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**GERMAN AND NATIVE POPULATION IN POLAND'S WESTERN
AND NORTHERN TERRITORIES (1945-1950) AS SEEN BY
GERMAN AND POLISH PUBLICATIONS***

INTRODUCTION

During the Second World War and in the first postwar years dramatic demographic processes occurred in Polish lands. Along with combatant losses, the extermination of Polish population was carried on by Nazi Germany and by the Soviet Union. Both occupying powers also forced migration of Polish population: the Soviets to the East (1939), and the Germans to the East and South within the occupied parts of Poland.

Beginning in 1944, the territory of Poland became an area of the new migrations caused by the war.

In the years 1945-1950 Poland's Western and Northern Territories (later called the WNT) experienced an unprecedented displacement and "exchange" of the population in postwar Europe. Fleeing from the front line moving westward, and later due to the Potsdam decisions, German population left the WNT, while the Polish native population was separated from the Germans during the verification action. The lands were populated by the Polish settlers arriving from the central districts of Poland, including forced settlement of the Ukrainians, repatriants from the Eastern Lands lost in favour of the Soviet Union and re-emigrants. The socio-demographic characteristics of German and native population of the WNT in the years 1945-1950 will be discussed in this paper.

* The vicissitudes of the population of the WNT have been arousing interest of the younger generation, which is illustrated by this paper, written by the student of the fourth year of geography. Although it is based on limited literature, we deemed that it was worth publishing due to its interesting approach.

POPULATION OF THE WNT BEFORE THE WAR AND DURING THE WAR

The area of the WNT prior to the outbreak of the Second World War was inhabited by some 8.9 million people (according to the population census of 1939; Table 1). Estimates of the number of Poles at that time are unreliable. German statistics show actual and partly desirable advance of Germanization of the native population and present a negligible proportion of the Polish population in the WNT (in 1933 the number of Polish citizens totalled 41.6 thousand, while the number of the Third Reich citizens speaking Polish — "Mazurian" or "Kashubian" — amounted to 440.2 thousand; Bohmann, p.216, 231, 232). The Polish researchers, on the other hand, basing on various premises (older statistics, results of the plebiscite, religion, languages used, etc.) estimated the number of Poles (population of Polish character) in 1939 at 1.25-1.40 million (Table 2).

Table 1

Population of the WNT before the Second World War (May 1939)

East Prussia — Polish part	1,330,700
Pomerania	1,895,200
East Brandenburg	644,800
Silesia	4,592,700
F.C. Gdańsk	390, 600
Total	8,854,000

Source: Bohmann, p. 212

Table 2

Polish population in the WNT before the Second World War — estimates for 1939

East Prussia — Polish part	400,000 — 550,000
Upper Silesia	750,000
Lower Silesia	60,000
F.C. Gdańsk	40,000
Total	1.250,000 — 1,400,000

Source: Misztal, p. 19

Another problem is the precise determination of demographic changes till the end of the war. Taking into account only the natural increase up to the end of 1944, the WNT were inhabited by 9.129 million German citizens (East Prussia, Pol.part — 1.370 million, Pomerania — 1,956, East Branderburg — 657 thousand, Silesia — 4,751, Free City of Gdańsk — 395 thousand; Bohmann, p.255; Meyers..., p.94). Military losses during the war totalled 656 thousand (East Prussia — 210 thousand, Pomerania — 125, East Branderburg — 41, Silesia — 280, Free City of Gdańsk — 22 (Bohmann, p.255; Kosiński, p.36 — according to German and Red Cross statistics),

while civilian losses caused by air raids, retaliatory actions, during escape etc. are estimated at about 1 million (corrected estimations of "Bund der Vertriebenen"; after Bohmann, p.255). Before the front reached the WNT in 1945, taking into consideration hitherto war losses (mainly soldiers — about 0.5 million), A.Bohmann estimates that the number of German citizens who inhabited the WNT reached some 8.3 million. Similar figures are given by J.Misztal — 7.42 million Germans and 1.15 million native inhabitants (Misztal, p.23).

