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978-1-107-02073-3 - The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970

Andrew Demshuk

Excerpt

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## Introduction

In the wake of Nazi racial atrocities during World War II, roughly 12 million ethnic Germans fled or were expelled from a vast swathe of Central and Eastern Europe, where many of their families had lived for centuries. More than 3 million of them came from Silesia, a verdant, industrial province about the size of Switzerland.<sup>1</sup> Uprooted from the spaces of their *Heimat* (homeland), German exiles from the East came to form roughly 20 percent of the postwar population in the four German partition zones. The ethnic cleansing of Germans was validated by the Allied powers' decision at the Potsdam Conference in August 1945 to cede one-quarter of Germany's 1937 territory – everything east of the Oder [Odra] and Lusatian Neisse [Nysa] rivers, including Silesia – to Polish administration, in part to compensate Poland for the loss of its eastern lands to the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joachim Rogall estimates 3,181,200 Silesian expellees in Germany as of 1950, with 2,091,200 in the western zones and 1,090,000 in the Soviet zone. See “Krieg, Vertreibung und Neuanfang. Die Entwicklung Schlesiens und das Schicksal seiner Bewohner von 1939–1995,” in *Schlesien und Die Schlesier*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, 156–225 (München: Langen Müller, 2000), 170. Statistics of the expulsion are controversial. See discussions in Chapter 1 of this volume.

<sup>2</sup> “Potsdam Agreement, Article XIII,” in *Germany under Occupation, Illustrative Materials and Documents*, ed. James K. Pollock and James H. Meisel (Ann Arbor, MI: George Wahr, 1947), 19–20. The only exceptions were northern East Prussia, ceded to the USSR, and Poland's acquisition of the port of Stettin [Szczecin] west of the Oder. To maintain continuity with how the Germans under study thought about the places they had left behind, this study refers to sites by their prewar German names and offers postwar Polish designations in brackets when a site appears for the first time (except when a source uses a Polish designation). Since 1945, the towns, rivers, and regions of Silesia have been widely known by their Polish names. A list of German and Polish names appears in the front matter.

Cambridge University Press

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

In the face of so great a loss in the German East (easily dwarfing Germany's much smaller and ethnically mixed territorial losses after World War I), political and scholarly spokespeople for those "expelled from their homeland" (*Heimatvertriebenen*) lost no occasion to demand a "return home" (*Heimkehr*), despite the likelihood that another mass migration would plunge Germany and Poland into ethnic conflict yet again. Walter Stein, the expelled mayor from the Silesian town of Parchwitz [Prochowice], pushed hard for a revision of the borders so that his old constituency could return to their lost "Garden of Eden."<sup>3</sup> In 1956, he was disturbed by a rumor circulating among Polish exiles in the West "that the desire for return among millions of German expellees dwindles more and more and that their integration in West and East Germany proceeds more and more quickly." He protested that such "Polish propaganda lies" were mere wishful thinking, meant to secure Polish claims to the lands they had occupied, and bragged: "The Poles should get to know our big *Heimat* meetings sometime."<sup>4</sup> In the end, however, it was Stein who had been blinded by wishful thinking. At the very *Heimat* gatherings he advocated, expellees succumbed to teary-eyed yearning for an idealized past they knew was long gone. Contrary to every expectation, they were steadily losing any desire to migrate back to the German East and seize their old homes.

Just how and why did expellees reach such an understanding about themselves, their past, and their future? It is instructive to look at what happened when Georg Ludwig and his fellow expellees from Liegnitz [Legnica] crowded together in an overfilled Munich restaurant in September 1953 to listen to their old neighbor, the bookseller Kurt Anders. Instead of reciting political demands, Anders turned on his slide projector and led them on an imaginary journey back "through the

<sup>3</sup> wst [Walter Stein], "Kloster Leubus. Ein Beitrag zum Parchwitzer Jubiläumsjahr 1957," *Liegnitzer Heimatbrief* 9, no. 7 (April 10, 1957), 102. The problematic term "expulsion" (*Vertreibung*, which came to dominate in expellee circles by the end of the 1940s) invokes imagery of a lost paradise. Less popular was the idea that those *expelled* shared a form of guilt that had prompted their expulsion. See Hans Henning-Hahn and Eva Hahn, "Vertreibung," in *Politische Mythen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, ed. Heidi Hein-Kircher and Hans Henning Hahn, 167–188 (Marburg: Herder Institut, 2006), 176–177; Jerzy Kranz, "Wunden, Wahrheiten und Narben," in *Verlorene Heimat. Die Vertreibungsdebatte in Polen*, ed. Klaus Bachmann and Jerzy Kranz, 242–253 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1998), 252–253.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Stein, "Unser Weg nach Schlesien! Die Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands und die Wiedergewinnung der deutschen Ostgebiete," *Liegnitzer Heimatbrief* 8, no. 19 (October 10, 1956), 306.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02073-3 - The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970

