face of the regime's unpopularity in Wielkopolska. Gomułka himself had already begun to pave the way for just this response in his remarks at the ninth session of the National Homeland Council in the last days of December 1945 and 2-3 January 1946. During this session he returned to the issue of the Recovered Territories, and claimed "...among the many important and most important questions which stand before the government and the people, and wait upon solutions, there is no more important question than the Recovered Territories."⁶⁹²

He first attacked Polish "Fascists" both at home and abroad who questioned Poland's western frontiers since such revisionism undermined both Poland's very existence and the peace of Europe. Anyone opposed to Poland's westward expansion was an enemy of Poland and an enemy of peace. He went on to argue that a further threat to Poland's hold on the Recovered Territories, and hence to Poland's existence, was any open or hidden anti-Soviet criticism, and the survival of any anti-Soviet complex. Poland alone was not

wartime damage than France, and that Poland within its new borders possessed an even greater industrial capacity than France. The unreality and wishful thinking which pervaded the analyses of the regime's leading figures is one of the more curious elements of official pronouncements in postwar Poland. WAPP KW PPR 51: 3, 7.

⁶⁹¹ WAPP KW PPR 51: 6-7.

⁶⁹² Gomułka, *Artykuły i przemówienia*, 563.

strong enough to defend its position on the Oder and Neisse and hence required the sincere friendship of the Soviet Union. For Gomułka this was a "...simple truth...whoever cultivates the politics of an anti-Soviet complex, who is grounded in reaction, such a one is undermining Poland's boundaries on the Oder, Neisse, and the Baltic."⁶⁹³

As the political situation grew more tense in January and early February as negotiations for an electoral bloc between the PPR and its allied parties and the PSL began to break down, both the national and the local PPR grew even more combative. Poznań's Executive Committee confirmed on 18 January 1946 that they had received a directive to encourage splits within the PSL.⁶⁹⁴ By 15 February, when it became obvious that the PSL's leadership had rejected a common electoral bloc with the PPR, the Executive Committee ordered its activists to redouble their efforts to create a split from below within the PSL and force Mikołajczyk into a common bloc. The Executive claimed that it was necessary to force Mikołajczyk to accept a common bloc since peace depended upon the PPR's victory in these elections. More ominously, since the PPR's leadership claimed that both "native and international reactionaries" were preparing for the elections, and that outside of an electoral bloc Mikołajczyk's movement had a real chance of victory, other activists should create a reserve militia throughout the province in every county and district, and base its membership upon political and social organizations (such as the ZWM, the PPR and PPS) affiliated with the regime.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹³ Władysław Gomułka, *O problemie Niemieckim*, 93.

⁶⁹⁴ WAPP KW PPR 7: 19.

⁶⁹⁵ WAPP KW PPR 7: 35.

When negotiations with the PSL for a united electoral bloc definitively broke down on 27 February 1946⁶⁹⁶ Gomułka led the Party to formulate answers to the unanswered question of the December Congress: what would the Party do if its key assumptions about the current political situation, the PSL's actions, and its own popularity were called into question. Gomułka gave his answer to these unspoken questions at a February conference of PPR and PPS activists in Warsaw. He argued that the PSL was placing itself outside the pale of both the PPR's definition of Polish democracy and of the Polish nation as well. Gomułka claimed that the PPR had fought for a common electoral bloc with the PSL, not because it feared the results of open elections, but rather because it desired to unite all of the nation's creative energy in order to rebuild Poland, especially the Recovered Territories. Gomułka went on to argue that the PSL leadership's pre-war and wartime conduct was fully aligned with reaction and revealed that "...they had neither a penny's worth of patriotism nor any feeling of responsibility for the fate of the nation." He also pointed out that the only reason for Mikołajczyk to pursue open, competitive elections rather than participate in an electoral bloc was the PSL's desire to secure the support of "malcontents, small people," those who were suffering from inevitable post-war dislocation and were vulnerable to demagogues, and most importantly reactionaries. Gomułka concluded by claiming that in spite of Mikołajczyk's claim that the peasants, as the majority of the nation, had the right to a majority of the Sejm's seats, it was the working class, as the most creative and important element in the nation, which had the moral right to rule, and whose full participation in Poland's reconstruction could be ensured only by a workers' government.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁶ Kersten, *Establishment*, 243-245.

⁶⁹⁷ Gomułka, *W walce o demokrację ludową* (Warsaw: Książka, 1947), 15.

The answer to the question of how the Party would react to any direct challenge by the PSL to its hegemony was now clear: any effort to alter the political status quo would be construed as anti-democratic and reactionary, as well as unpatriotic and anti-Polish . These answers were in part implicit in many of even Gomułka's "moderate" formulations. Werblan notes in his political biography of Gomułka during this period that there was very little experience at the upper echelons of the party with (or, he might have also added, acceptance of) the idea of a primarily political struggle with a legal opposition.⁶⁹⁸ Though Werblan rightly credits Gomułka with a much broader conception of legitimate political activity than most former members of the KPP possessed, Gomułka also betrayed the limits of the system he had played such a key role in helping to construct.

