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City and Nation during Mass Displacement. Poland's 'Recovered Territories' 1945–1948: The Case of Zielona Góra

Introduction

The end of the Second World War in Europe saw the movement of millions of people across state boundaries due to the treaties of Yalta and Potsdam and other inter--state agreements. Morawska has estimated that approximately 25 million people were uprooted in the immediate post-war period (Morawska, 2000, p. 75). The region most affected by this was Central and Eastern Europe. There Poles and Russians traded places with Germans and population transfers occurred involving Ukrainians, Belarusians and Poles and other national groups. The ethnic group most affected by these transfers were Germans with estimated nine million leaving territories lost in the East to settle in the post-war German state.

This article specifically discusses how nationalist and nationalising narratives assert themselves in urban areas touched by mass displacement. It does so by illustrating how states and individual settlers negotiate with departing ethnic groups and their material culture encountered due to population transfers. To explore this the article focuses on one city engulfed by post-war displacement and ethnic transformation, Poland's Zielona Góra[1], situated in territories which Poland gained from Germany as part of post-war peace conferences. Here, within the space of a couple of years, the city's overwhelmingly German population was entirely replaced by Polish newcomers. This complete ethnic transformation creates a fertile terrain for historians writing about nationalising narratives.

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[1] I will use the contemporary spelling of all place names throuhout the article.

This article adds to the growing body of literature concerning urban areas affected by mass displacement. Cities are perfect arenas in which to examine the processes of nation-building during and after population transfers. They allow us on a micro level to view how territories are de-nationalised and re-nationalised, how nations reclaim spaces and what kind of communities emerge as a result. Research has so far focused on the national transformation of large urban centres in Central and Eastern Europe. Much work has been done on the mutation of German Königsberg into Soviet Kaliningrad at the Second World War's end. This article will show, like that of Berger (2010) and Misiunas (2004), the attempts by states to develop workable identities in newly gained territories. In addition, akin to Sezneva (2002), it will illustrate the role the state plays in such a processes. This effort is often implemented by social elites, including local administrators, teachers, intellectuals, scholars and journalists.

The Western Ukrainian city of L'viv has also drawn the attention of academics dealing with displacement. This article, like that of Amar (2015) and Tscherkes (2005), will illustrate the difficulties involved in developing connections with displacement-scarred cities. In addition, it will show that states were often unable to implement as quick a purging of the city's departing nationalities as they had initially hoped. This can also be seen in both Glassheim (2016) and Frommer's (2000) work on post-Second World War population transfers and ethnic cleansing in Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland.

Moreover, this article builds on the extensive Polish literature on the Polish state in the new Polish West. In the immediate post-war years, a large amount of literature was produced legitimating the decision to move Poland's borders westwards. A classic example of this is Wojciechowski's (1945) *Poland-Germany. Ten Centuries of Struggle.* These studies tend to neglect thorny issues, including the conditions of German expulsion and focus instead on German imperialism from Frederick the Great to the Nazis. After the Polish thaw of 1956 studies on the Western territories became more nuanced and often dealt with the mechanics of forging a new Polish state in the West. Good examples of this include the work of Szarota (1969), Dulczewski and Kwilecki (1962), Jaworski (1973) and Magierska (1978), while some studies even discussed the expulsion of Germans (Skubiszewski, 1968). Local academics approached the same issues in the Zielona Góra area (Dominiczak, 1975; Szczegóła, 1984). In addition, Polish settlers related their experiences in various memoir competitions (Dulczewski and Kwilecki, 1963; Solińska and Koniusz, 1961).

Since the fall of Communism Polish authors have focused on previously censored aspects of Polish settlement in the new Polish West, including the mistreatment of displaced Germans and Polish settlers. These works have explored the settlement universe in the West in detail thus providing promising new areas of enquiry (Ciesielski,

1999; Jankowiak, 2005; Madajczyk, 1996). In addition, the post-Communist era has seen an increasing body of work focusing on 'ethnic re-ordering' policies in the new Polish West. These studies have illustrated the Polish state's overarching aim of ethnic homogeneity. They show that authorities often encountered a complex ethnic situation which could not be resolved simply by state action (Fleming, 2007; Fleming, 2008; Service, 2010; Ther and Siljak, 2001).

Several important works have analysed the ideological drive behind the transformation of Poland's new territories. They discuss the thorough work of workers, state planners, journalists and historians in reshaping the Polish West (Kenney, 1997; Strauchold, 2003; Thum, 2005a; Curp, 2006). Thum's work is especially valuable to this article as it focuses on the transformation of German Breslau into Polish Wrocław, including the displacement of Germans, settlement of Poles and how the Polish post-war state grappled with the remnants of a German presence in the city (Thum, 2005a). Curp's work is useful to this article as it underlines the revolutionary nationalist zeal that Poles from the Polish-German borderland region of Greater Poland (Polish – *Wielkopolska*) exhibited as they helped the Polish state to conquer the new Polish Western territories. Curp argues that ethnic cleansing in the 'Recovered Territories' helped to forge national solidarity among Poles (Curp, 2006, p. 5).

This article will initially look at the effects of mass displacement on territories touched by them. It will then move on to the Polish conquest of formerly German territories and how the Polish state and individuals renationalised space there. It also looks at the state's attempt to characterise what was 'good' and 'bad' national behaviour in the new territories. Finally, it will show the political and individual reclaiming of national space in the city of Zielona Góra. It will conclude by answering what kind of a space was created out of the ruins of mass displacement.