Andrew Demshuk

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Introduction

3

intimate corners, streets, and parks of our unforgettable *Heimat* city.” As Anders himself later recalled, through two hours and more than one hundred slides of their prewar city, members of the audience added cries of recognition: “Yes, I lived in that house. We shopped there all the time. And that was where we often strolled.” The whole experience left Anders and his old neighbors with a complicated sense of the very meaning of *Heimat*. Exiled together in the West and unable to set foot in the real city of Liegnitz, he felt that the close-knit company in that cramped room in Bavaria had actually become “a piece of *Heimat*” for each other. Likewise, although Ludwig led their local cell of the Silesian *Landsmannschaft* (an association devoted to the return of a specific lost eastern territory), he spread the politically unserviceable reflection that the dear *Heimat* they had visited together in the slideshow was distinct from the distant physical *Heimat* they had left behind.<sup>5</sup> All across West Germany, Silesian exiles steadily came to the same realization: Two images of *Heimat* were developing simultaneously, drawing ever further apart. They transfigured *Heimat* into an idealized realm that they could possess whenever they closed their eyes to console themselves amid growing awareness that the physical *Heimat* east of the Oder and Neisse rivers was diverging away, becoming a foreign space that they could never possess again.

Already by December 1945, the word of Silesia’s transformation was spreading quickly. When an expelled priest encountered a married couple from his flock who had spent the months after the war in their old *Heimat* Lauban [Lubań] (a village just twenty kilometers inside the Polish-administrated territories), he wrote to the others in the West that “I saw in my mind an image of our beloved little city, certainly no longer recognizable and not to be depicted here. Lauban and the surrounding area give an altogether Polish impression. New Polish businesses and street signs everywhere.” Like many other pastors, this led him to instruct his scattered congregation to surrender vain hopes that things could ever return to what they had been before.<sup>6</sup>

Even the highest expellee leaders unwittingly disillusioned their constituents (and at times themselves) about the prospect of *Heimkehr* through their regular diatribes that Polish “mismanagement” had turned Silesia

<sup>5</sup> They had been “permitted to undertake a journey, which from a spatial perspective was certainly distant, yet with a destination so near to our hearts.” Georg Ludwig, “Liegnitz in Lichtbildern,” *Liegnitzer Heimatbrief* 5, no. 11 (November 1953), 231–232; Kurt Anders, “Liegnitz in Lichtbildern,” *Liegnitzer Heimatbrief* 5, no. 11 (November 1953), 232.

<sup>6</sup> Piekorz, *Rundbrief*, December 6, 1945, BAK Z [Bundesarchiv Koblenz Zonen Archiv] 18/219, 1.

Cambridge University Press

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Andrew Demshuk

Excerpt

[More information](#)

into a destroyed and alien world. Hoping, like many of his colleagues in the Silesian *Landsmannschaft*, that alleged “proofs” of Polish inability would convince the Western powers to support a return of German “order” to the region, Otto Graf von Pückler ceaselessly demanded German annexation of the lost territories in both political circles and expellee meetings.<sup>7</sup> For all this, by the time he spoke at the 1959 federal convention of Silesian expellees, he was depressed by the “dismal picture” expellee travel reports conveyed of contemporary Silesia. Despite his protest that Silesia’s capital Breslau [Wrocław] was still legally part of Germany, he expressed his chagrin that “the old German Breslau no longer exists, and Wrocław, having become Polish, will be abandoned by the last Germans who don’t want to live in bondage under a foreign people.” Looking at the faces of those gathered, he saw for himself that “naturally the most strongly shaken are those who knew Breslau as it was before.”<sup>8</sup> In berating Polish Silesia, he despaired that the *Heimat* he had known was gone forever and thus damaged his own political stance that it was somehow still a part of Germany.