Gomułka had defined the PPR as the only Polish party which had the vision to win Poland's independence and could maintain Poland's friendship with the Soviet Union (upon which the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity depended), preserve peace, and establish social justice. In doing this he himself had delegitimized all but the most token opposition to the regime's policies. This delegitimization was facilitated by the all-too-flexible rubric of "reaction" which was as common to Gomułka as it was to Kamińska and Izydorzyc. Izydorzyc had already asserted that the local PSL's objections to the dismissal of an independent professor and its reservations about the shape of the PPR's agrarian reform (which was a source of widespread dissatisfaction in Wielkopolska in the second half of 1945⁶⁹⁹) were sufficient to render it a reactionary

⁶⁹⁸ Werblan, 322.

⁶⁹⁹ Choniawko, 66.

organization. This illustrates both the plasticity of “reaction,” and the extremely limited nature of the PPR’s conception of pluralism.

Finally, the PPR’s discovery of the uses of nationalism was to have a profound impact on Poland, its Communist Party, and its politics in 1946 and beyond. Gomułka had claimed that the war against Fascism had united both national liberation and socio-political revolution. Poland’s internationally mandated westward expansion (and eastern truncation) and ethnic cleansing amounted to an ethnographic revolution at least, if not more, profound as the post-war socio-economic changes. Like the socio-economic revolution which the regime made in their name, Wielkopolska’s nationalist revolution was primarily a revolution from abroad, made by the Red Army’s bayonets and the decisions of diplomats and dictators, with no consultation with and little participation from either its local victims or the beneficiaries on whose behalf this revolution was being waged. It owed much to foreign models and influences, Nazi and Soviet and even (to a more limited extent) western, which had prepared the ground for it both in their international schemes and domestic politics.

In Wielkopolska Poland’s ethnic cleansing and westward expansion allowed many Poles to benefit materially at the expense of their German neighbors through looting of German goods, the official confiscation and redistribution of local German property, and through the settlement of former German lands in Ziemia Lubuska and throughout the Recovered Territories. This nationalist revolution also allowed Poles to take revenge on the many Germans who had collaborated with the Nazis when midwestern Poland was incorporated into the Reich, and gave them an added sense of security through the creation of a nationally homogenous state

Like all revolutions, its benefits came with a considerable number of strings attached. The victory of Wielkopolska's and Poland's nationalist revolution was inextricably bound up with the political, and increasingly economic and socio-cultural, hegemony of the PPR. Polish nationalism and Polish Communism together would rid Wielkopolska of the burdens of national and political pluralism, as well as their benefits. In 1945 this was a trade-off many Poles were eager to accept, and even more were willing to acquiesce to, rather than run the risk of confronting head-on the already considerable coercive power of the new regime.

**Conclusion: Piast in Form, Socialist in Content: The Conquest of Eastern Germany,
the Final Solution of the German Question, and the Foundations of National Unity
in Wielkopolska**

“...the Poland of today is the fulfillment of Dmowski’s plan. Yes, it is! A Poland without minorities, ethnically homogeneous, and back within the boundaries Poland had a thousand years ago. But that also turned out to be a trap, the patriotism of the policemen.”

- Czesław Miłosz⁷⁰⁰

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof: and all the people we saw in it are men of great stature.

— Numbers 13:32

The new Poland which emerged from the maelstrom of the Second World War was a revolutionary state. It was revolutionary, in the first instance, because at the highest levels of government it was dominated by the PPR, which in turn was ultimately subordinated to the world’s first revolutionary socialist state, the Soviet Union. The PPR’s leadership sought to gradually but completely transform Poland politically, economically, and socially in accord with a Soviet-approved application of Marxist-Leninist ideology. This represented a political revolution which generated a great deal of conflict within Polish Communism and between the PPR and other political parties and movements in Poland.

Within the PPR, many of its leading members who before the war, in the old Polish Communist Party (Komunistyczna Partia Polski, KPP), tirelessly had advocated Poland’s

⁷⁰⁰ Ewa Czarnecka and Aleksander Fuit, *Conversations with Czeslaw Milosz* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 53.

incorporation into the Soviet Union and its immediate sovietization, found the way the high leadership of the Party waged revolution—embracing gradualism, advocating cooperative work within an outwardly multiparty system, and emphasizing unapologetic Polish nationalism—to be a betrayal of their fundamental principles. Furthermore, as the PPR sought to redefine itself and Polish politics and become a mass party, its ranks were flooded with Poles who were attracted to the perks and career opportunities attached to party membership and the PPR’s radical anti-German political agenda. Such persons often had little sympathy with, or even understanding of, the Party’s long-term and revolutionary social and political aims.