For primary sources, the article draws on Polish archives from the State Archives in Zielona Góra (*Archiwum Państwowe w Zielonej Górze*, APZG), the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw (*Archiwum Akt Nowych*, AAN), the State Archives in Poznań (*Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu*, APP) and the Institute for Western Affairs (*Instytut Zachodni*, IZ). It also uses the newspaper *Głos Wielkopolski*, published memoir collections and interviews with Zielona Góra settlers conducted as part of my doctoral research. Most of the memoirs used were published as part of memoir writing competitions organised by the Western Institute (Solińska and Koniusz, 1961). As part of my doctoral research, ten interviews were conducted in 2007 and 2008 with displaced persons who were transferred from the now-Ukrainian town of Lutsk to Zielona Góra (Lash, 2010). Both the memoirs and interviews offer a fascinating insight into the course of settlement in Zielona Góra.[2]

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[2]   Footnotes have been used for archival sources and interviews.

The Polish state and the nation in the new territories

At Yalta and Potsdam, Poland gained large parts of ex-German territories in compensation for territories it had lost to the Soviet Union. In 1945 these territories were populated by approximately five million German citizens. Poland's pre-war political elite had sought to gain German territories in the West in the post-war settlement but were wary of incorporating territories with large numbers of ethnic Germans (Kulischer 1948, p. 285; Naimark, 2001, p. 123). However, once the Oder/Western Neisse line had been accepted by the international community, Polish politicians from across the political spectrum supported the displacement of these Germans to post-war Germany. Germans left in several ways; they fled in the wake of the advance of the Red Army, were forcibly displaced across the new Polish-German border by the Polish Army in the summer of 1945 and left as part of 'organised transfers' from January 1946 onwards. By 1950 the territory had been purged of its ethnic German population. As Germans left Poles took their places. Millions of Poles came from all over the inter-war Polish state to settle in the new territories. The main two groups were voluntary settlers from Central Poland and Poles displaced from Poland's lost Eastern territories. In the space of five years, the territories thus had undergone a complete ethnic transformation (Sienkiewicz and Hryciuk, 2008, pp. 168–199).

Despite this transformation, there were many complications in the immediate post-war ethnic situation in the territories. Firstly, due to a severe lack of a labour force, the Polish state realised it could not displace Germans as speedily as initially planned. By the autumn of 1945, several things had become clear. First, there was a lack of Poles to accomplish essential tasks, second, Germans possessed crucial knowledge regarding the local economy and finally, they were cheap to employ. Germans thus worked in a range of professions and were granted the protection of administrative authorities. These German employees became so useful that the spring of 1946 even saw protests at the resettlement of Germans to the West (Borodziej and Lemberg, 2001, pp. 36–51; Ordyłowski, 1991, pp. 47–50). Germans continued to be an important presence until their eventual resettlement by the end of 1947. In addition, the Polish state had to decide what to do with thousands of people in former Polish-German borderland areas who had a 'mixed' national identity. Service has shown how many residents of formerly German Western Upper Silesia had complicated national allegiances. To decide who to resettle to Germany, Polish administrative authorities established 'verification' committees where residents could remain if they were verified as Polish. This was not an easy process as residents often had an assortment of different nationality traits linking them to both Polish and German nations. The decision to verify the local population was influenced by the Polish state's desire to portray the new

Western territories as being naturally Polish, thus legitimating their annexation. As a result, over 72% of Western Upper Silesia residents remained in Poland and over one million pre-war German citizens were verified as Poles between 1945–7. These 'autochthons'[3] often received harsh treatment at the hands of Polish settlers who saw them as Germans and by the Polish state who attempted to, among other things, ban the use of the German language in public spaces (Kulczycki, 2001; Service 2010; Sienkiewicz and Hryciuk, 2008, p. 187).

To administratively 'tame' the new territories, the Polish state sent thousands of civil servants, railway workers, policemen and journalists to the new Polish West. These authorities took power from German temporary administrations and the Red Army. These state officials were the first Poles to encounter the Germanness of the Western territories, and they immediately imposed nationalising narratives. Zofia Gostomska-Zarzycka, a librarian who made her way to Wrocław as part of a government mission soon after the city's liberation, stated: 'We (Poles) came here as masters for the first time in hundreds of years. You didn't have to be a historian to appreciate the moment' (Thum, 2005a, p. 63).

Gostomska-Zarzycka's position was just a small part of a nationalising narrative devised by Polish state policymakers. Thum, Strauchold and Curp have shown how Poland's ruling Communists turned to Polish nationalist narratives to justify their incorporation of the Western territories (Thum, 2005a; Strauchold, 2003; Curp, 2006). Polish Communists chose to utilise the ideas of Polish 'Western thought' (Polish – myśl zachodnia); a school of thought developed in the late 19th century in response to the aggressive posturing of German nationalists. The ideologues of Western thought (mostly historians and other academics) offered Polish Communists a ready-made language with which to approach the new territories. According to Western thought's precepts, Poland's new Western territories were 'age-old Polish territories.' These territories had belonged to the Polish Piast dynasty in medieval times and supposedly Germany's *drang nach osten* had forcibly removed them from Poland. Poland's Western territories became, according to official propaganda, 'the Recovered Territories' (Polish – *Ziemie Odzyskane*) despite the fact they contained very few ethnic Poles. Western thought allowed the Polish government, ably backed by academic institutes, nationalist organisations, the press, administrators and individual settlers, to attack German culture in all its forms in the new Polish West and establish the basis for the Polish state. According to official policy, the territories were to be aggressively 're-Polonised' and returned to their rightful Slavic owners (Thum, 2005a, pp. 232–257).