The episodes illustrated here were part of a widespread phenomenon that has found little place in six decades of scholarship and popular discussion. In general, it has been assumed that West Germany’s expellees either forgot about their lost *Heimat* because of newfound prosperity in the economic miracle of the 1950s or clung to a genuine desire for physical return, as their spokespeople claimed, and so were foiled when Bonn confirmed the border in 1970. Neither of these views gets to the heart of how expellees actually dealt with their traumatic past. Taken by themselves, they can even occlude how expellees saw themselves, their exile, and their lost *Heimat* in the charged political climate of the early Cold War.

Previous analysis of expellee memory has been hampered in part by overdependence on the politicized viewpoint heavily published by expellee leaders. Deploying a wide range of neglected archival holdings, *Heimat* periodicals, circular letters, *Heimat* books and diaries, travel reports, and unpublished manuscripts, the coming chapters move beyond what a few expellee leaders proclaimed to get at what expellees actually wrote and

<sup>7</sup> Herbert Hupka, “Ein Mann der ersten Stunde. 30. Todestag von Dr. Otto Graf von Pückler,” *Schlesische Nachrichten* (January 15, 2004), 9. For an example of his speeches, see EhoRe (editor), “Unvergeßliche Festtage in Diez,” *Liegnitzer Heimatbrief* 9, no. 13 (July 10, 1957), 207–209.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Otto Graf Pückler, “Breslau-Wrocław,” in “Freiheit für Schlesien. Deutschlandtreffen der Schlesier. Köln 26.–28. Juni 1959,” ed. Landsmannschaft Schlesien (Groß-Denkte über Wolfenbüttel: Grenzland-Druckerei Rock & Co, 1959), 45–46, 47.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02073-3 - The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970

Andrew Demshuk

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Introduction

5

thought about themselves after their historic migration from the East. I find that, as the years passed, millions of uprooted people were progressing through a steady process of coping with loss. At the same time that they drew solace from the *Heimat of memory*, their frail, idealized vision of the past world, they imagined the *Heimat transformed*, the contemporary Silesia they perceived as destroyed, decaying, and part of a foreign land. For the rest of their lives, they confronted the ever-widening bifurcation of *Heimat* into these two contrasting and irreconcilable images; they came to prefer residing in memory, because – painful though it was – they steadily came to understand that they could never reside in the real Silesia again. It was beyond their reach, separated by space and time, lost forever because of the tremendous changes that had occurred since their forced migration.

This is not to say that they forgave what had happened to them, much less that they gave up on the idea that they had some abstract right to the homeland that now only lived in their memories. For many, dealing with the loss of *Heimat* meant nourishing a sense of injustice in its loss. Some rushed to join political advocacy groups, attended their rallies, and voiced a “*Recht auf die Heimat*” (right to the homeland) as a way to protest what had happened to them.<sup>9</sup> All the while, however, this abstract “right” coexisted with the painful knowledge that the *Heimat* they remembered no longer existed as a space to be reclaimed in the changed world of reality. They first reached this realization in the months after their forced migration, as reports came through of Silesia’s transformation; they continued to ponder it through the 1950s and 1960s, when the political narrative of expellee spokespeople established itself as the most visible expression of the expellee worldview; and ultimately their healing process outlived the political narrative, which lost all real relevance for West German society by the 1970s. This changes the general understanding of how West Germans emerged from the ruins and ignominy of Nazism. At the same time that West Germany rapidly integrated into the West, millions of its citizens critically grappled with their relationship to the East. Each expellee’s process of dealing with loss contributes a new explanation for how and why stability took root in West Germany’s fledgling democracy, and how peace became possible along what had so recently been Europe’s most violent border.

<sup>9</sup> For more on the contested meanings of the expellee *Recht auf die Heimat*, see Andrew Demshuk, “What Was the ‘Right to the Heimat’? West German Expellees and the Many Meanings of Heimkehr,” *Central European History* 45, no. 3 (September 2012): forthcoming.

