

Conceptual framework for the Foundation and Guidelines for the planned permanent exhibition

FOUNDATION FOR DISPLACEMENT, EXPULSION, RECONCILIATION
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation
Conceptual framework for the Foundation and guidelines for the planned permanent
exhibition

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Introduction

For much of the 20th century, European history was marked by attempts to create homogeneous nation-states, followed by authoritarian regimes, totalitarian dictatorships and war. In combination with other forms of organized violence, this also led to mass expulsions and genocide. National Socialism and Stalinism in particular caused millions to suffer and opened deep rifts between the peoples of Europe. As a result, succeeding generations face the task of taking responsibility for this aspect of European history and carefully studying it. Both in scholarly discourse and in the dialogue between European neighbours based on mutual understanding, it is important to question and analyse national images of history, to raise awareness and encourage a shared process of remembering, thereby contributing to reconciliation and partnership in Europe.

The Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation will address the fate of the millions of refugees and expellees who lost their homes and homelands and endured terrible suffering due to wars, national conflicts and dictatorships in Europe during the 20th century. Roughly 14 million Germans were forced to leave their homes in the former eastern Prussian provinces (Pomerania, West Prussia, East Prussia, Posen and Silesia) and settlement areas in central, south-eastern and eastern Europe, driven out in reaction to National Socialist policy, crimes and the war it started and conducted with the greatest cruelty. In divided post-war Germany, these refugees and expellees had to start over from nothing, often finding little solidarity from their fellow Germans at their destination. In the Soviet zone of occupation and German Democratic Republic, openly discussing their fate was largely taboo. The Foundation will recognize the successful integration of these refugees and expellees and their contribution to rebuilding in both German states by 1990 despite these obstacles, as well as their willingness to work for understanding.

The Foundation is dedicated to remembering this tragedy of flight and expulsion. The Foundation aims to help ensure that expulsion is condemned everywhere and at all times as a violation of human rights and a tool of political violence.

The Foundation will carry out its legal mandate ‘to preserve the memory of flight and expulsion in the 20th century in the historical context of World War II and the National Socialist policies of expansion and annihilation and their consequences’ by working together at national and international level with scholarly institutions, historical museums and memorial sites, expellee organizations, civil-society projects and human-rights institutions. The Foundation will engage in cross-border exchange and dialogue, guided by the words of Polish intellectual Jan Józef Lipski: “We must tell each other everything, on the condition that each speaks about his own guilt. If we do not, the burden of the past will keep us from moving towards a shared future’ (1985). As Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel explained in a speech on 18 September 2006, this awareness leads to a ‘spirit of reconciliation, which is essential for proper and respectful remembrance of the suffering caused by flight and expulsion, and which is essential above all for a shared future in a peaceful Europe.”

Germans acknowledge their responsibility for the crimes of the National Socialist regime: the construction of a system of concentration and death camps; the murder of six million Jews and roughly half a million Sinti and Roma, as well as millions of civilian victims in Poland and the Soviet Union (present-day Ukraine, Belarus and Russia); the cruel military occupation; the starvation of millions of Soviet prisoners of war; and the creation of a system of forced

labour. These crimes resulted in troubled relations of both German states with their eastern neighbours for decades, a situation that was exacerbated in the West by the Cold War and in the East by an official policy dictating **'friendship' between communist countries**.

Addressing this dark chapter in 20th-century German history and remembering the victims is therefore an ongoing responsibility of government and society as a whole. Updated in 2008, the federal masterplan for memorial sites pays particular attention to this responsibility, stressing that all remembrance must be based on scholarly research and knowledge of the historical facts. The Foundation is committed to this awareness, which rejects all attempts to justify or relativize National Socialist crimes.

In view of the expulsions in the 20th century, it is possible to conclude that, in history, injustice has often led to fresh injustice; but no matter how great, injustice can never provide legal or moral legitimacy for subsequent injustice. This is especially true of the expulsion of Germans from eastern Europe after 1945. Saying so does not relativize German responsibility for the crimes of National Socialism.

In a European perspective, the Foundation remembers the millions who were victims of **Joseph Stalin's arbitrary and totalitarian rule in the Soviet Union**. Forced labour, deportation, gulag, starvation and mass murder were all part of the Stalinist terror starting in the 1930s. The worst of these mass crimes included the Great Purge, the Holodomor in Ukraine and the deportation of certain ethnic and social groups within the Soviet Union.

Addressing the past in a European framework and with respect for others' views is a way to promote reconciliation and understanding. The Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation will work to help ensure a peaceful, shared future in Europe.

1. Purpose of the Foundation

Remembering and condemning expulsion, strengthening reconciliation and understanding

‘Ethnic cleansing’ in the Balkans during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s led to renewed interest in those Europeans who lost their homes and, in many cases, their lives in the aftermath of World War II. The flight and expulsion of approximately 14 million Germans¹ and the loss of a significant proportion of national territory constitute major events in German history, but were long overlooked. German historian Karl Schlögel has called ‘this catastrophe’ an important chapter in the history of the Germans and one that ‘must have a central place in the national memory’ (2003). Also lost in 1945 were ‘landscapes of the soul’ (Horst Bienek), regions which were central to Germany’s identity for hundreds of years. Germany lost its eastern provinces as a direct result of National Socialist policy. But as Günter Grass has said, nowhere is it written that ‘the cultural substance of these provinces and cities must be forgotten’. The history of flight and expulsion and the cultural heritage of the regions left behind are part of Germany’s national identity and culture of remembrance.

On 19 March 2008, the Federal Government adopted a basic plan for an exhibition, documentation and information centre in Berlin focusing on flight, expulsion and forced migration in the 20th century. In a spirit of reconciliation and in line with the Federal Republic of Germany’s policy of understanding, this centre is intended to help remember and to condemn the injustice of expulsion by providing scholarly documentation of the history of ethnic cleansing. A central focus of the Foundation’s work is the flight and expulsion of Germans.

With the entry into force of the Act Establishing a German Historical Museum Foundation, the Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation was established in Berlin on 30 December 2008 as a dependent foundation administered by the German Historical Museum in Berlin. The Foundation’s governing bodies were constituted in 2009, a new law went into effect on 19 June 2010 to expand them, and a start-up team was appointed. After the Deutschlandhaus building near the Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin has been renovated, it will house the Foundation’s Centre for exhibitions, documentation and information.

Drawing on multiple perspectives to help promote European understanding and a culture of remembrance

According to the Federal Government report on the promotion of culture under Section 96 of the Federal Act on Expellees and Refugees of December 2009, **‘the cooperative study of history remains challenging in many ways. Like our European neighbours, we Germans are engaging with the issues of National Socialism, totalitarianism, World War II, flight, expulsion and forced migration. This engagement is increasingly international in nature, which creates a new social, political and scholarly relevance’ in the context of European integration.**

Learning with the aim of reconciliation requires the willingness to understand and accept the varied motivations for human actions. Reconciliation involves more than simply condemning

¹ All the figures given here are estimates which take the latest research into account; nonetheless, scholars continue to come to different conclusions. Most figures are quoted from the Lexikon der Vertreibungen. Deportation, Zwangsaussiedlung und ethnische Säuberung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts (Encyclopedia of expulsions. Deportation, forced migration and ethnic cleansing in 20th-century Europe), eds. Dettlef Brandes, Holm Sundhussen, Stefan Troebst with Kristina Kaiserová and Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, Vienna, Cologne, Weimar, 2010.

what happened in the past; it also requires looking for causes, questioning one's own points of view, and realizing the need for dialogue.

Conflicting national narratives long clouded the view of Europe's past. Due to differences in perception and different historical experiences, the interpretation of history is in many cases still controversial and subject to manipulation for political purposes. So when dealing with the issue of forced migration, it is especially important to take multiple perspectives into account in order to present, question and document conflicting images of history and how they have been constructed. Portraying different kinds of experience and ways of explaining reality within and between European countries makes it possible to examine the past from various angles and form independent judgements. In the process, reflecting on national, bilateral and European discourses on ethnic cleansing and expulsion can lead to greater understanding.

2. Topic: Forced migration in German and European history

Resettlement, evacuation, flight and expulsion of Germans

The terms 'flight' and 'expulsion' refer to very different processes in history: Following the 1939 Hitler-Stalin Pact, under National Socialist policy most of the Baltic Germans and other German-speaking minorities were resettled in occupied Poland, from which they fled at the end of World War II. After Germany attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, Stalin had many Russian Germans deported to Siberia and Central Asia. Thus, some ethnic German minorities living outside the Reich territory had to leave their homelands already during World War II.

Starting in October 1944, hundreds of thousands of Germans were evacuated from **Germany's eastern territories and Slovakia, Croatia and the region of Transylvania in Romania.** From 1944 to 1945, millions of civilians fled the German territories of East Prussia, Pomerania, eastern Brandenburg and Silesia ahead of the advancing Red Army; in many cases, civilians were caught up in combat action because the Nazi authorities had delayed issuing orders to evacuate. Many of those who stayed behind were deported to the Soviet Union as forced **labourers or lost their homes through 'wild' expulsions in the period between the war's end and the Potsdam Conference in summer 1945.** About one million civilians in Czechoslovakia and the territories given to **Poland were affected by such 'wild' expulsions, which were not based on any treaties and appeared to be unplanned, although they were often managed and ruthlessly carried out by army units, newly created police units or revolutionary militias.** Later, the Potsdam Agreement provided for the orderly transfer of German populations remaining in the territories under Polish administration.

