

# Propaganda in the Population Exchange between Czechoslovakia and Hungary

Lucia Heldáková

After the expulsion of the German minority from the territory of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, the further expulsion demanded by Czechoslovak politicians after the Second World War for the Hungarian minority from Czechoslovakia was rejected by the representatives of the victorious powers.

The Population Exchange Agreement was signed on 27 February in Budapest by Vladimír Clementis, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovak Republic and János Gyöngyösi, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs. The principle of reciprocity enshrined in Article V of the Population Exchange Agreement practically meant that as many Slovaks applied for the population exchange, that many Hungarians would be resettled from the territory of Czechoslovakia. However, the form of applying for the exchange was different. While the Slovaks from Hungary volunteered for the exchange, the Hungarians who were to be evicted from the territory of Czechoslovakia were determined by the state authorities. This fact resulted in the Czechoslovak representatives' desire to have as many Slovaks as possible sign up for the exchange (this was to guarantee as many evicted Hungarians as possible), and therefore the propaganda process carried out by the Czechoslovak authorities on Hungarian territory was a key element determining the success of the whole population exchange.

The agitation process in Hungary after the Second World War, carried out in order to motivate Slovaks to register for the population exchange, fulfilled the characteristic features of propaganda. Propaganda was carried out in the spirit of the ideology of the nation-state theory, and adapted its mechanism in the light of the socio-political situation at the time, both nationally and internationally, and in the context of the circumstances in which Slovaks in Hungary found themselves. The forms and instruments of propaganda sought to encompass all the media possibilities of the time and to recall the required propaganda information at daily intervals. Suggestive slogans and mottos were created, songs and poems were composed, and recruitment actions with emotional appeals were organised. The propaganda of population exchange was total in nature and fell into the category of grey propaganda.



*Príchod Slovákov  
z Maďarska do Serede  
13.4.1947*



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# Selected aspect of the population exchange propaganda analysis

