

Introduction

On a winter afternoon in 1936 in the Polish city of Łódź, well over a thousand people gathered in the hall of the men's choral society on the city's main thoroughfare, Piotrkowska Street. They were there for a rally held by a German minority organization, the German People's Union (DVV). Among the attendees, however, were numerous members of a rival group, the Young German Party (JDP). When the local leader of the Young Germans entered the hall, someone called out the command "Achtung, Young Germans!" and the room thundered to the shouts of "Heil." When the youth leader for the German People's Union arrived in the crowded building, however, someone else from the balcony likewise called out "Achtung, Young Germans!" Several of the disoriented Young Germans, not knowing that they were cheering their opponent, began to applaud and yell "Heil." After realizing their error, the enraged Young German intruders attacked the balcony, cleared it of the troublesome members of the German People's Union, and occupied it. The meeting, which was a German People's Union event after all, went downhill from there.

The gathering came to order with great difficulty. The first speaker of the German People's Union emphasized that the Germans in Poland, as part of the greater national community of Germans led by Adolf Hitler, did not need a political party but sought unity in a national organization instead. This seemingly minor nuance angered the Young Germans, who were likewise supporters of Hitler but who wanted a unified political party for all Germans in Poland. Having taken up the front rows, the Young Germans attacked the stage and were only beaten back with great difficulty. Several fights broke out in the audience, and the catcalls and jeering by the Young Germans forced the first speaker to leave. The next speaker likewise complained about the goals of the Young German party. The Young Germans again felt provoked and had to be fought back once more.

The third speaker also criticized the idea of a German party in Poland, saying the Germans should work for the good of the national community instead. At this moment, the Young Germans rushed the stage, grabbed and ripped apart the host party's banner, and a melee ensued. The meeting's organizers from the German People's Union called the city police, and order was briefly restored after the arrest of three Young Germans. However, another wave of fighting led to the breakup of the meeting altogether, and the Polish police were needed once again to forcibly evacuate those stubborn Young Germans who still refused to leave.¹

This example was just one in a long conflict among various German parties within interwar Poland. In this case, both of these German parties claimed to be National Socialist, and both espoused a similar rhetoric of unity, especially regarding the national community, or *Völksgemeinschaft*. Not only could they not agree on what this unity meant in practical terms, but they and other German nationalist groups fought rhetorically and physically in public spaces before Polish observers over its interpretation. Despite the widespread view of the Polish state as the primary enemy of the German minority, it was not unusual for Poles to mediate in this internecine German conflict. Indeed, German minority leaders often denounced one another to Polish authorities, who were themselves confused by how the idea of German national unity could cause these deep divisions. One Polish police official who tried to keep order at the rowdy meeting in Łódź shamed the Germans by reminding them that they were “civilized people” after all.²

Yet this strife between German rival parties also had a spatial dimension that can be traced to the aftermath of the virtually unexpected collapse of three Central European empires in 1918. The victorious Allied coalition hammered out a series of new states on the principle of national self-determination. These states, although having a titular nationality, were hardly nation-states in reality. Each state had significant ethnic minorities, many of which harbored bitter resentment against the loss of their right to national self-determination. Among these minorities were the Germans, who were found in settlements throughout East Central Europe. Owing to

1 Voivodeship of Łódź (Vice-Voivode A. Potocki) to Nationalities Department of the Interior Ministry in Warsaw, January 8, 1936, copy as attachment sent by Skarbek, Interior Ministry to Polish Foreign Ministry (Wydział Ustrojów Międzynarodowych), January 14, 1936, in AAN, MSZ, folder 2238, 1–3.

2 Annotated accounts that minimized Young German criticisms and were skewed favorably toward the German People's Union include the following newspaper articles: “Kundgebungen des Deutschen Volksverbandes. Vormarsch der volksdeutschen Front gegen Terror und Haßpropaganda. Organisierter Überfall jungdeutscher Sprengtrupps auf die Redner. – Die wahre Art der jungdeutschen ‘Erneuerung,’” *Freie Presse*, January 7, 1936, 1–2; “Brief an uns. Ein Unparteiischer über die Vorfälle,” (letter by Gustav Schumann, dated January 10, 1936), in *Freie Presse*, January 12, 1936, 6.

the still powerful position of a defeated Germany, these German minorities had disproportionate influence on domestic and foreign affairs. Both Weimar and Nazi claims to take care of German compatriots abroad made the treatment of German minorities in Eastern Europe a flashpoint of international tensions, leading toward the Second World War. In the 1938 Munich Agreement, the European powers dismembered Czechoslovakia so that the Sudeten German minority could join its putative fatherland. In Poland, the situation proved to be more intractable. The instrumentalization of the German minority for foreign policy goals reached its apex in 1939, when reports of Polish abuses against Germans were used to legitimate Hitler's invasion of Poland. Although postwar Polish and German historians have disagreed over whether the German minority served as a fifth column, they do agree that Polish repression and National Socialism led to the minority's growing unity. Behind this façade of *völkisch* (ethnic) unity, however, lurked serious divisions that undercut the political cohesion of this minority. Despite the efforts of Reich officials and the National Socialist fervor of the German minority leaders, these Germans were never unified into a comprehensive party along the lines of Konrad Henlein's Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront. Rather, the Germans in Poland remained fractured among several regional organizations.

These divisions can be understood by examining the problems of national cohesion and regional particularism. Unlike Czechoslovakia, where a great majority of the Germans came from Austrian Bohemia, interwar Poland inherited Germans from all three shattered Central European empires. The Germans of Western Poland, living on lands formerly of the German Empire, had enjoyed political and social domination prior to 1918. The conversion from *Staatsvolk* – people of the state – to *Völkische* – ethnic Germans – was a particularly hard blow for them.³ Most of these Germans found it difficult to come to terms with Polish rule, and Germany's claims on the ceded territories only reinforced their negative attitude toward Poland. The German speakers in Central and Eastern Poland, which included the former Congress Kingdom and other lands freed from Russian rule, had already experienced life in a state where Germans rarely belonged to the political elite and where German language had been increasingly suppressed. Many German activists here initially viewed the new Polish state with great hope, for they believed that the Poles would be more hospitable to their own national minorities than the former Russian masters. Likewise, German-speakers in the formerly Austrian lands of southeastern Poland were

3 *Staatsvolk* can also be translated here as “titular nationality.”

accustomed to local rule by Poles. Especially the peasant populations in formerly Austrian Galicia and formerly Russian Volhynia were rarely pre-occupied with issues concerning Germany or Germanness.