Measurability of demographic changes at the end of the war is a particular obstacle. It is therefore difficult to evaluate the specific estimations. The WNT were occupied by the Soviet and Polish troops between January and May 1945. Evacuation was organized by the Germans too late and it was inefficient, turning to disorderly flight of civilian population on their own account (taken by surprise and fearing the cruelty of the Red Army), which entailed many casualties, especially in winter (Misztal 1991).

It is estimated that upon the termination of the hostilities 2.5 million Germans, and 3.7 million people in general (Socio-demographic..., p.11), 3 million Germans and 1 million Poles (Albert, Roszkowski, p.495), as well as 3.5 million German population (Misztal, p.116) stayed in the WNT. The roughness of estimations is due to the uncontrolled migration within the WNT and over the frontier.

GERMAN POPULATION IN THE WNT AFTER THE WAR

RESETTLEMENT OF GERMAN POPULATION

Multi-directional and multi-stage migration of German population on the two sides of the front in 1945 cannot actually be estimated in figures. Part of the population managed to cross the Oder-Neisse line, another part concentrated in the western part of the WNT. A number of the refugees were captured by the front and forced to remain there or return, while many Germans were taken by the Red Army to the USSR under the "war reparations". Part of the German and native population were expelled by the newly established Polish administration and looters, while the Oder-Neisse boundary was depopulated and secured by military settlers (Bohmann); all this was done prior to the Potsdam decisions.

After the termination of the hostilities — in summer and autumn of 1945 — part of German and native population came back to their land (e.g. to Silesia some 800 thousand, to Pomerania 160 thousand (Bohmann, p.272)) hoping they would remain there, which was also the effect of German propaganda regarding the return of the WNT to Germany.

In November 1945, in accordance with the Potsdam decisions, the plan of resettlement of the Germans from the WNT was elaborated. The plan en-

visaged dislocation of some 3.5 million German population — 1.5 million to the British occupation zone in Germany and 2.0 million to the Soviet occupation zone. Displaced persons were allowed to take only 500 DM (a counter-inflationary measure), objects of personal use or household utensils, but they had to organize the luggage transport to the meeting-places on their own account.

An organized displacement action was not undertaken until February 1946. The population census conducted at that time already showed that there were 2,036,000 Germans (most of them in the Wrocław voivodship — 1,239,000, Szczecin voivodship — 474,000); besides, 188,000 persons were subjected to verification (Bohmann, p.279). These data were not too reliable since they did not take into account intensive migration, failed to include Germans employed by the Soviet army and persons avoiding verification as well as changing attitudes of the numerous natives of Upper Silesia and Gdańsk. Later estimates showed that there were 300 thousand Germans more at that time (Polish estimates resulted from a detailed migration balance; after Bohmann, p.279).

Table 3

Distribution of German population in the WNT — census of 14 February, 1946

Białystok — part	36,00	2,000	5.9
Gdański — part	127,000	52,000	41.1
Poznań — part	273,000	25,000	9.0
Upper Silesia	1,200,000	146,000	12.1
Wrocław	1,941,000	1,239,000	63.8
Szczecin	893,000	474,000	53.1
Olsztyn	352,000	98,000	28.0
Total	4,822,000	2,036,000	42.2
incl.: towns	1,806,000	702,000	34.5
villages	3,016,000	1,335,000	65.5

Source: *Statystyka Polski* (Statistics of Poland), series D, No. 1, p. 16, Warszawa 1947 (after Bohmann, p. 280)

Demographic structure of German repatriants was the reflection of the long-lasting hostilities: old people, women, children and youth, cripples and ill people prevailed, while the share of males of the productive age was small (Misztal). Under difficult postwar conditions, this was burdensome both to the Polish authorities that organized repatriation and to the German population. On the other hand, Germans with high professional skills, with professions that were in short supply in Poland, or even ordinary agricultural workers were excluded from the resettlement action (reclaimed) until the time when they might be replaced by skilled Polish employees. The Germans also worked for the Soviet troops stationing in the WNT. Most reclaimed Germans left Poland in 1945-47 (Misztal). Outstanding

specialists and workers of the key industry (chiefly mining) stayed longest and did not leave Poland until the 1950s.