Outside of the PPR, among both the Party’s sympathizers and its opponents, the ascendancy of the Soviet Union and its domestic Communist clients played a central (but not exclusive) role in the leftward realignment of Poland’s politics and gave this revolution some elements of popular support.⁷⁰¹ The widespread misery under the Sanacja regime which proved unable to defend Polish independence in 1939 discredited much of Poland’s pre-war political establishment. The war and subsequent Nazi occupation and Soviet liberation further radicalized the Polish population. Nazi, Soviet, and Polish Communist terror had resulted in the almost complete destruction, imprisonment or flight of most of Poland’s gentile (mostly German) and Jewish business, managerial, and professional classes, and the concentration of much of Poland’s surviving industry into the hands of Nazi (and later, Polish state) authorities.

⁷⁰¹ Krystyna Kersten, trans. John Micgiel and Michael H. Bernhard, *The Establishment of Communist Rule in Poland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 171

In midwestern Poland the Nazi annexation of the region and its transformation into Wartheland accelerated these political and economic trends. In Wielkopolska, a region where there was already a high pre-war concentration of property in German hands, the occupying Nazis confiscated thousands of Polish farms, evicted their owners, and turned over this property to German settlers from southern and eastern Europe. This confiscation undermined respect for property rights and was coupled with an alienation of work as the Nazis expropriated Polish labor to serve their war effort. This alienation of property and labor, as well as the shattering terror of Nazi rule (made all but irresistible by the many willing accomplices among the pre-war German minority, who provided expert local intelligence to the Nazi occupation authorities) produced what Jan Gross calls a crisis of values.⁷⁰² While this may indeed have led many Poles initially to be more open to accepting revolutionary, etatist solutions to the problem of post-war reconstruction and socio-economic organization,⁷⁰³ this crisis of values also significantly deepened religious life in Wielkopolska and greatly reinforced anti-minority and nationalist sentiments throughout Polish society.

The PPR, widely regarded as tainted by its dependence on Moscow, was not itself very popular politically, but the specific programs it advocated (land reform, the nationalization of industry, and the creation of a strong, centralized, homogenous Polish nation-state) all initially commanded real popular support in Poland as a whole. How long

⁷⁰² Jan Gross, "Foreword: The Experience of War in East Central Europe: Social Disruption and Political Revolution", in Kersten, *Establishment*, xx.

⁷⁰³ The degree to which the population of Wielkopolska was willing to embrace etatist organization is an open question (see below), but at the very least many of the Wielkopolska colonists had few qualms in settling abandoned German farms, or in taking other German property. Jan Gross, "War as Revolution," in Naimark et al, *The Establishment of Communist Regimes*, 22, 24.

the popularity of this leftward trend in politics survived the PPR's efforts at implementation is an open question. In eastern Poland, within six months of the PKWN and the Provisional Government's rule there, almost the entire region had turned against the regime.⁷⁰⁴ In midwestern Poland, where social radicalism was initially less popular, the decline in whatever popular support the regime's socio-economic reforms may have enjoyed was even more precipitate. Though land reform in Wielkopolska began only in February and March 1945, by the second half of 1945 it had become widely unpopular and supplied the PSL with a ready-made issue with which to attack the regime. The increasingly central role that the third, nationalist revolution played in the PPR's propaganda and agitation in the country as a whole, but especially in Wielkopolska, suggests that the regime realized the relative weakness of its political and social programs, and anticipated that the most important sources of its popular support, or at least popular sufferance, lay almost entirely in its nationalist revolution.⁷⁰⁵

This third revolution, the nationalist revolution, was and has remained the most significant of the post-war revolutions that transformed Poland. In this revolution, the government, the Church, and the people were largely united by the radical goal of bringing about a fundamental territorial and ethnographic transformation of the country. Poles across the political and social spectrum sought to territorially expand Poland up to the Oder and Neisse rivers, and to use population transfers and colonization to turn areas

⁷⁰⁴ Coutouvidis and Reynolds, 170-175.

⁷⁰⁵ By June 1946, when Poles were given an opportunity to vote on the regime's social and economic reforms both locally and nationally the majority of Poles not only supported the PSL's position in the Referendum, but even went farther than the PSL had asked them to and repudiated both the regime's program of land reform and its nationalization of industry. The only regime-sponsored revolution that received popular approbation was Poland's westward expansion.

of pre-war Poland and Germany, which before the war had been either of mixed Polish-German settlement or almost entirely German, into purely ethnic Polish territories.

Like Poland's post-war political and socio-economic revolutions, this revolution owed a great deal to foreign models and foreign assistance, though it differed from them in drawing upon deeper sources of popular support. In Wielkopolska, where the deepest roots of this revolution lay, the Endecja's extremist nationalism (which provided much of this revolution's blueprint) had already received a significant degree of its content from the long struggle between Poles and Germans in this region. German cultural chauvinism, which by the latter half of the nineteenth century had hardened into anti-Polish racism, had called forth an equal and opposite reaction from Wielkopolska's Polish population. Thanks in part to German tutelage prior to Polish independence, but also fueled by Weimar Germany's aggressive stance toward Poland in the interwar period as well as the desire of many Polish nationalists to build a more ethnically homogeneous Polish nation-state, Poles began to apply the lessons of state-sponsored persecution against the scattered German minority communities of western Poland in order to encourage German emigration.⁷⁰⁶

In this endeavor the Poles of Wielkopolska found intellectual and political leadership from Roman Dmowski and his party, the National Democrats. Dmowski provided the Endecja and much of Wielkopolska's Polish intelligentsia with a powerful set of conceptual tools with which to shape and interpret past, present and future Polish-German relations. His belief in an irreconcilable Polish-German conflict dictated by both nations' vital, long-term economic and geo-strategic interests and his neo-slavism helped shape

⁷⁰⁶ Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles*, 236.

