

## Seeking Peace in the Wake of War

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# Seeking Peace in the Wake of War

*Europe, 1943-1947*

*Edited by*

*Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, Sandrine Kott,  
Peter Romijn and Olivier Wieviorka*

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# Introduction

Seeking Peace in the Wake of War: Europe, 1943-1947

*Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, Sandrine Kott, Peter Romijn and  
Olivier Wieviorka*

How do wars end? International law stipulates that a formal transition from a state of war to a state of peace results from the official surrender of a warring party, the conclusion of a peace treaty, or both. During the nineteenth century this straightforward concept of bringing war to an end proved to be difficult to put into practice. The outcome of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871 was not defined by the surrender of Emperor Napoleon III alone. Defeated France also underwent a complete political transformation. The deployment of the German army of occupation was decisive for the defeat of the Commune and the belated installation of the Third Republic.<sup>1</sup> As the character of warfare evolved to engage states and societies as a whole, the outcome of international armed conflicts likewise determined the social, economic and political life of warring nations. From this perspective, this volume seeks to analyse the transition from war to peace by European societies in the mid-1940s. Our main historiographical argument is a reinterpretation of the chronology: the period from 1943 (the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk, the invasion of North Africa, the fall of Mussolini) to 1947 (the Paris Treaties, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan) is considered here as a single and crucially important transformative moment in European history.

Engaging in 'total war' between 1914 and 1945 was founded upon the complete mobilization and deployment of the productive and military capacities of all nations involved. This is self-evident in the case of the belligerent states that engaged large parts of their populations, male and female, in the war effort and created war economies in support of their armies. Yet total war also had a severe impact on occupied territories and states, as well as on neutral states. In earlier times, occupying armies had lived off the land and plundered resources. Modern occupation relied on planning and consequently transformed the most important spheres of social and political life in conquered territories and vanquished states. A striking early example of economic exploitation is the large-scale introduction of

1 Vincent Duclert, *La République imaginée (1870-1914)*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Belin, 2014), pp. 31-137.

forced labour in occupied Belgium during the First World War.<sup>2</sup> In the same way, the 'traditional' practice of safeguarding the public order in occupied territories escalated into the creation of instruments for repressive control, persecution, ethnic cleansing and, in the most extreme cases, genocide.<sup>3</sup>

The Second World War in Europe was not solely about crushing the military capacity of the enemy states; it was also waged between radically opposed political, ideological and economic systems. As such, the victors imposed their visions of the post-war order on the vanquished, occupied and liberated nations of Europe. At the same time, the defeat of 'Hitler's Empire' and its subsidiaries gave rise to a broad spectrum of ambitions and initiatives from below. All over Europe, resisters, old and new political leaders, and other social actors prepared themselves for shaping the future of their post-war states.<sup>4</sup>

Through a series of interrelated case studies, this volume intends to demonstrate how all these ideas and initiatives, as well as the individual and collective experience of disruptive warfare and genocidal violence, reconfigured the trajectory of European societies and international relations. The authors explore these reconfigurations on different scales and levels – the local and regional, the national and the international – with the purpose of enhancing historical understanding of the many forms of what recent historiography has termed *sorties de guerre*, the 'ways out of the war' in Europe.<sup>5</sup> The case studies of the repatriation of Latvian orphans deported to Siberia and the social positioning of the Jews in post-war Poland, for example, help to explain how the end of the war allowed for the ethnic reordering of states and societies. Likewise, the influence of military interim rule on post-war societies is compared and evaluated from the grassroots level in different geographical settings: in the region of Ruthenia, in Italy, France, the Netherlands, and in defeated and occupied Germany. The politics of transition from war to peace in the sphere of economic and social recovery is another topic addressed by the transnationally oriented case studies in this volume, ranging from Greece to Western Europe. Consequently, from a historiographical point of view, this volume's approach questions the

2 Sophie de Schaepdrijver, *La Belgique et la Première Guerre Mondiale* (Berlin/New York: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2004).

3 Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka and Anette Warring, eds, *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini. Daily Life in Occupied Europe* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2006).

4 Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London: Allan Lane, 2008), pp. 553–581.

5 On the First World War, see Bruno Cabanes, *La victoire endeuillée. La sortie de guerre des soldats français (1918–1920)* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2014.)

dominant focus on the nation-state as the sole interpretive framework for post-war reconstruction.

As the Second World War came to an end, states, societies, special interest groups and individuals positioned themselves in both the international and domestic spheres in order to shape the post-war order. This volume investigates the extent to which they succeeded, and at what price. It provides both an example of the general topic of reordering societies after war and a particular answer to the implicit question raised by Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Culture of Defeat* (2001): why did the mid-1940s transition from war to peace not produce a similar quest for revanche among the vanquished as the Paris peace settlement of 1918-1919?<sup>6</sup>

Since the 1990s, historians of the First World War have widely discussed the transition from war to peace at the end of the twentieth century's first global conflict. It has become customary to discuss the end of that war through the wider perspective of political cultures. To that end, John Horne and others have utilized the concept of the 'demobilization' of society, of turning a state's war effort into a broad peace effort.<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, demobilization is not confined exclusively to the cessation of mass violence and to the return of the soldiers to civilian life. Societies also demobilize by scaling down the culture of war, which had involved celebrating the warrior and demonizing the enemy. Other strategies for demobilization involve repositioning the economy for recovery and meeting the everyday needs of a civilian population instead of the requirements of the armed forces.

Understanding the different 'ways out' of the Second World War is the main purpose of this volume. Historiographical insight into the strategies which governed the ways that European states and societies exited from the First World War offer an inspiration for historians of the Second World War and the post-war moment. The latter have tended to focus more extensively on specific concerns tied up with 1945 as a turning point, including the trials of war criminals and collaborators, the quest for citizenship, political purges and ethnic cleansing, social and economic reconstruction, and the shifts in the international arena due to the beginnings of the Cold War and Decolonization. In its engagement with the Second World War, the

6 Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Die Kultur der Niederlage. Der amerikanische Süden 1865, Frankreich 1870, Deutschland 1918* (Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag, 2001). Published in English as *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, Recovery*, trans. Jefferson Chase (London: Granta, 2004).

7 John Horne, 'War and Conflict in Contemporary Europe, 1914-2004', in *Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp. 81-95.

historiography has dealt – for good reasons – with the transition from war to peace from the viewpoint of what preceded the end of the war: one of the largest military campaigns and examples of civilian carnage in human history.

In *Germany 1945* (2009), Richard Bessel argues for the credibility of the contemporary understanding of ‘*Stunde Null*’ in Germany – the moment between war and peace, between catastrophic defeat and a new beginning in everyday life. ‘What mattered after the devastation was being able to retrieve fragments of a normal existence, whether that meant having a habitable living room once again or being able to exercise one’s profession as a doctor.’<sup>8</sup> This probably holds true for the experience of the vast majority of Europeans in the wake of war, in both the victorious and vanquished nations. *Life after Death* (2003), edited by Richard Bessel and Dirk Schumann addresses the longer-term impact of the post-WWII transition from war to peace in Western and Central Europe and takes as its point of departure a certain surprise among the contributors about the seemingly commonsensical return to social, political and cultural normalcy. This return to normalcy was impossible for most people in Eastern Europe, especially for the Jewish survivors of concentration camps who had lost everything, but surviving the end of war and regaining some stability in life was of paramount importance for individuals here as well.