That these German-speaking groups had substantial historical differences is nothing new. Yet this book tells a different story from the standard narrative of these “three minorities” becoming one over time.⁴ Throughout the interwar period, there were several attempts to forge these heterogeneous elements politically, but all these attempts at “minority building” failed.⁵ Over time, in fact, the Germans in interwar Poland were increasingly splintered along regional lines. This book examines how German leaders in Poland proclaimed unity in word while undermining it in deed. In short, it focuses on the limits of national solidarity within the German minority in Poland.

THE HISTORIES OF THE GERMANS IN POLAND

The instrumentalization of the minority in the war's outbreak has meant that the literature devoted to the minority is fairly broad. Yet little attention has been paid to the question of cross-cutting loyalties within the minority itself. Rather, both Poles and Germans have emphasized the nationality struggle, or *Völkstumskampf*, between the minority and the Polish state. Much of the Polish and German literature consists of short contributions collected in edited volumes; monographs of book length make up only a small fraction. Many of the authors are part of the *Erlebnisgeneration* (those who experienced the events first hand), which often led to insufficient detachment and analysis: indeed, the majority of German works can be classified as sentimental memoirs or *Heimatliteratur* (homeland literature).⁶ Especially the debates about whether the minority was a fifth column or who was to blame for the *Bromberger Blutsonntag* (the massacre of several hundred people in Bromberg on the first Sunday after the German invasion of Poland in 1939) has overshadowed the many fruitful questions that an

4 On the unification of the “three minorities,” see Marian Wojciechowski, “Die deutsche Minderheit in Polen (1920–1939),” in *Deutsche und Polen zwischen den Kriegen. Minderheitenstatus und “Völkstumskampf” im Grenzgebiet. Amtliche Berichterstattung aus beiden Ländern, 1920–1939*, ed. Rudolf Jaworski et al., vol. 1, 1–26 (Munich: Sauer, 1997), here 4.

5 On minority building, see Ingo Eser, “Völk, Staat, Gott!” *Die deutsche Minderheit in Polen und ihr Schulwesen 1918–1939* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 34.

6 In one example, the German historian Sabine Bamberger-Stemmann notes that as much as 95% of the existing literature for Polish Upper Silesia can be labeled as “Heimatliteratur.” Markus Krzoska, “Tagungsbericht: Die Erforschung der Geschichte der Deutschen in Polen. Stand und Zukunftsperspektiven,” Conference of the Kommission für die Geschichte der Deutschen in Polen e.V. from May 29 to 31, 1999, in Mainz, report dated November 1, 1999, accessed August 10, 2006, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/BEITRAG/TAGBER/polen.htm>.

examination of the German minority in Poland poses. Moreover, the issue of the loyalty of the interwar German minority is intrinsically tied to the question of the expulsions of the Germans from the eastern territories lost after the Second World War. This emotionally laden topic of viewing the Germans and the German nation as victims of the Second World War was revived in the late 1990s and especially in discussions about establishing a Center Against Expulsions, planned by the Bund der Vertriebenen (BdV) with support from Christian Democrats and several Social Democrats. Many works are accusatory in nature, and even more scholarly (and lengthy) attempts to provide documentation of the other nation's crimes only reveal how politically charged this topic was and remains – despite the recent thaw in German-Polish relations. Nationalized positions have not necessarily declined after 1989 – indeed, they have often reinvented themselves.

By focusing on majority-minority conflict that is integral to the *Volks-*tumskampf narrative, the scholarly literature has tended to attribute the same experience to *all* Germans living in the Polish state, thus underplaying the depth of political conflict within the minority. Instead, they reproduce a narrative in which the Germans in Poland slowly overcame the legacies of the partitions to become one national community. Indeed, the very vocabulary used to describe the minority suggests harmony among the Germans. As Rogers Brubaker notes, the word “national minority” connotes “internally unified, externally sharply bounded groups.”⁷ Although the word *Minderheit* (minority) was in common usage in the interwar period, many used the term *Volksgruppe* (ethnic or national group) instead. There is no equivalent for *Volksgruppe* in the English language, and it also has ambiguous meanings in German. In its narrow sense, the contemporary usage of *Volksgruppe* referred to specific regional settlements within a minority; thus a minority could be made up of several *Volksgruppen*. However, in its broader, more common usage, *Volksgruppe* referred to an entire minority community within a state.⁸ Whereas *Minderheit* and *Volksgruppe* were often used interchangeably, the latter became increasingly loaded and politicized with a normative claim of ethnic cohesion. Not surprisingly, contemporary German nationalists preferred *Volksgruppe* precisely because it invoked the connection of the Reich with Germans living abroad.⁹ The concept of

7 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 62.

8 Valdis O. Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 22–23.

9 See Horand Horsa Schacht, *Du mußt volksdeutsch sein!* (Dortmund: Crüwell, 1935), 9. Max Hildebert Boehm, a Volkstum theorist, refused to use the word *Minderheit* (minority) because of its foreign nature and because it failed to express the diversity of German experience abroad. Moreover, he believed

Volksgruppe became a positivistic, teleological category that emphasized spiritual and biological unity while concealing the dissonance and power conflicts between the Germans in Poland. It implied not just growth and evolution but also a collective will toward unity.

This book refers to the master narrative of “Volksgruppe-in-becoming” as the “Volksgruppe paradigm.”¹⁰ Works by German and Polish historians have repeated the thesis that the uniform experience of repression, the struggle for minority rights, and a National Socialist renewal had transformed the loose and heterogeneous German minority into a tightly bound and homogeneous Volksgruppe.¹¹ Even if these works state that a Volksgruppe never fully evolved due to lack of time and other obstacles, they still maintain that the minority was on this trajectory of growing unity, hence confusing program with action.¹² Substantial differences are downplayed, and there is the danger of reifying the concept of Volksdeutsche by reaffirming the premises and wishful thinking of German nationalists. The fact that former German minority members dominated the scholarship on the Germans in interwar Poland into the 1980s only made the task of breaking this paradigm more difficult. Many German and Polish historians still fall into this Volksgruppe paradigm, even as they simultaneously argue for a more differentiated view of the minority.¹³ One study, for example, called for using the term Volksgruppe as an analytical category that is different from simple minority status.¹⁴ Yet as we have seen, the very concept of Volksgruppe is itself loaded, and its constructed nature needs to be analyzed.

that the use of the term would give recognition to Poland as a nation-state. See *Grenzdeutsch – Großdeutsch. Vortrag anlässlich der Hauptausschufstagung des V.D.A. im November 1924* (Dresden: Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland, 1925), 1–2; Max Hildebert Boehm, *Die deutschen Grenzlande* (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1925), 198–199.