Polish nationalism in the western borderlands. Dmowski's thought and the work of his party led many Poles to wage a ruthless struggle with the German minority in the interwar period, helped to mobilize the Polish community during its fight for survival with Nazi occupation authorities, and gave much of Wielkopolska's cultural and political leadership a vision of a "Piaśt" Poland that enabled them to take advantage of Soviet ascendancy in East Central Europe, work with the ruling PPR, and partially achieve their vision of a nationally homogeneous, ethnically pure Poland in control of the Oder-Neisse territories.

Neither Dmowski nor the Endecja had ever been adverse to using "German methods" for Polish purposes, and the nationalist revolution that Polish nationalists helped wage in cooperation with the PPR was no exception. Many of the particular elements and patterns of that revolution bore a striking resemblance to wartime Nazi efforts to ethnically cleanse both the nationally mixed and predominantly Polish areas they intended to colonize. Like Nazi Germany, the Polish Communist government and Polish nationalists created an elaborate settlement apparatus, sought to separate and "save" Poles of mixed or ambiguous nationality from an ostensibly tainted Germandom, eliminated German place names and replaced them with manufactured Polish names, and encountered similar difficulties in settling Poles from different regions in newly annexed territories.

Not only were many of the mechanisms and problems of colonization similar, but they were conducted with great ferocity by both sides, though the Nazis undoubtedly exacted many times the number of Polish lives throughout their occupation of Poland than Germans suffered at Polish hands.⁷⁰⁷ The Polish cross-border expulsions of Germans in

⁷⁰⁷ German sources cite the figure of 1,125,000 as the total number of dead or missing in all of eastern Germany (including the population of the northern areas of East Prussia

June and July of 1945 were as brutal as the wartime Nazi expulsions, though later Polish efforts would more closely conform to the Potsdam requirement that the expulsions be conducted in an “humane and orderly manner.” Also, just as the Poles who remained in Wartheland suffered all kinds of petty official harassment, so too did the Germans remaining in the newly expanded Wielkopolska fall prey to a wide variety of legal and illegal depredations prior to their deportation at the hands of both Poles and especially the Red Army.

The political ramifications of the Polish efforts to colonize the Oder-Neisse territories were profound. For many Polish nationalists, the nationalist revolution was an end in itself, a way to permanently weaken Germany and ensure the survival and prosperity of the Polish nation. Achieving this end made many of them willing to accept domestic Communist leadership and international Soviet hegemony in East Central Europe as a distasteful but necessary means of creating a Poland formed in what they believed was its authentic Piast form. For the new Communist authorities, however, the nationalist revolution that they waged was initially but one element in a longer-range plan to secure themselves (and their Soviet masters) a place in Poland’s political life and set the stage for further socio-economic and political changes.

assigned to the Soviet Union) during the flight and subsequent expulsions from 1945. As noted above, many Germans died during forced evacuations organized by Nazi authorities, and many more were killed who were caught in the crossfire in war zones or later fell into the hands of the Red Army, making it difficult to say how many Germans Polish soldiers or civilians were killed during the expulsions (though at times Polish expulsions did exact a high toll of German lives). In contrast, over 3 million Polish gentiles and 2.9 million Polish Jews died during the war (though a significant number—up to 1 million Polish gentiles—died at Soviet hands). Davies, *God’s Playground*, vol. 2, 463; Siebel-Achenbach, 117-148; de Zayas, *Nemesis*, xxv; Sword, 27.

Polish Communists' sponsorship of the nationalist revolution became a key element in their efforts to craft an image for themselves as a bona fide Polish political movement. As local society grew progressively dissatisfied with the regime's political repression, inability to halt the murderous banditry of the Red Army, and failing economic policies, and turned to support the opposition PSL, the regime in Wielkopolska found that the nationalist card became its only sure winning hand. Ironically, however, while their nationalist politics did provide the Polish Communists with an immediate political advantage, by making Poland's national interest and the redemption of Polish history through the recovery of the Western Territories such an essential element of their own claims to legitimacy they chose an arena of symbolic conflict that left them terribly vulnerable in their growing struggle with the Church and altered Polish Communism's *raison d'être*.

Ominously for the regime, it had acquired in the Church a competitor that was preparing to engage it in a different kind of political struggle: a struggle for the control of signs, symbols, and values. The Church's hierarchy, under Hlond's leadership, for the most part avoided being drawn into a traditional conflict over the rights and prerogatives of the institutional Church, or Catholicism's place in Poland's political life. Instead, churchmen and the laity waged a battle of ideas and symbols with the regime's official ideology, while claiming loyalty to the Polish nation and state.