What, then, were the main trajectories in the Europe-wide transition from war to peace? This volume zooms in on the courses of action chosen when dealing with the urgent problems of the day. Such an approach aims to emphasize the fact that the transition opened up a variety of trajectories, shaped by broad political choices and strategies as well as by individual and collective objectives, all of which contributed to shaping post-war European societies. Options chosen for solving particular problems in local contexts were likely to influence national or international relations. As the war came to an end decisive choices loomed large everywhere. They concerned positioning and planning for the post-war order. New geopolitical conditions created tensions among the Allies and new senses of belonging and citizenship in occupied and embattled states. Improvising on the ground and meeting the pressing needs of everyday life would contribute just as much to the shaping of the post-war order as grand designs projected top-down by the Great Powers.

In their contributions to this volume, the authors explore the impact of war, occupation and oppression in many different fields of political and

8 Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945: From War to Peace* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), p. 395.

social life. The experience of the Second World War exacerbated some tensions which pre-dated the war. Two examples addressed in this volume are the ethnic conflicts in the Polish borderlands and the position of ethnic Germans in Czechoslovakia. The war reshaped urgent pre-war problems as well, for instance in the field of economics. The prolonged slump of the 1930s and its disastrous impact on social life was widely seen as a crucial condition for the success of right-wing authoritarianism, and for the weakness of many European democracies in confronting it. By relying on pre-war ideas and employing the experiences of organized war economies, planning was also seen as a means of organizing economic recovery. On the other hand, in order to mobilize the populations for war, extended welfare had already been promised in August 1941 by the Atlantic Charter. This promise for more welfare and more social solidarity was also part of the programmes of the various resistance movements at least in the western part of Europe.

Studying individual and collective agency also helps explain what actions, considerations and decisions contributed to the reconfiguration of Europe in a relatively brief period of time. In the cases presented here, the contributors discuss actors on all levels in a variety of European nations: individual stakeholders like resisters, former collaborators, politicians, journalists, as well as collective bodies like armies, governments, political formations and international organizations. The volume also sheds light on those groups which did not have the same kind of agency, especially the millions of European refugees who were on the move in the mid-1940s, including former concentration camp inmates and forced labourers, DPs, and German expellees, among others.

The time frame adopted by this volume begins in 1943, when the turnabout in the Second World War in Europe became evident owing to the defeat of the German armies in Stalingrad, northern Africa and Kursk, the fall of Mussolini in Italy and other developments that forced military planners, political elites and populations to begin to imagine a post-war world and to start planning for it.

The year 1947, taken as the end point of this volume, is a bit more flexible. The post-war moment ended earlier in Western Europe than, for example, in the German lands, Poland or Greece. Indeed, the last two displaced persons camps in Germany were closed at the end of the 1950s.

Meanwhile, by 1947 the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was shut down, the Marshall Plan was launched and Europe was locked into a new conflict between East and West, which shaped societies, as well as the lives and experiences of citizens, in both parts of Europe until at least 1989-1990. Thus, the volume will refrain from addressing topics

which stretch across a much larger time frame, such as the social memory of the war that evolved over the following decades.<sup>9</sup> Instead, it highlights the manifold phenomena involved in a dense but short period of time from war to peace and offers new perspectives on the all-encompassing processes of socio-political reconfiguration on the local, national and international levels, thereby illuminating this transformative moment in twentieth-century European history from different angles.

### **Liberation – From What and for Whom?**

In most European states, the end of the Second World War is remembered as ‘The Liberation’. The term has also been widely used by historians, instead of ‘victory’ (in sharp contrast with the First World War). But the question is: liberation from what? The word ‘liberation’ has proven easy to use, but hard to conceptualize. The use of the concept of liberation in the historiography could be connected in the first place to the restoration of nation-states in the wake of war. Some nation-states claimed to have liberated themselves, while other states had to recognize that they were liberated by the Allies. This draws attention to the political dimension of the idea of liberation: peoples and states were allegedly liberated from Nazi rule, but also from capitalist oppression, feudalism, military dictatorship and ethnic discrimination. On the other hand, successor regimes were prepared, and able, to oppress large categories of people for the purpose of consolidating power and building the nation. Liberations and political or socio-economic transitions in Europe were overlapping phenomena.<sup>10</sup>

With hindsight, we are able to see the complex issues at hand during the years between 1943 and 1947. But how did Europeans experience these events at the time? Who had cause for celebrating the end of oppression, persecution and foreign rule? At an even more basic level, did hardship and mass violence actually come to an end? The photographic imagery of the time displays the losers and winners of war, but with hindsight it is surprisingly difficult to establish who lost and who won. All over Europe vanquished fascists, national socialists and collaborators were quite visible when dragged out of their homes, abused in the streets, summarily shot or confined in internment camps. But not all of them experienced

9 See, for example, Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller, eds, *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2010).

10 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).

this treatment. Conversely, irregular fighters who contributed to Nazi Germany's defeat after having enjoyed a brief spell of glory could become persecuted or at least marginalized, as was the case for some Western European resisters, and more prominently for Soviet partisans, the Polish Home Army or left-wing guerrilla fighters in Greece.

Women were especially targeted in this context. The images of shorn women accused of collaboration in general and of intimate relations with German soldiers and occupiers in particular, testify to the social 'carnival' of liberation as a national cleansing ritual in many European societies. In these cases, the individual humiliation of women was understood as a public way of erasing the national humiliation of occupation and collaboration. The superiority of the Allies – as male victors – was in many places underscored by their often violent 'appropriation' of women as the 'spoils of war' in liberated or occupied territories.<sup>11</sup> However, the impact of war and liberation on gender relations should be considered more broadly. Given that the war had been a period of mass mobilization, women were recruited *en masse* all over Europe to join the workforce on either a voluntary or compulsory basis. Were they, however, able to participate to the same degree in post-war reconstruction efforts? The fact that many women were active in the resistance movement, for example, and that they gained universal suffrage in France, Italy or Belgium in 1945, 1946 and 1948, respectively, does not necessarily mean that women were able to maintain, during the period of post-war reconstruction, the degrees of social agency they had gained by coping with mounting repression, hardship and havoc in the final stages of the war and its immediate aftermath. Ultimately, the brutal humiliation of women as alleged collaborators and their removal from the workforce aimed at restoring the symbolic order of pre-war gender relations.