10 On the “Volksgruppe paradigm,” see Ingo Haar, “Vom ‘Volksgruppen-Paradigma’ bis zum ‘Recht auf Heimat’: Exklusion und Inklusion als Deutungsmuster in den Diskursen über Zwangsmigrationen vor und nach 1945,” in *Die “Volksdeutschen” in Polen, Frankreich, Ungarn und der Tschechoslowakei. Mythos und Realität*, ed. Jerzy Kochanowski and Maike Sach, 17–39 (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2006).

11 One of the most notable proponents of the thesis that the German minority had transformed into a Volksgruppe was Richard Breyer, who grew up in Central Poland and became director of the Herder-Institut in Marburg. See Richard Breyer, *Das Deutsche Reich und Polen, 1932–1937. Außenpolitik und Volksgruppenfragen* (Würzburg: Holzner, 1955), especially 49–51, 227–236, 255–256. See also another work by a German from Central Poland: Theodor Bierschenk, *Die deutsche Volksgruppe in Polen, 1934–1939* (Würzburg: Holzner, 1954).

12 See Joachim Rogall, “Einheit in Vielfalt der Deutschen aus Polen,” in *Archive und Sammlungen der Deutschen aus Polen. Erlebte Geschichte, bewahrtes Kulturgut*, ed. Peter E. Nasarski, 13–18 (Berlin/Bonn: Landsmannschaft Weichsel-Warthe, 1992); Wilfried Gerke, “Auf dem Wege zur Einheit. Die Deutschen in Polen zwischen den Weltkriegen,” *Germano-Polonica. Mitteilung zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Polen und der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen* 2 (2002/2003): 10–17.

13 For recent examples, see Wojciechowski, “Die Deutsche Minderheit in Polen (1920–1939),” 4; Jörg K. Hoensch, *Geschichte Polens* (Stuttgart: Eugen Ulmer, 1998), 274–275.

14 Carsten Eichenberger, *Die Deutschen in Polen. Von der verleugneten Minderheit zur anerkannten Volksgruppe* (Augsburg: Bukowina-Institut, 1994), 18–22.

The remarkable resiliency of the *Volksgruppe* paradigm reveals not only how well this concept fit into German and Polish political agendas but also into broader conceptions of modernization that underplay the problem of regionality and regionalism. As the American historian Richard Blanke has noted, the postwar historiography has acknowledged regional differences within the minority, yet they have not made them into a “primary consideration.”¹⁵ The question of how regions are translated into political factors within the minority is ignored, and regionality is reduced to anecdotal and folkloric characterizations.¹⁶ Indeed, this view of the region as somehow backward and even reactionary merely reinforces the *Volksgruppe*-in-becoming interpretation of nationalism as a positive, modernizing force. The stubbornness of this thesis is due in part to its ideological proximity to national grand narratives elsewhere, where the success of the national project is commensurate to the steady reduction of regionalism. Such normative language is not unique to the Germans in Poland, of course, but is apparent in many other narratives of national awakening and unity. It is comparable to the traditional Jewish historiography on the Jews in Poland, whereby two approaches have emerged: to reveal the anti-Semitic nature of Polish state and society on the one hand and the flourishing of Jewish cultural life and the vibrancy of the struggle against this anti-Semitism on the other. Other strands of Jewish life that do not fit this mold, such as the assimilationists, are often downplayed or criticized.¹⁷

The scholarly preoccupation with the *Volksgruppenkampf* in the formerly Prussian territories of Poznań/Great Poland (Poznań/Posen), Pommerellen (Pomorzanie/Pommerellen), and Upper Silesia has only strengthened the *Volksgruppe* narrative. By focusing on the heightened nationality conflict in these areas, such works have set not only the tone but also the terms of debate in examining the German minority in Poland. During the interwar period, the territories lost by Prussia became the subject of an incessant propaganda war between Germany and Poland. German spokesmen criticized Polish nationalist policies for the dramatic decline of the Germans in Western Poland after 1918.¹⁸ Polish journalists and scholars refuted these

15 Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland, 1918–1939* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 3–4.

16 See especially Gotthold Rhode, “Lodzer Deutsche – Posener Deutsche. Keine wissenschaftliche Untersuchung, sondern eine Plauderei,” in *Suche die Meinung. Karl Dedecius, dem Übersetzer und Mittler zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Elvira Grözinger and Andreas Lawaty, 237–256 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), here 254–256.

17 Ezra Mendelsohn, “Jewish Historiography on Polish Jewry,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 8 (1994): 3–13, here 4–6.

18 See especially Ernst Hansen, *Polens Drang nach dem Westen* (Berlin: Koehler, 1927); Hermann Rauschnig, *Die Entdeutschung Westpreußens und Posens. Zehn Jahre polnischer Politik* (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1930); Richard Kammel [Gottfried Martin, pseud.], “*Brennende Wunden.*” *Tatsachenbericht*

accusations by claiming that the emigration of Germans was tied to their overwhelming dependence on the state for civil service jobs and subsidies. To them, the Germans had illegitimately established their presence through an aggressive *Drang nach Osten* (drive to the east) and the historical crime of the Polish partitions.¹⁹

After the Second World War, national partisanship politicized the minority issue even more. Historians supporting Poland's right to westward expansion accused ethnic German Polish citizens (especially in Pomerelia and eastern Upper Silesia) of disloyalty to the Second Polish Republic, using this charge of treason to justify Poland's postwar expulsion of several million Germans from the so-called recovered territories. For Mirosław Cygański, a postwar Łódź historian, this annexation was an act of historical justice.²⁰ German historians, however, have emphasized the injustice done by Versailles as well as the loyalty of the German minority to the Polish state.²¹ In their view, the behavior of the German minority was a reaction to Poland's repressive policies in the interwar period, thus making their postwar loss (and the expulsion of other German groups elsewhere) unwarranted. The

über die Notlage der evangelischen Deutschen in Polen (Berlin: Eckart, 1931); Richard Bahr, *Volk jenseits der Grenzen* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1933); Friedrich Heidelck, *Die deutschen Ansiedlungen in Westpreußen und Posen in den ersten zwölf Jahren der polnischen Herrschaft* (Breslau: Priebatsch, 1934); Viktor Kauder, *Das Deutschtum in Posen und Pommerellen*, vol. 3 of *Das Deutschtum in Polen. Ein Bildband*, edited by Viktor Kauder (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1937).

