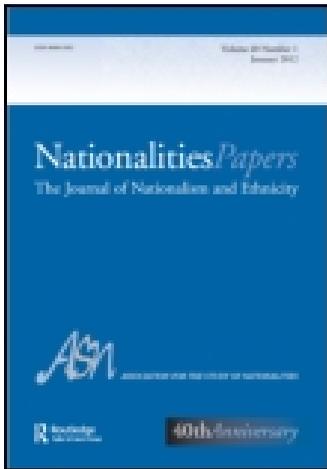


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Poland's Wild West. Forced migration and cultural appropriation of the Oder region in 1945-1948

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Poland's Wild West. Forced migration and cultural appropriation of the Oder region in 1945–1948 [Polens Wilder Westen. Erzwungene Migration und die kulturelle Aneignung des Oderraums 1945–1948], by Beata Halicka, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2013, 393 pp., \$37.66 (hardcover), ISBN 9783506776952

What happens to a region when its population is replaced? Does it change completely when inhabited by different people or does it retain some continuity with the past? How do newcomers, after such a violent rupture, appropriate the physical space around them to create a new society? Beata Halicka addresses these intriguing questions in her book *Poland's Wild West. Forced Migration and Cultural Appropriation of the Oder Region in 1945–1948*.

In the wake of World War II, nearly 20 million Europeans were resettled to achieve congruence between ethnicity and national borders. Halicka's book is centered on the Polish territory east of the river Oder, which underwent one of the most dramatic postwar transformations in Europe. In accordance with the Potsdam Conference in 1945, Poland lost 46% of its prewar territory east of the Curzon line and gained the equivalent of 26% of territory east of the Oder–Neisse line. The territorial changes were followed by the expulsion of over seven million Germans and the repatriation and resettlement of over six million Poles, as well as the transfers of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Lithuanians. Barely two-thirds Polish before the war, the country became an essentially homogenous state within just a few years.

Halicka uses this tragic turn of history to examine a remarkable social experiment in population replacement. The Communist authorities insisted on calling the resettled region "Recovered Territories," to emphasize that it had historically belonged to Poland rather than Germany. Halicka reminds us, however, that the region was unofficially dubbed as the "Wild West," to convey its potent mix of chaos and opportunity. The book traces the beginnings of the transformation of the "Wild West" after World War II into one of the most developed parts of Poland today.

In contrast to the growing literature on the geopolitical aspects of post-World War II population transfers, including books such as Douglas's *Orderly and Humane* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012) and Tessler's *Ethnic Cleansing and the European Union* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), Halicka's work explores forced migration at the micro-level. Her main contribution lies in highlighting the experiences of ordinary people in small towns and villages, and analyzing the post-resettlement process of cultural appropriation from their point of view. In addition, Halicka focuses on the region as an integral whole, enabling her to compare and contrast accounts of the region's diverse groups. This is a welcome addition to studies that deal separately with German, Polish, or Ukrainian inhabitants, and studies that focus on the fates of individual cities, such as Thum's *Uprooted: How Breslau became Wrocław During the Century of Expulsions* (Princeton, 2010) and Musekamp's *Zwischen Stettin und Szczecin. Metamorphosen einer Stadt von 1945 bis 2005* (Wiesbaden, 2010).

The book incorporates rich archival material. Most importantly, Halicka evaluates the written memoirs of the Polish inhabitants of the Oder region collected for essay competitions organized by the Western Institute (*Institute Zachodni*) in Poznan in 1957, 1966, and 1970. The institute sought out autobiographical stories highlighting the reasons for migration, the process of resettlement, and the early years in the new homeland. While the texts from the 1960s and 1970s cannot be taken at face value due to censorship and the influence of propaganda, the 229 memoirs written in the late 1950s, during a political thaw in Poland, as well as the diaries and texts from the late 1940s, represent far more accurate depictions of life in the Oder region.

To strengthen authenticity, Halicka compares published texts to their original, uncensored versions. Thus, she is able to determine how the authorities manipulated the memory of resettlement for political ends. Surely, evaluating autobiographical texts presents its own methodological challenges. But Halicka's combination of memoirs and other archival sources creates a truly captivating and well-researched account.

Official rhetoric about the "Recovered Territories" in the Communist period emphasized their "Polishness." Halicka reveals the true extent of social and ethnic diversity among the 2.9 million settlers. Some people indeed followed the patriotic appeals of the Communist government to help reintegrate the lands into Poland; yet many sought an escape from political persecution, easy money, or social mobility. Nor were all newcomers ethnically Polish; they included Jews, Ukrainians, Roma, and even a small Greek minority.