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[3]   The official term the Polish state used for local inhabitants of the Western territories who remained.

Curp has shown that the primary reason for Polish Communist use of Western thought nationalism was the weakness of their standing within Polish society as the Second World War came to an end. Resorting to ethnic cleansing against the hated German occupiers represented an opportunity for Polish Communists to gain legitimacy in the eyes of Polish society. The use of this policy provided unity of purpose for Poles settling the recovered territories. All parts of Polish society agreed that there should be a Polish national revolution in the new Polish West. This position was supported by the hierarchy of the Polish Catholic Church, all political parties (whether they were Communist or not) and both settlers from Central Poland and those displaced from Poland's lost Eastern territories (Curp, 2006, pp. 6–12, 56–80).

The ideology of Western thought filtered through Polish encounters with the Western territories. This is most evident in encounters with German material culture and people in the recovered territories. Cities were to be 're-Polonised' in official terminology, although in secret documents this term was often changed to 'de-Germanised.' Re-Polonisation/de-Germanisation occurred on a destructive and constructive level. Authorities moved to remove German inscriptions on cemeteries, buildings, road signs and other public spaces and destroyed statues of German political figures (Linek, 2001, p. 128; Thum 2005a, pp. 285–328). In addition, the local population of the territories experienced a cold reception by Polish officials. Negative treatment included the deportation of miners to the Soviet Union, the herding of Germans into detention camps and the forcing of Germans to wear armbands indicating their nationality. After a while, however, Germans were seen to be useful, so Polish authorities softened their position towards them (Kulczycki, 2001, p. 213). In a constructive sense, the Polish state emphasised the positive effects of Polonisation in the new West by acclaiming the first Polish schools, cultural institutions and holidays. Often political authorities were on hand to celebrate the occasion with residents.

Individual settlers also encountered and negotiated with the German material culture and people of the recovered territories. Polish newcomers often saw left-behind German property purely as an opportunity to enrich themselves. Teams of looters, (Polish – *szabrowniki*) travelled westwards to trade in stolen ex-German property. Despite these more aggressive appropriations of property, all Poles were forced out of necessity to re-use German property and material goods. New settlers often had a negative attitude towards Germans and autochthons who remained in the West. One major cause of irritation was the widespread Polish settler appropriation of abandoned autochthon properties. The return of former residents after the front had passed often caused consternation and friction between the two groups (Kulczycki, 2001, p. 214; Thum, 2005a, pp. 117–130; Zaremba).

The nationalist environment of the new territories forced the state to create new definitions of Polishness. The patriotic duty of a good Pole or 'Pioneer' was to selflessly

rebuild the devastated terrain of the Western territories. Pioneers were to assist the emergence of the Polish state in the new West and to assist their fellow Poles (Thum, 2005a, p. 281). The Poznań government-run newspaper *Głos Wielkopolski* in April 1947 discussed the requirements of a Pole in the new West:

> In the recovered territories life simply forces the emergence of a pioneering spirit as the conditions of life there are not only new but also often very difficult. Those that don't acquire the energy to act, might not be able to survive (Głos Wielkopolski, 1947).

In contrast, images of bad Poles were concentrated on the szabrownik or looter. A plethora of newspaper articles portrayed szabrowniks as being selfish and not worthy of a place within the national community. A *Głos Wielkopolski* article in January 1946 told the story of a man who meets an old friend in the recovered territories. He is invited with his wife to go to the friend's flat who turns out to be a szabrownik, with access to fine cigars, expensive whiskeys and other delicacies. After being asked to become a looter himself, the man eventually marches out of the flat in disgust declaring: 'Let your New Year be damned, bloody szabrowniks!' (Tomsza, 1946). The Pioneer/szabrownik dichotomy found its way into many aspects of life in the recovered territories. Everything from restaurants to amateur theatre groups were named Pioneer, whereas szabrowniks were considered the enemy which the law-abiding citizen was to beware of.

The Polish state, city and nation in Zielona Góra

The situation in Zielona Góra echoed that of the rest of the recovered territories but in one crucial way it was different. Unlike most cities in the new Polish West, the city survived the war relatively unscathed. Many Western cities suffered extensively because of the war with Wrocław and Szczecin suffering above 60% damage to its buildings. In sharp contrast to this Zielona Góra experienced less than 5% damage. Therefore, by the standards of the Polish West, it was a very attractive place to settle and the theme of rebuilding, so present in other cities' narratives, was not as pronounced. Finally, the lack of autochthons in the city meant that re-Polonisation efforts did not occur to the same extent as cities nearer the former Polish-German border.

Before the war, Zielona Góra had been the German Lower Silesian city of Grünberg, the centre of a German *Kreis* or district. It had a population of just over 26,000 with significant activity in industry and crafts. Grünberg's pre-war population was overwhelmingly ethnically German. In the Middle Ages, the city belonged to the Polish crown but from 1506 onwards it was ruled by a combination of Czech, Austrian,

Prussian and German political authorities. Polish administration returned to the city in June 1945 after its liberation by the Red Army early in the same year. The official handing over of power to Polish authorities saw the unfurling of the red and white Polish flag over the city hall, speeches and a banquet to mark the occasion. The heavy symbolic nationalist importance of this moment can be seen in the memoir of Maria Wencel, one of the city's first Polish administrators:

> I will always remember the taking of power in the city as the day of my 'National gratification.' I was proud when I realised that I had the honour of ordering the first Polish flags for our city from the German tailor. It was a great day for the small number of Poles in Zielona Góra when our flags flew in the city, giving testimony to the fact that we were here, and we would stay in these territories returned to the motherland (Wencel, 2008, p. 318).