For the ethnic German minorities in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Romania, the evolution of their relations with the countries in which they lived until 1945 had major consequences for their situations after the war. To understand the demand for nation-states free of Germans, it is therefore necessary to consider not only the decisive reasons in the near term, i.e. the Nazi military dictatorship and occupation, but also medium- to long-term causes, such as the desire which arose before World War I for ethnically homogeneous nation-states, and the difficult relations between the newly founded nation-states and their minorities after 1918.

Based on plans drawn up by their governments in exile, the newly formed governments in central, eastern and south-eastern Europe, most of them communist, supported expulsion and resettlement. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and most of Poland expelled almost all Germans from their territory. But Hungary and Romania, which were German allies until very late in the war, took different paths: After the war, large numbers of Banat Swabians and Transylvanian Saxons in Romania were deported to the Soviet Union as forced labourers. Those who survived were able to return to their homes in Romania and remain there, like most of the other ethnic Germans in Romania, although they faced severe repressions under the communist regime, and later many decided to emigrate to Germany for that reason. Although Hungary had long collaborated with the Nazi regime, after World War II it expelled about half of the Germans living there. In Yugoslavia, many of the ethnic Germans known as Danube Swabians were sent to internment camps, which few survived – an especially tragic chapter of post-war history.

From East Prussia to the Banat region of central Europe, resettlement, evacuation, flight, **'wild' expulsion and forced migration claimed millions of victims**, while Germans living further west were spared this fate.

The context of National Socialist policy of expansion, annihilation and Lebensraum

The flight and expulsion of Germans is embedded in the context of the National Socialist policy of expansion, **annihilation and Lebensraum, literally 'living space' for an expanding German population**. When Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) came to power in 1933, they established their totalitarian and racist ideology of Volksgemeinschaft, a National Socialist term for a community based on shared racial characteristics, as official state doctrine. In pursuing this doctrine, they excluded their political opponents and minorities defined on the basis of race, such as Jews, Sinti and Roma, stripped them of their rights and sought to drive them out of Germany. In 1933, more than half a million Jews were living in Germany. By 1938, roughly 180,000 had been forced by persecution and increasing restrictions on their lives to leave; another 80,000 Jews were able to flee Germany before the war started in 1939.

Sweeping expulsion and resettlement measures followed the 1938 Munich Agreement, the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 and the attack on Poland on 1 September 1939 which marked the start of World War II. The fact that the leadership of the Second Polish Republic and of the Polish Jews were murdered at the start of the war and the subsequent **war of annihilation against the USSR are evidence that the Nazis' racial and demographic policies fundamentally differed from previous ethnic cleansing and must be seen as part of a long-term strategy of genocide**.

The Nazis also turned Poland, parts of which were occupied and other parts annexed, into the central site of their operations to exterminate the Jews, Sinti and Roma. Their efforts **consisted of seizing their victims' property, deporting them, confining them to ghettos and then systematically killing them**. Starting in 1941, the war and occupation intensified, with the attack on the Soviet Union and persecution of the civilian population and prisoners of war. In the Generalplan Ost (master plan for the East), the Nazi leadership formulated its ultimate goal of **'Germanization' and of enslaving the peoples of eastern Europe all the way to the Ural Mountains**. The plan called for mass expulsions on an unprecedented scale and revealed the **Nazi regime's intention to destroy millions of lives**.

The European dimension

In its 2008 outline for the Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation, the Federal Government expressed its plan to present the **'flight and expulsion of Germans from their historical settlement areas ... embedded in the context of European expulsions in the 20th century'**.

The expulsions of the 20th century can be explained only with reference to the idea of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state, in which ethnic attributes take the place of pre-national loyalties. Although ethnicity is always something of a construct, many people gladly identified with their German, Polish or Czech nationality as a way of distinguishing themselves from others.

In the Balkans, ethnic cleansing took place already in the 'long 19th century', primarily affecting Muslims: Millions of Muslims were expelled as a result of the Serbian uprising against the Ottoman Empire in 1804, the Greek struggles for independence starting in 1821 and the Balkan wars in 1912/13. Historian Michael Schwartz has described World War I as '**the primal catastrophe of radicalization and spread of ethnic 'cleansing' across large parts of Europe**'. This includes the **expulsion of Armenians from their traditional homelands by the Ottoman Turk authorities in 1915/16**, considered by the international research community as constituting genocide. At least since the 1923 Convention of Lausanne, even democratic states regarded large-scale population transfers as a policy option. With the consent of the international community, the Convention authorized a population exchange between Greece and the new Republic of Turkey, which was accompanied by violence and affected nearly two million people.

Soon after, Stalin assumed the role of dictator in the Soviet Union and began using mass deportations as an ethno-political instrument to consolidate his power in the 1930s. Victims were members of groups associated with certain social characteristics, like the kulaks (affluent farmers), clergy and ethnic minorities such as Koreans, Poles and Germans.

This historical context, which also includes the practices followed by the European powers in their colonies, is crucial to understanding forced migration. The exhibition will therefore address the European dimension of this topic along with the causes, course and **consequences of the flight and expulsion of Germans as the Foundation's main focus**. Forced migration in 20th-century Europe affected millions of people, especially in central, eastern and south-eastern Europe. People lost their homes and in many cases their lives because they belonged or were thought to belong to a certain ethnic group, or were considered political enemies due to their ethnicity.

The exhibition will therefore provide a general overview of more than 30 ethnic groups in Europe affected by expulsion and provide more in-depth documentation on some of these instances of forced migration, showing similarities as well as key differences between them. Scholarly comparison will offer visitors further insight and leave no room for false comparisons. The exhibition will examine the Greek-Turkish exchange of populations in the early 1920s; the expulsion and forced resettlement of more than 1.6 million Poles after Nazi Germany annexed and occupied their country; and ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, including the genocide of Srebrenica, during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. The last example led to new awareness of this subject in Germany, Austria and elsewhere and also demonstrates its continuing relevance.

Expulsion and genocide for ethnic and political reasons

The Foundation's work focuses on the flight and expulsion of Germans and ethno-politically motivated forced migration in 20th-century Europe. In contrast to purges for political or religious reasons, the main focus of ethnic cleansing **is the victims' ethnicity**. Key elements of ethnic cleansing include war as a catalyst; the targeted use of terror and violence, including mass rape, to accompany expulsion and force victims to flee; and the destruction of cultural heritage.

There is a significant difference between expulsion and genocide: Ethnic cleansing is intended to remove a population group from a certain geographical area, while genocide is

intended, not to remove, but to kill all members of a particular group. But many instances of ethnic cleansing have demonstrated genocidal effects, even if no genocide was intended, meaning that the perpetrators were at least willing to accept the possibility that large numbers of expellees would die in the process.

Maintaining clear distinctions between ethnic cleansing and genocide and between expulsion and annihilation is a priority for the planned exhibition, documentation and information centre.

3. Profile, location, target groups and educational purpose

Unique in Germany and with an overall European perspective, the Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation is intended to be an internationally visible place of learning and remembrance for the history of forced migration in the 20th century. It rests on two pillars: The permanent exhibition is intended for a general audience and will present the causes, course and consequences of ethnic cleansing in Europe, with a primary focus on the flight, expulsion and integration of Germans. The Documentation- and Information Centre will offer opportunities for further study and research and will serve as a specialized institution for disseminating research on forced migration in Germany, Europe and the rest of the world.

The Exhibition-, Documentation- and Information Centre will be housed in the Deutschlandhaus building in Berlin. Due to its geographical location, historical context, role as the capital of unified Germany and home to numerous memorial sites, Berlin is uniquely suited as the location for the Foundation. The Deutschlandhaus building is across the street from the ruins of the Anhalter Bahnhof train station, where Berlin Jews were loaded into transports to Theresienstadt starting in 1942. The headquarters of the Gestapo, SS and Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt) were located nearby, at the site now occupied by the Topography of Terror Documentation Centre. The Deutschlandhaus building itself was used for several decades starting in 1960 as a meeting place for expellee organizations in West Berlin. The exhibition will also examine the history of the building in presenting aspects of the integration of expellees.

The Foundation's exhibitions will be targeted at a general audience and will offer information about the flight, expulsion and integration of Germans during and after World War II and about other forced migrations, primarily in 20th-century Europe. The target audience includes expellees and their descendants, Berlin residents and tourists from the rest of Germany and abroad. Many tourists come from countries where the subject of forced migration receives as much attention as it does in Germany. Exhibits will be described in multiple languages, and the permanent exhibition will have additional offerings (audio guides, special guided tours, etc.) for foreign visitors, especially those from north-eastern, central, south-eastern and eastern Europe.

In addition to the permanent exhibition, the Foundation will organize special exhibitions on a regular basis which may address current developments or focus in greater depth on individual historical aspects. The history of regions in north-eastern, central, south-eastern and eastern Europe where Germans once lived and sometimes still do will be portrayed in cooperation with existing regional museums which receive government funding under Section 96 of the Federal Act on Refugees and Expellees, and with other German and European museums.