Liberations, occupations and political transitions in Europe were overlapping phenomena, all part of the process of reconfiguring power relations in post-war states and societies. Italy was occupied step-by-step by the Allies in 1943 and, like Austria, reinvented itself as a victim of Nazi aggression, while the German Reich was completely dissolved. In several cases, for instance in Greece, the end of the Second World War did not produce the end of a civil war that had started in the context of Axis occupation. In the West, under

11 Fabrice Virgili, *La France 'virile'. Des femmes tondues à la Libération* (Paris: Payot et Rivages, 2000). Published in English as *Shorn Women: Gender and Punishment in Liberation France*, trans. John Flower (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 68-140; Monika Diederichs, *Wie geschoren word moet stil zitten* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2006).



the umbrella of the USA, occupied states and political regimes were generally restored to their pre-war status; even in the case of France, which had collaborated with the Nazis, the Republic (albeit a new one) was reinstalled. In the East, states were incorporated into the Soviet sphere of interest and borders were drastically redrawn. Consequently, large minorities – in some cases majorities – in many states did not feel ‘liberated’ at all: they were simply required to accommodate new realities of military and political power.

These developments also belong to the period of ‘reconfiguration’ in post-war Europe, in which new arrangements were reached on many different levels: within states and societies – locally, regionally and nationally – and also at the international level, often by using and continuing the war violence. The Baltic States, for example, were annexed and Sovietized, while many states expelled those who did not fit into the ‘ethnic pattern’ of the new territorial order. As its borders shifted to the west, Poland was the scene of large-scale transfer of populations – externally (Ukrainians in the east, Germans in the west) as well as internally (Poles moving west). The expulsion of around 12 million German-speaking people from Eastern European states is discussed here from the Czechoslovak perspective, but it occurred in many neighbouring states.

One of the lessons of World War II seemed to be that the ‘unmixing of peoples’ after World War I had not been radical enough. Within the restored states, whole categories of people were expelled from national communities. Former collaborators were subjected to massive retributive measures that revoked their citizenship and their liberty for years to come. The Jews of Europe were victimized doubly: by relentless persecution and mass killing during the war, and by the realities of having to cope with the loss of families, communities, and finding homes and a new existence in a post-war environment that remained by-and-large hostile to Jews, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. Those survivors of persecution who stayed in Europe would remain uprooted, even when they could return to their original communities. The contribution in this volume on the reconstruction of the Polish Jewish community points to the difficulties of negotiating a place in the post-war Polish state and society at a time when ethnic homogeneity was perceived as the precondition for national reconstruction.

## Reconfigurations

The period from 1943 to 1947, as a watershed moment in twentieth-century European history, needs to be studied on its own terms, not just as an



interlude or a marker in history, but as a complicated process in which European societies were seeking peace in the wake of war. The second aim of this volume is to rethink the relationship between the local, the national and the international during this period. Many national historiographies, until recently, have been focused primarily on the reconstruction of nation-states after Nazi rule in Europe. Instead, this volume seeks to bring in what happened in specific localities and regions to highlight agency from below. At the same time, the chapters in this volume also reveal that the 'zero years' constituted a moment of intense transnational interaction and international cooperation, which was subsequently overshadowed only by the onset of the Cold War.

For Europeans, the end of the Second World War consisted of a string of loosely connected and quite drastic events. The aim of this volume is to explore how ordinary people lived through the moment of liberation, how the end of the war affected them, and how, depending on the circumstances, they made new beginnings. The contributors assume that the transition of Europe from war to peace was a product of both political contingencies and structural elements. This emerges foremost from the material and psychological damage done by total warfare and genocide as well as by post-war humanitarian crises and internal power struggles. It is also important to explore to what extent individuals and their interest groups have political agency and to what degree were they subjected to the imperatives of the victorious Allies and their geopolitical interests? As contemporaries understood very well, it mattered very much who the liberators were and what their projected relationship to the conquered/liberated territories was to be. In the end, the bitter irony of Europe post 1947 was that it was not divided between victors and vanquished, but between an East and a West in which the vanquished also managed to assume the image of the victors.

The rich existing historiography on the aftermath of the Second World War tends to have a national focus, but it does so at the oversight of equally important developments on the local/regional and international levels. One explanation is that the restoration of national political communities was of central concern for the post-war states. In many cases, their existence had been threatened or even undone by foreign occupation and new territorial arrangements. As the war ended, the nation-state, which had been called into question, had to gain, or regain, its political legitimacy. At the national level, this is largely a history of European nation-states inventing or re-inventing themselves, or indeed being invented under pressure from others as in the case of Germany or Eastern Europe, and finding a place and a purpose in the post-war world. The authority of ruling state elites was

endangered, either during or after the war, as a result of foreign occupation. Under such circumstances, national political elites in Western Europe were forced to reach out both to the local (regional) level in order to (re)confirm and enhance their power base, and to the powers of the newly emerging international order in an effort to secure their position. Therefore, the interactions between armies of occupation (as allies or as conquerors) and the people at grassroots level were a crucial element in establishing the post-war order. In the eastern part of Europe, new communist elites came to power under the protection of Soviet hegemony. Most of these 'new men' had been involved in the resistance against the Nazis during the war but, with the exception of Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia, they had none or very little national or local legitimacy. They thus relied heavily on Soviet military power to establish their authoritarian rule over largely uprooted and devastated societies between 1945 and 1947.

By including the usually separated histories of Western, Eastern and Southern Europe, this volume aims to be comprehensively European. It thereby seeks to transcend the still dominant framework of national histories and Cold War divisions in the existing historiography. The contributors also aim to look beyond the Great Powers and the national ruling elites in European societies. For this reason, we highlight the agency of different historical actors, including resisters and irregular fighters, interim rulers and local authorities, Jewish survivors and international relief workers. It is impossible to capture the history of all European societies during this period in a comprehensive way in one volume. The editors have instead decided to present a series of case studies, which serve the purpose of pointing to developments that are typical for a specific European region while at the same time encouraging transnational comparisons and generalizations.

## Trajectories

The volume is divided into three sections, each of which highlights a different trajectory of how Europeans sought a way out of war. The contributions in Section 1, 'In the Wake of War', illuminate how the formal end of war brought forth the end of Nazi rule as well as institutional changes and political transitions. At the same time, the end of mass violence only gradually produced the demobilization of societies, while the restoration of a culture of peace would remain a long-term process. Marcin Zaremba's chapter argues that all over Europe, but in Poland in particular, the Second

World War was a not just a disruptive force, breaking down social, political and cultural institutions; wartime violence and despair also left a mark on people's psychological stability on an unprecedented scale. His analysis of the wounds and traumas suffered by Polish society during six years of war and occupation shows how difficult it is to establish at what moment and in which respects the war came to an end at all. The political transition to a new authoritarian regime, large-scale vengeance, ethnic cleansing and personal score-settling in many ways continued the wartime brutalization of interpersonal relations long after peace was declared. Thus, Polish society remained within the shadow of mass violence and hatred even during the early period of reconstruction.

Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann's contribution explores how defeat, occupation and questions of guilt for Nazi crimes were negotiated in the immediate post-war moment in everyday encounters between Germans and Allies. Diaries, Hoffmann argues, are the most relevant source for capturing contemporary understandings of the transition from war to peace and of such encounters more particularly. Autobiographical writings or early reports from occupied Germany do not merely reflect the larger shifts in international politics from Nazi rule in Europe to the Cold War between 1943 and 1947. More importantly, these chronicles also explain how rapidly Nazism collapsed, how sudden and unreal the post-war moment seemed, and how everyday experiences of the lawlessness and violence of Soviet rule in Central Europe turned Germans – especially in the eyes of Western observers – from Nazis into Allies.

The actual path of liberation created significant political and administrative interludes. Military interim rulers set up political and administrative arrangements that determined the first stages of the reconfiguration of post-war societies. In their comparative discussion of the French and southern Italian cases, Gabriella Gribaudi, Olivier Wieviorka and Julie Le Gac address the question of how existing institutions were able to shape the political transitions and to transform the task of finding a way out of the war into a nation-building processes. In this respect, the restoration of political communities took place at different levels: to reinvigorate the nation-state in France and restore the predominance of the regional and local political communities in the Italian South. In the French case, General de Gaulle declared republican continuity after the defeat of the German enemy and used the centralized state as a lever for the reconstruction of society. In Italy, responsibility for dealing with the legacy of war and more than two decades of Fascist dictatorship largely remained fragmented and was left to local and regional power structures.

The restoration of the centralized state in the wake of liberation is also the subject of Peter Romijn's study of military-civilian relations in the liberated Netherlands. The particular course of that liberation took the weak Dutch government in exile out of the picture in the process of arranging transitional measures. Over the course of nine months, Allied military administrators worked with local and regional provisional authorities with roots in the resistance and civil society. Nevertheless, as soon as Germany was defeated, power flowed back to a new central government in The Hague. The Dutch political culture and administration leaned strongly towards the central state, and for reasons of principle and expedience the Allied military authorities also preferred to interact with the highest authorities available. In the end, the reconfiguration that the 1944-1945 transition produced was one of institutional continuity and simultaneously innovation among the political and administrative personnel operating these institutions.

The second section, 'Reordering Communities', deals with embattled citizenship within restored, reorganized and redefined nation-states. One of the most destructive legacies of 'Hitler's Empire' and its allied and subaltern states, which ruled most of continental Europe by the early 1940s, was the massive geopolitical and genocidal mayhem resulting from racial politics and ethnic cleansing. The 'displaced person' became one of the characteristic groups of the European post-war, symbolizing the millions of people on the move in Europe in the mid-1940s.<sup>12</sup> Such displacement followed the suffering explicitly planned by rulers for specific groups, including those persecuted on racist and ethnic pretexts, slave and conscript labourers, and refugees. The Nazis and Fascists were not alone in pursuing such policies. The Soviet Union had deported populations wholesale for the purpose of controlling non-Russian internal dissent. Juliette Denis presents the Latvian case, considering in particular Latvian orphans who were deported to remote Siberian regions after the Soviet occupation of Latvia in 1941. After Nazi Germany's defeat and the re-assertion of Soviet control over their native country, groups of displaced Latvian children were gradually allowed to return home. As Denis demonstrates, the Ministry of Education of Sovietized Latvia managed to bring about this operation as a result of its own initiative, without assuring formal approval from the central authorities in Moscow. They managed to exploit the confusion of the immediate post-war years and thus linked a humanitarian approach to the effort of legitimizing their own rule at home.

12 Gerard Daniel Cohen, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press 2011).

Matěj Spurný challenges the grand narrative of post-1989 Czech historiography, in which the violent character of the immediate post-Second World War period is overlooked in lieu of the 1948 Communist takeover. Even if 1948 remains a significant turning point, Spurný argues that the violence encouraged by the 1945-1948 democratic regime was more extreme in nature. The forced and violent migration of ethnic Germans from the Czech borderlands was conceived as a way of re-establishing the Czechoslovak state and the legitimacy of its political class. Thus, the post-war Czech way of dealing with this ethnic minority illustrates a main current of the mid-1940s – that of realizing the post-war imperative of ethnic homogeneity in the domain of nation building. As a matter of fact, the Communists were keen to exploit these efforts in order to establish their image as guardians of the nation.

Within the restored nation-states of Europe, specific groups of people had to engage in hard struggles to find their place. Audrey Kichelewski presents the dilemma of the surviving Jewish community in post-war Poland in the aftermath of the Holocaust. She points to the difficulties in re-establishing Polish-Jewish relations and to the many efforts of Jewish cultural organizations to restore Jewish community life. In general, she concludes, the Jews who opted to live in post-war Poland tended to adapt to the new realities of post-war society there, rather than restoring their world, destroyed as it was by the Holocaust. The drive for integration in Polish post-war society, however, did not yield the desired results as, step by step, the Communist rulers brought social and political pluralism to an end. Thus, the Jewish organizations lost their initial independence and were forced to comply strictly with the regime's ideology and policies. The reconfiguration of Jewish life thus got caught up in the reconfiguration of Polish society in general.

Another group engaged in the war and forced to renegotiate their citizenship were Soviet partisans, who had been fighting behind enemy lines. As Masha Cerovic demonstrates, these soldiers had witnessed the failures of their political and military leaders and faced immense dangers on their own when the German Wehrmacht forced its way deep into Soviet territory in 1941-1942. Consequently, they were more independently minded and, from the regime's point of view, needed to be investigated and disciplined before reintegration could become possible. The situation in the former occupied areas of the Soviet Union was extremely convoluted. On the western borders of the USSR an irregular war continued, in which Baltic, Ukrainian, and Polish nationalists, as well as Red Army deserters, were challenging Soviet power. Not surprisingly, the Soviet state decided to deploy many of

the former partisans in counter-guerrilla warfare in the effort to impose authority in the border areas. This served the double purpose of deploying personnel experienced in this kind of warfare and disciplining the former partisan fighters. Thus, the Soviet state defined the conditions for the reintegration of this specific category of veterans.

The third and final section of this volume, 'Organizing the Peace', discusses how promoting social cohesion was an essential part of creating the post-war national and international orders. This purpose was facilitated by territorial redefinitions of political communities, by organizing relief to cope with emergencies, and by efforts to strengthen the social fabric and economic potential required for sustainable reconstruction. Shaping the post-war order was strongly connected to discussions about how to avoid the agony of economic crisis and political upheaval that had dragged Europe into the war. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that all contributions in this volume emphasize how working towards political stability and social cohesion in post-war societies did not necessarily depend on internal compromise or a careful balancing of social and political interests. In most cases, power politics, social struggle and the vexing categories of war's 'winners' and 'losers' were more important.

Sabine Dullin's chapter on the territorial expansion of the Soviet Union presents the case of the Czechoslovak-Ukrainian border region of Ruthenia, which in 1944 was occupied by the Red Army. The Soviet authorities had the Red Army organize a drive for annexation, supported by an orchestrated plebiscite held under severe military control. Crucial rallying points to secure a degree of support were the promise of agrarian reform as well as support to the Orthodox Church. Thus, particular groups (poor farmers, Orthodox Christians) were mobilized to define their interests in terms of becoming Soviet citizens.