Displacement and settlement in the city followed a similar pattern to the rest of the Polish West (see Table 1). Germans fled in the wake of the Red Army only to return soon after. When Polish civil authorities took power in June 1945 there was a working German administration and a developed network of shops and services (Borodziej and Lemberg, 2001, p. 29). Many Germans left in July 1945 as part of expulsions by the Polish Army. Despite this, they made up a majority of the city's population until the middle of August 1945. After June 1945 Poles began to flow into the city from Eastern and Central Poland and encountered Germans there. Indeed, as the table shows until the spring of 1946 more than 10% of the city's population was still German. Organised transfers of Germans started at the end of 1946, but it took until the end of 1947 before the great majority of Germans had left. Before departure Polish authorities placed Germans into collection points where they waited for transport to Germany, the conditions in these makeshift camps were often very poor (Borodziej and Lemberg, 2001).

Table 1.
Registered population of Grünberg/Zielona Góra by ethnicity 1939–1950[4]

Date	Population	Polish population (%)	German Population (%)
1939	26,076	0	26,076
14/01/45	35,000	0	35,000
14/02/45	4,000	0	4,000
10/06/45	10,000 +	N/A	10,000 +
24/06/45	5,566	566 (10%)	5,000 (90%)
01/08/45	5,468	2,670 (49%)	2,798 (51%)
01/09/45	8,467	5,669 (67%)	2,798 (33%)
13/09/45	10,488	7,690 (73%)	2,798 (27%)
31/10/45	13,771	10,756 (78%)	3,015 (22%)
31/11/45	15,799	13,128 (83%)	2,671 (17%)
31/12/45	18,030	15,359 (85%)	2,671 (15%)
31/01/46	19,101	16,430 (86%)	2,671 (14%)
28/02/46	18,606	15,935 (86%)	2,671 (14%)
30/10/46	25,198	24,269 (96%)	929 (4%)
31/12/47	28,285	28,265 (99.92%)	20 (0.08%)
03/12/50	30,165	30,165	0

At first Polish authorities had a very negative attitude toward Zielona Góra's Germans. An official from the State Office of Repatriation in May 1945 asked for the 'liquidation' of the German minority from the area. He also called for their property to be expropriated, for them to be placed in work camps and for Germans to rebuild any property they had destroyed.[5] However, this attitude changed as authorities realised

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[4] Figures adapted from Dominiczak, 1975, pp. 133, 137, 138, 142; Dzwonkowski, 1997, p. 8; Szczegóła, 1984, pp. 76–77; Szczegóła, 1971, p. 68; *Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu* (State Archives in Poznań, APP), Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny (PUR), file 988, reports for Sept. Oct. Nov. 1945 and Jan. Feb. 1946, pp. 429, 441, 446, 457, 462; Archiwum Państwowe w Zielonej Górze (State Archives in Zielona Góra, APZG), *Sprawozdania sytuacyjne Starostwa Powiatowego Zielonogórskiego w Zielonej Górze*, (SsSPZwZG), file 48, report for Oct.-Dec. 1947, p. 134. These figures are only approximate due to the scale of displacement at the time.

[5] *Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie* (The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw, AAN), PUR, file II/15, 6 Jun. 1945, p. 20.

Germans' importance as cheap, skilled workers. As a result, authorities moderated their language regarding Germans and moved to protect the community. At the end of 1945 Zielona Góra's highest ranking civilian official, Jan Klementowski declared at a displacement commission that: 'Working Germans shouldn't be removed, because they are needed' (Zaradny, 2009, p. 92). In December of the same year, Klementowski heavily condemned the actions of drunken militiamen who stole from Germans. To Klementowski this kind of behaviour was: 'incompatible with the ethics of a Polish citizen' and declared that militiamen who continued to do this would be thoroughly punished.[6] Germans were however clearly not full citizens; this can be seen in legislation which prevented them from voting in local and national elections. Furthermore, authorities often condemned demands by local employers to retain German employees (Zaradny, 2009, p. 139; Borodziej and Lemberg, 2001, p. 167).

In contrast to cities further to the East, Zielona Góra possessed very few autochthons. Proponents of the school of Western thought had hoped to find thousands of Poles in the region, but this did not occur. A Głos Wielkopolski article from 20 January 1946 lamented this fact:

> The Polish population which lived here at one time was diminished by Brandenburg-Prussia and even in parts decimated during the double occupation of these territories…we assume, apart from former border areas, that the local population is genuinely German and will have to leave the territories (Głos Wielkopolski, 1946b).

Due to the small number of autochthons in the area, verification did not start until the summer of 1946. In total Zielona Góra authorities verified approximately 300 autochthons, merely 1% of the city's population. The situation for the group in the city was not promising. Administrative reports in 1946–7 suggest that Polish settlers discriminated against autochthons whom they considered to be German. In addition, Polish settlers were annoyed when they lost properties to returning autochthons (Zaradny, 2009, pp. 95–97; Borodziej and Lemberg, 2001, p. 165).[7] A report from the city mayor's office in December 1947 stated: 'The immigrant population does not understand the historical role of local people here and their importance at the current time for Poland. This explains the mistrust between the two groups.' The mayor's office also noted that autochthons often could not afford to take Polish language classes intended to help them assimilate.[8]

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[6]   APZG, Zarząd Miejski w Zielonej Górze, file 22, 13 Dec. 1945, p. 1.