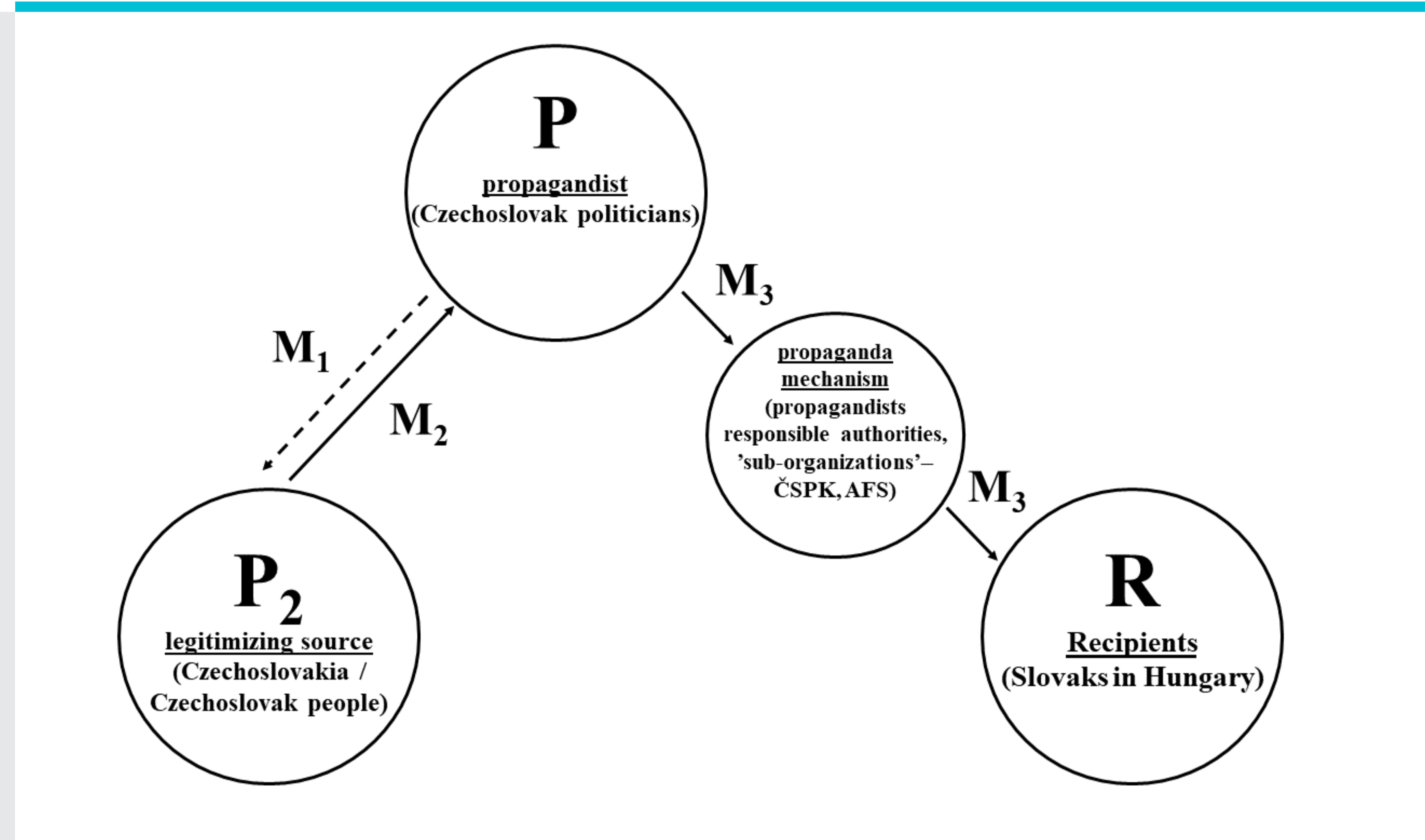
Lucia Heldáková

## Identification of the propagandist

In the case of the population exchange, the propagandist is not exclusively one person or leader; the Czechoslovak people, or rather Czechoslovakia, acted in the apparent position of the propagandist as a country that strives for the good of all Czechoslovak citizens in accordance with the predetermined theory of the nation state and at the same time in accordance with

the then direction of European policy. Thus defined apparent source of propaganda is evidenced by a number of texts, for example, on the pages of Sloboda we find many articles written in the name of the entire Czechoslovak Republic. On 24 March 1946, this periodical published an article entitled “Slovakia expecting the Slovaks”, where, in addition to a comparative description of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, which resulted in a more positive assessment of the Czechoslovak Republic, the author mentions two questions that plague Slovak people in the Czechoslovak Republic: “First: How our brothers and sisters in Hungary make decisions. And the second question: what should they do to feel the magic of home as fully as possible as soon as they arrive?”

However, the Czechoslovak people or rather the Czechoslovak Republic as a source of propaganda was (in accordance with Jowett and O'Donnell's definition of a propaganda source) only a legitimizing source. The main propaganda source in the case of the population exchange was the Czechoslovak political leaders, whose aim was to create a national state of Czechs and Slovaks. The propaganda of the population exchange corresponds to the second model according to Jowett and O'Donnell (the so-called “legitimizing source model”) and its application to the historical event we are researching is illustrated in Diagram 1 (Structure of the population exchange propaganda).



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“There were 118,100 posters and forms put up and published, 790,000 issues of newspapers and 46,353 books 540 leaflets and 490,000 brochures distributed, 277 meetings held in 133 villages. Trustees' trips to Slovakia were organised, as well as holiday events for 823 children at resorts in Slovakia.”



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# Post-WWII Immigration to Czechoslovak Borderland on example of Silesia and North Moravia

Ondřej Kolář

After 1945, the territory of Czech Silesia and surrounding areas of North Moravia, became probably the most multiethnic part of the Czech Lands (respectively today's Czech Republic). The region witnessed enormous demographic changes, due to two factors. The first of them was extensively supported immigration of workers and miners to Ostrava coal basin (in eastern and central part of the region), but even more important was the expulsion of German population from western part of the region in question. This territory alongside historical Silesian-Moravian border, which formally ceased to exist in 1928, could be defined as nowadays districts of Opava, Bruntál, Jeseník and Šumperk. Local Germans, forced to leave soon after the war, were supposed to be replaced by inhomogeneous newcomers from various regions of Central and Eastern Europe.



## Migration from Czech Lands

Amongst the first new-settlers were state employees, such as policemen, postmen or railwaymen, many of whom returned spontaneously to their pre-war positions, without waiting for official orders or instructions. Those people played significant role in restoring Czechoslovak administration in the region and also belonged to influential figures of civil administration, as well as cultural life. While in pre-war Czechoslovakia, political and free-time activities of state officials were severely restricted, in 1945 they could freely involve in communal and local politics or entrepreneurship. Their social position and experience predestined such people to take leading role in the life of the region.