Due to the historical and current significance of forced migration, the Foundation has a responsibility to educate. The Exhibition-, Documentation- and Information Centre is intended to address school pupils, teachers and university students directly and will offer adult education in the form of continuing professional training, seminars and workshops. The centre will focus in particular on school classes of children whose families have personal experience of (forced) migration and integration in a new living environment. The Foundation also sees its role as being an internationally visible centre of excellence with a specialized library and document collection available for scholarly research.

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The Exhibition-, Documentation- and Information Centre is intended to be a place of learning and remembrance for a diverse audience. It will present the causes, course and consequences of forced migration according to the latest theories of museum pedagogy. It will also provide appropriate opportunity for individual remembrance. The aim is to create a site of living memory based on the principle of dialogue, which reminds, informs and promotes understanding.

4. Documentation- and Information Centre

One cornerstone of the Foundation's work is the Documentation- and Information Centre, which will enable deeper and more extensive engagement with the subject in a European and global perspective.

The Documentation- and Information Centre will have a public reference library with a specific focus and containing works in German and other languages on the subject of forced migration. It will cooperate with the Martin Opitz Library in Herne, in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, which specializes in areas of German settlement in central, eastern and south-eastern Europe. It will also cooperate with other German and European libraries which concentrate on similar subjects. The specialized library of the Deutschlandhaus, which has been in storage at the German Historical Museum since 1999, will be incorporated into the **Foundation's** Documentation- and Information Centre. It may also be possible to acquire additional specialized and private libraries which match the **Centre's mission**.

The Documentation- and Information Centre's tasks include **collecting, producing and analysing** relevant materials, including oral histories from eyewitnesses in Germany and abroad, recorded in written form and in a variety of other media. The Centre will thus collect and present existing histories as well as conduct its own oral history projects especially **tailored to the permanent exhibition and the Foundation's work**. The aim is to build up a digital archive of oral histories and related documents from all over Europe which will make it possible to engage with this subject from a wide variety of perspectives.

The Documentation- and Information Centre hopes to work closely with European and German archives. The Federal Archives – Equalization of Burdens Archive in Bayreuth, Bavaria, in particular **contains unique materials relevant to the Foundation's work which will** be made available to visitors to the Deutschlandhaus, some in digital form: eyewitness accounts of flight and expulsion, parish registers, records related to the system of financial compensation for losses suffered in World War II (claims, records of the information offices that assisted with claims processing), card files and other materials, such as correspondence, of the Kirchlicher Suchdienst tracing service of the ecclesiastical welfare organizations. And about 200,000 historical photographs in the Bayreuth archive of cities, towns and persons in former areas of German settlement will also be made available. In this way, visitors will be able to find out (in compliance with archive law) what information the Bayreuth archive contains on a particular community, person or event. There are also plans to digitize archive collections from the former German Democratic Republic which are related to the history of expellees and refugees.

The tasks of the Documentation- and Information Centre also include publishing the results of research and organizing various kinds of events, such as discussions with eyewitnesses, lecture series, flight and expulsion as portrayed in film and literature, and expert conferences with national and international partners.

The Foundation is also working to establish close collaborations with German and European museums, universities, and research institutes and networks such as the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity. The aim is to create a centre of excellence on the subject of forced migration as an international flagship and platform for international exchange. With this in mind, the Foundation and its Advisory Board intend to take part in interdisciplinary

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research programmes, organize training courses and possibly work in the new research field of (re)conciliation studies dealing with processes of reconciliation within and between states. In future, the Foundation may also provide scholarly support for civil- society initiatives and projects dealing with refugees.

5. Outlook

Until the end of World War II, Berlin was in the geographical centre of Germany. From the Stettiner Bahnhof and the Schlesischer Bahnhof, the railway stations in eastern and northern Berlin, one could travel to the German cities of Breslau, Stettin, Danzig and Königsberg (now Wrocław, Szczecin, Gdansk and Kaliningrad). As they used to say in the German capital, every true Berliner is originally from Silesia. Lost worlds: Germany's **former eastern provinces** – Silesia, Eastern Pomerania, East and West Prussia and the Neumark region of Brandenburg – made up more than one-quarter of German territory before 1945. The German settlements in and around the city of Iglau (now Jihlava, Czech Republic) and the Gottschee region (now in Slovenia) are also a thing of the past. Greek and Armenian life in Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey) is gone; gone are the diverse cultures once found in Polish Lemberg, in the Czernowitz of Paul Celan and in Jewish Wilna. Their multi-ethnic diversity and cultural richness are lost forever.

But since the end of the Cold War and the accompanying ideological debates, we now have new possibilities for shared remembrance. Poland today remembers architect Erich Mendelsohn, born in East Prussia; poet Joseph von Eichendorff, born in Silesia; dramatist Gerhart Hauptmann, also born in Silesia; and the Nobel laureates of Breslau with a sense of regional pride. As Hannah Arendt once said, **'In the way I think and form judgements, I am still from Königsberg'**. So our perspective is broadened: The memory of these lost worlds is understood as part of European intellectual history. The Foundation for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation hopes to pursue a similar approach in a dialogue with partners throughout Europe, with various perspectives and an open scholarly discourse guiding its work.

The Foundation hopes to become an information resource and place of meeting in order to remember forced migration and the suffering of victims. The Foundation is committed to **upholding Article 1 of Germany's constitution, the Basic Law, which states: 'Human dignity shall be inviolable.'**

Guidelines for the permanent exhibition

Prologue; geographical overview

1. The principle of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state and the collapse of multi-ethnic empires at the end of World War I

2. Majorities and minorities between the two world wars

3. Volksgemeinschaft, anti-Semitism and Lebensraum im Osten: Central elements of National Socialism

4. World War II

4.1 The terror of occupation, forced migration and genocide as part of the Nazi regime

4.2 **The 'ethnic regime' in the Soviet Union under Stalin**

4.3 Evacuation and flight of the German civilian population

5. The expulsion of Germans and the reorganization of Europe

5.1 The path to the Potsdam Conference

5.2 **'Wild' expulsions**

5.3 Forced migration

5.4 Deportation, internment and expulsion in south-eastern Europe

6. Refugees and expellees in Germany and Europe after 1945: Strategies, conflicts and success in integration processes

6.1 Arrival experiences

6.2 Between integration and assimilation: Refugees and expellees in the two German states

6.3 Reconciliation initiatives

7. After 1989: Towards a European culture of remembrance?

Guidelines for the permanent exhibition

There are many different perspectives, many of them subjective, regarding numerous aspects of flight, expulsion and reconciliation. For this reason, the permanent exhibition intends not only to be a site of presentation, but also a place of reflection and an invitation to discussion.² Wherever there are multiple views, they will be made explicit. The Foundation is committed to scholarly and historical precision and is aware of the latest research. Its work adheres to the principles of documentability, transparency and professional museum pedagogy in preparing and presenting exhibits.

The exhibition is intended to present its subject matter both to provide visitors with new information and insights and to enable them to experience and understand history. This includes an engaging presentation of exhibits, restraint in design and a wide range of interactive offerings.

The exhibition will rely on the power of authentic exhibits to arouse visitors' curiosity and empathy. Like other cultural and historical exhibitions, it will include three-dimensional exhibits, posters, maps, graphics and other print media, documents, photographs, **audiovisual exhibits and, in a few instances, artists' renderings of the subject matter.** Multimedia will also be used intensively to display complex route of population flight, phases of expulsion and shifting national borders.

Structure

The exhibition will consist of a prologue followed by a room for orientation and a designated route through the exhibits, mainly in chronological order, rounded out with case studies and eyewitness accounts; the structure will not be teleological, but will take into account the fundamentally open-ended nature of historical processes.

² These guidelines lay the groundwork for the next steps in organizing the permanent exhibition, in which the Foundation's committees will be involved with the assistance of external experts.

Prologue: 'The suffering of others is the suffering of all'

The prologue is intended to create empathy for all victims of forced migration and will introduce visitors to the subject through individual stories. These will touch on universal experiences: What does it mean to be forced to leave your home? How do refugees and expellees deal with the challenge of adapting to a new environment? How do different cultures deal with expulsion and the loss of homeland?

Geographical overview

The first room will give visitors an overview of the subject in terms of content and geography.

A large panorama will display expulsions in 20th-century Europe and the gradual disappearance of ethnic minorities. This panorama could take the form of an interactive projection showing how Europe has become more and more ethnically homogeneous while offering visitors additional information about individual ethnic groups. Standard ethnic categories would be presented and at the same time questioned.

A large map on the floor will show the historical landscape of central, eastern and south-eastern Europe where Germans lived from the 12th or 13th century onwards, helping visitors get a better sense of spatial relationships. Visitors will be able to learn more about the history and culture of the different regions from recorded text and images.

Chronological route

The chronologically structured route through the exhibition will have the heading '**Moving People, Shifting Borders: Forced Migration in 20th-century Europe**' and form the backbone of the exhibition. It will follow the historical events of central importance to the subject of flight, expulsion and forced migration in the 20th century, examine the ideological motivations behind policy decisions and trace the resulting consequences for Europeans. Ethnic cleansing in the 20th century will be dealt with primarily in relation to German history and its international context.