[7]   APZG, SsSPZwZG, file 48, reports for Nov. 1946; Dec. 1946 and Nov. 1947, pp. 2, 9, 113.

[8]   APZG, SsSPZwZG, file 48, report for Oct.-Dec. 1947, pp. 129, 132.

Let us now move on to the state's position regarding German material culture in Zielona Góra. In terms of de-Germanisation Zielona Góra authorities initially aimed to remove German inscriptions in public places as quickly as possible. A meeting of the Polish Socialist Party in the city in August 1945 prompted the first removal of German inscriptions. In February 1946 local authorities stated that the initial stage of removal had been successful. Despite this by the end of 1947, the mayor's office reported that the removal of German markings still had a way to go.[9] However, by the end of 1948 Zielona Góra had all but completed the task of removal; a fact backed up by Polish settler Władysław Korcz who arrived in October of that year:

> Its renewed connection with Poland seemed to me so natural, that I found it hard to comprehend the recent emigration of Germans. Obviously, this was due to the way the city looked, as the traces of German presence there had been assiduously removed.[10]

Often de-Germanisation and re-Polonisation went hand in hand in Zielona Góra, the process was however quite complicated, a situation which becomes clear when discussing the creation of a Polish museum in the city. Initially, the new director of the city museum took control of exhibitions left by departing Germans. To begin with, Polish state authorities pressured the museum to translate all German inscriptions into Polish. As a result, the museum's reopening in June 1946 saw entirely German exhibitions with superimposed Polish inscriptions. As time passed authorities forced the director to put on more 'Polish' displays to represent Polishness in the new territories. This caused numerous problems as the museum did not have enough Polish cultural artefacts, forcing it to close in 1948. When the museum re-opened a year later it included displays of Polish archaeology and nineteenth-century Polish paintings. As one historian emphasised: 'The new exhibitions were supposed to guarantee Polishness, whereas actually, they were an artificial creation imposed on local German cultural heritage' (Ciosk, 2002, p. 66).

In contrast, constructive elements of re-Polonisation occurred in the city. Central to this was the creation of new Polish cultural traditions tying the new inhabitants to their new homes. These traditions were closely linked to the school of Western thought, affirming Polish 'return' to its new West. Indeed, Zaradny has argued that culture played

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[9]   APZG, *Powiatowy Komitet Polska Partia Socjalistyczna,* file 2, 25 Aug. 1945, p. 24; Miejska Rada Narodowa, file 40, report for Feb. 1946, p. 7; SSsSPZwZG, file 48, report for Oct.-Dec. 1947, p. 132.

[10]   W. Korcz memoir, *Instytut Zachodni* (Institute for Western Affairs, IZ), p. 80:1.

a central role in uniting Polish settlers who had travelled from a variety of different geographical locations (Zaradny, 2009). Authorities were on hand to offer patriotic addresses at the opening of every school, museum or cultural institution. No event was spared nationalising narratives. In May 1946 parish priest Michalski consecrated a new coal shaft in a ceremony with the participation of the city's mayor and other guests. Michalski's address stated:

> During the time of the German occupation, the occupiers attempted to oblite-
> rate all traces of Polishness in these territories. But the Polish soul found shelter
> underground in the hearts of Silesian miners. These men created a defensive
> wall of Polishness which the enemy couldn't break down (Głos Wielkopolski,
> 1946c).

Michalski's willingness to speak at such an event underlines Curp's argument about the synergy of Communist and Church interests in the recovered territories in this period before serious ideological tensions emerged (Curp, 2006, pp. 56–60).

The 'good/bad' Pole narrative was also heavily present in Zielona Góra. Szabrowniks in the initial settlement period were a constant nuisance to local authorities. In the summer of 1945, a plague of looters had attacked the city after the Polish Army's expulsion of Germans. The city administration reacted to this threat by closing the main train station for extended periods, thereby preventing szabrowniks from transporting stolen goods to Central Poland (Zaradny, 2009, p. 50). In January 1946 local courts carried out the first prosecution of a szabrownik in the city*,* Stanisław Walczyński, for trying to bribe an official. Walczyński was fined 4,000 zlotys and sentenced to one year's imprisonment (Głos Wielkopolski, 1946a). A *Głos Wielkopolski* article in May 1946 laid out the dichotomy of good and bad patriotic behaviour in Zielona Góra. According to the article, recent government regulations had:

> Stopped the outflow of undesirable elements which travelled to the recovered
> territories not to undertake hard pioneer work but only by the desire to get rich
> easily and quickly. Szabrowniks and speculators today make up a tiny minority
> in the city. The rest of the population of Zielona Góra are valuable settlers
> living mostly in very difficult conditions…without losing their zeal. They
> have become true citizens of Zielona Góra, the fate of the city, its district and
> the whole province is closer to their hearts than mere personal gain (Głos
> Wielkopolski, 1946c).

Polish settlers, city and nation in Zielona Góra

The actions of individual settlers in Zielona Góra in some ways followed state narratives regarding the recovered territories and in others differed from them quite considerably. Despite these fluctuations from the state-defined norm, almost all settler accounts operate within a highly nationalist and nationalising framework. The language of nationalism was rife in all fields of social interaction, and this left its mark on settler narratives. Poles, when encountering the new territories, often took on government language regarding the new Polish West with little criticism. A Polish railway employee, Józef Wawrzyniak, who moved to Zielona Góra in June 1945, explained his emotions as he approached the Oder River which marked the new Polish-German border: 'At the sight of the river, emotion seized us and everyone pulled out little objects or coins and threw them into the water, to document their connection to the ancient Oder River and the Western territories' (Wawrzyniak, 1961, p. 64).