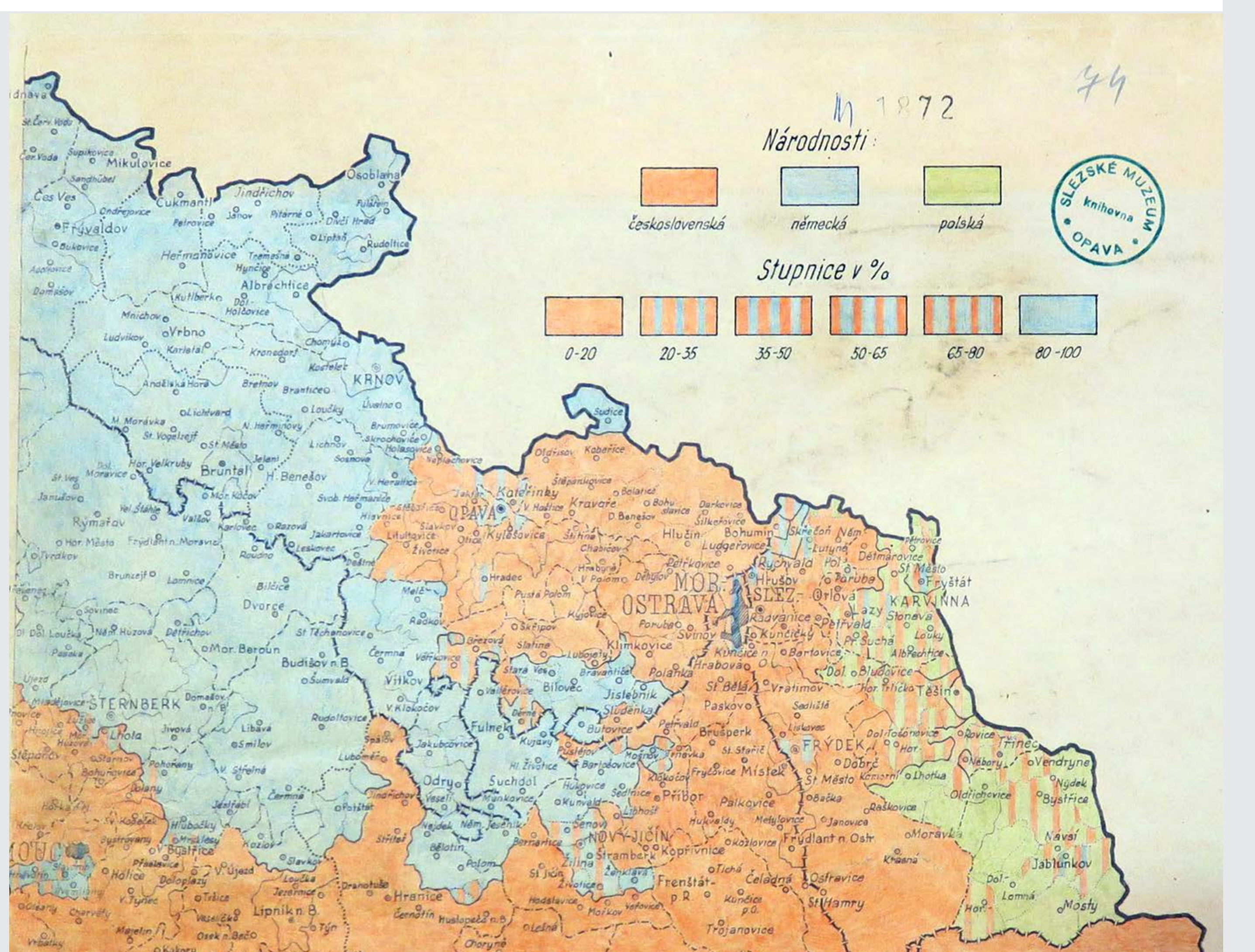
Czechoslovaks, who decided to settle permanently in the region, consisted mainly on farmers and workers in agriculture. They often came from neighbouring agricultural regions of Opava and Haná. This sort of new-settlers kept ties to their places of origin and maintained their traditional identity. Unlike agriculture, local industry showed not to be very attractive for the newcomers. Low wages in lumbering and textile companies did not grant “better future” for the employers. Skilled workers preferred better-paid positions in Ostrava agglomeration, which also provided better housing, traffic connection and free-time facilities.

## Forced Migration

While at the beginning most of the settlers came spontaneously and voluntarily, from 1946 onwards a significant number of newcomers were settled in the borderland by administrative decision. This group of people included Roma, moved from Slovakia and also from Hungary on the basis of Czechoslovak-Hungarian agreement about the “population exchange”. Also Czech and Slovak remigrants from Ukraine and Romania were given no choice where to settle. In late 1947–1949, the residual Germans, who could not be expelled due to the changing approach of the Allies, were often relocated within the borderland in order to weaken local ties and to prevent any form of German resistance. Later in 1950s, ex-convicts or various people labelled as “enemies of the working class” were often forcibly settled in the region. In late 1940s, families of left-winged refugees from Greece started to settle in the area.



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# Post-WWII Immigration to Czechoslovak Borderland on example of Silesia and North Moravia

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## Propaganda and Identity

Czechoslovak propaganda often described the borderland as a “melting pot” or “laboratory”, where the people got a chance to “start a new life” and to “create a new, just society”. This narrative combined both nationalist and socialist rhetoric. After the expulsion of Germans, the “Slavic” newcomers (numbers of foreigners amongst the settlers was commonly neglected or at least underestimated) were expected to live without the burden of alleged pre-war “bourgeois oppression”

The new settlers were often referred to as “bordermen” (hraničáři). Propagandistic usage of this term dated back to late 19th Century, when the word served as description of Czechs living not necessarily close to the real state border, but close to “cultural border” between Czech and German regions of Austro-Hungarian Empire. While the original meaning changed after 1945, the narrative was continually based on presumption the “bordermen” should be the best members of the nation, because they were permanently endangered by the “outer enemy”. In many aspects, the narrative of “bordermen” resembled to the popular image of the American Far West in the 19th Century. The borderland was imagined as a location, where enthusiastic pioneers are trying to create a new, “better” place for living, despite numerous dangers and threats. In both cases, the “civilising” mission of the settlers was pointed out.