- 19 Karol Gostyński, "Zarys historii politycznej Niemców w województwach zachodnich po wojnie," in "Problem niemiecki na Ziemiach Zachodnich," special issue, *Strażnica Zachodnia* 12, nos. 1–2 (1933): 45–81; Karol Gostyński, "Przewrót hitlerowski w Niemczech i Niemcy w Polsce (Część pierwsza)," *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 10, nos. 1–2 (1936): 22–39; Karol Gostyński, "Przewrót hitlerowski w Niemczech i Niemcy w Polsce (Dokończenie)," *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 10, no. 3 (1936): 197–222; Edmund Męclewski, *Walka graniczna trwa* (Poznań: Gospodarka Zachodnia, 1939); Józef Winiewicz, *Mobilizacja sił niemieckich w Polsce* (Warsaw: Polityka, 1939).
- 20 Mirosław Cygański: *Mniejszość niemiecka w Polsce centralnej w latach 1919–1939* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1962), 149–150. See also Andrzej Leśniewski, ed., *Irredentism and Provocation: A Contribution to the History of the German Minority in Poland* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zachodnie, 1960); Karol Grünberg, *Niemcy i ich organizacje polityczne w Polsce międzywojennej* (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1970); Marian Drożdowski, "The National Minorities in Poland 1918–1939," *Acta Poloniae historica* 22 (1970): 226–251; Edward Wynot, "The Polish Germans, 1919–1939: National Minority in a Multinational State," *The Polish Review* 17, no. 1 (Winter 1972): 23–64.
- 21 See especially Friedrich Swart, *Diesseits und jenseits der Grenze. Das deutsche Genossenschaftswesen im Posener Land und das deutsch-polnische Verhältnis bis zum Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Leer: Rautenberg & Möckel, 1954); Christian Höltje, *Die Weimarer Republik und das Ostloccarno-Problem, 1919–1934. Revision oder Garantie der deutschen Ostgrenze von 1919* (Würzburg: Holzner, 1958); Friedrich Swart and Richard Breyer, "Die deutsche Volksgruppe im polnischen Staat," in *Das östliche Deutschland. Ein Handbuch*, ed. Göttinger Arbeitskreis (Würzburg: Holzner, 1959), 477–526; Erich Keyser, "Der Deutschtumsverlust in Westpreußen 1918–1939," *Ostdeutsche Wissenschaft* 8 (1961): 63–79; Gotthold Rhode, "Das Deutschtum in Posen und Pommerellen in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik," in *Die deutschen Ostgebiete zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Erwin Hölzle, 88–132 (Cologne/Graz: Böhlau, 1966); Walther Threde and Peter E. Nasarski, eds., *Polen und sein preußischer Streifen, 1919–1939. Die deutsche Volksgruppe in Posen und Pommerellen* (Berlin/Bonn: Westkreuz, 1983); Hugo Rasmus, *Pommerellen-Westpreußen 1919–1939* (Munich: Herbig, 1989).

Polish mistreatment of the minority, especially in the first days of the war, and the expulsion of the Germans from Polish territory are legitimate topics of study, but they still tend to give disproportional weight to the minority's victimization and reproduce the terms of a Manichean *Volkstumskampf*. In contrast, the literature on the central and southeastern areas of Poland remains sparse.²² By embedding the history of the Central and Eastern Polish Germans into the narrative of their Western Polish counterparts, these authors have downplayed the role of political particularisms within the minority; and willingly or not, they have historically constructed the *Volksgruppe* that did not exist in the interwar period.

Since 1989, several new developments in the historiography have become apparent. For example, improved relations between Germany and Poland have led to a presentist tendency. Some Polish historians have attempted to make good for overly nationalistic judgments in the past by reevaluating the myth of the German fifth column and overcoming the distortions of the Polish government both in the interwar and communist periods. Pleading for German-Polish reconciliation, these authors use the history of the interwar German minority as a lesson for neighborly coexistence in a post-national European Union and for the better treatment of the sizeable German/Upper Silesian minority in Poland today.²³ Other works attempt to contextualize the Germans in Poland in a broader East Central European perspective or in the analytic framework of borderlands. In *Orphans of Versailles*, for example, Richard Blanke examines the nationalism of a “fallen people,” and Rogers Brubaker is interested in understanding the interaction of homeland, host state, and minority nationalisms.²⁴

Several historians have also studied peripheral groups within the minority. Pia Nordblom's study of Eduard Pant's German Catholic Party and Petra Blachetta-Madajczyk's work on the German Socialists in Poland have given new recognition to anti-Nazi movements within the minority.²⁵ Several

22 Krzysztof Woźniak, “Forschungsstand und Forschungsdesiderata zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Mittelpolen,” *Nordost-Archiv* 9, no. 2 (2000): 413–427.

23 See for example Dariusz Matelski, *Niemcy w Polsce w XX wieku* (Warsaw/Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1999), 343. Several Polish sociologists have examined post-communist Upper Silesia and the German and Silesian groups there. See Zbigniew Kurcz, *Mniejszość niemiecka w Polsce* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1995); Krzysztof Frysztański, ed., *Polacy, Ślązacy, Niemcy. Studia nad stosunkami społeczno-kulturowymi na Śląsku Opolskim* (Cracow: Universitas, 1998); Maria Szmeja, *Niemcy? Polacy? Ślązacy! Rodzimi mieszkańcy Opolszczyzny w świetle analiz socjologicznych* (Cracow: Universitas, 2000).

24 Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles*, 4–5; Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 58.

25 Petra Blachetta-Madajczyk, *Klassenkampf oder Nation? Deutsche Sozialdemokratie in Polen 1918–1939* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1997); Pia Nordblom, *Für Glaube und Volkstum. Die katholische Wochenzeitung “Der Deutsche in Polen” (1919–1939) in der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000).

works have used the German minority in Poland to examine the interwar minority treaties and Germany's foreign policy during the Weimar period.²⁶ In particular, Christian Raitz von Frenzt has strongly criticized the Minorities Protection Treaty that had been mandated by the Treaty of Versailles, condemning the treaty's exacerbation of the nationality conflict.²⁷ The tendency to draw forgotten lessons from the German minority in Poland is due partially to the growing concern for the rights of ethnic minorities: the shocking brutalities in campaigns of ethnic cleansing and genocide that have occurred in the last two decades have shown that such problems can be as intractable now as they were at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Scholars from Germany have also followed the wider trend of everyday history (*Alltagsgeschichte*) and have used case studies to examine daily life "from below."²⁸ In localized contexts, nationality itself appears as only one of many competing loyalties, for both "Germans" and "Poles" were heterogeneous collectivities that were ridden with internal conflict.²⁹ As Mathias Niendorf suggests, a glance at the local sections of newspapers offers a very different view of ethnic relations than what is presented in the political section.³⁰ Putting nationality conflict in the background thus opens a window on daily inter-ethnic cooperation, which was – in light of the increasing nationalist claims – a variation of *Eigensinn* (having one's own mind), to use Alf Lüdtké's usage of the term.³¹ Moreover, *Alltagsgeschichte* offers the possibility of comparative study of minorities along a common border as well as examinations that transcend conventional periodizations.