Other settlers, almost as if bidden by the government, searched for traces of Polishness in Zielona Góra. The day after Kazimierz Malicki arrived in June 1945, he found a German book about the city and, through looking at the supposedly 'Germanised' names of local villages, fields and hills, discovered the area's 'Slavic' roots. The book made Malicki feel sure that Poland had returned home (Malicki, 1961, p. 79).

These nationalising narratives also related to the German population of the city. In the initial settlement period, Poles and Germans often worked in the same workplaces. This was however the cause of several conflicts between the two ethnic groups. The presence of Germans in the workplace frequently caused insecurity among Poles. Given the history of German treatment of Poles during the war, some believed it was not right for Germans to give orders to Poles. Others worried that employers favoured German workers over their Polish counterparts (Zaradny, 2009, pp. 92–93). In addition to working relations, Poles encountered Germans on the streets of Zielona Góra and bought food in their shops. Some Poles felt anger towards Germans and sought revenge for what happened during the war. Piotr Kłuciński on arriving in the city noted two German women lowering their heads to him. For Kłuciński this meant:

> Now the boot is on the other foot. In the past, we Poles had to kowtow to the occupiers. Now they must do the same to us. But we aren't the occupiers. We have returned to our territories, which were stolen from us in the past' (Kłuciński, 1971, p. 139).

For Malicki Germans were the 'other', who did not look Poles in the eyes as if ashamed of their wartime activities (Malicki, 1961, p. 78).

Most of my interviewees had little or no contact with Germans in Zielona Góra. Many of them stated that Germans had already been displaced by the time they arrived in the city. Several stated that Germans could have been present but that they had not taken an interest in them. Several others worked alongside Germans in the city but said they had little contact with them. Interestingly one of my interviewees, Dionizy Malinowski, was looked after by a German woman who for a short period became his surrogate mother.[11] Autochthons in contrast were not mentioned in detail by my interviewees, probably due to the small number in the city. One interviewee Małgorzata Liszka remembered very fondly the autochthon family that lived next door. Liszka recalled how these neighbours had paid her family with a breadbin when they lacked a monetary equivalent. The Liszka family continued to use the breadbin while living in the city.[12] Other interviewees stated that autochthons worked hard and were good Polish citizens.

Settlers had far more experiences regarding ex-German property in Zielona Góra. The remains of German material culture were present everywhere, making it impossible to avoid some sort of interaction. By far the most common encounters with Germanness came with settlers' appropriation of German housing. After arriving in the city settlers traversed the streets to find property which had been abandoned by their former German owners. This was sometimes a traumatic experience for new arrivals. One of my interviewees stated how she had found German possessions still standing on tables. She recalled how these were very affecting sights and had not enjoyed walking through other people's homes.[13] One woman in the nearby city of Gorzów explained how looking into people's homes was as if she was reading from a book of their lives. She saw photographs, children's toys, Nazi propaganda. These sights convinced her to choose an empty house 'where there wouldn't be obtrusive traces of a still warm human presence.'[14] This then the unpleasant, personal side of the nationalising process in the new Polish West.

A case can be made for a 'culture' of ethnic cleansing in Zielona Góra in the immediate post-war years. This was due to the dictates of the state, individual anger over German actions during the war, and the fact German items were often considered redundant. This is most clear regarding settler attitudes towards German inscriptions in the city. Zofia Glinojecka told the story of her arrival in Zielona Góra in July 1945 after being released from a concentration camp: 'My first stop was to the State Office of Repatriation. I approached the building and saw a German inscription on the wall.

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[11]   D. Malinowski, interview by author, 30 May 2008, Nowy Kisielin.
[12]   M. Liszka, interview by author, 31 Jul. 2007, Zielona Góra.
[13]   K. Żubr, interview by author, 30 Jul. 2007, Zielona Góra.
[14]   H. Kuźnica memoir, IZ, p891–565:3.

I took a stone, and I scratched it out' (Glinojecka, 1965, p. 60). Piotr Kłuciński even organised a theatrical show in the autumn of 1945 for local authorities regarding the failings of re-Polonisation in the city. Kłuciński wrote a poem for the occasion:

> We have painters here who paint with their brushes in silence,
> Why don't they delete German inscriptions?
> Maybe they don't have enough paint, or brushes, damn,
> Maybe they're still waiting for Hitler?

According to Kłuciński, the next day the city apparently 'looked like a parrot' as locals painted over German inscriptions (Kłuciński, 1985, p. 39). In addition, Poles sometimes destroyed German items they found, including Józef Rusiński who threw German books discovered on his property onto a bonfire.[15]

The good/bad Pole dichotomy was very noticeable in settler accounts in Zielona Góra. Many Poles took on the narrative defined by government propaganda, but exceptions were also common. Piotr Kłuciński, when stating that Poles had behaved appropriately towards displaced Germans, referred to the pioneer myth to get his readers' trust: 'We pioneers of Zielona Góra, bearing witness to those times have the right to talk about the way it was' (Kłuciński, 1988, p. 17). Mieczysław Turski, an employer of the local council discussed the good work of settlers in the city: 'Settlers got down to work. Local mottos instinctively spread for example: 'Let's get to it!'. People set up facilities whose functioning was essential for the daily life of the city: the power station, city council, Polish Red Cross.' The bad Pole narrative was however never far away. Turski discusses how the city council sought to open a theatre but szabrowniks broke in to steal items to sell on the black market. The city councillor thus decided to keep watch outside the theatre to prevent szabrowniks from breaking in. He vowed, 'I won't let szabrowniks, dogcatchers and gadabouts into the theatre, I'll chase them out of here' (Turski, 1965, pp. 68–69).