Halicka also sheds light on other aspects of the population transfers long omitted from historical narratives. Of special interest are the experiences of Jewish settlers, a topic largely unexplored in contemporary studies of forced migration, not least in the Oder region. Candid memoirs of Polish residents betray apprehension about coexisting with Jewish neighbors. No less valuable is Halicka's account of Polish settlers' interactions with displaced Ukrainians, whose tragic story has traditionally been viewed in isolation from the fates of other forced migrants in the "Recovered Territories." Halicka also highlights the emotionally charged confrontations between Polish newcomers and their former enemies; namely, the moral qualms about the appropriation of German property at a time when those who sympathized with Germans could be accused of treason, and the complex relationships between German women and Polish, Soviet, and German men.

A further section of the book deals with the creation of schools and churches, the two institutions that played a key role in the creation of a cohesive society. Halicka notes that teachers performed a variety of social functions beyond teaching, such as establishing amateur theaters, founding libraries, and organizing clubs and professional organizations. Equally important for migrant integration was the Catholic Church. Catholicism was something that migrants with different dialects, clothing, and cuisines all had in common. In fact, the presence of a priest often informed the decision of a migrant to settle in a particular locality. This account of social activism presents an interesting puzzle for social scientists, who often assume that the disruption of social ties in the process of migration weakens civic participation and collective action.

Active civic participation was disrupted by the onset of Stalinism in Poland in the late 1940s, which triggered retreat into the private sphere. The book thus speaks not only of the short-term effects of forced migration in Poland, but also of the micro-level societal response to the encroaching Communist state. While it is not the main focus of her book, Halicka offers a fascinating account of how the 1946 agrarian reform affected property relations in the Oder region, as well as how the region's new inhabitants reacted to the Communist takeover after the 1946 People's Referendum.

The strengths of this book would stand out even more if it had covered a narrower terrain and was organized around the main questions motivating the study, rather than in chronological order. The first few chapters, while helping to set the stage, in many ways overlap with previous studies of forced migration in Poland. The author also sacrificed some depth and originality by trying to comprehensively cover every aspect of life in the Oder region in 1945–1948. As a result, interesting but extraneous information detracts from the questions posed at the outset.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses, Halicka's book holds broad appeal. Although it centers on the Oder region in Poland, its insights about societal development can be

applied to many other cases of migration and displacement. It will also be of interest to scholars of social capital, ethnicity, and nationalism.

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Atatürk in the Nazi imagination, by Stefan Ihrig, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014, 320 pp., US\$29.95 (hardcover), ISBN 9780674368378

In this study, Stefan Ihrig succeeded in delivering a tour de force, opening up pages of history to challenge conventional reading of the past, and to our understanding of the connected nature of nationalisms in the interwar period. This book proposes a major revision of established historiography, such as Kemalist modernism and its interpretation, the rise of nationalism in Europe in the 1920s, and sources and models of inspiration in the emergence of Nazism in Germany.

By plunging into the German texts of the 1920s and 1930s, Ihrig tells us how Nazi Germany read, imagined, and appropriated lessons of Kemalist Turkey. The study is largely based on reviewing nationalist German newspaper articles of the interwar period, as well as speeches, biographies, and diaries, to reconstruct how Nazi leadership and the broader German public integrated the example of Turkish nationalism, to serve as an example for Germany in crisis. Contrary to historiography of today, where Turkey under Kemal is treated as a different category compared to Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy, mainly for its supposed “lack” of a charismatic leader and constant mobilization of the population, and is often brought as an example of “modernization” in the Third World context and specifically for Muslim societies. Ihrig narrates how the “Turkish Führer” as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was called, played a “role model” for the Nazi imagination.

Germany was closely associated with Turkey even before the war of independence led by Atatürk. Close collaboration and admiration of Turkish examples goes back to the 1908 Young Turk revolution, and to the period of World War I during which Germany was in alliance with the Ottoman Empire, and German officers were put at the head of the Ottoman army. Among them were many who played an important role in the emergence of the postwar nationalist movement. Here, Enver Pasha, a Young Turk army officer who became the Ottoman war minister during WWI, emerges as the first subject of German fascination. Enver was also a friend and later a jealous competitor of Mustafa Kemal, an adventurer who led an invasion of the Russian Caucasus in winter snow through the mountains of Armenia only for the best of his fighting forces to perish in a snow storm.

In the postwar period, as the Entente imposed harsh conditions of peace on Germany in Versailles, nationalist Turkey revolted against the conditions imposed on the Ottoman Empire in the Treaty of Sèvres. The Nationalist Turkish movement gathered in Ankara around the leadership of Mustafa Kemal rejected the legitimacy of the Constantinople government that acknowledged Sèvres, fought against invading Greek forces, and challenged British and French troops. After its military victories, the new Turkish government in Ankara revised the peace accord in the new Lausanne Treaty, the basis of modern Turkey.