26 Helmut Pieper, *Die Minderheitenfrage und das Deutsche Reich 1919–1933/34* (Hamburg: Institut für Internationale Angelegenheiten der Universität Hamburg, 1974); John W. Hiden, "The Weimar Republic and the Problem of the Auslandsdeutsche," *Journal of Contemporary History* 12 (1977): 273–289; Bastiaan Schot, *Nation oder Staat? Deutschland und der Minderheitenschutz. Zur Völkerbundspolitik der Stresemann-Ära* (Marburg/Lahn: Johann-Gottfried-Herder-Institut, 1988); see also various works by Carole Fink: "Defender of Minorities: Germany in the League of Nations, 1926–1933," *Central European History* 5, no. 4 (1972): 330–357; "Stresemann's Minority Policies, 1924–29," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 3 (1979): 403–422; "The Weimar Republic and its Minderheitenpolitik: Challenge to a Democracy," *German Politics and Society* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 80–95.

27 Christian Raitz von Frenzt, *A Lesson Forgotten. Minority Protection Under the League of Nations: The Case of the German Minority in Poland, 1920–1934* (New York: Lit, 1999).

28 Mathias Niendorf, "Deutsche und Polen in Pommerellen von 1920 bis 1945. Rollenerwartungen und Realität," *Nordost-Archiv* 6, no. 2 (1997): 687–728; Mathias Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze. Deutsche und Polen in den Kreisen Flatow (Złotów) und Zempelburg (Szpolno Krajeńskie) 1900–1939* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997); Torsten Lorenz, *Von Birnbaum nach Międzychód. Bürgergesellschaft und Nationalitätenkampf in Großpolen bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2005).

29 Niendorf, "Deutsche und Polen in Pommerellen," 714.

30 Niendorf, "Deutsche und Polen in Pommerellen," 705–706.

31 See Alf Lüdtké, ed., *Alltagsgeschichte. Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1989); Alf Lüdtké, *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse-Verlag, 1993).

By focusing on both ethnic groups, such local studies also avoid the oft-voiced criticism of being overly fixated on just one nationality.³² They challenge the neat dualistic framework of nationality struggle and show that the allegiances of German minority nationalists were less than clear as they navigated between Berlin's demands, economic considerations, *völkisch* ideals, familial and social obligations, as well as their own interests as citizens of the Polish state.

There is, however, the danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. By equating minority politics with the conflict between German leaders and Polish authorities, microstudies either limit politics to *Volkstumskampf* or ignore political activity altogether. There are still many aspects of German political life in Poland, such as regionalization, that are associated with the so-called nationality struggle in indirect but important ways.³³ Two recent works reveal the differentiated politics within German institutions in interwar Poland. Ingo Eser has examined the German minority school system to show the limits of integration in a nationalizing state.³⁴ Beata Lakeberg's study of the German minority press reveals political and regional differences in the Germans' self-image and stereotypes of other nationalities.³⁵ At the same time, there needs to be a better understanding of how these regional differences were not simply legacies but constructed over time through political competition.

SUBJECTS OF ENQUIRY, METHODS, AND AIMS

The study of nationalism has long been preoccupied with the division between primordialist and instrumentalist/constructivist views. The two differ on how nationalism arises and national identity spreads, but they both emphasize its ability to politically unite people who share certain (i.e., ethnic) traits. There is a great need, however, to examine in greater depth how nationalisms evolve once a common sense of nationhood has been established among activists. This book examines the apparent paradox: Why

32 Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze*, 10.

33 Mathias Niendorf is a particularly strong proponent of the approach "from below." Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze*, 15; see also Niendorf, "Deutsche und Polen in Pommerellen," 688–689nn6, 8, where he criticizes one recent work for its "neglect of the regional problem to the benefit of pan-state aspects."

34 Eser, *Völk, Staat, Gott*.

35 Beata Lakeberg, *Die deutsche Minderheitenpresse in Polen 1918–1939 und ihr Polen- und Judenbild* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2010). See also Beata Lakeberg, "Identitätsfragen in der deutschen Minderheitenpresse während der ersten Jahre der Zweiten Polnischen Republik," in *Grenzdiskurse. Zeitungen deutschsprachiger Minderheiten und ihr Feuilleton in Mitteleuropa bis 1939*, ed. Sibylle Schönborn, 81–93 (Essen: Klartext, 2009).

and how did an increasing nationalization of political life in the minority widen regional divisions? Although much has been written on the appeal and integrative nature of nationalism (and National Socialism), the potential of nationalism to *create* conflict within a national group is still largely understudied.³⁶ Nationalist German leaders in Poland, seeing themselves as part of an embattled minority, were largely in consensus about what their cultural goals were. Yet their different historical development and the region-specific policies of Poland and Germany meant that minority leaders had different ideas regarding the shape of the German national community in Poland. How did regional German leaders protect their particular interests through nationalist ideology and rhetoric, and how did their appeals to the nation undermine the status quo and foster disunity? How did nationalism, and especially National Socialism, catalyze latent cleavages and create new conflicts that had not existed previously? In short, what are the limits of national integration?

A reframing of the problem from inter-ethnic to intra-ethnic conflict – and especially between region and nation – offers new perspectives on the dynamics of minority mobilization. Among these is the question of agency. Studies of national minorities often portray minority leaders as passive actors by concentrating on the policies of the ethnic motherland and/or the host nation-state. This view thus reduces the minorities themselves to peripheral objects that merely react to decisions determined at the metropolises.³⁷ Instead of nationalism bridging regionalism, this book examines how a common ideology could divide as much as it unites. It focuses on how German activists perceived one another in light of regional variations and how they constructed and politically instrumentalized notions of difference. Indeed, regional cleavages between Germans were growing more salient over time. It suggests that such attempts to build a “we” community in Poland exacerbated regional conflict and undercut the project of unity.