Many settlers however did not see the appropriation of ex-German resources as problematic. Indeed, alongside szabrowniks, most settlers made use of German property out of necessity. The luckiest settlers found food and appliances in the houses they moved into. These were luxuries in the poverty of post-war Poland (Lash, 2010). One of my interviewees vividly recalled how his family moved into a property as they found toys inside. He also stated that the house possessed large supplies of food which they eagerly consumed.[16] Others scoured the local area for items that could be reused or would bring wealth. One of my interviewees remembered how she had combed

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[15]   J. Rusiński, interview by author, 31 May 2008, Stary Kisielin.

[16]   Malinowski interview.

abandoned German allotments searching for food and other items of value.[17] Malicki described a related phenomenon of the early settlement period:

> At that time there was the outbreak of a true searching epidemic in our city. This was probably due to a couple of lucky people who managed to find buried jars of gold coins and jewellery. This encouraged many to rake the earth in gardens, courtyards and cellars, tap walls and look inside various staircases and alcoves (Malicki, 1961, p. 84).

These actions tend to suggest that there were not only 'good' pioneer and bad 'szabrownik' Poles, but that people rather operated between the two extremes.

Aftermath

Once the dust had settled in the new Polish West, its Germans expelled, its material culture removed or re-appropriated, its autochthons verified and its cities settled with ethnic Poles, Polish Communists had the chance to fully impose their Western thought-inspired nationalist narratives. One of the principal ways of doing so was through the *Ziemie Staropolskie* (English – Ancient Polish Territories) series which looked at different regions of the new Polish West. These books had short texts, portrayed simple arguments and possessed lots of photographs and drawings. They were ideal tools for telling the story of the Western territories. The section on Zielona Góra in *Ziemie Staropolskie* follows this pattern, creating a bite-size narrative easily digestible by residents. The description of the city focuses exclusively on its physical layout and the beauty of the surrounding district. The only mention of its German inhabitants was in stating that they had fled in the wake of the Red Army's advance. As for Zielona Góra's history, *Ziemie* saw its golden age as the Middle Ages, while it was part of Poland, and any of the city's achievements thereafter are not mentioned. Here was a vision of the city purged of all controversy, nuance and pain (Szczaniecki and Zajchowska, 1950, pp. 238–250).

Despite post-1956 moves to accept a more nuanced vision of the new Polish West, including reference to post-Yalta territories as the Northern and Western (and not the Recovered) Territories, many Communist-era myths continued until 1989. Since the fall of Communism in Poland, there have been attempts to celebrate the multicultural history of the Polish West. This is most clearly the case in the 'capital' of the territories, Wrocław, where considerable effort has been made to

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[17] Żubr interview.

discuss the achievements of the city's former German inhabitants. At the same time, Thum has argued that the city has not faced up to the ethnic cleansing which was at the centre of its post-war transformation. The Western thought myth of the return to the motherland still has resonance in the city (Thum, 2005b). In Zielona Góra moves have also been made to discuss the city's former German past, with regular historical articles in local newspapers. At the same time, the nationalist myths of 1945–8 still resonate in the city. One example of this are the activities of the Society of Zielona Góra Pioneers. In 2009 the society published a collection of memoirs about the early years of the city, in which many of the old narratives were still being told (Fokszan and Stankiewicz, 2008).

Conclusions

This article has shown the dual actions of political elites and individuals in re-making national space in Poland's 'Recovered Territories' and more specifically in the city of Zielona Góra. Polish political elites moved to de-Germanise and re-Polonise the formerly German city of Grünberg. They did so armed with the system of Polish 'Western thought', co-opted from Polish pre-war nationalists. This provided a powerful narrative with which to encounter Germanness in the city. Thus armed, the Polish state took on both German people and material culture in Zielona Góra.

Official state policy involved the removal of Germans living in the city as quickly as possible to provide space for Polish settlers. Initially the state, with the help of the Polish armed forces expelled thousands of Germans in the summer of 1945. This policy was found to have severe drawbacks as it increased criminality in the city due to marauding *szabrowniks* and removed crucial manpower in Zielona Góra. The state quickly realised that Germans could both carry out menial jobs which Poles would not do and possessed important expertise allowing the restoration of economic life in the city. The result of this was a paradoxical situation where the Polish state was protecting a group that it aimed to ethnically cleanse. Germans were thus a noticeable presence in the city until the end of 1947 when they were displaced to Germany. By 1950 the city had been completely re-Polonised as Germans left and Poles arrived.

Polish state narratives also concerned groups of mixed nationality. Autochthons were seen by authorities to be true Poles remaining after centuries of German oppression. The state however found only a negligible number of autochthons in Zielona Góra and many new settlers simply saw the group as Germans. The state was thus forced to move to protect these locals. The state also attempted to construct a vision of the good and bad Pole in the recovered territories. Good Poles were to rebuild cities and take part in the local community, whereas bad Poles carried out looting and were excluded

from the national community. The state thus aimed to show that Zielona Góra was an upstanding city where there was no place for bad Poles.

On the level of German material culture, inscriptions in the city were removed and new Polish cultural institutions replaced their formerly German counterparts. This process was not as rapid as the Polish state would have liked. State institutions made regular pleas to create a Polish public space, but it took a full three years for this project to be accomplished. In addition, newly created Polish institutions in the city owed a lot to their German predecessors, since there was a distinct lack of indigenous Polish cultural materials available. The Polish state attempted to fill public space with examples of Polishness. Official openings of institutions were full of nationalising narratives as the state demonstrated that Zielona Góra had returned to the motherland.

