Refugees and expellees in post-war Germany

Ian Connor

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List of abbreviations

Abt.	Abteilung (Department)
ACDP	Archiv für Christlich-Demokratische Politik, Sankt-Augustin
ACSP	Archiv für Christlich-Soziale Politik der Hanns-Seidel Stiftung, Munich
ADL	Archiv des Deutschen Liberalismus der Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, Gummersbach
AdsD	Archiv der sozialen Demokratie der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn
ADW	Archiv des Diakonischen Werkes der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, Berlin
AHL	Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck
AHR	American Historical Review
APZ	Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte
BA	Bundesarchiv, Koblenz
BHE	Block der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten (Bloc of Expellees and Dispossessed Persons)
BHStA	Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich
BLA	Bayerisches Landtagsarchiv, Munich
BSL	Bayerisches Statistisches Landesamt
BvD	Bund der vertriebenen Deutschen (League of German Expellees)
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union (Christian Social Union)
DA	Deutschland Archiv
DCV	Archiv des Deutschen Caritasverbandes, Freiburg im Breisgau
DCSVP	Deutsche Christlich-Soziale Volkspartei (German Christian Social People's Party)
DG	Deutsche Gemeinschaft (German Association)
DP	Deutsche Partei (German Party)
DRP	Deutsche Rechtspartei (German Right-Wing Party)
DSAP	Deutsche Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in der Tschechoslowakei (German Social Democratic Workers' Party in Czechoslovakia)

DVP	Demokratische Volkspartei (Democratic People's Party)
DZP	Deutsche Zentrumspartei (German Centre Party)
EHQ	European History Quarterly
EHW	Das Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (Protestant Church Welfare Organisation in Germany)
EZA	Evangelisches Zentralarchiv, Berlin
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth)
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party)
FO	Foreign Office
FRG	German Federal Republic
GB	Gesamtdeutscher Block (All German Bloc)
GDP	Gesamtdeutsche Partei (All German Party)
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GH	German History
GNP	Gross National Product
GP	German Politics
GStA	Geheimes Staatarchiv, Munich
HstA	Nordrhein-Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Düsseldorf
IfZ	Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich
JCH	Journal of Contemporary History
KA	Kriegsarchiv, Munich
KH	Kirchliche Hilfsstelle
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
KRO	Kreis Resident Officer
LDP	Liberal-Demokratische Partei (Liberal Democratic Party)
LDPD	Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (Liberal Democratic Party of Germany)
LKA	Landeskirchliches Archiv, Nuremberg
LRA	Landratsamt
LS	Landsmannschaft Schlesien
LSH	Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein, Schleswig
LV	Landesverband
NB	Neubürgerbund (New Citizens' Alliance)
NG	Notgemeinschaft (Emergency Association)
NHStA	Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Hanover
NL	Nachlaß
NLP	Niedersächsische Landespartei (Regional Party of Lower Saxony)
NPD	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (National Democratic Party of Germany)
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist Workers' Party of Germany)
OA	Oberbayerisches Archiv

OMGB	Office of Military Government for Bavaria, United States
OMGUS	Office of Military Government for Germany, United States
PRO	National Archives (formerly known as Public Record Office), Kew
PSQ	Political Science Quarterly
PV	Politische Vierteljahresschrift
SBZ	Sowjetische Besatzungszone (Soviet Occupation Zone)
SdP	Sudetendeutsche Partei (Sudeten German Party)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
S-H	Schleswig-Holstein
SMAD	Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland (Soviet Military Administration in Germany)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SR	Slavic Review
SRP	Sozialistische Reichspartei (Socialist Reich Party)
SSW	Südschleswigscher Wählerverband (South Schleswig Voters' League)
StA	Staatsarchiv München
StD	Stadtarchiv München
VdgB	Vereinigung der gegenseitigen Bauernhilfe (Association for Mutual Farmers' Assistance)
VdL	Verband der Landsmannschaften (Association of Homeland Societies)
VfZ	Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte
WAV	Wirtschaftliche Aufbau-Vereiningung (Economic Reconstruction Union)
WEU	Western Economic Union
ZfS	Zeitschrift für Soziologie
ZvD	Zentralverband vertriebener Deutschen (Central Association of German Expellees)
ZVU	Zentralverwaltung für deutsche Umsiedler (Central Agency for German Resettlers)