In the short term, this strategy allowed the Church to avoid fully committing itself to supporting the PSL in Wielkopolska during the increasingly bitter and dangerous political struggles of 1946 and 1947, and to avoid any direct confrontation with the state, though it was an open secret that the vast majority of Poles with strong religious convictions

sympathized with Mikołajczyk and the opposition PSL. Instead, the Church could concentrate on strengthening its internal organization and its ties with the people. Though later in the 1940s the regime used the Vatican's condemnation of ethnic cleansing in East Central Europe and its refusal to reorganize the Oder-Neisse territories' diocesan boundaries to conform with the new Polish-German boundary as a means to attack the Polish Church, the Church weathered this crisis and emerged from the Stalinist era as the single most popular institution in the country. The result was the beginnings of the standoff between the Catholic Church and the Communist state that would define Polish politics until the collapse of the Communist *ancien regime* in 1989.

In this standoff Polish Communism found itself increasingly vulnerable. Initially Wielkopolska's nationalist revolution appeared to offer a variety of benefits to almost all of Wielkopolska's Poles at little or no cost to them. Polish society received the relatively intangible benefit of seeing a certain rough justice done in a nationalist revolution that punished all of the region's Germans almost as indiscriminately as Nazi terror had swept through Polish society. Many Poles also benefited materially by the expropriation and distribution of German property throughout the newly expanded province. Polish nationalists achieved their dream of a nationally homogenous Poland abutting the Oder and Neisse rivers. The Catholic Church gained an exclusive religious monopoly, almost all of the former Evangelical Church's property, and saw Catholicism advance with Polish settlement in the Oder-Neisse territories. Polish Communists had what was for many of its members the novel experience of being able to pose as patriots as well as revolutionaries.

Yet the short and long-term price of Poland's nationalist revolution in Wielkopolska proved high for all of its participants and victims. For the millions of German victims of Poland's nationalist revolution the human costs are relatively more straightforwardly accounted for: at times brutal expulsions which resulted in injury and death to hundreds of thousands of Germans, and for almost all of the eastern Germans the loss of home and property and lives lived in exile. For Poles the ethnic cleansing of Poland and the colonization of the Recovered Territories cost the diversion of much-needed resources and effort in the lean post-war years to settling and rebuilding some of the most war-ravaged territories in Europe as well as placing millions of Poles in harm's way before a Red Army firmly ensconced on Germany's former eastern territories.

The most important consequence of Poland's state-controlled nationalist revolution was that it played a key role in ensuring Polish Communists sufficient popular support and even wider acquiescence to their rule to enable the PPR to consolidate its monopoly of power. This in turn ensured greater stability in Poland during the crucial early years of the Soviet Union's establishment of its imperium in East Central Europe and set the stage for the regime's later unsuccessful (but costly) effort to Stalinize Poland. Furthermore, the fear engendered within Poland by territorial gains at Germany's expense and the subsequent threat of German revanchism led a whole generation of Poles from the mid-1940s to the late 1970s to accept in practice the domestic and international political *status quo* of Communist domination and only seek amelioration of particular grievances rather than strive to secure Poland's independence.

The security, revenge and prosperity that Polish society sought at Germany's expense in their nationalist revolution came at the price of acquiescing to Poland's sovietization. It

was a price many Poles believed they had no choice but to pay in order to salvage some concrete gains for their country in the aftermath of a disastrous war. Nevertheless, in paying it Poles themselves helped to ratify the broader international processes that had consigned their country to the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. For Poland to become Piast in form the Polish people also had to accept the regime's socialist content.