Contrary, the residual German population was still seen as potential threat. Overestimated rumours about Nazi terrorist organisation were widespread amongst the population. Speaking about Germans and collaborators, the word “Nazi” was commonly replaced by “Fascist” or “far right” in official narrative. Czechoslovakia was seen as a socialist state and propaganda tried to avoid any connection between socialism and German Nazism (= National Socialism).

In borderland, the “cleansing” of public space played an important role for Czechoslovak propagandistic effort. Overwhelming majority of German statues and monuments disappeared soon after the end of the war, some of them used as construction material. The “luckier” monuments were newly rededicated to WWII victims or to Czechoslovaks killed during pro-Nazi uprising of local Germans in 1938. New “Slavic” and “socialist” identity of the borderland should be underlined by new local names, statues and symbols.

An important aspect of “identity-making” process of the first post-war years was religion. Roman Catholics decidedly dominated amongst both local Germans and the new-settlers, except Greeks. Although the role of Church gradually declined, Catholic identity still remained strong amongst farmers coming from Opava or Haná regions, as well as from Slovakia.

However, simultaneously with the “official” identity of “new, Slavic and socialist” borderland, several popular counter-narratives developed. Most of the new-settlers probably shared the anti-German ideas of official propaganda, but not everybody was so enthusiastic about economic and political situation in the borderland. Many locals felt mistrust and aversion against central authorities. The “popular” version of the “bordermen” identity commonly used the narrative of “hard-working”, but “poor” or “abandoned” periphery, which deserved more support and understanding of the state.



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# The Expulsion of Ethnic Germans from Hungary Considering International Politics

*Réka Marchut*

It is well known that the forced migration of Germans in the territory of Central and Eastern Europe was carried out in the name of post-war retribution. The great powers had been planning to solve the issue of minorities this way since the outbreak of World War II. In a report from 1943 the peace negotiation attempts of Kállay's Hungarian government, the British Foreign Secretary praised Hungary for stroking a blow against the German minority in Hungary by depriving SS-volunteers of their Hungarian citizenship, and thus shifting them to Germany. However, the expulsion of Sudeten Germans and Silesian Germans was already discussed in particular and supported by both the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom. In this context, it is clear that – considering the post-war expulsion of the Germans – this occurred both in victorious and defeated states. The main concern was revenge and the prevention of future problems.

The issue of the expulsion of Germans only came to the foreground in the spring of 1945, after the German troops had been driven out of the country. It was mainly in the press that the parties demanded a radical solution to the German issue, namely expulsion.