Introduction

The conclusion of the Second World War in May 1945 did not bring an end to the suffering of the civilian population in Germany or the other European countries involved in the conflict. This was particularly true of the German refugees and expellees who fled or were expelled from their homelands in Eastern and Central Europe from the autumn of 1944 onwards. They flooded into the remains of the former Reich, now divided into four occupation zones, each administered by one of the wartime Allies – the United States, Soviet Union, United Kingdom and France. By April 1949 no fewer than 12 million German refugees and expellees were resident in the four Occupation Zones. They had arrived in a country devastated by the effects of the war and the task of integrating them was one of the most daunting facing the Allied and German authorities. In fact, both the Western Allies and the Soviet Union harboured deep fears that the poverty stricken refugees and expellees would become a source of political radicalisation in post-war German society. For example, a British Military Government official predicted in the autumn of 1948 that 'unless action is taken to improve the conditions of refugees … there will be a large body of discontented persons … who will either rise in revolt or become facile tools in the hands of political agitators'.[1]

The early post-war years witnessed the publication of many works on the refugee problem in the German Federal Republic (FRG). Some focused on the economic integration of the newcomers in the individual federal states (*Bundesländer*),[2] while a number of sociological studies of the refugee question were also undertaken.[3] Several major research projects were financed by the West German Government. One study, edited by Theodor Schieder and published in five volumes between 1953 and 1961,[4] documented the harrowing experiences of the refugees and expellees during their

flight or expulsion from their homelands, while the other, edited by Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding and entitled *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland,* appeared in three volumes in 1959.[5]

During the 1960s and 1970s interest in the refugee problem dwindled in West Germany. This can be partly attributed to an assumption that the economic and political integration of the refugees and expellees had been largely achieved. However, it was also a product of a change in the political climate, both domestically and internationally. Against the background of the efforts of Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt to reach an accommodation with the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, public debate concentrated on German responsibility for the Holocaust and it would have been politically unacceptable to depict German expellees as victims of the Second World War.

The release of archival material from the mid-1970s onwards led to an upsurge in interest in the refugee problem, especially among younger West German historians. This resulted in the publication of a large number of regional and local studies during the 1980s and 1990s such as Siegfried Schier's monograph on Lübeck,[6] Uwe Weiher's volume on Bremen,[7] Evelyn Glensk's book on Hamburg[8] and Angelika Hohenstein's work on Dannenberg (Lower Saxony).[9] The results of these and other studies indicated that the integration process was more problematic than had previously been acknowledged and this conclusion was confirmed by Paul Lüttinger's empirical study which showed that the economic position of the expellees in 1971 still lagged behind that of the indigenous inhabitants.[10] Research during the 1980s and 1990s also focused on relations between the native and refugee populations, notably Rainer Schulze's work on Celle[11] and Andreas Lüttig's volume on Wewelsburg.[12] Another feature of this period was the employment of new research methods, especially oral history, where pioneering work was undertaken by Lutz Niethammer and Alexander von Plato.[13]

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the collapse of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe represented a major turning point in research perspectives on the refugee problem. Western scholars were for the first time able to gain unrestricted access to archival material located in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). Even among East German historians, research on the expellees in the GDR was at an early stage since it had been politically unacceptable to discuss the role of the Red Army in

their flight or expulsion from their homelands. However, since the mid-1990s a number of regional studies have appeared, including Torsten Mehlhase's monograph on Saxony-Anhalt[14] and two volumes on Saxony, one by Stefan Donth[15] and the other by Norbert Schrammek.[16] A number of other major works have been published focusing on the GDR as a whole, in particular a monumental study by Michael Schwartz.[17] There is also an important three-volume collection of documents edited by Manfred Wille.[18]

The opening of archives in Eastern Europe has also paved the way for comparative studies. One of the pioneering works was Philipp Ther's monograph comparing government policy towards the expellees in the GDR and Poland, as well as relations between the native and refugee populations in both countries.[19] Ther also published an article comparing the integration of expellees in Poland, the FRG and the GDR.[20] Meanwhile, Pertti Ahonen has argued that the existence of expellee associations in West Germany and Finland promoted the newcomers' integration into their new homeland, while the decision of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) to outlaw such organisations impeded this process in the GDR.[21] In addition, Paul Erker has edited a volume containing contributions on the issue of Equalisation of Burdens in both the German states.[22]

The fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe has also stimulated debate about issues of national identity and collective memory. Robert Moeller has undertaken pioneering work in this field,[23] while Rainer Schulze,[24] Michael von Engelhardt[25] and Helga Hirsch[26] have addressed these issues on the basis of interviews conducted with former refugees. In addition, Michael Schwartz[27] has discussed problems of identity.