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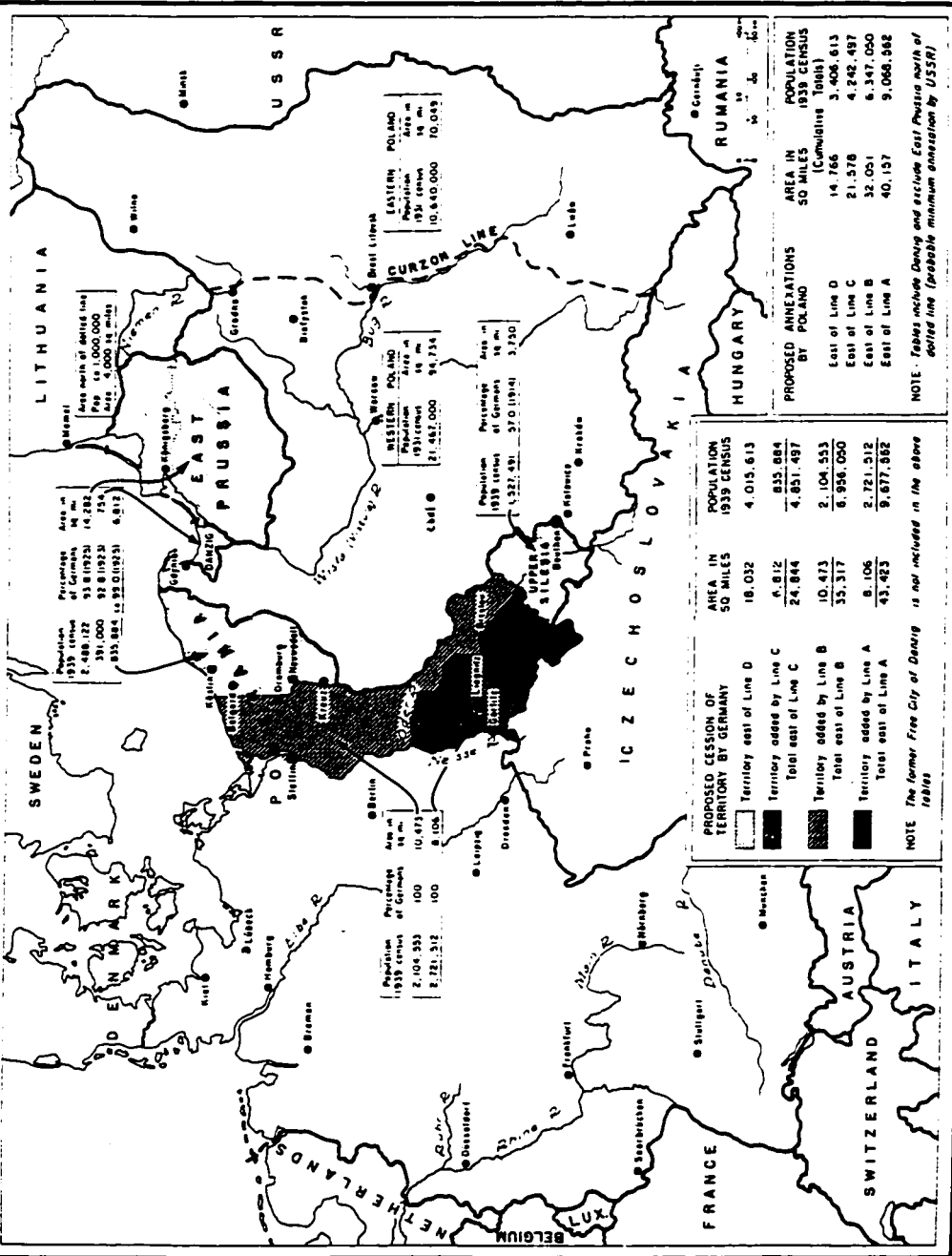
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Appendix A: Maps

Figure 1: Proposed Territorial Changes to
Germany and Poland, January 1945

(Reproduced in de Zayas, *Terrible Revenge*, vii-viii.)

GERMANY - POLAND : PROPOSED TERRITORIAL CHANGES



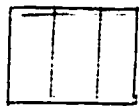
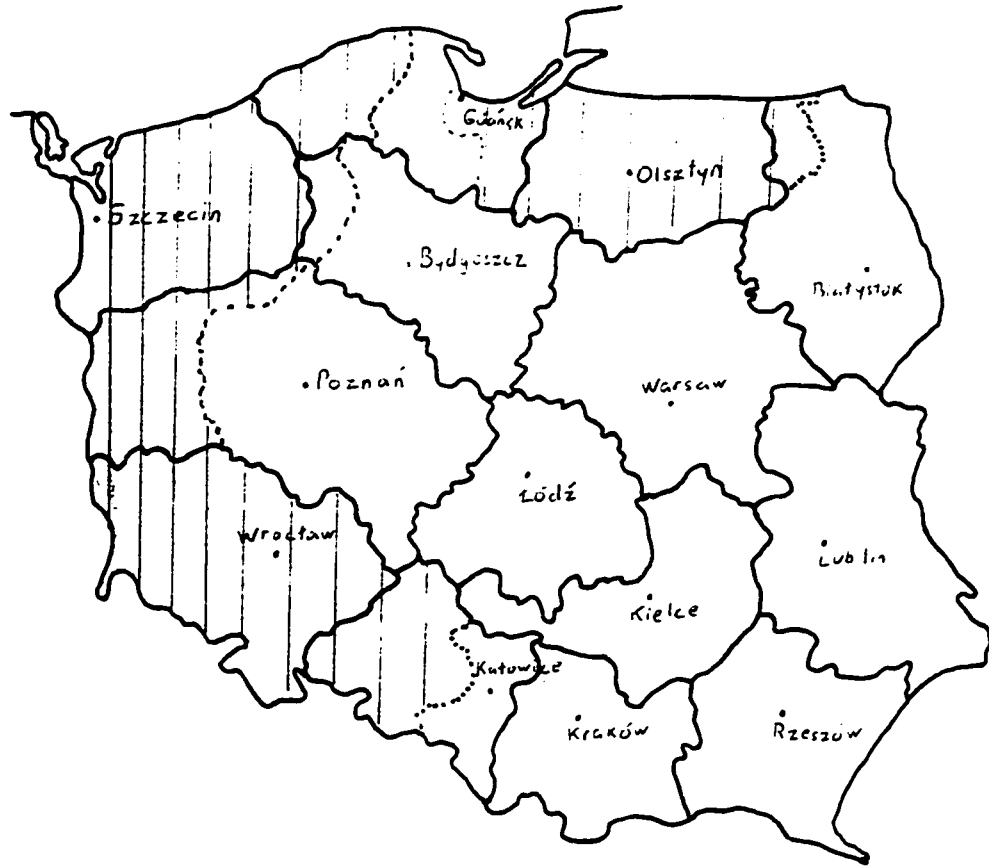
PROPOSED CESSION OF TERRITORY BY GERMANY	AREA IN 50 MILES	POPULATION 1939 CENSUS
Territory east of Line D	18,032	4,015,613
Territory added by Line C	4,812	835,084
Total east of Line C	24,844	4,851,497
Territory added by Line B	10,413	2,104,553
Total east of Line B	35,317	6,956,050
Territory added by Line A	6,106	2,721,512
Total east of Line A	41,423	9,677,562