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Andrew Demshuk

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Scholarly Debates about the Role of West German Expellees

In his grand narrative of the modern European tragedy, Mark Mazower claims that, when Germans looked backward to the world they had lost “in nostalgic photo albums of pre-war Silesia or East Prussia,” they were indulging in reactionary “dreams of empire.”<sup>10</sup> Michael Müller takes an even more extreme view: Because NATO supported West German territorial claims east of the Oder and Neisse rivers, the “silent majority” of West Germans, most notably expellees, stood behind the Western alliance; mindless adherence to the expellee leadership’s political platform allegedly fostered the strength of conservative West German politics.<sup>11</sup> This caricature of millions of expellees, quite common in scholarly and popular literature, cannot be sustained in light of how events actually unfolded.<sup>12</sup> In the aftermath of forced migration, church leaders were certain that expellees would radicalize politically. At a November 1945 meeting, a Catholic *Caritas* leader went so far as to recommend shipping expellees out of the country – an idea that was by no means uncommon.<sup>13</sup> In a 1946 proclamation, the Catholic bishops of the western zones warned that, unless the expellees were sent home, “seeds of hatred [will be] sown which will only cause more evil.”<sup>14</sup> In July 1950, American historian Franz Neumann feared that expellees would mass behind “Germany’s new demagogues” to overthrow stability in Central Europe.<sup>15</sup>

None of these apprehensions proved justified. Expellees did not protest by the millions for a return to the East, nor did they make mayhem for the new Republic. Traditional explanations – economic integration, Cold War tensions, and internal problems in the expellee political movement – offer important contributing factors, but they are incomplete without

<sup>10</sup> Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 400.

<sup>11</sup> Michael G. Müller, “Poland and Germany from Interwar Period through to Time of Detente,” in *Germany and the European East in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Eduard Mühle, 91–106 (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 103.

<sup>12</sup> Christian Lotz overcomes this misrepresentation in his analysis of the “politics of memory” within government and religious leadership in the BRD and DDR. See *Die Deutung des Verlustes. Erinnerungspolitische Kontroversen im geteilten Deutschland um Flucht, Vertreibung und die Ostgebiete (1948–1972)* (Köln: Böhlau, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> “Besuch bei Herrn Direktor Baumgärtner in Stuttgart,” Aktennotiz November 10, 1945, BAK Z 18/19.

<sup>14</sup> “Proclamation by the Bishops of Western Germany. Cologne, January 30th, 1946,” in *The Tragedy of Silesia, 1945–1946*, ed. Johannes Kaps, trans. Gladys H. Hartinger (Munich: Christ Unterwegs, 1952/53), 6.

<sup>15</sup> Franz L. Neumann, *Germany: Promise and Perils* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, July 20, 1950), 9.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02073-3 - The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970

Andrew Demshuk

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Introduction

7

considering how expellees came to interpret the Lost German East itself. Only here is it possible to fully understand why expellees refused to espouse the politics of memory their revisionist leaders desired.

A wide range of studies have given valuable proof that rising prosperity helped expellees achieve some modicum of economic integration.<sup>16</sup> However, it is simply not the case that, by enjoying greater stability through the economic miracle, expellees lost interest in the old *Heimat*.<sup>17</sup> A further presumption – that economic integration proceeded at the expense of memory – threatens to overlook that this integration proved difficult, and expellees continued to feel like outsiders in the native communities.<sup>18</sup> A glance at letters circulated by former Breslau schoolgirls reveals a consistent obsession to cope with loss by discussing prewar memories. Writing to her old classmates on August 15, 1958, Eva-Maria Schlaak shared memories of crying amid the ruins of Breslau in 1945. Because “everything beloved and precious had been annihilated,” she urged them to preserve what they had known: “beautiful in your recollection, as it resides in your memory.”<sup>19</sup> At the same time that Silesians struggled to ensure their economic survival, they selected consoling memories from the world they had lost to retain a sense of continuity. Uprooted and exiled, they chose to reside in memory.

<sup>16</sup> See entries in Ellen Simon and Werner Möhring, *Millionen ohne Heimat* (Frankfurt/Main: Wolfgang Metzner Verlag, 1950) and Walter Kiefl, *Bibliographie zur Integration von Aussiedlern in Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Bundesinstitut für Bevölkerungsforschung, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> For examples of this view, see Johannes-Dieter Steinert, “Organisierte Flüchtlingsinteressen und parlamentarische Demokratie: Westdeutschland 1945–1949,” in *Neue Heimat im Westen: Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge, Aussiedler*, ed. Klaus J. Bade, 61–80 (Münster: Westfälischer Heimatbund, 1990); Frank Buscher, “The Great Fear: The Catholic Church and the Anticipated Radicalization of Expellees and Refugees in Postwar Germany,” *German History* 21, no. 2 (2003): 204–224; Markus Mildeberger, “Brücke oder Barriere? Die Rolle der Vertriebenen in den deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen,” *Deutschland Archiv* 33, no. 3 (2000): 416–424.