Displacement of the Germans was carried out under difficult postwar conditions (lack of the rolling-stock, food shortage, bad communication, holding out transports longer in the Soviet zone, and lack of ships for sea transport that were confiscated by the USSR (Misztal). In the winter, repatriation was discontinued due to bad transport conditions. The dislocation action to the British zone was disturbed by spontaneous migration of the German population from the WNT to the border meeting-places; the Germans feared they would be displaced to the Soviet zone and preferred to go to the British zone, which resulted in overcrowded transports of repatriants to this zone. Excessive influx of displaced persons was so burdensome to the recipient party that the agreement on repatriation was endangered. The Germans from Lower Silesia and Pomerania were leaving most of all. Altogether, in the period between February 1946 and January 1947 (the repatriation to the British zone was expected to be completed by June 1946) only 1,181,000 Germans were displaced out of 1.5 million envisaged (after repatriation records; Misztal, p.163, 183). When the British authorities finished repatriation, they announced that apart from German emigrants sent directly by Poland, the British zone accepted additional 100 thousand Germans coming from the American zone in the WNT and 200 thousand from the Soviet zone. Starting with the year 1948, the British still agreed to carry out the action of the re-uniting of families.

In July 1946 an organized repatriation to the Soviet occupation zone in Germany was undertaken. Earlier, the Germans arrived in this zone (forced and voluntarily) beyond control of the Polish authorities through the leaky frontier. The Russians estimated this migration at 298 thousand people, but only for the period January-June 1946. From July to December 1946 organized transport took away 451 thousand Germans, in 1947, 538.5 thousand were repatriated, thereby completing the organized action of resettlement to the Soviet zone with the total of 1,836,000 persons (out of planned 2 million) (Misztal, p.204). Altogether, in 1946 1,632,562 Germans were repatriated to the two zones in Germany.

In the years 1948-49, there was a notable fall of the number of German emigrants (1948: 42,740; 1949:61,474) (Bohmann, p.280). Poland was left by the negatively verified natives, Germans avoiding verification, people employed in Polish economy and by the Red Army, orphans, sick people, old people, and other persons under the action of the re-uniting of families. In the years 1946-49 the number of resettled Germans amounted to 2,275,000 (Bohmann, p.280; quoted after *Rocznik Statystyczny* (Statistical Yearbook) 1949, Warszawa 1950).

The comparison of dynamics of adult repatriants of the Federal Republic of Germany living in 1955 is shown in Table 4. Till the end of 1944, merely 6.5% of the total number left; most people escaped or were expelled in 1945

prior to Germany's capitulation (57.6 cumulative per cent), Potsdam decisions (67.9 cumulative per cent) and organized resettlement (72 cumulative per cent). Thus, the planned repatriation comprised only 26.3% of adult citizens of the FRG living in 1955. In the FRG, most repatriants are resettlers from Silesia and East Prussia (respectively: 2.05 million and 1.35 million, totalling 4.42 million), and in East Germany — from Silesia (1.09 million), East Prussia (0.58 million) and Pomerania (0.5 million, totalling 2.41 million; Bohmann, p.288).