In terms of individual settlers, Poles and Germans coexisted in the initial pioneer period. Poles frequented German shops and often worked side by side with Germans. Individual settlers in general took on state narratives when encountering Germans in Zielona Góra. Poles frequently treated Germans in the workplace with suspicion and many took pleasure in seeing Germans reduced in stature. Despite this, there were incidents where intimacy replaced suspicion in relationships with the German 'other.' Poles, Germans and autochthons sometimes coexisted remarkably well.

The most common encounters of Poles with Germanness were with the material remnants of German culture. Poles often experienced shock when encountering items left by Germans in Zielona Góra. It was as if these encounters made Poles realise the true weight of their state's actions in the recovered territories. In contrast, many Poles happily went along with the nationalist propaganda of the state. This is evident in the 'culture of ethnic cleansing' which saw Poles create poems about the removal of German inscriptions and search for abandoned German treasures. Often the propaganda dichotomy of good and bad Pole meant little sense to Poles desperate to survive in difficult post-war conditions. Almost everyone took part in some form of material appropriation in the new Polish West, with Poles mostly ignoring the dictates of the state.

The article thus offers much to historians of ethnic cleansing, nationalism and displacement. Firstly, it illustrates the extreme lengths that states employed to ethnically cleanse societies and the accompanying creation of new forms of national life in the aftermath of these events. The Polish state's attempt to do so in Zielona Góra had a clear plan, Germans were to be displaced, autochthons to remain and new Polish institutions were to arise. On top of this, there was to be a purging of a German public space and its replacement with a Polish one. This article shows that in the post-war Polish West ethnic cleansing was not a simple task as these plans faced numerous obstacles, Germans were an essential labour force, autochthons suffered difficulties, it took time to remove traces of Germanness from the cityscape and there was a distinct lack of local

Polish cultural materials to create a new Polish Zielona Góra. In addition, many Poles ignored the propaganda dictates of the Polish state, appropriating space according to their whims and the needs of the moment.

Despite these caveats, the article shows the power of nationalist narratives during periods of ethnic cleansing and displacement. This can be seen in individuals' embrace of state propaganda and their creation of a 'culture' of ethnic cleansing. In addition, like Thum, Curp and Sezneva the article illustrates the long-term effects of nationalist myths initiated in the aftermath of war. In Zielona Góra the state, once it had ethnically cleansed the area, could impose its nationalist narratives without obstructions. In the post-war era, authoritarian Eastern European states had the power to rewrite history and prevent discussion of the more unsavoury aspects of ethnic cleansing. In the case of Zielona Góra, this can be seen in the continued popularity of myths established in the immediate post-war period throughout the Communist era in Poland and even after its fall in 1989. Organisations in post-1989 Zielona Góra continued to see themselves as pioneers with only negligible reference to the ethnic cleansing of 1945–1950. This case study therefore underlines the long-lasting impact of nationalist and nationalising narratives.

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City and Nation during Mass Displacement. Poland's 'Recovered Territories' 1945–1948: The Case of Zielona Góra

Abstract

The immediate aftermath of the Second World War in Europe was marked by the displacement of millions of national groups in Central and Eastern Europe across newly erected borders. These population movements altered the physical environment and ethnic composition of the region. This article looks at one of these transfers in Poland's „Recovered Territories" gained from Germany through post-war peace conferences, and its effect on the region's cities. The article's specific focus is how displacement affected the medium-sized Lower Silesian town of Zielona Góra. The article looks at how the Polish state and individual settlers in Zielona Góra claimed urban spaces as their own whilst simultaneously eradicating signs of their former German inhabitants. Using newly opened archives and drawing on interviews conducted with displaced Poles it shows the development of nationalist and nationalising narratives in the city and the problems the state had in implementing its visions there.

Keywords: Poland, Germany, displacement, Post-Second World War, cities, state-building, Recovered Territories

Miasto i naród w okresie masowych wysiedleń. Polskie Ziemie Odzyskane 1945–1948: przypadek Zielonej Góry

Streszczenie

Bezpośrednie następstwa drugiej wojny światowej w Europie naznaczone były wysiedleniem milionów grup narodowych w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej przez utworzone na nowo granice. Te ruchy ludności zmieniły otoczenie fizyczne i skład etniczny regionu. W artykule omówiono jedno z takich przesiedleń na polskich Ziemiach Odzyskanych, uzyskanych od Niemiec w ramach powojennych konferencji pokojowych, i jego wpływ na miasta regionu. W opracowaniu skupiono się przede wszystkim na wpływie przesiedleń na średniej wielkości dolnośląskie miasto Zielona Góra. Przedstawiono, jak państwo polskie i poszczególni osadnicy w Zielonej Górze przywłaszczyli sobie przestrzenie miejskie, jednocześnie usuwając ślady dawnych niemieckich mieszkańców. Wykorzystując nowo otwarte archiwa i opierając się na wywiadach przeprowadzonych z wysiedlonymi Polakami, ukazano rozwój narracji

nacjonalistycznych i nacjonalizujących w mieście oraz problemy, jakie miało państwo z realizacją w nim swoich wizji.

Słowa kluczowe: Polska, Niemcy, wysiedlenia, okres po II wojnie światowej, miasta, budowanie państwowości, Ziemie Odzyskane