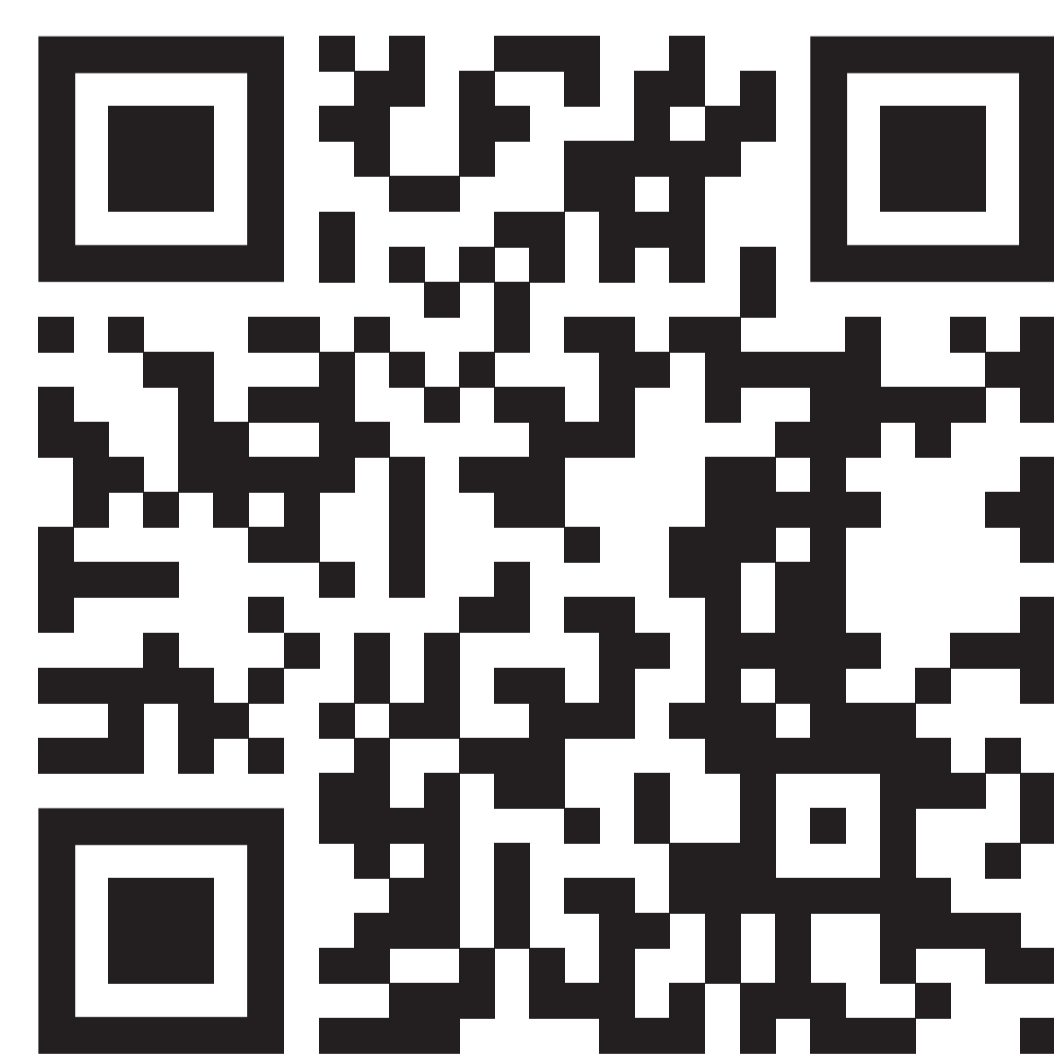
The positions of the great powers made it clear that they were the only ones to decide about the expulsion of the Germans. Then, in Potsdam (Photo 1), the issue of the Germans from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary was indeed discussed together. The expulsion of the Germans was opened by Churchill at the ninth meeting. Naturally, the issues the Germans in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary were given a different priority. The main focus of the negotiations was on Czechoslovakia and Poland, discussing Hungary only additionally, as there “the matter was obviously less urgent”.

Two days after the Potsdam decision, the British Foreign Office sent a telegram to the embassy in Budapest stating that, though it had been agreed at the Potsdam Conference that the expulsion of the Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary had to be carried out, the Czechoslovak government, the Polish Provisional Government and the Allied Control Commission in Hungary should be requested to cease any further expulsions until an appropriate notice from the German Allied Control Council to the governments concerned.

It would have been embarrassing for the Hungarian government to take the liability for the expulsion openly, mainly because it could have served as a real precedent for the fate of the ethnic Hungarians of Czechoslovakia. The country's leaders had no choice but to emphasise the coercive nature of the great powers' decisions. They had to cling to these arguments to spare the Hungarians living abroad from collective punishment. Looking back over the past decades, from a historiographer's view it is evident that the Potsdam Agreement was not binding, but the then Hungarian politicians could not publicly acknowledge this. The Potsdam Agreement was an opportunity to expel the Germans preserving the ambiguous nature of the positions of the great powers.

International politics played an important role not only in the preparation of the expulsion, but also in its implementation. The expulsion of the Germans from Hungary is usually divided into two phases: the first phase lasted from January 1946 to June 1946, when the Germans were expelled to the American zone of Germany; the second phase took place from August 1947 to June 1948, when the expulsions targeted the Soviet occupation zone of Germany. These two waves of expulsions were not simply the results of interior affairs, but were shaped rather by the international political forces and processes.

Even though the Potsdam Agreement clearly stipulated control by the Allied Control Commission, in August 1947, this was no longer of any importance. Controlling the implementation of the expulsion by the Allied Control Commission was problematic also due to the fact that the Commission was dissolved on 15 September 1947. This raises the interesting question of international law as to whether the expulsion had to be halted after that date or not. Back then, law did not matter any more – it was power that was decisive.



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# The Impact of the War and Collective Punishment on Ethnic German Families

Ágnes Tóth



Wars affect family relationships and personal life circumstances utmost severely. Even after World War II, the long-lasting absence of men, the separation, the existential insecurity and the loss of the loved ones negatively impacted the lives of families for decades. The situation was particularly difficult for ethnic Germans in Hungary and the Hungarian minority communities abroad, who were, in the post-war period, also subjected to various punitive actions based on the principle of collective guilt – these included forced labour, confiscation of property, deprivation of their civil rights, internment and deportation. In their case, the consequences of the war and collective punishment combined, impacting them for a prolonged time, influencing the lives and the life chances of several generations. For example, it had an adverse effect on community ties, still evident today.