<sup>18</sup> The difficulty of integration has been well established. Doris von der Brölie-Lewien, “Zur Rolle der Flüchtlinge und Vertriebenen in der westdeutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte,” in *Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in der westdeutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte*, ed. idem., Helga Grebing, and Rainer Schulze, 24–45 (Hildesheim: August Lax Verlag, 1987); Rainer Schulze, “Growing Discontent: Relations between Native and Refugee Populations in a Rural District in Western Germany after the Second World War,” in *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, ed. Robert Moeller, 53–72 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Andreas Kossert, *Kalte Heimat. Die Geschichte der deutschen Vertriebenen nach 1945* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> Eva-Maria Schlaak, August 15, 1958, in *Ein Teil Heimat seid Ihr für mich. Rundbriefe einer Mädchenklasse, 1944–2000*, ed. Juliane Braun (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2002), 108. Braun overlooks evidence in the letters when she argues that her subjects only “spoke about the past” in the 1980s (273–274).



Cambridge University Press

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Andrew Demshuk

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Likewise, although Cold War tensions and the agreement at the Potsdam Conference should have made a quick return seem unlikely, expellees seldom saw this as the decisive factor. For their part, expellee leaders easily exploited Potsdam's stipulation that a final border delineation could only be determined at a final peace conference, so that throughout the 1950s and even the 1960s, it was common knowledge that the border question was not necessarily closed. That even before 1970 thousands of expellees crossed the Iron Curtain to visit their old *Heimat* demonstrates that Cold War borders were not so insurmountable an obstacle as one might imagine, had expellees truly wanted to agitate for an actual return and resettlement. If one-fifth of the postwar West German population had formed a mass movement demanding border revision and threatened to destabilize the Bonn regime, and even if the Western Allies had managed to quash such a movement, at the very least this would have heightened resentment among the revanchist millions and further strained East-West relations.

Finally, a variety of useful studies have looked inside the political movements themselves to demonstrate why expellees never attained their supposed objectives; to explain decreasing interest in the movement, they tend to blame internal divisions within the leadership, decreasing outside political support, and their inability, by the 1960s, to appeal to a new generation.<sup>20</sup> Only the last factor even involves the expellee constituency, and it is itself problematic: If the millions expelled as adults are presumed to have been revanchist, how did all of these people (still alive in large numbers, capable of voting and protest) suddenly become so powerless by the 1960s? The top-down political approach even has potential to inadvertently back up the age-old boast of expellee spokespeople that they represented expellees as a whole and conflate the interest of expellees with the rise and decline of the political movements. I have found that, even before political groups were allowed to form in 1949, expellees were reaching conclusions at odds with the revisionist objectives. And after 1949, even though most felt their fate was an injustice, only a few favored revisionist platforms. As Jutta Faehndrich argues in her recent assessment of expellee *Heimat* books, “the expellees did not exist and never existed. To speak here of a unified group is to reproduce a merely

<sup>20</sup> Pertti Ahonen, *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe, 1945–1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Matthias Stickler, “Ostdeutsch heißt Gesamtdeutsch.” *Organisation, Selbstverständnis und heimatpolitische Zielsetzung der deutschen Vertriebenenverbände, 1949–1972* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2004).



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02073-3 - The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970

Andrew Demshuk

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Introduction

9

expedient, but hardly substantial construct of the media, political circles, and interest groups.”<sup>21</sup> In general, I find that expellees simply failed to care about the ongoing West German and Polish propaganda fight about borders. Already in 1952, editors from the popular monthly magazine *Revue* observed that, although the fight went “back and forth, for each expellee this is all only of interest on the margins. He wants to know how it looks in his community, on his street. The man that looks homewards closes his eyes. The louder the fight around him becomes, the more firmly he clings to the eternal, unchanging, always friendly image of the *Heimat*: to memory!”<sup>22</sup>

Expellees attended rallies to find old friends and discuss their shared past in a distant land. They published memoirs as a way to cope with loss, but only seldom to demand border revision. In 1955, the Brentano publishing firm received 12,000 submissions from a “literary competition” to assess how expellees from all age groups thought about the Lost German East and found “hardly a word of hate, hardly a call for retaliation.”<sup>23</sup> Such disinterest in territorial revisionism clarifies why the expellee political party (the BHE) survived a mere eleven years. By the time the most crucial expellee social demands were met in the early 1950s, expellees simply lost interest in the BHE, and the party’s rapid decline forced expellee politicians to ally with the SPD and CDU (the two largest West German parties) to keep pursuing their border demands.