The chronological route will be structured as follows:

1. The principle of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state and the collapse of multi-ethnic empires at the end of World War I
2. Majorities and minorities between the two world wars
3. Volksgemeinschaft, anti-Semitism and Lebensraum im Osten: Central elements of National Socialism
4. World War II
 - The terror of occupation, forced migration and genocide as part of the Nazi regime
 - **The 'ethnic regime' in the Soviet Union under Stalin**
 - Evacuation and flight of the German civilian population
5. The expulsion of Germans and the reorganization of Europe

- The path to the Potsdam Conference
 - 'Wild' expulsions
 - Forced migration
 - Deportation, internment and expulsion in south-eastern Europe
6. Refugees and expellees in Germany and Europe after 1945: Strategies, conflicts and success in processes of integration
- Arrival experiences
 - Between integration and assimilation: Refugees and expellees in the two German states
 - Reconciliation initiatives
7. After 1989: Towards a European culture of remembrance?

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will make up the heart of the exhibition.

Case studies

Case studies of individual regions and communities will be embedded in the chronological tour to offer visitors another way to engage with the subject: Concrete examples can portray political constellations, conflicts between ethnic groups and radicalization during the historical period in all their complexity. The case studies will be selected from the various historical landscapes of north-eastern, central, south-eastern and eastern Europe.

The case studies may focus on political and historical conflicts, such as the status of Upper Silesia after 1918, or on little-known phenomena such as the role of the planned city of Stalinstadt (renamed Eisenhüttenstadt in 1961), founded in 1953 as a centre for expellees from other parts of the German Democratic Republic looking to make a fresh start. Another possibility would be a case study of the debate over a memorial remembering the German victims of a post-war massacre in Postelberg (now Postoloprty, Czech Republic) in 1945; such a case study would show how attitudes have gradually changed since 1989.

An especially expressive case study for the 4th chapter would be the Polish city of Lodz, with its large Jewish and German minorities since the early 19th century. After Lodz was annexed by Nazi Germany, the city was renamed Litzmannstadt and became the central transit station for ethnic Germans being resettled from Bessarabia, Bukovina, the Baltic and the Soviet Union. A central **office for immigrants was responsible for determining the 'racial and biological suitability' of ethnic German families**, for their naturalization and for assigning them a place to live. Resettlement camps were built to house the influx of ethnic Germans; in March 1941 alone, 34,000 were waiting for their residence assignments, which depended on Polish civilians being evicted from their homes and forced to live elsewhere by the central **office for 'resettlers' (Umwandererzentralstelle), which opened in Lodz in April 1940. At the same time, the only major ghetto within the borders of Greater Germany was created for the Jews of Lodz and for Jews deported from Vienna, Prague, Frankfurt (Main), Berlin and Hamburg starting in October 1941. The Lodz Ghetto served both as a labour camp and as a transfer point for transports to the death camps. These different processes taking place in Lodz almost simultaneously can show the connections between Nazi ideology, military aggression, demographic measures and annihilation. The Red Army captured Lodz on 19 January 1945. While the Polish population celebrated this event as liberation, the Germans remaining in the city were subject to collective punishment, even though most of those**

responsible for the Nazis' crimes had already fled. Many of the remaining Germans were forced to labour in camps such as Sikawa before all were ultimately expelled from Poland.

Each case study is intended to depict both the historical event itself, its historical background and, if possible, its later interpretation as well; in this way, the case studies will provide **chronological 'core samples' revealing** multiple layers of time. Work on the permanent exhibition will uncover many more places and events which would be appropriate case studies. To illustrate the principle here, additional possible examples will be mentioned briefly in describing the designated route through the exhibition; subsequent research will determine which of these possibilities can actually be included.

Eyewitness accounts and other first-person documents as a means of narration

Personal experience and how it is interpreted later make up a third level of accessing the exhibition. The dramatic circumstances accompanying forced migration are a source of trauma for migrants which remains difficult to deal with even decades later. The experience of violence, separation, loss and rootlessness also affect subsequent generations.

Eyewitness accounts should be selected that express feelings and directly speak to visitors, but they should be embedded in the larger context and their subjective nature should be made explicit. Accounts should include those from people of different generations, social classes and political opinions. In its function as a Documentation and Information Centre, the Foundation is working to collect and prepare as many eyewitness accounts as possible, both in written form and as audiovisual recordings, along with personal documents such as diaries, letters and memorabilia.

‘Moving People, Shifting Borders: Forced Migration in 20th-century Europe’

1. The principle of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state and the collapse of multi-ethnic empires at the end of World War I

The notion of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state replaces pre-national loyalties with ethnic identities and attributions. Modern nationalisms have a major impact on multi-ethnic states in particular, as policies of assimilation and striving for national autonomy by individual ethnic groups mutually reinforce each other, resulting in the first calls for ethnic segregation, the first forced migrations and the first bilateral agreements on population transfer.

These new mechanisms of ethnic population policy become more radical during World War I: In czarist Russia, ethnic Germans in Volhynia and the part of Poland in Russian possession as well as Jews living in its western border regions are deported to the interior as a collective punishment; in the Ottoman Empire, the expulsion of the Armenians turns into the first European genocide of the 20th century.

At the end of World War I, which acts as a catalyst for ethnic cleansing, the political map of Europe is redrawn completely. The treaties of Versailles, Saint Germain, Neuilly, Trianon and Sèvres and the Russian revolutions of 1917 and subsequent civil war mark the end of the old multi-ethnic empires. New states are created while others regain their sovereignty or substantially add territory and population.

Popular plebiscites, such as those in the German-Danish and German-Polish border areas, are used to exercise the right of self-determination which goes into effect at the end of the war, with the aim of settling the borders of certain Central European regions peacefully and permanently. In East and West Prussia, the districts of Allenstein and Marienwerder vote overwhelmingly to remain part of Germany. In Upper Silesia, however, 60% of the population votes to remain in Germany while 40% votes for Polish rule. The League of Nations, which is dominated by the victorious allies, decides in favour of partition. In other disputed border regions, such as the former Prussian provinces of Posen, parts of West Prussia and Alsace-Lorraine, German territory is awarded to its neighbours without consulting the local population. Even though almost all its residents are German, Danzig is given the status of Free City under international administration.

While some population groups are given the right to self-determination, others are not. Millions of Europeans thus find themselves living in state structures where they hardly feel at home. As the result of discrimination, repressions or a feeling of not belonging, a million Germans and several hundred thousand Hungarians decide to leave their homes in the newly created states.

The newly founded Czechoslovakia regards itself as the nation-state of Czechs and Slovaks; the German minority, which makes up nearly 25% of the overall population and thus outnumbers the Slovaks, is included in the new state against its express will. The **Czechoslovak leadership rejects the Germans’ request for territorial autonomy and for official recognition as the third national minority.** The German minority is largely excluded from participation in the early years of the republic, although the situation eventually improves.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the second major state created by the Versailles Treaty (called the Kingdom of Yugoslavia starting in 1929), faces a different set of conflicts: In addition to the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the state is home to about twenty other ethnic minorities, although some of these groups are not recognized as having a unique identity, such as Macedonians and Muslims. While the Yugoslavian state is intended to be a strongly centralized, pan-Slavic state, the Serbian population enjoys a privileged position with regard to politics, the military and public administration. After conflicts between the Croatian and Serbian political parties culminate in a fatal shooting in Parliament in 1928, the king declares himself dictator and bans all organizations based on ethnic or religious affiliation. In subsequent years, conflicting economic and political interests are nonetheless attributed to historical, linguistic and religious differences, reinforcing the idea of the essential incompatibility of Serbs and Croats.

In Poland, two very different views of ethnic minorities compete for supremacy: Roman Dmowski's National Democrats strive for an ethnically homogeneous Poland modelled on the Piast dynasty (10th to 14th centuries), while Józef Piłsudski advocates the pre-national traditions of the Polish-Lithuanian union modelled on the Jagiellon dynasty (1386–1572). The struggle between these two views continues during the Second Polish Republic, with repercussions for minority rights: The March 1921 constitution of the Second Republic formally grants all national minorities equal rights. In contrast to Czechoslovakia, however, Poland never seriously attempts to win German support for the Polish state.

In Germany and other countries, there are attempts to revise the new order, leading to new wars or similar conflicts. But active protection of minorities, plebiscites, international conferences and mandates under international administration – the tools of peaceful conflict resolution that the newly founded League of Nations hopes to establish – have a difficult time. Following the Treaty of Lausanne, negotiated at the initiative of the European powers, in particular Britain, which ends the war between Turkey and Greece in 1923, those two countries agree to 'exchange' the populations of Muslims living in Greece and Greek Orthodox living in Turkey, thereby legitimizing the principle of population transfer. In this case, religious affiliation serves as a marker for a supposedly objective ethnic-national identity without regard to language or culture. In the Balkans, all Muslims are frequently called 'Turks'. As a result, roughly 500,000 Muslims are forced to leave the Greek areas of Macedonia and Thrace, while 1.5 million Greek Orthodox must leave their homes in Asia Minor, mostly on the west coast of Turkey. For Greece, a poor country with a total population of 5 million in the 1920s, accommodating 1.5 million expellees and refugees represents an enormous challenge. Following the forced resettlements, both Greece and the Turkish coast are largely ethnically homogeneous.