Much has been made of nations as “imagined communities,” but it is rarely asked what happens when these members of the imagined community actually meet and have to cooperate. How does the imagination stretch to encompass diversity?³⁸ In German history especially, the study of regions

36 For recent works that examine this problem, see Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, and Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Sven Oliver Müller, “Die umstrittene nationale Gemeinschaft. Nationalismus als Konfliktphänomen,” in *Politische Kollektive. Die Konstruktion nationaler, rassistischer und ethnischer Gemeinschaften*, ed. Ulrike Jureit, 122–143 (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2001); Moritz Föllmer, “The Problem of National Solidarity in Interwar Germany,” *German History* 23, no. 2 (2005): 202–231.

37 Niendorf, *Minderheiten an der Grenze*, 12.

38 On “imagined communities,” see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London/New York: Verso, 2006).

has enjoyed a long pedigree from the *Kleinstaaterei* (multitude of small states) of the Holy Roman Empire to reunified Germany. Allan Mitchell notes that regional particularism in Germany is the “subject that will not go away.”³⁹ Still, only recently has regionality been taken seriously.⁴⁰ If nationalism is a term fraught with many meanings, however, regionalism can be even more elusive. Previous works on regionalism have tended to see regional identity as a form of community that is somehow more primary than national identity or at least a factor mitigating national loyalty. Yet as one sociologist has argued, “It is important not to view ‘the community’ as a given natural unit. Collectivities and ‘communities’ are to some extent ideological and material constructions, and their boundaries, structures and norms are a result of constant processes of struggles and negotiations.”⁴¹ The collectivity of region is no different, and it is not the purpose of this study to reify regional identities or to show that they are more essential than nations. Rather, this study examines the dynamic relation between regional and national forms of belonging, their shifting meanings, and their mutual reinforcement of one another. It will examine how region came to be imagined as a significant point of self-reference, especially in the way minority elites used region-building for nation-building – and vice versa.

Many studies of regionalism describe in actuality a type of nationalist separatism (e.g., Basque regionalism) or supranational cooperation (Baltic regionalism). Indeed, the former seems to be a particularly common case, thus many works on regionalism are really studies of separatist movements with the goal of establishing a nation-state – or at least autonomy.⁴² On the other hand, other regions are often seen as failed nations. In a 1999 forum in *American Historical Review*, Celia Applegate argues that “[r]egions should not be understood only as would-be nations; from that perspective, it takes only one small step to return to the notion that regionalism is therefore backward, archaic, and, above all, transitional.”⁴³ In concurrence with Applegate, Eric

39 Quoted in Celia Applegate, “A Europe of Regions,” in AHR Forum: “Bringing Regionalism back to History,” *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4 (October 1999): 1156–1220, here 1167.

40 Recent works on Imperial Germany, for example, tend to see a regionalization, not nationalization, of politics: Thomas Kühne, “Historische Wahlforschung in der Erweiterung,” in *Modernisierung und Region im wilhelmintischen Deutschland. Wahlen, Wahlrecht und Politische Kultur*, ed. Simone Lässig, Karl Heinrich Pohl, and James N. Retallack, 39–67 (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1995).

41 Nira Yuval-Davis, “Women, Citizenship and Difference,” *Feminist Review* 57 (Autumn 1997), 4–21, here 8.

42 A recent work argues for the similarity of regional and national movements in their claims, language, and organization: Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, Michael G. Müller, and Stuart Woolf, “Introduction,” in *Regional and National Identities in Europe in the XIXth and XXth Centuries = Les identités régionales et nationales en Europe aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, ed. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, Michael G. Müller, and Stuart Woolf, 1–21 (The Hague/London/Boston: Kluwer Law, 1998), here 10–14.

43 Applegate, “A Europe of Regions,” 1171.

Storm notes that research on regionalism remains dominated by traditional nation-state narratives, whereby regional distinctions are often considered backward anomalies that have managed to resist the national idea.⁴⁴ Thus, both Applegate and Storm are in line with recent works that have shown that national and regional imaginings are not necessarily in competition with each other but are both modern creations that complement each other.⁴⁵

Applegate also makes the distinction between “resistant” and “accommodating” regionalisms: whereas the former is usually an autonomous or separatist movement centered around a claim to nationhood, the latter “emphasize[s] a distinctiveness that can reinforce national markers of difference – in effect, performing variations on a common national theme.”⁴⁶ Although her categories are helpful conceptually, there is no way to pigeon-hole the subjects of this study. The development of regional cleavages among those who understood themselves as German – in short, within a collectivity that is already nationally bounded – exemplifies the accommodating form of regionalism. Because perceptions of regional inequality complicated the cohesiveness of this collectivity, causing Germans to put forth competing notions of Germanness to assert their national self-worth and claims to power, this book is also a study of the resistant type of regional particularism.

A related theme concerns the role of marginality and nation building. As Peter Sahlins’ study of the French-Spanish borderlands shows, an examination of the territorial margins allows new insight into the process of region building and national identity.⁴⁷ Nation building is not merely a project brought from the metropolises to the peripheries, but it can occur in the opposite direction. Moreover, border studies also demonstrate that the dissolution of a political border can lead to the discovery of new differences and

44 Eric Storm, “Regionalism in History, 1890–1945: The Cultural Approach,” *European History Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2003): 251–265, esp. 252–255, 261.

45 Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Charlotte Tacke, *Denkmal im sozialen Raum. Nationale Symbole in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995); Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871–1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Abigail Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Nancy R. Reagin, “Recent Work on German National Identity: Regional? Imperial? Gendered? Imaginary?” *Central European History* 37, no. 2 (2004): 273–289; Siegfried Weichlein, *Nation und Region. Integrationsprozesse im Bismarckreich* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2004); Michael B. Klein, *Zwischen Reich und Region. Identitätsstrukturen im Deutschen Kaiserreich (1871–1918)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2005).

46 Applegate, “A Europe of Regions,” 1179.

47 Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries. The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

the construction of a territorial-cultural identity.⁴⁸ This study goes one step further and examines the margins of an already peripheral group, that is, a national minority. By exploring the perception of differences and their hierarchical arrangement within the German minority, the relationship between power and territoriality can be better understood: regionalization, after all, went hand in hand with exclusionary politics. The national project to build a German minority in Poland created peripheries that were marginalized and also malleable. Indeed, in times of hypernationalism, former pariahs were not just rehabilitated but even became a national model for Germans in Poland and in the Reich.