This banner presents the life situations of ethnic German families of Hungary in the last period of the war and in the decades that followed. I will also discuss the personal and community strategies they used to cope with these hopeless situations.

*“...and so, we must also abandon our own family members”*

At the end of the war, in the spring of 1945, both ethnic German families and the majority experienced fragmentation and existential insecurity. Many of the men had not yet returned home from the war, most of them were waiting for release in Soviet prisoner-of-war camps. The German community was also severely affected by the punitive action carried out by the Soviet-Russian army with the assistance of the Hungarian administration between Christmas 1944 and 2 February 1945, during which some 32,000 ethnic Germans of Hungary (20,989 men and 10,934 women) were deported to Soviet forced labour camps.

As a result of the deportations, the already broken German families lost the young women responsible for running the family farms and preserving the families during the war. In the absence of their husbands, many of them had to sustain their families, raise their children and help their elderly parents. After their deportation, these tasks often had to be taken over by their (yet) minor children or relatives, or other members of the communities. A significant number of the deported men were typically those exempted from front-line service due to their age or health.

The situation was particularly difficult for families with several deported members.

*“Physically weak, I was transported home with the sick. With a broken health, I could work only intermittently. (...) A month later, my father and my sister were also torn out of the family, they were also sent to the Soviet Union, to work in a coal mine, just like me. But it was only my father, who returned home – my sister died in the mine at the age of 23.”*

*“My father died on 30 August 1945, in the camp hospital. (...) Back then, his son was still alive. Unfortunately, my brother also died in the same camp on 15 December 1945. (...) I suffered quite a lot from the deportation of my father and brother. I had to work with my mother – at a very young age – to make a living.”*

*“I was 19 when I was taken away. My father was also deported. He was 44, he couldn't stand the labour, he died there. My 3 sisters were left at home with my mother.”*

*„My mother was among those deported. She died in March 1946 of meningitis in Russia. I was placed in foster care and was often ill, from the age of 9. Then, I could only work intermittently.”*

*“The Germans were deported from Gyöng on 28 December 1944. My mother and my father were among the deported ones. My mother cried heavily, she hugged me and my two-year-old sister and she told us that they had to go to work for two weeks and then they would come home. My mother died abroad. ... When my father returned home, it was a great joy for the whole family, but he and my grandparents cried a lot because many people returned, but not my mother.”*

*“(...) that was the last time I saw my poor dear Mother, because when I returned home in '46, they had already been expelled to Germany on Pentecost, to a place 20 kilometres away from Nuremberg. There, they built another house, at that age.”*

*„On 10 October 1947, they packed us into wagons and we were taken to Debrecen, where we stayed for at least a week. Every day, we were interrogated, molested and questioned whether we wanted to return home or to go abroad. All we wanted was to return home to our parents, but as we found out, we decided wrongly. On 29 October, we were released home; on 30 October, we arrived to Kaposvár, where we met a young man from our village, who told us not only that our father was gone, but also that our mother left us, as she had emigrated in August 1947.”*

*“Then we lost our property and the dearest of all, our ‘homeland’. My daughter K. L., a dressmaker, was born on 25 January 1925 in Egyházaskozár. She had been taken to Russia years ago. She returned from Russia on 26 November 1949. She was taken to barracks in Debrecen (Hungary). There are about 200 people held there, who are released one after another to the settlements they wanted to go to. My daughter does have the right to move where she wants to, but only within Hungary. Please help and prove your helpfulness! It is a terrible thing that we have been evicted from our property, deprived of our homeland, prevented from returning home, and now, we even have to give up our own family members”.*



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# Framing post-war migration flows in the Polish propaganda. Towards the utopia of ethnic homogeneity

Katarzyna Andrejuk

Media were important channels of communist propaganda: they played a role in production of knowledge about the sociopolitical order and interpretation of political actions. A new political structure cannot be successful without social support. *Nowe Drogi* was established in 1947 as the official journal of the Polish Workers' Party that operated between 1942 and 1948. *Nowe Drogi* remained the official journal of this governing party until the collapse of communist system in 1989. *Nowe Drogi* contained i.a. reprints of important public speeches of various party officials, voices of social scientists regarding the urgent social problems, reviews of academic books. The journal covered a broad range of topics concerning the social, political, and economic situation in Poland, Soviet bloc, and worldwide including Western capitalist countries. The authors of the texts were the communist Party officials, as well as academics, especially those representing social sciences. The recipients of the journal were party members of higher, medium, and lower grades. The journal message was disseminated among new political elites and therefore had a crucial influence on community building.