Topics:

- The idea of an ethnically homogeneous nation-state
- Forced migration during World War I, especially in Russia and the Ottoman Empire
- The decline of the old multi-national empires, the politicization of ethnic issues and the new political map after 1918
- The new and reconstituted nation-states after 1918
- The League of Nations and the protection of national minorities
- Revisionist strivings in Germany, Bulgaria and Hungary
- The Soviet Union's nationality federalism between cultural autonomy, Party dictatorship and ethnic cleansing

Possible case studies:

- The fate of the Volhynia Germans during World War I
- The German-Polish conflict over Upper Silesia 1919–1922
- The 'Asia Minor Catastrophe': The exchange of the Greek and Turkish populations
- South Tyrol after World War I

2. Majorities and minorities between the two world wars

After this look at international conflicts, the next section focuses on interaction between majority and minority populations in the new and reconstituted states. For example, those ethnic Germans who decide not to resettle in Germany after 1918 are confronted with the issue of becoming integrated in the new states. Their response ranges from loyal political participation to open rejection. Their choice often depends on the extent to which the new states extend rights to minorities, for example regarding the language of instruction at schools. The politically unstable new nation-states often regard ethnic minorities with mistrust, even intensifying their measures of suppression and nationalization. As already before World War I, ethnic conflicts are combined with and magnified by religious and social issues.

For the ethnic German minorities, in many cases the political coordinates have shifted: **Austrians in Bohemia and Moravia first become Czechoslovakian citizens and then 'border and foreign Germans' who now look to Berlin rather than Vienna or Prague for political support.** And new collective identities arise: For example, German speakers in Czechoslovakia first begin to view themselves as **'Sudeten Germans' during this time.** In the parliamentary elections of 1925 and 1929, about three-quarters of the ethnic German **electorate vote for one of the three 'activist' parties** involved in building a democratic Czechoslovakia. These parties have been represented in the government since 1926/1929, but their participation fails to win them any concessions. The global economic crisis hits the areas of German settlement, Bohemia and Moravia, especially hard, contributing to the political radicalization of the ethnic German population and the breakthrough of the newly founded Sudeten German Party led by Konrad Henlein. By 1937, the party advocates joining the German Reich.

In Poland, Germans living in what were the three partitions (the Prussian provinces of Posen, West Prussia and eastern Upper Silesia; the Habsburg province of Galicia; and the Russian Congress Kingdom of Poland and Volhynia) now find themselves living in the restored Polish Republic. But the Germans in these various regions never manage to develop a common identity as an ethnic German minority before the Second Polish Republic comes to a violent end. Although the ethnic German minorities can express themselves in the press, in cultural **clubs and political parties, the 'Polish policy of suppression' (Detlef Brandes) leads to a significant decline in the proportion of Germans in Greater Poland, Pomerelia and eastern Upper Silesia, from 1,2 million at the end of World War I to 342,000 in 1926.** The use of German in schools is also suppressed. The German minorities look to Berlin rather than Warsaw for political leadership and never regard Poland as their own state.

Not only ethnic Germans are affected by conflicts between majority and minority groups during this time; many other European minorities find themselves struggling in an increasingly anti-democratic and nationalist climate. The new post-war order has left not only ethnic Germans, but above all Ukrainians, Hungarians, Belarussians, Poles, Turks and Jews in a diaspora. But the inter-war period is characterized not only by ethnic conflicts and does not lead automatically to war and expulsion. Other rules and loyalties often apply at regional and local level, enabling peaceful interaction across ethnic lines. For example, Czernowitz in the region of Bukovina, which was given to Romania under the 1919 Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye following the demise of the Habsburg Empire, remains a city of great ethnic and religious diversity until 1939. Although residents face increased pressure to assimilate,

especially in schools, various language communities remain active. The Polish, Ruthenian, German and Jewish residents of Czernowitz enjoy a vibrant cultural life and are active in a wide variety of clubs, although the Jewish residents face greater anti-Semitism.

Complex national and ethnic affiliations may be more common in central and eastern Europe but are certainly not restricted to these areas, as the example of Alsace and eastern Lorraine shows. In this region, ceded to the French Republic in 1918, '**selection committees**' of the French administration divide the local population into four groups; one of these, Group D, consists of residents with German roots who moved to the region after 1870 (mainly persons in the military and civil service). These persons are forced to leave the country by September 1920. Most of the native German-speaking population remains in Alsace and does not question French rule, although a movement for greater autonomy is formed to protect the **cultural traditions of the German language community against the government's policy of centralization.**

While Germany recognizes its western borders defined in the 1926 Treaty of Locarno, it exploits the minority issue in the east to challenge the Treaty of Versailles and have the eastern borders redrawn. Before 1933, these efforts are pursued through diplomatic channels; after 1933, they increasingly take the form of threats and ultimately the use of military force. The rapidly growing influence of National Socialist ideology among the ethnic German minorities has a disastrous effect on their already troubled integration and weakens their loyalty to the new states.

Topics:

- Minority policies of the European states
- Cultural and political organizations of the ethnic German minorities
- The rise of new loyalties and self-images among the 'border and foreign **Germans**'
- The acceptance of National Socialism by numerous organizations of the ethnic German minorities
- Politics and society in the eastern Prussian provinces during the Weimar Republic and under National Socialism

Possible case studies:

- Expulsions in the west? Alsace-Lorraine in 1919
- The politicization of the Sudeten issue
- Romanization policy in Bukovina
- A German-Polish-Silesian community in Upper Silesia
- The Polish-Czech border conflict over Cieszyn Silesia/Śląsk Cieszyński/Těšínsko
- German-Polish relations in West Prussia/Pomorze Gdańskie
- Magyars outside Hungary
- Estonia's minority policy as a model

3. Volksgemeinschaft, anti-Semitism and Lebensraum im Osten: Central elements of National Socialism

Nazi fantasies of superiority and annihilation are the main force driving rearmament, race policy, war, expulsion and genocide. This chapter of the exhibition will follow the rise of the racist and anti-Semitic elements of National Socialist ideology and how the totalitarian Nazi state translated them into concrete action up to the year 1938.

The National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) comes to power in 1933, a watershed year. Nazi ideology of biological determinism defines the differences of **'the other' as a fact of nature**; older projects aimed at cultural assimilation are replaced by violent policies of segregation and eradication. As a result, minorities such as Jews, Sinti and Roma are initially excluded, deprived of their rights and expelled.

The 'new European order' envisioned by the Nazis goes well beyond revising the resolutions of the Versailles Peace Conference. To give their aims the appearance of legitimacy, they draw on the results of research on German settlement in the east, known as Ostforschung. Already during the Weimar Republic, German scholars had established an ideological construct which defined large areas of eastern Europe as traditional areas of German settlement and culture and did not regard the Slav majority population as having a comparable level of civilization.

Adolf Hitler calls the Germans a **'people without space'** (Hans Grimm) who need **'room to live'** (Lebensraum) in the east. Early on, he expresses his belief that **'one cannot Germanize people, only land'**, which leads to his call for **'space without people'** for a **'people without space'**.

Topics:

- Policies of exclusion and expulsion in Nazi Germany after 1933
- Anti-Semitism as a unique radicalizing element of Nazi ideology
- Nazi population studies: biological policy, statistics, settlement policy
- The ideology of Lebensraum

Possible case studies:

- Masuria during the Third Reich
- Flatow: The end of a German-Jewish community in the border region of Posen-West Prussia

4. World War II

4.1 The terror of occupation, forced migration and genocide as part of the Nazi regime

The year 1938 represents a turning point in many ways: The Munich Agreement allows Nazi Germany to annex the Sudeten region, which is followed by the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia; in connection with the pogrom in November 1938, 17,000 Jews with Polish passports are forced to leave Germany.

After the German invasion of Poland these incidents, which Polish historian Jerzy Tomaszewski has called **'the opening act to annihilation'**, are followed by extensive expulsions and resettlement as the Nazis radicalize the principle of creating ethnically homogeneous populations practised in south-eastern Europe since the start of the 20th century and establish their own policy of expulsion on the basis of racist criteria. In the years to come, the Nazi government will forcibly resettle individual ethnic groups in many parts of Nazi-occupied Europe. In Poland, large numbers of people are expelled, with the aim of vacating broad areas of land for resettlement by Germans; people in Slovenia and Lorraine are also forced to leave their homes.

Over the next six years, up to six million Poles fall victim to the German occupation. After Nazi Germany attacks the Soviet Union in summer 1941, launching its racist war of annihilation, Nazi warfare and occupation become increasingly harsh. Underpinned by anti-Slav ideology, the **Nazis'** strategy of genocide is expressed in the Generalplan Ost (master plan for the East), **with its ultimate goal of 'Germanization' and of enslaving the peoples of eastern Europe all the way to the Ural Mountains.**

The Nazi regime consciously exploits long-standing conflicts between ethnic groups to consolidate its own power in the occupied countries. Introducing a list of ethnic Germans (Deutsche Volksliste) as part of Nazi population policy destroys traditional regional ties and loyalties. The list creates a hierarchy of ethnic affiliation and assigns people better or worse chances of survival. In Ukraine, the list is used above all to select candidates for **'Germanization projects'** as part of the Generalplan Ost.