PROPOSED ANNEXATIONS BY POLAND	AREA IN 50 MILES	POPULATION 1939 CENSUS
East of Line D	14,766	3,408,613
East of Line C	21,578	4,242,487
East of Line B	32,051	6,347,050
East of Line A	40,157	9,068,562

NOTE: Tables include Danzig and exclude East Prussia north of dotted line (Probable minimum annexation by USSR)

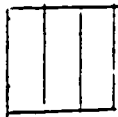
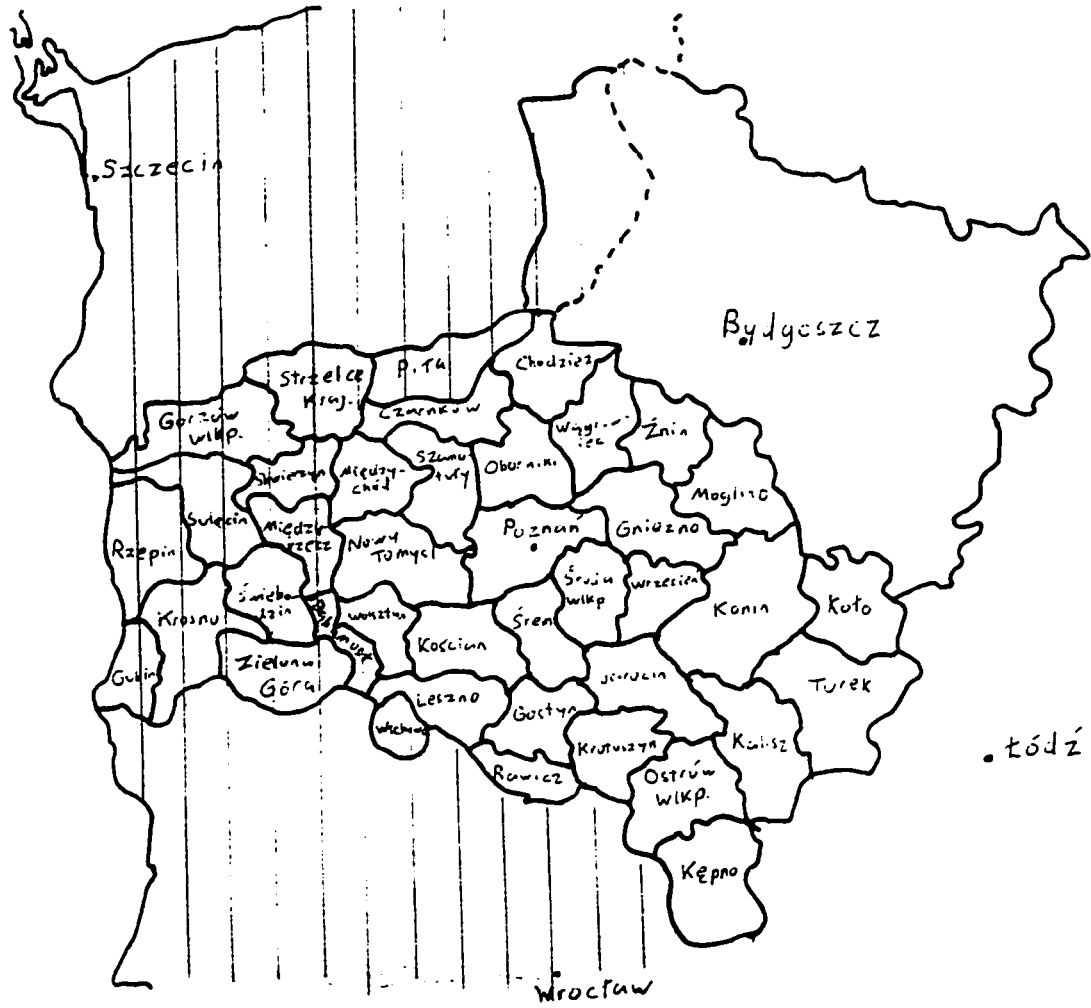
NOTE: The former Free City of Danzig is not included in the above tables