While a large number of works on the refugees and expellees have been published in German since the 1980s, there are very few English-language monographs on this topic. Two studies appeared during the 1970s. Hans Schoenberg's *Germans from the East* (1970),[28] based on secondary literature, concentrated primarily on the expellee organisations, while Bertram Lattimore made a case study of the expellee problem in Eutin (Schleswig-Holstein).[29] Several of the more recent publications in English have focused on the expulsion of the expellees from their homelands, including a controversial work by Alfred de Zayas[30] and a collection of essays edited by Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak.[31] In addition, *Coming Home to Germany?*, a volume edited by David Rock and Stefan Wolff, contains several contributions on

the integration of expellees in post-war Germany.[32] Pertti Ahonen's excellent monograph, *After the Expulsion*, published in 2004, analyses the interaction between the expellee organisations and the political elites in the FRG up to 1990.[33] However, there is as yet no study in English of the economic, social and political integration of the refugees and expellees in post-war Germany, a gap that this book proposes to fill.

At the same time, it is important to point out that, while this book contains some coverage of the refugee problem in the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ)/GDR, its main focus is on the Western Occupation Zones of Germany/FRG. This reflects the fact that research on the expellee problem in the western part of Germany is at a more advanced stage. It should also be underlined that this book does not aim to give equal chronological coverage to the refugee problem throughout the post-war period. Its main focus is on the immediate post-war years (1945–50) when the economic, social and political problems arising from the influx of millions of German refugees and expellees were most acute. A particular feature of the book is its treatment of the political dimension of the refugee question. German historians and political scientists have so far paid little attention to the relationship between the refugees and political parties, an issue that this book will seek to address.

Chapter 1 explores the origins of the refugee problem and shows that the flight and expulsion of the refugees and expellees from their homelands from the autumn of 1944 onwards was a direct consequence of National Socialist policies. This chapter will also outline briefly the appalling conditions under which the expulsions were carried out. Chapter 2 examines the immensity of the refugee problem in the Western Occupation Zones in economic and social terms, demonstrating that the task of integrating the refugees and expellees was one of the most urgent facing the Allied Occupying authorities and German State Governments after the Second World War. Chapter 3 analyses the relations between the refugee and native populations in the Western Occupation Zones of Germany in the period 1945–50. Chapter 4 focuses on the attitude of the political parties towards the refugees and expellees in the early post-war years and also analyses the newcomers' voting behaviour up to 1950.

Chapter 5 explores the economic, social and political integration of the refugees and expellees in the FRG from 1950 onwards, arguing that while economic and political integration had been

largely accomplished by the late 1960s, social integration turned out to be a more protracted process. Chapter 6 examines the issue of political radicalisation: despite disturbances in a number of refugee camps in 1948–49 and the emergence of expellee trek associations in 1951–52, the feared political radicalisation of the refugees did not occur on a wide scale and this chapter discusses the reasons for the absence of widespread unrest. The final chapter focuses on the refugee problem in the SBZ/GDR and seeks to draw parallels and contrasts with the situation in the Western Occupation Zones.

Notes

1 Public Record Office (PRO), FO 1013/368, Matheson (Regional Governmental Officer) to Chief Manpower Officer, 27 September 1948.
2 See for example, F. Edding, *Die wirtschaftliche Eingliederung der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge in Schleswig-Holstein* (Berlin 1955).
3 See for example, E. Pfeil, *Der Flüchtling: Gestalt einer Zeitenwende* (Hamburg 1948).
4 T. Schieder (ed.), *Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost- und Mitteleuropa*, 5 vols (Wolfenbüttel 1953–61).
5 E. Lemberg and F. Edding (eds), *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland: Ihre Eingliederung und ihr Einfluß auf Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Politik und Geistesleben*, 3 vols (Kiel 1959).
6 S. Schier, *Die Aufnahme und Eingliederung von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen in der Hansestadt Lübeck: Eine sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung für die Zeit nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg bis zum Ende der 50er Jahre* (Lübeck 1982).
7 U. Weiher, *Flüchtlingssituation und Flüchtlingspolitik: Untersuchungen zur Eingliederung der Flüchtlinge in Bremen 1945–1961* (Bremen 1998).
8 E. Glensk, *Die Aufnahme und Eingliederung der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge in Hamburg 1945–1953* (Hamburg 1994).
9 A. Hohenstein, 'Aufnahme und Eingliederung von Flüchtlingen im Landkreis Dannenberg 1945–1948', in D. Brosius and A. Hohenstein, *Flüchtlinge im nordöstlichen Niedersachsen 1945–1948* (Hildesheim 1985), pp. 87–181.
10 P. Lüttinger, 'Der Mythos der schnellen Integration: Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Integration der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis 1971', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, Vol. 15(1) (1986), pp. 20–36.
11 R. Schulze, 'Growing Discontent: Relations between Native and Refugee Populations in a Rural District in Western Germany after the Second World War', *German History,* Vol. 7(3) (1989), pp. 332–49.