The death of millions of Soviet prisoners of war is simply taken for granted. Millions of Soviet civilians, above all Ukrainians, Belarussians and Russians, are victims of the ruthless measures taken against partisans, of the cruel and **exploitative occupation and later of the 'scorched earth' policy.**

Occupied Poland and the western Soviet Union become the central site of the Nazi genocide. Expropriation, deportation and ghettoization culminate in the systematic murder of six million European Jews (three million of them Polish citizens) and half a million Sinti and Roma. Auschwitz becomes the symbol of National Socialist inhumanity.

4.2 **The 'ethnic regime' in the Soviet Union under Stalin**

The Hitler-Stalin Pact signed in August 1939 paves the way for the Nazi invasion of Poland and the renewed partition of that country. The two totalitarian regimes turn eastern Europe into an area of unbridled violence where they put their genocidal ethnic policies into practice.

The Hitler-Stalin Pact provides for resettlement campaigns which affect Baltic Germans and ethnic Germans from Volhynia, Galicia, the Narew region of Poland, Dobruja, Bukovina and Bessarabia. In the Soviet-occupied part of Poland, the Soviet secret police execute thousands of members of the Polish elite, which becomes known as the Katyn massacre. Before and after Germany attacks the Soviet Union, hundreds of thousands of Poles, Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians are deported to Central Asia and Siberia. These follow on the mass deportations Stalin began before World War II to punish supposedly unreliable ethnic groups and remove them from regions of strategic importance. **In the early 1930s, the 'purging' of the western border areas mainly affected Poles and Germans.** After Germany attacks the Soviet Union in June 1941, Stalin deports a number of ethnic groups to Central Asia and Siberia, starting with Finns and Germans as a preventive measure and followed by Chechens, Ingush and Crimean Tatars as collective punishment for alleged collaboration. Several thousand ethnic Germans who avoided resettlement to German-occupied Poland or to Germany and thus remain in the Soviet Union are registered on the list of ethnic Germans in Ukraine; as a result, they are found guilty of treason and sentenced to spend years in prison camps.

Even after World War II, the Soviet Union under Stalin continues its policy of ethnic cleansing, deporting millions of its people within its territory. It also signs resettlement agreements with Poland and Czechoslovakia in which resettlement is formally on a voluntary basis.

4.3 Evacuation and flight of the German civilian population

After the German front collapses, the Soviet Army is at the German border in East Prussia by the summer of 1944. Rumours of Soviet atrocities create panic among the civilian population. Millions of Germans leave their homes. Many die in the fighting or subsequent violence by Red Army troops; others die en route during the extremely hard winter of 1944/45 or commit suicide rather than fall into the hands of Soviet troops.

The specific situation differs from region to region. When the Red Army first enters German territory in mid-October 1944, troops kill a number of civilians in the village of Nemmersdorf in East Prussia. After the German Wehrmacht recaptures the village, the Nazi leadership uses this incident for propaganda purposes, calling on the civilian population to stand firm rather than organizing a timely evacuation. For their part, the Soviet troops, who for the past two years have fought town by town, city by city to recapture their devastated country, are encouraged by their leaders to take revenge.

Executions of German civilians are an everyday occurrence, as are mass rape, looting and imprisonment. Alexander Solzhenitsyn later describes the brutality of the Soviet march into East Prussia, which he experiences first-hand as a Soviet army officer, in his long poem **'Prussian Nights'**. **Serving as propaganda officer and interpreter, Lev Kopelev also experiences the violence of the Red Army in East Prussia; when he tries to intervene, he is expelled from the Communist Party and sentenced to prison camp for 'compassion with the enemy'.** **A dissident and author in later life, he describes the East Prussian campaign in his autobiography To Be Preserved Forever.**

Mass rape traumatizes women in the areas captured by the Red Army: Women are gang-raped to death; sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and abortions are common. Many women choose suicide as a way out. Strong taboos prevent public and private discussion of the subject for decades, so the number of victims can only be guessed

at; estimates are as high as 1.4 million victims in the eastern provinces. The women receive little help with their physical and emotional suffering; in many cases, they cannot even talk to their families about it.

For weeks, the only escape route to the west for the fleeing population is across the frozen Vistula Bay to the Vistula Spit. Up to two million refugees are evacuated to the west by sea. Tens of thousands die, many of them in the sinking of the ships Goya and Wilhelm Gustloff. The Red Army overtakes many groups of refugees as they flee Eastern Pomerania. The Neumark region of Brandenburg is evacuated much too late and suffers the highest proportion of losses of all eastern German regions. The city of Breslau in Silesia is declared a 'fortress' to be defended at all costs; the local Nazi leader calls on residents to hold fast and fails to order evacuation in time, resulting in a large loss of life in the winter of 1944/45. As in the eastern Prussian provinces, the evacuation and flight of German civilians from other parts of eastern and south-eastern Europe differs by region.

But in every case, the refugees' progress is repeatedly interrupted; the evacuation measures undertaken by the German authorities are subordinate to the needs of the military, so few refugees are saved in an orderly and timely fashion. In many cases, German troops halt groups of refugees heading west.

Families are torn apart and children separated from their mothers. Those unable to flee and overtaken by the front try to return to their homes, usually in vain. Many are stranded along the way in places that seem at least relatively safe. Starting in February 1945, up to 200,000 German civilians from the eastern Prussian provinces are deported to the Soviet Union as forced labourers, according to post-war German estimates. When Germany surrenders in May 1945, about 4.4 million Germans are still in the areas east of the Oder-Neisse line. Cut off from all news, they have no idea what the future will bring. In the end, they too will be unable to remain.

Unlike other refugee movements in history, the refugees from the eastern German provinces will never be able to return to their homes.

Topics:

- The Munich Agreement and its consequences for the population of the regions cut off from Czechoslovakia
- The Free City of Danzig, the Polish Corridor and the German invasion of Poland
- The German Reich's policy of annexation and occupation
- Resettlement of ethnic Germans, the German Volksliste and Nazi population policy
- German nationals' and ethnic Germans' support for the Nazis during the war and German occupation
- The Generalplan Ost: Expulsion, forced labour, mass murder
- Deportation, ghettoization and the Holocaust
- Evacuation of the concentration and death camps, death marches
- The ethnic regime of the Soviet Union under Stalin
- The Hitler-Stalin Pact and Soviet expulsion policy
- Deported Russian Germans in the Soviet forced labour system
- Evacuation from German settlement areas in south-eastern Europe
- Evacuation and flight of Germans from the eastern parts of the Reich
- Rape as a mass phenomenon

- The forced deportation of able-bodied German civilians to the Soviet Union

Possible case studies:

- Lodz: Centre of German policy of resettlement and ghettoization
- Aktion Zamość and the Nazi policy of expulsion
- A Volga German village between the October Revolution and deportation
- Kazakhstan as a place of exile for ethnic groups deported by Stalin
- The evacuation of a community in northern Transylvania
- Fleeing across the Vistula Bay in East Prussia
- The city of Stolp in Pomerania after its capture by the Red Army
- The Prague Uprising

5. The expulsion of Germans and the reorganization of Europe

5.1 The path to the Potsdam Conference

After the German surrender at Stalingrad in early 1943, the Allies begin planning for the post-war future. Planning begins at the Tehran Conference in late 1943, followed by meetings in Yalta (February 1945) and Potsdam (July–August 1945).

Unlike the situation after World War I, **following the experience of the Nazis' policy of expansionism and annihilation a rigorous policy of expulsion is internationally accepted for the territorial reorganization of central and eastern Europe, including the westward shift of Poland's borders. This also applies to regions in which redrawing the borders will create ethnic German minorities.** Experience before and during World War II leads Poland and Czechoslovakia to the conviction that German minorities cannot be loyal citizens. The principles of self-determination and minority protection are replaced by a policy of creating ethnically homogeneous nation-states.

With support from the governments in exile of the central and eastern European governments, the Allies plan to expel millions of Germans from central and eastern Europe. **The minutes of the Potsdam Conference describe them as 'transfers' to be carried out in an 'orderly and humane manner'.** Some in the West, in the Polish government in exile and even in the Soviet government are critical of expulsion, but their objections are ignored. **The Polish government in exile tries to have Poland's pre-war border in the east restored and to limit territorial expansion in the west in order not to give the Allies any reason to make Poland give up territory in the east.** For this reason, until autumn 1944 the Polish exile government **expresses concern about incorporating the 'almost completely German' cities of Breslau and Stettin.** But in view of the unavoidable loss of **Poland's eastern territories, which the Polish communists are forced to concede to the Soviet leadership, politicians in Poland's other parties, such as Stanisław Mikołajczyk, the leader of the Polish farmers' party, change their minds in the course of 1945.** There is a political consensus in post-war Polish society on drawing the western border along the Oder-Neisse line.