Table 4

Time of repatriation from the WNT of adult citizens of FRG living in 1955

	Repatriants*	%
to the end of 1944	202,147	6.5
1. Jan. — 7 May, 1945	1,589,814	51.1
8 May — 31 July, 1945	320,561	10.3
1 August — 31 Dec., 1945	126,890	4.1
1946	745,352	24.0
1947	87,717	2.8
1948 — 1954	36,788	1.2
1944 — 1955	3,110,429	100

* incl. repatriants arriving from the Soviet occupation zone in Germany

Source: Bohmann, p. 288

THE NATIVE POPULATION OF THE WNT AFTER THE WAR

In order to be allowed to live in the WNT, the natives had to prove their Polish descent, that is — according to the official language used at that time — they had to be verified. The preliminary verification was conducted first in the summer of 1945; it was organized by the newly established Polish administration. A broader legal basis was provided by virtue of instructions on procedure of asserting Polish nationality issued by the Minister of the Recovered Territories in April 1946. Persons under verification were obliged to meet the following requirements: (a) live in the WNT before 1st January, 1945; (b) apply for verification; (c) prove their Polish descent and contact with the Polish nation; and (d) declare their faithfulness to the Polish nation and state. Persons who were verified positively received a PROVISIONAL card stating their Polish nationality and they could stay, while persons regarded as Germans were subject to resettlement. In January 1951 an extended bill on Polish citizenship was brought into force, by virtue of which the whole native population living in the WNT practically received Polish citizenship.

In practice, the verification saw a number of cases of distortion and corrupt practices on the part of Polish local authorities and settlers, which led

to acceptance of pro-German orientation by part of the native population who left for Germany. For many natives verification was unnecessary and humiliating — this was not the way they had imagined the "coming" of Poland. There were also formal troubles with verification (poor knowledge of the Polish language, loss of documents, lack of information on verification etc.). Out of some 1.3 million natives subjected to verification in 1945-46, about 1.0 million were verified positively, that is due to erroneous verification Poland lost at least 200 thousand natives who were potentially deserving verification (Misztal, p.23). In 1950, the native population in the WNT totalled 1,165,000 (Bohmann, p.285,; Kosiński, p.61).

CONCLUSION

1. As a result of the change of Poland's eastern and western frontiers after the Second World War, decision on resettlement of the Germans from the WNT and the action of populating these territories with the Polish settlers, there was an unprecedented displacement of population in Europe in the first postwar years (1945-50). The WNT were left in the years 1944-50 by nearly 7 million Germans (6,985,300, Table 5), about 1 million (1,008,500 in 1947, Table 5, 1,165,500 in 1950; calculated after Bohmann, p.285, natural growth incl.) of verified native population remained, and 4.4 million Polish settlers arrived (1.5 million repatriants and 150 thousand remigrants) (Bohmann, p.332,344; after various Polish sources).

Table 5

Autochtones in the WNT

Adm. unit	Total population	Autochtones	% share
Olsztyn voivodship	380,200	80,000	21.0
Białystok voivodship — part	48,700	1,500	3.1
Gdańsk voivodship — part	370,100	33,100	8.9
Szczecin voivodship	756,100	27,200	3.6
Poznań voivodship — part	351,500	8,500	2.4
Lower Silesia	1,384,400	7,000	0.5
Upper Silesia	1,351,800	851,300	63.0
Total	4,642,800	1,008,500	21.7

Source: Bohmann, p. 281; calculated on the basis of Polish statistical data.

2. The organized action of displacement of Germans by virtue of the Potsdam agreements in 1946-49 encompassed 2,275,000 persons (1.2 million to the British zone and 1 million to the Soviet zone in 1946-47), including 200 thousand natives potentially deserving Polish citizenship. Therefore, 4.7 million Germans who lived in two parts of postwar Germany in

1950 ran away from the front or were expelled before the Potsdam Conference and prior to organized repatriation.

3. Verification action actually separated the Polish native population related to various extent to Poland and Polish character from the Germans. Thus, the later problem of German minority in Poland should be related to specificity of the national borderland community as well as political, economic and cultural incentives — both on the part of the FRG and the People's Poland — which made a number of verified residents of the Western and Northern Territories of Poland accept pro-German orientation.

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