The journal reflected a post-war communist emphasis of modernization intertwined with nation-building based on common history, ancestors, primordial cultural space, and territorial hegemony. In the public discourse of Polish People's Republic, ethnically homogeneous states and each nation's right to sovereignty was considered a value per se. *Nowe Drogi* perpetuated this discourse of modern utopias: a monoethnic nation was perceived as an ideal community. It was understood as a socially desired state which should be politically supported and sought for. Not only separate states of the Soviet bloc (Poland, Czechoslovakia) were treated as such sovereign units; Soviet republics such as Ukraine and Belarus were also defined as political units of sovereign nations. Resettlement of ethnic populations to the territories considered as their own were treated as an important dimension of social justice. The overarching aim of all post-war resettlements was stabilization, preventing potential future tensions and wars.

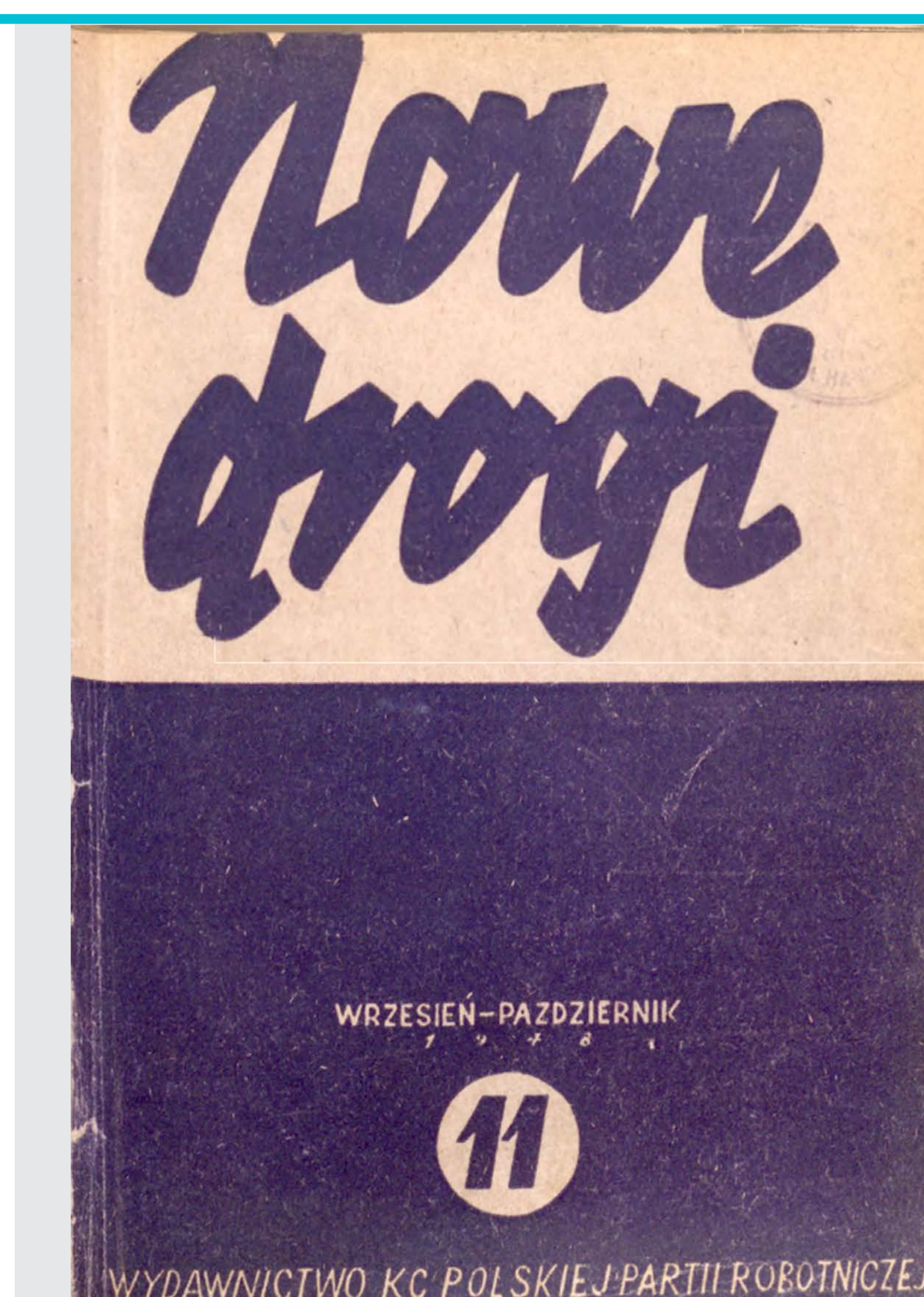
From "Nowe Drogi":