Stalin plays a major role in establishing the new borders of post-war Europe to expand the Soviet sphere of influence to central Europe and the Balkans. Expelling the Germans also helps establish communist governments. **Immediately after Poland's westward shift, more than a million Poles are forcibly resettled from the eastern territories now given to the Soviet Union; most of them are moved to the formerly German territories in the west.** About 2.8 million Poles are estimated to be living in **Poland's eastern territories when the Soviet Army approaches in 1944.** Major centres of Polish culture such as Lwów, Grodno and Wilno become part of the **Soviet Union as a result of Stalin's power politics.** About 1.3 million Poles (including 54,000 Jews) are forced to move to Poland by summer 1946, although officially **they do so voluntarily. They are euphemistically called 'repatriates'.** For example, Poles from Lwów are resettled in and around Wrocław (Breslau), where they continue to maintain the traditions of their former homeland.

In Czechoslovakia, the expulsion of Germans and the growing labour shortages lead the government in July 1945 to encourage **Czechs and Slovaks living abroad to return as 're-emigrants'.** Their numbers include nearly 39,000 'Volhynia Czechs' in Ukraine who are

resettled in the once-German regions of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia under an agreement with the Soviet Union.

By contrast, the German-speaking minorities in western and southern Europe, such as eastern Belgium, South Tyrol and North Schleswig, are allowed to remain after 1945; their post-war situation can be considered an example of success in dealing with minority issues.

5.2 'Wild' expulsions

Processes of expulsion differ from region to region, but they are almost always drastic and inhuman and claim numerous lives. The central and eastern European governments are responsible for carrying out resettlement measures, which start in Poland and Czechoslovakia **with 'wild' expulsions' intended to create facts on the ground ahead of the Potsdam Conference**, especially in the strip of territory just east of the Oder and Lusatian Neisse rivers, from which Germans are systematically driven out in June and July 1945. The river crossings are also blocked off to keep refugees from returning to their homes. And more than a half million Germans are expelled from Czechoslovakia between May and August 1945.

For Germans, this transitional period is marked by uncertainty, arbitrariness, denunciations and lawlessness. Many die of starvation, disease and lack of medical care, while others are victims of revenge and retaliation. In Czechoslovakia and parts of Poland, Germans are required to wear armbands publicly identifying them as such. Ethnic Germans and former Polish citizens who registered with the German Volksliste during Nazi rule are collectively condemned as traitors to the nation. In Poland, Germans are sent to labour camps: Potulice, Lamsdorf, Jaworzno, Zgoda and Sikawa become synonyms for cruelty. In Czechoslovakia too, Germans are forced to labour in hundreds of camps, where they must endure severe mistreatment.

In the former German territories, Polish administrative authorities are gradually set up to **organize the restructuring and resettlement of the 'regained territories'**. In the process, there are often bitter conflicts between Soviet troops and the Polish authorities; the German civilian population is stuck in the middle without legal rights. In both Poland and Czechoslovakia, new laws, decrees and regulations are used to seize German property. Now that the Germans must leave, the people of Poland and Czechoslovakia demonstrate a wide range of behaviour towards them, from violence and indifference to examples of humanity by their Polish and Czech neighbours.

5.3 Forced migration

The phase of 'wild' expulsions is followed by forced migration organized on the basis of the Potsdam Conference resolutions. The relevant governments are involved, along with communist party organizations, military and police units, but criminals and gangs also take advantage of the situation. According to a plan published by the Allied Control Council in November 1945, the German population from Poland and the former eastern German territories is to be transferred mainly to the Soviet and British zones of occupation, while the Germans from Czechoslovakia are to be transferred mainly to the American and Soviet zones of occupation. Germans from Hungary are also to be transferred to the American occupation zone.

Women, children and the elderly are transferred first, while the transfer of skilled workers, who are urgently needed, is often delayed. As a result, many families are separated, not to be reunited until years later. Most displaced persons arrive at the designated camps in the Allied zones of occupation with little more than the clothes on their backs. Even in 'orderly' resettlement, many die during the strenuous journey in cattle cars, due to lack of medical care, exposure or malnutrition.

5.4 Deportation, internment and expulsion in south-eastern Europe

Although Hungary was an ally of Nazi Germany for years, it is the only country in south-eastern Europe which the Potsdam Agreement authorizes to expel its German population. Starting in 1946, Hungarian Germans are expelled for political and economic reasons, though the expulsions are accompanied by far less violence than in other countries. Half of the German population is not affected by the expulsions. The Hungarian government is long divided over the extent of the population to be expelled: The communists and the party representing agrarian interests insist on radical expulsions, while the party of smallholders is torn between respect for middle-class property rights and Magyar nationalism. The Social Democrats are sceptical about collective punishment for the Germans. This position takes into account the uncertain fate of Hungarians in southern Slovakia; expelling the Hungarian Germans could set a negative precedent for treatment of the former.

The ethnic German population is allowed to remain in Romania, but is hard hit by deportations to the Soviet Union starting in January 1945. In addition to tens of thousands of ethnic Germans from Hungary and Yugoslavia, 70,000 ethnic Germans are deported from Romania alone, most of them men aged 17 to 45 and women aged 18 to 30. Most of them are forced to labour under extreme conditions in the Donets Basin or in the iron and steel industry in the southern Soviet Union; the mortality rate is 10% to 15%. The last deportees are not allowed to return home until the late 1940s. In the early 1950s, ten thousand Banat Swabians are deported to the Baragan Steppe of south-eastern Romania. The nationalistic policy of assimilation under dictator Nicolae Ceauşescu in the 1980s leads to cultural discrimination against the remaining ethnic Germans in Romania, and large numbers of Transylvanian Saxons and Banat Swabians leave the country.

Yugoslavia pursues its policy of expulsion and internment of its German population without any internationally recognized legal basis. **Yugoslavia's entire** German population is sent to internment camps and their property is seized. Life in the camps is brutal and many die: an estimated 11,000 in Rudolfsgnad, 8,500 in Gakowa and 7,000 in Jarek.

The Italian community along the Istrian and Dalmatian coasts is removed from Yugoslavia in a **resettlement process known in Italy as the 'exodus'**. **Already at the end of the war, the** Yugoslavian army kills as many as 4,000 Italians in the karst sink-holes (foiba) of the region, in what is known as the Foibe massacres. Under the peace treaty of 10 February 1947 between Italy and the Allies, the Italian residents are given the right to choose whether to retain their Italian citizenship or to assume Yugoslavian citizenship. Yugoslavia may legally expel those who choose to retain their Italian citizenship. In addition, communists use harassment, political pressure and violence to force Italians to leave. By 1956, roughly 300,000 Italians leave Istria and Dalmatia, in particular the cities of Zadar (Italian: Zara) and Rijeka (Italian: Fiume).

The number of deaths caused by flight and expulsion is enormous, but the exact number is impossible to determine with certainty, even with extensive research. In 1958, the Federal Statistical Office calculates 1,338,700 unexplained deaths among the civilian population of the eastern Prussian provinces and 886,300 unexplained deaths among the German civilian population outside the borders of the Reich (not including ethnic Germans in Russia). These figures include deaths during the war and the entire period of flight, so in 1974 the Federal Archives determine by way of explanation that it is not possible for this total of 2.2 million unexplained deaths to have resulted from expulsions alone. Based on estimates and the analysis of written reports, the Federal Archives calculates a minimum of 600,000 deaths resulting from expulsion: more than 400,000 of them in the regions east of the Oder and Neisse rivers, more than 130,000 in Czechoslovakia and more than 80,000 in Yugoslavia.

A comprehensive study commissioned by the Danube Swabian Cultural Foundation provides a more precise estimate of the civilian losses among the ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia, arriving at a figure of nearly 60,000 deaths. Based on new research, a German-Czech commission of historians in 1996 recommends assuming a figure of up to 30,000 victims of violence related to the expulsion of Sudeten Germans.

The wide range in figures results from different methods of calculating and gathering data and from differing definitions of victims. Among other things, it is unclear how to count those who died of the effects of expulsion soon after arriving at their destinations.

Topics:

- Allied plans for post-war Europe
- Plans of the governments in exile, the popular democracies and of Czechoslovakia 1944–1948 and their implementation in law, e.g. the **Beneš Decrees**
- Local violence and materialist motives
- How forced migration from the eastern Prussian provinces was planned and carried out
- How forced migration from Czechoslovakia was planned and carried out
- How forced migration from northern East Prussia was planned and carried out
- Deportation and labour camps
- (Forced) resettlement of Magyars and Slovaks
- (Forced) resettlement of Poles, Ukrainians and Belarussians
- The situation of ethnic Germans who stayed in their homelands
- Resettlement of ethnic Germans to Germany since the 1950s
- German minorities in western Europe
- The expulsion of Germans from Hungary
- The fate of Danube Swabians in Yugoslavia and Yugoslavian plans for expulsion and new settlement starting in 1944

Possible case studies:

- Postelberg/Postoloprty: Violence against the civilian population of Sudeten Germans
- Aktion Ullmann: Resettlement of Sudeten German social democrats
- Breslau and Lemberg in 1945: Loss of homeland and population transfer in two large European cities
- The Central Labour Camp in Jaworzno
- The dismissal of the German bishops in Danzig and Ermland

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- Deportations from Transylvania and Banat to the Soviet Union
- East Prussian war orphans ('wolf children') in Lithuania
- Rijeka/Fiume: The Treaty of Osimo and the 'exodus' of Italians from Istria

6. Refugees and expellees in Germany and Europe after 1945: Strategies, conflicts and success in processes of integration

6.1 Arrival experiences

As the **result of World War II and the Allies' decisions concerning the post-war order**, millions of Europeans lose their homes and, in many cases, their lives: Germans, Poles, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Finns and many others. By the time forced resettlements are completed, roughly 14 million German refugees and expellees have had to leave their homes. Their lives in the four zones of occupation are often marked by alienation and exclusion; hunger and want are constant companions, as is the search for missing family members. Many have to live in camps or share their homes with soldiers. These experiences are shared by millions of displaced persons and prisoners of war who must wait to emigrate or return to their home countries after being liberated from the Germans.