**Figure 2: Poland's Provincial Administrative
Divisions, June 1945**



Former German territories

**Figure 3: County Administrative Divisions in
Poznań Province, June 1945**



Former German territories

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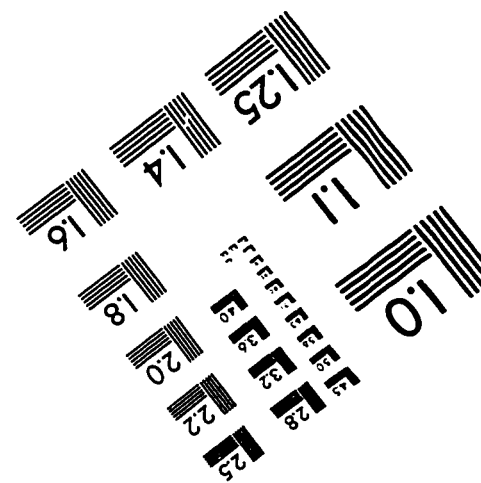
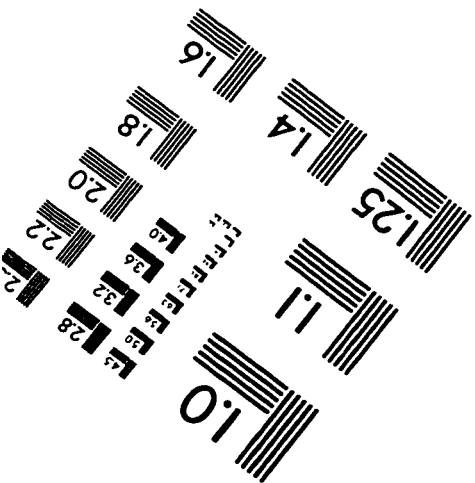
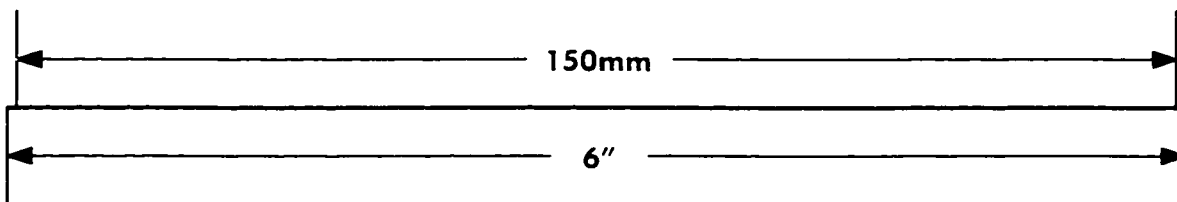
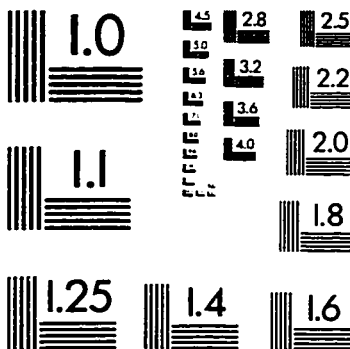
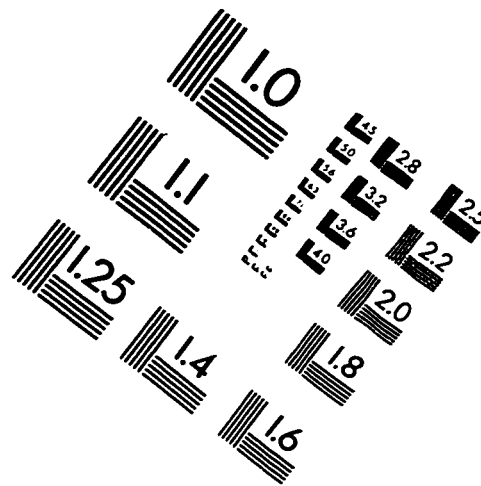
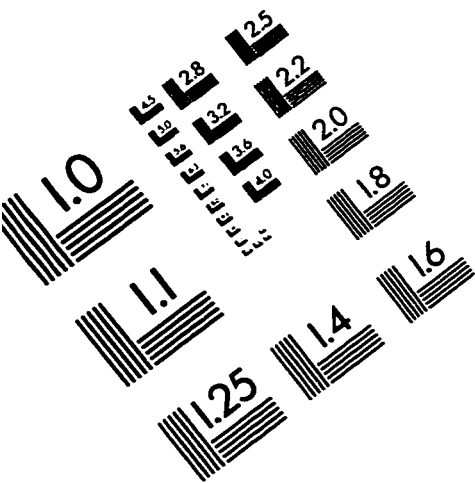
Areas of Specialization/Concentration

Areas of Specialization: 20th century Polish history, history of Eastern rite Catholicism, modern Ukrainian national movements, Soviet diplomatic history, 1919-1945, history of Russian Orthodoxy, 19th and 20th centuries

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Languages: Polish, Russian, German

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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