Dirk Luyten's contribution shifts the focus back to Western Europe, while explaining the different courses taken in establishing the modern liberal welfare states. Promoting social security was, in his words, social peacekeeping. An important component of the policies of rulers in the liberated and restored nation-states was the implementation of social pacts concluded during the war between employers, trade unions and representatives of bureaucracy. All those involved were eager to assume the image of resisting the Nazi 'New Order' in the interest of creating, out of the turmoil, a better future for all citizens. Luyten points to the different trajectories in nations in which the role of the state was conceived as more prominent (France, Belgium) or less prominent (the Netherlands), and to the varied styles of collective bargaining. Moreover, the ideological differences

between Christian Democrats and Socialists played a role, as well as those between technocratic bureaucrats building on their experiences of running the economy and liberal, business-oriented politicians. In fact, what was presented as a covenant for social peace and welfare proved to be a bone of contention in post-war politics of reconstruction.

The aftermath of the Second World War in Europe saw a resurrection of the nation-states that had been subjugated under Nazi rule. At the same time, the emerging confrontation between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies was resulting in the formation of new supra-national power blocs. The gradual division of Germany is the most poignant example. However, the other nations were also affected by the emergence of new fault lines in Europe, in particular in places where the fault lines crossed the territory of the nation-states, as in Greece, Poland or Yugoslavia. Polymeris Voglis discusses the impact of a new supra-national organization for providing foreign aid as a means of survival in the Greek case. He points out that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) was in fact a concerted effort by the Western Allies to tie economic relief to political intervention, in this case in support of the conservative government fighting the communist resistance in a bloody civil war. Thus, the United States' general priority of reconstructing the economies of Western Europe was adapted in Greece to the purpose of defeating the Left first.

The role of the new international organizations is explored further in Sandrine Kott's study of the International Labour Organization (ILO) as a player in the international politics of the 1940s. Taking the 1941 Atlantic Charter's promise of improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security as a starting point, Kott argues that at the time, the ILO was the obvious instrument for discussing the implementation of this concept. The ILO had originally been part of the League of Nations structure and had been a stronghold of organized labour on an international level. However, during the war, the political planners of post-war reconstruction reduced the role of the organization by removing it from policy-planning processes. Military and economic planners of the major allies preferred to shape labour relations according to their own interests. For strategic and domestic political reasons, they took away the setting of all kinds of labour standards from international organizations like the ILO. As a reservoir of expertise on universal labour issues, Kott argues, the ILO would nevertheless remain influential. At the same time it assumed the role of a development agency outside Europe and lost its character as a norm-setting agency for European workers' interests as had been the case in the interwar period.



In his conclusion, Philip Nord examines how the Second World War continued in several respects after it had come to a formal end. He points to the savage ethnic cleansing and violence which persisted in many places, to the efforts by the re-established states to restore their authority within their territories, and to the need to overcome the mayhem of war. But the question remains: if normalization was achieved, can it be equated with restoration? Nord makes three assertions that characterize the new configurations of the European post-war, the first being the socio-political levelling caused by the war, and in particular the definitive end of the power of the aristocratic landowning class in Eastern and Central Europe. A second feature was the reconfiguration of the political landscape in the West, which amounted to a new political centre consisting of Christian Democracy and Social Democracy. After a total war, which had resulted in massive state intervention in all areas of life, these parties used the state to push forward their plans to provide social security for all citizens. The third element is the strengthening of the nation as a guiding principle for defining citizenship within the political community. The way out of war was not found in restoration alone, but also in deep reconfigurations, firstly but not only within the nation-state.



# In the Wake of War



# The 'War Syndrome'

World War II and Polish Society

*Marcin Zaremba*

More than seventy years now separate us from the outbreak of World War II. To date, the most important trend in debates about the war's consequences for Central Europe has been to focus on the interconnections between the social, political and economic changes occurring during the war, on the one hand, and the origins of the communist bloc in that part of Europe on the other.<sup>1</sup> This approach is too narrow: it fails to take account of the importance of the psycho-social consequences of the war, which extended far beyond the political dimension.

Arthur Marwick distinguished two sociological approaches to the consequences of war in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> The first focuses on changes to class structures brought about by the participation of previously unprivileged groups in the war effort. According to this approach, war provides an opportunity for building new solidarity, for socialization, and, in the case of Poland, for social self-organization within the framework of the underground state. Such underground institutions are usually described as having preserved the nation by opposing the occupier and strengthening national identity. Polish society thus emerges as a community united in struggle, sacrifice and shared suffering. The majority of Polish publications about World War II, memoir literature and scholarly literature alike, seem to follow precisely this path. In addition, this path also provides the standard model for commemorating the war.

The second sociological approach to war in the twentieth century sees it as an event akin in certain respects to a natural disaster, whose consequences were generally the same for all people who found themselves at the epicentre. From this perspective World War II should be interpreted

1 Jan T. Gross, 'The Social Consequences of War: Preliminaries to the Study of Imposition of Communist Regimes in East Central Europe', *East European Politics & Societies*, 3/2 (1989), pp. 198-214; Gross, 'War as Revolution', in *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949*, ed. Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); Bradley E. Abrams, 'The Second World War and the East European Revolution', *East European Politics & Societies*, 3 (2002), pp. 623-624.

2 Arthur Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 10.

as a multidimensional catastrophe of an elemental nature. Unfortunately, in my opinion, this approach fails to recognize sufficiently the specific sociological and psychological effects of this war in particular.<sup>3</sup>

In this article, I shall attempt to provide a systematic account of these effects through an examination of the Polish case. My intention is not to demystify the Polish war experience; rather, I shall attempt to generalize this experience in sociological terms, focusing in particular on those phenomena which failed to find a place in the standard heroic schema. By necessity, the picture to be presented here will be incomplete; many issues – aspects linked with political life, for example – will have to remain in the shadows. And one more disclaimer: what interests me is the final effect, namely, the state of society in the year 1945. Thus, for example, I will not be considering here the consequences of the Red Army's arrival onto Polish soil.