The proportion of expellees in the four zones of occupation varies widely: Bavaria, Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony accept large numbers of expellees, while the French zone of occupation initially refuses to take any. Because of its geographical proximity to their regions of origin, the Soviet zone of occupation has a very high proportion of expellees, and in some parts of Mecklenburg and Western Pomerania, refugees and expellees are in the majority. In order to avoid creating new pockets of minorities, the authorities do not consider social, religious or cultural affiliations when assigning expellees new places to live. Their arrival fundamentally changes the religious and social composition of the rest of Germany.

The churches play a crucial role in supplying immediate needs upon arrival: Catholic and **Protestant organizations provide initial material aid and above all minister to the expellees' spiritual needs**. Religious groups are soon formed among the expellees themselves, such as the Protestant aid committees which make up the convention of dispersed Protestant churches from the East. Among Catholics, important groups include the homeland organizations of the eastern German dioceses and the Sudeten German Ackermann congregation.

6.2 Between integration and assimilation: Refugees and expellees in the two German states

The founding of the two German states contrasts two fundamentally different strategies for integrating German expellees: in the west, integration with the help of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, cultivation of homeland traditions and church work; in the east, forced assimilation and official silence regarding the expulsions.

The process of economic, social and political integration is by no means easy and is different for every individual. Nonetheless, millions of expellees help rebuild the Federal Republic of Germany with the help of immediate state aid and financial compensation for losses suffered in the war. Expellees with industrial and crafts occupations assigned to live in rural and forested areas help bring about rapid economic growth there. Against the backdrop of the **Cold War, political parties in the Federal Republic initially compete for expellees' votes**. The expellee issue ultimately polarizes the effort to conclude **treaties with the Federal Republic's eastern neighbours** and becomes a lasting bone of contention. Starting in the 1970s, the expellee issue is increasingly marginalized. In the German Democratic Republic, expellees often face state repression simply for meeting other expellees from the same region of origin.

Other European countries also face the difficult task of creating a new home for expelled or resettled groups. Finnish integration policy is viewed as a model: Karelians who have fled the Soviet Union receive rapid and unbureaucratic aid in the form of financial compensation for war losses. And unlike the Allied occupiers in Germany, the Finnish authorities often resettle refugees from the same area of origin as a group.

6.3 Reconciliation initiatives

Early on, the churches make symbolic gestures of reconciliation between the Germans and their eastern neighbours. In 1965, an open letter from the Polish bishops with the message **'We forgive and ask for forgiveness'** sends an important signal of willingness to reconcile. A 1965 memorandum from the Protestant Church in Germany on the situation of expellees and the relations of the German people to their eastern neighbours is also influential. It becomes the subject of passionate discussion within the church and in society as a whole as it **deplores the lack of solidarity shown by German society for expellees, 'to whom we obviously owe a great deal'** while calling for acknowledgement of the new political realities in Europe. Church organizations such as the ecumenical Action Reconciliation – Service for Peace begin working in the late 1950s to improve relations **with Germany's eastern neighbours**.

In the Federal Republic, expellees and their descendants are actively involved in improving understanding with their eastern neighbours. Starting in the early 1970s, they take advantage **of the opportunities offered by the Federal Republic's new Ostpolitik to travel to their former homelands**, in many cases initiating friendships with the current residents. In the GDR, expellees are able to travel to Poland even earlier. When martial law is imposed in Poland in December 1981, many expellees take part in campaigns to help people oppressed by the communist regime. On the other hand, some expellee organizations cling tenaciously to legal opinions confirmed by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1973 and 1975 in its rulings on **treaties with Germany's eastern neighbours. Their communist regimes exploit their citizens'** uncertainty regarding the permanence of the borders in order to stabilize their own systems, thereby perpetuating hostile stereotypes.

Topics:

- Arrival experiences of German refugees and expellees
- Different economic and social measures of integration in the two German states (land reform vs. Equalization of Burdens Act)
- The work of the churches' tracing services
- The 1950 Stuttgart Charter of German Expellees
- The fate of displaced persons
- Finnish integration policy as a model?
- Expellees and their political, cultural and religious organizations, including the history of the Bund der Vertriebenen and the range of religious, political and ideological positions represented by expellee political leaders
- How expellees changed society and culture in post-war Germany
- The collection and preservation of culture and dialects of ethnic Germans from eastern Europe
- Refugee and expellee narratives and interpretations of flight and expulsion
- The political dimensions of the expellee issue
- Flight, expulsion and loss of homeland in the literature of East and West Germany

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- The letter of the Polish bishops, the memorandum of the Protestant Church in Germany and other reconciliation initiatives since 1965, including those of individuals
- Czech, Polish and other initiatives before 1989 (e.g. Kultura)
- Long-term effects of the loss of homeland for refugees, expellees and succeeding generations
- The overseas emigration of German refugees and expellees
- A difficult legacy: Austria and its ethnic German refugees
- Emigration panic promoted by the state: The 'great excursion' of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey in summer 1989

Possible case studies:

- The Friedland transit camp
- Waldkraiburg: A city of expellees in the ruins of an explosives factory
- Wolfsburg and Eisenhüttenstadt: Hope for expelled workers
- Berlin: History of the Deutschlandhaus building
- A village divided by the river Oder: Expellees on both banks

7. After 1989: Towards a European culture of remembrance?

With the opening of the Iron Curtain, past conflicts between majorities and minorities which **had long been suppressed by the state are revived by unscrupulous 'ethnic' operators** seeking to exploit the situation. The wars over the breakup of Yugoslavia make flight and **expulsion, under the term 'ethnic cleansing', a reality in Europe once again. Europeans begin** studying expulsions that happened long ago and condemning expulsion as a policy tool. In **November 1989, Poland's Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Germany's Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl** attend a reconciliation mass at the former estate of the family of Helmuth James Graf von Moltke, a leader of the anti-Hitler resistance in Germany, in **Kreisau/Krzyżowa, Poland.**

But the (re-)constitution of sovereign nation-states raises painful questions about the past. At first, the focus is on studying the communist dictatorships, but taboos covering long-suppressed topics such as German contributions to cultural landscapes and the expulsion of their residents are also lifted and these topics studied. National stereotypes are thus analysed and questioned in the public discourse. With its project on the **'forgotten Sudetenland'**, the initiative Antikomplex founded by young Czechs explores abandoned Bohemian towns and villages. In Germany, too, growing numbers of **expellees'** children and grandchildren set out to explore their family history in their former homelands.

Asking about history also means asking about one's own identity. The submerged multi-ethnic worlds of central and eastern Europe are increasingly seen as a valuable shared heritage worth preserving. German and other minorities are guaranteed rights and allowed to express themselves in public. Signs of this change in attitudes include the declaration of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on 12 February 1991 expressing regret for the forced migration of Carpathian Germans and the statement by then-interior minister of Romania, Vasile Blaga, **at the heritage days of the Transylvania Saxons and Banat Swabians in 2010: 'I can tell you that Romania misses you.'** Many expellee groups at local level are in close contact with communities in their former homelands and are welcome partners in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Serbia.

Numerous regional projects, such as the Kreisau Foundation for European Understanding, are making international study and remembrance a European reality. These efforts create new perspectives for **Europe's future which attempt to do justice to the complexity of its historical heritage.** Nonetheless, significant differences between national attitudes towards World War II and its impact remain.

In addition to the German–Polish, German–Czech and German–Hungarian dialogues, processes of reconciliation are also taking place between other European peoples, such as between Poland and Ukrainians and Hungary and Slovaks.

Kyrgyzstan, Darfur, Congo: Although ethnically motivated expulsions reached their greatest extent so far in the 20th century, ethnic cleansing continues to be used in warfare and in mistaken attempts at conflict resolution. The designated route through the exhibition concludes with a look at expulsion today around the globe and its consequences for victims. In this way, the exhibition is intended to help document the international injustice of ethnic cleansing.

Topics:

- German-speaking minorities in central and eastern Europe today
- Russian German resettlers to Germany following deportation and exile
- Regional initiatives
- Ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia
- Political-historical debates and controversies in Germany and other countries
- The rise of new minorities in the wake of labour and economic migration after 1945 and the challenge of their integration in Europe
- The global character of forced migration and ethnic cleansing today

Possible case studies:

- A Danube Swabian cemetery in Serbia
- The city of Hermannstadt in Transylvania after 1989
- Polish-Ukrainian relations
- The Stari Most bridge in the Bosnian city of Mostar
- Whose history is it? The Masurian village Eichmedien/Nakomiady and its Bismarck monument
- The German-Polish Kreisau Foundation for European Understanding