Exploring expellee memory, one discerns why the political movement steadily lost support. The “silent majority” was composed of free individuals who needed to heal from the trauma of ethnic cleansing. Rather than encouraging revanchist fantasies, the process of looking back on the Lost German East helped millions of expellees accept the impossibility of physical return. Such a finding confronts the influential 1967 allegation of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, namely that Germans had failed to master their terrible collective past because they were incapable of mourning their responsibility for the Holocaust and diverted their attention to West Germany’s material reconstruction. Expellees in particular were said to have proven their inability to mourn by a sense

<sup>21</sup> Emphases in original, Jutta Faehndrich, *Eine endliche Geschichte. Die Heimatbücher der deutschen Vertriebenen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2011), 238–239.

<sup>22</sup> Stefan Eich, “Schau heimwärts Vertriebener! Schauprozeß der Frauen,” *Revue* 33 (August 14, 1952), 14. The editors incurred disapproval from some political leaders, but they were also supported by such official organs as the Union of *Landsmannschaften* (VOL), Berlin League of Expellees, and Göttinger Arbeitskreis.

<sup>23</sup> Der Verlag, “Nachwort,” in *Aber das Herz hängt Daran. Ein Gemeinschaftswerk der Heimatvertriebenen*, ed. Marianne Aktardieff, 349–351 (Stuttgart: Bretanoverlag, 1955), 351.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-02073-3 - The Lost German East: Forced Migration and the Politics of Memory, 1945–1970

Andrew Demshuk

Excerpt

[More information](#)

of “entitlement” to “their own ‘just claims’ to the lost territories beyond the Oder-Neisse line.”<sup>24</sup> Without question, recognition of the Holocaust’s central role remains essential for gaining an accurate picture of how subsequent collective traumas, such as the expulsion, became possible. And certainly whereas some expellees came to see that crimes perpetrated by Germans had prompted the revenge they experienced, others never gave up their monopolized victim status or acknowledged the suffering Germans had also inflicted on Poles and Jews; some even felt resentment for “eastern” peoples and places. This has unfortunately encouraged the notion that only a sparse cast of famous, politically liberal expellees from the younger generation managed to “deal with their past” by coming to terms with the loss of *Heimat*.<sup>25</sup> Amid their useful examination of flight and expulsion as a German space of memory, Eva Hahn and Hans Henning Hahn imply that only a minority of expellee writers rejected the leadership’s politics of memory, wherein memory was made to serve revanchist politics; the great mass of expellees are said to have furthered revanchist politics by collectively mixing personal memories of the old *Heimat* with the larger idea of a lost “German East.”<sup>26</sup> The two scholars are successful in showing how the expellee movement projected itself into West German society; it is problematic, however, to pose that most expellees had failed to cope with loss, because at times political leaders misused what they wrote for their revisionist ends, while famed writers such as Horst Bienek had a proper stance on memory, because he wrote in the 1980s that, since his childhood exile, Upper Silesia had ceased to be *Heimat*.<sup>27</sup> Important scholars such as David Blackbourn have reiterated this view. Alleging that *Landsmannschaften* “cultivated the collective identity of East Prussians, Silesians, and Sudeten Germans” (that is,

<sup>24</sup> Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, trans. Beverly Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1967, 1975), xvi, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Literary scholarship often contributes to this problem by praising famous writers like Horst Bienek, Günter Grass, and August Scholtis for having achieved memory work, and overlooking how the vast majority of expellees thought about the past. Louis Helbig’s groundbreaking 1988 analysis of postwar expulsion literature makes the useful observation that these writers had a “poetic representation” of beloved homeland spaces not to be overshadowed by territorial claims or expressions of victimization; but the cast of those dealing with loss had been far greater than he noted. See *Das ungeheure Verlust: Flucht und Vertreibung in der deutschsprachigen Belletristik der Nachkriegszeit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988), 266.

<sup>26</sup> Eva Hahn and Hans Henning Hahn, “Flucht und Vertreibung,” in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte: Eine Auswahl*, ed. Etienne Francois and Hagen Schulze, 332–350 (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2005), 338.

<sup>27</sup> See Horst Bienek, *Reise in die Kindheit. Wiedersehen mit Schlesien* (Munich: Hanser, 1988).