12 A. Lüttig, *Fremde im Dorf: Flüchtlingsintegration im westfälischen Wewelsburg 1945–1958* (Essen 1993).
13 L. Niethammer and A. von Plato, '*Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten*' (Berlin 1985).
14 T. Mehlhase, *Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg in Sachsen-Anhalt. Ihre Aufnahme und Bestrebungen zur Eingliederung in die Gesellschaft* (Münster 1999).
15 S. Donth, *Vertriebene und Flüchtlinge in Sachsen 1945–1952: Die Politik der Sowjetischen Militäradministration und der SED* (Cologne 2000).
16 N. Schrammek, *Alltag und Selbstbild von Flüchtlingen und Vertriebenen in Sachsen 1945–1952* (Frankfurt a. M. 2004).
17 M. Schwartz, *Vertriebene und 'Umsiedlerpolitik': Integrationskonflikte in den deutschen Nachkriegs-Gesellschaften und die Assimilationsstrategien in der SBZ/DDR 1945–1961* (Munich 2004).
18 M. Wille (ed.), *Die Vertriebenen in der SBZ/DDR: Dokumente*, 3 vols (Wiesbaden 1996–2003).
19 P. Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene: Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ/DDR und in Polen 1945–1956* (Göttingen 1998).
20 P. Ther, 'The Integration of Expellees in Germany and Poland after World War II: A Historical Reassessment', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 55(4) (1996), pp. 779–805.
21 P. Ahonen, 'Collective Action and Expellee Integration: West Germany, East Germany and Finland after the Second World War', *Annali dell' Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, XXIX (2003), pp. 617–38.
22 P. Erker (ed.), *Rechnung für Hitlers Krieg: Aspekte und Probleme des Lastenausgleichs* (Heidelberg 2004).
23 R. G. Moeller, 'War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany', *American Historical Review*, 101 (1996), pp. 1008–48.
24 See for example, R. Schulze, '"Wir leben ja nun hier". Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in Niedersachsen – Erinnerung und Identität', in K.J. Bade, and J. Oltmer (eds), *Zuwanderung und Integration in Niedersachsen seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Osnabrück 2002), pp. 69–100.
25 M. von Engelhardt, 'Biographieverläufe von Heimatvertriebenen des Zweiten Weltkriegs', in Bayerisches Staatsministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung, Familie, Frauen und Gesellschaft (ed.), *Die Entwicklung Bayerns durch die Integration der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge: Forschungsstand 1995* (Munich 1995), pp. 49–77.
26 H. Hirsch, *Schweres Gepäck: Flucht und Vertreibung als Lebensthema* (Hamburg 2004).
27 M. Schwartz, 'Vertreibung und Vergangenheitspolitik. Ein Versuch über geteilte deutsche Nachkriegsidentitäten', *Deutschland Archiv*, 30

(1997), pp. 177–95.

28 H. Schoenberg, *Germans from the East: A Study of their Migration, Resettlement and Subsequent Group History since 1945* (The Hague 1970).

29 B. Lattimore, Jr, *The Assimilation of German Expellees into the West German Polity and Society since 1945: A Case Study of Eutin, Schleswig-Holstein* (The Hague 1974).

30 A. de Zayas, *Nemesis at Potsdam: The Expulsion of the Germans from the East*, 3rd edn (London 1989).

31 P. Ther and A. Siljak (eds), *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948* (Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford 2001).