This book examines not just the (re)construction of regional homelands but also the politicization of these regional cleavages. The focus is hence less on identities than identity politics. Whereas recent *Heimat* studies have shown that local identities are instrumental in mediating and furthering national feeling, the emphasis here will be to investigate the converse of this relationship and analyze how attempts to create a national community contributed to a regionalization of the minority. The self-identification of many Germans in Poland as “Poznanian-Pomerelians,” “Galician Germans,” or “Germans in Central Poland” was a phenomenon that had not existed widely or at all before 1918. The very attempts by national activists to turn similarity into community also meant the creation of new marginal groups among the Germans in Poland. A similar process can be seen in the case of today’s unified Germany, where Germans living apart for forty years now share the same state. The initially high expectations of national brotherhood have given way to the disappointing perception of unequal treatment and political marginalization, allowing a common sense of East Germanness to reinvent itself and even to be much stronger than in the early 1990s.

Whereas this study focuses on German minority activity in Poland, it also contributes to the understanding of the German state, German nationalism, and National Socialism. Much emphasis has been placed on the breakthrough of *völkisch* ideology after the First World War, thus suggesting the continuity of minority policies between Nazi and Weimar Germany, and even with the Imperial period.⁴⁹ These examinations have converged

48 Daphne Berdahl, *Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

49 Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik. Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933* (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1962); Peter Schöttler, ed., *Geschichtsschreibung als Legitimationswissenschaft 1918–1945* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 1999); Ingo Haar and Michael Fahlbusch, eds., *German Scholars and Ethnic Cleansing, 1919–1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005); Elizabeth A. Drummond, “From ‘verloren gehen’ to ‘verloren bleiben’: Changing German Discourses on Nation and Nationalism in

with several recent works on German constructions of Eastern Europe.⁵⁰ Together, this research has shown that the First World War, Germany's defeat, and its territorial losses were crucial elements in a paradigmatic shift, what Gregor Thum has called a "völkisch turn," in Germany's relationship with Eastern Europe.⁵¹ Yet as this book argues, the concern of the Weimar government for its former citizens in Poland reveals the limits of völkisch ideology on Weimar Germany's minority policies. By carefully examining the conflicting agendas and motives of different national activists, this book questions if völkisch ideology had widely penetrated the German population as a whole and if it was decisive in the policy making of Weimar and Nazi officials. Völkisch thought was certainly not homogenous, and it often divided as much as it united Germans.

More broadly, this book also expands the notion of Germany as a subject for historical inquiry. In 1981, James J. Sheehan asked "What is German History?" in the *Journal of Modern History*. In his article, Sheehan argued that history writing on Germany should not just serve as proof of the success of nation building but that it should also serve as "a case study of the nation's limitations, both as a historical force and as a historiographical category."⁵² He added that "If we shift the picture of the German past just slightly, its pieces fall together in a different way." For too long, Prussia and the Bismarckian Reich have served as the prism for understanding German history. Germany's postwar division likewise created new teleological narratives. Before German reunification in 1989, there was the tendency to project West German states back on to the past.⁵³ This study will try to

Poznanian," in *The Germans and the East*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A.J. Szabo (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008), 226–240; Annemarie Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914–1922* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 106–107, 119.

50 Guntram Henrik Herb, *Under the Map of Germany: Nationalism and Propaganda 1918–1945* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997); Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front. Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Gregor Thum, ed., *Traumland Osten. Deutsche Bilder vom östlichen Europa im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Wolfgang Wippermann, *Die Deutschen und der Osten. Feindbild und Traumland* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2007); Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A.J. Szabo, eds., *The Germans and the East* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2008); Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Robert L. Nelson, ed., *Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

51 Gregor Thum, "Mythische Landschaften. Das Bild vom 'deutschen Osten' und die Zäsuren des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Traumland Osten. Deutsche Bilder vom östlichen Europa im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Gregor Thum, 181–211 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 190–191.

52 James J. Sheehan, "What is German History?" *Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 1 (March 1981): 1–23, here 4.

53 Hartmut Boockmann, "Deutsche Geschichte ist mehr als rhein-donauländische Heimatkunde. Die ostdeutsche Geschichte wird in der Bundesrepublik zuwenig erforscht," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 22, 1989, 12.

escape such determinism by showing the limits of nationalism. It will look beyond the state in analyzing national activism, and at the same time explain how many German nationalists remained fixated on the Reich in a time of broad *völkisch*-ideological upheaval.

While expanding German history geographically, however, many scholars have become wary of reading too much of Germany and Germanness into the past. Not surprisingly, scholars of the Habsburg lands have provided much of the impetus in decentering the state. An increasing body of work in Central Europe has noted the importance of national indifference and is skeptical of the way many scholars of nationalism have ethnicized the past in a deterministic way that has established the nation as the *telos*.⁵⁴ Scholars in this field include Tara Zahra and Pieter Judson on Bohemia and Czechoslovakia as well as James Bjork on Upper Silesia.⁵⁵ Whereas Central Europe before the First World War was dominated by dynastic and local loyalties, the interesting point for these scholars is not how certain ethnic groups inevitably belong to or become one national group, but how nationalist activists constructed and politicized the threat of national indifference in contested lands. As the historian Jeremy King put it, we as historians have to avoid “ethnicism” or risk becoming “closet primordialists.”⁵⁶

Finally, this study reveals how the interwar Polish state and society functioned within a multiethnic reality, for the Poles also faced the problem of post-partition integration.⁵⁷ A major point here is that Polish authorities offered more leeway than suggested by German contemporaries and

54 On national indifference, see Tara Zahra, “Imagined Non-Communities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,” *Slavic Review* 69 (Spring 2010): 93–119.

55 Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009). See also Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Chad Bryant, “Either German or Czech: Fixing Nationality in Bohemia and Moravia, 1939–1946,” *Slavic Review* 61, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 683–706; Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

56 Jeremy King, “The Nationalization of East Central Europe: Ethnicity, Ethnicity, and Beyond,” in *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present*, ed. Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield, 112–152 (Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2001), here 125. For a similar critique, see Pieter Judson, “When Is a Diaspora Not a Diaspora? Rethinking Nation-Centered Narratives about Germans in Habsburg East Central Europe,” in *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*, ed. Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin, 219–247 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

57 See Barbara Wysocka, *Regionalizm wielkopolski w II Rzeczypospolitej 1919–1939* (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1981); Thomas Serrier, “‘Deutsche Kulturarbeit in der Ostmark.’ Der Mythos vom deutschen Vorrang und die Grenzproblematik in der Provinz Posen (1871–1914),” in *Die Nationalisierung von Grenzen. Zur Konstruktion nationaler Identität in sprachlich gemischten Grenzregionen*, ed. Michael G. Müller and Rolf Petri, 13–33 (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2002).

historians. The weak central government in Warsaw resulted in varying local conditions. The particularly strong presence of the Polish National Democrats in Western Poland, a legacy of fumbled Prussian policies, also meant that the German leaders there were more hard line than their counterparts in Central and Eastern Poland. Another point is that the Germans in Poland were not merely a parallel society in the Polish state, and internal conflict within the minority often meant German leaders turned to Polish authorities for assistance. Indeed, one important reason for the Germans' own weak impulse to unify was the very success of the German regional parties in the Polish parliamentary system in the 1920s, in which Germans were over-represented in the Sejm. The participation of the Germans in Polish institutions in the 1920s and even 1930s was not necessarily subversive, but in many ways it helped to stabilize the new Polish state.

SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION

The main actors of this story are the German leaders of the various regional political organizations: Deutsche Vereinigung in Western Poland (i.e., Poznań and Pomerelia), the Deutscher Volksverband in Central Poland, and the Volksbund in the semiautonomous voivodeship of Silesia. After 1933, the Jungdeutsche Partei from formerly Austrian Silesia became a major factor in minority politics and attempted to expand to all of Poland. Not all German minority organizations were officially registered as parties. This technicality was used in order to deflect the unwanted scrutiny of Polish authorities. However, even these self-avowedly non-political groups were political in their goals, principles, organization, and activity. For example, the Deutsche Vereinigung, officially just a network of German representatives in the two houses of the Polish parliament, served as the most important focal point for minority mobilization within Western Poland.⁵⁸ Because of this fact and for the sake of convenience, the term “political organization” and “party” will be used interchangeably. Although the primary subjects of this study are German political organizations and their leaders, this study is not an organizational history. Nor does it focus on the parliamentary activity of the German minority leaders, although this subject still requires further investigation.⁵⁹ Rather, the study focuses on the conflicts for power

58 Przemysław Hauser, *Mniejszość niemiecka na Pomorzu w okresie międzywojennym* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1998), 94.

59 The only monograph devoted exclusively to the role of the German activity in the Sejm and Senate appeared only recently: Janusz Fałowski, *Parlamentarzyści mniejszości niemieckiej w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Częstochowie, 2000).

and influence between the various actors within a framework of regional organizations, and how these actors used national and regional arguments to legitimate their power and to achieve their goals. Other actors examined in this book include German officials in the Reich and in Poland, especially those who sought to monitor or manipulate these leaders, as well as Polish authorities who sought to do the same.

The focus on German nationalist political organizations and leaders reduces the ambiguities about the Germanness of the subjects here. The experiences of the German minority were necessarily vast and varied, and it is difficult to demarcate the boundaries of the term “Germans in Poland.” Many Germans lived in areas where coexistence with their Slavic neighbors had been the rule for centuries. A large number had been assimilated (“Polonized”) and/or were largely unconcerned with their nationality. Yet the subjects of this study will be those who not only thought of themselves as Germans but also took upon themselves the task of preparing others to think and act that way as well. These activists may not have represented all, or even most, Germans in Poland, but their claims to speak to and for them were generally recognized by Polish and German authorities. Although it is extremely difficult to describe how most Germans in Poland felt about these activists, the increasingly nationalized atmosphere decreased the opportunities for exercising subjective nationality. People who were described as German were given “their” leaders whether they liked it or not, and the nebulous silent majority accepted events and action in their name passively.⁶⁰ Some Germans may have opposed these leaders actively, but their opposition was often couched in terms of what was truly “German” or, later, “National Socialist.”

The organization of the book follows a chronological and thematic format. After the introduction are six main chapters following important phases grouped around seminal events for the minority. It does not have a strictly comparative approach and does not exhaustively examine each region in each chapter. Rather, it takes on political events, demographic developments, and personal ambitions as they come in order to reveal the regionally fractured nature of minority politics. The time frame of the study is limited to the period in which Germans lived under the authority of the Polish state. Due to the contested nature of Poland’s borders, Polish rule had various beginning dates: 1918 in Central Poland, 1920 in most western areas, and 1922 in Upper Silesia. Due to its status as a free city and a separate citizenship during the interwar period, this study does not include the city

⁶⁰ Lumans, *Himmler’s Auxiliaries*, 28.

of Gdańsk (Danzig). The primary period of investigation ends in 1939, with the beginning of the Second World War and the collapse of the Second Polish Republic.

The first half of the book investigates the establishment of a center in the minority's western half. Chapter 1 examines the impact of the lost war on German institutions and nationalism, especially in light of the Versailles Treaty. It pays special attention to how Reich politics privileged the recovery of the lost territories and the Germans living there. Chapter 2 evaluates the impact of German revisionist policies on former Reich citizens in Western Poland and how German activists there deployed a sense of Reichness vis-à-vis other Polish Germans. An analysis of an expedition in 1926 to Eastern Poland to discover the Germans there reveals this hierarchical relationship. Chapter 3 allows for a deeper examination of power dynamics within the minority by examining the city of Łódź in Central Poland. Here, Poland's largest concentration of German-speakers became a negative other that was personified in the stereotype of the anational *lodzermensch*. It also examines how Łódź German pacifists and socialists contributed to this regional distinctiveness.

The second half of the book explains how factors in the Reich and Poland undermined the established hierarchy of Germanness. Chapter 4 examines the role of National Socialism in this trend, in part through the thaw between Germany and Poland that culminated in the non-aggression pact of January 1934. In particular, it explores how attempts at *Gleichschaltung* did not necessarily turn the Germans against Poland, nor did it unify them, as the increasing regionalization triggered by the upstart Young German Party (JDP) reveals. Relatively little has been written on the Young Germans, and this book is one of the first analyses of the roots, methods, and impact of the JDP. Moreover, the bitter conflict and denunciations among rival nationalist groups has made it possible for the historian to gain insight into the workings of intra-minority politics, which were often conducted covertly. Chapter 5 examines how demographics and racial-völkisch ideology resulted in the easternization of the minority. The upgrading of Germans in Eastern Poland from national pariahs to völkisch vanguards elucidates the tortuous dynamics of nationalization. Chapter 6 goes beyond the interwar period and covers the ostensible return of Polish Germans to the German Empire. It pays attention to how new hierarchies created both tensions and opportunities for ethnic cleansing. This chapter also outlines the legacy of interwar regionalism within the milieu of expellee organizations in Germany's postwar period.