*"The question of Slavonic genealogy and their place of origin has long been debated in the science of prehistory. Under the influence of German scholars, whose suggestions were sometimes taken even our writers, the Slavonic indigenes in the basins of Elbe and Neisse rivers, and even in the basin of the Vistula river, was questioned. The concept of Asian origin of the Slavs was developed. (...) The indigenes of Slavonic tribes in the nowadays Recovered Territories is, according to the most recent research, uncontested, not only in the Polish, but also Soviet science."* („Geneza i kolebka Słowian” *Nowe Drogi*, vol. (9)3 / 1948; review of Tadeusz Lehr-Spławiński: *O pochodzeniu i prakolebce Słowian*. Instytut Zachodni, Poznań 1946, p. 264)

*"The time is coming when the worst wounds will be healed (...) when massive migration and repatriation flows will stop, when a new countryside will lift us massively to a new level of life"* [*Nowe Drogi* vol. 4/1947, „Zagadnienie demokratycznej przebudowy szkolnictwa”, p. 39-40]



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The propagandist portrayal of migration reflected the political attempts to build monoethnic states, driven by the essentialist vision of nations. Communist propaganda referred to migration as a single occurrence redressing the ethno-national balance in the region, and not as an incessant demographic process. Migrations were treated as a one-off event, restoring the ethnic order and social justice in Europe. Post-war migration was imagined as a process of building ethnically homogeneous nations.

Despite the communist regime's declarations about the Communist International, the traditional ethnic group and nationhood were deemed as the crucial sources of solidarity, and basic fundamentals of a community. A nation state was perceived as a key pillar of political order, ensuring equality and redistribution. The discourse about mitigating class divisions and equalizing social inequalities was accompanied by imageries referring to a nation understood as an ethnic unity. The post-WW2 migration flows were intended to form such a nation, and subsequently to extinguish. Migration flows post-WW2 were perceived by stakeholders and policymakers as a one-off event which would ensure stabilization in the region, and peace. After the ethnic groups migrated to their respective territories and settled there, the migration processes were expected to stop. This anticipation hugely affected the policy of migration in the later years of the communist regime. The phase of mass migration flows (1946-49) was followed by the period of restricted mobility in 1950s and continuing obstacles to international mobility in the following periods of the communist state.



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## Wracamy na ziemie naszych ojców

# Obywatele

Jesteśmy świadkami historycznych chwil. Polskie władze państwowe objęły w posiadanie tereny, które nie wchodziły w skład Państwa Polskiego przed 1 września 1939 r.

Obszary te różnie polskie wydarte nam przez odwiecznego wroga i załudnione przez ludność niemiecką muszą zostać znów obsadzone przez element polski, który je zagospodaruje, poniesie tam zapomniany język ojczysty i rodzimą kulturę.

**Nie wolno nikomu kto czuje się Polakiem uchylać się od pracy nad zaludnieniem tych ziem.**

Od naszych wysiłków, od naszej dobrej woli, i wytrwałości zależy przyszłość tych obszarów i nas własny dobrobyt. Nie wolno ociągać się! Bójmy na słarm gdyż każdy dzień zwłoki przynosi niepowetowane straty. Władze w zrozumieniu interesu Państwa jak również korzyści materialnych poszczególnych jednostek, które bezwzględnie poprawia swój byt, obejmując w posiadanie obszary porzuczone gospodarstwu gruntu, okaza przesiedleńcom jak najdalej idącą pomoc.

**transport, wyżywienie, pomoc sanitarna, materialna, i zakwaterowanie aż do czasu zagospodarowania**

przesiedleńcy oraz i ich rodziny będą mieć zapewnione

## **Na Zachód!**

## **Pamiętajmy,**

że Polska stała nad Bałtykiem, Odra, Nisą, i ustąpić nam z tych terenów nie wolno.

Rejestrację zamierzających przesiedlić się przeprowadzają:

- 1) Związek Samopomocy Chłopskiej Jarosław, ul. Sienkiewicza 7, oraz placówki jego we wszystkich gminach i gromadach. Związek ten rejestruje miejscową ludność rolniczą (bezrolnych, małorolnych i wszystkich rolników)
- 2) Polski Związek Zachodni Jarosław, ul. Sobieskiego 5. Związek ten rejestruje wszystkich Polaków, zamieszkałych poprzednio na ziemiach zachodnich, którzy pragną powrócić na zachód.
- 3) Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny Jarosław, Magistrat, pokój Nr. 7, oraz delegaci po gminach i gromadach. Urząd ten rejestruje repatriantów, uchodźców i wszystkich innych to jest nie rolników i nie byłych mieszkańców ziem zachodnich. Braci można ze sobą wszystko (inwentarz żywy, narzędzia pracy, urządzenia domowe i t. p.) bez ograniczeń. Rejestrujący się otrzymuje zaświadczenie przesiedleńcze, które uprawnia go do zbiornego i bezpłatnego przejazdu i przewozu mienia i na podstawie tego zaświadczenia otrzymuje on na zachodzie przydział ziemi lub innego warunku pracy zależnie od zawodu.

Jarosław, dnia 13 czerwca 1945 r.

**Powiatowy Komitet Przesiedleńczy.**

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