32 D. Rock and S. Wolff (eds), *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic* (New York and Oxford 2002).

33 P. Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe 1945–1990* (Oxford 2003).

1

The origins of the refugee problem

German settlements in Eastern and Central Europe

Even before the end of the Second World War, German refugees and expellees began to flood into Central Europe from the eastern territories of the Reich. Many of those who fled or were expelled from their homelands in Eastern Europe from 1944 onwards were the descendants of German settlers who had arrived as early as the twelfth century. Some of the earliest recorded settlements took place in Silesia and the Carpathian mountains where the political elites encouraged the migration of German coal miners around 1150;[1] as a result, a number of coal mining towns such as Goldberg and Löwenstein had been founded in Silesia by approximately 1250.[2] Similar developments occurred elsewhere. For example, the rulers of Bohemia and Moravia encouraged the settlement of economically valuable German colonists such as farmers and coal miners from the beginning of the thirteenth century.[3] While the colonisation of these areas was achieved by peaceful means to the mutual economic benefit of both the settlers and the ruling elites, this was not the case everywhere. The German Teutonic Order, founded in 1190, conquered the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as well as East and West Prussia.[4] As a result of these developments, some 120 towns had already been established by German colonists in Silesia by the beginning of the fourteenth century and a further 43 in Pomerania, while East Prussia had witnessed the foundation of 55 towns early in the fifteenth century.[5]

This first wave of German colonisation in Eastern and Central Europe slackened off in the fifteenth century due to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. However, the eviction of the Ottomans from parts of Hungary and the Balkans after their unsuccessful siege of Vienna in 1683 prompted a new phase of colonisation by German

settlers. Supported by the Habsburg Emperors, they settled in Croatia, Northern Bosnia, Hungary and the Banat, a geographical region which includes parts of Rumania and Serbia.[6] The first and most successful of the three so-called 'Swabian tracks' (*Schwabenzüge*) was initiated by Charles VI between 1723 and 1726. Most of these settlers, who came from Bavaria, Lorraine, the Palatinate and south-west Germany, had arrived by around 1750 but further migration took place in the period 1763–73 under Maria Theresa and between 1782 and 1787 under Joseph II.[7]

A third stage of German colonisation took place in Russia, where in 1763 Catherine the Great offered tax and other incentives to German farmers who were prepared to set up home in the Volga steppes, Crimea and Ukraine.[8] This attracted farmers from Hesse, the Rhineland and elsewhere and by 1769 over 23,000 German settlers had made their home in the areas surrounding the lower and central Volga river.[9] A decree issued by Alexander I in 1804 prompted farmers and artisans from southern Germany to migrate to the Crimean peninsula and the Caucasus. This influx of German colonists continued throughout the nineteenth century: the census of 1897 revealed that no fewer than 1.79 million Germans were resident in Russia.[10]

The privileges enjoyed by the Ethnic German minorities located in Eastern and Central Europe were generally eroded during the nineteenth century and their relations with other ethnic groups became increasingly strained. This was partly due to economic and religious factors, but the most important cause was the growth of nationalist sentiments. A feature of German nationalism was that it was more deeply rooted in linguistic and cultural factors than political principles and in Bohemia, for example, the tensions which developed between Germans and Czechs during the nineteenth century were largely based on cultural issues.[11] The underlying problem was that the geographical borders of the German 'nation-state' did not correspond with the German 'cultural nation' (*Kulturnation*). Therefore, as new homogeneous nation-states were established along ethnic lines their leaders sought to assimilate or exclude all ethnic groups other than their own. This was not a new idea, and the Prussian reformer Baron Karl von Stein had expressed the view as early as June 1814 that German-speaking people should 'cleanse the Rhineland of everything which has made … and keeps it un-German'.[12] The first examples of population transfers in order

to change the ethnic composition of a particular area took place in the late nineteenth century. In 1886 the Prussian Government authorised the settlement of German farmers in West Prussia in an attempt to increase the German population in rural areas with a Polish majority. An amendment passed in 1908 went even further, sanctioning the dispossession of Polish landowners.[13]

The Paris Peace Settlement and the rise of National Socialism

While the emergence of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe formed the background to the large-scale population transfers and forced migration which took place in Eastern and Central Europe during the first half of the twentieth century, these events were by no means predetermined in 1900. After all, up until 1918 the majority of Germans were incorporated in either the German or Austro-Hungarian Empire, while the German minority groups outside these Empires – in Russia, Serbia and Rumania – generally co-existed amicably with the indigenous populations. In fact, at least 300,000 of the German ethnic minority living in Russia served with the Russian army against Germany between 1914 and 1918.[14] However, the territorial changes set out in the Treaties of Versailles and St Germain in 1919 transformed the situation. The dissolution of the Second German Empire (1871–1918) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1918) led to the creation of new states such as Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia, whose populations included Germans as well as other ethnic groups. Although the US President, Woodrow Wilson, promised that borders would be drawn according to the principle of national self-determination, this proved impossible to implement in practice. Ethnic Germans formed one of a number of different nationalities in a new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In addition, some 750,000 Germans from the Banat, Bessarabia, Bukovina and south Dobrudja found themselves part of an enlarged Rumanian state;[15] the new Czechoslovakian state included as many 3.2 million Ethnic Germans. In addition, approximately two-thirds of West Prussia was ceded to Poland, which also gained about a third of Upper Silesia following a plebiscite in April 1921.