My analysis draws primarily on Piotr Sztompka's sociology of trauma.<sup>4</sup> Paraphrasing the title of Sztompka's book, we might call the Polish war experience 'the trauma of the great war'. This is a particular kind of 'pathology of social subjectivity'<sup>5</sup> formed as the result of a long-term, destructive traumatic experience – a collective experience of terror, shock and fear, of

3 There is an extensive body of literature on the theme of the war and occupation period. The area is less fully covered, however, when it comes to social history. Most of the social histories of the period were published after 1989 and are devoted to everyday life. The most important works include: Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vols 1 and 2 (Warsaw: PWN, 1970); Czesław Łuczak, *Polityka ekonomiczna Trzeciej Rzeszy w latach drugiej wojny światowej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1979) and idem *Polska i Polacy w drugiej wojnie światowej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1993); and Jan T. Gross, *Polish Society under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement, 1939-1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979). The first work to deal with the history of everyday life was Tomasz Szarota's book *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1988). Subsequent works include: Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Polacy we Lwowie 1939-1944. Życie codzienne* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 2000); Stanisława Lewandowska, *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Neriton, 1997); Andrzej Chwałba, *Kraków w latach 1939-1945* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002). For a different kind of analysis, see the classic works: Kazimierz Wyka, *Życie na niby* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1984); Jan Strzelecki, *Próby świadectwa* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1971). On psychological and sociological aspects of World War II, see Ewa Jackowska, *Psychiczne następstwa deportacji w głąb ZSRR w czasie drugiej wojny światowej. Przyczyny, moderatory, uwarunkowania* (Szczecin: Uniwersytet Szczeciński, 2004); Alicja Rokuszevska-Pawełek, *Chaos i przymus. Trajektorie wojenne Polaków – analiza biograficzna* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2002); Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

4 Piotr Sztompka, *Trauma wielkiej zmiany. Społeczne koszty transformacji* (Warsaw: ISP PAN, 2000).

5 Ibid, p. 20.

disintegration and destruction. For Sztompka, trauma is connected with the experience of social change, especially when such change is sudden, violent, unexpected and relates to multiple spheres of life simultaneously. This kind of change entails the institutional disorganization of social and cultural life, affecting the personalities of people who live through it.<sup>6</sup> Social disruption of this kind is wrought by wars, revolutions and violent modernization processes. The Poland of 1945 was without doubt a country utterly different from the Poland of August 1939. This was a country that had not only gone through great change, but was also standing on the brink of fresh changes linked with the communist seizure of power. The war played a role equivalent to the destructive phase of revolution.<sup>7</sup> Psychologist Stefan Baley commented with regard to his research on Polish post-war youth that this generation's 'collective soul' had been 'infected by a war syndrome'.<sup>8</sup> How deeply, then, did this infection penetrate the 'collective soul' of Poles, and what was the nature of the devastation it wrought? Or, to put it in more contemporary terms, what were the sources, symptoms and cultural consequences of the war trauma in Poland?

## Trauma Sources

The first and most important source of war-related psychological traumas was the omnipresence of death. The practices linked with the burial of those killed in the course of the war (the dead were very often buried a second time over, following exhumation) can be read as an attempt to overcome this trauma symbolically. Any attempt to recreate the Polish 'post-war' landscape would need to foreground collective exhumations and funeral processions, the latter sometimes with tens of thousands of participants.<sup>9</sup> Death was everywhere; one could literally smell it through the strong stench of decay emanating from unburied bodies as early as spring 1945.<sup>10</sup>

6 On the theme of trauma see further: Sławomir Kaprański, 'Trauma i pamięć zbiorowa. Przypadek Jedwabnego', in *Stawanie się społeczeństwa. Szkice ofiarowane Piotrowi Sztompce z okazji 40-lecia pracy naukowej*, ed. Andrzej Flis (Kraków: Universitas, 2006), pp. 631-633.

7 See note 2.

8 Stefan Baley, 'O pewnej metodzie badań wpływów na psychikę młodzieży', *Rocznik Psychiatryczny*, 37 (1949), p. 37. Idem., 'Psychiczne wpływy drugiej wojny światowej', *Psychologia Wychowawcza*, 1/2 (1948), p. 12.

9 Joanna Wawrzyniak, 'W cieniu śmierci', *Polityka*, 29 September 2005.

10 One account tells us, for example, that: 'the sanitary state of Kolobrzeg was terrible, the town streets were covered in spilt blood, on which whole swarms of flies were nesting. In Zabrow near Kolobrzeg I found a store with barrels of insecticide, we sprinkled this powder over the streets,

In Warsaw there were fears of a cholera outbreak, and with good cause: a plague of mice and rats did in fact break out in the same year, lasting into the next.<sup>11</sup> Even today the final number of the war's victims is unknown. The results of pioneering research conducted by psychologists affiliated with the State Institute of Mental Health in Warsaw on the psychological effects of the war among children and young people provide a rough idea of the scale of death. Over 5,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 23 were examined as part of this study in June and July 1945. The sample of 1,500 questionnaires completed by students from Warsaw, Kraków and Lublin, indicates that 73.2 per cent of the respondents had lost a loved one, or several loved ones, in tragic circumstances. There were also cases in which seven, eight or even thirteen family members had been lost.<sup>12</sup>

Soon after the war, the Bureau for War Compensation placed the total number of victims at around 6 million.<sup>13</sup> Paradoxically, however, this figure is at once too high and too low. Too high, because today we know that the number of victims of, for example, Auschwitz, or the Warsaw Uprising, is smaller than previously supposed. The most recent estimates indicate that wartime demographic losses of Polish and Jewish inhabitants of pre-war Poland were in the order of approximately 5 million (including 2.9 million

the flies began to disappear – at the end there were none left, a great relief. The corpses were another plague, it was an unusually hot summer and decomposition of bodies came on quickly. One had to cover one's nose when walking through the streets – the stench of corpses was so strong' ('Wspomnienia Stefana Lipickiego, prezydenta miasta Kołobrzeg w okresie 1 VI – 31 VIII 1945', in Hieronim Kroczyński, *Powojenny Kołobrzeg 1945-1950. Wybór źródeł* (Kołobrzeg: Wydawnictwo Reda Kazimierz Ratajczyk, 2004), p. 100).

11 On 17 September 1945 in an article entitled 'Rat Plague in Kielecki Voivodeship', *Dziennik Powszechny* reported that: 'The Provincial Health Department has recently been alarmed by a great plague of mice and rats in destroyed districts. There are localities on the so-called bridgehead where mice have literally eaten up all the mowed wheat, leaving the shredded sheaves. Meanwhile rats are multiplying in great numbers in bunkers and mud huts inhabited by people who have lost their homes to fire, spreading disease and fear among the local population. Unless the plague of rats is brought to an end, we must expect unpleasant reports of biting of babies and children by rats.'

12 Maria Kaczyńska, 'Psychiczne skutki wojny wśród dzieci i młodzieży', *Zdrowie Psychiczne*, 1 (1946), p. 54. Thirty-six per cent of respondents had lost one person close to them; 24 per cent had lost two; 16 per cent – three; 12 per cent – four; 5 per cent – five; and 2 per cent – six.

13 The Bureau initially estimated biological losses at 4.8 million (not counting the reduced number of births – around 1.25 million), but by order of Jakub Berman this number was adjusted upwards to 6 million (Mateusz Gniazdowski, "Ustalić liczbę zabitych na 6 milionów". Dyrektywa Jakuba Bermiana, dla Biura Odszkodowań Wojennych przy Prezydium Rady Ministrów', *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny*, 1 (2008), pp. 99-113.