All in all, the territorial settlement after the First World War left some 7 million Ethnic Germans outside the borders of Germany and Austria, and this formed the background to the flight and expulsion

of the refugees and expellees from their homelands from 1944 onwards. In accordance with the Paris Peace Settlement, the League of Nations was responsible for protecting the rights of these minority groups, who were to be granted a degree of cultural autonomy and the same rights as the indigenous inhabitants. However, problems soon arose and in the period 1919–34 the League of Nations received thousands of petitions from Germans who claimed that they were suffering discrimination from the authorities in Poland.[16] Although the Czechoslovakian Government was more even-handed in its treatment of the Sudeten Germans than its Polish counterpart, it nonetheless gave financial incentives to its own citizens to resettle in areas which had a German majority and took steps to reduce the percentage of Germans employed by the state.[17]

For their part, the German minorities, unused to being ruled by a foreign power, invariably proved to be dissident and destabilising elements within the new states which had been established. This was particularly the case after Hitler's rise to power in January 1933. In Czechoslovakia, for example, the German population, hard hit by the economic crisis, became increasingly susceptible to the slogans of the radical right. In October 1933, Konrad Henlein, a former school teacher, founded the Sudeten German Home Front (*Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront*), which was later renamed Sudeten German Party (*Sudetendeutsche Partei,* SdP). At the national elections held in May 1935, it won a sensational victory, obtaining 68 per cent of the Sudeten German vote.[18] Although Henlein had given a declaration of loyalty to the Czechoslovakian state in 1933 he was courted by Hitler and his Carlsbad Programme, announced in April 1938, made a series of demands, including equal rights for the German and Czech people and self-government for German speaking districts. The Czechoslovakian President, Dr Eduard Beneš, rejected these demands and the crisis intensified when the SdP won 85 per cent of the votes cast by the Sudeten Germans in local elections held in the summer of 1938.[19] It was against this background that the British and French Prime Ministers gave in to Hitler's demand at the Munich Conference in September 1938 for the Sudetenland to be ceded to Germany. The outcome of the Munich Conference, and the destruction of the Czechoslovakian state following the invasion of Prague by the German army in March 1939, had a profound effect on the attitude of Beneš to the 'Sudeten German problem'. In fact, as early as December 1938 he privately advocated the expul-

sion of the Sudeten Germans [20] and in September 1941 publicly put forward this idea.

The expansionist policies of the National Socialists were not confined to Czechoslovakia. They aimed to establish a Greater Germany comprising not just the Sudetenland and Austria, which had been annexed in March 1938, but also the Warthegau, a large area in western Poland. Following Germany's conquest of Poland some 450,000 Poles and 550,000 Jews were removed from their homes in the Warthegau in 1939–40 and replaced by repatriated Ethnic Germans who had formerly lived in the Baltic States, Hungary, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Bessarabia and other areas.[21] The enormous scale of forced migration under the Nazis is shown by the fact that they deported no fewer than 5.5 million people to Germany during the war, including some 2.8 million forced labourers of Polish extraction.[22] The Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe was accompanied by numerous other acts of brutality: in retaliation for the murder of Reinhard Heydrich, Deputy Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, in June 1942, the Nazis shot every male in the mining village of Lidice from whence the assassins were thought to have originated.[23] Similar atrocities were committed in other parts of Eastern and Central Europe and the German minorities were regarded as willing instruments of the expansionist policies of the National Socialists. Thus, when the German offensive in the East failed, Soviet troops, as well as the indigenous inhabitants of countries such as Czechoslovakia, began to exact revenge on the German population for the appalling suffering they had experienced at the hands of the Nazis. The flight and expulsion of German refugees and expellees from Eastern and Central Europe in 1944–45 was therefore a direct consequence of National Socialist policies.

The flight and expulsion of Germans from the East

The German defeat at Stalingrad proved to be the turning-point in the war and in October 1944 Soviet troops entered the eastern territories of the Reich. One of the first villages they reached was Nemmersdorf (East Prussia) and the brutality with which they treated its German civilian population led to a huge exodus of terror-stricken refugees from the eastern parts of the Reich in the face of the advancing Red Army. Many women in Nemmersdorf were raped and almost the entire village was wiped out.[24] The Soviet offensive