Jews).<sup>14</sup> However, even after this correction, the figure is still too low, since in the final calculation it fails to take into account the Belorussian, German and Ukrainian citizens of the Second Republic who died as a result of World War II. If, then, we take into consideration the entire 35-million-strong population of Poland in August 1939, we can make the tentative hypothesis that as many as 7 million may not have survived to the end of the war. If we add all those who survived but were displaced somewhere outside Poland (and who later remained in the West or the East), then the population of Poland shrinks by around one-quarter, or nearly 9 million, in comparison to the pre-war period. No other European country sustained such heavy losses.

While no social group survived the war intact, relatively speaking it was the intelligentsia that suffered the most serious losses. The political, intellectual and cultural elite of Polish society was decimated. It has been estimated that 37.5 per cent of university-educated people and around 30 per cent of secondary-educated people in the Second Republic perished.<sup>15</sup> To consider this from another angle: if we also take into account the group of high officials, the officers' corps, and the free professions, who left the country in 1939, in most cases never to return, then Polish society in 1945, when the population was just under 24 million, may have included between 60,000 and 70,000 university graduates and no more than 300,000 high-school graduates. In other words, this period saw the demise (in wartime migrations and exterminations, on the battlefields) of the Polish elite: educated, opinion-making, official Poland, made up of those who held dear the values and symbols of the Second Republic. In these circumstances, the post-war mobilization of institutions vital for social life and for the economy must have entailed severe difficulties. The cadres revolution of the period was not only imposed from above; it was dictated by circumstances. Only the intelligentsia was capable of giving a name to the post-war reality, of conceptualizing it, of putting a swift end to the cultural chaos and confusion, and of playing a guiding role in the post-war reconstruction.

Left alone on the battleground was the majority of the population – poor, uneducated, resentful, brimming over with anxiety and trauma, more closely connected to the Church, conservative, traditional, living mostly in villages and small towns. It was in this Poland that Polish communists

14 Czesław Łuczak, 'Szanse i trudności bilansu demograficznego Polski w latach 1939-1945', *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 2 (1994), pp. 9-15. In the same issue of *Dzieje Najnowsze* on this theme see also, inter alia, texts by: Jerzy Zdziśław Holzer, Franciszek Piper, Józef Marszałek, Krystyna Kersten.

15 T. Szarota, *Upowszechnienie kultury*, in *Polska Ludowa 1944-1955. Przemiany społeczne*, ed. Franciszek Ryszka (Wrocław-Warsaw: Ossolineum, 1974), p. 412.

placed their modernizing hopes, and it was first and foremost from this group that the communist system recruited its functionaries. But the revolution from above also had its own particular base: the marginalized and the 'superfluous'.<sup>16</sup> The revolution gave them a chance for advancement, to utilize their energy and channel it against survivors of the pre-war elite who might have been inclined to resist communism.

The second source of trauma was poverty. In 1939 many German officers, convinced of their cultural superiority, took amateur photographs of 'exotic' East European poverty. But the landscape they left in their wake as they fled Polish soil in panic in 1944 and 1945, often plundering right up to the very last moment, was incomparably bleaker. Poland belongs alongside Germany and the Soviet Union in terms of the scale of economic destruction suffered during the war. In 1945 the Polish national income dropped as low as 38.2 per cent of the 1938 level,<sup>17</sup> and this had a strong impact on the everyday life of the population. Several million people lost their property, their jobs, their sole sources of income. In the lead-up to the 1946 harvest, people were talking about the spectre of famine hanging over the country. But it was not only food that was lacking. In the course of six years of war, hundreds of thousands of families had lost even the most basic belongings. As Stanisław Szwalbe, then deputy leader of the Homeland National Council, recounted, 'There are families whose members don't own a single pair of shoes and when they want to go out they borrow them from neighbors. There are cases when there is a single pair of shoes and three shirts for seven people.'<sup>18</sup> It is not surprising that after the war it was precisely clothing, shoes and lard that were the goods most commonly targeted by thieves. Two consequences of poverty are the concentration of all the individual's cognitive processes on survival and the blunting of sensitivity to everything external to bare existence.<sup>19</sup> In such circumstances, human beings become more egotistical, less sensitive to the suffering of others, and hence quick to behave

16 On this category of people, see Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 231. See also Marcin Zaremba, 'The Myth of Ritual Murder in Post-War Poland: Pathology and Hypotheses', *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, 23 (2011), pp. 465-506.

17 Hanna Jędruszcak, 'Miasta i przemysł w okresie odbudowy', in *Polska Ludowa 1944-1955...*, p. 279.

18 *Dziennik Powszechny*, 14 February 1946.

19 Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Man and Society in Calamity: The Effects of War, Revolution, Famine, Pestilence upon Human Mind, Behavior, Social Organization and Cultural Life* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1943), pp. 25-35. These observations have been developed further in Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Chicago: Free Press, Research Center in Development and Culture Change, University of Chicago, 1958).



aggressively. It was the material deprivation of large groups of the population that lay at the root of the wartime and post-war assaults, the murders of Jews, the looting, the banditry. Poverty also propelled the post-war migrations from the lands of central Poland to the 'Recovered Territories'.

The third source of trauma was the consequences of the wartime deportations and displacements. In those territories incorporated into the Reich these processes began as early as autumn 1939. From this point until the end of the war, the Germans exiled over 860,000 people, the majority of whom were from Wielkopolska and the Łódź region. In the territory of the *Generalgouvernement* 280,000 Poles were forced to leave their homes, and 500,000 were forced to leave the capital after the failure of the Warsaw Uprising. In total, 1,650,000 people underwent forced exile during the German Occupation.<sup>20</sup> In addition, over 2 million Polish citizens were sent to Germany as forced labourers.<sup>21</sup> Although deportations carried out in the territories annexed by the Soviet Union comprised around 300,000 Polish citizens,<sup>22</sup> the trauma connected with the journey and the stay in the place of exile was probably more painful and the sense of being cut off, isolated and lost more intense than in the case of the German deportations. However, the social consequences of both sets of deportations and displacements were similar: the severing of middle-class bonds (professional, local, personal) and family bonds (in the case of forced labourers and POWs), and the disintegration or disappearance of entire groups and communities.

The fourth source of trauma is connected with the collapse of social, political, and cultural institutions. In the Poland of 1945, not only had the pre-war elites disappeared, but so too had the pre-war structures: authentic, recognizable and familiar organizations, associations and institutions, which – as was the case in the West – could take immediate measures to combat anarchy. The war brought about the almost complete disorganization of social life; it ripped apart the existing networks and structures.

20 C. Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy...*, vol. I, pp. 333–336.

21 Ibid., pp. 251, 255.

22 One should also add to this number: forced conscriptions into the Red Army and construction battalions, prisoners of the Gulag, people who were resettled out of the border zone, and so on. Altogether around 600,000 to 800,000 people may have been forced to leave their places of residence; see further, inter alia: Stanisław Ciesielski, Grzegorz Hryciuk and Aleksander Srebrakowski, *Masowe deportacje ludności w Związku Radzieckim* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2002). On the theme of the course and consequences of ethnic cleansing in this region of Europe, see Philip Ther and Ane Siljak, eds, *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

The first traumatic blow connected with the collapse of institutions came with the annihilation of the state in 1939. There is only one word which captures adequately the psychological experiences of this period: shock. 'That is', as Kazimierz Wyka has written, 'the most violent, unprepared, unexpected political, social and moral shock. A shock which spread across all dimensions of collective life, across all the assertions upon which behaviour and predictions still relied on 31 August, on 1 September.'<sup>23</sup> The collapse of the country diminished social control, and was one of the causes of what was to be the greatest panic in Polish social history. Reminiscences of the September trauma can be found easily in war diaries, post-war memoirs, and works of literature. But the annihilation of the institutional world did not end in September 1939. Later, by order of the occupying authorities, a ban was placed on the activities of nearly all institutions and organizations in the territories occupied by the Third Reich and of the majority of those located in the Soviet zone. The latter – such as institutions of higher education, theatres, schools – were also shut down after the German invasion of the USSR. The Central Welfare Council and the Polish Red Cross were essentially the only organizations whose activities were sanctioned by the Germans.

The response to the German policy of disorganization and atomization of Polish society, a measure aimed at restoring its 'social health', was the re-creation of its most important institutions in the form of underground state structures. Various underground institutions were created in this fashion: schools, a judiciary, and various forms of social assistance. There were functioning political parties, and a powerful upsurge of publishing activities did its best to meet the demand for information, and even for entertainment. New bonds, a new solidarity, were created in conspiratorial conditions. For Jan Strzelecki, 'The form of our existence was the group, held together by a bond best described by the concept of brotherhood. This existence, lived in a state of constant threat, with the consciousness that we were walking along a knife's edge, that every meeting brought the final parting closer, opened up the meaning of the word "community" for us.'<sup>24</sup> Thousands of communities of this kind created a social movement, operating in conspiratorial conditions, which was without historical precedent; a movement which strengthened Poles' faith in themselves and their hopes of a final victory, as well as providing a sense of community and shared subjectivity. Although the decisive majority of the population was not

<sup>23</sup> K. Wyka, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> J. Strzelecki, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

formally sworn in, this movement nevertheless possessed social legitimacy and people felt as though they were a part of it. But popular support is not the whole story. The underground movement also employed sanctions for betrayal and banditry, creating a system for controlling behaviour and attitudes.<sup>25</sup> While giving full due to the movement's achievements, however, it must be observed that underground bonds and organizations were not capable of fully replacing the 'normal', stable functioning of society and state.

The second traumatic blow was dealt with the annihilation of this world of underground institutions. The defeat of the Warsaw Uprising had a strong detrimental effect here, serving to weaken the majority of forms of underground social self-organization, which had been so crucial for sustaining social subjectivity during the Occupation. With the collapse of the underground the conspiratorial ethos disappeared and an institutional vacuum emerged that lasted until the formation of the Polish People's Party. In 1945 there were no independent authorities or power centres, whether symbolic, local, judicial or economic. Not only did many pre-war political parties fail to resume operations, but so too did professional unions, business federations, local associations and clubs.<sup>26</sup> Almost instantaneously, especially in Malopolska, the Polish People's Party exploded, its ranks swelling rapidly to nearly a million members. Many organizations and associations operating in 1945-1948 were later liquidated as the mono-organizational system was put in place. However, it would appear that the 'sociological vacuum' described by Stefan Nowak in 1979 – that is, the disappearance of middle-range bonds and cooperations – was not a creation of the communist system.<sup>27</sup> This should rather be understood as a legacy of the war and the Occupation and as a factor which played a significant role in facilitating the communist seizure of power.<sup>28</sup> In the immediate post-war period, the deficit of institutions meant a lack of social control, which resulted in chaos and anarchy.

25 Leszek Gondek, *Polska karząca 1939-1945. Polski podziemny wymiar sprawiedliwości w okresie okupacji niemieckiej* (Warsaw: PAX, 1988).

26 Exceptions included the Union of Polish Teachers, the Polish Western Union, the Maritime League, the Association for Friends of Children, veterans' organizations, Poland-wide scientific associations, and scouts' organizations, all of which were resurrected relatively quickly.

27 Stefan Nowak, 'System wartości społeczeństwa polskiego', *Studia Socjologiczne*, 4 (1979), pp. 155-173.

28 J.T. Gross (*The Social Consequences of War...*) and Bradley E. Abrams (op. cit.) have drawn attention to the Polish and Jewish bourgeoisie's disappearance as a result of the war (a development viewed as positive from the communist perspective). Neither of these authors, however, has commented upon the significance of the destruction of middle-range bonds.

On the post-war landscape, the Catholic Church was essentially the only Poland-wide institution that still possessed moral authority. The Church, too, sustained great losses, both in human and material terms, numbered in destroyed churches, care homes, hospitals, archives, libraries. Yet despite all this, the numbers of the Church's adherents remained steady. Metaphorically speaking, one might say that organizationally and institutionally post-war Poland looked something like Cologne after the Allied carpet bombings: an almost intact cathedral left standing in the midst of a vast sea of rubble.

The fifth traumatic factor to be examined here is the deformation of the old hierarchy of stratification. The war rendered meaningless the previous hierarchies and stereotypes of social roles. Many hitherto privileged groups experienced economic degradation during the war: directors of state companies, owners of large and medium-sized enterprises seized on the territories occupied by the Third Reich by the Main Trusteeship East.<sup>29</sup> In the Polish Eastern Borderlands, the property of the middle and upper classes was also liable to seizure by the 'worker-peasant regime'. In the name of the 'Aryanization' of the economy, in the former case, and of historical justice in the latter, thousands of people suddenly lost their footing and fell off the property ladder, sometimes losing overnight positions which families had held for generations. The old privileges, knowledge and offices ceased to be meaningful, especially in the face of shortages of potatoes and coal; more than this, they could even be targets for repression by the occupiers. As a result, the social structure flattened out and class antagonisms became less acute.

The village, too, underwent a structural revolution. Its feudal world order, resting on three pillars – lord, reeve (*wójt*) and pastor – was turned to rubble. In the Eastern Borderlands the extermination of the land-owning gentry had already taken place in 1939. In the other territories the agony dragged on until 1945. During the war the manor lost its significance as a centre of social order in the village, while its inhabitants were repressed under the German policy of exterminating Polish elites.<sup>30</sup> The village was divided in its attitudes towards these changes. For older people, the fall of 'our feudal

29 For more, see C. Madajczyk, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 515-595.

30 Krzysztof Jasiewicz, *Lista strat ziemiaństwa polskiego 1939-1956* (Warsaw: Archiwum Wschodnie, IH PAN, 1995); idem, *Zagłada polskich Kresów: ziemiaństwo polskie na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939-1941. Studium z dziejów zagłady dawnego narodu politycznego* (Warsaw: Volumen, ISP PAN, 1998).